# SAM 4920

## PROJECT APPROVAL ~~LIFECYCLE~~ PURPOSE ~~–~~ 4920

**(Revised: ~~06~~03~~7~~/~~2015~~2026)**

The ~~P~~project ~~A~~approval ~~Lifecycle (PAL)~~process represents an opportunity for Agency~~'s~~/state entity's management to assess the full implications of a proposed I~~nformation T~~echnology (~~project~~IT) project. The ~~PAL~~ project approval process is also the means of linking a specific IT project to the Agency/state entity's strategic business plans and IT plans, and to ensure ~~that~~ the proposed project makes the best use of the Agency/state entity's IT infrastructure.

The ~~PAL~~ project approval process ~~is divided into four stages, separated by gates (business analysis, alternatives analysis, procurement analysis and solution analysis). Each stage~~ consists of a series of analyse~~i~~s and ~~set of prescribed, cross-functional, and parallel activities to develop~~ deliverables ~~used as the inputs for the next stage. The gates provide a series of "go/no go" decision points~~ that provide the information necessary to determine whether a proposed IT project is justified and should proceed toward approval. ~~request only the necessary and known information needed to make sound decisions for that particular point in time.~~ As ~~additional~~ information is ~~collected and~~ refined ~~through the lifecycle~~, the cost estimates, schedules, and business objectives are ~~will be progressively~~ updated ~~and evaluated~~ to ensure ~~determine if~~ the project is still practical and if the investment should continue to move forward towards project approval.

~~The model also integrates procurement into the project approval lifecycle, providing better estimates regarding a project's budget and schedule.~~ The purpose of the project approval process ~~PAL~~ is to accomplish the following:

1. Better business outcomes for the State through the successful implementation of IT projects.
2. ~~Result in m~~More successful projects and fewer Special Project Reports.
3. Improve efficiencies through effective project planning and analysis to meet State business needs, while also ensuring compliance with State IT policies.
4. Introduce scalability to the project approval process based on business and/or technical complexity.
5. Ensure each decision point requires only the necessary and appropriate level of information needed to make a sound decision, estimate, or product ~~for that particular stage~~ at that point in the process.
6. Determine whether there is a substantiation for a proposed project, i.e., whether the expenditure of public resources on the project is justified based on the following:
    a. Responsiveness to a clearly-defined, program-related problem or opportunity~~;~~.
    b. Selection of the best of the possible alternative~~s~~;.

c. Agency/state entity's technical and program capabilities; and
d. Financial and/or non-financial benefits over the life of the solution that exceed development and operations costs. Project benefits typically include reduced program costs, avoidance of future program cost increases, increased program revenues, or provision of program services that can be provided most effectively through the use of IT.

~~d.~~

7. Provide a process ~~means~~ for achieving agreement between Agency/state entity's executive management, program management, and project management regarding:
   a. The scope, benefits, schedule, and costs of a proposed project~~;~~.
   b. Management responsibilities over the course of the project; and
   c. Opportunities to collaborate with the California Department of Technology.
8. Provide the executive branch, control agencies, and the Legislature with sufficient information to assess the merits of the proposed project and determine the nature and extent of project oversight requirements.
9. To the extent feasible, ensure each step and work product in the ~~lifecycle~~ project approval process is useful input into subsequent steps.
10. Ensure that a "no" or a "go back and re-think" decision is communicated as early as possible if the level of detail provided is inadequate.