

Adoption and impact programme: adoption team

Building a business case

A business case is a structured document that presents information and evidence which can aid decision-making when starting a project. It contains the facts needed to secure support (not always financial) and resources from senior management and commissioners.

Usually, stakeholders will produce a business case following some form of business planning. Some preparatory work may be needed, such as a feasibility study, which will help to determine if and when a business case is needed (for example, if the costs involved are below a certain threshold, for example, a business case may be unnecessary). It is advisable to discuss individual cases with the organisation's business manager.

A business case needs to be concise but provide enough detail to allow the decision-makers to understand what is being proposed, why the change is necessary, how it will be beneficial, what can be achieved within clear timescales and how the proposed change will be implemented.

Note that although this is general advice to on how to build a business case to support adoption of new technologies, NHS organisations may have individual approaches to business case planning which will need to be considered.

Business case planning

When planning a business case, information about the current state of the service or clinical area in question needs to be identified. This should include information regarding any aspects of the service that are commissioned to external organisations. Sometimes services are outsourced because there is no current provider provision in the local NHS organisation, or because it has proved to be more cost effective.

Documents whose inclusion may strengthen the business case include the following:

- A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to assess the current service.
- Evidence to support the business case, such as research papers, evidence-based practice (for example, NICE guidance) and locally produced evidence (for example, audits).
- Financial information including current and future costs and evidence to support any potential savings (previous cost modelling and cost–benefit

analyses can provide a reference point to support the data). This is included and available in NICE guidance.

A good business case needs to answer several pertinent questions:

- What are you hoping to achieve by adopting the new technology?
- What resources do you need to get to your future state?
- Will the new technology deliver everything that you need?
- Who do you need to consult with?
- Why do you want to make the change?
- What is driving the need for this change?
- What are the timescales involved? Are they realistic?
- Can any services be decommissioned through implementing the suggested changes?
- How will you demonstrate the impact of the change?

Drafting a business case

Basic information

The business case should have a clear and concise title that informs the reader of exactly what the business case concerns. Contact details for the author, the date and version control information should also be included.

Executive summary

The executive summary is an essential part of the business case and must be understandable to any audience. It should:

- introduce the business problem and briefly describe the actions taken so far to address the problem
- provide an overview of the current state of the problem, followed by an assessment of how business needs are (or are not) being met
- include information such as the stakeholders or sponsor
- include current costs and potential future financial or resource savings
- summarise the proposed options which form the business case
- include the intended methodology for evaluating the impact of the proposed options, along with timescales.

The goal of the business case

This section should outline a compelling case for change in terms of current and future needs of a department, service or organisation. Include information such as the project goal, expected outcome(s) and how the project will contribute to organisational strategy and take advantage of any opportunities identified during business case planning. Include any non-financial benefits such as effects on quality.

Assumptions

Only assumptions that are relevant to what is being proposed should be included here, and there may not be assumptions for every business case. This is where any specialist resources that are needed should be identified, along with any internal or external factors upon which delivery depends.

Constraints

Highlight any constraints that have been identified, including any capability and capacity issues or contractual commitments.

Option appraisal

There may be a number of different ways to achieve the aims described in the business case; these should each be included as separate options. It is advisable to review and evaluate all options and then prioritise them in order of preference; often, many will not be viable because of cost or other organisational issues. Ensure that for each of the proposed options, its rejection or continuation is justified.

- The first option generally indicates taking minimal or no action, including the costs and risks of inactivity.
- Subsequent options provide alternatives that have been considered. These options may span different levels of funding, resources or risk, but produce similar results to the final option.
- The final option outlines the course of action that would provide the closest fit to the objectives outlined in the business case.

Outline any advantages or disadvantages associated with each option and relate them directly to the objectives stated in the business case. All costs (including direct, indirect, recurrent/non-recurrent, capital and revenue) should be detailed, along with any workforce considerations including changes to staffing resources. Any identified risks associated with each option should be explained, including details about their likelihood and impact, how they may be minimised and any costs involved.

Proposing a recommendation

Having outlined all available, feasible options, the business case should then propose the final option and summarise why it is the most likely to achieve the outcomes.

Impact analysis

This section should provide an overall assessment of how the change and the project in general will affect the organisation. Areas to be considered include the following:

- **Cost:** include estimated expenditure and activity for the project along with information on anticipated return of investment. Any additional income needed for the project should be identified.
- **Culture:** describe any deviation from or reinforcement of the organisation's values.
- **Capability:** provide an assessment of the organisation's ability to finish the project in the proposed timescale, considering previous experience of similar projects and its overall commitment to the change.

Risks

This section should cover any important risks that have been identified, including those that could arise from the change and those related to the organisation's ability to carry out the project. It is important to refer to the organisation's own risk matrix to define appropriate scores for each of the identified risks. For each risk, the business case should suggest controls that can be introduced or strengthened to minimise the risk. This is also an opportunity to consider if these risks need to be entered in the organisations risk log.

Implementation

This section should provide a high-level plan of the main activities involved in the project. A work plan including a Gantt Chart and milestone plan detailing important activities and the time by which they must be finished can also be included for further detail. A stakeholder analysis should be completed to identify all relevant stakeholders for the project.

It is important to provide details of the project's workforce requirements on a yearly basis and any changes to role or skill mix that will need to be made to the current state (including staff groups, grades and departments).

Further implementation support and resources are available from the [NICE](#) website.

The information presented here represents the key points of NHS learning shared with the adoption team during the development of this resource.