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| Project Appraisal and Prioritization Process |
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**Project Appraisal and Prioritization Process**

The units reporting to the University of Illinois System CFO Office are responsible for the delivery of many administrative functions to stakeholders across the university system. Each year departments and units within the CFO office launch and implement many initiatives to improve customer service, business process rationalization, cost reduction, internal controls and to meet other goals.

These initiatives are critical to continuous improvement and fostering innovation and is a major focus of the CFO Office. The *Project Appraisal and Prioritization Process* (PAPP) is designed to facilitate the effective implementation of these initiatives in a manner that ensures that organizational resources are deployed effectively.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is also intended to support implementation through careful prioritization, planning and as well as monitoring of results.

The PAPP is a sequence of steps whose purpose is to:

* ensure a systematic appraisal of the cost and benefits of projects;
* examine potential conflicts or synergies with other institutional projects;
* establish priorities among projects;
* ensure adequacy of resources; and
* provide management support and oversight of initiatives.

The purpose of each stage of the process is briefly described below. Note that while PAPP is presented here as a linear process, in reality it is an iterative process in which feedback from the different steps results in adaptation of the project plan

1. **Project Initiation and Definition**

Projects that routinely take place within a unit for standard operational improvement efforts are not expected to go through PAPP. A project request should be initiated if any of the follow holds true: [[2]](#footnote-2)

The impact of the project goes beyond the unit (viz., the project will affect workflows of other units or require collaboration from other units).

Requires resources from the IT group that exceeds 250 hours.

Personnel or financial resources from outside of the requesting unit will be needed for the project and hours are expected to exceed 250 hours or the budget for the project is over $25,000, excluding facilities or infrastructure updates.

For projects that don’t meet the above criteria, and you would like to inform committee and CFO Leadership on, you can complete Part 1 of the PAPP Proposal and it will be reviewed at the PAPP and CFO meetings. These would be considered FYI only projects.

Any unit or department can initiate a project request by completing a brief *Project Initiation Proposal* (PIP) document. The PIP document should explain the rationale for the project by identifying the benefits that are expected upon the completion of the project, including improvements to current operations. In addition, it should provide an initial assessment of the scope of the project and identify all stakeholders of the project as well as any potential risks. A preliminary assessment of the types of resources required to implement the project should also be provided. The proposal should also explain how the project aligns with the stated aims and initiatives of the organization.

The requester should submit the document to the senior administrator responsible for his/her division, hereby known as the “executive sponsor” of the project.  The executive sponsor should carefully review the information provided in the project proposal. The requestor should also have preliminary conversations with major stakeholders to verify the assumptions and rationale of the project.

Once the project is reviewed by the executive sponsor it should be discussed with the head of the parent unit (if the executive sponsor is not the head of the unit).

If assistance is required to complete the PIP document, the project requestor may complete the [project idea web form](https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7449062/Project-Idea-Form) to request further assistance in completing the PIP. Some projects may require a business process analysis prior to completion of the PIP document. Others may require a detailed assessment of IT system issues and resource requirements.  Additional resources may be assigned to help develop these through an established template. If required, IT and BPI staff will be made available to assist with the development of this proposal and complete any requested analysis or process improvement activities.

Throughout the process the project requestor should confer with the executive sponsor and unit head. The executive sponsor will review the document and may suggest further analysis/refinement as needed. The executive sponsor will sign off on the final document.

Upon completion of the above steps and approval by the executive sponsor and the unit head, the requestor should electronically submit the complete Project Initiation Proposal to Karen Greenwalt (greenwlt@uillinois.edu).

1. **Project Appraisal & Intake**

Once the project specification is completed it will be evaluated by a *Project Intake Committee* (PIC). Each project will be reviewed against key criteria and the project’s potential contribution in advancing institutional goals and objectives (customer service, efficiency, compliance and reporting, internal control, etc.). The balance between impact and the resources required to implement the project is a further consideration. The PIC will review all information outlined in project submission and provide an initial feedback within a reasonable time (the PIC may request additional information from the project requester).

**Project Intake Committee:**

The PIC is a committee with rotating membership from the CFO organization and the office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA). The committee is chaired by a representative of the CFO organization.

The purpose of the PIC is to review proposed projects originating from within the CFO organization to ensure they meet organizational objectives and are appropriately prioritized and resourced. The committee doesn’t approve projects, rather it reviews projects and provides key insights that are shared with CFO leadership who performs the final approval.

1. **Project Approval and Prioritization**

Since implementing any initiative requires institutional resources—both financial and human resources—not all meritorious projects can be implemented because of organizational resource limitations.  Thus, the final step is project approval and prioritization. CFO leadership will review all appraised projects in the pipeline and provide approval and prioritization as appropriate.

1. **Post Approval Steps**

Once the project has been approved by CFO leadership, it will be included in the CFO portfolio of approved projects. These will be managed and scheduled by the CFO portfolio manager.

Any approved project that requires resources from the IT group exceeding 250 hours requires approval from the Information Technology Priorities Committee (ITPC). The ITPC Coordinator will assist the project requestor in getting the project reviewed by ITPC. A project manager will be assigned during the ITPC review process.

Projects requiring less than 250 hours from the IT group do not require ITPC approval. The project requestor will work with the CFO portfolio manager to ensure that the project is properly initiated, and that regular reviews and updates are being performed.

When needed, the CFO portfolio manager will assign a project manager to confirm the details in the PIP document and start planning the project. Any significant changes from the original proposal will be reviewed by the Project Intake Committee.

The CFO portfolio of approved projects will be actively managed using existing PMO processes. This will include in-flight prioritization, risk management, performance reporting, and project health reviews. Regular status will be produced and delivered once a month. Post implementation assessments against key metrics will be performed 6 months after project completion.

1. Note that the PAPP does not replace the ITPC approval process. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Project requestor can contact PAPP coordinator determine if a project should be included in the PAPP [↑](#footnote-ref-2)