



# What is enterprise architecture?

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**Enterprise architecture** is a comprehensive framework used to manage and align an organization's Information Technology (IT) assets, people, operations, and projects with its operational characteristics. In other words, the enterprise architecture defines how information and technology will support the business operations and provide benefit for the business.

It illustrates the organization's core mission, each component critical to performing that mission, and how each of these components is interrelated. These components include:

- Guiding principles
- Organization structure
- Business processes
- People or stakeholders
- Applications, data, and infrastructure
- Technologies upon which networks, applications and systems are built

**Guiding principles, organization structure, business processes, and people** don't sound very technical. That's because enterprise architecture is about more than technology. It is about the entire organization (or enterprise) and identifying all of the bits and pieces that make the organization work.

## Enterprise Architecture's Benefits

A well-documented, well-understood enterprise architecture enables the organization to respond quickly to changes in the environment in which the organization operates. It serves as a ready reference that enables the organization to assess the impact of the changes on each of the enterprise architecture components. It also ensures the components continue to operate smoothly through the changes.

## An Analogy to City Planning

You can relate enterprise architecture to the more widely understood concept of city planning. In city planning, zones are established for very specific purposes. The buildings that are built in these zones are constructed to specifications to meet those purposes.

For example, a hospital is built to different specifications than a house or office building. Additionally, to ensure uniformity of the city and to ensure roads link to each other and pipes attach to each other without a problem, city planners establish specific guidelines on building materials and interface specifications.

In the case of enterprise architecture, the enterprise is analogous to the city. The organization structure represents the zones established to execute the enterprise's core mission. Buildings are analogous to applications and systems. Likewise, technical elements, such as infrastructure hardware, design specifications, and development languages, are analogous to building materials and interface specifications and are used to implement the applications and systems.

City Plan is to . . .	as enterprise architecture is to . . .
1. zones	1. organization structure

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|--|--|
| 2. buildings                                       | 2. applications and systems  |
| 3. building materials and interface specifications | 3. infrastructure hardware, design specifications, and development languages |

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