U.S. General Services Administration

Federal EOA Playbook

Federal Process Improvement through Elimination, Optimization, & Automation (EOA)

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The first Trump Administration published a President's Management Agenda (PMA) in 2018 that aggressively pursued federal efficiency and operational improvement through IT modernization, human capital reforms, workforce transformation, and structural reorganization. Cross Agency Priority (CAP) Goal 6 was especially noteworthy for its forward-leaning approach to *shifting from low-value to high-value work,* including a focus on requirements elimination, process optimization, and the adoption of emerging automation technologies.

The second Trump Administration has doubled down on its first PMA through executive orders and OMB memorandum, with a clear mandate for agencies to deliver efficiencies and reduce workforces. Lessons learned and best practices from 2018's CAP Goal 6 remain timely and relevant, and will greatly benefit agencies in their workload optimization initiatives.

PURPOSE

This handbook was compiled for career and political executives interested in achieving workload and workforce transformation. It compiles tools and strategies for rapidly achieving tangible efficiencies in federal operations, and infuses key lessons identified during CAP Goal 6 pilot deployments at the Department of Education (ED) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and through the work continuously done within the General Services Administration (GSA).

The strategies included in this handbook serve as a blueprint for transforming federal performance and rapidly achieving efficiencies through the (1) elimination of waste and non-value-add activities, (2) optimization of mission-critical operations, and (3) automation of low-value, costly tasks and processes.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

Mike Lynch

Deputy Administrator

US General Services Administration

Federal Community,

I am proud to publish the **EOA Playbook,** a practical guide to assist our Federal partners in improving operations and shifting more time and resources toward mission delivery. This playbook builds on lessons learned from GSA's Million Hour Challenge, an ambitious effort to move work away from manual, low-value activities and toward higher-value outcomes.

The Administration has prioritized greater efficiency, accountability, and smarter use of technology across government. This playbook helps agencies put those priorities into action by identifying opportunities to eliminate unnecessary work, improve operations, and automate repetitive tasks.

The EOA Playbook captures lessons learned from federal pilots, mature automation programs, and GSA's own enterprise experience, giving agencies a practical path to identify opportunities, move quickly, measure results, and scale what works across government.

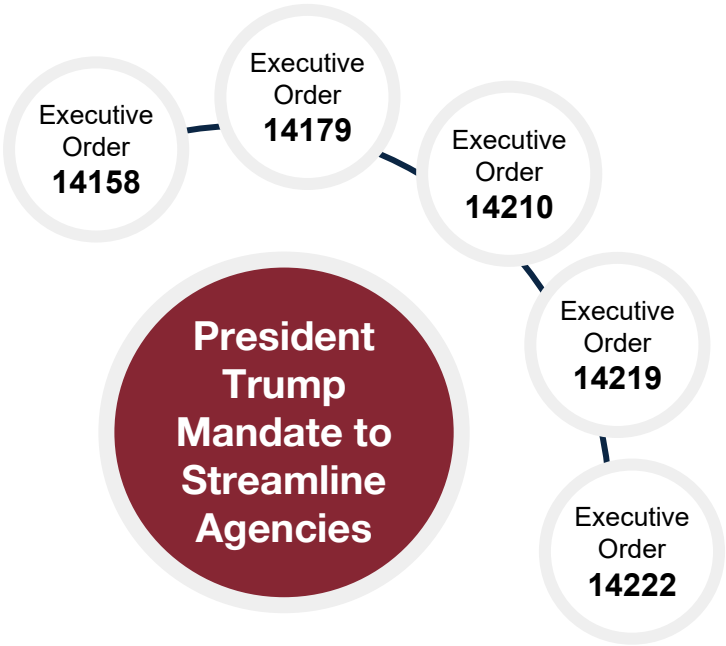
- Mike

Why EOA?

President Trump has set a clear mandate for federal agencies — aggressively pursue cost savings and efficiencies.

Through both executive orders and OMB memoranda, agencies have been asked to deploy innovative solutions to modernize the federal government, while maximizing value and service for hardworking American taxpayers.

Agencies have made substantial strides in right-sizing their workforces. **Agencies must now tackle the workload challenge associated with decreased resources,** and find efficiencies through requirements elimination, optimization, and automation.



DRIVERS OF OPTIMIZATION IN FEDERAL AGENCIES

1 People

- Organizational redesign and consolidation
- Upskilling and retraining employees
- Hiring freezes and attrition
- Elimination of functions / organizations
- Reductions in force
- Streamlining missions / organizational requirements
- Early retirement incentives

2 Process

- Process reengineering and streamlining
- Requirements review and elimination
- Automation design and deployment
- Application of artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies
- Change management
- Opportunity identification, validation and scoping

3 Technology

- Systems modernization and new platforms
- Systems integration, streamlining, and retirement
- Improved user / customer experience and design
- Data modernization, new capabilities, and use of AI

**** This EOA Handbook**

Rigorous Application of Management Sciences

The EOA methodology fuses several complementary process improvement and management methodologies including *lean, root cause analysis, and agile management.*

The goal of EOA is practicality and rapid implementation — EOA took the best parts of these management sciences and determined how to streamline their deployment in the federal environment.

Private Sector Optimization Best Practices

The EOA methodology borrows from process improvement and management strategies used by leading private sector companies.

These organizations are pioneers in eliminating inefficiency and continuously improving operations. EOA seeks to enable federal organizations to achieve the same goals using the same techniques.

Solutions Tailored to the Federal Environment

The EOA methodology is tailored to the unique constraints of the federal environment.

- Creating coalitions to sustain improvements beyond changes in administration.
- Incentivizing employees and overcoming resistance to change.
- Leveraging the right level of agency SMEs to expedite and deploy EOA projects.
- Identifying common constraints in policy and standards, and working around them to make progress.

GSA Case Study: EOA Results

Organizational Background

The General Services Administration (GSA) launched an EOA pilot in 2019 from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) that later included all administrative functions and business units. The effort included sprints to identify and vet opportunities for improvement, scoping and prioritizing initiatives, and full deployment of projects across requirements elimination, optimization, and automation. GSA has continuously applied principles of the EOA methodology across the enterprise to both foster a culture of continuous improvement, as well as to effectively manage workload.

FY 2019–25 Qualitative and Quantitative Results

Developed an enterprise automation program that has deployed 190+ applications, estimating over 2M hours of workload saved (2019-2025).

- Led by the performance improvement officer to align agency requirements with automation strategy
- Automations deployed in every business unit

Reviewed program requirements and eliminated 115,000+* hours of annual workload

Optimized business processes to save 125,000+* hours of annual workload

Improved Federal Employee Viewpoint scores in organizations adopting EOA — manual / tedious work drives employee disengagement

FY 2026/2027 EOA Plan

GSA will continue to leverage EOA to rapidly increase operational efficiency through its **Million Hour Challenge**, a moonshot goal to shift one million hours from low to high-value work during FY26 and FY27.

- **E - Eliminate:** Redefine or remove policies, procedures, requirements, and standards that create unnecessary workload.
- **O - Optimize:** Standardize, simplify, and streamline work within and across business units to reduce duplication and improve consistency
- **A - Automate:** Use emerging technologies to replace manual, repetitive, and rules-based work with scalable automation solutions.

*Note: These values, calculated using approved methodologies before project deployment, estimate the manual process' annual capacity in hours. They are unaudited and used to prioritize EOA efforts.

Organization Deep Dive — Office of Chief Financial Officer

EOA Strategy + **24 Month Hiring Freeze** (2018-20)

The use of a hiring freeze in conjunction with the EOA methodology provided an added incentive for employees to fully engage and optimize / automate manual workload.

EOA Actions Taken

- Consulted with customers and eliminated financial reports that were no longer needed.
- Eliminated second level financial reviews that were redundant and did not identify discrepancies
- Designed **45 process standardization and optimization projects** deployed within 6 months to reduce FTE requirements
- Identified and built **20+ Robotic Process Automation (RPA) applications**
- Developed new automated dashboards to provide customers with real-time data, and to reduce manual analysis and data entry

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

- **Staff reduction from 450 to 343 FTEs (24%)**
  - Attrition over 24 months (2018-2020)
  - Elimination of existing vacancies
- **Increased federal employee viewpoint scores from 66% to 88% within the organization**
- **Increased operational performance**
  - Timely funds certification — 87.7% to 95.9%
  - Aged invoices from 2.58% to <1%
  - Reduction in chargeback backlog by $40M
  - Eliminated all audit material weaknesses and significant deficiencies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This EOA Handbook provides pragmatic guidance for federal programs seeking to rapidly improve operations through process streamlining, automation, and/or standardization.

The handbook is formatted to follow a typical EOA project through its lifecycle, from ideation to deployment. It provides best practices and lessons learned from high-performing agencies and mature federal automation programs who have successfully delivered hundreds of impactful applications, including pilot EOA deployments launched during the first Trump Administration.

01.

Opportunity Assessment

Identify and validate high-impact EOA opportunities to solve known and emerging business challenges

Estimated Phase Time Commitment: 4 Weeks

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

1.1 Change Coalition | 1.2 Kickoff & Alignment | 1.3 Project Identification | 1.4 Project Validation

OBJECTIVE

Assemble a coordinated group of change champions, rather than a single point of change management, to align stakeholders, remove barriers, and accelerate efficiency gains.

RATIONALE

Establishing an effective change coalition is a critical element of all three focus areas covered in this handbook — opportunity assessment, solution planning & design, and implementing and sustaining. Members of the coalition leverage their unique insights into process performance, business requirements, policies, and standard operating procedures, making them invaluable during opportunity identification, process reengineering, and automation deployment.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Assemble a team of change champions (e.g., sponsors, executives, senior leaders, managers, front-line workforce, SMEs, governance boards, approving bodies).
2. Establish an EOA project charter and assign a project manager.
3. Agree on systems for tracking, communicating, and managing EOA project progress.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Executives, managers, SMEs, employees, and external partners • Project charter template • Collaboration tech and tools	• Assembled change coalition • Approved EOA project charter • Clear project management structure	• Including only senior stakeholders • Losing track of ongoing initiative progress • Assigning multiple managers to an initiative or domain

CHANGE COALITION BEST PRACTICES

Picking the Right Team

Ideal EOA initiative champions will favor change and focus on continuously improving business processes. Coalition members should have visibility across business functions, with representation from systems, process, and policy Subject-Matter Experts (SMEs).

The formalizing of the change champion function is a common practice among large federal automation programs via a customer or client manager role.

Using the Right Structure

Leveraging a Community of Practice (COP) structure is a common approach to creating a change coalition. A COP brings together technical experts, leaders, and staff that perform a common function. A COP is chartered to accomplish certain outcomes, whereas a Community of Interest (COI) is often created for knowledge sharing within an agency.

In the EOA context, COPs help incorporate a broad group of SMEs to facilitate timely and effective opportunity identification, improvement, and automation.

Critical Success Factors

A Engaged SMEs

COPs do not require a huge time commitment, but do require a passion for improvement. A small group of engaged SMEs can create outsized momentum for change.

B Engaged Executives

EOA project implementation inevitably results in some delays. Engaged executives are needed to overcome hurdles and provide ongoing momentum.

Federal Program Responsibilities

- Analysis and vetting of improvement opportunities
- Project design, scoping, and implementation planning
- Project implementation and change management
- Ongoing performance measurement and reporting

EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix A: Sample EOA Initiative Charter

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

OBJECTIVE

Determine the strategies that define an agency's success as it relates to its mission and to cross-agency goals, then formally kick-off project.

RATIONALE

Strategic orientation is essential to understanding where an agency is today and where it wants to be tomorrow. A clear strategy enables teams to track progress, adapt to a changing operating environment, and clarifies priorities and goals.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Align on strategic goals and priorities for the EOA initiative.
2. Define EOA initiative goals.
3. Hold formal EOA project kickoff to ensure common understanding of expectations and purpose.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Executives, managers, SMEs, employees, and external partners • Strategic orientation or plan for EOA • Change coalition developed	• EOA Initiative approved and launched • Defined, measurable EOA goals • Strategically-aligned EOA priorities	• Involving the wrong stakeholders • Ignoring agency / federal strategies • Setting vague or obscure goals

EOA ALIGNMENT AND KICKOFF BEST PRACTICES

Setting Aggressive Goals

When kicking off a project or change coalition initiative such as EOA, it is critical to align stakeholders, define success, and set goals for all activities. EOA leaders must assess the individual priorities, operating environments and constraints at their agency to determine appropriate goals.

Example EOA Goals Include:

Outcome goal: EOA initiative total cost savings

Outcome goal: EOA FTE / contractor reduction targets

Outcome goal: new capabilities delivered

Outcome goal: customer service improvements

Outcome goal: increased employee satisfaction

Output goal: annualized capacity created or redeployed

Output goal: number of EOA projects deployed on-time and on-budget

Process goal: increased quality, throughput, accuracy

Process goal: total volume processed

Input goal: number of EOA projects

Input goal: number of stakeholders engaged in EOA

Input goal: % of organization operations under EOA review

Metrics and KPIs

Good strategies are grounded in data-driven insights. Great strategies tie valid measures and robust measurement systems to stated priorities, driving accountability.

Whether a project is tasked with defining a strategy or implementing it, EOA project success depends on being able to measure and demonstrate progress.

These metrics will be used during kickoff and project closure to define and determine project success.

Formalize the EOA Plan

The best strategies turn obscure vision into actionable tasks. They break down complex targets into manageable timelines and activities. The EOA Initiative requires a documented plan that includes elements like key milestones, priorities, assigned owners, measurable outcomes, and channels of communication.

A strong strategy is adaptable to shifting needs, while avoiding obscure language. The EOA program should anticipate the need for continuous review and prioritization of projects — and should develop a framework to accommodate that degree of iteration.

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

OBJECTIVE

Identify and assess business challenges that serve as candidates for elimination, optimization, and automation projects.

RATIONALE

Leveraging the change coalition to employ a variety of opportunity identification strategies helps ensure that high-impact EOA projects are surfaced and prioritized. Following the best practices below will minimize the likelihood that critical business opportunities are missed.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Choose effective opportunity identification tool(s) to include value stream mapping, staff or SME surveys, and/or a review of known and emerging business challenges.
2. Ensure the EOA opportunity is accurately defined and can be observed or measured.
3. Understand the value stream, key players, handoffs, and business requirements.
4. Prepare a final, defined list of EOA opportunities for validation.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Clear EOA success criteria and metrics • Aligned stakeholders and business needs	• EOA projects identified from emerging or known challenges • Preliminary projects scoped • Shortlist of opportunities for change coalition validation	• Inadequate assessment leading to downstream rework • Failing to establish trust with the stakeholders and SMEs • Ignoring regulatory or agency-specific constraints

EOA OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION BEST PRACTICES

Programs should select one (or more) of three common approaches to identifying EOA projects.

A

Value Stream Mapping

Purpose: graphic depiction of the sequence of events, actions, and decisions that add value in a process or program

Pros: highlights high-impact areas; ensures EOA projects are prioritized and aligned with strategic objectives

Cons: may not capture intangible benefits; requires accurate data to avoid misaligned priorities; narrower in scope than staff survey; does not increase broader staff engagement

B

Staff Surveys

Purpose: collects insights from employees to identify opportunities, barriers, and areas of improvement within a project, process, or office

Benefits: broadest in scope to uncover all challenges; enables increased staff engagement and participation

Cons: responses may be biased or incorrect; labor intensive to validate responses; creates expectation of action

C

Known & Emerging Business Challenges

Purpose: analyzes known or emerging issues; involves reviewing existing problems that have already been identified

Pros: requires limited validation of opportunities; built-in change coalition and project rationale

Cons: may be overly focused on past issues; can lead to analysis paralysis; scope might not be broad enough to actually solve challenges

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION BEST PRACTICES

A

Process and value mapping to identify EOA projects

APPROACH STEPS:

1. Gather a mapping facilitator, process SMEs, process owners, and executives with visibility into the end-to-end process or program to be assessed.
2. Agree on a scope of the value stream review — this would include a finite list of business processes.
3. "Walk" (directly observe) the process from start to finish and finish to start. Take notes on observations related to performance, outputs, or overarching impact on the organization (internal and external).
4. Map the steps in the value stream at a high level (Level 0 example below).
5. Facilitate a group discussion on the health (performance) of each step in the value stream and flag underperforming steps for further analysis.

Requirements

- Mapping software or whiteboard (e.g. MS Visio)
- Process SMEs and owners
- Executives
- Process documentation or other performance standards (service level agreements)

Outcomes

- Current value stream (Level 0) map
- High-level business opportunities (gaps/problems)

Common Pitfalls

- Poor process documentation and understanding
- Siloed process knowledge
- Missing SMEs and stakeholders
- Too many voices in the room

Time and Resource Commitment

- Planning and facilitation of the value stream session should require no more than two weeks.
- Costs incurred should only include facilitator and participant time.

VALUE MAP EXAMPLE: EMPLOYEE PTO REQUEST

Employee requests paid time off (PTO) → Supervisor approves / denies PTO → PTO balance is updated → Employee is notified of request outcome

Session Output

Potential EOA project ideas

Discussion: *1A) What are the high-level, current state challenges, performance issues, and areas of potential inefficiency related to each Step. 1B) What are the areas that directly drive value for customers / stakeholders (e.g., customers find value in requesting PTO through self help portal rather than asking supervisor to log it). 2) How can challenges and areas of inefficiency be addressed while prioritizing the aspects that drive value.*

Conducting an Effective Value Mapping Exercise

Lay the Groundwork

Engage all relevant stakeholders early in the process to share ideas, build consensus, and establish a culture of change and trust. Success requires a well-informed and bought-in team aligned on the purpose of the value mapping session.

Discovery Sessions

Discovery sessions are collaborative meetings where stakeholders discuss current processes, ongoing pain-points, and goals. These sessions build excitement around change and help form a holistic view of current operations.

Process Walkthrough

Process walkthroughs involve observing work happen (or reviewing work products or outputs produced at each stage). This method allows teams to identify process issues that might be overlooked through discussions alone.

Resist Solutioning

One of the biggest pitfalls is rushing to solutions before understanding the problem. Effective value mapping require thorough analysis of the opportunity, questioning of requirements, and identification of root causes.

Leveraging Logic Models

Performance logic models can support a value mapping exercise as a means of facilitating end-to-end processes or program analysis.

EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix B: Sample Performance Logic Model

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION BEST PRACTICES

B

Employee and stakeholder surveys to identify EOA projects

APPROACH STEPS:

1. The EOA initiative lead should meet with relevant leadership to confirm the survey approach, audience, and milestones.
2. Write clear, unbiased quantitative (e.g., Likert) and qualitative (e.g., open-ended) questions — an EOA survey example is included in Appendix C.
3. The EOA initiative lead should meet with relevant compliance organizations to receive approval for survey launch.
4. Perform launch and follow-up communications to increase employee engagement and participation.
5. Process results into a shared format for evaluation, grouping by key theme and common elements (office, function, E/O/A).
6. Transparently communicate with employees who completed the survey on next steps.

EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix C: Sample EOA Staff Survey used within several pilot agencies.

Requirements

- Surveying software with the ability to provide anonymity and accommodate survey population
- A survey that complies with 508 restrictions and the Paperwork Reduction Act (as well as any agency specific requirements)
- Survey communications

Outcomes

- Broad-scale organizational EOA assessment
- Significant inputs for eventual EOA projects

Common Pitfalls

- Poor communication and leadership visibility leading to low participation
- Creating unrealistic expectations among staff on how their inputs will be used

Time and Resource Commitment

- The survey could take time to get approved by relevant compliance groups
- Costs incurred include survey technology and SME time spent analyzing and assessing a greater pool of EOA opportunities

EOA OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION BEST PRACTICES

C

Known and emerging business challenges

Sources of Known Business Challenges

Voice of the Customer Analysis

What: soliciting customer feedback through formal and informal channels provides program executives an understanding of existing business challenges and EOA opportunities

How: voice of the customer analysis can be obtained through value stream maps, process walkthroughs, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and quantitative data review

Strategy: leverage organizational SMEs to help translate customer feedback into actionable requirements

Voice of the Stakeholder

What: the concept of voice of the business analysis refers understanding the requirements of executive leadership and oversight stakeholders, and using them as inputs for EOA opportunities

How: voice of the business analysis is most often obtained via executive mandate, requirements, policies, and standards

Strategy: leverage organizational process SMEs to translate executive mandates into distinct EOA opportunities

Sources of Emerging Business Challenges

Program Evaluations

Program evaluations can offer guidance on organizational performance that merits additional discovery and EOA solutioning.

Oversight Reports & Findings

Internal and external audits can identify potential business challenges, compliance risks, and process bottlenecks. Some audit reports are able to identify root causes, whereas others provide macro-level findings.

Operational Metrics and Dashboards

Operational and strategic reviews can convey performance trends and data analytics that reflect potential business challenges.

Executive & Legislative Mandates

Mandates from Executive and Legislative Branch management organizations often identify performance anomalies that require investigation, evaluation, and greater insights. EOA strategies can be important tools in resolving these challenges.

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

OBJECTIVE

Validation and distillation of business challenges into scoped EOA opportunities ready for deployment.

RATIONALE

To ensure the the right challenges are selected as EOA projects, the opportunities identified in Phase 1.3 must now be validated. Programs should apply consistent and comprehensive standards to decide which projects receive approval for process optimization and reengineering.

Programs can be validated on a per opportunity basis as part of a formal intake process for the program, or as a batch if the opportunities result from a broad survey or other feedback collection mechanism. Consider validity, feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment when assessing potential solutions.

EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix D and E: Sample Prioritization Matrix and Feasibility / Impact Assignment Matrix

See Appendix F: Sample Final Vetted Projects List

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Assemble the right team of cross-functional experts to validate identified potential projects.
2. Gather relevant artifacts, assessment results, and opportunity documentation.
3. Assess the challenge and prepare for solution design.
4. Develop a final list of validated opportunities, ready for the solutioning phase.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Multiple data sources could be needed to validate identified opportunities • Credentials and access to performance data • Skilled facilitators and analysts to expedite the validation process • Understanding of agency or strategic goals	• Identified challenges vetted, and ready for solutioning • Actionable areas for EOA • Alignment of EOA opportunities with agency strategy	• Over-reliance on single source of data to confirm opportunity validity • Lack of stakeholder involvement and limited perspectives • Failing to fully scope the EOA need, leading to later rework or incorrect resource estimates

EOA OPPORTUNITY VALIDATION BEST PRACTICES

Process for conducting EOA validation

1. Prepare a list of identified needs or challenges with all available scoping information and background context. For those identified through a survey, this may require additional investigation to assemble.
2. Share the EOA opportunities list with the cross-functional experts selected to complete initial vetting and analysis.
3. Have the SMEs review the opportunities list and conduct an initial validity check that ends in a go / no-go decision. This could include a facilitated discussion to derive at shared decisions or independent review. The goal of Check 1 is to confirm whether the actual opportunity exists.
4. Once Check 1 is complete, Check 2 is used to assess feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment to discern whether the opportunity is a project that the EOA initiative should facilitate given available resources and the goals of the program.

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA OPPORTUNITY VALIDATION BEST PRACTICES

Best practices for conducting check 1: validity

VALIDITY CHECK

Does the EOA opportunity address a real business challenge or enable new capacity, capability, or performance levels?

Is the EOA opportunity data-driven? What evidence supports implementation?

Does the EOA opportunity need to be refined or altered to increase efficiency, quality, effectiveness, or compliance?

Is there a logical connection between the recommended EOA project and the purported benefit?

Does the opportunity meet all specified requirements for development (e.g., minimum hours of capacity created)?

The output of the project validity analysis is a go or no-go decision.

Assess approved projects for feasibility, impact, and strategic alignment.

EOA OPPORTUNITY VALIDATION BEST PRACTICES

Best practices for conducting check 1: feasibility, impact and strategic alignment

FEASIBILITY

What are the resource requirements for deploying the identified EOA opportunity (e.g., tools, technology, people)?

Are there external factors — such as policies, standards, or oversight stakeholders — that would preclude the EOA opportunity?

What is the proposed scope and timeline for implementing the EOA opportunity? Is the timeline too long to be an effective solution?

Is the proposed EOA project possible? Do statutory or other policy requirements require the activity be performed to a certain standard?

Is there an available technical solution with the capabilities to deploy the proposed improvement?

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Will the automation opportunity meaningfully impact or contribute to achieving the agency / office's strategic priorities?

Will the EOA opportunity meaningfully impact or contribute to achieving the agency / office's operational priorities?

What strategic initiatives will the organization not be able to complete in order to prioritize this EOA opportunity?

IMPACT

Would the EOA opportunity fully rectify the identified business challenge?

Would the EOA opportunity provide a long-term solution or short-term fix?

Does the impact of the EOA opportunity justify the resource allocation required? If resources are limited, what initiatives will the agency not be able to pursue?

Are there risks to implementing this solution? How likely is a successful deployment?

PROGRAM-WIDE VALIDATION CONSIDERATIONS

The EOA Program Leads should assess the following at a macro level:

- A robust portfolio of EOA opportunities across critical functions
- An opportunities list with a mix of quick wins, projects that can be accomplished within a fiscal year, and long-term solutions — EOA initiatives thrive off of quick wins to build momentum
- Detailed project descriptions and a sufficient degree of analysis (feasibility and impact) to inform executive decision making on which projects should be approved

02.

Solution Planning & Design

Designing EOA projects that improve business processes and resolve complex operational challenges

Estimated Phase Time Commitment: 8 Weeks

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Collaborate with process SMEs to map the process end-to-end, with enough detail that any stakeholder can understand the steps, variation, and bottlenecks within the process.

RATIONALE

Mapping the process at the task level facilitates a shared understanding of the current state, and allows the team to choose the right improvement approach to solve the problem.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Engage a representative group of stakeholders (SMEs, Executives, Change Champions) to map the process. Where possible, 'walk' the process together as a group prior to mapping.
2. Document the first and last steps in the process to define the scope (or 'bookends') of the process in question. Fill in the remaining steps from left to right. Check in frequently to ensure group alignment.
3. Layer in additional data to obtain a clear clear view of the problem and opportunity space (resources, cycle time, inputs, outputs, etc.). An example is provided on the next page.
4. Discuss findings with the team and share learnings with key stakeholders.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Final list of vetted projects from Phase 1 • Mapping software (e.g., MS Visio) • Process SMEs • Process owners	• Current state process map • Identified bottlenecks / pain points • Understanding of what is driving poor performance • Identified high-level ideas for elimination, optimization, and/or automation	• Inaccurate / missing data • Siloed process knowledge • Inaccurate / missing process documentation • Too many stakeholders creating a collective action problem

PROCESS MAPPING BEST PRACTICES

Conducting mapping sessions that rapidly uncover bottlenecks and performance issues

Facilitate a Collaborative Mapping Session

Ensure representation from across the functional area(s) to foster fruitful discussion of value alignment and rapid mapping, as well as identification of process variances.

Keep the Process Map Consistent and Simple

Improvement methodologies offer various approaches to current state mapping. The best approach is to keep things simple and leverage a consistent set of symbols.

Incorporate Quantitative Performance Data

Incorporate quantitative data where possible to fully understand the scope and what happens at each step in the process, the current bottlenecks, and the current constraints.

Identify Critical Systems Interfaces

Identify interfaces with systems and technology to understand whether they drive efficiency or inefficiency in the overarching business process.

Determine What Drives Value for the Organization

Align desired process outcomes with process steps. What drives value for customers and stakeholders? How can optimization improve those steps?

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

PROCESS MAPPING BEST PRACTICES

Example: process map for employee PTO requests

Level 0 — Value Stream:

Employee requests paid time off (PTO) → Supervisor approves / denies PTO → PTO balance is updated → Employee notified of request outcome

Level 1 — Process

Employee logs into payroll System A to confirm PTO availability → **Employee accesses HR system B to formally complete PTO request** → Employee emails supervisor to notify of PTO request completion

- **Average Processing — 4 Mins** Source: System uptime log
- **Average Monthly Transactions — 250** Source: System transaction log
- **Average Processing — 8 Mins** Source: System uptime log
- **Average Monthly Transactions — 200** Source: System database
- **Average Processing — 2 Mins** Source: Time trial
- **Average Monthly Emails — 375** Source: Email audit

Level 2

Employees log into HR System B using assigned access credentials. → Employee navigates to the “Request Annual Leave” tab. → Employee inputs required information including start date, end date, and PII. → Employees enter supervisor data and select “Submit PTO Request.”

PROCESS MAPPING BEST PRACTICES

Types of data to incorporate into process maps to assess current state performance

Resourcing and Points of Contact

The number of employees working on each individual process step, as well as who is accountable for actually performing the activity.

Inputs and Outputs

Inputs include forms, systems, reports, data and other elements that feed into the process. Outputs include what is produced through the process.

First Time Quality (FTQ)

The percentage of units or procedures that are right the first time received. Other quality metrics can include error or defect rates.

Cycle Time

The amount of time it takes for a transaction unit to be produced from start to finish. This can be measured as the throughput time for the entire process or each process step.

Processing Time

The amount of time a unit is acted upon by FTEs to bring it closer to an output. This differs from cycle time in that it does not include delays and wait time.

Decision Analysis

Decision analysis measures the percentage of workflow associated with decision points in process maps (e.g., yes/no decisions).

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Discuss process mapping outcomes with process SMEs, process owners, and COP members, and select one or more improvement approaches to address identified challenges.

RATIONALE

Processes often suffer from several performance gaps that can be difficult to close with a single or linear improvement process. An in-depth review of each step in your current process map with key stakeholders ensures selection of an approach tailored to performance challenge(s).

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Gather process SMEs, process owners, and COP members to review the current process map (can occur separate from step 2.1 or concurrently).
2. Discuss and question each step in the process to clarify areas of opportunity for requirements elimination, optimization, and automation.
3. Analyze process performance data to support selection of EOA approach(es).
4. Update the current process map to flag steps for elimination, standardization, optimization, and/or automation.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Final list of vetted projects from Phase 1 with current state process maps from step 2.1 • EOA program leads • Process SMEs • Process owners	• Future state process maps representing selected EOA strategies • Documented EOA opportunities	• Solutioning too quickly • Resistance to change • Infeasible ideas

Tip! *There is almost always a combination of EOA opportunities in a process flagged for performance challenges. Combine approaches to achieve optimal outcomes.*

APPROACH SELECTION BEST PRACTICES

Incorporating elimination, optimization, and automation solutions to address challenges

ELIMINATION

Can this workload be eliminated?

Eliminate — legacy activities, processes, requirements, and deliverables that are no longer needed or can be done less frequently because of a change in business requirements, technology, or partner needs

Eliminate — controls or standards that are too stringent and cause the agency or its partners unnecessary work

OPTIMIZATION

AUTOMATION

If workload cannot be eliminated, can we optimize, standardize, or automate it?

Optimize — processes, requirements, and deliverables that can be done more efficiently, in less time, or more accurately

Optimize — process additions, modifications, or deletions that would streamline work products to increase efficiencies, or increase the usability by customers, partners, and the public

Optimize — process additions, modifications, or deletions that would more closely align workload with organizational missions

Standardize — process additions, modifications, or deletions that create organization-wide or agency-wide consistency in performance

Standardize — identification of a best process among offices or regions performing the function, and implement nationally or agency-wide

Automate — processes, tasks, and activities that are manual, rule-based, and mundane to free up employee time for more complex, higher-value work

Automate — critical processes, tasks, and activities that must be performed accurately and must avoid the risk of human error

Automate — analysis, reporting, and data streams for agency or government-wide stakeholders

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Research and build consensus for the **requirements elimination opportunities** identified through Phase 1 and mapped in the initial steps of Phase 2.

RATIONALE

Eliminating requirements or process steps requires understanding and agreement among large groups of stakeholders. Research policy and speak with experts to maximize the value of requirements elimination activities.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Assess which stakeholders (internal and external) are critical to analyze, and ultimately approve the elimination of the identified opportunities.
2. Gather those stakeholders, as well as additional process and policy SMEs, process owners, and executives to review the identified elimination opportunities in a facilitated session (this should not take more than two hours). The EOA opportunity owner should present the process mapping documentation and the cases for elimination. Stakeholders should flag any initial concerns to be reviewed by the EOA Owner outside the session.
3. The EOA Owner should consult policy documentation and subject matter experts to assess and validate the elimination opportunities and address any concerns raised.
4. A second facilitated session is needed to discuss concerns raised during the initial session and to make final go / no-go decisions on elimination (again should not take more than two hours).
5. The EOA Owner should begin documenting the approach to eliminating the requirements as input to Phase 2.4 Developing Project Charters.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Updated current state process map with incorporated performance data for the initial facilitated session • Final list of vetted elimination opportunities • Process SMEs and owners • Executives and policy experts	• Validated requirement and/or process step elimination opportunities • Discussion of the approach to elimination as an input to implementation planning and project charters	• Missing or misinterpreted standards • An overly cautious approach to elimination, or conversely, a misguided elimination-first mindset

REQUIREMENTS ELIMINATION BEST PRACTICES

Inputs for Making Rapid Go-No/Go Decisions on Elimination

1. Preparing for the Initial Facilitated Session

The EOA owner should arrive at the initial elimination facilitated session having well researched the existing activity / requirement, and developing a data-driven approach confirming the need for elimination. This would include researching applicable standards, predicting stakeholder questions / concerns, reviewing performance data, and discussing future needs with key constituencies. The goal of the facilitated session is to identify any potentialities not assessed by the EOA owner, rather than starting from scratch on the analysis.

2. Conducting the Initial Facilitated Session

The elimination facilitated session should be a rapid-fire style review. EOA owner(s) should quickly present the opportunity and business case for elimination, and stakeholders should raise any concerns or requests for additional analysis. Careful note taking and action item tracking is critical so EOA owners can perform those requests quickly, and move forward with valid elimination opportunities.

3. Researching Stakeholder Concerns

The EOA owner should thoroughly review stakeholder concerns during the time between the two facilitated sessions. This could include finding additional policy or guidance, reassessing performance data, validating with additional stakeholders, or rescoping the exact contours of the requirements elimination opportunity. Careful sourcing and collection of documentation is important to show stakeholders the validity of the elimination case.

4. Finalizing the Elimination Opportunity

With the final approval of relevant stakeholders, the EOA owner should record all thoughts from the second facilitated session as inputs for the project charter developed during Phase 2.4. This could include sequencing, details on specific elements of the elimination opportunity (e.g., reports, deliverables, standards), and change management concerns.

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Follow a series of structured problem-solving steps and develop a robust process improvement plan.

RATIONALE

Deploying structured problem-solving aligns diverse groups of stakeholders to quickly and effectively develop pragmatic solutions to sticky process problems.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Assess which internal and external stakeholders are critical to analyze the identified optimization opportunities, develop improvement plans, and implement end-to-end process changes.
2. Gather those stakeholders, along with the process maps and performance data, to review the identified optimization opportunities (this should take no more than four hours). The EOA opportunity owner should present the business problem and current state process data, consulting stakeholders to flag any initial concerns. The group should agree on measurable improvement goals that the project's success can be measured against.
3. The EOA owner should facilitate a brainstorming exercise to identify and prioritize ideas to achieve the established goals. A simple impact and feasibility matrix can be used to create a roadmap of quick wins and low hanging fruit.
4. The group should assign owners to approved ideas and begin implementing process changes. A second facilitated session is needed after implementation to assess outcomes and ensure improvements are sustained.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Updated current state process map with incorporated performance data for the initial facilitated session • Final list of vetted elimination opportunities • Process SMEs and owners • Executives and program leads	• Clearly defined business challenges and optimization projects • Evaluated process performance data • Problem root cause analysis	• Surface-level process understanding • Infeasible ideas that depart from requirements and policy standards

Tip! *Standardization and optimization often go hand-in-hand. While assessing current and future process performance goals, double-down on opportunities to spread best practices to other teams, functions, or locations.*

OPTIMIZATION BEST PRACTICES

Inputs for designing optimization / improvement plans for identified opportunities

Problem Background

- What is the purpose or business reason for choosing this issue?

Improvement Opportunities

- What are the options for addressing the gaps and improving performance in the current environment?
- What do you recommend and why?

Current Performance

- What is the problem or need, e.g., the gap in performance?
- What facts or data indicate there is a problem?
- Are there simple, **repeatable standards?**

Action Plan

- What are the main actions and outcomes in the implementation process, and in what sequence?
- What support will be required?
- Who will be responsible for what, when, and how much?
- How will you measure effectiveness?

Future Goals / Target

- What specific improvement(s) in performance do you need to achieve?

Follow-up & Lessons Learned

- How will you know if you meet your targets?
- How will you know if you reduced the gap in performance?
- What processes or systems will you use to enable, assure, and sustain success?

Analysis (Root Cause)

- What is the trigger to the problem?
- What conditions or occurrences are preventing you from achieving the goals?

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Select the automation technology with capabilities best suited for the identified opportunity.

RATIONALE

Selecting the wrong automation technology can result in a failure to meet development timelines, remain on budget, and effectively solve the business problem.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Assess which internal and external stakeholders are needed to analyze the identified automation opportunities and approve the selection and implementation of an appropriate automation technology.
2. Gather those stakeholders, along with the policy experts and technology SMEs, to review the identified automation opportunities (this should take no more than two hours). The EOA opportunity owner should present the process mapping documentation and high-level requirements for automation. Stakeholders should flag any initial concerns to be reviewed by the EOA owner outside the session.
3. Evaluate the structure of incoming and outgoing data, business rules and decisions, and the systems the automation will be required to interface with. Document automation technologies available to the organization that meet the defined requirements and discuss with the group to make a final go / no-go decision.
4. Consult policy experts, Community of Practice members, and IT stakeholders to ensure an understanding of the organizational processes and policies required for automation as an input to Phase 2.4 Developing Project Charters.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Updated current state process map with incorporated performance data for the initial facilitated session • Final list of vetted automation opportunities • Process SMEs and owners • Executives, technology SMEs, and policy experts	• Automation technology selection for the identified opportunity • High-level solution requirements and resourcing needs	• Selecting the wrong technology for the identified requirements • Limiting discussions to available technologies • Missing stakeholders or standards

Tip! *There has been a significant increase in adoption and deployment of automation technology across government. Utilize publicly available automation use case repositories to learn what others have already tried and the technology they leveraged. For more information and best practices on public sector automation, we recommend reviewing the federal RPA Program Playbook authored by MSI for the federal RPA Community of Practice — available at https://digital.gov/guides/rpa/rpa-playbook/.*

AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

Data Structure

Are the business process data structured (consistent, repeatable) or unstructured (inconsistent, varied)? Are they transmitted digitally or via paper?

Decisions & Rules

What decisions are made throughout the process? Are there clear business rules for making decisions? Do any decisions require situational human judgement?

Available Resources

What automation tools are currently available in your organization that you can leverage? Who are the automation experts in your organization?

Systems and Interfaces

Which and how many systems does the process interact with? Are those systems connected? Are the system owners internal or external to your organization?

Transaction Volume

Is the process in question executed daily? Weekly? What is the volume of transactions in the process during a given period? How does that vary over the course of a year?

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

AUTOMATION PROJECT BEST PRACTICES

Identifying technologies best suited for automation opportunities

Goal: Select the most appropriate automation technology to meet the high-level requirements identified within the process and value stream mapping.

Does the business process require situational human judgement?

No

Does the business process use structured or unstructured data?

Structured

A — *Robotic Process Automation (RPA)*

Software programmed to mimic and perform rules-based digital actions usually done by a human.

B — *Application Programming Interface (API)*

Programming code that enables the transmission of data between two distinct systems.

C — *Optical Character Recognition (OCR)*

Software that can identify, leverage, and translate handwritten and static printed data into digital formats.

Unstructured

D — *Natural Language Processing (NLP)*

Software capable of understanding, manipulating, and acting on human language.

E — *Document Understanding (DU)*

Software that can extract, interpret, and process data from multiple file types, including PDFs, images, and scans.

Yes

AI and ML tools often leverage NLP and DU tools.

F — *Artificial Intelligence (AI): Cognitive Insights

Software that uses algorithms to detect patterns and trends in data, and can then take action accordingly.

G — *Artificial Intelligence (AI): Cognitive Engagement

Software that facilitates engagement with human beings to provide or capture data in convenient formats.

H — *Machine Learning (ML)*

A broad category of software applications that learn from data over time and perform transaction processing without additional human intervention.

Note: This graphic simplifies the technology selection process to help EOA programs get started. CIO organizations across government know these technologies and can help program offices identify available solutions.

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

AUTOMATION PROJECT BEST PRACTICES

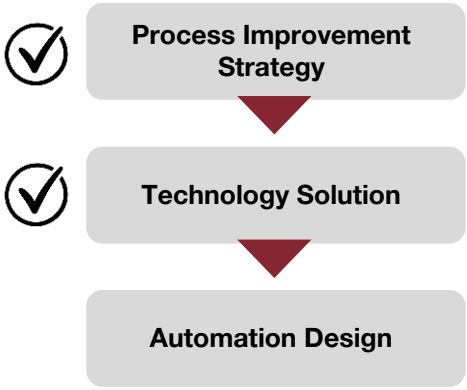
Codifying the requirements for automation solutions

Goal: Identify and catalog design specifications for the automation for development and deployment.

After determining the process improvement strategy and technology solution, the automation program should transform business and performance requirements into an actionable automation design. When designing an automation, key stakeholders include the process owner, process SME, automation developer, and automation project manager. Stakeholders should collaborate to design the future state of the automated process. They should use the best practices established above for current state process mapping.

They should document and evaluate each step in the automation to align technical requirements with technical capabilities. When setting up a process for automation, consider the technical systems that will be used, the triggers that will kick off certain steps in the process, the inputs and outputs of the process, and the potential security implications.

Once a future state automation design is agreed upon, create a vetted documentation of the future state, receive approval to proceed, and then engage the development team.



Automation Design Key Considerations

Key Stakeholders

- Project owner and subject matter expert
- Project developer
- Automation project manager

Process Description and Scope

- Current process flow diagram
- Future state automated process flow diagram
- Technical systems
- Triggers
- Inputs/outputs
- Security considerations

PHASE 2: SOLUTION PLANNING & DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

Codify the EOA improvement opportunities from previous steps to prepare for a formal EOA project implementation kickoff in Phase 3.

RATIONALE

A project definition template provides a clear visual of the identified EOA opportunities for review, alignment, common understanding, and approval to deploy the project.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Transcribe EOA opportunities and descriptions into a standard project definition template.
2. Collaboratively discuss and document the impact and feasibility of each project and compare against the values assigned during the validation stage in Phase 1. Decide whether the project is more or less of a priority after the solutioning phase (as needed).
3. Document the high-level projected benefits (value outcomes) of the project.
4. Identify and document resource (human, material) required for project deployment.
5. Gather process SMEs, owners, COP members, and executives to review, approve/reject, and prioritize projects.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Updated current state process maps and solution plans • Documented EOA opportunities • Process SMEs and owners • Executives	• Completed project definition templates for all projects • Project approval(s) • Project kickoff plan	• Missing stakeholders or executives • Inaccurate or missing cost/benefit analysis • Inaccurate impact and feasibility assessments

EOA INITIATIVE BEST PRACTICES

Codifying EOA projects in a basic charter before implementation planning

Project ID	Project Description	Impact	Feasibility	Hours Savings Projection	Resourcing	COP POC
A-24-9 (Automation, FY, Project #)	Contractor Responsibility Determination Screener Every contracting officer (CO) must conduct a contractor responsibility determination to determine if companies who submit offers in response to the solicitation are responsible in accordance with FAR. To accomplish this task, they must manually research offerors DUNS number in both SAM.gov and FAPIIS.gov to summarize vendor information and document findings. An RPA bot could accomplish these tasks and save significant agency-wide resources.	Impact **7** (Ranking on a 1,3,7,9 scale). This would provide much needed capacity for agency COs.	Feasibility **7** (Ranking on a 1,3,7,9 scale). The agency can leverage existing technology but GSA systems access could be a constraint.	Hours Savings Projection **4,000** Estimated annualized hours calculated using the following inputs — number of people performing the process * average hours spent per week *52 weeks.	Resourcing **160** This will require 120 developer hours and 40 business analyst hours.	COP POC **First Name, Last Name** Office of Acquisitions

03.

Implementing and Sustaining

An overview of agile methodologies and strategies for rapidly planning, deploying, and managing EOA projects, as well as a programmatic approach to sustaining change and improving methods

Estimated Phase Time Commitment: Ongoing

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

3.1 Project Kickoff | 3.2 Automations | 3.3 Change Management | 2.4 Sustaining

OBJECTIVE

Ensure that stakeholders, SMEs, developers, and project managers (PMs) 1) know the expected outcomes and timeline for the project, 2) know roles and responsibilities, 3) establish a cadence for meetings and doing the work, and 4) determine next steps.

RATIONALE

The initiation of a project highly impacts its success. Defining roles/responsibilities, setting clear expectations, establishing milestones, and determining the next steps are all tasks that are critical to a successful project. SMEs, developers, and other change agents must be engaged early to ensure that their expertise is accounted for in the planning and execution of the project.

EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix G:
Sample EOA Program Deployment Schedule

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Gather the relevant documentation, including the project charter and scope of work.
2. Assemble the project team, including all stakeholders.
3. Determine the next steps, ideally formatted as a plan of actions and milestones (POAM).
    a. Depending on the complexity of the project, a risk register may also be advisable.
4. Establish a clear timeline, milestones, and expectations for the project.
5. Create a communications plan that outlines who, when, and how.
6. Assign responsibilities to the appropriate project team members.
7. Establish a meeting cadence for check-ins and collaboration.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Stakeholders, SMEs, PMs, developers and other support staff • Project charter from phase 2 • High-level solution plan	• POAM and risk register developed • Communications plan developed • Roles and expectations established • Meeting cadence set	• Missing requirements • Missing stakeholders • Inappropriate timeline • Unclear expectations

PROJECT KICKOFF BEST PRACTICES

Completing a basic POAM to initiate approved EOA projects

Project Name: Contractor Responsibility Determination Screener

Project ID: A-21-9
Accountable Official: Mary Smith
Project Manager: John Smith
Lead SME: Janet Smith
Current Status: Ongoing

Projected Hours Saved	**4,000**	**Target Completion Date**	**7/1/25**
Project Description and Scope	Contracting officers conduct contractor responsibility determination to evaluate companies who submit responses to RFQs. This requires manually researching offerors DUNS number in both SAM.gov and FAPIIS.gov to summarize vendor information and document findings.		
Improvement Plan Summary	The EOA team will conduct a rapid 60-day assessment of the contractor responsibility determination process to capture the current state process, assess systems access, and complete the process design document for the RPA bot. The development team will then have 30 days to develop and deploy the automation, including user acceptance testing.		

Project Phase	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Completion
Project Approval and Launch	**Complete**				[Date]
Project Plan Completion	**Complete**				[Date]
Automation Development		**Ongoing**			[Date]
Automation Testing			**Planned**		[Date]
Change Management	**Complete**	**Planned**	**Planned**		[Date]

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

OBJECTIVE

Develop, test, and implement automation solutions in an agile manner that manages stakeholder involvement, accounts for process requirements, and delivers the necessary outcome(s) as efficiently as possible.

RATIONALE

The automation development process is often rife with unforeseen obstacles in the form of system / data challenges or scope creep. Having a clear path to delivery and implementation, with well-defined boundaries for the automated process, will minimize the likelihood of delays.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Leverage the process maps and project plans developed in earlier steps to identify relevant systems, IT tools, and software packages that will need to be incorporated into the automation.
2. Determine whether the automation will require human user interaction (attended) or if it can be unattended.
3. Create the process definition document (PDD), obtain approval from the process owner(s), and seek to gain access to the required systems and datasets.
4. Begin developing the automation and hold frequent meetings with the process owner(s) to ensure that the automation fulfills its purpose.
    a. For larger projects, it is advisable to use storyboards and backlogs to track project requirements and progress.
5. Once complete:
    a. Review the automation with the relevant personnel responsible for ensuring security and privacy protocols are met.
    b. Verify that the process owner is satisfied with the functionality and outputs.
6. Monitor the automation closely in a hypercare period for an appropriate period of time, and troubleshoot any issues that arise.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
● Future state process maps for the process being automated ● Project charter and milestones ● Systems access ● Process SME(s) ● Existing IT security / privacy protocols	● Process definition document for each automation ● Security and privacy approvals ● User acceptance testing ● Automation delivered	● Automating inefficient processes instead of optimized processes ● Failure to design delivery processes around known constraints like privacy / security approvals ● Failure to create robust PDDs ● Communication between the development team and process SMEs

AUTOMATION PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES

Basic components of successfully implementing automation projects in the federal environment

PDD

The automation's functionality and key steps should be captured via PDD to include processes, inputs, outputs, systems, stakeholders, decisions, and logic.

Security

Verify that the automation's interactions with existing systems, file drives, networks, and user accounts does not pose a risk to the IT infrastructure.

Code

Automation code should have clearly defined boundaries, specifying its inputs, outputs, and the systems it interacts with while adhering to proper practices for error handling and data storage.

Privacy

Automations should only have access to the data necessary to accomplish their tasks, and those data should be stored in as temporary and protected a manner as possible.

User Acceptance Testing

Process owners and employees that will use the automation or receive its outputs should have the opportunity to test and approve them.

Hypercare

Immediately after initial implementation, developers should closely monitor the automation under typical use for a period of time to ensure that it functions as intended.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

OBJECTIVE

Whether the project involves elimination, optimization, or automation, staff must be aware of, aligned with, and prepared for the changes that will impact their business processes.

RATIONALE

Without proper change management, initiatives often times fail or cause service interruption, resulting in lost time and money, as well as a negative impact on employee morale.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Identify and document the gaps between current and future states.
2. Determine and involve the key stakeholders associated with each gap, if they aren't already part of the project team.
3. Communicate to the impacted employees the reason behind the change, the intended outcomes and their benefits, the timeline, and that the project team welcomes their input.
4. Engage those same employees in identifying obstacles, requirements, and courses of action.
5. Develop and provide communications, supporting documentation (SOPs, guides, flowcharts, etc.), and training as needed to ensure that the gaps are bridged.
6. Implement the future state by empowering employees to initiate the changes where possible, or with their awareness and acceptance otherwise.
7. Seek feedback frequently from stakeholders, monitor the impact of the changes (ideally with data), and adjust the approach as needed.
8. Ensure that the impacted employees continue to be satisfied with the changes, and that their tasks within the new process(es) are an improvement (easier, take less time, etc.).

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Project and communication plans • Current and future states of the process • Case for change document	• Employee engagement with anticipated process changes • Communications, documentation, and training that supports the change • Implemented future state	• Not communicating early and often • Not accounting for all stakeholders and impacted employees • Not providing enough opportunity for stakeholder feedback • Over-focusing on project management at the expense of change management

EOA CHANGE MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Completing a basic communication plan to ensure stakeholder alignment during implementation

Project Name: Contractor Responsibility Screener **Project Owner:** Emily Smith **Communications Approver:** Joe Smith	Project Description and Scope	The way that contracting officers (COs) evaluate companies who submit responses to RFQs will be changing as a result of new automation. The automation will change the steps that COs undergo as part of that process, eliminating some of their manual work, and allowing for them to spend more of their time on the actual evaluation component.

Project Phase	Event	Estimated Date	Status	Target Stakeholders
Initiation and Planning	Project Kickoff and announcement of change(s)	[Date]	Complete	All
	Pre-implementation stakeholder survey	[Date]	Ongoing	All
Implement Changes	Standard operating procedures	[Date]	Ongoing	Front-line staff
	Live, hands-on training with questions	[Date]	Planned	Front-line staff
Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust	Post-implementation feedback survey	[Date]	Planned	All
	TBD	[Date]	Planned	TBD

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

OBJECTIVE

Ensure that the overall EOA program is set up in a way to verify that 1) its outputs match its intentions, 2) it is truly adding value to its customers and the organization, and 3) it continues to rigorously improve both its internal processes and those it interacts with.

RATIONALE

An intentional method of tracking project successes and impacts, as well as obtaining feedback from stakeholders, will ensure the effectiveness and longevity of the improvement program.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Establish a means of comparing project intentions with project results in as quantifiable and objective a manner as possible (e.g., hours saved or quality improved), along with other "soft" metrics (e.g., customer satisfaction).
2. Monitor metrics around project delivery in order to identify bottlenecks, refine lead time estimates, plan for staffing levels, and report out to leadership.
    a. Given the variability in project size/length, a monthly cadence for review should ensure that short-term projects are being completed on schedule and long-term projects continue to progress through their POAMs.
3. Seek feedback from process owners early and often to identify any missing components or additional opportunities for improvement.
4. Check in with process owners at a set cadence (e.g., annually) to determine whether improvements are delivering what was intended, and if they are in need of any further refinements.

Requirements	Outcomes	Common Pitfalls
• Established, robust metrics • Customer feedback mechanisms to capture results and satisfaction scores (as appropriate) • Input from the Improvement Team regarding time spent, complexity, and results	• Program dashboard that monitors project statuses • Informed, data-driven decisions regarding program health and direction	• Measuring the wrong elements of EOA, or over-measuring and forgetting the burden of data collection • Metrics misaligned with goals / priorities • Not seeking customer feedback

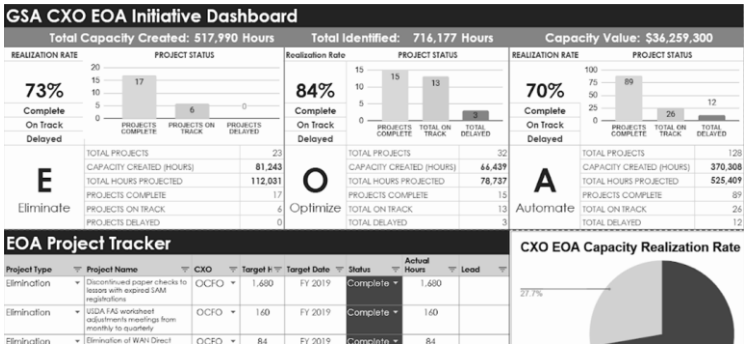
EOA INITIATIVE SUSTAINMENT BEST PRACTICES

Building program dashboards to track long-term progress

Executive engagement and agile management are critical facets of a successful EOA initiative. The best management tool for achieving and maintaining these outcomes is a comprehensive and accessible performance dashboard that displays all approved EOA initiatives, progress to date, and program-level key performance indicators.

EOA initiatives can involve hundreds of projects and stakeholders. A program dashboard allows constant collaboration, information sharing, and real time data for the project sponsors. An effective program dashboard, however, does not have to be a huge lift to build or maintain. The software just needs to offer multiple users the ability to access and update information simultaneously. Simple tools like Google Sheets meet that requirement.

It is important for the EOA program to establish ambitious goals at the outset, and to provide ongoing assessments of progress. Include all metrics needed to assess those goals in the performance dashboard.



EOA TOOLKIT

See Appendix H and I:
Sample EOA Program Metrics and Executive Dashboard

04.

EOA Toolkit

Tools and templates to help accelerate your agency's launch of an effective EOA initiative

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix A (EOA Initiative Charter)

Purpose

The Purpose of the EOA Initiative

Includes the goals, metrics, and mission. What challenges was the EOA initiative intended to resolve? What is the operational scope? How will the executive leadership team measure progress?

Benefits of the EOA Initiative

What specific outcomes does the Initiative intend to achieve? Who will benefit from these outcomes?

Goals	Metrics	Mission
[INPUT TEXT]	[INPUT TEXT]	[INPUT TEXT]

Initiative Structure

Roles and Responsibilities

High level description of the roles and positions.

Team Rules

Any rules the team must adhere to, expectations for event cadence, and a communication plan.

Internal Structure

Internal community structure, such as the number of practice areas or functions involved and how they will be managed by team members.

Deliverables

Key products and outputs.

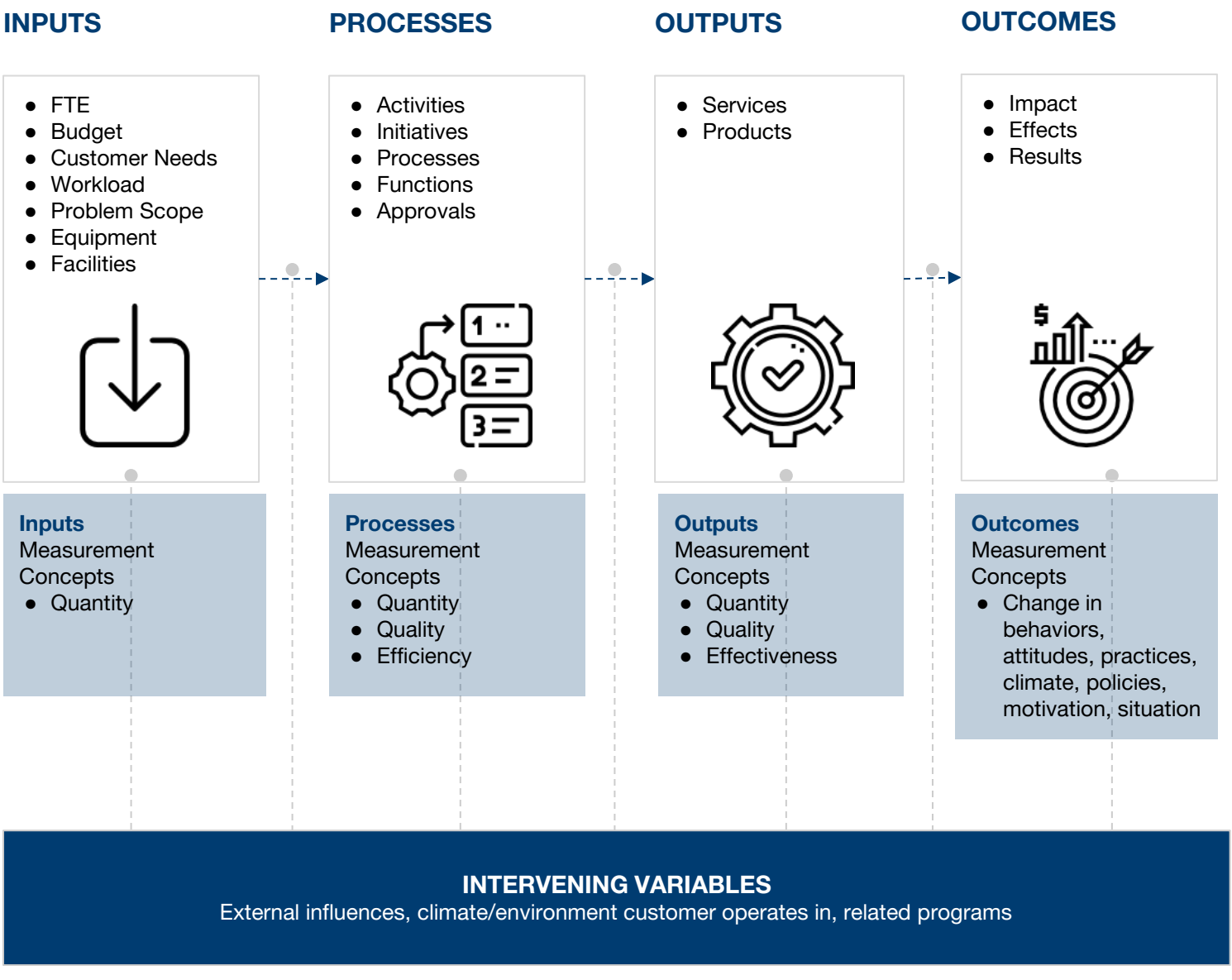
PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix B (Performance Logic Model)

Logic models are visual diagrams used for planning, collaborative consensus-building, knowledge development, and evaluation, including selection and alignment of measurements. If aligned properly via valid performance logic, federal programs can be assured the performance measures effectively support higher level strategic goals and key outcomes.

The logic model is a performance value chain linking events, and provides a blueprint for mission achievement. Typically, it is a graphic representation illustrating the rationale behind each activity, process, program, or investment. It shows the causal relationships among today's activities, future outcomes, and the activities and strategies in between. It is goal-oriented, containing the goals and performance measures for each phase.

As shown in the figure below, the building blocks of a logic model are inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and intervening factors. The program's logical flow is reverse engineered from outcomes to determine critical elements, relationships, key handoff points, and measures within each category usually in a facilitated session with relevant program and process SMEs.



PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix C (Sample Staff Survey)

Elimination, Optimization, and Automation (EOA) Employee Survey

The EOA initiative seeks to identify and plan to eliminate, optimize, and automate requirements and processes that increase employee and customer workload. The more efficient our organization becomes, the better customer service we can provide, and the more focus we can shift to analytics, management, and planning support.

The leadership team needs your help to make this initiative a success. Every suggestion will be evaluated and reviewed by leadership. We value your suggestions and feedback on the EOA initiative, though it is important to note filling out the survey is entirely voluntary.

The survey includes three sections: 1) requirements elimination; 2) optimization; and 3) automation. Please put your great ideas in the appropriate section.

Agency-specific demographic questions — the survey should capture enough information on the respondent to enable sorting responses into meaningful sub-categories (e.g., job function, region, office alignment). It is important to also include a question on whether the respondent is a federal employee. This will allow the agency to ensure contractors do not respond to the survey, which would invoke the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Section 1: Requirements Elimination

This section of the survey collects ideas on processes, requirements, and deliverables that create an unnecessary burden for our employees or customers and can be eliminated.

Some questions to consider in your responses:

1. Are there legacy processes, requirements, and deliverables that we no longer need?
2. Can we change how often we do some activities to reduce overall workload?
3. Can we eliminate requirements and standards that create work for our customers and employees?

- Do you have an idea for processes, requirements, or deliverables that could be eliminated (Yes/No).
- Please identify whether the idea will benefit internal operations, customer operations, or both.
- Identify all offices within the agency that will benefit from the idea (drop down list).
- Describe your idea below. Please provide enough information so the leadership team can adequately assess and evaluate its merits (open text response).
- Provide an estimate of how many workload hours could be saved each year by implementing your recommendation. Please provide a brief explanation and rationale (open text response).

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix C (Sample Staff Survey)

Section 2: Optimization

This section of the survey collects ideas on processes, requirements, and deliverables that can be improved or performed more efficiently.

Some questions to consider in your responses:

1. What internal processes or tasks can we improve to be more efficient?
2. Are there internal processes that we can improve to more closely align with agency priorities?
3. What customer-facing processes can we transform to reduce burden?

- Do you have an idea for processes, requirements, or deliverables that could be optimized (yes/no).
- Please identify if the idea will benefit internal operations, customer operations, or both.
- Identify all offices within the agency that will benefit from the idea (drop down list).
- Describe your idea below. Please provide enough information so the leadership team can adequately assess and evaluate its merits (open text response).
- Provide an estimate of how many workload hours could be saved each year by implementing your recommendation. Please provide a brief explanation and rationale (open text response).

Section 3: Automation

This section of the survey collects ideas on processes that might benefit from additional automation.

The criteria below will help us assess which business processes can be automated:

1. Is the process clearly structured? Could a set of instructions easily be given to a new employee?
2. Does the process use multiple applications and tools, or just one?
3. Does the process rely on well-established rules?
4. Is the process prone to human error?
5. Is there a high, steady volume of activity? (e.g., is it worth the investment in automation?)

Some potential applications or areas for automation: 1) manual data entry and transfer between systems; 2) creation of standard data reports; 3) transaction processing; 4) standardized analytics and metrics reporting; 5) compliance checks and sampling; 6) customer interactions and communications; and 7) tracking task completion.

- Do you have an idea for processes, requirements, or deliverables that could be automated (Yes/No).
- Please identify if the idea will benefit internal operations, customer operations, or both.
- Identify all offices within the agency that will benefit from the idea (drop down list).
- Describe your idea below. Please provide enough information so the leadership team can adequately assess and evaluate its merits (open text response).
- Provide an estimate of how many workload hours could be saved each year by implementing your recommendation. Please provide a brief explanation and rationale (open text response).

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix D (Prioritization Matrix)

Establishing a formal evaluation process for EOA projects ensures that the most impactful projects are prioritized for delivery. To effectively evaluate each process, SMEs will need to assess each project's feasibility, strategic alignment, and impact. Each criterion for prioritization is further explained in the tables below. The associated prioritization matrix can also be used to score each project.

EOA Opportunity		Feasibility		Strategic Alignment		Impact		Priority	
	Project Type	Weight	2	Weight	1	Weight	3	Total	Level
Opportunity 1	Eliminate	9	18	9	9	9	27	54	1
Opportunity 2	Optimize	7	14	7	7	7	21	42	1
Opportunity 3	Automate	3	6	3	3	3	9	18	3
Opportunity 4	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 5	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 6	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 7	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 8	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 9	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Opportunity 10	E,O,A	(1/3/7/9)	X*2	(1/3/7/9)	X*1	(1/3/7/9)	X*3		
Priority Scoring		**Priority 4: 0–12**		**Priority 3: 13–26**		**Priority 2: 27–40**		**Priority 1: 41–54**	

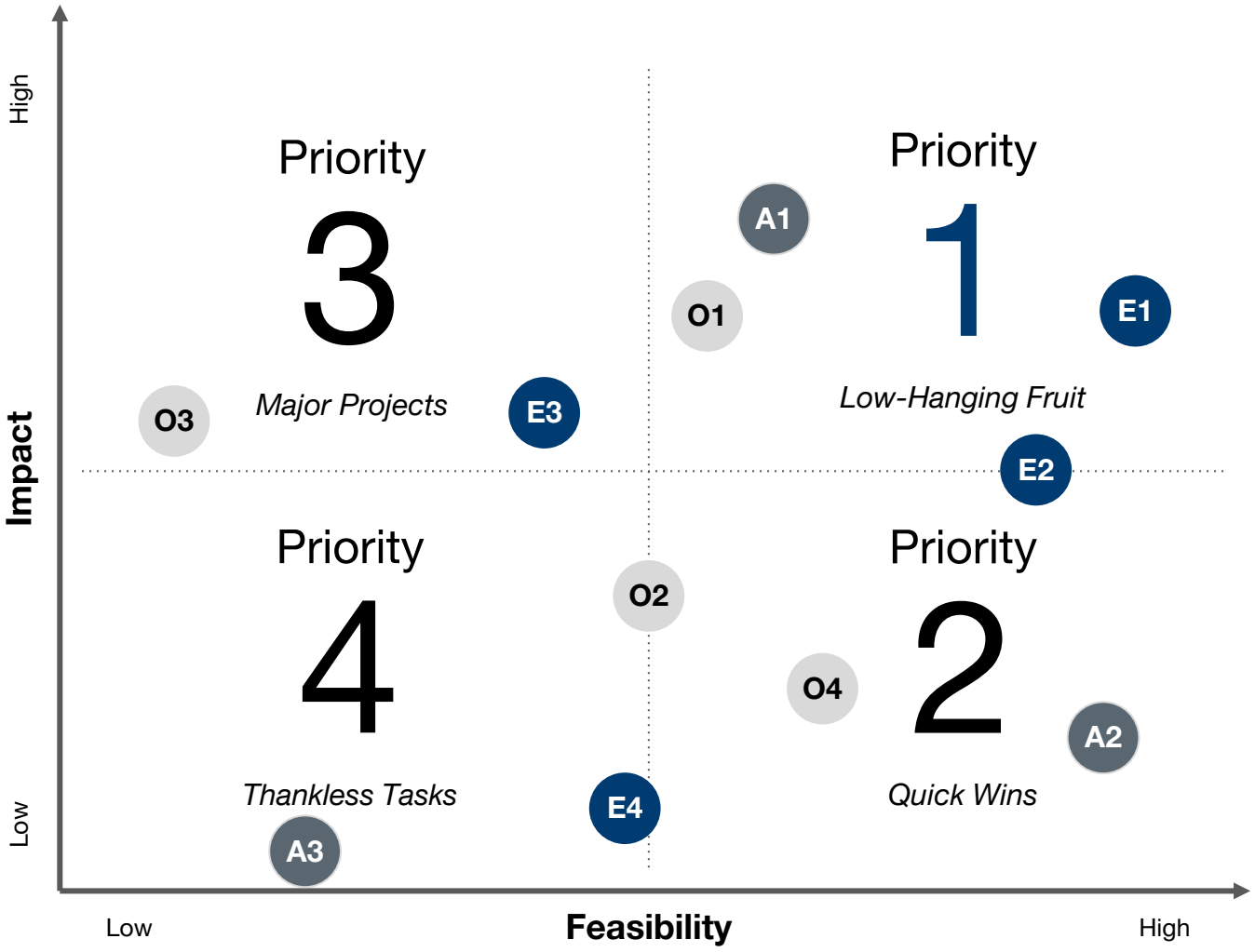
Feasibility	Is elimination, optimization, or automation the right approach to the identified business challenge?	
Areas of Analysis	**Attribute — legacy, outdated, manual, or repetitive process**	**Attribute — difficulty to implement**
	Process no longer mandated Legacy process Outdated requirements Repetitiveness of process Manual, rules-based degree of standardization	Number of locations or organizations involved Organizational and operational readiness Quality of process definition/documentation Subject Matter Expert availability Congressional mandates or requirements

Strategic	Does the EOA project align with the department / office and agency strategy?	
Areas of Analysis	**Attribute — business unit alignment**	**Attribute — agency strategic alignment**
	Business unit goals and objectives Leadership priorities and strategies Organizational change readiness	Agency mission and goals Leadership priorities and strategies PMA and CAP Goals Broader agency-wide deliverables and initiatives Congressional mandates or requirements Agency change readiness

Impact	How impactful is the elimination, optimization, or automation project to stakeholders and the agency?	
Areas of Analysis	**Attribute — quantitative value**	**Attribute — qualitative value**
	Labor hour savings Reduction in cycle time Increase in throughput Increased process outputs	Improved employee morale Increased compliance/auditability Increased process accuracy

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix E (Feasibility and Impact Design Matrix)



Major Projects

These projects will have a high impact, but they'll take a lot of effort to complete. In many cases, these projects are resource and time intensive. Opportunities in this category should be evaluated initially, but not started until there is sufficient momentum and identified resources.

Low-Hanging Fruit

Ideas in this category will have a high impact on an organization and are possible. These projects should be an organization's priority because they serve as a proof of concept and establish buy-in from executives and employees.

Thankless Tasks

These projects have low impact and low feasibility. These projects may be high effort, or require a large amount of resources that should be more efficiently allocated elsewhere. These ideas are painful to complete and they take time away from more impactful ideas. Avoid these projects.

Quick Wins

These projects require limited effort and have a lower impact than other projects. These tasks or solutions can be completed easily. They provide needed proof of concept for nascent EOA programs.

PHASE 1: OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

EOA Toolkit — Appendix F (Sample Final Vetted Projects List)

Requirements Elimination Projects

ID	Project Description	Impact	Feasibility	Projected Savings	Resourcing	COP POC
E-21-009	Eliminate Data Discovery Process Steps Eliminate process steps required to find data on new and existing projects by creating an automated, fixed report output that will simplify manual data discovery by incorporating all required information.	**7** [1,3,7,9]	**9** [1,3,7,9]	1,000 Hours	25	Jane
E-21-038	Eliminate Duplicative Data Entry Application Eliminate duplicative travel approval applications and use existing infrastructure to reduce the number of similar systems.	**3** [1,3,7,9]	**9** [1,3,7,9]	4,800 Hours	10	Mike

Optimization Projects

ID	Project Description	Impact	Feasibility	Projected Savings	Resourcing	COP POC
O-21-097	Consistent Project Identification Number Create a consistent project identifier that follows a project through the several different phases, rather than having a unique ePM number, RWA number, contract number, PR number, etc.	**9** [1,3,7,9]	**9** [1,3,7,9]	None	None	John
O-21-012	Centralize and Optimize the Dashboarding and Reporting Process Optimize data reporting by creating a centralized repository that contains live data. The current process has multiple redundancies in reports that often tell conflicting stories.	**7** [1,3,7,9]	**7** [1,3,7,9]	1,200 Hours	40	Ann

Automation Projects

ID	Project Description	Impact	Feasibility	Projected Savings	Resourcing	COP POC
A-21-062	Centralized Project Review System Automate the consolidation of all project review comments into a centralized comment management system. This will eliminate the need for separate documents for each round of comments and improve final quality.	**9** [1,3,7,9]	**9** [1,3,7,9]	None	65	Bill
A-21-024	Automate Performance Metric Data Collection Automate the process that takes data from organization expenses and feeds information to performance measures tracking tools.	**9** [1,3,7,9]	**1** [1,3,7,9]	5,400 Hours	16	Mia

Project Identification

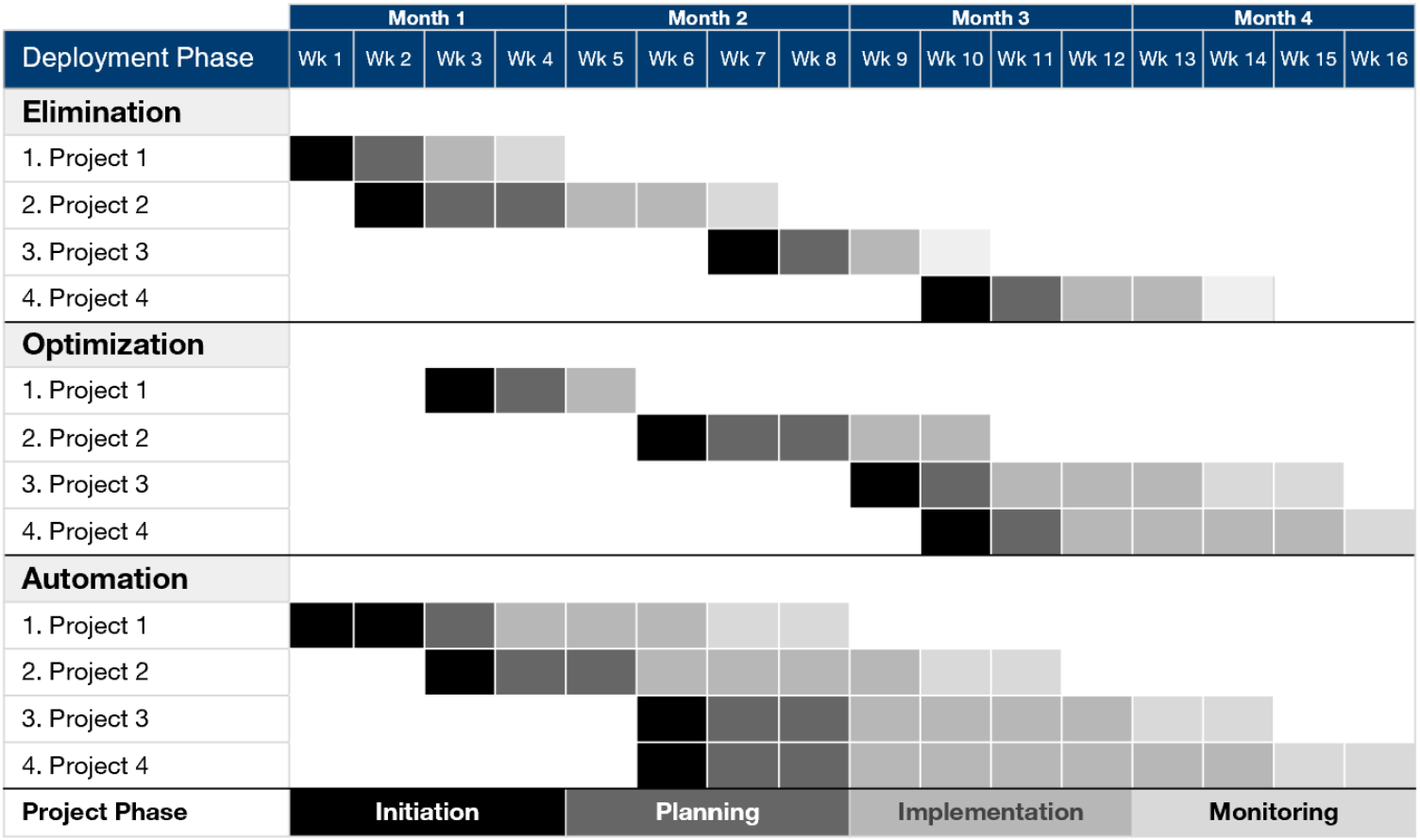
The project ID is a unique, user-assigned identifier that is used to reference each opportunity submitted during the lifecycle of a project. Organizations should not change or re-use a project ID that is in use, or one that has been used with a deleted project.

Projected Savings

When employees submit their project ideas, they should include an estimate for annualized hours saved. However, before moving forward with a selected project, leadership should verify these projections. An opportunity may apply agency-wide, drastically increasing the projected hours saved. The organization should also estimate the resources required to implement a given project during the vetting process. Leadership can use these projections to calculate the ROI of different projects, allocating organization resources to maximize hours saved.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

EOA Toolkit — Appendix G (Sample EOA Program Deployment Schedule)



Initiation: In this phase, the EOA project is deemed worthy to proceed, and a project charter is developed. Stakeholders agree that the hours saved by this project, and the shift of these hours to higher value work, justify the undertaking.

Planning: Project management begins in this phase. During this phase, organizations establish key performance indicators (KPIs), milestones, POAMs, Gantt Charts, and deadlines. Additionally, risk assessments are conducted.

Implementation: Project deliverables are carefully developed according to the guidance determined in the planning phase. Project metrics are captured through status meetings and reporting, and determine the level of success the project will achieve continuing down its current path. Managers should course-correct as necessary.

Monitoring: As project deliverables are being completed, project managers should ensure all milestones and KPIs are being met. As late-stage project deliverables are presented to the end users, managers must verify customers are receiving a product that meets their needs. If not, they must pivot accordingly to achieve all project goals and functionality.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

EOA Toolkit — Appendix H (Sample EOA Program / Project Metrics)

Total Capacity Identified

Before a project is started, the organization should estimate the total annualized hours of capacity it will save. This early calculation aids in selecting which projects to move forward with, as well as calculate an initiative's projected overall return on investment. The most common way to track this metric is using labor hours; however, some organizations may use full-time equivalents (FTEs) to measure impact.

***Formula** = (Total # of Employees Performing Task * Average # of Hours per Week * 52)*

Total Capacity Created

Total capacity created measures the amount of time an organization saves by implementing a project. Capacity *created* is often used instead of capacity *saved*, because the employees who had previously done this work can focus on higher-value tasks, rather than being separated. Total capacity created is **only collected and tracked after a project is implemented.** Tracking the metric after implementation accounts for any unforeseen changes to a project during the implementation phase. This metric is typically used with *total capacity identified*, allowing agencies to also calculate a realization rate.

Capacity Value

This is a common metric used to track and monitor many EOA initiatives, since it presents the annualized hours of capacity in a metric that is easier to understand and measure a project's return on investment. Many organizations use an average hourly wage across the entire organization to calculate the value of the capacity created. However, some may choose to distinguish the wages between employees at different levels. GSA has used $70 an hour to measure the value of capacity based on average salary. Using different hourly wages for each position may not be necessary for your organization. It makes calculating the capacity value more complex, and only slightly improves accuracy.

Project Deployment Status

Track this metric to ensure the project is meeting all milestones and KPIs in the deployment phase. Quick action is required if any last-minute changes need to be made during deployment, so careful monitoring of deployment status is paramount.

Office-Level Project Deployment

This metric helps manage project deployment across various offices in an agency. This metric is useful for efficiently allocating resources and for tracking adherence to time schedules, project plans, milestones, and KPIs.

Process- and Program-Specific Metrics

EOA projects can help Agencies achieve objectives outside time savings and workload reduction. For example, optimization and automation projects can improve quality, reduce throughput time, enable agencies to increase outputs, increase accuracy / reduce error rates, improve compliance, and provide new services to customers or other key constituencies. Agencies should monitor these important project benefits via process metric scorecards associated with each EOA project.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

EOA Toolkit — Appendix I (Sample Program Dashboard)

Eliminate, Optimize, and Automate (EOA) Initiative Management Dashboard

A management dashboard is a visual display of the most important information that decision makers need to understand key trends, optimize decision making, and evaluate progress towards an organization's strategic goals. Establishing a centralized, formal management dashboard for EOA projects ensures that leadership is informed on progress and has real-time access to KPIs, without interrupting an employee's workflow.

Best Practices for Creating a Dashboard

1. **Think of Your Audience First —** Only include metrics that matter to your audience; more information is not always better. *(What does your audience need to know? How often do they need it?)*
2. **Keep it Simple & Continuously Improve —** Excess information, confusing graphics, and unnecessary features make dashboards difficult to use and understand. If users are not taking away the necessary information, you need to adjust the dashboard. The true value of a dashboard comes from the information it provides its users.

Sample EOA Initiative Dashboard

Total Capacity Created: 30,000			Total Identified: 60,000			Capacity Value: $2,100,000		
Realization Rate	Project Status		Realization Rate	Project Status		Realization Rate	Project Status	
50%			50%			50%		
Complete			Complete			Complete		
On Track			On Track			On Track		
Delayed			Delayed			Delayed		
E	Total Projects	10	O	Total Projects	10	A	Total Projects	10
	Hours Created	**10,000**		Hours Created	**10,000**		Hours Created	**10,000**
	Hours Projected	**20,000**		Hours Projected	**20,000**		Hours Projected	**20,000**
	Projects Complete	5		Projects Complete	5		Projects Complete	5
Eliminate	Projects on Track	3	Optimize	Projects on Track	3	Automate	Projects on Track	3
	Projects Delayed	2		Projects Delayed	2		Projects Delayed	2

EOA Project Tracker

Project Type	Project Name	Office	Target Hours	Target Date	Status	Lead
Elimination	Project #1 Name	X	1,000		On Track	Name
Elimination	Project #2 Name	X	1,000		Complete	
Elimination	Project #3 Name	X	1,000		Delayed	
Optimization	Project #4 Name	X	1,000			
Optimization	Project #5 Name	X	1,000			
Optimization	Project #6 Name	X	1,000			
Automation	Project #7 Name	X	1,000			
Automation	Project #8 Name	X	1,000			
Automation	Project #9 Name	X	1,000			
Automation	Project #10 Name	X	1,000			

EOA Projects by Office

Actual Hours Saved by Office

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