*Triple constraints*

With any project, large or small, the most basic elements that will define your project are scope, cost and schedule. The first part of any project is defining the scope – what will the project do? Next, usually comes the schedule. When does the project need to be completed? And third, the cost. In the public sector, this most often comes in the form of staff hours, how many staff hours will be necessary to accomplish the scope by the deadline (schedule). These three elements are interdependent and changing one will always require changing one of the others. For example, if the scope grows (there are more things that need to be done), then you may need more time to complete them (extend the schedule) or you may need more work hours to get it done on time (cost), or both! The role of a project manager is to manage these three elements so that all stakeholders understand the implications when any of these things change.

When projects are bigger, other tools should be applied. A project is considered bigger when more external stakeholders are involved or affected by the project outcome, when known risks could have dangerous outcomes or when the work to be done is very complex.

*Stakeholder Analysis*

This is a common tool needed for many projects at Gavilan because often a project’s stakeholders are large groups such as students, faculty, staff, transfer institutions, high schools and so on. A stakeholder analysis identifies all the individuals or groups who play a role in the completion of your project (e.g., labor, materials, funding, approvals, and so on). Knowing your stakeholders will ensure that you communicate with all necessary parties. By communicating your project plans early on and gathering input for how to execute your project, you will get more support from the people. The stakeholders will be needed later to ensure project success through implementation. Also, you will likely eliminate several roadblocks early on which will save everyone from a lot of frustration and re-work.

*Risk Analysis*

This tool is less-commonly used at Gavilan, but overlooking this piece easily results in project failure. Risks are only the *known*problems that the project might face. There will always be unknown risks that cannot be accounted for. One major risk for projects that has to be mitigated in the schedule is making sure that key resources are available when you need them. For example, if you need to ship a package to meet a deadline, your schedule needs to allow time for the company to ship and for the hours of operation to send the package. Interviewing stakeholders can be an important way to better understand all of the risks facing a project.

*Work Breakdown Structure*

A work breakdown structure is a formal way of saying task list. This starts with the project deliverables and breaks down each one into smaller elements. This is important for larger projects with several activities going on at the same time.

WBS are particularly useful while trying to balance the needs and wants of sponsors and stakeholders as well as the risks of the project. Often, a project starts out seeming like there will be one main activity, but as you plan out mitigations to risks and incorporate stakeholder needs while still accomplishing the goals of the project, you find that many more activities will need to occur to accomplish a successful product.

*Schedule*

Using the WBS, plan out the activities in sequential order on a timeline. Each activity on the timeline should tie directly to a deliverable on the WBS. The schedule should also outline the *critical path*, if any steps must be done before the next step can be taken or if steps can be occurring simultaneously. For example, while redesigning a room, you could be painting at the same time as the curtains are being constructed, but you can’t hang pictures on the wall until the painting is fully complete.

*Communication Plan*

Anytime you have stakeholders that are not on the project team, you will want to have a communication plan. This can be as simple as reporting out to your work group at each staff meeting to a full grid of stakeholders, what parts of the project need to be communicated to them, how often and through what means. Much of this information can be found out during the stakeholder interviews.

*Project Evaluation*

Evaluation is the most overlooked piece while planning the project but is often looked to after project completion to determine if the project worked. To determine what evaluation should be done, start with the project goals. If they are measurable, how so? Is any data already collected that would indicate if the project is working? At Gavilan, many of these might be on the institution-wide survey results, success in classes or usage of certain services. If the data is not collected or not in a form you need, you will need to make sure to embed collection of this data somewhere in the project. This can mean that the cost or schedule of the project will need to change because this is not often factored in when creating the project at first.

*Organizational Development*

Organizational development plays a surprisingly large role in project management at Gavilan even though few books about project management cover it. The basic tenants of organizational development are that you design and execute your project in a way that reflects your philosophy of doing business. For example, if you want staff and faculty to be actively involved in the outcome, you should be soliciting their advice, taking their concerns into account and communicating with them the project plans so they have the opportunity to let you know when something doesn’t seem like it will work. Another area where organizational development is important is in the risk analysis. If your goal is to have open and honest dialog about the real risks your project might face, we must make sure to let them know their input is appreciated. If we were to ignore what they had to say or be defensive and offer excuses, it is likely that the honesty or openness of that individual would decrease in the future.