

# Custom Application Development Program Management Framework

Effective program management is essential for the successful execution of large-scale custom application development initiatives. A **Program Management Framework** serves as a structured approach to plan, organize, execute, and monitor all aspects of the development lifecycle. This framework provides clarity on roles, responsibilities, and processes that are required to ensure project alignment with business goals. It has been created from extensive experience of managing projects & programs over hundreds of projects executed over 25 years incorporating learnings from both successful and failed projects. It outlines a clear path from project initiation to completion, ensuring that all stakeholders remain engaged, risks are mitigated, and project deliverables are achieved on time and within budget.

## What Does This Framework Cover?

The framework covers **17 core functional areas** critical to the successful delivery of a custom application. Each functional area is broken down into **key activities and supporting tasks** to provide a clear, step-by-step guide for project execution. The execution **starting timeframe and owners** involved in each Functional Area and Activities are clearly listed as part of the framework. The core functional areas include leadership formation, stakeholder management, application delivery, financial planning, talent and training management, risk management, and governance, among others. By covering these key areas, the framework provides end-to-end guidance for managing the technical, operational, and administrative aspects of the program.

**A quick glance of Excel-structure (370+ rows) of the Program WBS:**

#	Functional Area/ Activity/ Tasks	Exec Phas	Owner	Start date	Target Date	Status	Key Target D	Remarks
1.0	Account Leadership Formation	Pre-Tender	Commercial Leader					
1.1	Identify Delivery Leader	Pre-Tender	Commercial Leader					
1.1.1	Propose 3 Candidates to Senior Leadership Team (SLT)							
1.1.2	Obtain SLT Concurrence							
1.1.3	Engage Delivery Leader							
1.2	Form Delivery Management Team	Post-WO	Delivery Leader					
1.2.1	Identify & Engage BA Lead/ Manager							
1.2.2	Identify & Engage Delivery Manager							
1.2.3	Identify & Engage QA Lead/ Manager							
1.3	Form Client Management Team	Post-Tender	Commercial Leader					
1.3.1	Identify Client/ Account Manager							
1.3.2	Introduce Client Manager to Client Stakeholders							

**Here are brief descriptions of each of the Functional Areas:**

## 1.0 Account Leadership Formation

This functional area focuses on assembling a leadership team to oversee the program and ensure alignment with strategic goals. Identifying the delivery leadership early in the cycle ensures that Delivery Leadership is well aware of the contract key decisions and client stakeholders so that post contract award, transition to delivery happens smoothly with minimal information loss. It includes **defining key leadership roles and responsibilities, establishing governance frameworks, and creating escalation pathways for issue resolution**. The leadership team is tasked with **providing direction, monitoring progress**, and ensuring collaboration across all functional areas. Strong leadership ensures the program remains focused, cohesive, and responsive to challenges. The overall owner for this area is Commercial Leader.

## 2.0 Deals Construct Redesign

The delivery organisation may have some existing delivery execution construct for similar programs. This area is dedicated to revisiting and optimizing the business deal structure or create a new one if doesn't exist, to meet evolving client needs and market conditions. It involves **analyzing existing pricing models, delivery commitments, and contractual terms** to identify areas of improvement. By redesigning the deal construct, the program ensures that the agreement remains profitable while meeting the client's expectations. This step is crucial increasing the chances of winning the contract and subsequent successful delivery. The Commercial Leader provides overall leadership for this area.

### 3.0 SoW/ Agreement Establishment with Client

This functional area emphasizes creating or revising the Statement of Work (SoW) and contractual agreements to clearly outline the scope and deliverables. It involves **detailed negotiations with the client, defining project goals, timelines, and resource commitments, and ensuring legal compliance**. Key activities include **finalizing payment terms and setting expectations for both parties**. A well-drafted SoW serves as a blueprint for the program, minimizing risks of scope creep and disputes. The Solution Leader plays an important role in driving this area.

### 4.0 Local Office (Near Shore) Establishment

This functional area focuses on **setting up a local or nearshore office** to enhance operational efficiency and client proximity. It includes **identifying a strategic location, acquiring office space, and provisioning infrastructure** to support team activities. Additionally, **compliance with local labor laws and tax regulations** is ensured during the setup. This step is often essential for projects requiring **real-time client collaboration, faster issue resolution, and cultural alignment**. The activities in this area is primarily led by Admin Leader.

### 5.0 Talent Planning & Management

This functional area involves creating a comprehensive strategy for **hiring, allocating, and managing talent** throughout the project lifecycle. Activities include **assessing resource requirements, identifying skill gaps, and defining recruitment strategies** such as internal re-deployments and external onboarding. A key aspect is **seeding the team with SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) from existing teams**, ensuring knowledge transfer and faster ramp-up. **Recruitment activities** include creating job descriptions, conducting interviews, onboarding team members, and addressing role-specific requirements. **Travel planning** ensures timely deployment of team members to nearshore or client locations, while **retention planning** includes offering competitive benefits, fostering a supportive environment, and establishing career progression pathways. A robust **performance monitoring and appraisal system** ensures accountability and productivity, enabling team members to deliver effectively. HR Leader primarily leads this functional area.

### 6.0 Training Planning & Management

This functional area is focused on equipping the team with the necessary knowledge and skills for successful project execution. Activities include **designing training programs, scheduling sessions, and selecting trainers or external vendors** for specific needs. The training could encompass **technical topics, domain knowledge, or client-specific requirements**. Periodic **assessment of team readiness and feedback mechanisms** help refine the training plan. By investing in training, the program ensures the team is competent, confident, and aligned with project goals. The L&K Leader of the organisation oversees this area with help from COE Leader.

### 7.0 Functional Specs Readiness for Day-0

Many times a deal is won because the winning team is able to showcase their **existing products or assets** which are relevant to the client. Hence it's important that the product or asset specs are kept up-to-date incorporating the experiences from past projects. This area ensures that all functional specifications and requirements are clearly defined and finalized before the project kickoff (Day-0). Activities include **updating requirements**, and **deal-size wise scope allocation**. Early readiness minimizes ambiguities and lays a solid foundation for timely delivery of downstream activities like **coding** and **testing**. The area is overseen by Delivery Leader.

## 8.0 Program Code Readiness for Day-0 (Reuse Existing Assets)

Similar to Functional Specs, potential clients look for ready product or assets code that can accelerate the project delivery at lower cost with high quality. This functional area focuses on updating the application codebase for Day-0 deployment. Activities include **identifying reusable components**, **refactoring code**, and **integrating modules** to meet evolving requirements. This approach accelerates development while ensuring **consistency** and **cost efficiency**. Delivery Leader plans, allocates resources and monitors this area.

## 9.0 Financial Planning & Management

This area ensures meticulous planning and tracking of the program's financial resources. Activities include **creating detailed budgets**, **monitoring expenses**, and **conducting periodic financial reviews** to ensure cost control. It involves **forecasting future costs**, **managing invoices and payments**, and **allocating funds to key project components**. Risk assessment of financial overspend and identification of savings opportunities are also critical. Effective financial planning ensures that resources are **optimized**, **unnecessary costs are avoided**, and the project remains within the profitability margins agreed upon. Finance Leader is instrumental to ensure that the processes for this area are effectively implemented.

## 10.0 Stakeholder Planning & Management

This functional area, led by Commercial Leader, focuses on identifying and managing stakeholders to ensure their involvement and alignment with the program objectives. Activities include **stakeholder mapping**, **communication planning**, and **periodic engagement through reviews or updates**. Understanding stakeholder expectations and **addressing their concerns proactively** is key to building trust and ensuring support. This approach reduces friction and enhances **collaboration across different teams** and hierarchies.

## 11.0 Application Delivery Planning

This area involves creating a comprehensive plan for developing, testing, and delivering the application. Activities include defining **the key phases of the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC)**, such as **requirements analysis**, **design**, **coding**, **testing**, **integration**, **deployment**, and **maintenance**. Specific focus is given to **sprint planning**, **defining milestones**, and **allocating resources to each phase**. This ensures a seamless transition from one phase to another, minimizing risks and delays. Delivery Leader with effective planning ensures timely delivery of a high-quality application that meets both client and end-user expectations.

## 12.0 Infrastructure Delivery Planning

This functional area focuses on **provisioning and configuring the infrastructure** required to support the application. Activities include **setting up servers**, **configuring networks**, and **ensuring scalability** to meet anticipated demand. It also involves **planning for security, redundancy**, and **disaster recovery mechanisms**. A well-planned infrastructure setup, led by Infra Delivery Leader ensures **reliability and performance** during application deployment and operations.

## 13.0 Vendor Planning & Management

This area is dedicated to **selecting and managing vendors** or third-party service providers critical to the program's success. Activities include **vendor evaluation and selection**, **contract negotiation**, and **performance monitoring through SLAs (Service-Level Agreements)**. It also includes **coordinating with vendors** for timely delivery of products or services and **periodic performance assessments**. Effective vendor management ensures timely delivery of **high-quality services**, reduces risks, and keeps costs within budget. Procurement Leader oversees the execution of various activities under this area.

## 14.0 Risk Management

This very important functional area involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks that could impact the program. Activities include **maintaining a risk register**, **conducting regular risk assessments**, and **creating mitigation or contingency plans**. Proactive risk management helps in **minimizing disruptions** and ensuring smooth execution of the project. Regular reviews ensure that **emerging risks** are identified and addressed promptly. While risks are managed within each functions, the delivery risks are managed under overall ownership of Delivery Leader.

## 15.0 Change Management

This area focuses on managing changes in **project scope**, **processes**, or **deliverables** to minimize disruption and maintain alignment with goals. Activities include **evaluating change requests**, **conducting impact analysis**, and **obtaining stakeholder approval**. A structured change management approach ensures that changes are implemented smoothly and with minimal risk. This area, led by Delivery Leader, is critical for maintaining project timelines, profitability and quality standards.

## 16.0 Governance & Reporting

This functional area, overseen by Delivery Leader, establishes the frameworks and processes for **monitoring project progress** and **reporting to stakeholders**. Activities include **defining KPIs**, **conducting governance reviews**, and **generating regular status reports**. Effective governance ensures **transparency, accountability**, and timely identification of issues. Robust reporting mechanisms keep stakeholders informed and aligned throughout the program lifecycle.

## 17.0 Project Kick-Off

The project kick-off marks the official launch of the program and sets the stage for execution. Activities include **organizing a kick-off meeting**, **aligning teams**, and **finalizing action plans for initial phases**. This phase helps in setting clear expectations, building momentum, and establishing a collaborative environment. The Delivery Leader through a well-planned kick-off ensures all teams are on the same page and ready to execute their responsibilities.

## Why Is This Framework Important?

Custom application development projects are inherently complex, often involving multiple stakeholders, technical challenges, and dynamic requirements. Without a well-defined framework, these complexities can lead to **missed deadlines**, **budget overruns**, **scope creep**, and **quality issues** ultimately leading to project failure. Here's why this framework is crucial:

1. **Structure and Consistency:** It brings **uniformity and consistency** to program execution. By standardizing activities and tasks, the framework ensures that every stakeholder follows a defined process created from project best practices, leading to better coordination and fewer errors.
2. **Risk Mitigation:** By incorporating dedicated functional areas for **Risk Management** and **Change Management**, the framework provides early identification and mitigation of risks, preventing costly disruptions.
3. **Accountability and Transparency:** Clear ownership of activities under **Account Leadership Formation** and **Governance & Reporting** ensures that every team member knows their role, responsibilities, and deliverables.
4. **Improved Decision-Making:** With **Stakeholder Management** and **Vendor Planning & Management**, decision-makers can evaluate dependencies, contracts, and constraints before taking action.
5. **Enhanced Efficiency and Cost Control:** Through **Financial Planning & Management** and **Program Code Readiness**, the framework ensures optimal resource utilization, reduced wastage, and cost-effective reuse of assets and components.
6. **Alignment with Business Goals:** The framework aligns the program's objectives with **business and client goals** through formal processes for scope definition, requirements analysis, and delivery planning.

In summary, this framework reduces uncertainty, improves predictability, and increases the likelihood of success for large, complex custom development projects.

## How and When Should This Framework Be Used?

This framework is most effective for **large-scale, multi-phase application development programs** where there are multiple stakeholders, vendors, and teams working together. It is particularly beneficial when:

- **New Custom Development Projects Are Initiated:** From tender identification through Day-0 readiness to project conclusion, this framework provides a structured approach to manage every phase.
- **Multiple Teams and Stakeholders Are Involved:** Projects involving multiple stakeholders, vendors, and internal teams require a common framework to maintain alignment and accountability.
- **Cross-functional Dependencies Exist:** For programs with interdependencies between technical development, finance, infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement, this framework ensures that these areas remain synchronized.
- **Risk and Change Are Inevitable:** Custom development programs are inherently dynamic, and this framework includes functional areas for risk management, governance, and change control to manage uncertainties.

The framework should be **introduced at the very beginning** of a program, even before the official kick-off for preparation for response to Request for Proposal (RFP/ Tender). This allows for clear alignment on leadership, stakeholder expectations, financial goals, and risk management processes. By integrating it from the outset, organizations can ensure that all functional areas are addressed from Day-0, minimizing last-minute surprises and reducing rework.

