



# Building the Toolkit for the Enterprise Workflow National Project

The Institute of Public Finance provide support for learning and dissemination on enterprise workflow.

## Background

IPF - the Business Services Division of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) - was employed by the Programme Office to support the National Project in three interlinked areas: toolkit development, Web support and quality assurance. In doing this, it was able to draw on a broad range of experience and expertise across the different areas of public sector management.

With over 150 local authority members of its IT and e-Government Forums, IPF has a long-standing appreciation of the demands faced in local government. And as one of the biggest providers of Web services to the UK public sector, it is also well practised at providing information and advice in an accessible electronic form.

In supporting the Programme Office and its partners, IPF was therefore keenly aware of the wider audience for project learning. Like the Roman God Janus, it wore two distinct faces: one pointing inward, to facilitate effective project collaborations, the other looking outwards to the wider local authority world - for which project learning was repackaged and disseminated.

## The Story

Early discussions about toolkit and quality assurance identified two key principles. Firstly, the value - and ultimately the quality - of the toolkit would be dependent upon its ability to guide potential users through the whole project cycle, from developing plans and strategies for enterprise workflow, through to implementation and routine operation. Rather than simply documenting the solutions delivered at the end of project, therefore, emphasis was also placed on capturing the whole journey of workflow related change. Put another way, while local authorities would be interested in what the National Project achieved, they were also particularly interested in how its partners got there.

The second principle recognised that, in documenting learning about the project process, data would be much more reliable if captured and codified as events unfolded. In other words, learning needed to be logged on an ongoing basis, rather than dredged up from memory and compiled post hoc.

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*Paul Jackson  
IPF*





## The Solution

In building the National Project website, there were two audiences - and two sets of functional requirements - to respond to. On the one hand, the website was the main means of communication to the wider community. Here, easily accessible and engaging content was required. On the other hand, there were the project partners (the Programme Office, the ODPM, the transformation projects and IPF), whose needs in respect of project management and collaboration had to be met. The site - [www.workflownp.org.uk](http://www.workflownp.org.uk) - is shown below:

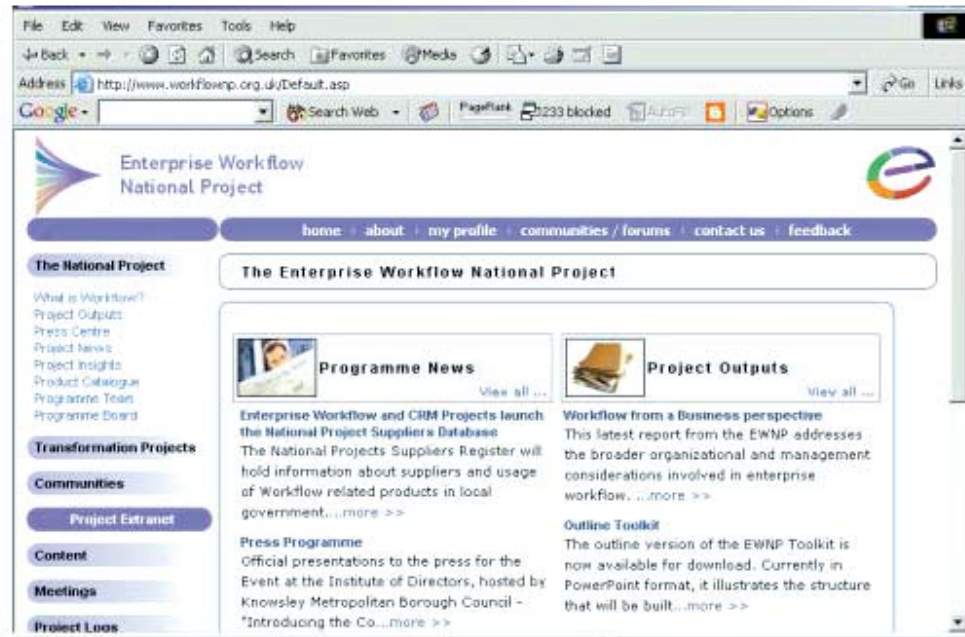


Figure 1  
Enterprise Workflow National Project Website

In using the site, both partners and external visitors first needed to register, which involved entering their email addresses, in response to which a password was automatically issued. This allowed the system to recognise users from partner and non-partner organisations, and thus offer differential access to web resources and functions (the screens taking on a different appearance in each case). For each partner organisations, this effectively meant access to an 'extranet', whereby a designated system administrator could provide users from his or her authority with permissions to enter content on the site.

Having set the system up in this way, it was then possible to add functionality that supported internal communication between project partners. This was particularly important given that several organisations from differ parts of the country were involved in the project, with personnel only meeting at monthly project and programme boards. So far as learning and toolkit develop were concerned here, the most important web component here was the 'learning logs'.





## Learning logs

In addition to supporting project management generally, the project-partner part of the website provided important functionality as an electronic learning repository. This allowed partner authorities to record and share project experiences, as well as position papers and details of problem solving work.

For this to operate effectively, as well as to provide direct support for toolkit development, a degree of structure was first needed around the learning categories. At the commencement of the project, therefore, a workshop was held to develop an outline specification for the toolkit. This was used by IPF to create a set of categories and subcategories, which could then be used as a framework for describing and recording project learning. This process is described in Figure 2.

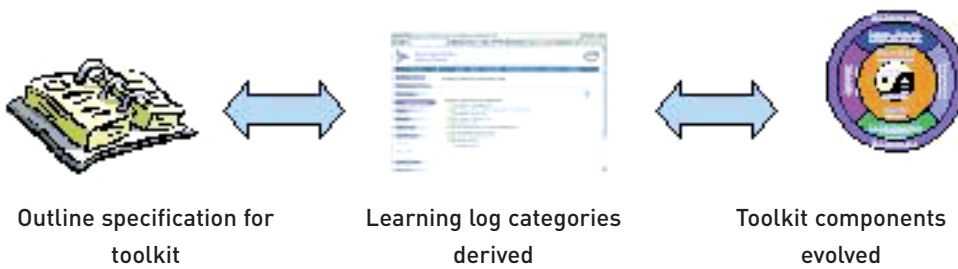


Figure 2  
Specifying the toolkit requirements and learning logs

The specific categories derived and populated during the course of the project are shown in Figure 3. Partners were able to log items in more than one category, of course, reflecting the fact that any area of learning will speak to more than one workflow issue. They also had the option to log (sensitive) items confidentially, in which case only the members of IPF's toolkit team were able to access the content. These items apart, the logs were fully searchable by all partners using online tools.

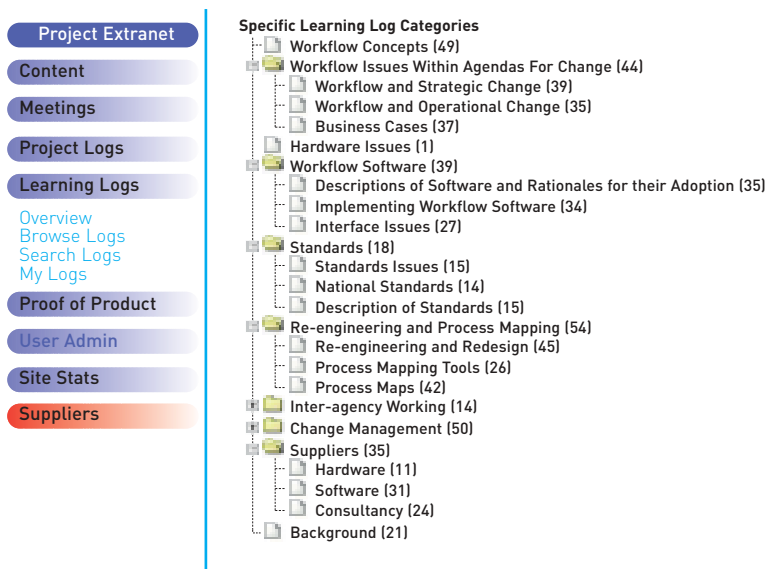


Figure 3  
The learning log categories





A brief example of a learning entry can be seen below. This was recorded under the following categories, for obvious reasons: Change Management, Re-engineering and Process Mapping, Workflow Concepts, Workflow Issues Within Agendas For Change and Workflow Software.

*It is important to recognise when looking to introduce workflow systems, that workflow is first and foremost about layers rather than slices. What I mean by this is that, while users may see things from a vertical silo perspective (and hence, left to their own devices, would look for vertically integrated silo applications), workflow really needs to be seen as a set of cross-organisational systems built up in layers (that deliver common functionality to all). This is why workflow is like cake making; the users may eventually see just one (vertical) slice from the cake, but the cake most definitely needs to be 'constructed' one broad layer at a time, with each layer then being laid on top of - and support by - the one below. In this way, everyone gets the same functionality and ability to handle workflows, from pre-defined production workflows to created-on-the-fly ad-hoc ones. What users do with the cake slices once they are given them, however, is then up to them!*

Figure 4  
Example of a learning log entry

The outline specification for the toolkit was also used by IPF in site visits to project case studies, where first-hand data was collected on workflow developments and experience. In addition - and so as not to re-invent 'workflow wheels' - efforts were also made to combine project learning with documented best practice from beyond the National Project.

### Combining Best Practice

In one sense the development of the toolkit had a very specific goal: providing guidance to local authority managers on implementing enterprise workflow. In doing this, cognisance was needed of the local authority context, in terms of purpose, culture, structure, governance arrangements, statutory requirements, political pressures, and so on. In other words, while workflow maybe a universal concept and tool, the particular issues faced by local government users needed to be foremost.

This said it was also recognised that other sectors - particularly the private sector - had been using workflow for many years. Much of this experience had been document in business and information systems literature and offered valuable inputs and starting points in building a framework of ideas for local government. IPF therefore undertook background research on workflow and enterprise systems and combined this with project learning in developing the toolkit.

### Re-specifying the toolkit

Interim meetings about the toolkit soon drew out two underlying requirements: while it should meet address an authority's needs during the course of a workflow





project, it also had to recognise a range of different users - each with their own interests, understandings and capabilities. In a sense then, the market for the toolkit's products needed to be segmented.

The key 'customers' here were seen to be:

- Councillors, chief executives and senior managers
- Programme managers and change management boards
- Project managers
- Process analysts
- IT managers
- Service managers
- Users

Each would need to be understood in their own right, spoken to in their own language and supported in their own needs.

It was also recognised that many stakeholders in local authorities were unlikely to have come across the term 'workflow' or 'enterprise workflow' before. The toolkit therefore needed to undertake an educational role, explaining to the uninitiated about the nature of workflow and where it fitted in with the local authority agenda - especially on e-Government.

## The outline toolkit

As the project developed, the structure of the toolkit evolved around three key (interlinked) areas.

1. At the highest ('introductory') level, the components played an educational role - explaining what workflow 'is' and identifying the contexts within which discussions should be located.
2. At the next level - and before workflow could 'get off the ground' in an authority - was the need to aid executive understanding and decision-making. Here, an executive or programme board would identify a high-level business case for workflow and commission and review exploratory analysis and oversee the implementation of workflow solutions.
3. The third level, it was soon realised, was the heart of the toolkit. It was here that the detailed tools would be needed to guide project managers, process analysis and IT specialists through the process of delivering workflow-related change. This included analysis, scoping, re-engineering, project management, implementation, integration and change management.

The links between the three levels is shown in Figure 5.



## The Authority

### Key Lessons

Users of the toolkit need to know about the process of workflow-related change. The toolkit design had to recognise this and support potential users through the whole journey of designing and implementing workflow solutions.

To understand properly the process of change, learning had to be collected on an ongoing basis. A system needed to be set up to do this.

The toolkit needed to recognise the range of potential users. Each of these had their own set of needs and had to be communicated with in an appropriate way.

### Key Benefits

A multi-user set of tools that can guide an authority through the whole workflow project cycle.

An actionable set of ideas that respond to the issues faced in a local authority.

An accessible and usable product available in preferred formats.

### Key Facts

The toolkit will be available in word/pdf and html formats, via the project website, by June 2004.

It will also provide an interface onto the other outputs from the National Project, such as case studies and technical reports.

IPF will be working with the Knowsley Programme Office to enhance the toolkit with interactive functionality, which will be available via the website by autumn 2004.

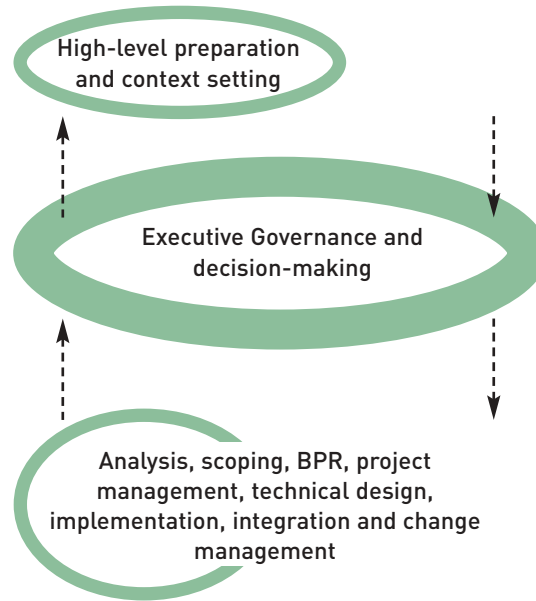


Figure 5  
The three toolkit levels

## The toolkit reports

In addition to the diagrammatic version described in Figure 5, the bulk of the toolkit content will be contained within a set of short reports. These will be available on the project website, in both word/pdf and html. The html versions will also provide linkages to other project outputs, such as technical reports and case studies. The toolkit reports will therefore involve:

1. An introduction
2. High level introduction to workflow
3. Workflow technologies and architectures
4. Planning and managing workflow projects
5. Building the business case for Enterprise Workflow
6. Identifying and scoping workflow projects
7. Workflow modeling and BPR
8. Change management
9. Design, Implementation and operation
10. Doing workflow with external parties
11. Glossary of terms

Working with the Programme Office, IPF will, in due course, repurpose this content, providing interactive functionality, available via the project website.