Background  Based on experience from across the university community, Northwestern University wishes to improve the processes of coordinating technology initiatives, both when they require development of applications and when they involve the acquisition of new information systems. Based on a “best practices” model, the goal is to facilitate integration with University central systems and to ensure that any new technology supports the fullest range of needed functionality.

Purpose  These guidelines are intended to communicate and advance understanding of those project planning practices that have been successful for members of the Northwestern Community. They offer an overview to the process of understanding needs, documenting requirements, and directing a selection and implementation process.

Use of the Protocol  The stages and steps below are shown in outline form and may require modification to suit the needs of a particular project. The NUIT Consulting and Project Office should be contacted for assistance and additional documentation of steps in a project planning process.

Stage One: Needs Assessment and Outcome Setting

- Align with NU Institutional Policies and Direction
- Determine availability/timing of supporting resources (NUIT and others)
- Align with Departmental/Organizational Policies and Directions
  - Articulate Common “Business Purpose”
- Develop Understanding of Needs
  - Current needs defining the project
  - Other existing needs yet to be analyzed
  - Future needs
- Set Specific Outcomes
  - Deliverables (using specific measures against the stated “Business Purpose”)
  - Ownership (key parties with responsibility for deliverables)
  - Dependencies
  - Security (assess potential sensitivity – determine policies and roles/responsibilities)
  - Milestone Dates
- Document Initial Test Plan Requirements
- Create Initial Budget Estimates

Stage Two: Selection of Vendor

- Establish and Follow a Process
  - Creation of Requirements Document
  - Preliminary Market/Vendor Review
  - Establishment of Review Committee
- Stakeholders, Users, Others
- NUIT Departments: Management Systems (ITMS), Computing Services (ITCS), Information Systems Architecture (ISA) and Information and Systems Security/Compliance (ISSC)
  - Creation of Request for Proposal (RFP), including evaluation document
- Consulting and Project Office Assistance and Review
  - Release of RFP to vendors
  - Review of RFP Responses by Committee based on Requirements Document and Common “Business Purpose”
  - Selection of Finalists
Presentations by Finalist Vendors
Trials (May occur here or below)
- Determine Goals
- Establish Process
- Report Results
  - Selection of Vendor (Negotiation here and/or below)
  - Contract Review – Consulting and Project Office/Office of General Counsel Review
  - Fit-Gap Analysis
- Fit-Gap Review of Software, Hardware, and Networking Needs
  - Vendor, Third-party Applications and or Tools, Operating System
  - Application Support Review (ITMS)
  - Datacenter Planning (ITCS)
- Zone and Firewall Requirements, Installation Services, Ordering Timelines
- Create Final Recommendations Document (May occur here or elsewhere)
- Develop Test Plan
- Review and Update Requirements Document – Revise Plan

**Stage Three: Phased Implementation**

**Preparation**
- Development of Initial Implementation Plan (in parallel with other Stage Two processes)
- Resource/Budget Development
- Roles and Responsibilities Development
  - Including all participating organizations
- Internal Training/vendor training for: administrator, developer, user, and trainer (vendor and NU schedules)
- Complete Detailed Test Scripts.

**First Internal Use – project initiation for skills development**
- Internal to the implementing organization:
  - Develop “infrastructure”: people, processes, elements to be tested
- External to the organization:
  - Creation of policies to support larger community: General Public, Technical Users, Support Services (NUIT – CS, MS, others), Others
- Review and Update Requirements Document – Revise Plan

**Pilot – small group roll-out**
- Small “captive” project
  - “Friendly,” knowledgeable users
  - “Report” results to larger communities
  - Extend and develop skills and policies
- User training focused to needs/tasks
- Review and Update Requirements Document – Revise Plan

**Selected Roll-out**
- Determine Sequence of roll-out phases
- Target and train end user communities
- Refine and develop infrastructure: skills, resources, policies
- Review and Update Requirements Document – Revise Plan

**Post Roll-Out Review**
- Creation and distribution of lessons-learned document

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