

How the Texas Department of Public Safety Maximized the Value of Project Management by Creating an Enterprise Project Management Office¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper will describe how the Texas Department of Public Safety (TXDPS) maximized project management efforts by establishing an Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO). In 2011, the TXDPS Executive Director realized that he did not have visibility into the agency's priority projects and had no way to determine if the projects were being accomplished on schedule or within budget. Under his leadership, the Agency soon implemented an EPMO to invest in the right projects and drive successful execution and delivery of those projects.

This paper will provide insight into the opportunities and pain points that drove the TXDPS executive leadership team to create the EPMO, as well as the steps that were taken to drive the creation of the EPMO and the Enterprise Project Roadmap. It will focus on lessons learned along the way, with an emphasis on core framework components that were established to effectively identify and manage stakeholders, project scope and performance measures.

CHALLENGE

In late 2011, the Executive Director (Director) of the Texas Department of Public Safety was challenged with lack of visibility into the Agency's priority initiatives and wondered why those initiatives were not being completed as expected. Some projects were facing budget and scheduling overruns, but there was no transparency into the underlying causes of these slips. Other projects were producing results but never seemed to reach the close out phase.

Additionally, other important projects seemed to be in an eternal holding pattern in the concept phase, but were never able to get started. Finally, a number of in-flight projects were being cancelled, killed, or put on-hold as priorities changed. With this lack of transparency, the Director also determined there was a lack of clear ownership and accountability for the state of the various projects at TXDPS.

The Director identified this challenge surrounding projects as a threat to the business operation of the Agency. He used his experience to formulate a strategy to assess and address this threat. That strategy was to establish an Enterprise Project Portfolio Management Office (EPMO) for TXDPS.

¹ *This paper was originally presented at the 8th Annual UT Dallas Project Management Symposium in Richardson, Texas, USA in August 2014. It is republished here with permission of the author and symposium organizers. For more about the annual UT Dallas PM Symposium, [click here](#).*

OPPORTUNITY

Once the Director identified the need to create an EPMO, he had to identify personnel to lead the organization. The Director chose not to hire an outside consultant, familiar with the intricacies of leading an EMPO. Instead, he chose personnel currently within the agency, familiar with the agency and agency personnel to lead this effort.

The EPMO was charged with finding solutions to the challenges identified by providing an enterprise-wide approach to identify, prioritize, and successfully execute a portfolio of initiatives and projects that are aligned with the Department's strategic goals, mission and legislative mandates. EPMO leadership was also tasked with ensuring the projects within the portfolio were managed as efficiently as possible.

Initial Assessment

To accomplish the objective, EPMO leadership had to assess the current environment to determine how best to establish the EPMO and its associated processes in the organization. The assessment identified there were multiple methods for initiating and executing projects across and within various business units within the TXDPS. They determined there was an opportunity to achieve organizational efficiencies by establishing standards and governance, coordinating and providing oversight of priority projects and efforts. They also identified that lack of communication and coordination, along with failing to effectively plan the use of resources, were root causes of the challenges the TXDPS was facing.

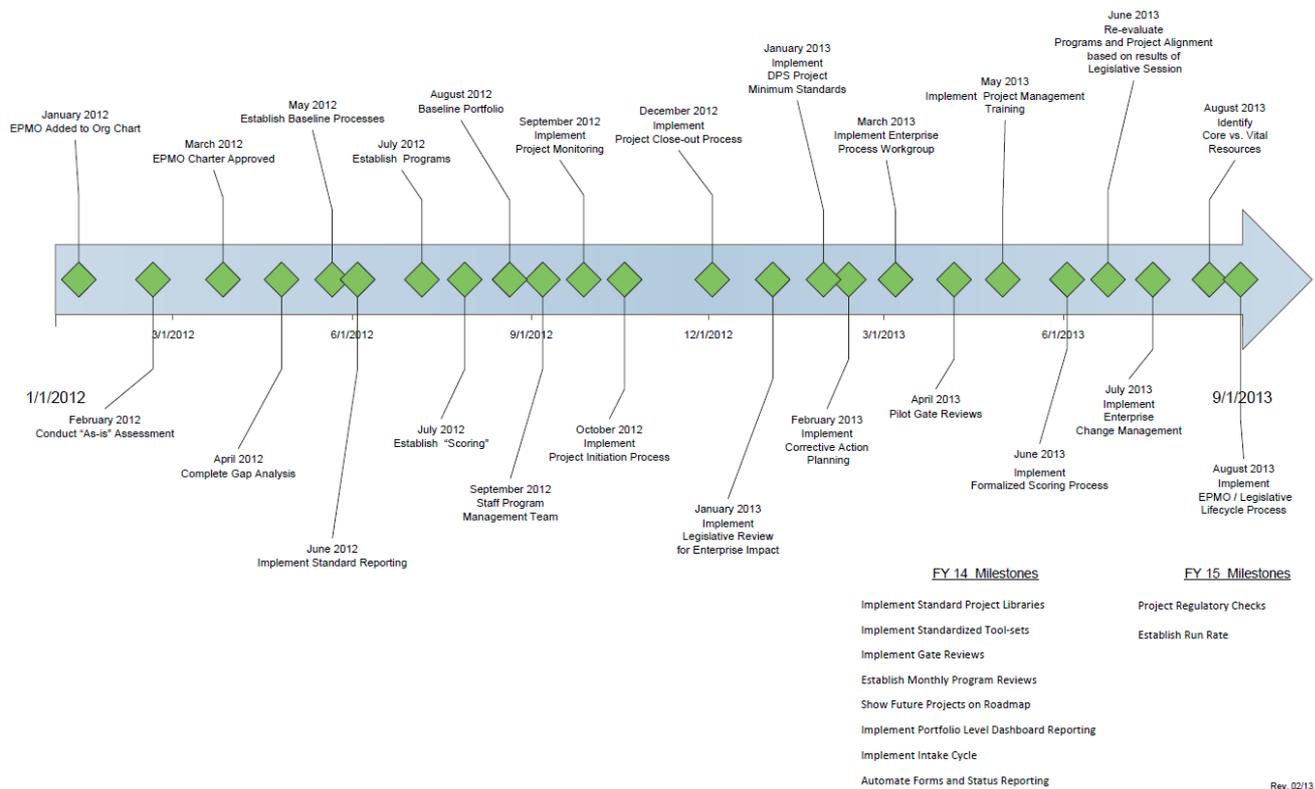
One major issue preventing successful project completion was the lack of consistency for project selection and initiation. The EPMO leadership understood this was a great opportunity to provide a systematic and logical approach to identify and select projects to start.

In addition to having an opportunity to implement a strategic approach to project selection, the EPMO leadership also identified opportunities for providing channels of communication to determine and report project status and health, issue and risk mitigation, and dependencies across projects, divisions, and/or business units.

EMPO leadership conducted an "as-is" assessment to capture existing activity that was running, evaluating how those activities were being planned and managed. Once that was completed, the EPMO leadership leveraged this input, along with the Director's vision, to establish the desired target state, and created a formal Charter for the office.

With the target state as their goal, the EPMO leadership conducted a gap analysis to determine what milestones would be required to achieve the desired outcome and fulfill the Charter. Stakeholder analysis and management planning played a critical role in determining the path to the desired end-state and designing the baseline processes. A chart listing the EMPO milestones can be found below.

EPMO Milestones FY12-FY13



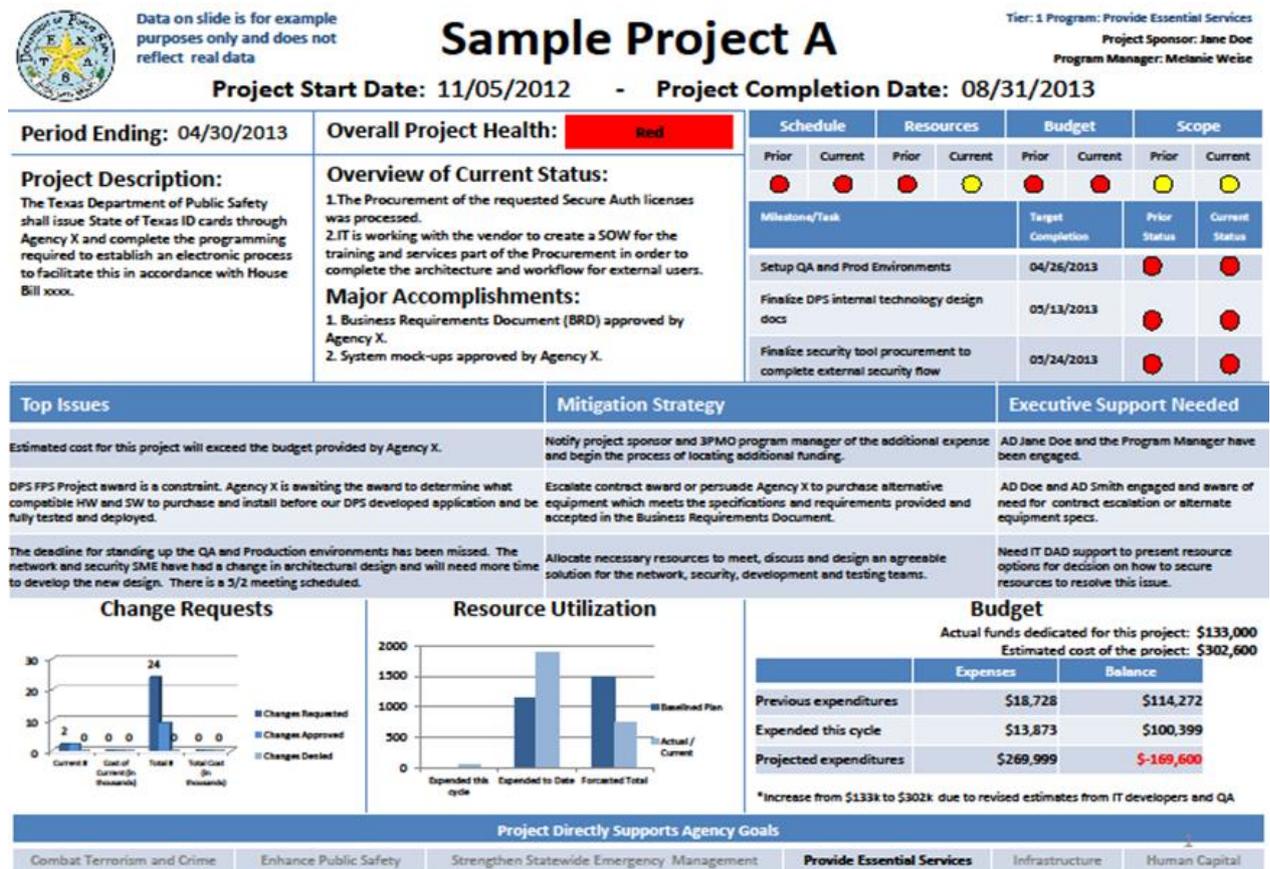
Change Management

To make the EMPO successful and accomplish the Director’s mandate, EPMO leadership had to do more than establish a charter. They also had to market the creation of an EPMO to the various stakeholders within the agency to prove the value of the new process. In theory, most stakeholders agreed that transparency, communication, prioritization, resource alignment and risk mitigation were valuable goals for the agency. However, in practice, those concepts translated into new processes and seemingly “more work”. This required the EPMO leadership to not only institute a new project management philosophy that had not typically been utilized by the organization, but also required an extensive use of organizational change management skills.

EPMO leadership developed a strategic and incremental approach towards establishing the EPMO, implementing portfolio management and governance that would work within the culture and sub-cultures that were strong throughout the TXDPS. They reviewed the PMI best practices and adapted them, creating simplified processes that would fit best at TXDPS. Buy-in was extremely important to success, so the EPMO leadership systematically met with every group of stakeholders, tailoring the communication style to the audience. They had to determine how to properly “sell” the concept. For some stakeholders, it was enough that the Department is a para-military organization and the head of the organization said it needed to be done. After acknowledging the concerns of all stakeholders, the EPMO began executing their plan to implement their new processes. Understanding the cultures and needs of the various stakeholders translated into the need to take an incremental and agile-like approach to rolling out the new EPMO framework and process.

Implementation

The first step was to develop a mechanism to gain executive visibility into active projects. The EPMO implemented a standard reporting process and template to get the right information to the executives within certain timeframes based on the circumstances of the project. A sample of the reporting template can be found below.



EMPO leadership also worked with agency stakeholders to determine the selection criteria for projects that receive priority within programs and across the portfolio. Unlike a business for profit, TXDPS didn't create a true numbers-based ranking system. Instead, they focused on whether the initiative was a mandate from either the Legislature, the agency Commission or the Director or whether it was not a mandate, but an operational need.

The Process

With the criteria in place, the EPMO was ready to implement the new project initiation process. New efforts were provided proper visibility and approval before scheduling resources to begin the effort. EMPO leadership selected program managers, familiar with agency protocol and personnel to assist with this new effort. Program managers are aligned to divisions to build effective relationships and understand the business needs and priorities of the divisions. Program managers are responsible for coordinating across the divisions and for translating between service providers and business divisions for improved communication and collaboration.

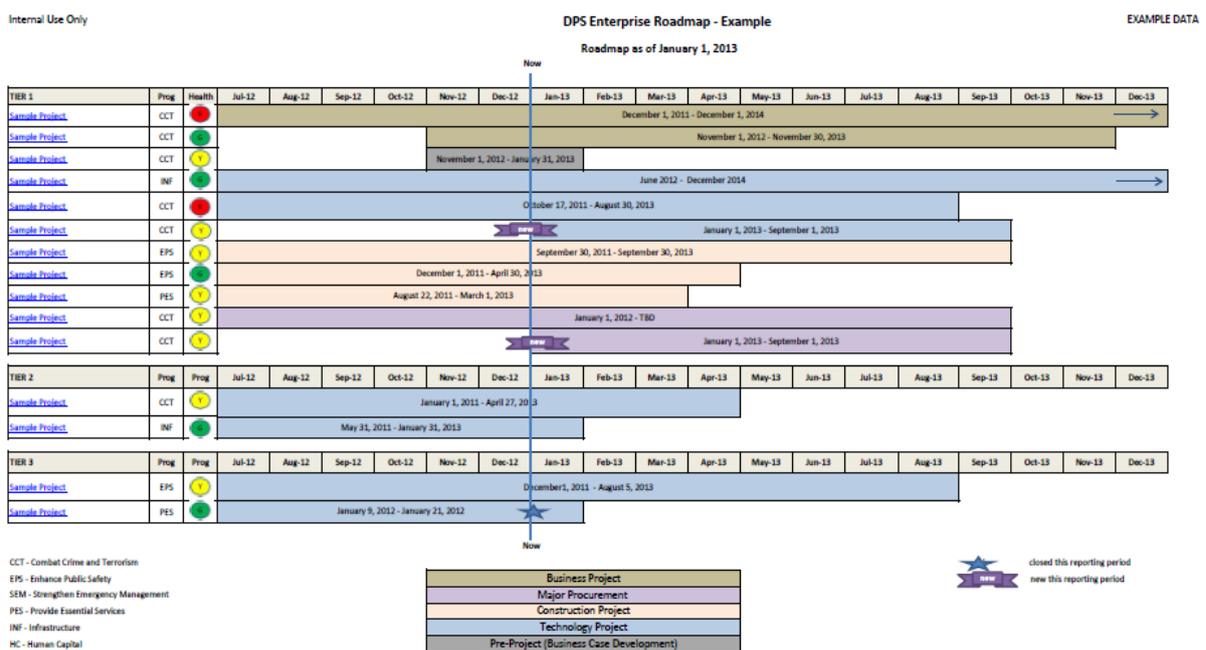
Executive Leadership is presented with a list of all proposed new project requests. Using the selection criteria, projects are selected to move forward. Once a request is approved, the EPMO assigns a program manager to facilitate communication among all stakeholders that may be impacted and to ensure the stakeholders are included in the business case development and analysis. Including all potential stakeholders allows agency leadership to fully understand the impact and complexity of the project and more accurately capture resource needs and anticipated costs. The business case analysis details the estimated costs, benefits, and resources requirements. The Executive team leverages this information to determine whether or not the project should be authorized to start.

The EPMO established the use of Gate Reviews in order to maintain visibility into whether the project is still meeting its initial charge and whether adequate human and financial resources are still available for the next phase without having adverse impact on another project. The Gate Review also provides a forum to ensure that there are no major issues that could have a detrimental impact on the portfolio or business operations. Gate Reviews are essential tools to provide insight as to whether there are roadblocks that will prevent successful project transition to the next phase, and provide agency leadership with information needed about which items should take precedence in the event of a collision or competition for resources.

Finally, a standard project close-out process was established to capture results and assess completion of work. This enables formal authorization by sponsors and executives that the expectations of the project have been delivered before release of resources.

Enterprise Roadmap

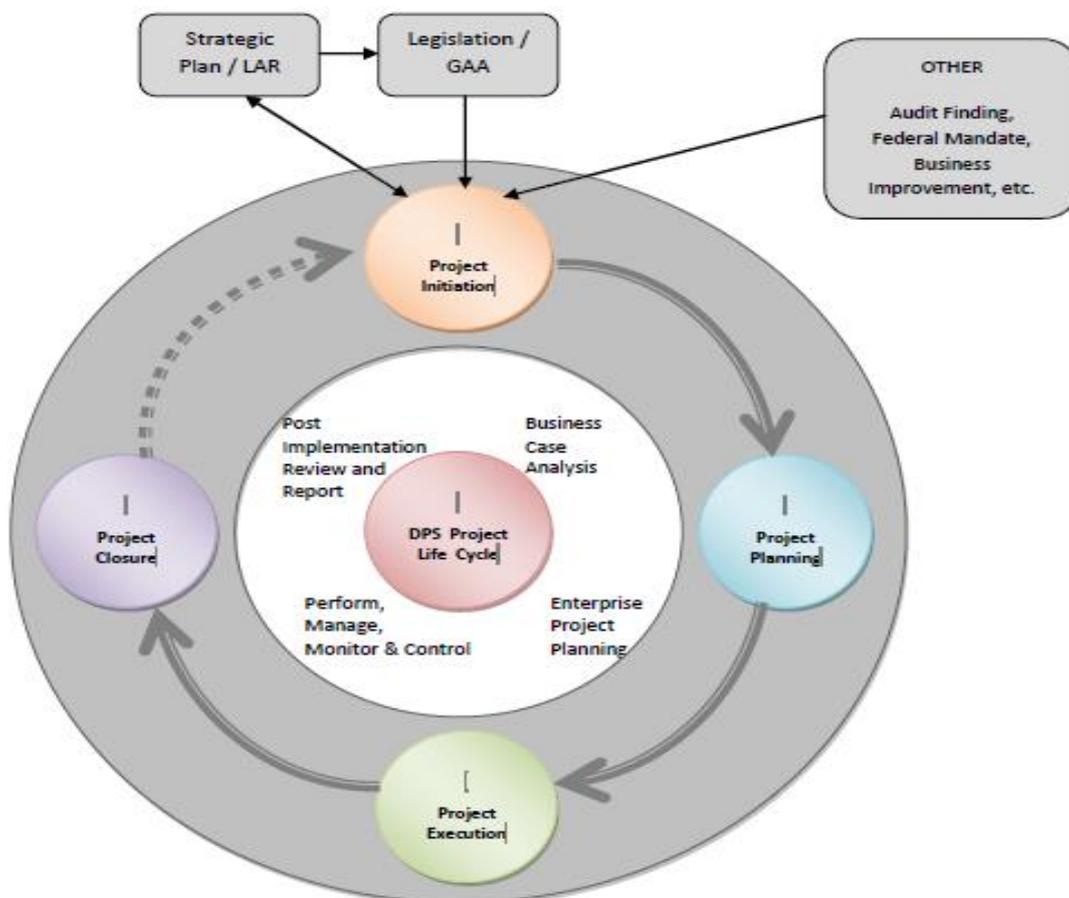
Once the framework for the enterprise project lifecycle was put into place, the EPMO focused on creating an enterprise roadmap that would not only highlight current activities, but that would also capture planned work.



Strategy Cycle

The EPMO focused on how to develop a strategy cycle that would account for those drivers that are most critical to state government. In state government, there are multiple drivers that contribute to an agency's workload. Legislation dictates that certain functions must be established or may alter business operations. The State Legislature also funds and drives the need for major contracts meant to achieve a specific result in supporting the Agency's mission. Texas state agencies receive these mandates from the State Legislature every biennium, so the EPMO adapted the enterprise roadmap to accommodate future legislative mandates to ensure executive leadership had visibility into future resource needs.

The EPMO partnered with the Finance and Government Relations divisions at TXDPS to leverage the EPMO business case framework to assess all potential legislative mandates. The business case not only helps keep TXDPS on track as to the resources needed, the Agency has a tool to explain to the Legislature the impact of the specific mandate to their resources.



RESULT

The EMPO was able to meet the Director's vision of providing visibility and TXDPS realized a significant increase in the number of projects that were being tracked and monitored at the executive level. The agency also experienced a drastic decrease in the number of project

“kills” or cancels as resources were being better planned and allocated towards priorities. A greater number of projects have achieved successful completion and there has been a decrease in the number of projects that have gone significantly over budget or schedule.

The TXDPS now has a strategic enterprise roadmap that can be leveraged for decision making, resource allocation planning, and reporting based on priorities.

CONCLUSION

EPMO leadership learned that the key to successfully applying project management principles was to begin with effective change management skills. EPMO leadership had to skillfully tailor every conversation with stakeholders in a manner that demonstrated the value the process would provide to them, rather than use jargon that the audience was unfamiliar with. The EMPO had to demonstrate how applying these principles would positively impact the stakeholders, enabling leadership at the Department to utilize the same set of priorities, allocating resources to the most important efforts and efficiently managing schedules and expectations. The EPMO also learned that leveraging both government industry and private sector best practices was important, but the key is to tailor those best practices to the specific culture and environment.

Most importantly, executive support is critical. Without the Director’s vision and commitment to have TXDPS leverage industry best practices to successfully manage its diverse portfolio of projects, the effort would not have been successful. When processes change and responsibilities shift there will always be “naysayers” who do not think they should comply. When challenged with this type of stakeholder, being able to leverage the support of the Executives is critical towards working with those stakeholders to gain commitment.

Though the concept of project portfolio management was new to many people at the Department, the basic principles were applied and adapted to successfully support TXDPS’s state government processes. These same principles could be applied to processes in any industry and at every level.

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