Project Management Fact Sheet:

Document Control

Version: 1.3, November 2008

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

It is important within projects to ensure that the 'right' people have the 'right' copy of the 'right' document at the 'right' time. For example, have you ever found yourself in a meeting where the attendees each have a different document, or asked yourself how you can be sure that all Steering Committee members and your team members are referring to the same release of a *Project Business Plan*?

This Fact Sheet explains the value of using document control procedures within a project and how to implement them.

Where guidelines detailing the requirements for information or document control exist within an Agency they should be read in conjunction with this Fact Sheet.

What is Document Control?

All documents, whether electronic or hard copy, need to be uniquely identifiable. In most cases, it is also necessary to track the changes that occur to the document and record its distribution throughout the document's development and subsequent revision(s).

Document control includes:

- the use of version numbers on documents (version control)
- maintaining a history of the development of versions (build status)
- the use of numbered copies of documents (controlled documents)
- maintaining a list of recipients for distributed copies (distribution list)

Not all documents require the same level of document control. The level of document control required corresponds with the purpose and ownership of the document. For example, the *Project Business Plan* that is owned by the Steering Committee may require full document control, while an *Issues Register* owned by the project team may need little document control beyond the date it was last modified.

Why is it important to have Document Control?

Document control would not be necessary if documents were only prepared and released once during a project. This is not generally the case, as most documents go through various iterations before being endorsed for distribution. The same document may be revised and re-released a number of times.

The importance of using document control is to avoid a number of pitfalls that can occur within a project including:

- difficulty in readily determining the difference between documents
- superseded documents remaining in circulation
- key stakeholders referring to, or working from an out-of-date document
- not knowing who has been issued with copies of the documents
- no audit trail for changes to key project documents

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Who is responsible for Document Control?

The Project Manager, in consultation with the Project Sponsor, is responsible for determining the level of document control to be used in the project. Major project management documents such as the *Project Business Plan*, usually have a higher degree of document control than other working documents used by the Project Team. Individual team members or consultants developing documents for a project should adhere to the relevant controls established by the Project Manager.

The Steering Committee may direct that additional controls be introduced.

What is Version Control?

Version control provides for unique identification of documents, whether electronic or hard copy, and assists with the easy identification of each subsequent version of a document. The version number changes as the document is revised allowing released versions of a document to be readily discernable from draft versions.

How to use Version Control

Documents may be identified by a version number, starting at one and increasing by one for each release. Ideally, the version number should appear on the first page of the document and within the footer of each page. Documentation should be identified as follows:

- a release number (and a revision letter if in draft)

- the original draft shall be Version 0.A

- subsequent drafts shall be Version 0.B, Version 0.C etc

- the accepted and issued document is Version 1.0

- subsequent changes in draft form become Version 1.0A, 1.0B etc

- the accepted and issued second version becomes Version 1.1 or Version 2.0, as determined by the author based on the magnitude of the changes (minor or major)

On this basis a document, which is presented to a Steering Committee for endorsement, would include a revision letter such as Version 0.A. After receiving endorsement, a copy of the document (with any approved amendments) would be created **without** a revision letter, in this case as Version 1.0. Wherever the version number appears in the document (i.e. front page, release notice, footer etc.) it should be updated. If controlled copies are to be distributed (refer below) the information in the Distribution List, Build Status and Amendments In This Release sections may need to be updated. Where there is provision for signatures, these should also be obtained prior to distribution.

Including the corresponding version number in the file name (for example, Project XYZ Business Plan v0.A.doc) can uniquely identify electronic copies of documents.

What are Controlled Documents?

Controlled documents are final versions of documents distributed to a list of recipients, where each controlled document is uniquely numbered, for example **Copy 1**, **Copy 2**, etc. This usually appears in the header on the front page. The recipients should be requested to remove superseded copies from circulation, or to return the old copies for disposal.

A list of individuals or organisations holding controlled copies should be maintained. In this way, controlled documents that are revised can readily be distributed to the relevant recipients. This can be done by using a Distribution List, which can also record the electronic file location of the document, as illustrated in the example below.

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DISTRIBUTION:

Copy No	Version	Issue Date	Issued To
1	3.0	8 May 2008	Project Sponsor, Project XYZ, Department ABC
2	3.0	8 May 2008	Project Manager, Project XYZ, Department ABC
3	3.0	9 May 2008	Business Unit Manager, Division, Department ABC
Electronic	3.0	5 May 2008	Shared drive

The Distribution List can be included within the document, usually after the Document Acceptance and Release Notice (as described below in the section 'How to put it together').

What are Uncontrolled Documents?

Uncontrolled documents are final versions of documents distributed to recipients who are not required to be kept up-to-date if the document changes. These documents are identified by the absence of a unique copy number, or by the identification **Copy: Uncontrolled**.

Generally, there is no need to maintain a list of persons or organisations issued uncontrolled copies.

What is a document's Build Status?

The Build Status of a document provides a history of the development of the document through subsequent releases and revisions. This information provides an audit trail of changes when read in conjunction with the summary of amendments in the current release. The word processing feature of highlighting changes within the document can be used in place of the summary of amendments, or used to complement the summary.

The following is an example of the format that could be used to record the Build Status of a document or report. As each version is released, the list within the Build Status grows, with the most recent amendment appearing first.

BUILD STATUS:

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
3.0	30 May 2008	Joe Citizen	Updated financial summary, risk management plan and risk register	5, 6 & Appendix 1
2.0	2 April 2008	Ima Person	Revised to clarify scope of work for Phase 2	All
1.0	21 Feb 2008	Ima Person	Initial Release	All

A summary of the amendments included in the current release of the document complements the Build Status. This allows for easy reference to changes in the latest release of the document.

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AMENDMENTS IN THIS RELEASE:

Section Title	Section No.	Amendment Summary
Financial Summary	5	Updated to reflect all costs for this phase of the project
Risk Management Plan	6	Added description of process and timing for regular reviews of the risk register
Risk Register	Appendix 1	Updated to reflect the recent risk review undertaken by the Project Team (August 2007)

How to put it together

The Build Status, Amendment Summary and Distribution List for a document usually appear on a single page. The example used throughout this Fact Sheet has been presented in this format (refer to Appendix).

There are a number of templates for standard documents, such as a *Project Business Case*, *Project Business Plan* and *Outcome Realisation Plan,* available on this website. These templates include the document control information described here. It is included on a page after the Document Acceptance and Release Notice and before the Table of Contents.

Where to get additional help

- Refer to the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines.*

- Further information and resources are available from www.egovernment.tas.gov.au

Acknowledgements

This Fact Sheet contains elements of the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines* prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

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Appendix - Document Control Example

1 BUILD STATUS:

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