

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

By Andy Jordan, PMP

Process Development Plan Template

This template provides a step by step guide to developing the processes around organizational risk management, although with minimal adjustment it will be applicable to other organizational processes. This template is designed to be completed throughout the process development effort and is laid out in sequence to mirror the activities described in Chapter 21.

Step 1 – Process framework

The process framework is the highest level of process structure that will be developed. It is the equivalent to the Risk Identification → Risk Analysis → Risk Management → Contingency and Impact Assessment → Adjust and Refine framework that formed the basis of the processes outlined in Chapters 8 to 12.

Step #	Step Name	Step Definition
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Notes on each field:

- **Step Name** – this will be the name of the highest level process area and should clearly establish the work that is being undertaken. It should represent a logical segregation of the work to be carried out as part of organizational risk management – risk identification, risk analysis, etc.
- **Step Definition** – While the steps should be simple and straightforward they should still contain a brief definition. This will likely only reinforce the name for the majority of readers but it will help to prevent any misunderstanding. The definition should only be brief – the later sections of the template provide opportunity for greater detail.

Step 2 – Process structure framework

The process structure defines the style, templates, etc for the process. Chapter 21 provides details on the variables to consider when deciding on the structure, and it is important to ensure that the structure is defined and captured – that’s the only way to ensure that the processes will be developed consistently and correctly. It is therefore vital to ensure that this section is always accurate and up to date.

Process Item	Location

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

By Andy Jordan, PMP

Notes on each field:

- **Process Item**– this will refer to the specific items that come together to define your framework. Examples will be the process document template, checklist template, guidelines, etc. You should avoid being too specific – the key is to provide a standard look and feel without reducing the flexibility that your process development team has. There is no explanation or definition column in this table because the names should be self-evident. If you have ten different types of checklist that require explanation then you are too detailed!
- **Location** – This is simply the network location where the template / guideline / manual / etc can be found so that it is readily accessible to all team members. The framework is of no use if it cannot be accessed by the project team and this helps to ensure that it is easy to find all of the information that is needed. If you are linking to a folder rather than a specific document (which will make maintenance easier as you don't have to update the link every time that an element changes) then you need to ensure that there is only one document in that folder. I generally create a sub-folder called 'previous versions' or similar and move all outdated versions into that leaving only the current version in the main folder.

Step 3 – Process detail completion checklist

In Step 1 we defined the high level framework, and in Step 2 we established the way that the detailed process elements and supporting documents would be developed. Here in Step 3 we confirm that the work to bring those elements together has been undertaken successfully. This section of the template is a checklist that needs to be completed for each of the entries from Step 1. Here I have included additional columns to indicate completion of each of those steps but if your project has more steps then you may decide to break the checklist out into separate lists for each process phase.

The majority of Chapter 21 is spent on explaining each of these items in more detail and you may wish to adjust this checklist to better reflect the specific aspects of your particular implementation. You may also need to generate supplemental checklists that are only applicable to one or two sections of the process – that may be particularly true if you are enhancing an existing risk management approach.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations
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Item	Completed for (from process framework above)				
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Has all work been completed in accordance with process structure framework?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
If No, have exceptions been approved?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have all process tasks / elements for this step been defined?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Do all elements have a specific owner (responsibility and accountability)?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Has guidance been provided in identifying owners where needed?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have all inputs been identified and defined?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Has distinction been made between required inputs and optional support inputs?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have all outputs been identified and defined?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have all tools and templates been identified and defined	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have exception scenarios been identified?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have exception processes been defined for those scenarios?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Have supporting documents and processes been defined?	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

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Notes on each field:

- **Work completed in accordance with process structure**– the whole point of establishing a process structure for the initiative is to create consistency across all process elements and between the risk management approach and other organizational and / or significant processes that are undertaken. It is therefore important to try and ensure that all work is conducted in accordance with that structure framework.
- **Have exceptions been approved** – the choice not to use the defined process structure framework should only be taken in the most exceptional of circumstances and that decision must always be approved. You will determine the level at which that approval should occur but I would strongly recommend that it be at the sponsor / governance level rather than the project manager – this is a significant variance.
- **Process elements defined** – these next checks really reflect completion of the core of process development activities. Here we are ensuring that every item has been defined – every box and connection in the process flow, every step in the process explanation, etc. None of the subsequent checklist items can be completed until this one is complete because they all require activity to be undertaken for each process element.
- **Elements have owner** – see Chapter 21 for more details on how the owner should be defined, but each process element should have both responsibility (the person doing the work) and accountability (the person who ensures that the work gets done) clearly established in terms of skills, experience, etc.
- **Guidance provided on ownership** – some elements may require more specific guidance for practitioners on how to establish a unique owner for each task within the process. Again chapter 21 goes into more detail but this check is important to ensure that the process development team provides enough guidance to make it simple and straightforward to identify the owner for each element.
- **All inputs identified** – process steps cannot succeed unless they are provided with the right ‘raw material’ to process. In parallel with the development on processes the required inputs to each step must be identified, ensuring that everything that is required by the process is available and that everything that is identified as an input is introduced at the right point in the process.
- **Distinction between required and support inputs** – Chapter 21 explains the distinction between mandatory inputs that are consumed or transformed by the process and the optional support elements that are beneficial but have an element of discretion around their use. As part of the process development work it needs to be made clear which category each type of input falls into, and this check should also ensure that all inputs are legitimate for the process itself. It can be tempting to include optional support inputs that are only likely to be available and / or helpful in a small minority of cases and in most scenarios those should not be listed as distinct inputs.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

By Andy Jordan, PMP

- **Outputs identified and defined** – the outputs of the process provide practitioners with a ‘roadmap’ for successful execution – as the outputs are generated so the confidence that the process is being executed correctly increases. It is therefore vital to ensure that process development clearly identifies all of the outputs at the correct point in the process – if the process doesn’t include it then it simply won’t be produced when the process is executed. Similarly, the output has to be defined well enough to ensure that it is clear the level of complexity and detail that is required and the purpose of the output. The tools and templates (see below) can assist, but the process definition of these outputs should provide the business focused context.
- **Tools and templates identified and defined** – it is only natural that when the process is executed practitioners will use the tools and templates that support each process element as their main guide to successful completion. While education and leadership needs to ensure that the process doesn’t simply become an exercise in form filling, it is important to ensure that the tools and templates that are provided are comprehensive enough to ensure that the process is executed comprehensively without being too rigid and preventing practitioners from applying their judgment.
- **Exception scenarios identified** – processes are designed to provide a standard approach to the majority of situations. It is impossible to develop a process that will serve every single scenario, but if the process definition work doesn’t define the exception situations then practitioners will, and that can rapidly result in everything becoming an exception. This is an area that may well need to be revisited during the pilot phase, and potentially after a full rollout, but process development should aim to identify as many of the expected exceptions as possible.
- **Exception processes developed** – there is no benefit in identifying the scenarios that do not fit the standard process unless exception processes are also developed for those scenarios. To many practitioners the idea of an exception will also mean an area where there are no processes in place. It is important that the defined process creates an alternate process path for each of those scenarios, minimizing the variance and returning to standard processes as quickly as possible. The definition of exception processes will also need to include inputs, outputs, tools and templates, etc.
- **Supporting documents and processes** – while not directly associated with the process itself, this element is one of the most critical to success. This area should cover training materials, manuals, examples of completed templates, etc as well as ‘link’ processes that connect organizational risk management with other processes within the organization. This should also cover the processes for delivering training, ensuring that manuals are available and maintained, etc. The details can vary considerably for this section and it is worth considering developing a specific list of items for each step in the process as well as for the overall approach.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

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Step 4 – Process Finalization Checklist

The final step in process development is to ensure that all of the different elements of the overall organizational risk management approach come together as a cohesive set of steps that achieve expectations and are capable of integrating with other organizational processes. This section can only be addressed once all of the work in Step 3 is complete and you may well want to combine the completion of the checklist with the formal review of the processes by the whole team that is described at the end of Chapter 21.

Item	Completed?
Is progression through the process as smooth as possible?	Choose an item.
Are inputs complete, relevant and introduced at the right time?	Choose an item.
Are outputs complete, relevant and introduced at the right time?	Choose an item.
Are all tools and templates complete and appropriate?	Choose an item.
Are all owners accurate and appropriate?	Choose an item.
Are exceptions accurate, complete, and clearly defined?	Choose an item.
Are support materials consistent, complete and appropriate?	Choose an item.
Does process integrate with existing organizational processes?	Choose an item.

Notes on each field:

- **Progression as smooth as possible** – the different process elements that come together to form the overall end to end process will have been developed by a number of different individuals, and while the elements will have been consolidated under the different steps that you identified at the start of this plan template there will inevitably some variation. In this check you are focused on ensuring that there is a cohesive, consistent process from start to finish. You will focus particularly on the ‘hand offs’ between the different steps, but you are also ensuring that the process structure has been interpreted consistently so that practitioners have the same user experience for every process element.
- **Inputs** – the inputs should be considered in combination with the next check (outputs) as the two are inextricably linked. You are focused here on ensuring that:
 - Every input that is required is included – if it’s not in the process then it won’t be used during process execution.
 - Every input that is included is relevant and adds value. Additionally you need to ensure that you are correctly distinguishing between mandatory and support inputs and that only rarely used information sources aren’t identified as part of standard process inputs.
 - Inputs are introduced at the right point in the process. They should only be associated with process elements where they are required and of course if the inputs are generated by an earlier process element then you need to ensure that they are identified as an output from that step – it wouldn’t be the first time that an input was required before the process step that produced it or without any process element ever producing the output.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

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- **Outputs** – these must be considered alongside the inputs discussed above and the elements that we are concerned with align with those elements:
 - Every output that is required is included – if it's not identified in the process documentation then it won't be produced during process execution.
 - Every output that is produced is relevant and adds value. If the output is never used further downstream in the process then it may not be required (it may still be needed to assist with management or with other organizational processes).
 - Outputs are produced at the right point in the process. This is effectively the mirror image of the last sub point under inputs – outputs must be produced before they can become inputs to downstream process elements.
- **Tools and templates** – this is an area where significant care is necessary. Tools and templates are a common area of variance between different groups within your project team, even if there are clear template standards identified in the process structure. The most frequent difference is in varying levels of depth and expectations and this issue needs to be addressed to ensure that all artifacts are consistent and appropriate. The tools and templates also have to align with the process elements, inputs and outputs – if you have a template associated with a process element but no output that uses that template then what exactly is the template for? You may also have differences in terms that need addressing, which may also indicate that you haven't produced a (comprehensive) process glossary.
- **Owners** – the majority of the work on owners will have been undertaken by the groups responsible for each step within the process. However, you need to look at the overall process flow and look for illogical ownership flows. You may have situations where ownership switches back and forth between a couple of different owners and that may indicate an opportunity to revisit the owners to see if they can be rationalized to avoid the back and forth. This will be particularly true for owners who are accountable – it is more acceptable to have additional changes in responsibility to ensure that the best possible person is completing the work.
- **Exceptions** – this is an area that may need to be revisited during the pilot and deployment work, and that should be expected. However, as the process is being finalized you need to ensure that any exceptions that have been identified are legitimate, that the boundary conditions have been set (the groups that it applies to, the scenarios that can trigger the exception, etc) and that the exception process is clearly defined and designed to bring the approach make in line with the standard as quickly as possible without compromising quality. This check should also confirm that there are no areas of the process where exceptions have been missed.

Risk Management for Project Driven Organizations

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- **Support materials** – these will need to be finalized towards the end of the process work as they are the items that will help people to understand all of the other areas of the process. As such this check is largely concerned with ensuring consistency in versions, completeness of coverage and suitability for purpose – do they help practitioners to understand the processes, their purpose, how to execute them, etc.
- **Integration with other processes** – your project team will have been focused on the processes that they have been developing and will have had a largely internal focus – ensuring that they are building the best possible organizational risk management process. This final check ensures that all of that work can be leveraged as effectively and efficiently as possible by ensuring that all of the connections with other organizational processes are well defined and that the transition is smooth. This will require consideration of the same issues around inputs, outputs and process elements that we considered above for this process as well as ensuring that all of the connections have been defined. Commonly process development teams do a good job of identifying the processes that they rely on (upstream), but are less good at ensuring that the processes that rely on risk management (downstream) are complete, comprehensive and accurate.