Connecticut Department of Social Services
Making a Difference

<Project Name>
Issue Management Plan

Version X.XX

Issue Management Plan:

The purpose of the Issue Management Plan is to define how the project team will effectively identify, assess, and manage project issues as they emerge over the course of a project. The Issue Management Plan provides direction on identifying issues, assessing them by identifying their ownership and severity, and managing them to resolution. The Plan describes the roles, responsibilities, tools, and control measures used to identify and manage issues.

An issue is a presently occurring problem or question that, if not resolved, has an adverse impact on the project. This is as opposed to a risk which is in simple terms a probability that could become an issue if certain events occur or conditions are met.

Issue Management is integrated with other project management processes, including Risk Management, Action Item Management, Governance Management, Quality Management, and Communication Management. This integration is an important aspect of managing and controlling project schedule and scope.

- Risk Management: The Issue Management Plan is related to the Risk Management Plan in terms of the related risks that may escalate into issues as a routine part of Risk Management. In addition, risks may be identified during the execution of issue resolution activities.

- Action Items: The Issue Management Plan is related to project Action Item Management processes because action items may be raised during the execution of issue resolution plans. In addition, upon assessment, proposed issues may be reclassed as action items. Issues and action items both track questions or problems that must be answered. Action items, however, are generally simple and discrete items that can be resolved within the team, where issues require actions or decisions from the sponsor, stakeholders, executive leaders, or another organization or area outside of the team.

- Governance Management: The Issue Management Plan is related to the Governance Management Plan because the governing entities defined in that plan are the authorities who approve or reject issue resolution plans. Issues are escalated per the structure identified in the Governance Management Plan.

- Quality Management: Issues may be created because of a deficiency identified during the validation of requirements; additionally, an issue may trigger the creation of one or more non-conformities, which are governed by Quality Management.

- Communication Management: The Issue Management Plan is related to the Communication Management Plan because the processes for reporting and escalating issue status and metrics are identified in the Communication Management Plan.

- Change Management: The Issue Management Plan is related to project Change Management processes as significant issues often require a project change that may impact the terms and conditions of the project's charter or contract.

- Decision Log: Issue Management is related to the Decision Log because as issues are managed to resolution, key decisions will be made to remedy the impact of the issue and should be documented.

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<Project Name>
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Revision History

Date	Version	Author(s)	Notes
1/1/2018	0.01		

Introduction

Issue Management is the disciplined process of identifying, tracking, and resolving issues that affect a project's progress and direction. Throughout a project's life cycle, issues that affect the ability of the project team to meet project goals can occur on a regular basis. Issue Management is the set of procedures that help a project team manage issues. Issue Management interacts with Risk, Action Item, Communication, Quality, and Governance Management activities through the life cycle of a project effort.

Purpose

The purpose of the Issue Management Plan is to define how the project team will effectively identify, assess, and manage project issues as they emerge over the course of a project.

Scope

This Issue Management Plan is specific to the <PROJECT NAME> project team. Project team members have a responsibility to identify project issues and comply with the Issue Management Process defined in this plan.

Objectives

The <PROJECT NAME> project will take an integrated approach to manage issues from identification through to closure. The documentation of issue resolution is a critical aspect of this process given the lessons such resolutions can provide for future project releases or phases. The objective of this plan is to aggressively address and quickly resolve issues as they are raised throughout the project delivery timeline.

Roles & Responsibilities

The <PROJECT MANAGER OR OTHER DESIGNEE> will serve as the issue manager for this project. The Project Manager will establish a standing incident assessment/response team for the review, monitoring, and control of project issues. The issue management roles and responsibilities of key members of the project are listed below.

\<Project Name\>
Issue Management Plan

Name/Title	Role	Issue Management Responsibility

Procedures

Provide a summary of how issue management activities will be performed, recorded, and monitored throughout the lifecycle of the project.

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Issues will be identified as early as possible in the project to minimize their impact. The following sections outline the procedures the project team will follow in the management of project issues.

Inputs

Provide a summary of the inputs into this project's Issue Management Process.

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E.g., The inputs to the Issue Management Process for the \<PROJECT NAME\> project are:

- Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Version 5
- DSS Project Management Project Governance Plan
- Project Charter
- The Project Management Plan
- Risk Management Plan
- Quality Assurance Plan
- Communications Plan
- Action Items Log
- Change Control Log
- Risk Log
- Project Commitments

Process

Outline the Issue Management Process. Reference the detailed four step Issue Management Process outlined in Appendix A.

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The \<PROJECT NAME\> Project Issue Management Plan establishes an iterative process for identifying issues and managing them through resolution to closure. It is imperative that issues are identified and resolved in a timely manner. Issue tracking and reporting is an important part of the process because it allows project leaders to have an accurate understanding of project issue status to make timely and

informed decisions. An effective Issue Management Process identifies issues as soon as they are known and clearly states the action or decision that is needed for resolution and who needs to take the action or make the decision. Issues that require escalation are escalated as early as possible to eliminate or minimize their impact to the project.

The Issue Management approach described in this plan consists of four high-level steps, which are supported by several underlying activities:

Step 1: Identify and assess issues.

Step 2: Clarify issue, create a resolution plan, review, and verify the issue.

Step 3: Implement continuous issue response monitoring and control.

Step 4: Confirm and close the issue.

See Appendix A for a detailed accounting of the process and workflow.

Outputs

Provide a summary of the outputs of the Issue Management Process.

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The outputs of the project Issue Management Process for the <PROJEFCT NAME> project are as follows:

- Issue Log
- Project Status Reports
- Decision Log

Incident Response

Provide a general outline of what response strategies the project will pursue should a risk escalate into an issue. Reference the Risk Assessment Toolkit and Appendix A for details on DSS Project Management risk response best practices.

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Monitoring, Control, and Reporting

Provide a general outline of how the project team will monitor, control, and report issues. Outline standing project procedures, review processes, frequency of reviews, team roles and responsibilities with respect to these tasks. Include a listing of conditions that will trigger an escalation of an issue to the appropriate level of visibility. Reference the Risk Assessment Toolkit for details on DSS Project Management risk monitoring, controlling, and reporting best practices as a guide.

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E.g., All issues with a priority that is material will be tracked and published in a weekly project status report and in the monthly executive steering committee report.

Escalation

Provide an overview of the escalation path for reporting new issues.

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E.g., Escalation of new issues should, at minimum include in the reporting chain the

- Project Sponsor
- Business Lead
- Steering Committee

- Program Director

Tools & Practices

Provide an overview of the tools the project will use and the practices the team is committed to follow to manage project issues. At a minimum, the project must develop and maintain an issue log. This can be achieved by using a Project Management tool suited for large, complex projects or using the Issue Log Template for small projects of a short duration. Additionally, the project team should establish a repository for collocating the plan and the artifacts that will be generated over the life cycle of the project.

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Issue Management Repository

Detail the location (directory, system, etc.) and a high-level overview of the organization structure of the Issue Management Repository. If available, provide an accessible link to the repository's location.

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Issue Log

Provide an outline of what (i.e. DSS Issue Log Template, issue management system, etc.) will be used to capture and track identified issues. Provide a list of the key information items that will be captured for each issue. Detail where the issue log will be maintained. If available, provide an accessible link to the issue log's location.

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References & Related Documents

Provide references to any project work products this plan *is dependent on* or *are dependent on* for this Issue Management Plan. For example, the Project Charter contains a listing of high-level risks and assumptions that could become issues, the Risk Management Plan and Risk Log contain a list of risks which could escalate into issues, the project schedule will likely include issue status reviews at weekly and monthly intervals.

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Approvals

Identify by name, title, and signature the individuals agreeing to authorize expenditure of organizational resources to accomplish the project activities outlined in this Issue Management Plan. At a minimum, the plan should be signed by the Project Manager, the Project Sponsor, and, if applicable, the Executive Sponsor.

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Role	Name & Title	Signature	Date

APPENDIX A – Issue Management Process Workflow

Issues are generally the result of an identified barrier to completing project activities from the project schedule. Any risk in the risk log also has the potential to escalate into an issue. It is the responsibility of each team member to be vigilant in identifying and assessing issues to verify that decisions can be made in a timely manner to reduce potentially negative impacts to project completion and program objectives.

The following steps are guidelines recommended by DSS to assist the project manager in establishing an effective Issue Management Process within the project team.

Step 1: Identify and Assess Issues

An issue can be created whenever a project team member or stakeholder identifies a question, problem, or condition needing to be tracked to resolution. An issue has the potential to affect project components including, but not limited to

- Schedule
- Deliverables
- Budget
- Resources
- Quality Assurance
- Releases

Identify and Submit a Proposed Issue

An event that meets any of the criteria below is a potential issue:

- The event cannot be resolved at the project team level within three days.
- The event impacts areas outside of the project.
- Action(s) required to overcome the event involve a change to the project that increases cost or scope.
- Action(s) required to overcome the event will materially impact the project schedule or commitments.

When issues are created, consider the following options for responding to the issue:

- Add staff resources according to the processes outlined in the Project Management Plan or Project Resource Management Plan.
- Revise the effort estimate or other scheduling specifications according to the processes in the Project Management Plan.
- Adjust project or release scope or requirements through the Project Change Control Process.
- Add or modify project risks as described in the Project Risk Management Plan.

To help determine whether to open an issue, the issue originator should follow these guidelines:

- When a risk escalates: the events identified as precursors to the risk becoming an issue trigger the need to initiate the response plan or seek the enactment of a contingency
- When a decision, support, or action is needed from another project area, project management, executive management, or stakeholder

- When an answer to one question is needed that, if not resolved, will have an adverse impact to the project

When an issue is identified, the issue originator should enter the issue in the project's issue repository or issue log and set status to "In Review."

For critical issues the originator determines require expedited processing, the issue should be escalated to the attention of the project manager. Critical issues typically meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The severity of the issue will significantly impact project quality, cost, schedule, or resources.
- The issue includes a project work stoppage
- The issue cannot wait for disposition due to client concerns.

Identify and Assign the Owner

The proposed issue should be reviewed preliminarily by the project incident assessment/response team to determine whether the proposed issue, question, problem, or condition is an action item, issue, or risk. If the issue stands, then an issue owner should be identified.

The Project Manager is responsible for assessing new issues to identify items that may affect multiple project areas or that could affect both operational groups and stakeholders and recommend escalation for these items. Based on this assessment, the Project Manager and the incident assessment/response team should determine the issue owner for the proposed issue based on the team or manager who holds the most responsibility and/or authority over the resolution of the issue. In cases where the issue owner is a peripheral stakeholder outside of the project, the Project Manager may choose to assign a member from the incident assessment/response team as a steward to facilitate resolution through the issue owner.

The issue originator should be included in the review with the incident assessment/response team to facilitate clear communication of the details of the issue and provide background as required.

Assess the Issue

When a new issue is identified, the issue originator works with the incident assessment/response team to determine if the issue is valid and within the project's domain of control. If the initial assessment reveals the issue should belong to a different team or project, the Project Manager routes the issue to the appropriate agency for consideration. This routing should be in the form of an email and/or other documented written notice that a possible issue to their operations has been identified and is being routed for their assessment.

If the incident assessment/response team find the issue is a duplicate or is a risk or an action item, they should notify the issue originator and the Project Manager, transfer the impediment to the appropriate work stream, and close the issue in the issue log. An entry noting the reason for closure should be entered in the issue log along with the name of the decision makers and rational for redirection.

The incident assessment/response team works with the issue owner and issue originator to assess the impact of each issue on the project. Analysis includes an assessment of the

- Consequences of delaying resolution of the issue
- Impact to quality, project cost, technical success, and schedule
- Dependencies the issue may have to other issues, risks timelines, or events

- Discovery of other issues or risks that were unseen

The result of the incident assessment/response team assessment must include a concise statement that identifies the decision or action needed, the due date by which the decision or action is needed, and the impact if the decision or action is not completed by the due date. The due date should be determined in relation to tasks or milestone dates in the schedule that are affected by the decision/action requested.

Step 2: Clarify Issue, Create a Resolution Plan, Review, and Verify the Issue

After the initial assessment the issue owner clarifies the issue and updates the issue log accordingly. The issue then proceeds into the review and verification process.

Clarify

Upon completion of the initial issue assessment, the issue owner is responsible for revising the issue to validate the following information in the issue log is correctly updated:

- The description contains enough background or supplemental information to understand the issue
- The action/resolution being requested is clearly outlined
- The impact is assessed

Once the issue owner, issue originator, and Project Manager are mutually satisfied with the description of the issue and the proposed action or resolution, the issue status is updated to "In Progress."

Review

An issue that is in progress is prioritized based on the impact the issue presents to the project. Review priority is given to high severity and escalated issues. Medium and low severity issues are reviewed after the priority issues have been examined and as time permits. Issue reviews are scheduled weekly. Expedited issues will be reviewed by the Project Manager and incident assessment/response team as soon as practical after escalation.

Resolution Plan

The issue owner is responsible for drafting the Resolution Plan steps necessary to drive the issue to closure in the issue log. Once this is completed, the Resolution Plan is reviewed by the incident assessment/response team and updated as required. Depending on the severity of the issue, the resolution plan may require a review and approval by the project sponsor and/or executive leaders.

Resolution Plan steps are constructed to use the "what/who/when" construct: they identify the action, the person assigned to perform the action, and the action due date.

Resolution Plans are in the form of sequential, numbered steps that identify the steps and sequence that will be taken to bring the issue to closure. Resolution Plan steps should be discrete tasks with a single assignee and a single target date assigned. Avoid an ambiguous task like "hold meeting" in place of a concrete and demonstrable task like "secure agreement on design." Avoid combining tasks that require multiple assignees. For example, "procure and install router" might be broken into "procure router," "configure router," and "test connectivity" with different assignments and sequential due dates.

Although some steps may be assigned to persons outside of the team, it is the responsibility of the issue owner to track the issue to completion. It is the responsibility of the issue owner to collaborate with the issue originator and Project Manager to validate the Resolution Plan fully addresses the issue and

effectively leads to closure. The issue owner should request additional information and input from the team, affected project area, and other stakeholders, as necessary, to understand the complexity of the issue so an effective issue Resolution Plan can be developed.

Step 3: Implement Continuous Issue Response Monitoring and Control

Active Issue Management is necessary to verify that identified issues are resolved in a timely manner to reduce potentially negative impacts to the project or operational activity. Project Managers are responsible for verifying issue resolution steps are performed by the due dates assigned and the identified resolution steps result in a resolution to the issue. If additional resolution steps need to be added, changed, or deleted, the issue originator, should be notified and provide approval prior to the issue being modified.

Monitor & Manage Issues to Resolution

The issue owner is primarily responsible for verifying the escalation occurs: if the issue resolution steps are not achieving the necessary progress or if critical path tasks or key deliverables are being adversely affected. If the modification of the resolution steps affect the overall due date of the issue, the issue must be reviewed for approval to extend the overall due date of the issue. Before approval can be given, the owner must include a statement in the discussion field indicating the reason or need to extend the due date of the issue (e.g., the schedule date changed, additional resolutions steps were added, the work is more than expected, etc.).

Escalation

If the issue owner, team, Project Manager, or issue originator determines the issue requires escalation based on the issue escalation criteria below, the issue should be escalated in accordance with the Project Governance Plan and/or Communication Plan.

Criteria for escalation include

Criteria	Measure
An issue description cannot be agreed upon at the project level between the owner and the originator or there has been no response or update to the issue. Issues with no outlined Resolution Plan within ten (10) business days of issue identification.	The issue has been in an "In Review" status for longer than ten (10) business days without a mutually agreed update to the description, impact, action/resolution description, and Resolution Plan, or there has been no response or update to the issue with no outlined Resolution Plan within ten (10) business days of issue entry.
An issue has steps in the Resolution Plan that are past due, and they affect the critical path or key milestone delivery dates.	A key milestone or critical path tasks are affected by at least one (1) day.
Approval of the Resolution Plan requires a decision from a higher governance level.	Decision/action requested is beyond the authority of the team.
Issues affect multiple projects, or affect both operations and projects.	Tasks on the schedules for more than one (1) project are affected.

Criteria for Close

Issues can be closed when the steps in the Resolution Plan are complete and the owner, originator, and Project Manager agree the issue no longer exists. The issue owner may recommend closure based on the following criteria:

- Resolution Plan steps are complete and the issue no longer exists
- Resolution of the issue occurs through the resolution of another issue
- The issue de-escalates into an action item or risk
- The issue is closed by one project and a new issue is created by another project
- The issue is transferred out of the project

To initiate the closure process, the owner updates the issue log with the details of the final resolution of the issue. The owner then forwards the issue resolution update to the originator to confirm agreement the issue is resolved and can be closed.

If the issue originator disagrees, a response is routed back to the issue owner for additional actions required to complete the issue resolution.

Step 4: Confirm and Close the Issue

As notified by the issue owner, team or Project Manager, the issue originator reviews a resolved issue and verifies it can be closed. Once agreement is reached on closure between all issue stakeholders, the issue is added to the agenda for the next project status review to secure executive consensus to approve to close.

Once approval is given, the Project Manager sets the issue status to "Resolved;" enters a "Closed Date" in the issue log; updates the resolution description to record how the issue was resolved; and notifies the project team, issue owner, and issue originator of the action. At the close of the project, all outstanding issues and issue resolutions are compiled for review during the project lessons learned sessions for record.