

DEFINING STATEMENT

The Discovery Project

Author, Tom Mochal, PMP at Tom.Mochal@TenStep.com.

If you are defining a very large project, there is a tendency for the project definition work to become very lengthy and unfocused. **Defining the work for very large projects takes enough time that it should be structured as a project itself.** This is the purpose of defining a separate **Discovery Project**.

This should make sense. If the project is ultimately going to take 50,000 effort hours, for example, it may take a number of months to get the Project Definition documented and approved. In these cases, a distinct project is established to define the work. The final deliverable for a Discovery Project is a completed **Project Definition, Project Management Procedures** and **project workplan** for the subsequent large project. For the most part, all the "real" deliverables will be produced as a part of the larger, follow-on project.

A Discovery Project is, in fact, a project itself. Therefore, you need to create a Project Definition and workplan for the Discovery Project. Defining and managing the Discovery Project just like a regular project will help you keep your focus and ensure that you and the sponsor are in-synch on what you are doing and what the expectations are. As always, you want to **make sure you are clear what is expected at the conclusion of a Discovery Project.**

Just like with any project, you will need to determine whether your Discovery Project is a large, small or medium sized project. Depending on the size of the Discovery Project, you have three options on how to proceed (the same as for any project).

1. For a small Discovery Project, a service request can be created, but it is not required. Even though the Discovery Project is small, the deliverables produced will include the full Project Definition, as well as a project workplan and Project Management Procedures. It is assumed that if you are executing a Discovery Project the final project will be large enough to require a full Project Definition.
2. For a medium Discovery Project, follow the **TenStep Project Management Process** for a medium sized project. The Discovery Project should have an Abbreviated Project Definition and project workplan, and be managed just like any other medium-size project, including managing issues, scope, risk, etc. When the Discovery Project is complete, the Project Definition, Project Management Procedures and project workplan for the subsequent project should be created. The approval process for these documents should be a part of the Discovery Project. Assuming that the Project Definition has been approved, the subsequent larger project can start at any time.
3. If the size of **your Discovery Project is, in fact, a large project**, you should follow the steps required for defining large projects. Lets look at an example. You may be trying to define a very large project perhaps even **a program** (a set of related projects managed as a whole). Lets say the Discovery Project itself is estimated to take 5,000 hours. The Discovery Project should then be defined and managed as a large project. *If the Discovery project is large, the follow-on project actually being defined would have to be very, very large.* (emphases added)

Hopefully that is not too confusing. The bottom line is that a Discovery Project is used to define and plan for a subsequent, larger project. **The final deliverables of the Discovery Project are the approved Project Definition, project workplan and Project Management Procedures for the subsequent, larger project.** You won't have to do a formal define/plan phase on the larger project. This work was done in the Discovery Project. So, the larger project may be able to start executing immediately.