

# Design Quality Framework

## This Advisory Note provides an overview of the standard elements of a Design Quality Framework.

The Design Quality Framework (the Framework) provides government agencies with a structured process to integrate good design practices at the corporate level from a project lifecycle perspective. This framework is then available for application by the agency at the program or project level.

Producing a Design Quality Framework is a collaborative process between a government agency and GANSW. This co-design methodology shapes each of the Framework's elements to reflect the agency's operating model and structure.

Project specific outputs, resulting from the implementation of the Framework, can be used to monitor performance and inform external requirements including INSW Gateway reviews or design excellence requirements as part of development application assessment.

### DESIGN QUALITY FRAMEWORK

ELEMENTS	OUTPUTS*
<b>Corporate level</b> Standards and protocols	<b>Program or project level</b> Project and site-specific outputs
<b>1. The agency's Design Quality Statement (DQS)</b>	Project specific design quality criteria
<b>2. Design governance protocols</b>	Project specific design governance structure
<b>3. Project lifecycle structure</b>	Project specific design inputs, activities and outputs
<b>4. Procurement protocol</b>	Design procurement strategy
<b>5. Design review protocol</b>	Design review strategy
<b>6. Design integrity standards</b>	Design integrity strategy

\*These elements can be contained within existing documents such a Design Management Plan or form a project specific Design Quality Project Plan

### 1. The agency's Design Quality Statement

A Design Quality Statement (DQS) articulates an agency's intention for design quality. It identifies the design outcomes that will distinguish the projects delivered by the agency, aligning them with high level corporate objectives and government policy.

The DQS provides the corporate approach to inform project specific design quality criteria across the project lifecycle. For example, to inform project and business case objectives at the project formation stage; design review and evaluation processes at the design and procurement stages; and post occupation evaluations at the project operation stage.

The DQS serves to embed consistent design quality criteria across the agency's portfolio of projects.

In producing the DQS, agencies can consider:

- who and what drives design decisions at the agency? on what basis?
- how does design quality contribute to the agency's corporate vision and reflect the agency's values?
- how does design quality align with government and corporate policy objectives? How does it contribute to delivering relevant government outcomes?
- how is design quality reflected in the agency's built projects?

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**2. Design governance protocols**

This element aims to establish from the project outset how design decisions will be made. The emphasis of this element is on the people and their capacities to champion, steward and make design decisions across the project lifecycle. Developing the governance protocol generally involves:

- describing the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor (or design champion), the lead designer and the representative from the project operator, when relevant
- determining how design will be and remain integral to the entire project lifecycle, for example how will design be represented at the business case or procurement stages
- identifying the forums, individuals and protocols for incorporating advice from design review activities

- establishing project integration activities regarding actions, participants and processes in response to internal and external factors such as other projects in the area, funding and planning approvals or government announcements
- ensuring the capability of the wider team is appropriate to the challenges and opportunities for integration and in place at the right project stages
- agreeing the approach and forums to effectively communicate with all stakeholders.

For projects with medium and long timeframes it also involves:

- outlining hand over procedures to ensure the project intent is maintained across the entire lifecycle
- ensuring that if key individuals leave, their skills will be replaced or brought in.

**3. Project lifecycle structure**

The project lifecycle structure identifies and documents:

- the agency’s specific project lifecycle phases or stages
- the points within the project lifecycle where design quality reviews will take place
- the strategic focus of each review, for example the first review can focus on how the design problem is framed and what options there are to investigate solutions.

The project lifecycle structure provides project teams with a framework that helps define the specific inputs and outputs for each of the project phases. As a project progresses the inputs and outputs will evolve from the broader high level to the more detailed finer scale.

**The project lifecycle – mapping project phases to project outputs**

INFRASTRUCTURE NSW	Initiation	Planning + development	Procurement	Delivery	Operation			
COMMISSION FOR ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (CABE)	Prepare	Design	Construct	Use				
GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE HUB	Conceptualise	Prove	Procure	Implement	Realise			
ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS (RIBA)	Strategic definition	Preparation & brief	Concept design	Developed design	Technical design	Construction	Handover & close out	In use
GOVERNMENT AGENCY PROJECT PHASES (tailored to the organisation's structure & operating model)	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE	STAGE				
	Strategic vision	Visioning	Visioning	Vision				
	Strategic frameworks	Strategic frameworks	Urban design frameworks	Contracts				
	Strategic business case	Spatial scenario testing	Masterplan	Operation and maintenance manuals				
	Outline brief	Preliminary business case	Reference design					
		Final business case	Tender documentation/ specifications					
		Design quality criteria						
		Detailed brief						

**PROJECT PHASES**  
Examples from different organisations

**PROJECT OUTPUTS**  
Examples vary depending on the project stages

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**4. Procurement protocol**

Procurement of design services take place across the project lifecycle at various stages including feasibility, strategic planning, business case, design selection, design development, construction, operation and maintenance.

Design services can be procured directly by the agency or indirectly through joint ventures or partnerships. The direct or indirect procurement of design impacts the project's risk allocation and procurement considerations should be tailored accordingly.

Design quality is significantly influenced by the procurement processes that establish design services. A project-specific procurement strategy will ensure these multiple procurements sustain consistent quality objectives to realise long-term strategic benefits. The procurement strategy will vary depending on project scale, typology and contract type, and procurement route.

Broad considerations for a procurement protocol include:

- integration with design governance structures to support procurement processes. For example, including design management skills in the project team
- establishing parameters for fairness and clarity of working relationships. For example, including agreed objectives in the project brief and equitable design contracts
- defining adequate time frames and related fees to enable rigorous design development

- identifying procedures for selection of quality consultant teams such as design competitions, EOs and procurement lists
- integrating weighting for design quality in evaluation criteria
- alignment with relevant government policies such as Better Placed and the NSW Procurement Policy Framework
- identifying strategic opportunities that support broader government initiatives, for example, fostering emerging, regional and Aboriginal suppliers.

**5. Design review protocol**

While the project lifecycle structure suggests when design reviews take place, the Design Review Protocol explains the type of review required (e.g. advisory, for internal approval, external/statutory).

Design reviews provide agencies with a check point to:

- ensure that the design process is being properly managed
- evaluate design proposals in relation to the project specific design quality criteria
- support the project's governance structure with decision making and evaluation.

The Design review protocol helps to establish:

- the principles that guide design review at the agency
- the criteria for selecting review panel members
- review panels' terms of reference
- mechanisms to ensure the design, technical and economic aspects of projects are well balanced when decisions are made
- how the interfaces between external design reviews or

design excellence requirements, including design excellence competitions (if applicable), will be coordinated or integrated.

An effective design review panel should be independent, accountable, expert and diverse.

**6. Design integrity protocol**

Design integrity identifies the process and mechanisms to ensure the design quality features agreed at the project formation phase are upheld through the further development of the design — from commissioning through design development, construction and operation.

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**The Design Quality Framework helps identify what GANSW Advisory Notes are best suited to inform the different stages of a project cycle.**

GANSW Advisory Notes highlight fundamental issues and opportunities and set out considerations rather than prescribing procedures. They provide a starting point for conversations about how best to approach a specific project or a task within a project. Many of the advisory notes are interrelated and, where relevant, they direct you to further information on the topic.

Topics include:

- How to develop a design brief
- How to select design consultants
- When to get design advice
- Good design and design excellence in the planning system
- Strategic visioning
- Strategic frameworks
- Urban design frameworks
- Master planning process
- Green infrastructure spatial frameworks.

For an online version of the advisory notes please refer to GANSW website: [www.ga.nsw.gov.au/resources/advisory-notes](http://www.ga.nsw.gov.au/resources/advisory-notes)

**Government Architect NSW**

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**Contact GANSW**

GANSW makes every effort to keep its advice up to date. From time to time we will release new versions of these advisory notes. For further advice, or if you think there is information missing, please contact GANSW.