



Defining Deliverables

What is a deliverable?

A deliverable is a tangible or intangible good or service produced as a result of a project. It can be an outcome achieved or an output to be provided (e.g. increase tourism by 10% versus upgraded ERP software). It can be a completed product (like a report, a document, a software product, a server upgrade), a component or building block of an overall project, or multiple smaller deliverables (often called interim deliverables). In IT projects, deliverables might be hardware, software or design documents, or an item specifically required in the statement of work.

Deliverables differ from milestones in that a milestone is a measure of progress toward an output while the deliverable is the output being developed. Often some deliverables may be dependent on other deliverables being completed first and this will be represented by several successive milestones.

Defining Deliverables

During the PLAN phase, once you have identified your current state and conducted preliminary research, you should define the deliverables for your project. By defining the deliverables early, you will be able to better capture and detail the work breakdown structure needed to reach those deliverables. This is particularly true in circumstances where the deliverable is an outcome and/or the state will have a significant role in bringing the project to completion.

Start by asking “what is the desired outcome or output?” This focuses attention on the outcomes rather than the activities, which, by extension, helps eliminate activities that may not be productive in achieving the desired outcome. Defining the deliverables in terms of the outcome or output and building the tasks and activities around achievement of those outcomes (essentially beginning with the end in mind) helps focus in on only the activities that are essential to the project.

Deliverables Alignment to Project Objectives and Goals.

During the process of defining your deliverables, ask “which deliverables will help satisfy the objective(s)?” Each objective should be aligned to one or more deliverables. If you have an objective without a deliverable, validate whether the objective is really important and, if it is, then modify the deliverables to meet the objective. If you have a deliverable with no relationship to an objective, validate if the deliverable is needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Further, examine each deliverable to determine if it is integral or essential to achieving the objective and eliminate those that are not. Eliminating unnecessary deliverables will help save time and money on your project.

If you identify deliverables that are not tied to an objective but are determined to satisfy an important business objective, its likely there is an objective that has not yet identified for the project.

During the PLAN and EXECUTE phases, ongoing verification of alignment between objectives and deliverables is essential to ensure a successful conclusion to the project. Use project meetings to discuss alignment and ensure that the deliverables produced align with the project outcome or output.

Expressing a Deliverable for the Statement of Work

A statement of work should include the following elements for each deliverable:

- A description of the work.
- A standard for performance.
- Test conditions or the method or procedure to verify that the deliverable meets with the standard.
- A method or process to monitor and/or ensure quality in the deliverable.
- An acceptance process for each deliverable (see **Acceptance Criteria**).

It may also be helpful to describe the existing business processes and, if the deliverable changes the business process, also describe what the business process will be after the project objectives are completed.