



NWCG Project Management

Principles, Guidelines, and Standards

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**National Wildfire
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**Information Resource
Management**

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Introduction

This document is written for business leaders and project managers and is intended to identify certain principles, guidelines, and standards to be used in the development and maintenance of NWCG IRM systems. This document is not all-inclusive and should be used in conjunction with current advice from the IRMWT and IRM-PMO. Each project is unique and will have special requirements and considerations that may not exactly fit the guidelines and standards identified within this document.

The IRM-PMO harvests “lessons learned” from projects. As we develop more understanding of what it takes to achieve successful project outcomes, this document will change. Consider the date and version number, and check with the IRM-PMO for the latest version. Generally, the date of an IRM-PMO document determines the precedence of information as it may apply to other IRM-PMO documents.

Key words may be helpful in distinguishing principles, guidelines, and standards. Within this document a principle is a broad concept or statement of direction identified by an action verb, guidelines contain the verbs “will” or “should”, and standards contain the verb “shall”.

NWCG Project Management

Project Management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations from a project. Essential to the project management concept is a clear delineation of authority and responsibility. The project manager knows that his/her basic responsibilities are to deliver an end product (1) in accordance with performance requirements, (2) within the limitations of the budget, and (3) within a specified time schedule. These three components are often referred to as the “triple constraints” of scope, time, and cost. A fourth constraint, (4) quality, is related to customer satisfaction with the end product, and interagency acceptance of the product.

Projects within the interagency business community have the added complexity of bridging interdepartmental, federal, and state agency policies, and satisfying the business and technical requirements of a wide variety of interagency stakeholders. Successful outcomes depend on interagency coordination and facilitation that is both internal and external to the project. The various NWCG business groups (working teams, task groups, and advisory groups) and the IRM-PMO are key to the coordination and facilitation.

Objectives

- ❑ Provide project management guidance and direction to NWCG business groups
- ❑ Identify procedure and consideration requirements for NWCG projects
- ❑ Identify a process and policy for managing NWCG projects
- ❑ Identify organizational relationships of NWCG projects
- ❑ Identify NWCG project roles and responsibilities

Principles

1. Concentrate on wildland fire business. Focus on safety and efficiency. Select projects that are business related and customer driven. Identify return on investment.
2. Understand customer business requirements. Obtain customer agreement in writing. Maintain documents under version identification and change control.
3. Develop and adhere to a project plan and project schedule. Involve task owners in developing plans and estimates. Identify risks and plan risk mitigation.
4. Establish an interagency team with clear responsibility. Create an environment in which team dynamics can synergize.
5. Track project status and give it wide visibility. Schedule reviews, identify problems and successes, and manage stakeholder expectations.
6. Use baseline controls and hold people accountable. Establish baselines for the product using configuration management. Establish baselines for the project using cost and schedule.
7. Document requirements, plans, procedures, lessons learned and share this information. Repeatable processes are dependent on documentation. Record all agreements and decisions with supporting information.
8. Thoroughly test products. Identify testing organizations as stakeholders and get them involved early.
9. Ensure customer satisfaction. Involve customers throughout the process. Plan for customer support beyond the end of the project.
10. Be pro-active with regard to quality. Quality planning, control, and assurance are essential to the success and acceptance of interagency projects.

Guidelines

There are myriad sources for information about project management. Each wildland fire agency has policy associated with information technology (IT) and other types of projects. NWCG project management policy serves as the means for assuring all of the wildland fire agencies' interests are equally and fairly represented. These NWCG project management guidelines and standards have precedence in management of NWCG projects. The Project Management Institute (PMI) standards committee publishes *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* referred to as the PMBOK Guide. The PMBOK Guide identifies specific project management guidelines that project managers should follow in managing a project through the project lifecycle. If the project is an IT project, project managers should also address and plan for system lifecycle management.

Standards

Projects are business-related and customer-driven

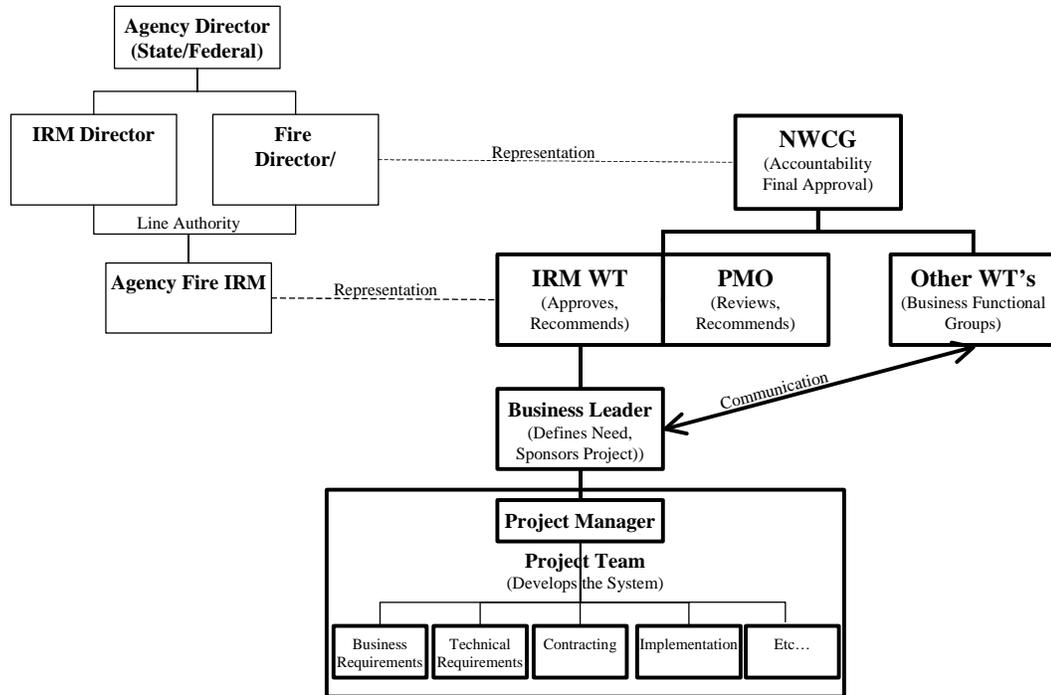
All NWCG sanctioned IT projects shall be based on demonstrated business needs related to the mission and vision of the NWCG. (See NWCG Bylaws and Operating Principles)

- ❑ A white paper shall be developed identifying the sponsoring business group, business need, importance, and scope of a project to accomplish a business need. (See NWCG White Paper Guidelines)
- ❑ The white paper shall be presented to the NWCG for consideration through one of the NWCG members or associate members.
- ❑ The NWCG shall respond back to the business group by letter with direction pertaining to the issue described in the white paper.
- ❑ If the response from NWCG supports continuation, the business group shall contact the IRM-PMO for guidance in developing a formal business case required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for all federal agency IT capital investments.

Projects have an interagency organizational structure

All NWCG sanctioned projects shall have a sponsoring NWCG business group, a designated business leader, a project manager, a core team of interagency members, and a lead federal agency. (See NWCG Project Relationships diagram)

NWCG Project Relationships



- ❑ The business leader shall remain external to the project and ensure all business requirements are met or renegotiated with the business group and stakeholder community.
- ❑ The business leader shall represent the business group and the project to the NWCG.
- ❑ The business leader shall participate on an interagency review panel in the selection of a project manager.
- ❑ The business leader shall supervise the project manager regarding project business requirements and deliverables.
- ❑ In addition to the oversight provided by the business leader, the project manager shall operate under the technical oversight of the IRM Working Team and quality assurance oversight of the IRM-PMO.
- ❑ All NWCG sanctioned projects shall have a designated federal lead agency to assist the project in obtaining government approvals as part of the required federal IT capital asset planning process.
- ❑ The lead agency shall host the project manager position for the duration of the project. The agency Fire Director shall identify the project manager's supervisor of record.

- The business lead and the agency supervisor of record shall sign semi-annual project manager performance evaluations in adherence to agency policy. The project manager's performance rating shall also be signed by the NWCG IRM Program Manager pertaining to quality assurance and project management process control.

Projects have a project charter

All NWCG sanctioned projects shall have a project charter identifying the business case; responsible individuals; project deliverables; project boundaries, cost estimates, timelines, and necessary resources; agency agreements and conditions. In some instances a project will consist of developing business requirements and a business case. Large-scale projects should begin with a chartered business requirements study and complete development of the business case before a separate charter for system design, build, and implementation is granted. Small projects may be accomplished with a charter, a simple spreadsheet doubling as a WBS, and consist of a few people working under the direction of an NWCG business or advisory group. There are cost thresholds that trigger levels of approval. Cost and complexity will distinguish the need for more formalization. (See NWCG Charter Guidelines)

- The sponsoring business group, business leader, and project manager shall develop the project charter.
- Modifications or revisions to project charters shall be approved by the NWCG.
- Project charters shall be revised and updated according to conditions stated within the charter, and whenever the following conditions occur:
 - At the discretion of the NWCG.
 - The business lead or project manager is replaced.
 - Upon recommendation of the business lead.
 - Upon recommendation of the IRMWT/IRM-PMO.

Projects are managed according to these NWCG standards

All NWCG projects shall be managed in conformance with Project Management "best practices" as identified by the NWCG, lead agency, and Project Management Institute. These NWCG project management guidelines and standards have precedence in management of NWCG projects.

- Project Managers shall follow and comply with NWCG lead agency policies and reporting requirements.
- Project Managers shall provide project status reports to the NWCG through the IRMWT and IRM-PMO according to an agreed upon schedule and format ahead of NWCG meetings.

- ❑ Project Managers shall develop, use, and maintain a project plan (See NWCG Project Plan Guidelines) that addresses each phase of the project.
- ❑ The project plan shall be reviewed and approved through signature by the business leader and the NWCG IRM Program Manager prior to commencing each project phase.
- ❑ Project Managers shall use an automated tool to develop a Work Breakdown Structure sufficiently decomposed to identify and map the necessary tasks to complete the project.
- ❑ Project Managers shall develop and adhere to a budget and schedule in line with cost estimates, timelines, and deliverables identified in the project charter and in conformance with parameters established by the NWCG lead agency.
- ❑ Projects shall be managed in cooperation and collaboration with other NWCG projects and in conformance with NWCG architecture, data, and repository principles, guidelines, and standards. (See additional NWCG architecture, data, and repository documents)
- ❑ Projects Managers shall support the goals of the NWCG IRM Strategy by building systems that align and contribute to the evolution of NWCG's Enterprise architecture. (See NWCG IRM Strategy)

Definitions, Roles, and Responsibilities

NWCG – National Wildfire Coordinating Group is an organization comprised of the five federal wildland fire organizations: the DOI Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service; Forest Service Fire Research; National Association of State Foresters; US Fire Administration; and the Intertribal Timber Council. Associate (non-voting) members include the National Fire Protection Association and FCOG-Australia and New Zealand fire organizations. The Fire Directors or representatives from each of these organizations comprise NWCG membership.

The NWCG is the chartering organization that sanctions wildland fire projects. The NWCG is responsible for project funding, resourcing, and maintaining the final products according to agreement of the membership documented in the project charter.

NWCG Business Groups include affiliated working teams, task groups, advisory groups, and other organizations recognized and established by the NWCG. NWCG business groups oversee and sponsor safety or business initiatives that are sanctioned by the NWCG.

NWCG Business Leader, a representative of one or more sponsoring NWCG business groups who provides direction to the project manager to ensure that all business requirements and stakeholder expectations are met or exceeded according to the project charter.

NWCG Project Manager, a position temporarily dedicated full-time to managing an NWCG project. The project manager is responsible for the overall planning, design, execution, control, implementation, and closeout of an NWCG project. It is the project manager's responsibility to manage the scope, time, cost and quality of the deliverables in conformance with the project charter.

NWCG Core Team, a temporary interagency team of subject matter and technical experts dedicated full-time to performing the work necessary to complete the project. These personnel are under the direction of the Project Manager for the duration of the project. Core team members are often team leaders who supervise part time project personnel working on specific project tasks.