



NCDIT Enterprise Project Management Office Project Governance & Oversight

Document Type	Process
Title	Determining an IT Project
Revision	1.0
Effective Date	10/19/26

1.0 PURPOSE

This guide consolidates and modernizes NCDIT criteria for identifying IT projects. It aligns with the Enterprise Project Management Office's (EPMO) processes and policies and how they are carried out in the Phoenix project management system. It accounts for NCDIT statutory compliance with N.C.G.S. 143B-1340 and 1341 and addresses how the EPMO will evaluate IT efforts as being a project or not.

2.0 WHAT IS AN IT PROJECT?

An IT project is a **temporary effort that delivers a unique IT product, service, application, or capability**. Projects have a defined start and end, scope, schedule, resource need, risks, and business outcomes. Operational work sustains ongoing services and does not introduce new capabilities.

3.0 DETERMINING AN IT PROJECT

Determining whether an initiative qualifies as an IT project requires a structured, criteria-based review that examines how the effort introduces change to an agency's technology landscape. This evaluation focuses on whether work delivers a new or enhanced IT product, system, capability, or service; whether it involves procurement activities that fall under statewide IT purchasing rules; or whether it triggers enterprise-level governance such as security, architecture, or funding oversight.

Criteria:

- New technology purchases and implementation regardless of cost
- Development and establishment of new IT service offering
- Development and establishment of new capabilities
- Feasibility studies and Proof-of-Concepts (POC)
- Procurement using the NCDIT Statewide IT Procurement Office's solicitation process for IT Technology or Services
- Outsourcing business functions to a vendor that includes IT systems
- Use of IT Reserve Fund spending
- Contextual subjectivity: significant risk; cross-functional team utilization; time sensitivity; substantially expanded stakeholder communications; lack of project management resources; an initiative present within an agency's Strategic IT Plan.

By assessing how the initiative affects service delivery to citizens, businesses, and employees, and whether it alters the way an agency provides or improves those services, agencies can distinguish project work from routine operational tasks. This determination also considers the scope, risk, and uniqueness of the effort, including whether it requires cross-functional coordination, vendor involvement, formal feasibility analysis, or technology implementation governed by statewide standards. Efforts that introduce new service offerings, deploy new technologies, establish new capabilities, involve solicitation-based procurement, or require structured pilot evaluation typically meet the threshold for classification as an IT project. Conversely, actions that reflect routine maintenance, incremental configuration changes, or operational continuity generally fall outside project designation. Applying a consistent and criteria-driven review ensures appropriate governance, compliance with statewide IT management processes, and alignment with statutory responsibilities for overseeing IT investments.

4.0 PROJECT GOVERNANCE THRESHOLD

All IT efforts may be classified as either an IT project or not. If an effort has been determined to be an IT project, it must follow established EPMO governance and oversight policies and processes. The only differentiator within IT projects is the level of investment and risk the State undertakes, and the determination of decision points (DP) being needed through applied EPMO governance and oversight.



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Governance and Oversight		Threshold	Decision Points	
EPMO	Implementation cost < \$250,000 4-year O&M cost < \$500,000 Low risk	Required	Required	Business Case Closeout
			EPMO Determined	Security Review Architecture Review Change Request Go-Live Readiness
EPMO Office of State Budget and Management State Chief Information Officer (SCIO)	Implementation cost ≥ \$250,000 4-year O&M costs ≥ \$500,000 Medium or High risk	Required	Required	Business Case Security Review Architecture Review Go-Live Readiness Closeout
			EPMO Determined	Change Request

5.0 ENGAGEMENT and COMPLIANCE

EPMO Project Management Advisors (PMA) periodically consult with their assigned agencies and Project Managers (PM) to ideally make determinations prior to a procurement request or action. Absent a forenotice, the IT Procurement Intake Form submission functions as the sole notification; at this point the PMAs reach out to the respective agency to review the request following the criteria-based rubric. Agencies may not waive participation or compliance, save those mentioned in N.C.G.S. 143B-1320(b) or who have received a deviation from the SCIO, per N.C.G.S. 143B-1320(c). The SCIO has final authority for project determination.

6.0 AUTHORITY

- [Article 15](#) of N.C.G.S 143B: Department of Information Technology.
 - [N.C.G.S. 143B-1320](#)(b) and (c): Exemptions and Deviations.
 - [N.C.G.S. 143B-1340](#)(a): Requires standardized, documented project management under the SCIO.
 - [N.C.G.S. 143B-1341](#)(a): Establishes documentation and PM standards with public reporting.
- [09 NCAC 06A and 06B](#) of the NC Administrative Code.



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7.0 CRITERIA

Criteria	Guidance	Examples	
		Yes (with rationale)	No (with rationale)
New technology purchases and implementation regardless of cost	- Treat any acquisition and deployment of new IT as a project, even at low dollar values, because NC statute does not set a minimum cost threshold and the SCIO must ensure standardized project management. - If the acquisition requires SCIO-managed contracts (term or agency-specific), follow the 09 NCAC rules and document project governance (Business Case, approvals) before procurement. - Apply PMBOK's "temporary + unique" test: implementation activities with defined start/end that deliver a unique capability (even a small SaaS rollout) may qualify as a project.	- Deploying a new low-cost SaaS knowledge base to replace ad-hoc documents, including configuration, data migration, user training, and go-live activities. <i>(Temporary, unique outcome; no minimum dollar threshold for project governance under SCIO.)</i> - Standing up a pilot mobile device management (MDM) solution for one division, with defined start/end and security configuration before broader roll-out. <i>(Implementation introduces a unique capability and requires standardized project management and security and privacy due diligence.)</i> - Introducing a new API gateway to front existing services, including procurement of licenses, architecture review, and controlled release. <i>(New technology acquisition and decisions governed under Article 15 and 09 NCAC rules.)</i>	- Laptop refresh using a statewide term contract with like-for-like replacements and no new capability. <i>(Standard O&M.)</i> - Firmware updates to existing network switches as part of scheduled maintenance. <i>(Recurring operations without unique deliverables.)</i> - Renewal of an existing software subscription with no change in features, configuration, or service scope. <i>(Procurement action but not a project activity by itself.)</i>
Development and establishment of new IT service offering	- Classify new enterprise or agency-facing service offerings (e.g., ITSM, CRM, telephony) as projects because they introduce unique capabilities and require governance under N.C.G.S. 143B-1340 and 1341. - Consider adopting GAO's ITIM "select-control-evaluate" model to justify project-level planning (business case, risk, architecture, security) and post-implementation evaluation.	- Launching a service desk (ITSM) with incident, request, and change modules, a service catalog, SLAs, and agency onboarding plan. <i>(Includes architecture and security reviews and Business Case DP.)</i> - Standing up an agency's enrollment function for citizen services. <i>(New service offering; unique deliverables; governed under SCIO project management standards.)</i>	- Adding a new queue within an existing service desk tool for a single team. <i>(Incremental configuration with no new service offering.)</i> - Publishing an updated FAQ page for an existing service. <i>(Content maintenance, not a new service.)</i> - Extending hours of an existing help desk without changing tools or processes. <i>(Operational change, not a unique IT service.)</i>



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	Consideration of the NCDIT Statewide Information Security Manual (SISM) or NIST Risk Management Framework (RMF)¹ to categorize and select controls since new services change security and privacy posture and generally need an authorization step before go-live.	Creating a secure data-sharing service for inter-system exchanges with a vendor. <i>(Unique service; requires SISM or NIST RMF steps and project governance to authorize before production use).</i>	
Development and establishment of new capabilities	- Any initiative that adds functionality not currently possessed by the organization meets the PMBOK uniqueness criterion and should be governed as a project. - When capabilities affect multiple agencies or enterprise architecture, reference Article 15 standardization and architecture provisions and obtain SCIO review or approval. - Plan for investment management controls to ensure the capability is selected, controlled, and evaluated against strategic outcomes and risk tolerance.	- Implementing role-based access control (RBAC) across legacy apps. <i>(New enterprise capability with scoped deliverables and a defined end state.)</i> - Adding digital signatures to an internal workflow system with policy, integration, and training. <i>(Unique capability requiring governance and security.)</i> - Standing up new service entry points for state citizens to request or seek support. <i>(Unique functionality introduced possibly spanning multiple agencies; project oversight for architecture standardization and security.)</i>	- Raising an existing application's concurrency limit. <i>(Capacity tuning without new functionality.)</i> - Updating report layouts within a current BI tool. <i>(Cosmetic change; no unique capability delivered.)</i> - Turning on a pre-existing module that was licensed and configured earlier, with no additional work or change management. <i>(Already-available functionality.)</i>
Feasibility studies and POCs	- Treat formal feasibility studies or POCs as projects when they have scoped objectives, scheduled activities, and discrete deliverables for decision-making. - Leverage appropriate due diligence methods and practices to frame the study's criteria and success measures; then use outcomes to evaluate whether to proceed to procurement and implementation. - Where POCs involve handling production-like data or connecting to state	90-day feasibility study comparing two grant-management platforms with defined evaluation criteria, test data, and a final recommendation report. <i>(Temporary, unique deliverable; governance needed for selection.)</i> - POC to integrate an AI assistant for citizen email triage using synthetic data, scoped measures for distribution precision and recall, and Go/No-Go decision. <i>(Projectized pilot with security considerations.)</i>	- Ad-hoc tool demo by a vendor without structured objectives, schedule, or deliverables. <i>(Informational session; not a project.)</i> - Informal brainstorming workshop about future modernization. <i>(No temporary, unique output—pre-project ideation.)</i> - One-off sandbox for a development team with no documented scope or evaluation plan. <i>(Operational experimentation.)</i>

¹ A risk management framework may be established utilizing NCDIT and NIST approaches and yet be different; however, it must be complementary and operate solely within NCDIT SISM parameters.



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	networks, apply appropriate security protocols for time-boxed pilots.	Feasibility analysis for migrating a legacy application to a serverless environment. (<i>Architecture assessment, risk and cost analysis, executive decision package.</i>)	
Procurement using the NCDIT Statewide IT Procurement Office's solicitation process for IT Technology or Services	- Any effort requiring an IT RFx should be treated as an IT project, with EPMO oversight and documented DPs. - Follow 09 NCAC 06A and 06B rules, use statewide term contracts when available, justify agency-specific contracts when needed, and obtain SCIO approvals within a project framework. - Integrate best practices (CIO Council, NASCIO, GAO ITIM, etc.) around acquisition planning, risk, and performance measures to strengthen the Business Case DP.	- Issuing an RFQ for a targeted sole-source case-management platform, developing use cases, security and architecture reviews, and award recommendation. (<i>RFP-driven effort requires SCIO standards and project DPs.</i>) - Conducting an RFP for statewide endpoint protection. (<i>Integrating with architecture and security review DPs before contract execution and deployment.</i>) - RFP for a cloud data platform including migration services and a multi-year contract. (<i>Project governance spans Business Case > Award > Implementation.</i>)	- Buying from a mandated statewide term contract (e.g., adding seats under an existing antivirus contract) with no new functionality or implementation activities (<i>Procurement action only.</i>) - Executing a small services SOW for routine admin tasks under an existing contract. (<i>Operational support; not a new project.</i>) - Renewing an existing RFP-awarded contract with no scope or capability change. (<i>Contract administration rather than project work.</i>)
Outsourcing business functions to a vendor that includes IT systems	- Classify as a project when outsourcing alters any data stewardship parameters, data flows, or security responsibilities; Article 15 places accountability on the SCIO to ensure project standards and oversight. - Ensure that statewide IT procurements involving third-parties undergo ESRMO security and risk review, align with Enterprise Architecture standards, and include contract language that clearly assigns security control responsibilities. - Use generally accepted and industry-relevant portfolio governance techniques to evaluate sourcing alternatives, avoid	- Outsourcing document digitization and e-records management to a vendor with a new hosted system, data migration, access controls, and continuous monitoring requirements. (<i>New system boundary; project governance plus RMF.²</i>) - Contracting a vendor to operate a citizen-facing portal, including implementation of identity, hosting, and analytics. (<i>Unique deliverable; SCIO oversight and security authorization.</i>) - Managed Security Operations Center service engagement with log collection changes, tooling deployment, and runbooks. (<i>New capability/system</i>	- Extending an existing outsourced help desk's hours of operation. (<i>Operational parameter change; same system/process.</i>) - Adding a small bucket of additional tickets under a current managed services contract. (<i>Routine O&M scope.</i>) - Vendor performs quarterly patching per the standing agreement with no system changes. (<i>Ongoing operations.</i>)

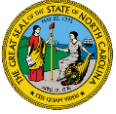
² As adopted from either NCDIT or NIST examples or determined based on project context and still within SISM constraints.



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Use of IT Reserve Fund spending	duplication, and track benefits/risks across the contract lifecycle. - Any initiative drawing from the IT Fund should be handled as a project with documented selection, control, and evaluation consistent with Article 15 planning and financing provisions. - Demonstrate compliance with 9 NCAC procurement rules for how funds are used (e.g., term vs. agency-specific contracts), linking spending decisions to project governance milestones. - Tie funded efforts to PMBOK project framing (temporary, unique deliverables) and performance measures to show outcomes and accountability.	<i>integration requiring authorization and project controls.)</i> - Initiative funded by the IT Fund to implement a new data exchange platform. <i>(Requires selection, control, evaluation, and SCIO project management oversight.)</i> - Using Reserve Funds to deploy statewide MFA across agencies. <i>(New capability; governed under Article 15 with project standards and security authorization.)</i> - IT Fund-backed modernization of a legacy application to a cloud-native architecture. <i>(Unique deliverables; project governance and procurement alignment.)</i>	- Drawing a small Reserve Fund amount to cover an unexpected maintenance invoice for an existing system. <i>(Financial transaction; no new capability.)</i> - Using IT Fund dollars to prepay term-contract support for a current tool. <i>(Funding mechanism for O&M; not a project.)</i> - Reassigning IT Fund budget between cost centers for existing services without starting a scoped initiative. <i>(Budget administration only.)</i>
Contextual subjectivity	- The initiative introduces elevated risk, e.g., technical, security, operational, privacy, financial, or compliance, treat it as a project. - When effort requires coordination across multiple teams, divisions, agencies, or external entities, classify it as a project. - Work is time-critical, highly visible, involves significantly expanded stakeholder communication, or appears in the agency's Strategic IT Plan; elevate it to project status.	- A cybersecurity remediation initiative in response to a high-risk audit finding that requires coordination between ESRMO, EA, network teams, vendors, and legal with deadlines tied to compliance reporting and substantial stakeholder sensitivity. <i>(Article 15 requires SCIO structured oversight, risk management, and adherence to project management standards.)</i> - Implementing an enterprise-wide data-sharing governance framework called out in the agency's Strategic IT Plan, involving joint work across multiple divisions, significant policy communications, and the creation of new capabilities and decision structures. <i>(EPMO oversight, documentation with multi-department communications and</i>	- Routine coordination between two teams to refine an existing workflow without any new functionality, no defined end state, and no material risk beyond normal operations. <i>(Operational adjustment to refactor existing sources for improvement and efficiency gains with no change in functionality.)</i> - Responding to a low-severity security advisory requiring only a quick configuration change by a single team, without cross-functional involvement, documentation deliverables, or strategic alignment. <i>(Operational parameter change; same system/process.)</i> - Updating internal communication templates or informational materials for an already-established service, with no programmatic change, no new capability,



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		Yes (with rationale)	No (with rationale)
		<i>alignment safeguard delivery and accountability.)</i> • Standing up a replacement system under tight federal funding deadlines, requiring collaboration between procurement, EA, ESRMO, business units, and vendors, along with elevated reporting requirements and executive visibility. (<i>Cross-functional work typically demands formal governance, integrated schedules, DPs, and defined roles.</i>)	and no project-level risk or governance need. (<i>Modernizing informational methods; not a project.</i>)

8.0 CONTACT EPMO

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- [Feedback](#)
- [NCDIT EPMO Project Approval & Oversight](#)