

Management Reviews

A Microsoft® Operations Framework (MOF) Companion Guide

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# **Overview of Management Reviews**

In every organization, management is responsible for establishing goals, evaluating progress, and ensuring results. Microsoft Operations Framework (MOF) management reviews establish critical decision and evaluation points in the service management lifecycle—each phase of the lifecycle has one or more of these reviews, which function as points of management oversight. This means that the right people are brought together, at the right time, and with the right information to make management decisions. Every phase has different management objectives, so each review involves separate stakeholders, decisions, and contributing data.

Across the service management lifecycle, management reviews act as internal controls that provide management validation checks, ensuring that goals are being achieved in an appropriate fashion and that business value is considered throughout the life of the service. In general, management reviews, no matter where they occur in the service management lifecycle, have these goals:

* Provide management oversight and guidance.
* Act as internal controls.
* Capture organizational progress—lessons learned, items to encourage or avoid.
* Improve service development and delivery.

Management reviews help ensure that business objectives are being met and that initiatives, projects, and services are on track to deliver expected value. The scope of management reviews can be either project-specific or broad. The project-specific management reviews evaluate “a project.” The broad-scoped management reviews assess an area such as operations, service alignment, portfolio, or policies and controls. Table 1 lists all six management reviews in order.

Table 1. Management Reviews

| **Management review** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Operational Health** | This management review provides a structure for reviewing and analyzing results and taking action to improve performance. It might result in requests for changes or improvements in existing services, as well as changes to service level agreements and operating level agreements.  *Main focus:* Evaluation of effectiveness and health of operations to meet organizational objectives  *Scope:* Broad  *Decision to be made:* General assessment and improvements to make  *Area:* Technology  The one management review in the Operate Phase. |
| **Service Alignment** | This management review focuses on understanding the state of supply and demand for services and directing investments to make sure that the business value of the services is realized. It is responsible for officially proposing new services, making changes to existing services (such as service improvements) that are larger than standard changes, and decommissioning features and services.  *Main focus:* Evaluation of services’ effectiveness in meeting organizational objectives  *Scope:* Broad  *Decision to be made:* General assessment and improvements to make  *Area:* Business  The first of two management reviews in the Plan Phase. |
| **Portfolio** | This management review focuses on proposed service changes and the current mix of projects and services being built and in production. The ultimate outcome of the Portfolio management review is the initial project charter, with which a project team can begin the process of creating the project plan that will ultimately result in building and delivering new or updated services.  *Main focus:* Balance the portfolio to meet organizational objectives  *Scope:* Broad  *Decision to be made:* Go/no-go for specific projects  *Focus area:* Business  The second management review in the Plan Phase. |
| **Project Plan Approved** | This management review focuses on finalizing the scope of a delivery project. It signals a complete review of key project plans and the readiness of the project team to move on to the development of the solution.  *Main focus:* Management of a project  *Scope:* Project-specific  *Decision to be made:* Go/no-go to move into development of the project  *Area:* Technology  The first of two management reviews in the Deliver Phase. |
| **Release Readiness** | This management review focuses on the readiness of a new or improved service to be deployed; it results in a go/no-go decision about whether to deploy the release.  *Main focus:* Management of a project  *Scope:* Project-specific  *Decision to be made:* Go/no-go to deploy a new or changed service  *Area:* Technology  The second management review in the Deliver Phase. |
| **Policy and Control** | This management review evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and compliance controls in place across the service management lifecycle. The Policy and Control management review should identify requests for changes that will improve the management and enforcement of policies as well as improve the management of risk.  *Main focus:* Evaluation of policies and controls to meet organizational objectives  *Scope:* Broad  *Decision to be made:* General assessment and improvements to make  *Area:* Compliance  The one management review in the Manage Layer. |

## Intended Audience for This Document

This document will be most useful for service managers responsible for delivering results and interested in driving improvements. Meeting participants may also find this document useful for understanding more about the rationale behind the management reviews they attend.

## About MOF 4.0

Microsoft Operations Framework (MOF) 4.0 is concise guidance that helps organizations improve service quality while reducing costs, managing risks, and strengthening compliance. MOF defines the core processes, activities, and accountabilities required to plan, deliver, operate, and manage services throughout their lifecycles. The MOF guidance encompasses all of the activities and processes involved in managing such services: their conception, development, operation, maintenance, and—ultimately—their retirement.

MOF organizes activities and processes into service management functions (SMFs), which provide detailed processes and outcomes related to a series of disciplines. Each SMF is anchored within a lifecycle phase and contains a unique set of goals and outcomes that support the objectives of that phase. For more information about SMFs, visit [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof).

## How to Use Management Reviews

Management reviews drive and monitor the continuous improvement of services and the delivery of those services. The reviews evaluate the current state and compare it to goals and any changes in requirements to determine what improvements are needed. They track whether the improvements are completed as expected and that they provide the benefit expected.

To implement management reviews, start with the Operational Health Management Review. It will give you a good understanding of the current state of your services and operations. The data you gather from that review will in turn be used in the other reviews in the cycle. Decisions in each review provide inputs to the next one, as shown in the following sequence:

* The Operational Health Management Review evaluates the current state of operations and provides data for the business value discussion in the Service Alignment Management Review.
* The Service Alignment Management Review evaluates the quality of service delivery and results in the creation of project proposals for review in the Portfolio Management Review.
* The Portfolio Management Review evaluates existing and proposed services and improvement projects; tracks initiatives, and selects projects to be developed in more detail and approved in the Project Plan Approved Management Review.
* The Project Plan Approved Management Review kicks off project building and stabilizing, which is evaluated in the Release Readiness Management Review.
* The Release Readiness Management Review approves the deployment of a project into operations, at which point it is evaluated by the Operational Health Management Review.
* The Policy and Control Management Review focuses on reviewing and adjusting organizational policies and internal controls. Organizational policy is a crucial underpinning of all management reviews.

### Meeting Logistics

The logistics of management review meetings vary between organizations depending on the scope of the work under consideration, but there are some common characteristics and questions to consider.

#### Focus

Many organizations will choose to have management reviews on distinct aspects such as a service or customer group. This enables them to manage the scope of the reviews more effectively. These multiple reviews should culminate in an overall review to ensure that the entire organization is working effectively and as desired. For example, Operational Health Management Reviews may be held for each technical service, and another review may be held that combines the results of these individual reviews for an assessment of operational health as a whole.

Management reviews benefit from a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a service, what that service may depend upon, and how services are consumed and by whom. Given the complexities of technology, different people specialize in different areas. Because this can create pockets of knowledge, you need to use mechanisms such as management reviews to collect this specialized knowledge into a cohesive and complete picture. Services are organized into layers, which constitute distinct functions that are managed and delivered as separate entities. Ultimately, these layers are combined to create consumable services. The layers are:

* **Component technologies.** These are individual technologies such as Microsoft Active Directory® Domain Services, Internet Information Services (IIS), or Domain Name System (DNS). These components are the building blocks of IT technical services.
* **IT technical services.** These consist of component technologies that work together to provide a technical service. Examples of IT technical services include identity and access management, data life cycle management, and unified communications management. IT technical services combine to provide IT business services.
* **IT business services.** This layer combines various IT technical services to support line-of-business (LOB) applications––those services offered in a business context that provide the technology needed for business processes. Examples of IT business services include enterprise resource management (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), e-mail, or any custom LOB application used to support a special business process.

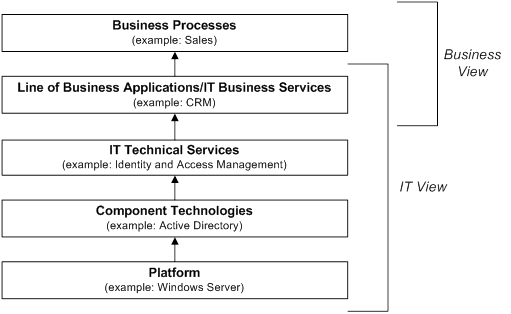


Figure 1. IT and business view of services

#### People

Do you have the right people at the meetings? Selecting the right attendees for the management review session is important for its success. Be sure that participants have a good understanding of the information they are presenting and are empowered to make recommendations and decisions. Consider the following:

* Are they authorized to make the necessary decisions?
* Do they have the necessary knowledge to discuss the key information and perform the analysis?
* Are all impacted and contributing areas represented? Are you getting a balanced picture? If not, consider inviting a broader group.
* It is bestif the same group of people can be included in each meeting for a particular management review so that they can more easily identify patterns and bond into a solid working team.

#### Schedule

Most management reviews are scheduled monthly or quarterly as a checkup. Project-driven management reviews (Project Plan Approved and Release Readiness) occur at specific points in the project lifecycle, with their timing triggered by events in the project plan. There are two key considerations for scheduling management reviews:

* Because it is crucial for key players to attend, the schedule request should be sent as far in advance of the review meeting as feasible so that most attendees will have the time free.
* The meeting's length depends on the nature and complexity of the work. It takes time to get to the level of discussion needed for deep understanding of current service health and improvements that have the most positive impact.

Evaluate your meetings periodically to adjust duration and frequency, and consider the possibility of breaking the meeting into multiple meetings, each focused on a smaller scope.

Think about these factors:

* Are all topics covered adequately in the time you have scheduled?
* Are discussions sufficiently in-depth? Are you able to consider possible changes that support continuous improvement and their implications on the overall service?
* Is there sufficient time for everyone to provide input as needed?

#### Documentation

Because these reviews establish and evaluate the services used to meet the organization’s objectives, they are a form of internal control. To this end, documentation of the review should include who the participants are, the goal of the review, the decisions made, the proposed initiatives and changes that resulted, and the intended outcomes of initiatives and changes (how they will support management objectives).

# **Operational Health Management Review**

The Operational Health Management Review helps ensure the effective, efficient, and agile operations of services. This management review is a periodic, comprehensive evaluation of the operations of services, and it occurs during the Operate Phase (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506050.aspx>) of the MOF service management lifecycle. Both the Operational Health and Service Alignment Management Reviews evaluate the delivery of services, but where the Operational Health Management Review focuses on the view of operations, the Service Alignment Management Review focuses on the impact of services to the business.

## Goals of the Operational Health Management Review

The Operational Health Management Review focuses on ensuring that services are operating efficiently and are meeting the expectations defined in service level agreements (SLAs), operating level agreements (OLAs), and underpinning contracts (UCs). Outcomes of the Operational Health Management Review include change requests for the continuous improvement of both processes and technology. The Operational Health Management Review focuses on answering three key questions:

* Is Operations providing the value the organization expects?
* If not, what can be done to improve results?
* What issues need to be monitored in the future?

### Key Terms

Table 2 defines key terms used in this management review and throughout the guide.

Table 2. Key Terms

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Management review | Internal controls that provide management validation checks, ensuring that goals are being achieved in an appropriate fashion and that business value is considered throughout the service management lifecycle. |
| Operating level agreement (OLA) | An internal agreement between one or more of the teams that supports the requirements set forth in the service level agreements (SLAs). |
| Service level agreement (SLA) | A written agreement documenting the required levels of service. The SLA is agreed on by the service provider and the business, or by the service provider and a third-party provider. SLAs should list the metrics and measures that both sides use to define success. |
| Underpinning contract (UC) | A legally binding contract in place of or in addition to an SLA. This is a contract with a third-party service provider on which service deliverables for the SLA have been built. |

### If You Are New to Operational Health Monitoring

If this is a new role for you, the following activities will help orient you to this task:

1. Determine what “critical few” metrics matter for your organization. These metrics will come from a variety of sources—from customer service reports to technology performance and financial reports. Think about metrics concerning the following:

* Operational health (See the Administrator’s Guide for Reliability Workbooks at <http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=181539>.)
* Business value
* Efficient operations
* Compliance

1. Determine target results and acceptable limits above and below each target, as well as warning alerts necessary to ensure proactive action. See the Service Monitoring and Control SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543300.aspx>) for more information.
2. Establish monitoring methods, such as automated or manual tests.
3. Define steps to take when limits are exceeded, and identify who is responsible for taking those steps.
4. At reviews, look at trends, limits that have been exceeded, and the response to those events. The type and frequency of problems investigated will also indicate changes in operations environments; see the MOF Problem Management SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543264.aspx>) for more information.

## Details About the Operational Health Management Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Operational Health Management Review is owned and driven by:

* Operations managers, who are responsible for ensuring predictable, repeatable, and automated day-to-day system management.
* Customer Service managers, who are responsible for effectively and efficiently decreasing incidents and incident solution time as well as increasing effectiveness of resolutions and reducing support costs.

The Operational Health Management Review requires broad representation to provide a complete picture of organizational health—from the operations of the data center to the end-user experience. The key stakeholders and decision makers who participate in this management review include:

* **Service managers responsible for the services being delivered.** Give specific details about the sources under discussion.
* **The operations management team.** Provides the “big picture” of all service management operations.

**Managers from platform- or technology-specific teams.** For example, managers from network administration, messaging, and data lifecycle management. Discuss service dependencies.

* **Event monitoring team (also known as bridge or command center) representatives).** Explains monitoring results and details.
* **Storage management, backup, and recovery representatives.** Explain storage requirements and concerns.
* **Security administration team.** Ensures that security requirements are understood and met. Provides background on any violations.
* **Development and test representatives.** Discuss the impact of change requests.
* **Customer, user, and partner representatives.** Discuss the impact of change requests.

### Meeting Frequency

Operational Health is a regularly scheduled meeting. We recommend monthly meetings. These meetings should be frequent enough to catch issues in time to take action to correct them.

### Key Information

Since the bulk of the review meeting itself will be taken up in discussing the state of the service, it’s important to gather as much information as possible about that state beforehand. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the information in advance of the review, and thus be able to focus on the real intent of the meeting itself—an analysis of the information and a decision about whether any remediation is needed.

This information consists primarily of performance measurements that have been formally documented in OLAs, SLAs, or contracts that Service Level Management helps formulate. The Operational Health Management Review is not limited to reviewing only OLA/SLA-related metrics, however. It should also evaluate other business and operational indicators that will assist senior management in measuring the overall health of the production environment and in understanding where improvements will provide the most positive impact.

The information provided in advance of the review meeting should include the following items to evaluate operational efficiency and process maturity, preferably in the form of a scorecard comparing actual results to target metrics:

* OLA, SLA, and contractual (UC)-defined targets and performance metrics from service monitoring systems and customer service records.
* Customer satisfaction metrics and other information gathered through customer surveys and anecdotal feedback from Customer Service.
* Costs and other financial performance information from your financial systems.
* Action items, accountabilities, and minutes from previous management review meetings.
* Current issues and risks from risk analysis.
* Recent problems and trends observed by Problem Management teams.
* Basic human resources metrics and organizational health indicators including IT staff performance, personnel skills, and competencies.

### Analysis

The first step in the review meeting should be a focused effort to determine the health of the service in Operations. In large part, this means reviewing and analyzing the material sent out ahead of time to find trends and situations that are out of alignment with expectations. Review what has just happened and what is expected to happen in the near future, considering these factors:

* Compare the actual state to the desired state. Is the discrepancy within accepted limits?
* Check the trend as well. The measurement may still be within limits, but is the trend a warning sign that merits attention?
* What action should be taken, if any? Who will be responsible for following through on the action?
* What upcoming changes will affect operations?
* What needs to happen to support the changes, and what is the timing of the change?
* Does the monitoring need to be updated to accommodate the change in the business needs? Update targets, limits, and alerts.

Take into account any existing issues and trends:

* OLA or SLA performance that is outside of established tolerance levels and possible causes for this.
* Trends in metrics that are unexpected.
* Operational maturity compared to desired state.
* Compliance violations.
* Trends in customer satisfaction and possible causes for this.
* Financial performance overall and in specific categories compared to budget expectations.

Take into account any anticipated future changes:

* Ongoing or emerging issues, reflected in action items and previous management review minutes and from other industry and organizational sources.
* Changes in risk assessments or tolerance boundaries.
* Upcoming changes that may affect operations.

### Outcomes

Decisions to be made in the Operational Health Management Review primarily focus on identifying changes needed in order to respond to trends or to correct conditions that led to metrics outside acceptable parameters. The outcome of the review may include requests for changes to the following:

* Services
* Infrastructure and configuration
* Procedures
* Documentation
* Contracts or agreements
* Formal service improvement plans
* Resources with desired capabilities or for training
* Funding

Be sure to evaluate any proposed changes in terms of the risk from the problem identified, the risk from the proposed change, and the return on investment of making a change. Not every variation from expected behavior is worth the cost of a fix, particularly in light of other fixes that may also be needed. Trade-offs need to be considered and prioritizations need to be made as part of the decision-making process that occurs in the Operational Health Management Review. Questions to consider include:

* In what area(s) do you want to effect change?
* How will you make that change happen?
* In which area(s) will you get the greatest impact on the most important measures?
* What unintended side effects might result from that change?

### Follow-Up

At this point, suggested changes follow one of two paths:

* Change requests are submitted to the change control process. (For more information, see the Change and Configuration SMF at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx>.)
* More substantial project proposals should be subjected to a more thorough evaluation across the organization and be compared with other projects under consideration. For more information, see the Business/IT Alignment SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>) and the Portfolio Management Review (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543275.aspx>).

After the Operational Health Management Review is complete, the results of the meeting should be documented and distributed to all participants, as well as to any key stakeholders. The meeting minutes should include the findings as well as associated actions and accountabilities. These results, typically in the form of minutes, should be supplemented with documentation of actions to be taken and lessons learned.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)
* MOF Operate Phase Overview and SMFs: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506050.aspx>
* Administrator’s Guide for Reliability Workbooks: <http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=181539>

## Summary Checklist

Table 3 summarizes the preceding management review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 3. Summary Checklist for Operational Health Management Review

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the management review and should have decision-making authority:   * The operations management team * Service managers responsible for the services being delivered * Managers from platform- or technology-specific teams * Event monitoring team representatives * Storage management, backup, and recovery representatives * Security administration team * Development and test representatives * Customer, user, and partner representatives |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * OLA-, SLA-, and UC-defined targets and performance metrics * Customer satisfaction metrics * Costs and other financial performance information * Action items, accountabilities, and minutes from previous management review meetings * Current issues and risks from risk analysis * Recent problems and trends observed by Problem Management teams * Basic human resources metrics and organizational health indicators |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Actual state compared to desired state * Actions to be taken * Upcoming changes that will affect operations * What needs to happen to support the changes, and the timing of the change * Monitoring updates * Existing issues and trends: * OLA or SLA performance that is outside of established tolerance levels and possible causes for this * Unexpected organizational health trends * Operational maturity compared to desired state * Compliance violations * Customer satisfaction * Financial performance * Anticipated future changes: * Ongoing or emerging issues * Risk assessments or tolerance boundaries * Upcoming changes that may affect operations * Lessons learned |
| **Outputs** | The management review might result in requests for changes to the following:   * Services * Infrastructure and configuration * Procedures * Documentation * Contracts or agreements * Formal service improvement plans * Training plans * Funding |

# **Service Alignment Management Review**

The Service Alignment Management Review, performed periodically in the Plan Phase (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506051.aspx>) of the MOF service management lifecycle, is an internal control that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the delivery of services to the business. Specifically, it focuses on ensuring that:

* Services are meeting business needs.
* Opportunities for service improvements are explored.

## Goals of the Service Alignment Management Review

Positioned just prior to the Business/IT Alignment SMF, the Service Alignment Management Review is a periodic meeting that launches the Plan Phase of the service management lifecycle. It is focused on understanding the state of supply and demand for services and directing investments to make sure that the business value of services is realized. The review should assess two things:

* Customers’ experience of services as compared with service goals.
* Service experience in terms of reliability, compliance, cost effectiveness, and value realization—and whether it can be improved.

Service Alignment is one of two reviews in the Plan Phase. It serves a key governance function by evaluating the costs and benefits of delivering and using services and ensures the business value of services is realized. Completion of this management review indicates that management understands the value of delivering quality services to the business. Additionally, it should result in the following:

* Proposed new services.
* Changes to existing services (such as service improvements).
* Decommissioning of features and services.

The key question to be answered in the Service Alignment Management Review is whether the services are providing expected business value and, if not, what needs to change in service management or in business processes that use the services. The review presents the opportunity to identify barriers that decrease alignment or inhibit innovation to the degree that business value is negatively affected; it also lets decision makers identify other opportunities to innovate and improve services.

### Key Terms

Table 4 defines key terms used in this management review.

Table 4. Key Terms

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Benefit management | A process that identifies the benefits of a service—their definition, monitoring, and realization as a result of a business change. This process ensures that a business change achieves its desired outcomes, such as cost reduction or improved performance. |
| Demand management | The process of aligning an organization’s supply of resources to meet service demands forecasted by the business. For example, shifting servers from one service to another as business priorities change. |

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Alignment | A state that occurs when the technical and business goals and strategies of the service organization match the goals and strategies of the overall business. |
| IT service strategy | The plan that aligns an organization’s objectives, policies, and procedures into a cohesive approach to deliver services that support business strategy. |
| Service catalog | A comprehensive list of services, including priorities of the business and corresponding SLAs. |
| Service level agreement (SLA) | A written agreement documenting the required levels of service. The SLA is agreed on by the service provider and the business, or by the service provider and a third-party provider. SLAs should list the metrics and measures that both sides use to define success. |
| Service level management | The process of defining and managing performance through monitoring, reporting, and reviewing the required, agreed-upon level of service. |
| Value realization | The identification of target benefits, their definition, monitoring, and realization as a result of a business change. |

### If You Are New to Service Alignment

The Service Alignment Management Review focuses on the impact of services to the business. If service alignment is a new role for you, the following activities will help orient you to this task:

1. Identify the key contributors and decision makers in services and users of services within the business.
2. Read the Business/IT Alignment SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>) to become familiar with service level agreements (SLAs).
3. Clarify what the business expects—look at SLAs and discuss them with representatives of the business, if necessary.
4. Understand the demand for the services in question and how this demand may be changing.
5. Decide which data you will use to measure success, and make sure there is agreement on how to interpret the data.
6. Focus on just a few key metrics that measure what is most important. Concentrating on too many measurements can be distracting, and paying attention to the wrong ones can create unintended consequences. For example, suppose you started measuring the time it takes for your customer service representatives (CSRs) to close service requests—without a corresponding measurement about quality. The CSRs might start closing the requests before the problem is completely resolved in the hopes of improving the time measurement, but this would decrease the quality of the service delivery.
7. Measure results of key indicators from a business perspective (for example, availability of applications, customer service response time—whatever is important in your organization), and compare the results to expectations.
8. Consider whether the potential cost of improving a service is worth the benefit—if its performance is adequate, the organization’s time and resources might be better spent elsewhere.

## Details About the Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Service Alignment Management Review is owned and driven by:

* The service level manager, who acts as the main interface between the business and the service delivery organization.
* The operations manager, who is responsible for ensuring predictable, repeatable, and automated day-to-day system management.
* The customer service manager, who is responsible for increasing the effectiveness of service request resolutions and reducing customer service costs.
* Managers, who represent the business areas that use the services under review.

If the Service Alignment Management Review is to be effective, it requires participation from operations, customer service, service managers, the business, and key stakeholders in IT initiatives, as well as parties responsible for developing business cases and ensuring value realization from IT investments. Attendees work as partners to ensure that organizational goals are achieved.

Deciding who will attend or participate in the management review session is an important task. Be sure that participants have a good understanding of the information they are presenting and are empowered to make recommendations and decisions.

The key stakeholders and decision makers who participate in this management review include:

* **Service level manager.** Owner of this meeting; responsible for its outcome.
* **Technical area managers.** Answer questions and propose solutions that affect their technical areas.
* **Monitoring managers.** Support the metrics under review.
* **Operations manager.** Addresses overall operations concerns and proposed solutions.
* **Customer service manager.** Addresses overall customer service concerns and proposes solutions.
* **Portfolio manager.** Reviews the impact of service alignment results on the portfolio and proposes changes to the portfolio.
* **Account manager.** Responsible for managing the relationship between IT and the business.
* **Business managers.** Offer perspectives from the business side.
* **End-user representatives.** Offer the end-user perspective.

It is best if the same group of people can be included in each meeting so that they can more easily identify patterns and bond into a solid working team.

### Meeting Frequency

This meeting needs to be regularly scheduled in order to build on a knowledge base and evaluate trends. We recommend meeting at least quarterly, with monthly meetings preferred.

### Key Information

In advance of the meeting, gather information that gives an accurate picture of the current value and quality of services. Be sure to approach this data from the view of the consumer of the services and not as the service provider. Include the following data:

* Metrics referenced in the SLA (such as reliability and customer service responsiveness).
* New business requirements, proposals, and forecasts.
* New regulatory or policy requirements.
* Customer satisfaction surveys and other end-user feedback.
* Feedback from the Operational Health Management Review.
* Demand-management report of expected changes in the way services will be used.
* Reliability reports about performance and availability.
* Cost of the services, budgeted versus actual spending, financial reconciliation, and new budget requirements.
* Audit reports, issues, and recommendations.
* Senior management directives.
* Value realization data.
* Security, privacy, and non-compliance incidents.
* Minutes and actions from last management review meeting.

In addition to data about the current state of the service delivery, include information about changing business demands and trends in the industry that will affect what is needed from IT in the near future.

### Analysis

The first step in the review meeting should be an analysis of core issues regarding service delivery, user satisfaction, and alignment of services with the goals of the business. Consider the following questions as a starting point:

* Is the service delivery performance satisfactory? Is it cost effective for the benefit it provides?
* What is the service fit with business processes? Are the services providing the information and features that the business processes require? Is there more that can be done that would greatly benefit the business goals?
* What is the level of end-user satisfaction with support?
* What new requirements, features, processes, or services will be required by changes to the business?
* Can new technologies and innovations be utilized in a way that provides great business value and benefit?
* Are people and capabilities well matched to responsibilities required to deliver business value?
* Is value realization tracking in place? Are funding and spending in proportion to the delivered business value?
* What are the cost and impact of proposed changes and improvements?

### Outcomes

The result of the Service Alignment Management Review is the identification of changes that will improve the utility and value of a service to the business. The outcome of identifying these needed changes may include requests for changes to the service portfolio, such as:

* Enhancements to existing services.
* New services.
* Decommissioned services.
* Service health assessment.
* Proposed budgets and project spending activities.
* Areas for continued investigation and assigned accountabilities.
* Summary report of participants, decisions made, and intended results.
* Documentation of management review with actions and accountabilities.

Because not every proposed change is cost-justifiable (particularly in light of other, more pressing changes that may be needed), trade-offs and prioritizations are a key component of this management review. Be sure to evaluate any proposed changes in terms of the risk from the problem identified, the risk from the proposed change, and the return on investment of making a change.

Questions to consider include:

* In what area(s) do you want to effect change?
* Which changes will have the greatest impact on organizational goals?
* How will you make that change happen?
* What unintended side effects might result from that change?

The decision to make changes results in formal change requests. See the Change and Configuration SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx>) for more information about change requests and the change management process.

### Follow-Up

The Service Alignment Management Review should result in identified requests for changes that will improve both the management of operations and the alignment between the business and technology. At this point, proposals follow one of two paths:

* Change requests are submitted to the change control process. For more information, see the Change and Configuration SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx>).
* More substantial project proposals go through Business/IT Alignment (see the SMF at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>) and are evaluated in the Portfolio Management Review.

After the Service Alignment Management Review is complete, the results of the meeting should be documented and distributed to all participants, as well as to any key stakeholders. Those results, typically in the form of minutes, should be supplemented with documentation of action to be taken and lessons learned.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)
* MOF Plan Phase Overview: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543274.aspx>
* Plan Phase SMFs: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506051.aspx>
* Change and Configuration SMF: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx>

## Summary Checklist

Table 5 summarizes the preceding management review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 5. Summary Checklist for Service Alignment Management Review

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the management review and should have decision making authority:   * Service level manager * Technical area managers * Monitoring managers * Operations manager * Customer service manager * Portfolio manager * Account manager * Business managers * End-user representatives |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * OLA-, SLA-, and UC-defined targets and performance metrics * Customer satisfaction metrics * Costs and other financial performance information * Action items, accountabilities, and minutes from previous management review meetings * Current issues and risks from risk analysis * Recent problems and trends observed by Problem Management teams * Basic human resources metrics and organizational health indicators |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Actual state compared to desired state * Actions to be taken * Upcoming changes that will affect operations * What needs to happen to support the changes, and the timing of the change * Monitoring updates * Existing issues and trends: * OLA or SLA performance that is outside of established tolerance levels and possible causes for this * Unexpected organizational health trends * Operational maturity compared to desired state * Compliance violations * Customer satisfaction * Financial performance * Anticipated future changes: * Ongoing or emerging issues * Risk assessments or tolerance boundaries * Upcoming changes that may affect operations |
| **Outputs** | The management review might result in requests for changes to the following:   * Services * Infrastructure and configuration * Procedures * Documentation * Contracts or agreements * Formal service improvement plans * Training plans * Funding |

# **Portfolio Management Review**

The Portfolio Management Review serves as an internal control to help ensure the value of investments made in services, projects, and initiatives. The Portfolio Management Review, performed periodically in the Plan Phase (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506051.aspx>) of the MOF service management lifecycle, is a comprehensive review of services, initiatives, and projects that presently exist, have been proposed, or are in development.

The portfolio contains several types of interrelated information domains that span initiatives, services, and projects. These are brought together to facilitate an understanding of the investments that are being made, the expected value to be returned, and the associated risks that result across these domains. This information reflects initiatives, which are ongoing work streams that have strategic or tactical impact, and often are supported through one or more projects; the services that an organization offers or will offer when the project work is completed; and the projects (planned or in-flight) that have impact on these services.

The projects include those that will affect the platform or infrastructure on which the services depend, the applications and software that run on the platform, and also projects that involve sourcing decisions, such as using external service providers, or fundamental business changes such as mergers and acquisitions. The key is to provide a comprehensive view that avoids making investment decisions in isolated silos.

Specifically, the portfolio management review focuses on:

* Understanding the concepts and requirements of proposed service changes.
* Deciding whether to invest further in the development of those concepts.
* Approving a preliminary project vision and scope that will move a project forward.

## Goals of the Portfolio Management Review

The Portfolio Management Review focuses on ensuring that the service organization is doing the following:

* Tracking the investment in services, initiatives, and projects and balancing costs and benefits across these efforts.
* Working on projects that will positively affect the business.
* Clarifying what capabilities of the business will be enabled or improved by the proposed initiatives, services, and projects and addressing the risks associated with doing that work.

Decisions made in the Service Alignment Management Review as well as work initiated in the Business/IT Alignment SMF *(*<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>*)* are used as inputs to the Portfolio Management Review. The difference is that the potential work identified in those activities has not been rationalized across the entire body of effort undertaken by the organization. This broader perspective is what generates a multi-year understanding of investments in services and an integrated understanding of the risks being undertaken.

The Portfolio Management Review acts as a gateway for proposed projects in the Plan Phase of the service management lifecycle. It focuses on understanding the concepts and requirements of proposed service changes, deciding whether to invest further in the development of those concepts, and approving a preliminary project vision and scope that will move a project forward into the Envision SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531013.aspx>) in the Deliver Phase of the service management lifecycle.

The result of this review should be organizational agreement on expectations for value, impact, and funding of the proposed work. The review establishes the basis for how changes to the portfolio and its value to the business will be measured and evaluated.

The alignment of business and services is improved by:

* Defining the context of projects and initiatives.
* Identifying and clarifying areas of ambiguity before proceeding.
* Judging the fit with the current portfolio.
* Taking into account existing services and initiatives in the pipeline that will result in the “to-be” environment.

An advisory board of those with the authority and knowledge required to make the relevant investment decisions should be included in this review. This board should have ongoing membership that includes representatives of enterprise architecture, finance, and the project management office, if one exists. At each Portfolio Management Review, relevant information will be needed from executive sponsors for initiatives, projects, and services under consideration, appropriate business stakeholders, and selected service management and project team members.

This management review represents the opportunity to balance the costs, benefits, risks, and rewards driving the decisions for making investments in services. This means that the review is not triggered on a project-by-project basis, but instead examines the broader domain of service investment. The participants, the timing, and the analysis done in the review should reflect this perspective. Since this management review is a significant tollgate before development work is undertaken, the timing of the meetings should reflect the rhythm of the business in terms of budgeting cycles and the need for a timely response to emergent issues and business change initiatives. It is likely that the advisory board will meet at a minimum of twice a year, but quarterly or even monthly meetings may be needed depending on the organization’s desire to facilitate frequent change.

An important aspect of the portfolio is its use as the source for the service catalog. The catalog is the customer-facing perspective into the service portfolio. It is a subset of what is contained in the portfolio, showing a list of services and associated SLAs that are offered and managed by the service organization. More details and an example of a service catalog may be found in the Business/IT Alignment SMF *(*<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>*)*.

### Key Terms

Table 6 defines key terms used in this review.

Table 6. Key Terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Definition** |
| Discretionary project | A new project that represents an effort to change and expand the business or to execute against new strategic directions. |
| Non-discretionary project | A project that represents updates or improvements to infrastructure, or work done to meet regulatory and compliance requirements. For a variety of reasons, there is no choice but to invest in these initiatives. |
| Portfolio management | A decision-making process that results in an official record for proposed and accepted projects and services that drive offerings in the service catalog. |
| Risk | The possibility of adverse effects on organization objectives. Risk is measured in terms of impact and likelihood. |
| Value realization | The identification of target benefits, their definition, monitoring, and realization as a result of a business change. |

### If You Are New to Portfolio Management

This document is based on the assumption that you have some form of portfolio management in place, however simple or sophisticated. There are certain topics and data points that need to be ready for consideration during the management review, and collecting that information is basic to any form of portfolio management.

Portfolio management can help a business achieve strategic goals by focusing on the things that matter most for success. This is accomplished by rationalizing initiatives, services, and projects to increase efficient use of skills and technologies, reducing redundancy, and adapting to changes in circumstances and plans.

Portfolio management comes into action once strategic direction is established, understood, and evangelized through the processes described in the Business/IT Alignment SMF. That SMF contains activities that drive progress toward these strategic goals through the definition and generation of initiatives and associated projects. Initiatives also consider work that is required to add or improve existing services. The need for that service improvement work is identified through the Service Alignment Management Review.

Through portfolio management, a group of decision makers is given the authority to make trade-off choices between multiple initiatives. This process determines what projects and programs become funded and approved to move into development.

Because the Portfolio Management Review takes into account existing initiatives, services and potential portfolio additions should include an analysis of the impact on existing services or in-flight work. Part of decision-making authority includes the authority to terminate a project or program. Since this has potential impact on multiple projects, programs, and initiatives, it is important that this type of decision is well vetted and communicated. This dynamic process of assessment and decision making is at the core of efforts to align business strategy and services while finding ways to derive value from technology investments.

In addition to the Business/IT Alignment SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>), the Financial Management SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543324.aspx>) aids in defining and realizing value through gathering and analyzing appropriate information. Much of the information generated in the activities of both these SMFs is consumed in the Portfolio Management Review.

Certain things should be in place before the portfolio management process begins. If you do not have a portfolio in place, consider the following areas listed below:

* Portfolio structure: product, business segment or business unit. The structure of the portfolio might reflect the nature of the service organization (federated versus centralized, for example), but fundamentally the idea is to look across potential silos to be able to manage all initiatives, services, and projects in the portfolio.
* Portfolio attributes. Outside of the Portfolio Management Review, attributes should be chosen that will be used to manage the portfolio. Some common attributes include:
* Risk
* Finance
* Product
* Reputation
* Innovation
* Application
* Service
* Project

Once you have made decisions about the structure and attributes of your portfolio, the specific activities of managing your portfolio can proceed more effectively and drive toward desired results.

If the project’s benefit for a certain attribute outweighs the costs of doing the work, and if the risks can be made acceptable, then the project should be approved. Once attributes are chosen (a governance decision that should be revisited at least annually to assure the portfolio is providing strategic value), then project-appropriate methodology should be put in place across the attributes.

## Details About the Portfolio Management Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Portfolio Management Review is owned and driven by:

* TheIT Executive Officer, who is responsible for sponsoring technology initiatives, owning metrics, and executive relationships.
* Solution managers, who are responsible for turning business requirements into services and resolving conflicts between projects.
* Architects and architecture managers, who are responsible for future directions and solutions.

As you decide who will take part in the review, be sure that the participants have a good understanding of the information they are presenting and that they are empowered to make recommendations and decisions. The key stakeholders and decision makers who participate in the Portfolio Management Review meeting include:

* **Supplier manager.** Focuses on vendor relationships.
* **Portfolio manager.** Makes sure services are accurately reflected in the service catalog.
* **Account manager.** Represents users, customers, and generally the business.
* **Service level manager.** Responsible for maintaining SLAs.
* **IT Executive Officer.** Sponsors technology initiatives.
* **IT manager.** Oversees risk and business value realization dependencies.
* **IT policy manager.** Ensures that decisions are informed by policy and that policy is effectively used across the organization.
* **Change manager.** Oversees the process of determining that the service portfolio follows the appropriate level of change control.
* **Business relationship manager.** Acts as communication interface between the business and technology partners.

Depending on the particular body of work being reviewed, certain specialists may also be involved in understanding technical implications. This input should be gathered in pre-management review meetings and possibly working sessions. It is best if there is a core group of people who can be included in each meeting so that they can more easily identify trends and bond into a solid working team.

### Meeting Frequency

The Portfolio Management Review should be scheduled at least twice a year and more often if the organization requires agility and rapid change in initiatives, services, and projects. Meetings should be frequent enough to not delay necessary projects, but not so frequent that direction changes before work can be completed.

### Key Information

The Portfolio Management Review meeting determines the best options for furthering business goals and deriving value from the investment of resources. In order to collect the most useful information, management will need to identify the initiatives to be considered (along with appropriate stakeholders) prior to the meeting.

The preliminary analysis should result in comparisons of the different proposed additions to the portfolio. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the information in advance of the review and identify the trade-offs that will make up the core discussion in the review meeting itself and its resulting conclusion—a final analysis of the information and a decision on what projects will move forward.

During the review meeting, the various scenarios should be evaluated using criteria that are consistently applied. To aid in achieving consistency, the information provided in advance of the review meeting should include the following elements:

* Project concept proposals and other change requests.
* Key improvements to business capabilities.
* Key enablers for business processes.
* Proposed value realization, methods, and metrics to use.
* High-level funding estimates.
* Existing portfolio along with the status of in-flight projects.
* Existing and upcoming architecture requirements.
* Relevant regulatory, standards-based, and industry-specific requirements.
* Process guidelines and policies.

### Analysis

The first step in the review meeting should be a listing of proposals along with a summary analysis for each proposed initiative, including a characterization of the risks of accepting or rejecting the proposal, the expected cost and expected value realization, and the primary strategic drivers for the initiative. In large part, that means reviewing and analyzing the material sent out ahead of time to determine the following:

* Discretionary or non-discretionary initiative
* Suitability with:
* Strategy and shared goals
* Other initiatives
* Budget
* Architecture
* Standards and regulations
* Capabilities
* Timing
* Portfolio risk tolerance
* Executive stakeholder support
* Initiative scope and complexity
* Risk management
* Innovation approach
* Portfolio Management Review performance based on metrics and trends from past review cycles. Some example metrics include:
* Number of initiatives in portfolio
* Number of new initiatives
* Number of existing services
* Number of planned services
* Number of in-flight projects
* Number of new projects

### Outcomes

The second step of the review meeting is to discuss the trade-offs and potential beneficial combinations of proposals that will drive the final decisions to be made. The Portfolio Management Review decisions are primarily based on the need to allocate limited resources in a way that best achieves the objectives of the organization.

Combining proposals may involve rethinking a solution, altering timing and dependencies, and substituting technology choices. Coordinate efforts across projects to:

* Leverage resources and skills.
* Reuse components.
* Address priorities (such as compliance or ROI).

Consider all portfolio activity (existing services, in-flight projects, and approved proposals) when making resource decisions. For strategic initiatives, try to look ahead five years in terms of funding and development (long-term commitment needed to reach strategic goals). Tracking the amount invested in infrastructure and comparing that to the amount invested in innovation creates a useful ratio. That ratio reflects operating efficiencies gained compared to the potential for business innovation using technology—which demonstrates the impact of strategy choices on capital outlay.

Applying a risk-based approach to the final portfolio will establish the framework for achieving the goals and expected value for the entire portfolio. The risk model that is discussed in the Governance, Risk, and Compliance SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531019.aspx>) is useful for performing this analysis and the risk mitigation process.

The result of these discussions is a decision on next steps for each proposed portfolio addition (programs and projects):

* Approved:
* Advance the proposal to the portfolio.
* Advance with certain changes.
* Delayed:
* Return the proposal for further analysis.
* Hold the proposal for the next review.
* Denied:
* Discontinue pursuit of the proposal.

The final activities in the Portfolio Management Review are focused on the approved work that will become part of the portfolio. These steps include:

* Value realization metrics for approved initiatives are defined and agreed upon. The Financial Management SMF *(*<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543324.aspx>*)* provides the processes to follow to establish value realization.
* Risk analysis and management approaches are judged to be adequate for the approved elements. A model for risk identification and impact analysis is available in the GRC SMF *(*<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531019.aspx>*)*
* The entire portfolio, including approved proposals, is judged to be balanced appropriately to best achieve goals with available resources. This should be the capstone decision made at the end of each Portfolio Management Review by the portfolio advisory board.

### Follow-Up

The decision to accept changes to the portfolio results in the following activities:

* Create project charter (preliminary vision and scope approved).
* Determine initial project team.
* Publish approved project(s) in the portfolio.
* Summarize expected improvement to business by these additions to the portfolio.
* Document decisions made.
* Record denied projects for future learning.
* Approve the approach to managing organizational and workflow changes resulting from the solution (may initiate one or more formal change requests).
* Communicate Portfolio Management Review decisions.

Note that some of these activities may require formal change approvals, beyond the Portfolio Management Review itself. See the Change and Configuration SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx>) for more information about change requests and the change management process.

After the Portfolio Management Review is complete, the results of the meeting should be documented and distributed to all participants. The meeting minutes should include the findings as well as associated actions and accountabilities. The Portfolio Management Review process itself should have metrics—for example, portfolio status (in-flight, in-production, not-yet-begun), the number of proposals considered, and the number approved, approved with changes, or denied.

Results of the Portfolio Management Review become reflected in specific projects through the Project Plan Approved Management Review. That review will consider the projects that have been approved and initially funded through the Portfolio Management Review. The decisions made in the Project Plan Approved Management Review are focused on specific projects and involve project details, deliverables, and timelines.

Fundamentally important, but requiring time to develop, is an accounting of portfolio decisions with accompanying expected results and follow-up evaluation (often requiring years) of the actual value realized. The Portfolio Management Review should incorporate continuous improvement processes that adjust the match between the initial expected value and the actual achieved value. All of these results should include documentation of actions to be taken and lessons learned.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)
* MOF Plan Phase Overview <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543274.aspx>
* Plan Phase SMFs: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506051.aspx>

## Summary Checklist

Table 6 summarizes the preceding review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 6. Summary Checklist for the Portfolio Management Review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Item** |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the Management Review and should have decision-making authority:   * Supplier manager * Portfolio manager * Account manager * Service level manager * IT Executive Officer * IT manager * IT policy manager * Change manager * Business relationship manager |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * Proposed projects * IT portfolio * Organizational initiatives and priorities |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Discretionary or non-discretionary initiative * Suitability with: * Strategy and shared goals * Other initiatives * Budget * Architecture * Standards and regulations * Capabilities * Timing * Portfolio risk tolerance * Executive stakeholder support * Initiative scope and complexity * Risk management * Innovation approach * Portfolio Management Review performance |
| **Outputs** | The management review should result in the following:   * Project charter for approved projects * Initial project team determined * Documented decision process * Updated IT portfolio |

# **Project Plan Approved Management Review**

The Project Plan Approved Management Review serves as an internal control to help ensure the quality of services being planned. Occurring in the Deliver Phase of the MOF service management lifecycle, this project-focused milestone occurs after the project team has clarified business requirements and determined the level of effort and resources (people and funding) needed to complete the work. It determines whether the project team has met the requirements for plan approval and is ready to move on to the development of the solution.

## Goals of the Project Plan Approved Management Review

Project Plan Approved is the first of two management reviews in the MOF Deliver Phase. It is a project-focused milestone that occurs after the project team has clarified business requirements and determined the level of effort and resources (people and funding) needed to complete the work.

It and the review that follows it—the Release Readiness Management Review—act as progress indicators for all projects, which makes them much more tactical than the other four MOF management reviews.

The goal of this management review is a go/no-go decision about whether planning has been done sufficiently—whether the project is, in fact, ready to move into development. It involves a review and sign-off on the project’s functional specification, master plan, and master schedule. Approval of the management review requires agreement by those participating in the review that the project team has met the requirements for plan approval and is ready to move on to developing the service.

This review also offers an important opportunity for stakeholders to determine—prior to starting development—that the project being reviewed still makes sense for the business.

This review depends heavily on the outcome of the preceding Portfolio Management Review, which focuses on proposed service changes and the current mix of projects and services being built and in production. A key outcome of the Portfolio Management Review is the initial project charter, with which a project team can begin the process of creating the project plan that will ultimately result in building and delivering new or updated services.

### Key Terms

Table 7 defines key terms used in this management review.

Table 7. Key Terms

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Baseline | A known state by which something is measured or compared. Baselines make managing change in complex projects possible. |
| Customer | The person or organization that commissions and funds the project (typically management). |
| Milestone | A project synchronization point. Major milestones mark the transition of a project from one phase to the next phase. They also transfer primary responsibility from one role to another role. |

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Scope | A view of the project’s vision limited by constraints such as time and resources. Solution scope describes the solution’s features and deliverables. Project scope describes the work to be performed by the team. |
| Solution | A coordinated delivery of technologies, documentation, training, and support to successfully respond to a unique customer’s business problem. Solutions typically combine people, processes, and technology to solve problems. |
| Stakeholder | Individuals or groups who have an interest in the outcome of the project. Their goals and priorities are not always identical to those of the customer. Examples of stakeholders include departmental managers who will be affected by the solution, IT staff who will be responsible for running and supporting the solution, and functional managers who contribute resources to the project team. |
| Users | The people who interact with the solution to perform their jobs. |
| Vision | The fundamental goals of the solution. |

### If You Are New to Project Milestones

Project milestones are "reality check" thresholds—they indicate whether a project is on track to finish as expected. Specific milestones will vary by project, but in general, project milestones can be defined as the group of accomplishments, results, deliverables, and events used to measure the project’s overall and specific progress.

In addition to signaling the completion of a key deliverable, a milestone may also signify an important decision or the derivation of a critical piece of information, which outlines or affects the future of a project. In this sense, a milestone not only signifies distance traveled (key stages in a project) but also indicates direction of travel since key decisions made at milestones may alter the route through the project plan.

## Details About the Project Plan Approved Management Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Project Plan Approved Management Review is owned and driven by:

* TheIT Executive Officer, who is responsible for sponsoring technology initiatives, owning metrics, and executive relationships.
* Solution managers, who are responsible for turning business requirements into services and resolving conflicts between projects.
* Architects and architecture managers, who are responsible for future directions and solutions.

The key stakeholders and decision makers who participate in this management review include:

* **Business sponsors.** Have a stake in ensuring that services meet business needs and requirements. They are represented by the IT Executive Officer role type, which is the accountable role for the Management Accountability. More information about accountability roles can be found in the MOF Team SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543311.aspx>).
* **Solution Manager.** Has the responsibility for ensuring that services meet business needs and requirements and that there are no conflicts among active projects.
* **Project team members.** Have the responsibility for planning, building, and testing the service under review. Key attendees among the project team members are the program manager and product manager.
* **Operations and support representatives.** Will be responsible for running and supporting the service after its release.
* **Security representatives.** Responsible for ensuring that the release is secure.
* **Business users’** representatives. Ensure that the release is usable.

In an ideal situation, everyone involved with the Project Plan Approved Management Review would be so invested in making the right choices that the go/no-go decision about whether to move forward with a release would be achieved by consensus.

However, the team will likely need to identify a person responsible for making the decision. This individual needs to be accountable for both the potential success and failure of the decision to start development and should factor in the relevant risks and trade-offs. Guidance for “deciding who will decide” can be found in the MOF Governance, Risk, and Compliance SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531019.aspx>).

The decision might be made according to a voting logic derived for the review meeting. Voting logic is discussed in more detail in the “Outcomes” section of this review.

Regardless of how the final decision-making is structured, someone must be designated as the review team lead. This role is typically filled by the Solution Manager role type, as described by the MOF Team SMF. This role type is usually the director for all projects, is responsible for resolving conflicts between projects, and has the high-level goal of ensuring that all projects run smoothly and make a successful transition to operations.

In addition to the six attendees that should be represented at the review meeting, the following project team role types (several of which encompass some of the responsibilities of the attendees listed above) should also be represented:

* **Program manager.** Drives design, schedule, and resources at the project level, ensures individual projects run smoothly, and builds the right service at the right time.
* **Developer.** Builds the agreed-to service and ensures that it meets agreed-to specifications.
* **Tester.** Tests to accurately determine the status of service development and ensures that all known issues are resolved before release.
* **Product manager.** Acts as the customer advocate, helps drive a shared project vision, manages customer expectations, and ensures customer satisfaction.
* **Project team user-experience advocate.** Helps define and design user requirements and ensures the released solution is usable and meets end-users’ needs.
* **Release management advocate.** Evaluates the solution design; documents operations requirements to ensure that they are met by the design; creates a pilot, deployment plan, and schedule; manages site deployment; and ensures a stable solution is deployed to the production environment.
* **Project team operations experience advocate.** Speaks on behalf of operations, brings in operations experts as needed for detailed information, coordinates with release management, and ensures operational requirements are part of the solution design and are addressed before release.
* **Test manager.** Owns all the testing across all project teams, develops testing strategy and plans, ensures best practice test methods are used, ensures that test matches production, and ensures there are no surprises.

Anyone who is attending the review session should be prepared with project planning information from each of his or her respective functional areas.

### Meeting Frequency

Because the Project Plan Approved Management Review is a project-based, go/no-go decision point, it occurs when the project team members believe they have met the requirements for plan approval and are ready to move on to the development of the service.

### Key Information

By documenting plans in certain areas, the project team clarifies how it will meet performance and compliance expectations. Keeping a record from the beginning captures the project team’s understanding of management’s goals and intents and provides potential auditors with a clear body of evidence to see how well these goals were captured and, ultimately, met.

In advance of the meeting, make sure the following information is available:

* The functional specification, which acts as a set of instructions to developers about what to build, a basis for estimating work, an agreement with the customer about exactly what will be built, and a point of synchronization for the whole team. A sample functional specification is available at [http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF Job Aids - Deliver.zip](http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF%20Job%20Aids%20-%20Deliver.zip).
* Plans that illustrate the design and delivery processes:
* Work plans, cost estimates, and schedules for the various parts of the service project in question
* Communication plan
* Master test plan
* Training plan
* Baseline project plan
* User acceptance test plan
* Data or system conversion plan (if applicable)
* Security assessment and threat modeling plan
* Reviews of privacy and other standards, general policy compliance.
* Approach to segregation of environments for development, test, and production.
* Segregation of roles (where needed for control purposes).
* Project risk analysis and management plan.

Since the bulk of the review meeting itself will be taken up in discussing the state of project planning, it’s important to gather as much information as possible beforehand. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the information in advance of the review and thus be able to focus on the real intent of the meeting itself—an analysis of the information and a decision about whether to proceed with development. See the Project Planning SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543357.aspx>) for more information.

The information provided in advance of the review meeting should also include the following background information:

* Project charter with detailed vision and scope. This information is carried forward from the Portfolio Management Review. A sample vision/scope document is available at [http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF Job Aids - Deliver.zip](http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF%20Job%20Aids%20-%20Deliver.zip).
* Project master plan.
* Project master schedule.
* Project risk assessment.
* Plan for project coordination, including:
* Approach for stakeholders
* Communications
* Managing requirements
* Managing risks
* Identified opportunities to consolidate, simplify, or decommission the solution.
* Metrics for project performance.

See the Envision SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531013.aspx>) for more information.

### Analysis

The review meeting itself focuses on determining whether the project in question is ready to move into development. More specific questions to be answered include the following:

* Have the project team, customers, and stakeholders reviewed the functional specification, master project plan, and master schedule?
* Do these plans meet project requirements and expectations? What are these requirements?
* Do the project team, customers, and stakeholders agree that the project team is ready to move forward with development?
* Do the project team, customers, and stakeholders agree that the master schedule is realistic?
* Is the project vision clear and comprehensive?
* Is the project meaningfully and effectively scoped?
* Have capability gaps or resource shortfalls been identified?
* Have requirements and functional specifications been evaluated for adequacy, clarity, and readiness for development activity?
* Are project metrics appropriate and useful?

### Outcomes

The decision process at this point should be fairly straightforward. If one person is responsible, then that person indicates a go/no-go decision. If the decision is to be made via vote, then a pre-defined approval logic should be in place. In the absence of a strong preference for another tactic, it is practical to map that voting logic to whatever voting logic an organization’s Change Advisory Board (CAB) has already established. Many organizations employ a CAB as a way of obtaining multiple perspectives for change-related decision making. An example of a voting logic would be: “A 75 percent majority vote is required with all core members present.”

In summary, the project team, customers, and stakeholders need to agree they have reviewed the functional specification, master project plan, and master project schedule, and that all interim milestones have been met, that the due dates are realistic, and that the projects, roles, and responsibilities are well defined.

They also agree that mechanisms are in place to address project risks. They vote **go** if those things are agreed to. Accordingly, a **no-go** vote would be submitted if any of those criteria are not met.

It is useful to have a set of go/no-go indicators in place to help guide the voting. Table 8 shows several of those indicators.

Table 8. Go/No-Go Indicators

| Element | *Go* indicators | *No-go* indicators |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project plan and related plans | * Project plan is realistic and agreed to by project team. * Project plan reflects business needs and priorities. | * Project plan is not realistic; does not have team support. * Project plan does not meet business needs. |
| Project risk assessment | * Project risks are clearly identified. * Identified risks are addressed with mitigation plans. | * Important risks are not identified. * Identified risks are not addressed. |
| Resources | * Adequate budget is approved and available. * Adequate human resources are approved and available. | * Budget is not adequate. * Sufficient human resources are not available. |

### Follow-Up

After the team approves the specifications, plans, and schedules, the documents become the project baseline. The baseline takes into account the various decisions that are reached by consensus by applying the three project planning variables: resources, schedule, and features. After the team defines a baseline, it is placed under change control. This does not mean that all decisions reached in the planning phase are final.   
But it does mean that as work progresses during development, the team should review and approve any suggested changes to the baseline.

As a result of the Project Plan Approved Management Review, the management review group will have agreed that the project team has met the requirements for plan approval. The project team is then ready to move on to the development of the solution.

Because of the project-based focus of this review, there are no specific outcomes that carry forward to the Release Readiness Management Review, the next review in line. Rather, the outcome of this review sets in motion the next steps in the project in question. Those steps are:

* Build. The primary goals of the building process are to develop the solution deliverables to the customer’s specifications, develop the solution documentation, create the development and test lab, and prepare the solution for pilot deployment.
* Stabilize. The goal of stabilizing is to release the highest-quality solution possible at the Release Readiness Management Review. The project team achieves this goal by identifying bugs and issues through thorough testing and release-candidate piloting. Then, the team triages and resolves all known bugs.

Stabilizing culminates in the Release Readiness Management Review. That review occurs after a successful pilot has been conducted, all outstanding issues have been addressed, and the solution is released and made available for full deployment in the production environment.

The final step is deployment, the goal of which is to release a stable solution into the production environment. This includes stabilizing the solution in the production environment and transferring responsibility for the solution from the project team to the operations and support teams.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)
* MOF Deliver Phase Overview and SMFs: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506047.aspx>
* MOF Deliver Phase job aids: [http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF Job Aids - Deliver.zip](http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF%20Job%20Aids%20-%20Deliver.zip)

## Summary Checklist

Table 9 summarizes the preceding review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 4. Summary Checklist for Project Plan Approved Management Review

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the management review and should have decision-making authority:   * Business sponsors * Managers * Project team members * Operations and support representatives * Security representatives * Business users’ representatives * Program manager * Developer * Tester * Product manager * Project team user-experience advocate. * Release management advocate * Project team operations experience advocate * Test manager |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * Project charter * Project master plan * Project master schedule * Project risk assessment * Plan for project coordination, including: * Approach for stakeholders * Communications * Managing requirements * Managing risks * Identified opportunities to consolidate, simplify, or decommission solutions * Metrics |

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Have the project team, customers, and stakeholders reviewed the functional specification, master project plan, and master schedule? * Do these plans meet project requirements and expectations? What are these requirements? * Do the project team, customers, and stakeholders agree that the project team has met the requirements of the Project Plan Approved Milestone? * Do the project team, customers, and stakeholders agree that the master schedule is realistic? * Is the project vision clear and comprehensive? * Is the project meaningfully and effectively scoped? * Have capability gaps or resource shortfalls been identified? * Have requirements and functional specifications been evaluated for adequacy, clarity, and readiness for development activity? * Are project metrics appropriate and useful? |
| **Outputs** | The management review should result in the following:   * Go/no-go decision to move forward with development of the project |

# **Release Readiness Management Review**

The Release Readiness Management Review serves as an internal control to help ensure the quality of services being released. This evaluation, performed near the completion of the Deliver Phase (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506047.aspx>) of the MOF service management lifecycle, is a comprehensive review of the deliverables produced in developing the service. Additionally, it assesses whether the business is ready to employ the service and whether operations and support are ready to be responsible for the service in the production environment. Specifically, it focuses on ensuring that:

* New or changed services are operable and supportable.
* The production environment is ready to support and operate new or changed services.
* The business and/or customers are ready to use the features and functionality of new or changed services.
* Release strategy plans—including rollout and rollback plans, training plans, and support plans—are in place.

## Goals of the Release Readiness Management Review

Release Readiness is the second of the two management reviews in the MOF Deliver Phase. It determines whether a changed or newly developed service is ready for release and is the final process step in the Stabilize SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543320.aspx>). It occurs after a successful pilot has been conducted, all outstanding issues have been addressed, and the new or changed service is believed to be ready for full deployment in the production environment. This milestone presents the opportunity for customers and users, operations and support personnel, and key project stakeholders to evaluate the solution and identify any remaining issues that must be addressed before deployment.

Much like the Project Plan Approved Management Review—which precedes this review in the Deliver Phase—it acts as a progress indicator for all projects, which makes both Deliver Phase reviews much more tactical than the other four MOF management reviews.

It follows two key project management steps in that phase. They are:

* Build. The primary goals of the building process are to develop the solution deliverables to the customer’s specifications, develop the solution documentation, create the development and test lab, and prepare the solution for pilot deployment.
* Stabilize. The goal of stabilizing is to release the highest-quality solution possible at the Release Readiness Management Review. The project team achieves this goal by identifying bugs and issues through thorough testing and release-candidate piloting. The team then triages and resolves all known bugs.

Stabilizing culminates in the Release Readiness Management Review. The final step is deployment, the goal of which is to release a stable solution into the production environment. This includes stabilizing the solution in the production environment and transferring responsibility for the solution from the project team to the operations and support teams.

The purpose of the Release Readiness Management Review is to confirm these four items:

* The operability and supportability of the release itself.
* The readiness of the production environment (organization and infrastructure) to support and operate the release.
* The completeness of the release strategy plans, including rollout and rollback plans, training plans, and support plans.
* The overall quality of the release.

The review should result in a go/no-go decision about whether to deploy the release.   
If the decision is go, the release moves to rollout preparations driven by the release management team. Otherwise, the release is postponed until the necessary improvements take place, or it is cancelled.

### Key Terms

Table 10 defines key terms used in this review.

Table 10. Key Terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Definition** |
| Change Advisory Board (CAB) | A cross-functional group set up to evaluate change requests for business need, priority, cost/benefit, and potential impacts to other systems or processes. |
| Management review | An internal control that provides management validation checks, ensuring that goals are being achieved in an appropriate fashion and that business value is considered throughout the service management lifecycle. |
| Milestone | A project synchronization point. Major milestones mark the transition of projects from one phase to the next phase and the transfer of primary responsibility from one role to another role. |

### If You Are New to Release Readiness

This Release Readiness Review document is based on the assumption that you have some form of release readiness in place, however simple or sophisticated. There are certain topics and data points that need to be ready for consideration during the management review, and collecting that information is basic to any form of release management.

Conceptually, release readiness is fairly simple. It is a way of ensuring that a release is ready for production by determining whether:

* Planning for phased deployment has been completed.
* Testing has been completed.
* Hardware compatibility and device drivers have been confirmed.
* Application compatibility has been confirmed.

## Details of the Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Release Readiness Management Review is owned and driven by:

* Solution managers, who are responsible for turning business requirements into services and resolving conflicts between projects.
* Program managers, who are responsible for ensuring that individual projects run smoothly and represent the right solution at the right time.
* Product managers, who are responsible for ensuring customer satisfaction.

Deciding who will attend or participate in the management review session is an important task. Because this is the last review of a new service before it goes into production, the Release Readiness Management Review represents the opportunity to ensure that the new service meets the business needs it was conceived to meet in the first place and that it is usable, operable, and supportable.

Ensuring those factors requires that opinions from the following individuals are part of the process:

* **Business sponsors.** Have a stake in ensuring that services meet business needs and requirements. They are represented by the IT Executive Officer role type, which is the accountable role for Management Accountability. More information about accountability roles can be found in the MOF Team SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543311.aspx>).
* **Managers.** Have the responsibility for ensuring that services meet business needs and requirements.
* **Project team members.** Have been responsible up to this point for carrying out the work of planning, building, and testing the service under review.
* **Operations and support representatives.** Will be responsible for running and supporting the service after its release.
* **Security representatives.** Responsible for ensuring that the release is secure.
* **Business users’** representatives. Ensure that the release is usable.

In an ideal situation, everyone involved with the Release Readiness Management Review would be so invested in making the right choices that the go/no-go decision about whether to move forward with a release would be achieved by consensus.

However, the team will likely need to identify a person responsible for making the decision. This individual needs to be accountable for both the potential success and failure of the decision to deploy and should factor in the relevant risks and trade-offs. Guidance for “deciding who will decide” can be found in the MOF Governance, Risk, and Compliance SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531019.aspx>). The decision might be made according to a voting logic derived for the review meeting. Voting logic is discussed in more detail in the “Outcomes” section of this review.

Regardless of how final decision making is structured, someone must be designated as the review team lead. This role is typically filled by the Solution Manager role type, as described by the MOF Team SMF. This role type is usually the director for all projects, is responsible for resolving conflicts between projects, and has the high-level goal of ensuring that all projects run smoothly and make a successful transition to operations.

In addition to the six attendees that should be represented at the review meeting, the following project team role types (several of which encompass some of the responsibilities of the attendees listed above) should also be represented:

* **Program manager.** Drives design, schedule, and resources at the project level, ensures individual projects run smoothly, and builds the right service at the right time.
* **Developer.** Builds the agreed-to service and ensures that it meets agreed-to specifications.
* **Tester.** Tests to accurately determine the status of service development and ensures all known issues are resolved before release.
* **Product manager.** Acts as the customer advocate, helps drive shared project vision, manages customer expectations, and ensures customer satisfaction.
* **Project team user-experience advocate.** Helps define and design user requirements and ensures the released solution is usable and meets end-users’ needs.
* **Release management advocate.** Evaluates the solution design; documents operations requirements to ensure they’re met by the design; creates a pilot, deployment plan, and schedule; manages site deployment; and ensures a stable solution is deployed to the production environment.
* **Project team operations experience advocate.** Speaks on behalf of operations, brings in operations experts as needed for detailed information, coordinates with release management, and ensures operational requirements are part of the solution design and are addressed before release.
* **Test manager.** Owns all the testing across all project teams, develops testing strategy and plans, ensures best practice test methods are used, ensures that test matches production, and ensures there are no surprises.

Anyone who is attending the review session should be prepared with release readiness information from each of his or her respective functional areas. This information should include risk assessments, testing results, and operations and support readiness.

### Meeting Frequency

Because it is a final sign-off, it must take place after the readiness preparations have been completed, but far enough ahead of the tentative release date to allow for the impact of a no-go decision.

The meeting's length depends on the nature and complexity of the release. For example, the Release Readiness Management Review for a simple or straightforward release may last just an hour, while complex, high-impact releases may require more time. Keep in mind when scheduling that critical releases often require attendance by high-level decision makers, whose schedules are usually the fullest.

### Key Information

Since the bulk of the review meeting itself will be taken up in discussing the state of the service, it’s important to gather as much information as possible about that state beforehand. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the information in advance of the review and thus be able to focus on the real intent of the meeting itself—an analysis of the information and a decision about whether to proceed with the release.

The information provided in advance of the review meeting should include the following items:

* **Project vision and scope.** The vision/scope document is usually written at a high level, and the project team uses it during planning as the context for developing technical specifications and project management plans in greater detail. It provides clear direction for the project team; outlines explicit project goals, priorities, and constraints; and sets customer expectations. The vision/scope document provides a way to compare what was actually designed and built to the original intent of the project. A sample vision/scope document is available at [http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF Job Aids - Deliver.zip](http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF%20Job%20Aids%20-%20Deliver.zip).
* **Operations support guide.** This guide should address how well the needs of operations and support will be met by the new or changed service. Getting this right requires steady communication with operations and support. It also requires that the following are in place and ready for the deployment:
* A release automation process that both simplifies release activity and reduces the amount of time needed for operations team members to be involved in a release.
* Training for production and support staff where required.
* Established operating level agreements (OLAs) and underpinning contracts (UCs) that appear to support required service levels.
* **Deployment plan and contingency plan.** This plan should identify the following:
* Key deployment roles—that is, who is accountable for the deployment, and who performs other tasks. The MOF Deploy (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc465181.aspx>) and Team SMFs offer guidance about these decisions.
* Deployment goals. At a minimum, identified goals should be to release a stable solution into the production environment, including stabilizing the solution in the production environment and transferring responsibility for the solution from the project team to the operations and support teams.
* A process-based approach for deploying the service, such as:
* Deploy core service solution components.
* Deploy sites.
* Stabilize deployment.
* Review the Deployment Complete Milestone in the Deploy SMF.
* Rollout plans—the actual plan for deployment.
* Rollback plans—how to reverse what has happened in case something goes wrong.
* Communications plan—who needs to know about the release, and when they need to know it.

Note   A sample migration plan and site deployment project plan are available at [http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF Job Aids - Deliver.zip](http://download.microsoft.com/download/6/5/8/658BC1E9-E262-45CA-BB6E-E87C058BBD37/MOF%20Job%20Aids%20-%20Deliver.zip)

* **Security implementation plan.** This plan coordinates the service’s security effort to match existing corporate security policy and ensures there are no gaps. The plan should identify:
* Overall security goals for the release.
* Procedures for preventing, detecting, and responding to security incidents.
* An underlying framework for enforcing compliance.
* **Data validation and conversion** **(if applicable).**
* **Risk management plan.** This plan does the following:
* Identifies mission-critical applications.
* Identifies and analyzes potential risks.
* Quantifies the potential impact of the risks.
* Details escalation processes.
* Identifies solutions.
* **User acceptance approval.** Lessons that previous user team representatives learned in previous release readiness and post-implementation review meetings are an important factor in decision making. Confirm that all required documentation and training relative to this release exist and are adequate.
* **Test results.** Test results are used for determining whether the service is acceptable for deployment into production. The test results review includes acceptance and pilot testing as well as performance and stress testing, if appropriate. Additional testing results may be reviewed, including regression testing, integration testing, system testing, and QA testing.

### Analysis

The first step in the review meeting should be a focused effort to determine whether the service is ready to be released. In large part, that means reviewing and analyzing the material sent out ahead of time, including the following:

* Project vision and scope
* Operations support guide
* Deployment plan and contingency plan
* Security implementation plan
* Data validation and conversion (if applicable)
* Risk management plan
* User acceptance approval
* Test results

Analyzing those assessments of release readiness, as well as such factors as the operational impact of data migration and management and the impact to the organization of proceeding or not proceeding, should lead the review team to two key decisions:

* Is everyone in agreement that the service is ready for release?
* If everyone is not in agreement, is there consensus about what needs to be done to get the service ready for release?

### Outcomes

The decision process at this point should be fairly straightforward. If one person is responsible, then that person indicates a go/no-go decision. If the decision is to be made via vote, then a pre-defined approval logic should be in place. In the absence of a strong preference for another tactic, it is practical to map that voting logic to whatever voting logic an organization’s Change Advisory Board (CAB) has already established. Many organizations employ a CAB as a way of obtaining multiple perspectives for change-related decision making. An example of a voting logic would be: “A 75 percent majority vote is required with all core members present.”

In summary, the team members vote **go** if the release itself, the production environment, and the release strategy plans (if executed) will result in the release being deployed into the environment and meeting agreed service levels with respect to the team member's functional area. Accordingly, a **no-go** vote should be submitted if any of the above criteria are not met.

It is useful to have a set of go/no-go indicators in place to help guide the voting. Those indicators generally address the following items:

* The release itself.
* The readiness of the production environment.
* Release strategy plans.

Table 11 offers an example of a set of go/no-go indicators.

Table 11. Go/No-Go Indicators

| Element | *Go* indicators | *No-go* indicators |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Release | * All prerequisites have been met. * All documentation is in order. * An adequate rollback plan exists. | * Release is not built to standards. * Documentation is missing. * Primary and secondary support personnel have not been assigned. |
| Production environment | * Support staff is already trained. * All administrative procedures for the release are clear and are aligned with site standards. * Operating level agreements (OLAs) and underpinning contracts (UCs) are in place and appear to support required service levels. | * Software or infrastructure levels used to build the solution are unsupported (too new, too old) in the current environment. * No support staff training plan exists. * No backup plan exists. |
| Release strategy plans | * Escalation process and contact list have been communicated. * All key stakeholders have been notified. * All resources required for implementation have been confirmed. | * A single point of failure or fatal flaw exists in the plan—for example, dependence on one technician or an unproven technology. * Plan prerequisites, such as confirmation that users will be present to do acceptance testing, have not been met. * Change management documentation is not in order. |

If the decision is go, the release moves to rollout preparations driven by the Release Management team. Otherwise, the release is either postponed until the necessary improvements take place, or it is cancelled.

### Follow-Up

Because this review focuses so heavily on the overall quality of the release, it will have a significant impact on how well the new or modified service behaves in operation, and therefore will have an impact on the next Operational Health review.

After the review concludes, ownership of the release is transferred from the development and test teams to the release team.

Deployment begins when stabilizing ends with the Release Readiness Management Review. During deployment, the project team will deploy the service solution and the site components into the production environment, stabilize the deployment, transfer the project to operations, and get final customer approval for the new solution. More information about deployment can be found in the MOF Deploy SMF.

Even though the formal process is finished, stabilization continues during deployment as the team transfers the service solution from the test environment into the production environment. After deployment, the team conducts a project review and a customer satisfaction survey.

The Deployment Complete Milestone concludes deployment. By this milestone, the solution should provide the expected business value and satisfy the customer’s expectations and specifications. The customer must explicitly agree that the solution meets its objectives before the team declares that the solution has been successfully deployed to production. This requires a stable solution and clearly communicated criteria for success. Additionally, the appropriate operations and support systems must be in place. Upon reaching the Deployment Complete Milestone, the team should have finalized all activities and effectively terminated the project.

After the Release Readiness Management Review is complete, the results of the meeting should be documented and distributed to all participants, as well as to any key stakeholders. Those results, typically in the form of minutes, should be supplemented with documentation of lessons learned.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/solutionaccelerators/dd320379.aspx)
* MOF Deliver Phase Overview: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543223.aspx>
* Deliver Phase SMFs: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc506047.aspx>

## Summary Checklist

Table 12 summarizes the preceding management review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 12. Summary Checklist of the Release Readiness Management Review

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the management review and should have decision-making authority:   * Business sponsors * Managers * Project team members * Operations and support representatives * Security representatives * Business users’ representatives * Program manager * Developer * Test manager and testers * Product manager * Project team user-experience advocate * Release management advocate * Project team operations experience advocate |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * Project vision and scope * Operations support guide * Deployment plan and contingency plan * Security implementation plan * Data validation and conversion (if applicable) * Risk management plan * User acceptance approval * Test results |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Is everyone in agreement that the service is ready for release? * If everyone is not in agreement, is there consensus about what needs to be done to get the service ready for release? |
| **Outputs** | The management review should result in the following:   * Go/no-go decision to deploy a new or changed service |

# **Policy and Control Management Review**

The Policy and Control Management Review is an opportunity for management to assess the impact and effectiveness of service management policies and controls.

Policies range from corporate statements that define goals and how goals should be pursued down to specific policies for the use and configuration of technologies. The role of policy is to set expectations and steer behavior in an organization. The policy-setting process starts with the top levels of management establishing organizational goals based on strategy; then moves through ever more specific and focused guidance, closer to the particular actions and behaviors involved in procedures and activities that are, in turn, potentially supported by specific internal controls.

Controls are processes that an organization puts in place to help ensure that goals and objectives are achieved. Technical controls may take the form of software configuration settings and Group Policy objects in Active Directory. General controls may include such things as establishing a development and testing environment that is separate from production and limiting direct developer access to the production environment.

Performed periodically in the Manage Layer of the MOF service management lifecycle, the Policy and Control Management Review evaluates the quality of policies and their implementation and assesses the connection between policies and related controls. Specifically, it focuses on ensuring that:

* Policies and controls are operating effectively, producing desired behavior and results in the organization.
* Policies and controls are operating efficiently, with a minimum of effort and expense.

For more information on procedures, internal controls, and compliance, see the Governance, Risk, and Compliance SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc531020.aspx>). Creating and managing policy is described in the Policy SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543348.aspx>).

## Goals of the Policy and Control Management Review

The goal of the Policy and Control Management Review is to ensure that policies and controls are delivering desired behavior in the organization—which supports the overall Manage Phase goal of integrating service management activities. This management review focuses on ensuring that management properly oversees and assesses:

* The adequacy of policies to address risk, regulatory, and compliance requirements.
* The organization’s effectiveness at ensuring that internal operating processes deliver on management’s objectives through formal policies and internal controls.
* Improvements to be made to existing policies, the need for new policies, and the termination of redundant or unnecessary policies.
* The general state and performance of the internal control environment.

Across all phases and SMFs in the service management lifecycle, attention is given to identifying management objectives, risks that could adversely affect these objectives, and controls put in place to mitigate these risks. The Policy and Control Management Review is an opportunity to focus on policies and controls and their impact across the service management lifecycle.

This management review provides a structure for reviewing and analyzing results and taking action to improve performance. It is basic to the effective maintenance, monitoring, and updating of policies and controls.

### Key Terms

Table 13 defines key terms used in this review.

Table 13. Key Terms

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Policy | A deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. (This definition deals with human-readable descriptions of desired behavior, not machine-readable descriptions.) For example, a policy might state the requirement that the data that makes up a customer’s Personally Identifiable Information (PII) must be encrypted at rest or in transit. |
| Internal controls | The policies, procedures, practices, and organizational structures designed to provide reasonable assurance that business objectives will be achieved and that undesired events will be prevented or detected and corrected. A specific control might be that Transparent Data Encryption (TDE) is instantiated, configured, and operating correctly. |
| Management objectives | Business directives and activities intended to fulfill strategic goals. They are the responsibility of executives and senior managers. For example, the board of directors might have a strategic goal to enter a market that involves the use of PII. Managers have determined the way this service will be built and run, and as part of that work have established the objective that the service is to be compliant with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard. |
| Effectiveness | The ability to produce a desired result. |
| Efficiency | The ability to accomplish something while avoiding unnecessary use of time, energy, effort, or resources. |

### If You Are New to Policy and Control Management

In general terms, policies define the important principles and give guidance for decisions. They document intended organizational results and allowable ways to achieve those results. Procedures are detailed steps that define what is to be done, the tasks. Procedures make “the way we do it here” explicit and usable by any worker assigned to complete the task. Controls are processes that are used to help make sure that objectives are accomplished and completed as intended. This guidance is written with the assumption that your business, like most organizations, has some form of policy and control in place. However, several things might also be true:

* The policies you use are generic, possibly taken from a list of non-specific policies that are widely available.
* Someone in the organization has written policies, but there is no existing process to evaluate and refine them.
* There are policies in place, but there is no formal policy review process.
* Controls exist, but their relationship to specific policies is not clear.

Regardless of the status of your current policies and controls, your overarching goal should be to combine several layers of activities and documents to establish a structure of policy and control management.

#### Policy Creation

An organization’s policy and control structure establishes its response and posture for addressing specific processes and events. In a broader sense, this structure defines desired characteristics within the organization and provides ways to measure and assess performance. The Policy and Control Management Review, then, assesses and fine tunes the organization’s policy and control structure in order to increase quality and compliance in the service organization.

Good policies share a number of attributes, but they can be distilled to Why, Who, What, Where, When, and How. Examples include:

* Why is this policy needed? Regulatory or compliance reasons, business requirements, service level agreements (SLAs)? There can be multiple drivers for creating a policy, but stating this clearly helps to communicate the rationale and promotes an understanding of the intent of the policy as well as the implications of not adhering to the policy.
* Who owns the policy, who is responsible for its execution, and who needs to be aware of the policy? Target the policy to the appropriate audience.
* What kind of event could create significant (material) risk or result in the violation of laws or regulations? These are prime candidates to be addressed through policy.
* Where does the policy apply? Multiple areas of the organization may be involved in applying the policy, or it may be relevant to a specific geography or locality.
* When is the policy applied? It is possible that some policies are in effect at all times, while other policies may be invoked or suspended in specific circumstances. These considerations should be spelled out in the policy.
* How will the policy be applied? This is where well-written procedures come into play. A policy usually requires associated guidance for application to specific activities. Internal controls may become part of this instantiation process.

Beyond policy creation and implementation is the ongoing need to maintain policies and keep them current. This maturation process takes a policy from its initial creation through ongoing improvements and, in some cases, ultimately to its discontinuation.

#### Policy Maturation

The process of policy maturation is not complicated, but it requires attention to several areas. Maturing and maintaining policy involves attention to the policies themselves, combined with communications and training to address their awareness and use. To build a policy maturity process, start with a defined set of basic policies as well as an awareness and training program.

Defining a base level of policy coverage can be a daunting task, involving multiple authority documents and many compliance obligations. However, this process is necessary to establish the level and scope of control demanded during compliance audits. The IT Compliance Management Guide (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/dd206732.aspx>) helps establish compliance baselines for Microsoft products and takes into account these diverse drivers of policy and controls. It is a useful tool for constructing and maintaining compliance that is focused on technology.

Once a foundation for policy is established (policies created, reviewed, and published), it must be introduced into the organization. This involves awareness and training, both of which are significant influencers of a “culture of compliance.” With policies in place and people trained in their use, compliance testing becomes part of the policy lifecycle. This is accomplished through a variety of activities and is influenced by the nature of the risks and controls involved; the outcome of testing is an assessment of the effectiveness of controls and, ultimately, of policy.

It is important for management to review this information and ascertain that the people in their organization are doing their work in the way management intends—while maintaining the type of workplace environment that management desires.

Mature policies should demonstrate the following characteristics:

* They are being used in the ways intended.
* They are well understood.
* They are current and timely.
* Users find them effective and do not have to work around them to get their work done and meet business goals.

When policies are out of date, inaccurate, consistently ignored, or actively thwarted, they need to be re-evaluated. When they are working effectively and the corresponding controls demonstrate compliance, the organization should consider automating manual control monitoring and compliance testing for an up-to-date understanding of the impact of the policy and associated controls.

#### Procedures and Controls

By thinking of policy as setting parameters for specific tasks, you are then ready to address procedures, which define and detail the activities and tasks needed to accomplish the goals of the policy. However, bundling together a collection of procedures does not create a policy. As you create procedures, you should define flexible process flows that bring a few critical elements into focus and provide a means for assessing and communicating status and recording events.

As you create controls, consider the following factors:

* The goals of the policy—why are you concerned with this particular control?
* The risks that come from violating those policy goals—what kind of trouble could result from ignoring the control?
* The cost/benefit trade-off of putting the control in place—is it justified?

It is also important to consider controls and procedures in terms of their involvement across different parts of the organization, or even their possible extension to your organization’s partner network. By considering business objectives—and the results that occur as managers implement activities that support these objectives—you can ascertain the appropriateness of where the controls should be applied.

## Details About the Review

As you prepare information for the review, and in advance of the review itself, be sure you and all the attendees have a common understanding about both the purpose of the meeting and its intended outcome. A shared vision will encourage collaboration and ensure more focused results.

### Attendees

The Policy and Control Management Review is owned and driven by:

* TheIT Executive Officer, who is responsible for sponsoring technology initiatives, owning metrics, and executive relationships.
* Solution managers, who are responsible for turning business requirements into services and resolving conflicts between projects.
* Architects and architecture managers, who are responsible for future directions and solutions.
* Compliance officers and those concerned with specific challenges, such as security or privacy.

Participants in this management review should be primarily senior managers with support provided by relevant business representatives and team members from Compliance, Policy, and Security. Auditors may provide useful insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of controls; partners might participate to ensure that policy and control objectives are achievable in their environments.

### Meeting Frequency

The Policy and Control Management Review should be scheduled on a recurring basis, twice per year at a minimum, so that performance, service reliability, and the ability to respond to the business are supported by up-to-date, effective policies and controls.

### Key Information

Since the bulk of the review meeting itself will be taken up in discussing the state of the policy and control environment, it’s important to gather as much information as possible about that state beforehand. This allows participants to familiarize themselves with the information in advance of the review and thus be able to focus on the real intent of the meeting itself: determining the best options for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies being evaluated. The information provided in advance of the review meeting should include the following items:

* Operational and security policies.
* Policy violations, compliance incidents, management action taken since last management review.
* Policy change requests.
* Results from the “Enforce and Evaluate” process in the Policy SMF (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543350.aspx>).
* Changes in regulations, standards, or industry practices.
* New or changed contractual agreements, such as SLAs and OLAs.
* Audit findings, recommendations, issues.
* Unanticipated risks, incidents.
* Controls failing or underperforming.
* Control self-assessments.
* Minutes and actions from last management review meeting.

### Analysis

The first step in the review meeting should be to use the input information described above and do the following:

* Evaluate incidents and non-compliance, determine root cause.
* Review policy enforcement activities.
* Review audit findings and recommendations.
* Review risk assessments and mitigations for completeness and effectiveness.

Through discussion, the meeting attendees will need to analyze this information and arrive at conclusions that cover, at a minimum, the following summary areas:

* Whether policy and control performance meets management expectations.
* Whether there is agreement as to root cause of non-compliance and any changes to policy management.
* Whether the control environment is appropriate or if changes are needed.

In addition, they should evaluate the treatment of policy and control in the following phases:

* In the Plan Phase to ensure that they promote services that the business sees as valuable, predictable, reliable, and cost-effective.
* In the Deliver Phase to ensure that they contribute to the development of services that are effective, deploy successfully, and ready for operations.
* In the Operate Phase to see that services are operated, maintained, and supported in line with the OLAs and SLAs and are compliant with policy.

The next step of the review meeting is to address the following core questions:

* Are the right policies in place? Have management objectives, regulations, standards, and industry practices been considered?
* Are the policies effective? These include compliance reporting, requests for changes to policies, and exceptions granted.
* Are the right controls in place? Are they based on risk assessments and mitigations, events and incidents not addressed by controls, and costs and benefits of controls?
* Are controls operating effectively across the service management lifecycle?
* Focusing on change and configuration: Are the intended results occurring? Are there any failed changes or is rework needed to correct changes?
* Focusing on value realization: Assess the fit between the policy and control environment and the value that the business needs to receive from IT. Is this the right level of control given identified risk impacts and expected returns?

Since controls are central to providing secure and trustworthy services, any changes to controls must be managed. The Policy and Control Management Review should evaluate the impact of changes to controls made since the previous review. Related effort should be given to also assessing the impact of potential changes made prior to the actual implementation of the changes.

### Outcomes

At a minimum, the analysis and discussion in the management review should result in the following:

* Documentation of the Policy and Control Management Review with actions and accountabilities.
* Requests for changes to specific policies or controls.
* Requests for changes to policy management.
* Requests for changes to control management.

The final step of the review is to communicate the results to the appropriate parties and initiate any change requests that originated in the management review. These changes are intended to improve the management and enforcement of policies as well as improve the management of risk and the overall control environment. Actions for improvements identified during this management review should be documented and a record retained to demonstrate engagement with the key processes related to the management of risk, policy, and control. This will provide transparency and evidence that executive management and the board of directors can use to assess service management activities.

### Follow-Up

After the Policy and Control Management Review is complete, the results of the meeting should be documented and distributed to all participants, as well as to any key stakeholders. The meeting minutes should include the findings as well as associated actions and accountabilities. Those results should be supplemented with documentation of action to be taken and lessons learned.

At this point, proposals may follow one of several paths:

* Change requests are submitted to the change control process. (See the Change and Configuration SMF at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543211.aspx> for more information.)
* More substantial project proposals that may be part of improvements identified in this SMF go through Business/IT Alignment (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>) and are evaluated in the Portfolio Management Review ([www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)).
* There might be impacts to other management reviews in terms of policy or control changes, such as adopting new standards, evaluating conflicting policies, and process changes from new or modified internal controls.

## Resources

* Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0: [www.microsoft.com/mof](http://www.microsoft.com/mof)
* MOF Manage Phase Overview: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc539509.aspx>)
* Policy SMF <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543348.aspx>
* Business/IT Alignment SMF: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc543303.aspx>
* IT Compliance Management Guide: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/dd206732.aspx>
* Relevant GRC resources: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/regulatorycompliance/default.aspx>

## Summary Checklist

Table 14 summarizes the preceding management review in checklist form. Use it as a guide as you conduct your review meeting.

Table 14. Summary Checklist for the Policy and Control Management Review

| Category | Item |
| --- | --- |
| **People** | The following people should participate in the management review and should have decision-making authority:   * Executive officer * Solution manager * Policy manager * Security manager * Compliance officer |
| **Inputs** | The following data should be distributed in advance and should be current and available for the meeting:   * Operational and security policies * Policy violations, compliance incidents, management action taken since last management review * Policy change requests * Results from the “Enforce and Evaluate” process * Changes in regulations, standards, or industry practices * New or changed contractual agreements * Audit findings, recommendations, issues * Unanticipated risks, incidents * Controls failing or underperforming * Control self-assessments * Minutes and actions from last management review meeting |
| **Analysis** | Prior to the meeting, participants should consider the following:   * Incidents and non-compliance * Policy enforcement activities * Audit findings and recommendations * Risk assessments and mitigations * Overarching issues: * Whether policy and control performance meets management expectations * Whether there is agreement as to root cause of non-compliance and any changes to policy management * Whether control environment is appropriate or if changes are needed * Effectiveness of policy and control across all MOF phases |
| **Outputs** | The management review might result in the following:   * Documentation of the Policy and Control Management Review with actions and accountabilities * Documentation of lessons learned * Requests for changes to: * Specific policies or controls * Policy management * Control management |

# **Feedback**

Please send comments and feedback to [MOF@microsoft.com](mailto:MOF@microsoft.com). To keep current with the latest releases and beta review programs, please subscribe to our news feed on the [MOF home page](http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/solutionaccelerators/dd320379.aspx).

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