

# **Business Project Guide and Workbook**

# **USE MAX**

Designed by transit agencies for transit agencies

# **2025**

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## The Business Project: Introduction

### What Is It?

The Business Project is one of the essential components of the MAX Program. It is an implementable proposal to solve high-priority, agency-defined business problems or untapped opportunities. It provides you with real world application of many of the skills you will be learning and best practices you will observe throughout the program year. One of the significant values of the MAX program has been the implementation of participant business cases, resulting in cost savings since MAX's implementation in 2012. Below are examples of just a few of participant's Business Cases which have been implemented.

### Why?

Developing a Business Project allows you to apply many of the skills you will be learning and best practices you will observe throughout the program. The Business Projects allow you to bring innovative solutions, best practices, and new knowledge to your home agency.

### The Business Project Worksheet

An important tool that we will be using throughout this process is the Business Project Worksheet. This Worksheet provides a logical structure for the information you will be collecting and supports the format of the Business Project Presentation that you will be developing. In this packet you will find a blank and annotated version of the form.

Stage	Business Project Training	Research and Explore Business Project	Finalize Project Materials	Polish and Present Business Project	Present to Home airport Leadership
Details	Eno Staff will conduct a Business Project Training during <u>EnoWeek</u> , which will review the <u>Business Project Worksheet</u> and other resources.	Research, analyze data, and work on your project during and between agency visits; fill out your Business Project Worksheet as you work on project.	Complete your Business Project Worksheet and then prepare for your Business Project Presentation	Present your <u>Mock Business Project Presentation</u> to VIP panel at final host week.	Following the conclusion of the Max program, your home agency will arrange a meeting with leadership to pitch your business project
Timeline	April 23 (during <u>EnoWeek</u> )	June – July (during and in between <i>Host</i> 1 & 2)	July –Sept (during and in between <i>Host</i> week 2 & 3)	Sept—Oct (during <i>Host</i> week 3 or before between <i>Host</i> week 3 and 4)	Post-Program

## **Examples of Implemented Business Projects**

### **Drone Use in Asset Management**

During the 2017 program two LA Metro participants heard a presentation about the use of drones for asset management purposes while visiting Denver RTD. They were able to meet the person who flies the drones during one of the Meet Your Match sessions, where they had an extended conversation about the drone use. Metro had received an unsolicited proposal for drones through the Office of Extraordinary Innovation. They are currently in the process of working with the proposer to come up with a proof of concept to see if the technology is viable for Metro.

### **Abridged Long Range Planning Document**

During the 2015 program a DART participant saw a presentation on LA Metro's long-range plan. These plans are very complex and often hard to understand for the public or non-technical personnel. LA Metro includes an abridged version that is full of graphical presentations and easily understandable commentary. This abridged version is smaller than the technical version and therefore saves considerably on mass production for the agency and the public. The participant brought back the report and it is now being implemented in DART's 2040 Transit System Plan. It will help DART's dissemination of their transit service growth strategies to all of DART's customers as well as realize some internal cost savings.

### **Customer Center Remapping**

During the 2014 program, just two years into the MAX program, a MARTA participant was able to observe and acquire best practices of all Customer Centers at the four founding agencies and adapt them to be used at MARTA. He implemented the RideStore (MARTA's Customer Center) remapping to establish a more efficient way to carry out MARTA's revenue functions including the sale of fare media, restitution research and customer service. He did this by modifying the hours of operations and by making various process changes at each RideStore. Based on the recommended changes, MARTA was able to decrease its staffing requirements by four FTEs or \$187,000; and five PTEs or \$97,000 annually. To date MARTA's total savings are \$1,136,000 and counting.

## Business Project Worksheet

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

- 1 paragraph (~100 words) summarizing the problem/opportunity

### Situational Analysis

- Background and History
- Perception of Current State
- Projections if current state continues
- Work that may have already been done
- Financial, operational impacts

### Research Plan

- Information needed from home property
- Key questions of Speakers/Matches
- What to look for on Tours/Site Visits
- Written information or data needed

### Evaluation of Options

*The what, why and how questions of the project*

- List all Options
- Identify Critical assumptions
- Required resources
- Required resources
- Organizational capability
- Key interdependencies
- Identifies areas impacted
- Key decision criteria (eg: benefits, cost, operational & customer impacts, etc.)

### Recommended Path Forward

- Summarize preferred recommendation
- Reasoning supporting recommendation
- Identify next steps
  - Who is responsible for project implementation?
  - Major schedule milestones

## Business Project Worksheet

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

### Situational Analysis

### Research Plan

### Evaluation of Options

### Recommended Path Forward

## Business Project Worksheet

(Sample)

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

As public transportation vehicles become more technically complex, our maintenance staff are increasingly confronted with maintenance and repair situations for which they have not been adequately trained or prepared. These situations can lead to longer vehicle downtimes, reduced capacity to transport our constituents in a timely manner, and higher fleet maintenance costs.

### Situational Analysis

### Research Plan

### Evaluation of Options

### Recommended Path Forward

**Describe the effectiveness of this statement. Consider: *Is it clear, is it concise, do you understand its impact..***

## Business Project Worksheet

(Practice)

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

#### Situational Analysis

This section should assess the environment in which your project is taking place and all entities that it impacts. This should include internal and external factors such as background and history, perception of current state, projections if the current state continues, relevant work that may have already been done, and financial/operational impacts. Consider utilizing the SWOT technique as a starting point which identifies (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

#### Research Plan

#### Evaluation of Options

#### Recommended Path Forward

**What is your perception of the current state of problem/opportunity? What else do you know about the background?**



Business Project Worksheet (Practice)	
<b>Business Problem/Opportunity Statement</b>	
<b>Situational Analysis</b>	
<p><b>Research Plan</b></p> <p>A successful Research Plan identifies what you will be investigating. Below are some tips data collection you may need for your analysis:</p> <p><b>At Each Agency Visit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview and network with resources from BPiE Sessions</li> <li>• Ask questions of relevant speakers/tour guides</li> <li>• Collect relevant printed best practices information</li> <li>• Visit relevant sites on tours or specially arranged visits</li> </ul> <p><b>At your host property, host week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine your project with Facilitators and LDS</li> </ul> <p><b>At work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up with contacts</li> <li>• Collect documents and data</li> <li>• External research</li> <li>• Discuss projects with facilitators and supervisors</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview Targets (Experts, Supervisors, Contractors, Operators, etc. )</li> <li>• Interview Questions</li> <li>• Data to collect</li> <li>• Industry Best Practices</li> <li>• Industry Standards</li> <li>• Regulatory Requirements</li> <li>• Documents to collect</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation of Options</b>	
<b>Recommended Path Forward</b>	

**What are some things that will be important as you begin to conduct your research? (Consider: *Who will you need to connect with? What questions do you need answers to? What standards and regulations might you consider? Which documents will you need?*)**

**Create a suggested timeline for yourself to gather this information.**

Business Project Worksheet		(Read)
<b>Business Problem/Opportunity Statement</b>		
<b>Situational Analysis</b>		
<b>Research Plan</b>		
<b>Evaluation of Options</b> <b>List Options</b> List all options including No Action. Do not eliminate options during the listing process, even if they seem untenable. <b>Define and Describe Options</b> Make sure you include the same information for each of the options so that you are comparing the same information categories and are not skewing your evaluation. Some areas to include in your definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical assumptions</li> <li>• Required resources</li> <li>• Organizational capability</li> <li>• Key interdependencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completion of other projects, availability of key personnel, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify areas impacted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• own department, other internal departments, external entities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <b>Evaluate, Compare, and Rank Options</b> When establishing your decision criteria, consider the following; <b>Financial Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs/benefits for each option including no-action</li> <li>• Consider every associated cost</li> <li>• Ensure affordability</li> <li>• Project ROI</li> <li>• Identify predicted budget and cash flow implications</li> </ul> <b>Operational Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry/Regulatory Standards</li> <li>• Consistency with existing infrastructure/equipment</li> <li>• Personnel</li> </ul> <b>Customer Impact Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease of use</li> <li>• Familiarity</li> <li>• Cost to use</li> </ul> <b>Benefits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Public Relations</li> <li>• Long Term Feasibility</li> </ul>		
<b>Recommended Path Forward</b>		

## Business Project Worksheet

(Read)

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

### Situational Analysis

### Research Plan

### Evaluation of Options

### Recommended Path Forward

The final step in the evaluation process is ranking the options and selecting a recommended path forward. The highest ranked option is not always the recommended option. Consider critical assumptions, risk, constraints and limitations when making your final decision.

Summarize your preferred recommendation and thoroughly describe it. It is important to provide the reason for making your selection. What is it about this option that provides a better solution to the problem than all the other options. Identify next steps if this option is greenlighted, who is responsible for project implementation, major schedule milestone, and possible project staging.

***This step cannot take place until the other four steps have been completed.***

## Business Case Worksheet

(Read)

### Implementation Plan

After finalizing your recommended path forward, discuss the basic framework for the implementation of the options. These should include basic timeline, resources required, costs of implementation, etc.

### Executive Summary

This is typically written after the Business Project Worksheet is finished and sometimes is the only section an executive will read. It should include essential points in the following order: Problem/Opportunity Statement, al Analysis, Evaluation of Options, Recommended Path Forward, and finally, the Implementation Plan.

**Draft your implementation plan below.**

**Draft your Executive Summary below (this should not exceed 150 words).**

## Business Project Worksheet

(Past Eno/MAX Example)

### Business Problem/Opportunity Statement

Metro-North Railroad is faced with the need to increase its ridership and fare revenues. Competitive publicly funded bus services operating out of train stations are being started by the State of New York.

Politicians are criticizing the size of Metro-North's operating subsidy and questioning the continuation of service at its current levels.

### Situational Analysis

Over the past 10 years, ridership has declined about 15% and absent some action this trend is expected to continue in the future. Ridership is falling in all markets (peak, off-peak) and all lines. Population in the service area has increased by about 5% over the past ten years but has been constant in the past year.

The primary reason for this ridership decline is poor service. The primary problems are late trains, dirty trains, surly train crews, and inadequate schedules. These are a result of very poor infrastructure (primarily track and signals and power systems), cars and locomotives beyond their useful life and lack of front-line staff training. These in turn have been caused by a lack of funding for the past decades.

On the positive side, there is an opportunity to increase ridership and revenue by expanding our market share. Previous market studies have shown that this is especially true for off-peak markets

### Research Plan

- Planning Department Ridership Data
- Market Share Data
- On-time performance Data
- Customer Performance Indicators
- Customer Complaints
- Budget Department
- Maintenance of Way Department
- Governmental Relations Department
- MTA Board Budget Information
- Capital Funding Plan(s)

## Business Project Worksheet

(Past Eno/MAX Example)

### Evaluation of Options

#### Options

1. Do nothing and let the political environment resolve the problems
2. Raise fares focusing on the least elastic market (peak commutation fares) and reduce service
3. Request additional monies to bring the system into a state of good repair
4. Request further additional monies to expand service

#### 1. NO ACTION

- Lose control of organization and its future
- Likely to have unfavorable outcome

#### 2. Raise fares and reduce service

- Continued ridership decline
- Raise \$20,000,000
- Negative customer reaction
- Alienate key political leaders

#### 3. Request additional monies for state of good repair

- Likelihood of success is unknown
- Crisis environment may help
- Lack of repairs may jeopardize future safe operation of the railroad
- Pre-requisite for railroad to improve service and grow
- Will need major organizational expansion to plan and implement program
- Does not provide immediate solution

#### 4. Request further additional monies for service expansion

- Similar pros and cons as above
- Will need further expansion of organizational capabilities
- Service expansion may impede progress to bring system into a state of good repair
- Few people may ride as service will remain of poor quality
- Political risk if ridership does not increase and subsidies increase

### Recommended Path Forward

Recommend Option 3 while suggesting Option 4 for the future.

- Operational safety
- Necessary for organizational future
- Phased approach which is easier for political leaders and customers to accept
- Does not over promise nor jeopardize monies for state of good repair work
- Suggest that MNR President get approval from MTA Chairman and then have Government Affairs department develop a detailed plan for requesting the funding

## **Refining Your Problem/Opportunity Statement**

Your problem/opportunity statement should get right to the point. This is not the place to summarize all the information in your project. This is where you tell us what the problem/opportunity is and why the executives should buy in. This will likely be your opening statement during your Executive Briefing and Mock Pitch.

### **Original Statement**

### **Refined Statement**