

7 Issues Management

An issue can be defined as a concern that may impede the progress of the project if it is not resolved. Issues management is one of the skills that all Project Managers must master. Projects of any size have to deal with issues. If issues are not addressed they may become a risk to the project. Issues must be resolved quickly and effectively.

This section of the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines* includes:

- Issues Management - including a definition
- Issues Management Flowchart
- Issues Register structure
- Tips for managing issues

Definition

Issues Management involves monitoring, reviewing and addressing issues or concerns as they arise through the life of a project. Issues can be raised by anyone involved with the project, including the Business Owner(s), Steering Committee members, Reference or Working Group members, the Project Manager, Project Team members and other Key Stakeholders.

Issues Monitoring

For small projects, a brief scan and ongoing monitoring may be all that is required. In large and/or more complex projects, it is advisable to maintain an *Issues Register*. From this register the issue, current status and resolution, where appropriate, should be reported regularly to the Steering Committee as part of the *Project Status Report*.

(Refer to *Section 10: Status Reporting*)

An *Issues Register* should be established as part of the ongoing project management activities. The Project Manager and Team need to have a process for capturing issues as they arise, updating and reviewing them so that they can be managed and resolved as the project moves forward. Once a resolution is agreed on, the appropriate activities are added to the project work plan to ensure the issue is resolved, and to the project budget if appropriate.

If the project is medium to large or quite complex, separate *Issues Registers* might be established for each of the major outputs as they are being developed. If an issue cannot be resolved it could become a risk, and if identified as such should be added to the *Risk Register*. Small projects also can benefit from the establishment of an *Issues Register*, as it is low maintenance and high value in terms of keeping the project on track and managing the issues, preferably before they become risks.

7.1 Issues Management Flowchart

The following diagram represents the process of managing issues during the life of a project.

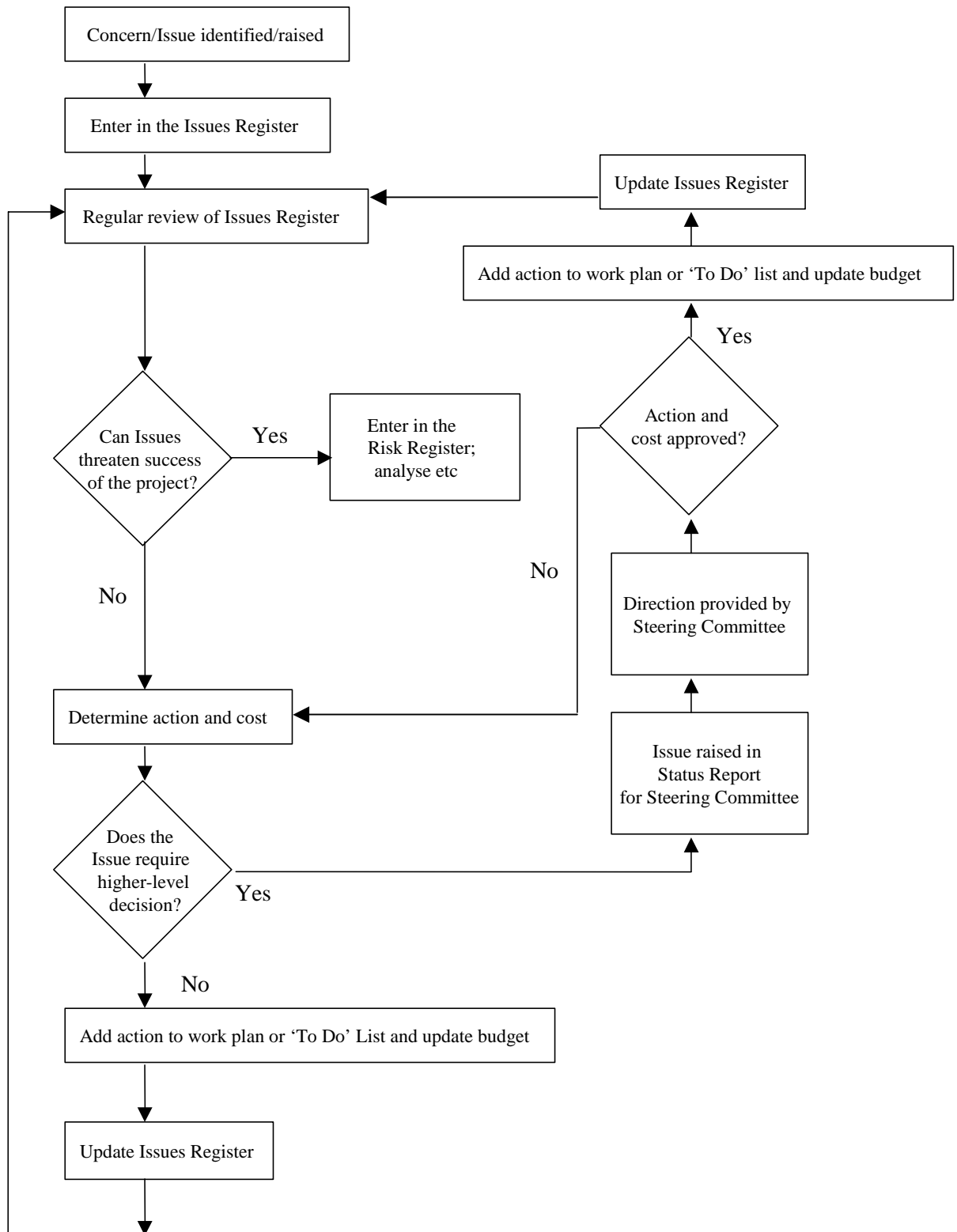


Figure 8: Issues Management Flowchart

7.2 Issues Register Structure

An *Issues Register* is basically a form, often in a MS Word[®] table, for the systematic recording of issues. It usually contains the following for each issue:

- A unique number
- A description
- Who raised the issue
- Date reported
- Priority rating
- The person or group responsible for resolving the issue
- How it is resolved (included as an action in the project work plan and budget, documented in the *Issues Register* or closed)
- Status, usually open or closed
- Date resolved

For example:

Issue Number	Description	Raised By	Date	Priority	Responsible Officer	Actions & Progress Notes	Status	Date Resolved
1.1	Lack of Agency representation on Project Working Group	Working Group	1/09/01	High	Jane	Letter of invitation from Director to Agencies who are unrepresented	Open	
2.1	Lack of registrants for next Forum	Project Manager	1/11/01	High	Senior Project Officer	Send out reminder via the ListServer	Open	
1.3	How to show links between PM documents	Project Team member	10/09/01	Medium	Senior Project Officer	Matrix to be developed and published	Closed	30/11/01

Table 10: Example of an Issues Register

Project Team meetings should include, on the agenda, a review of current issues for each meeting. Current issues should be reported in the *Project Status Report*. In the case of a small project, it may be a verbal discussion between the Project Manager and Project Sponsor/Senior Manager.

If it is unclear as to whether an item belongs on the *Issues Register*, or is something that needs to be dealt with, but will not impede the project, it can be recorded on an action list kept by the Project Team until resolved.

(Refer to the *Project Management Proforma: Issues Register*)

7.3 Tips for Managing Issues

- “Try to make sure you solve the root cause of the issue, not just the symptom, which will ensure that the issue does not resurface later in the project.
- Try to gain a resolution and, where appropriate, approval to proceed as quickly as possible so that the project can move forward.
- In many cases items that are classified as issues are really action items. Action items are areas that must be followed up on at some time. They may or may not involve problems for the project. Maintain a separate Action Items listing as part of Project Team, Steering Committee, Reference and Working Group meetings. The important thing is to record them somewhere.
- Issues can come from team members, project stakeholders or other sources. It is good practice to encourage people to help identify solutions along with the issues.
- Try to engage the Project Sponsor/Steering Committee in the resolution of issues from very early in the project. It can be done through the Project Status Report. Earlier issues management experience will cause the Project Sponsor/Steering Committee to see problems as temporary hurdles that need to be overcome.
- If a large issue looks too difficult to be resolved in a timely manner, break it down into logical sub-issues.
- In many cases issues arrive in pairs, or a number may be encountered in a short timeframe. Their relationship to each other needs to be examined, and then the issue most likely to be the root cause can be addressed. The resolution of this issue may substantially resolve others.”⁷

⁷TenStep Project Management Process <http://www.tenstep.com/open/0.0.0TenStepHomepage.htm>