



# **Architecture Planning**

Adding value to projects with  
Enterprise Architecture

**Whitepaper**

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# Architecture Planning

## Introduction

We are often asked what an architecture plan is and why it is important. As with most things there isn't a simple answer to what an architecture plan is. There is no standard template for an architecture plan as every organisation is different and the nature of the plans change depending on an organisation's specific needs. As to why it is important, the success of any architecture is dependent on delivering value and the plan is the means by which the delivery of this value can be managed and measured.

Once you understand the objectives of your architecture initiative, planning is key to ensuring that you deliver a successful architecture programme. We generally see there being two aspects to any architecture plan:

1. A schedule for building the organisation's architecture capability
2. A definition of how and when architecture benefits will be delivered

Getting the plan right is often the starting point to success. This white paper focuses on the nature of architecture plans and how to create them.

## Planning Fundamentals

The focus of architecture planning can be split into two elements. One part is concerned with building the capability to define and maintain your organisation's enterprise architecture (EA), the second with how the EA will provide benefit to projects in supporting decision-making processes. If the balance of these is wrong, you can end up with either an ivory tower that delivers no value, or with a project support service that makes project-level architecture decisions rather than taking into account the enterprise perspective and doesn't, therefore, realise the benefits of enterprise architecture.

Organisations can often fall into the trap of focusing on only one of these aspects at the expense of the other. The two extremes of this can be characterised by the following scenarios:

### **“If you build it, they will come”**

This refers to situations where an organisation decides to build their EA Capability by delivering and populating an EA framework, their minds focused on the long term objective of having a fully populated, broad and deep EA model. Often, little thought is given to the projects, or the fact that they will not comply if there is no immediate benefit to them.

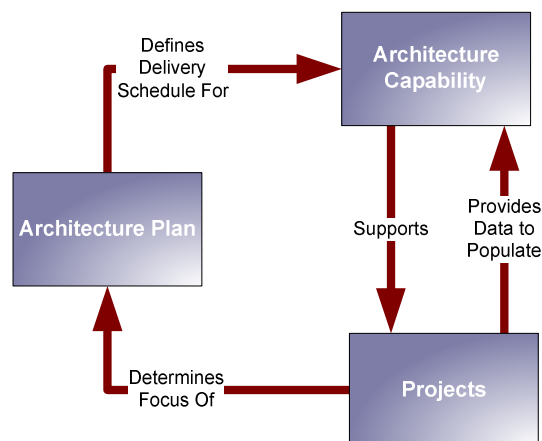
This trap often occurs when an organisation is starting out from scratch, with no previous experience of EA or perhaps even architecture-driven project delivery. The problem is that, in most cases, this approach will make the EA a long, protracted initiative where confidence and support can erode before it begins to show any value to the organisation.

### “Just Do It!”

This refers to organisations that focus solely on delivering models to support a particular project. In this situation, organisations fail to consider how these models will be kept updated and integrated with decisions and models resulting from other projects and initiatives.

This trap occurs when there is a desire to show the benefit of EA as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, although short term buy-in is achieved, the EA quickly becomes uncoordinated and difficult to manage.

A good architecture plan will deliver a coherent EA by balancing the effort required to build and populate an EA framework with the effort to provide effective project support. These two things are not mutually exclusive as the former provides the framework within which projects can deliver consistently and more quickly, and the latter is a mechanism for populating, testing and evolving the EA.



*Relationship between the Architecture Plan, Projects and the overall Architecture Capability*

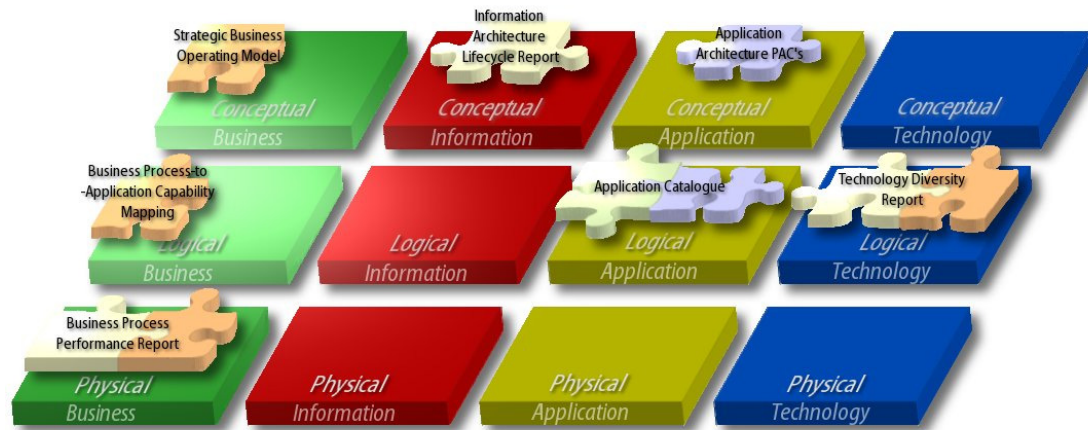
## Key Planning Questions

In order to achieve the required balance between EA capability development and short-term benefit to projects, there are some key questions that the architecture plan must answer.

### Scope: What is being delivered by the EA?

EA can be very broad, so the focus must be on the key elements that will deliver value. The output must be of use to projects; the projects should be spoken to and the areas of need that EA can support identified.

Each element of the architecture must be justifiable. Why is this element important? Is it saving money? Is it shortening project delivery times? If it is not possible to explain the concept sufficiently well to get buy in from projects then, although it may be the right thing to do, it should be dropped in the short term in favour of an element that has clear benefit. It can be re-introduced when the architecture initiative is embedded and fully bought-into.

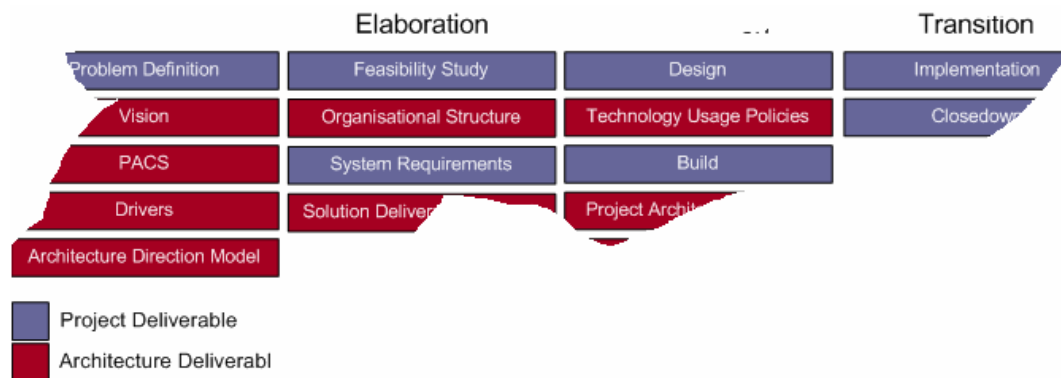


The diagram above shows the 12 EA boxes, as defined in the EAS Framework, with the most valuable elements initially in scope shown as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Over time, the jigsaw will be completed.

### Timing: When are the elements of the EA to be delivered?

To reiterate, the architecture plan needs to meet two objectives. One, deliver an EA; two, deliver value to projects. The latter should be seen as a mechanism for delivering and populating the former and it is also key to gaining traction for the EA.

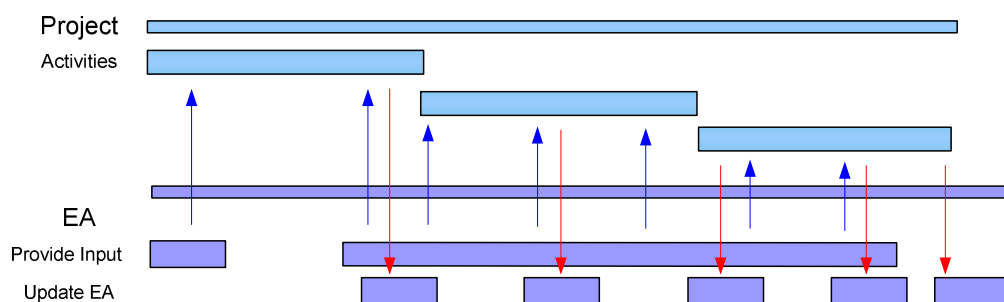
A large amount of the output must fit with the timescales of when projects require it. The plan needs to identify the architecture information that projects require that is also of use to the EA effort. It needs to understand when the information is required by the project, what role (if any) that enterprise architects will play in the projects and how the output will be captured in the EA model. The important thing for the architecture team to do is to focus on delivering value to projects as this will prove the benefits of EA and give it traction.



Above is a section of a high-level view that was used at a global financial company to show the project/architecture split of responsibilities in a major initiative.

### Maintenance: How is the EA to be kept up to date?

There needs to be a defined process for keeping the EA information up to date. If the culture is not geared to doing this then it may initially be a centralised EA team exercise. However, the aim must be to introduce a process into the project activities over time. There needs to be an activity in the plan to define this process, execute the process and also to have updates and reviews. The nature of the organisation will determine *when* this activity appears in the plan, not *whether* it appears.



The diagram above illustrates the project updating the architecture and also the architecture keeping the project informed of related decisions or changes elsewhere that have an impact on the project. A process to ensure this happens must be defined and monitored.

## Key Decision Factors

Architecture plans are not off-the-shelf, 'one-size-fits-all' exercises. The creation and development of the architecture plan requires some careful thought as it has to fit with the demands of the organisation, and the plan will be influenced by a number of factors.

### Culture

If the organisation is not geared to following processes, procedures and rules, all of which are important in any architecture effort, then, typically, you will find inconsistency in the information and detail that projects deliver - both in the level of information captured and the way it is presented. Without some formality, population of the architecture can be difficult. The plan needs to reflect the maturity of the organisation in terms of processes, procedure, etc; EA success is harder to achieve if you try to impose a large amount of formality on an immature organisation.

As an aside, it can be a good opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of EA, as organisations that behave in this way tend to have a lot of EA opportunities.

### Previous Experience with EA

Any previous attempts at EA by an organisation will heavily influence how receptive projects are to a new plan and its associated architecture. If previous attempts at EA were seen as a hindrance to projects, then buy-in will require careful thought; if it was seen as a good idea but an ivory tower then a different approach may be needed. If a previous EA initiative is being superseded then planning needs to involve people who had previous experience and who have views on what worked and what didn't.

### Existing Projects

Any project will benefit from some degree of architecture support. The plan needs to make sure that the architecture is delivering outputs that benefit both in-flight as well as planned projects and also ensure that the architecture is populated in line with the project outputs. If it does not deliver value to projects now then it will quickly gain the ivory tower tag and lose credibility. It is critical to understand what the projects need, what their timelines are and what the EA can do to support them.

### Communication

Communication is an essential factor in the successful delivery of any plan, and EA is no exception. Your plan must include a Communication Plan considering **Who** the Stakeholders you need to communicate to are; **How** you plan to communicate with each of these groups; **What** you will be communicating to each group; **When** you will need to communicate this information to them. Remember that communication is an on-going exercise from the initial selling of the concept, through the benefits and successes to gathering feedback for improvements.

## Case Study: Consequences of Bad Planning

### Case Overview

A large global organisation was undertaking a strategic programme of change across a number of business areas. The main focus was cost reduction and improved operational efficiency achieved through global/regional IT consolidation and sharing.

It was decided that developing an enterprise architecture would be key to achieving the objectives of the change programme. A central architecture team was established and they worked hard to select tools, define the framework, the models and the links between the Business, Information, Application and Technology layers of their enterprise. They defined an aggressive plan whereby they would engage various project teams to explain the overall benefits of EA and then conduct a strategic requirements gathering exercise in order to develop a target state EA model. This model was then created sequentially, layer by layer; completing one and then moving on to the next.

After nearly two years of work, with two layers complete and work on the third already underway, the initiative was halted. Senior management cited poor uptake in the use of the model by projects and most importantly, a lack of evidence of the EA initiative providing any measurable benefits.

### Where did they go wrong?

In order to understand why this organisation's EA initiative failed, we can return to the Key Planning Questions.

#### ***What is being delivered by the EA?***

The decision to build the EA layer by layer was made up-front, independently of in-flight and planned projects. Project teams were engaged, however, communication was limited to gaining initial buy-in, general EA education and training once a layer was complete. The central architecture team neglected to work with project teams to identify the EA elements that would provide the greatest value in the short to medium term.

Consequently, the outputs from the EA initiative were largely ignored by projects and any buy-in gained at the beginning was soon lost.

#### ***When are the elements of the EA to be delivered?***

Although the timeframe for developing their EA was aggressive, milestones indicating when EA elements were to be delivered were not aligned to project dates. This meant that while the central architecture team were defining the modelling language and future state model for a particular layer of the EA, project teams were busy capturing architecture information and producing deliverables using project-specific languages and formats.

As a result, the central architecture team found themselves attempting to convince project teams to retrospectively adopt their framework in order to populate the EA; with little success.

#### ***How are the elements of the EA to be kept up to date?***

This particular organisation was relatively immature with respect to disciplined project practices with the adoption of consistent project delivery processes and project governance in their earliest stages. Even so, the central architecture team decided to focus most of their efforts on defining the EA framework. They did not consider it a priority to define the project processes, roles and responsibilities required to maintain the architecture information representing the EA.

Upon completing a layer of the EA, the central architecture team would define and execute an education programme to train project team members in the use of that particular layer of the EA framework together with the supporting repository tool. Trained staff would then be returned to their projects with the central architecture team assuming that, armed with appropriate skills, project teams could be left on their own to develop and maintain

architecture information in line with the EA. Once training was complete, the central architecture team would then move on to developing the next layer of the EA.

The central architecture team felt it unnecessary to define explicit processes for maintaining the EA information. To compound matters, they also failed to provide ongoing support to projects when tasked with populating the EA. These factors, coupled with the organisation's immature project delivery practices, meant that it was almost inevitable that projects would revert back to project-specific practices.

## Case Study: Benefits of Good Planning

### Case Overview

A well known Investment Management company were at the earliest stages of developing an architecture capability in support of a number of large projects in the pipeline. One of these projects was tasked with decommissioning one of their major systems. An essential part of this project was to understand the dependencies between applications to be decommissioned and all other applications to ensure that when the system was removed there were no unexpected failures.

The central architecture team, which had already been put in place, recognised that this project presented opportunities to capture information of relevance to the architecture and to provide some benefit to the project. An architecture plan was created that factored in the requirements of the project and they ensured that appropriately skilled architects were available to work alongside the project. The central architecture team supported the project in gathering the information and ensuring that the information that was captured would also be relevant for future projects. For example, capturing not only the dependencies between applications but also linking back to the business processes that each application was supporting. The central team also ensured that the information was captured into a central repository using a common framework, so that it was easily accessible to other projects and could be added to and kept up to date.

The benefit to the organisation was that the work done to complete this project was then used to support other projects. The central repository was used to understand the risks and dependencies between applications and also between projects impacting the same applications. In addition, further benefits were achieved when the Programme Office recognised that they now had the ability to use the repository to understand risks and issues in the programme plans caused by projects impacting the same applications and the impact of any project delays that might occur.

### Why were they successful?

The reasons for this organisation's success in achieving their objectives for EA can again be explained by exploring how they addressed the Key Planning Questions.

#### ***What is being delivered by the EA?***

The central architecture team spoke directly with project teams to understand which EA elements would be of use and exactly how they would benefit the projects. With this information, the central architecture team were then able to scope the EA framework according to the specific needs of projects.

As a result, projects were able to use the outputs from the central architecture team to directly support project activities. Most importantly, other projects were able to benefit from and extend the information gathered. In fact, their success was such that projects began requesting access to the central repository to support their activities.

#### ***When are the elements of the EA to be delivered?***

The central architecture team realised that it would not be possible to tackle everything at once; it would be too much for the organisation to take on board and would result in failure.

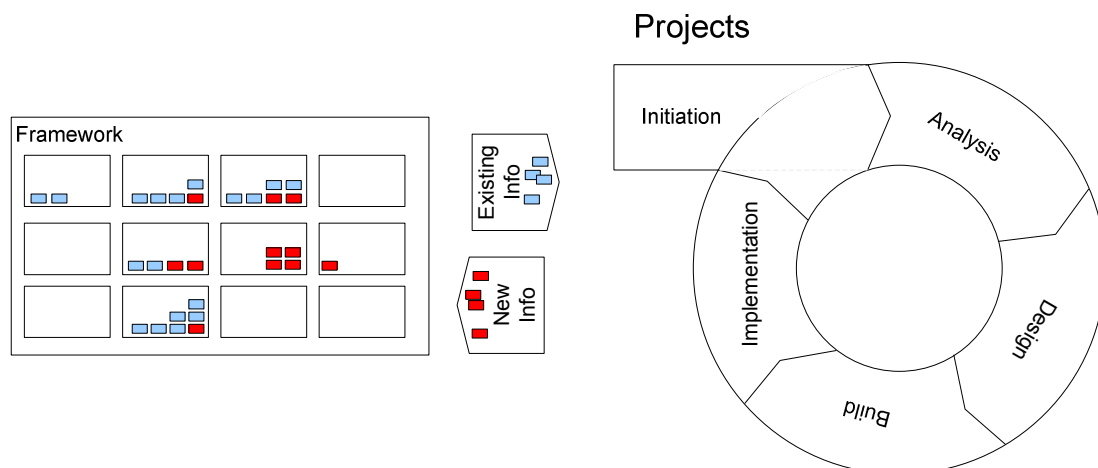
Having identified the areas of the architecture that can provide benefit to projects, the central architecture team decided to adopt an incremental approach. They would introduce a sub-set of the EA elements in scope then draw on positive and negative experiences to build into other projects. Once there was sufficient take up and re-use among projects, they would then move on to the next set of EA elements.

In order to understand the timing of when the different EA elements should be developed, the central architecture team engaged the Programme Office. Understanding and support from the Programme Office was a crucial factor in the success of the EA initiative – they had deep knowledge of project dates and deliverables, understood resource dependencies and were aware of the organisational (and political) issues that existed.

By co-ordinating the delivery of EA elements with project readiness, key project stakeholders of the EA were able to see almost immediate benefits. In this case, the information capture and reporting capabilities that the central architecture team provided allowed project teams to quickly identify application dependencies and areas of risk, shortening project delivery times.

### **How are the elements of the EA to be kept up to date?**

The central architecture team worked with the programme office to gain an understanding of the touch points between EA, project governance and project lifecycle processes. Once understood, they were able to ensure that processes were in place to handle these touch points. When introducing EA elements into projects, they worked alongside the project teams and provided appropriate help and support until team members were self-sufficient and the benefits were clearly visible to all concerned.



*By providing benefits to projects, and becoming an intrinsic part of the project process, the architecture framework is populated overtime.*

## Summary

When creating an architecture plan, an organisation should initiate two streams of work. One identifies the framework within which enterprise-level information will be captured and shared and the second focuses on identifying the key areas of need for projects.

The key to creating a successful plan is in determining the correct balance between these two elements to ensure that each project gains some benefit from the EA and promotes the view within the organisation of EA as an aid to project delivery and change. In addition, that the delivery of the EA framework proceeds incrementally through each project, changing the way the organisation works over time until a full EA is in place. This is a long term plan that will need many updates and iterations from inception to completion - completion being an Enterprise Architecture that is fully integrated into the project lifecycle and day to day running of the business; not a project that has ended.

The key to success is in correctly defining the balance between these two aspects of the plan. By assessing the culture of the organisation, their EA maturity, the experiences they have had to date and the projects that are in their portfolio, this balance can be found. This will enable you to identify which elements of the architecture should be focused on initially and produce a meaningful communication plan to engage both the senior management and the project teams, and enable them to understand the short and long term aims of the architecture plan.

Successful architecture plans achieve the right balance between the ability to build and populate a long term usable framework and the need to provide real value to projects.

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EAS is one of the world's leading independent enterprise architecture consultancies. We work with our clients to develop and deliver effective, architecture-driven solutions that provide clear value, tangible results and ongoing benefits.

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