The Business Case, Project Charter and Phase Plans.

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I am often asked what information should be included in a Business Case, or what should go into a Project Charter (sometimes called a Project Definition or Project Plan). We need to balance relevance with lack of duplication. We need to understand the different audience and purpose of each document. In addition I have included a Phase Plan that is used to plan the next chunk of work.

The table below gives a guide to each document and shows how the information meshes together.

Overview - Business Case, Project Charter, Phase Plan

	Business Case	Project Charter	Phase Plan
Purpose	Obtain organisational agreement to fund the project and provide resources	Define the manner in which the project will be managed and the governance surrounding the project	Define at a micro level, the plan for each phase
Audience	IT Steering Committee	Project Team, Sponsor and if applicable, Program Director	Project Team and if applicable, Program Director

Project Context - Business Case, Project Charter, Phase Plan

PROJECT CONTEXT			
Business Problem	Yes. Detailed		

Project Objectives	Yes.	Yes.	
Project Scope	Yes. High Level	Yes. Low Level	
Approach	Yes.		
Stakeholders	Yes.	Yes. Detailed	

Justification - Business Case, Project Charter, Phase Plan

Strategic Alignment	Yes.		
Benefits	Yes. Detailed including basis for estimating and how they will be validated.		
Project Deliverables	Yes.	Yes.	
Budget	Yes. Detailed including basis for estimating.	Yes. Broken down into accounts. Cash flow	Yes. For the phase seeking approval for allocation of the phase budget.
Timing	Yes. Approximate	Yes. Estimated Schedule	Yes. Detailed Phase Plan
Risks	Yes.	Yes. Include mitigation	Yes. Phase specific including mitigation

Macro Planning - Business Case, Project Charter, Phase Plan

Assumptions	Yes.	Yes.	Yes. Relevant to the phase

Constraints	Yes.	Yes.	
Issues	Yes. Only if relevant to approval to proceed	Yes. Current Issues	Yes. Current Issues
Resources	Yes. Approximate numbers	Yes. Skills required plus any resources already assigned	Yes. Assigned resources
Readiness		Yes. To start the project	Yes. To start the phase
Scope Variation Mgmt		Yes.	
Communication Plan		Yes.	
Security		Yes	
Documentation Plan		Yes.	
Financial Management		Yes.	
Vendor Mgmt		Yes.	
QA		Yes. Approach to QA	Yes. QA activities within the phase
Tools & Techniques		Yes. Which tools & techniques and how deployed. Training reqd.	Yes. If applicable to the phase. Training plans if reqd.
Facilities & Equipment		Yes. General requirements such as x PC's, Space reqts.	Yes. If applicable to the phase e.g. room bookings, dates etc.

Micro Planning - Business Case, Project Charter, Phase Plan

Roles & Responsibilities		Yes. Overall for the project	Yes. Detailed for that phase
Phase Deliverables		Yes.	Yes. Includes internal & external deliverables
Phase Scope		Yes. High Level	Yes. Low Level
Milestones		Yes. Major project milestones	Yes. All milestones for the phase
Phase Objectives			Yes.
Activities			Yes.

This information is not meant to be definitive. It depends on how your organisation operates, and what level of detail is required. In some organisations, a very comprehensive business case includes much of the information normally found in a charter.

Another aspect is the size of the project. For smaller projects, there may be no need for phase plans, or you might include two or three phases in the one plan.

Neville Turbit has had over 15 years experience as an IT consultant and almost an equal time working in Business. He is the principal of Project Perfect. Project Perfect is a project management software consulting and training organisation based in Sydney Australia.

Project Perfect sell “Project Administrator” software, which is a tool to assist organisations better manage project risks, issues, budgets, scope, documentation planning and scheduling. For more information on Project Administrator or Project Management visit www.projectperfect.com.au