

Service Governance

There are a number of industry-accepted approaches to managing services (e.g. COBIT, CMM, ISO, ITIL, Prince2, Six Sigma...). While these approaches possess certain differentiating features, they are all focused on providing a framework of best practices for managing internal and external service providers, through the full life-cycle of service management.

Governance Life-cycle

The governance life-cycle can be categorized into 5 main functions:

Service Strategy	The achievement of strategic goals and objectives requires the use of strategic assets, and the development of a strategic and consistent vision of the approach to service management and establishment of guiding principles.
Service Design	The design of services includes the design of governing practices, processes, and policies, to realize the strategy and facilitate the introduction of services into the live environment ensuring quality service delivery, customer satisfaction and cost-effective service provision.
Service Transition	Service Transition includes the development of capabilities for transitioning new and changed services into operations, ensuring the requirements of Service Strategy, encoded in Service Design, are effectively realized in Service Operations while controlling the risks of failure and disruption.
Service Operation	Service Operation provides guidance on achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery and support of services to ensure value for the customer and the service provider. Strategic objectives are ultimately realized through Service Operations.
Continuous Service Improvement	Continuous Service Improvement is focused on creating and maintaining value for customers through better design, introduction and operation of services, linking improvement efforts and outcomes with Service Strategy, Design, Transition and Operation.

Service Level Agreements

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) records a common understanding about services, priorities, responsibilities, guarantees, and warranties. Each area of service scope should have the "level of service" defined. The SLA may specify the levels of availability, serviceability, performance, operation, or other attributes of the service. The "level of service" can also be specified as a "target" and "minimum," which allows customers to be informed about what to expect (the minimum), whilst providing a measurable (average) target value that shows the level of performance. In most contracts, penalties will be agreed upon, in the case of non-compliance of the SLA.

SLAs design, implementation, monitoring, and measuring provide the foundation for a solid client/vendor relationship, while serving as the basis for implementing process improvements.

Assessing the Maturity of Your Governance Environment

The in-place governance model can be assessed based on the understanding of the Vision, Process, Roles, Tools, and Performance Measures that are associated with each governance activity, throughout the entire life-cycle. The maturity of these activities can be readily evaluated against a set of maturity levels that range from activities being performed in an ad-hoc manner (Level 1), to those activities that have been fully deployed, measured, and instantiated in the enterprise (Level 5).

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Vision	Does not exist or is limited	Developed, but not formally communicated	Communicated and ratified in all areas of the organization	Formalized, with the relevant policies and procedures	Encompasses the corporate vision and strategy.
Process	Not defined	Defined, but there are no formal mechanisms in place	Currently being deployed throughout the organization	Fully deployed throughout the organization	Continually evaluated and improved
Roles	No personnel are dedicated to performing the function	The role exists, but the associated responsibilities are not clearly defined	The role and responsibilities are clearly defined, and staffed	There is a dedicated team assigned, with rotation and succession plans	The team is evaluated on the introduction of innovations
Tools	No tools or technology in-place	Basic tools, single-user, desktop (MS Office) are used	Formal, fit-for-purpose tools are being used	A comprehensive set of tools are available on the corporate intranet	An enterprise-wide toolkit is being used
Performance Measures	No benchmark information considered	considered successful if hiring deadlines are met	Performance evaluation measures are clearly defined and documented	Performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is tracked.	Performance measures are updated and monitored

Governance Maturity Model