



Planning,
Industry &
Environment

Priority Assessment Program

Program Controls Framework

November 2020

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Purpose of Program

- The program is an assessment support mechanism to help accelerate major strategic projects through the assessment process. It does not occur at the expense of 'business as usual'.
- The Priority Assessment Program is aimed at supporting projects that:
 - Will make a substantial contribution to the delivery of the strategic objectives of the government; and
 - Will have significant public benefit including the strategic objectives of open and green space, community development or environmental protection and enhancement.
 - Will make have an overwhelming positive impact on the economic development of the State or region to assist with the recovery from the COVID19 pandemic.
- The Program is a project management approach for existing assessment processes. Inclusion in this Program doesn't predetermine the assessment outcome. All projects will be assessed in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.
- Projects can include:
 - State significant development / State significant infrastructure;
 - Key planning proposals (State or Council led) or key precincts; or
 - An integrated planning proposal and State significant development projects.
- The program is scheduled to be run between 2020/21 to 2021/22 financial years. Projects can be considered for inclusion at any time.

Objectives

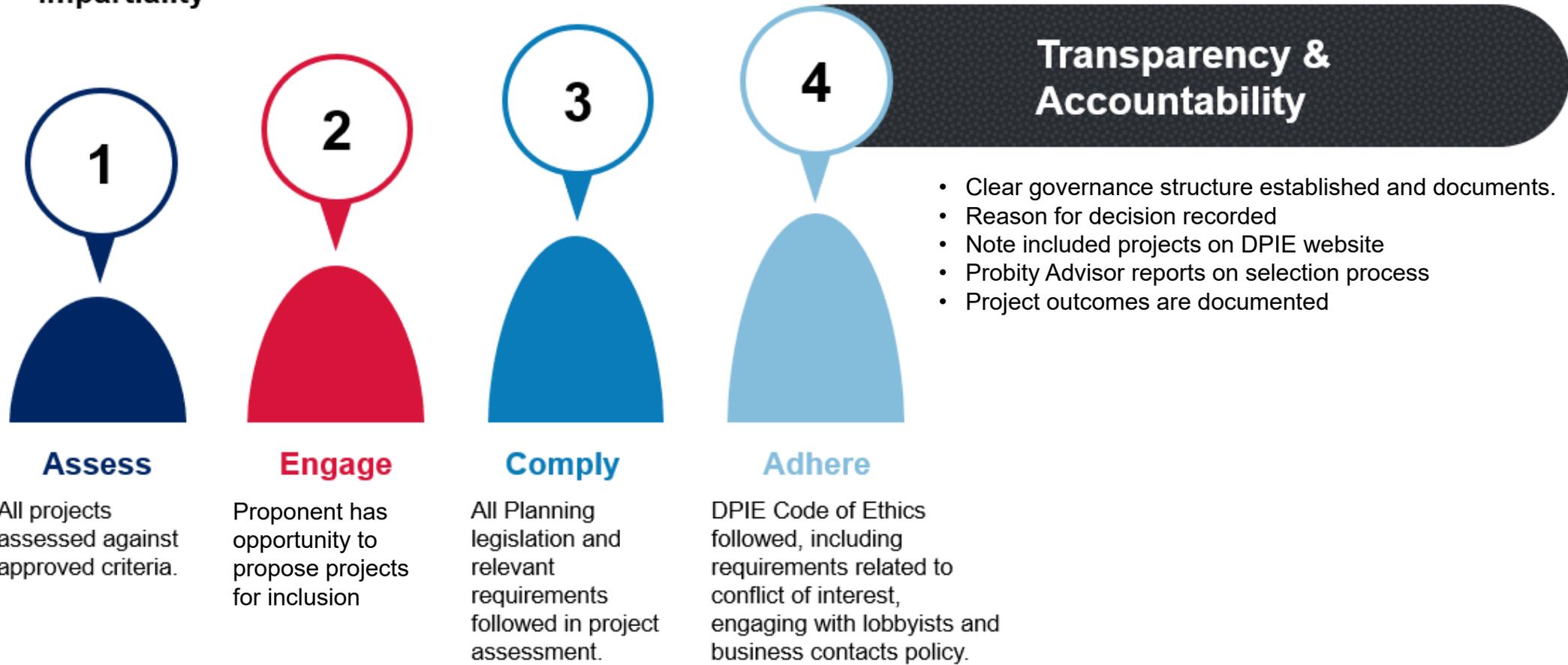
- To support the recovery of the NSW economy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provide assessment decision support to accelerate completion of project with high public and economic benefit to NSW, and which have a high degree of alignment with strategic objectives.
- Activate the economy via the pipeline of planning projects that have high likelihood of delivery, creating investment certainty and confidence in the planning system.
- Provide case-management oversight and assist the completion of planning decisions to keep people in jobs and the construction industry moving as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Benefits

- Provides improved communication between proponents of major strategic projects and the Department.
- Enables more efficient resource allocation with defined objectives and targets on a case by case basis.
- Support proponents, councils, planning panels and DPIE assessment teams to fast-track strategically important projects.
- Provide clearer expectations about assessment requirements for all stakeholders, including commitments to public benefit, public value and overall project schedule.
- Improved oversight and monitoring of major project assessments processes including timeframes.

Shared and transparent decision-making is critical. Oversight is fundamental to the program.

Impartiality



Project Management Pathways

Method 1	Method 2	Method 3
State Significant Development & State Significant Infrastructure	Planning Proposals	Integrated Planning Proposal & Development Application
Milestones relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuing of SEARS • Exhibition • Response to Submissions • Assessment • Final determination • Any other key milestone on a project. 	Milestones relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway determination • Studies required • Exhibition • Response to submissions • Assessment • Recommendation on rezoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined State-led rezoning and State significant development application • Milestones as per method 1 and 2 combined/overlapping • Planning proposal or precinct could be expanded to include adjoining land or to create better connections.

Project Management Pathways

- Councils will be engaged in the consideration of whether a planning proposal should be managed through this program
- A clear schedule will be agreed, informed by the statutory process.
- Proponent(s) will commit to the quality of information to support the assessment and decision.
- The project schedule will be monitored by senior executives within stakeholder organisations – including milestone reporting and monitoring/mitigation of project schedule risk.
- Projects will primarily be under assessment by DPIE (or bilateral assessment with Commonwealth) but projects under assessment by Councils or not yet lodged will be considered for inclusion.

Projects being considered for participation in the Program will be considered against the following criteria*

Strategic Alignment

Proposals that align with, or act as a catalyst for existing State Policies/Strategies and land use strategies.

State Plans and Strategies. Makes a significant contribution to the delivery of key government plans and strategies such as the State Transport Strategy, State Infrastructure Strategy, Regional Economic Development Strategies or Premier's Priorities

Alignment with land use strategy. The project is recognised in a regional or district plan as being aligned to a spatial or economic strategy, is within a strategic centre, a location for employment or land release, an economic corridor or will enable the delivery of a Lighthouse Precinct

Synergy/catalyst. The project creates investment certainty that can unlock significant further development in a precinct and/or generates significant downstream economic activity.

Economic Benefit

Proposals will result in significant capital investment and create or protect jobs:

Economic scale. The project provides for significant capital investment in the medium term

Job creation or protection. The project creates a significant number of new jobs (construction or operational) or safeguards existing jobs.

Public Benefit

Proposals will provide significant public benefit such as improving open or public space and/or provide social and environmental benefits.

Social benefits. The project provides significant social benefits (e.g. substantial affordable housing, a major community facility, aboriginal land, build-to rent);

Environmental benefits. The project provides significant environmental benefits (eg. biodiversity corridors, threatened species refugia, improved surface water quality, renewable energy);

Public space. The project provides significant open or public space, better access or connections to open or public space, or provides an appreciable improvement to the quality of public space through design.

Design Excellence

Proposals that leverage existing infrastructure or improve designs of neighbourhoods are more likely to have better community benefits.

Design Excellence, sustainability and urban design. The project provides for high quality urban design or sustainability outcomes, such as incorporating high measures of energy reduction and environmental benefit.

Existing or planned infrastructure. The project is well-serviced by existing or planned infrastructure (e.g. open space, community facilities, major transport facilities).

High Likelihood of Delivery

The project delivery plan enables timely delivery of the planned benefits to the economy and community. This will maximise the likelihood of the program objectives being met. In assessing this participation criteria a number of matters will be considered:

Proponent experience. The proponent has capacity and experience to deliver the project as proposed; and
Proponent capacity. The proponent can demonstrate the financial capacity to complete the project (independently verified); and
Willing to commit. The proponent is willing to commit to delivering milestones on-time, (including timely project delivery) and to signing a Service Charter.
Proponent schedule. The proponent can commit to construction commencing (for DAs) or a DA being lodged (for planning proposals) within 18 months.
Project delivery risks. There are no known significant environmental factors, construction risks, land access issues.

Considerations in Assessing Proposals for Participation

	Criteria	In selecting projects for participation in the Program the Department may consider questions such as (as relevant to the type of project)...
1	Strategic Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project critical to the achievement of a State plan or strategy, Premier's priorities or major economic priority. • Does the project provide infrastructure that will help unlock or kick-start a larger precinct or growth area? • Is the project a national or Commonwealth initiative?
2	Economic Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project generate significant jobs in the short to medium term including through planning, design or construction? • Will significant numbers of construction jobs be created within 18 months of the decision? • Will a large numbers of jobs and economic activity including downstream jobs and economic opportunities) be enabled through the project?
3	Public Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the project contribute to exceptional levels of species or habitat protection including enhancement of biodiversity corridors • Does the project make a substantial contribution to public or affordable housing? • Does the project provide or contribute to significant additional public realm improvements or new or upgraded open space?

Considerations in Assessing Proposals for Participation

	Criteria	In selecting projects for participation in the Program the Department may consider questions such as (as relevant to the type of project)...
4	Design Excellence & Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the project incorporate highly innovative or exceptional levels of energy saving technology or design relevant to the type of proposal? • Will the project contribute to an exceptional public realm improvement or achieve outstanding architectural merit relevant to the type of proposal? • Does the project leverage existing infrastructure capacity or incorporate innovative demand management techniques (where relevant)?
5	High Likelihood of Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence of a plan for delivery or development application within 18 months of decision? • Is there a market demand for the project (where relevant)? • Are there any clear impediments to delivery that are outside the proponent's control such as infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints? • Does the proponent have the right to develop the land if an approval is issued? • Is the proponent willing to commit to a Service Charter for the assessment process including consideration of responsiveness, quality of information?

Project selection process will assure alignment of resources with achievement of objectives

- Projects will have a strong alignment to strategic objectives of the Government and have significant public benefits that deliver a positive legacy for communities and businesses and assist with the economic recovery from the COVID19 pandemic.
- The program will not be suitable or appropriate for all projects. Other reform initiatives and improved BAU will continue to provide accelerated planning pathways to projects across NSW.
- Projects will be selected according to the program criteria, through a carefully monitored review and selection process. The selection process will be informed by advice from independent experts, government agencies, councils DPIE assessment teams and proponents.
- The Program Criteria will be applied by the Department to consider projects for inclusion through a three-stage triage process. The process will consider resources, the nature of the project and whether it will benefit from the processes available to the Program.
- The Program of Priority Assessment Projects will not be selected as a single group. Projects can be considered for inclusion at any time, subject to resources.



Assessment will occur in three stages. Projects will seek approval before proceeding to the next stage of assessment (refer governance (page 13 & 14))

Stage 1 – Initial Review

- High level review of project against criteria
- Identify that case management will be beneficial to accelerating the assessment

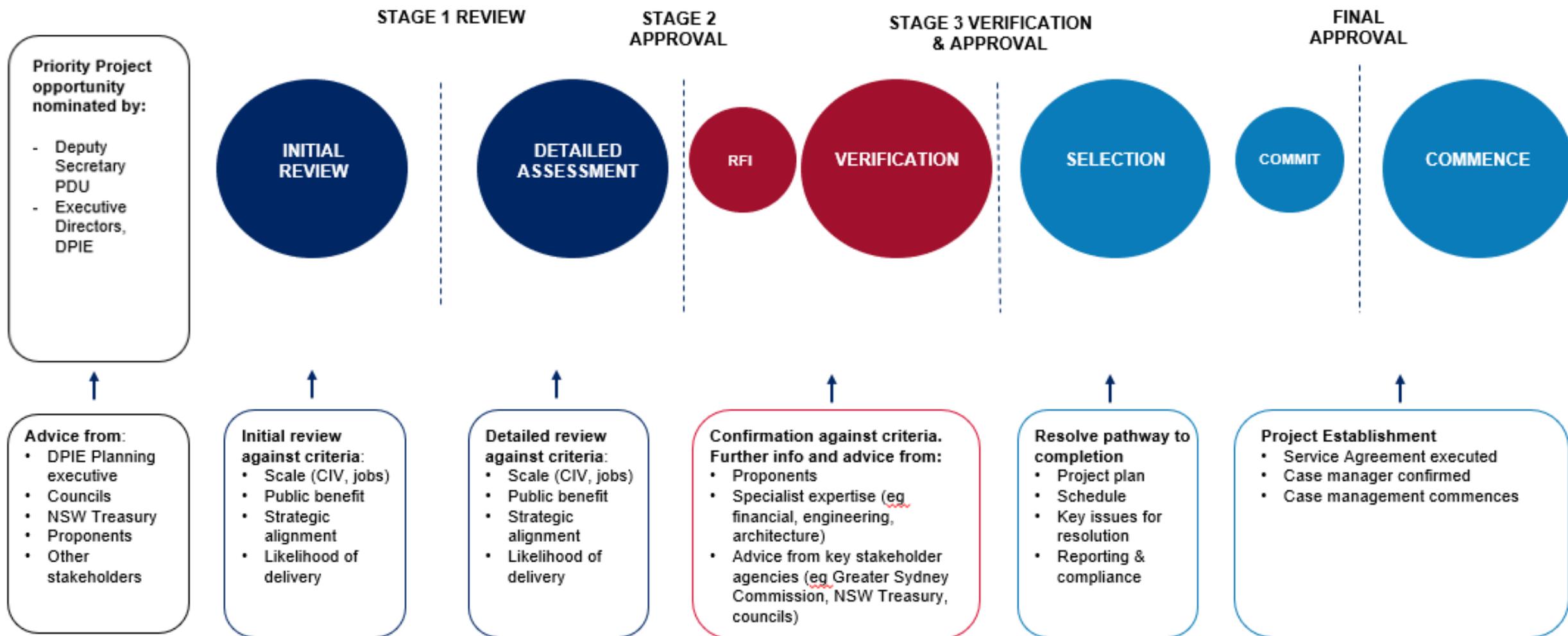
Stage 2 – Detailed Assessment

- Detailed review of project against criteria using information within application
- Confirm that case management is will significantly accelerate the assessment
- Initial advice from specialists (eg finance, infrastructure, design) if required

Stage 3 – Confirmation and Verification

- Detailed review of project against criteria using information sought from:
 - Council
 - Proponent
 - Relevant specialist advice (eg finance, infrastructure, design) if relevant
 - Strategic planning agency (eg Greater Sydney Commission in Sydney) if required
- Confirm that applicant is willing to commit to program

Process for Deciding Which Projects Will Participate in Program





Selection Governance – Stage 3 (Verification)



Program reporting to:

- Planning Leadership Team.
- Precincts Coordination Steering Committee.
- Minister for Planning & Public Spaces.
- Planning Reform Implementation Committee
- DAPCO
- Program Sponsors

Program Reporting Requirements:

- Schedule – program and projects
- Progress towards program objectives
- Risks and issues
- Outcomes

Report Name	Frequency	Audience	Responsible
Project Progress Report	Fortnightly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary’s Office • Program Sponsors 	Program Manager
Monthly Program Status Report	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAPCO • Minister’s Office • Secretary’s Office • Program Sponsors 	Program Manager
Planning Reform Implementation	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Reform Implementation Committee 	Program Manager
Probity report on project selection process	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary’s Office 	Probity Advisor



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