

CANADEM OPP Guidelines

(Operational Planning Process)

Updated July 2015

A structured approach to operational planning
that **if applied flexibly** will:

- ✓ provide a **checklist** of key OPP activities, in an optimal sequence/flow;
- ✓ help identify **risks** & enable early risk **mitigation**;
- ✓ clarify **who** is doing what, and **why** they are doing it;
- ✓ **speed up planning**, e.g. faster decisions and less 'second-guessing' as there will be confidence that a systemic approach has not missed key steps;
- ✓ **less wasted effort**: detailed work only carried out on agreed intent and options.

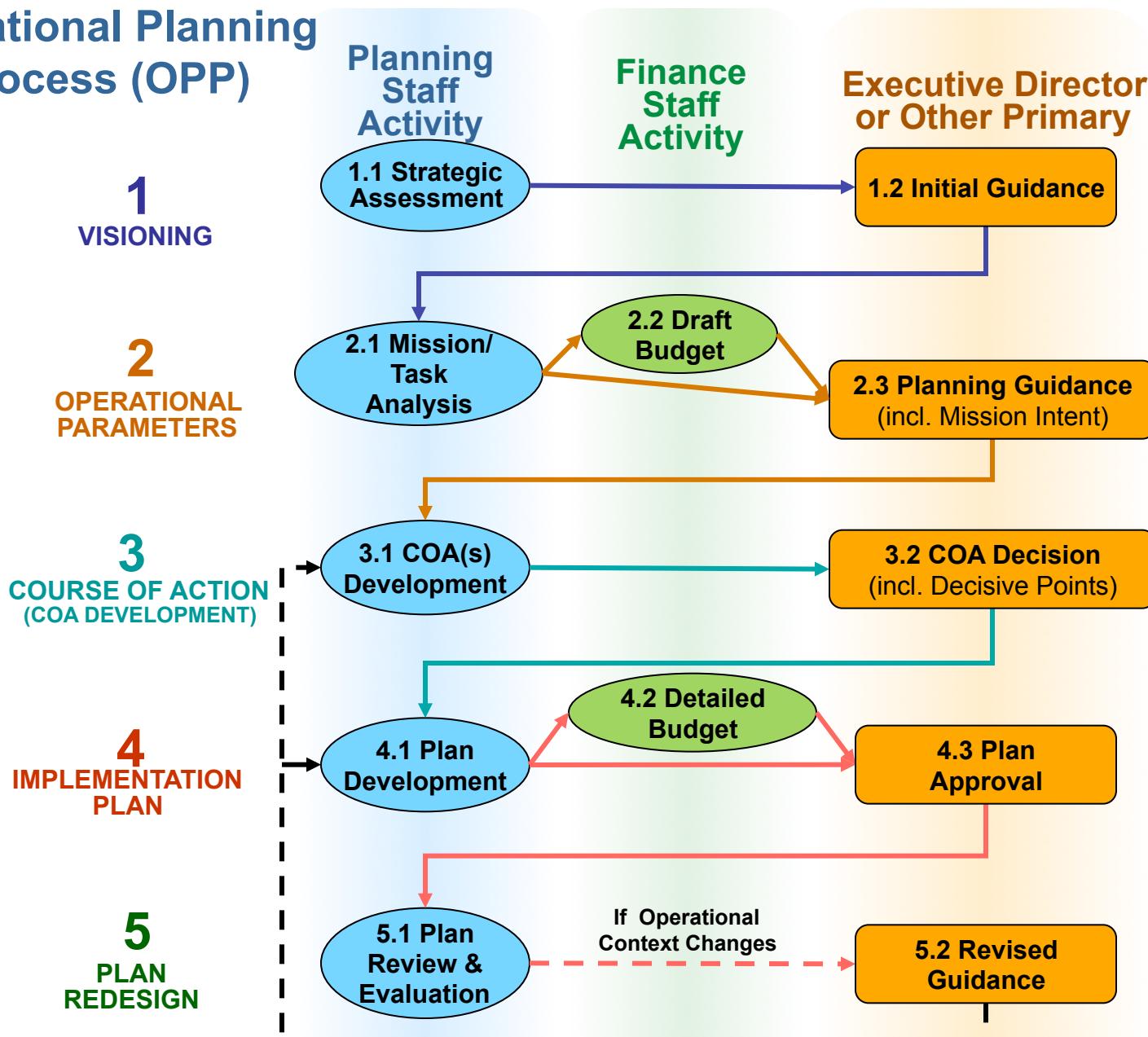
OPP Assumptions & Caveats

- This document is **internal to CANADEM**. It will guide staff/associates as they plan for large missions, programs, projects or even very small tasks.
- It replicates **common logic-flows** found in any planning/decision process, and draws from NATO and Canadian Forces doctrine.
- A **guide**, it must be applied flexibly allowing for common sense and time limitations to override standard practice.
- It is as much an **approach/mind-set** as a process, and thus can be adapted and various steps/stages collapsed together to rapidly plan very small tasks, or meet the needs of rapid response.
- **Other CANADEM procedures** run in tandem with or as part of any OPP. In particular see:
 - ✓ *CANADEM Primaries*
 - ✓ *Integrated Risk Management Doctrine & Guidance*
- When this document refers to a **Primary**, note that it may not be the same individual. It depends on the OPP stage or the operational context.
- Operational planning is not the same as operational implementation.

CANADEM

Operational Planning Process (OPP)

Plan Development → Estimate Process



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Operational Planning

Process (OPP)

With Board and Funding
Agreement 'bolted-on'

Plan Development → Estimate Process

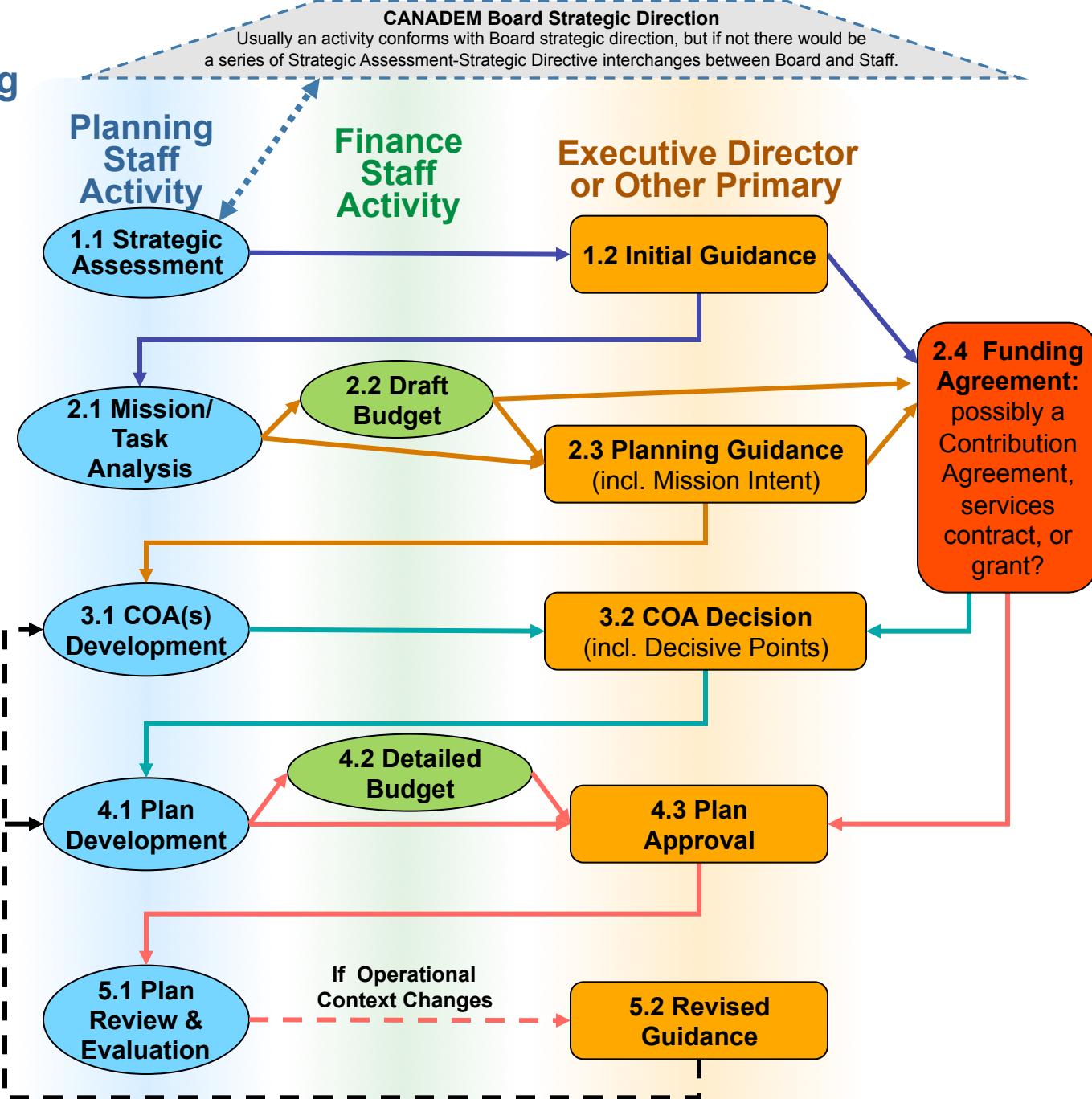
1
VISIONING

2
OPERATIONAL
PARAMETERS

3
COURSE OF ACTION
(COA DEVELOPMENT)

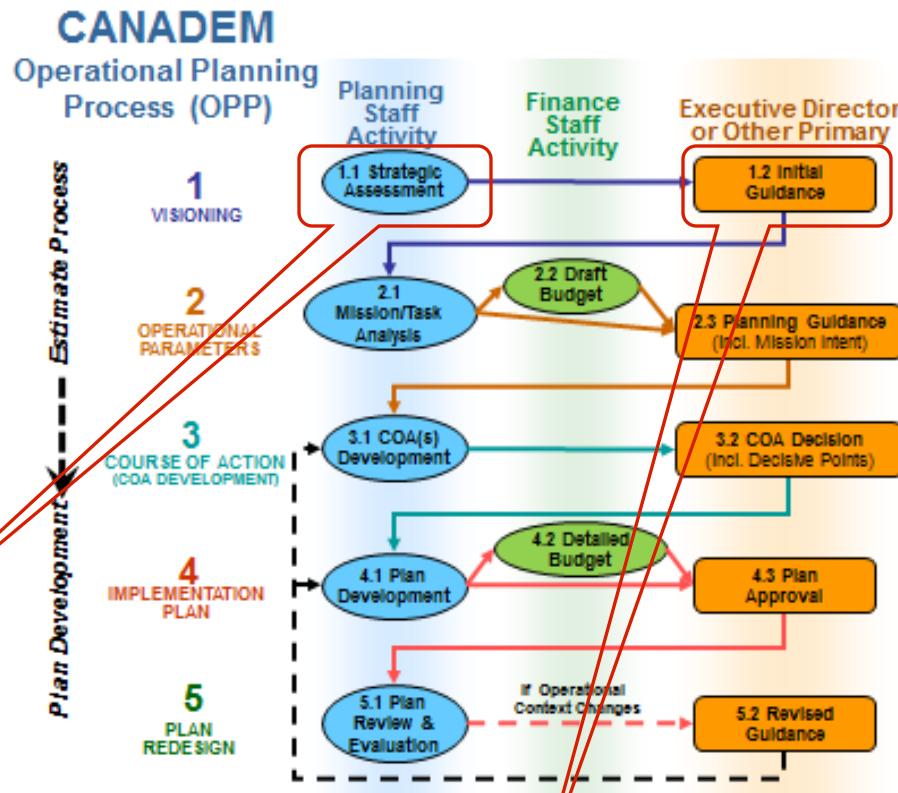
4
IMPLEMENTATION
PLAN

5
PLAN
REDESIGN



1. Visioning

In stage #1, relevant staff will start to envision what the mission, project, or task might be and then bring it to the right level of management for agreement to move forward to a more substantive mission or task analysis.



1.1 Strategic Assessment

- ✓ CANADEM staff have a bright idea or are approached by a funder (e.g. DFATD, UKaid);
- ✓ They sketch out a strategic 'picture' of what such an activity (e.g. mission, project, or task) might be (possible SWOT analysis); ...and then
- ✓ Bring it to the right level of management for discussion to see if it fits within CANADEM's mandate and whether it is in CANADEM's best interest to undertake it.

CAVEAT: Usually an activity conforms with Board strategic direction, i.e. CANADEM's mandate. If not, there would be a series of Strategic Assessment and/or Strategic Directive interchanges between the Board and the Executive Director (ED).

1.2 Initial Guidance

The ED or relevant *Primary* will provide guidance on the key issues and how to proceed. For example:

- ✓ name the *primary* for the Mission/Task Analysis (step #2);
- ✓ suggest who else should be involved in that Analysis;
- ✓ provide early risk analysis, what to start looking out for;
- ✓ provide early financial analysis, is this action affordable;
- ✓ set out a short strategic intent, the key goal(s).

Initial Guidance is often verbal and usually consists of a discussion with the *primary* for stage #2 – Mission/Task Analysis and relevant CANADEM colleagues.

2. Operational Parameters

Guided by stage #1's Initial Guidance, stage #2 will now initiate the operational analysis.

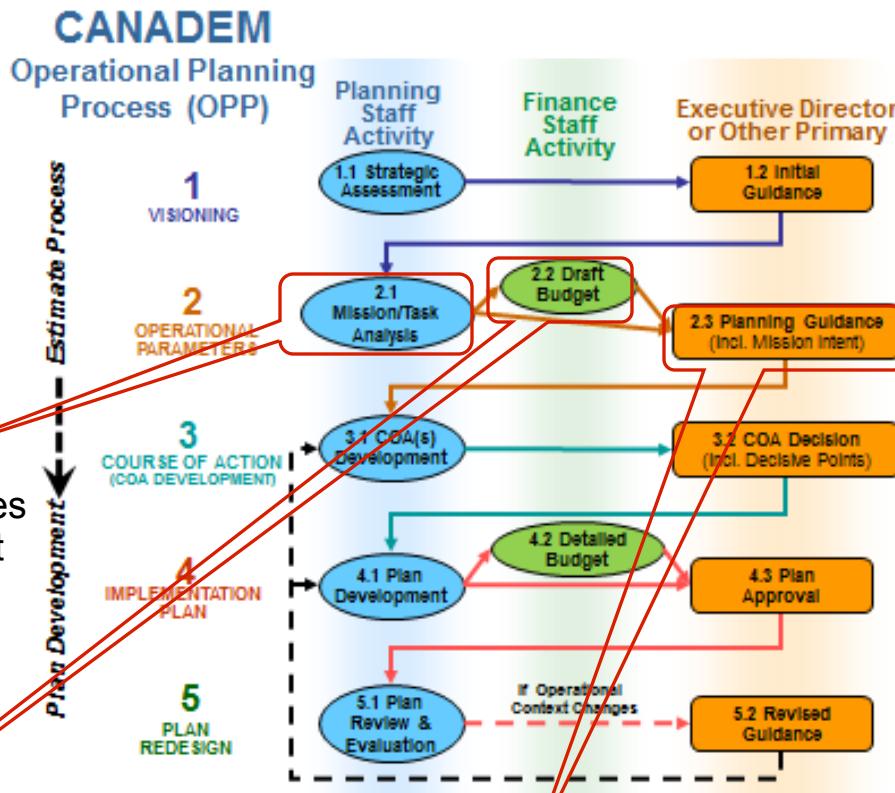
2.1 Mission/Task Analysis

- ✓ The *Primary* assisted by relevant colleagues will set out in writing, often bullet points, what they assess is the mission or task.
- ✓ This is 'big-picture' analysis, with only sufficient detail to enable:
 - Finance to create an initial draft budget;
 - ED or *Primary* to provide Planning Guidance.

2.2 Draft Budget

Finance will forecast major operational costs. Large budgets involve the Finance Director and other relevant senior management.

NOTE: If a funding agreement is required before reimbursable activity is undertaken by CANADEM, this may require substantial work right away so as to sign a funding agreement. If so, it must be a 'skeleton' budget with few budget lines so as to provide substantial flexibility and coverage for all possible expenditures.



2.2 Planning Guidance

The ED or *Primary* will provide clear guidance for the planner(s). For example:

- ✓ written Mission Intent for major activities, and task objectives for lesser activities;
- ✓ key assumptions, constraints, & available resources;
- ✓ what further risk analysis is needed.

The Mission Intent must be written but the rest of the Planning Guidance may be verbal, often part of extended discussion with the *Primary* and relevant CANADEM colleagues.

Most of these Guidelines explain a standard Operational Planning Process, but this page has some brief comments on the impact if there is a donor funding agreement.



Funding Agreement?

- ❖ Financial resources & constraints are part of any OPP and are set out and applied by various CANADEM staff involved in the OPP.
- ❖ Sometimes the activity/mission being planned is funded by a **new** funding source or agreement, e.g. a Contribution Agreement.
- ❖ New funding agreements are separate from the OPP yet can dramatically affect the content or the sequencing of a standard planning process.
- ❖ The red box has been 'bolted-on' to the standard OPP flow chart to remind staff of this potential complicating factor.

Donor relations including funding agreements are hugely important and the subject of separate CANADEM guidance. Although far too complex and important to be dealt with in this page or the larger OPP guidance document, **if** there is a funding agreement involved, here are some issues of immediate planning consideration:

- ✓ **Urgency:** Must the funding agreement be in place before CANADEM can be reimbursed for any planning activity?
- ✓ **Added Constraints:** What unique financial or operational constraints & risks are added by that funding agreement?
- ✓ **Sequencing:** Is there a need to collapse or short-circuit various OPP steps to be in a position to sign an agreement?

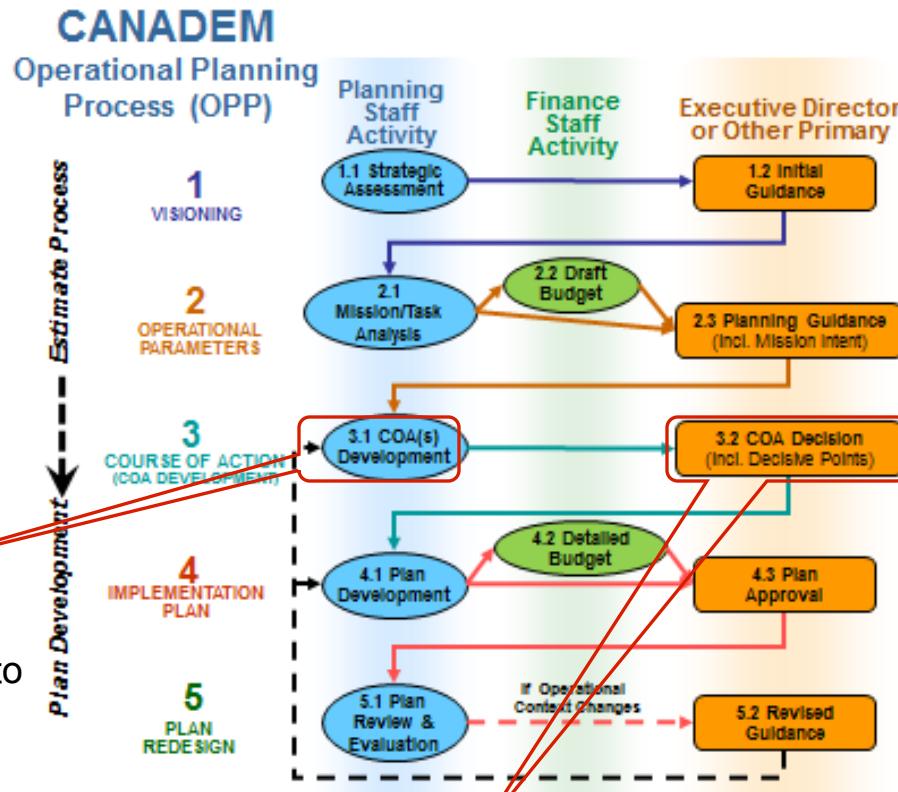
3. Course of Action (COA)

- ❖ By now CANADEM has decided to proceed with a particular activity, most importantly that it is financially and operationally sustainable.
- ❖ It is now time to look at implementation options and select a single way forward: a Course of Action (COA).

3.1 COA(s) Development

Usually there are many ways to achieve the Mission/Project Intent, and this is a good time to be innovative. So planning staff must:

- ✓ Provide sufficient detail to enable the ED or mission/task primary to evaluate and select from several COAs;
- ✓ Draft Decisive Points (DPs) for approval concurrently with the COA Decision.
- While solid analysis is needed this point, until the step 3.2 COA Decision is taken, it is a mistake to spend a lot of time on written documents.
- So COA Development need only demonstrate in written bullet points and flow charts why certain courses of action are being recommended.
- The planning staff will verbally make their arguments and recommendations, and the ensuing discussion will enable the COA decision.



3.2 COA Decision

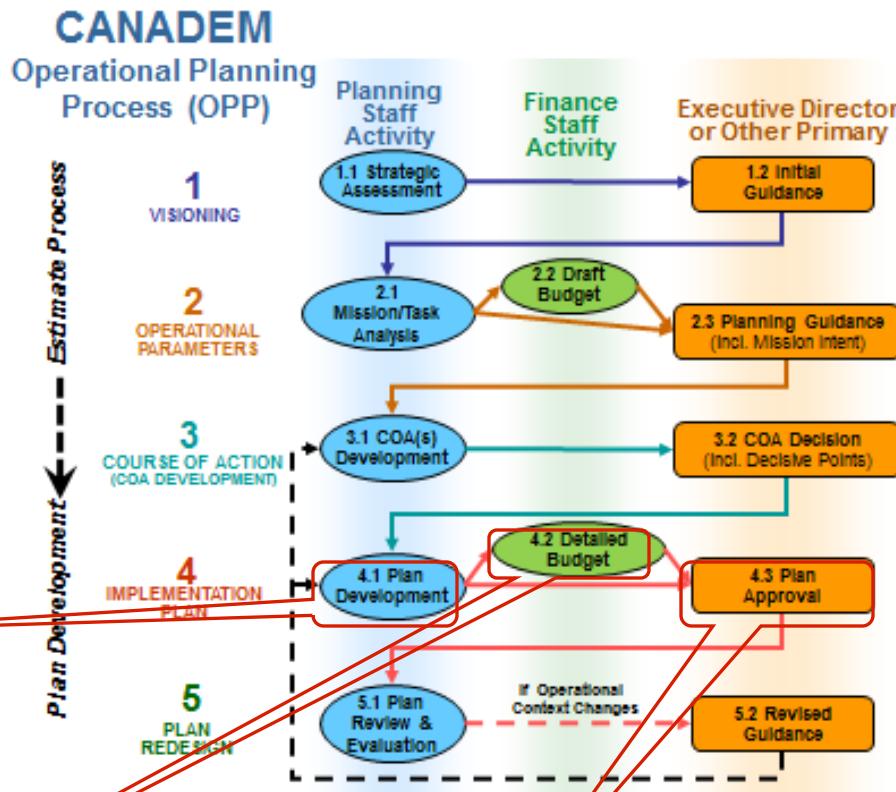
- ✓ The ED or *Primary* selects the best COA, or a combination of bits of several COAs.
- ✓ The COA decision is usually verbal, part of an extended discussion with the *Primary* and relevant colleagues.
- ✓ Also, the ED or *Primary* will validate or revise the draft Decisive Points (DPs). **DPs are 'events' which if not achieved will result in mission failure.**
- ✓ CANADEM's Operations Gaming procedure can be used here to stress test COAs.
- ✓ The ED or Primary should review the written Mission Intent from 2.3 and ensure it remains valid and sufficient.

4. Implementation Plan

Much of the exciting OPP work is now completed, but developing the Plan is no less critical to success. Most importantly, detailed planning will identify risks and other issues missed during the previous OPP stages.

4.1 Plan Development

The *Primary* and their team, in collaboration with various stakeholders (some outside of CANADEM), will create a detailed plan sufficient to meet the requirements of the mission or task at hand.



4.2 Detailed Budget

- ✓ A financial officer, often assisted by the Chief Financial Advisor and the Finance Director, will substantially expand the early draft budget, reflecting the detailed plans.
- ✓ NOTE: if there was funding agreement, the final detailed budgets must fit within the funding agreement budget or a budget revision must be sought.

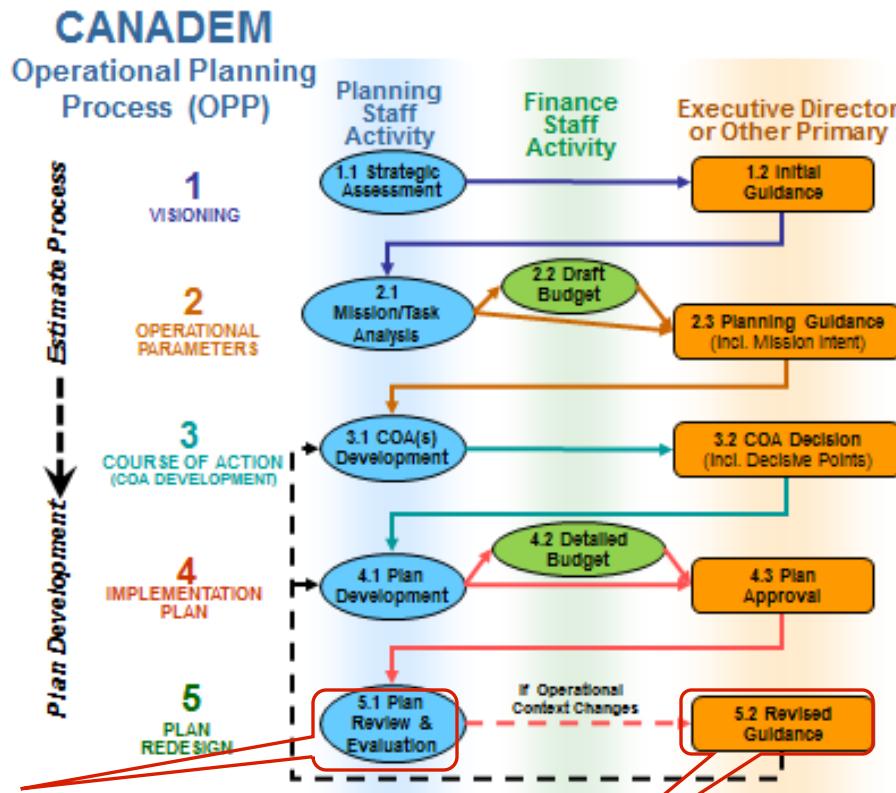
4.3 Plan Approval

- ✓ The ED or *Primary* must drill down sufficiently into the detailed plan in order to validate, change where necessary, and then approve the Plan.
- ✓ This is often an iterative process, so that bits of the Plan may be approved in stages until there is a composite Plan that can be handed over to those tasked with implementing the mission/task.

5. Plan Re-Design

Stage 5 takes place once an activity or a project starts. Remember, no plan survives contact with operational reality:

- Sometimes this is because reality changes as the operational context changes.
- Other times CANADEM did not have sufficient situational awareness (reality) and must adjust as it becomes more aware of expectations, risks, and realities on the ground.



5.1 Plan Review & Evaluation

- ✓ Various CANADEM staff are tasked with reviewing and evaluating mission/task progress as part of the normal operational implementation.
- ✓ If they perceive that the operational context has changed substantially, they will inform the ED and the *Primary* .

Note: as mentioned, this OPP guidance does not fully address donor relations including critically important donor expectations resulting from the red box that was 'bolted-on' to the OPP flow chart in slides #4 & #7

5.2 Revised Guidance

- ✓ If the ED or *Primary* determines that a change in operational context is truly substantive, they will trigger a repeat of earlier stages of the OPP.
- ✓ Often a revision of the Plan will be sufficient;
- ✓ Other times there has been a 'game changer' event(s) that requires returning to the Course of Action level 3;
- ✓ If truly catastrophic, a 'game changer' may end the mission/task in whole or in part.

Closing Notes on the CANADEM OPP

(Operational Planning Process)

- ✓ Remember, these are procedural guidelines, so they must always be flexibly adapted to the situation at hand:
 - Those well versed in the OPP will be best at adapting it, e.g. moving fast and collapsing stages as required;
 - This document is concise, reinforcing the expectation that individuals will bring their common sense and experience to bear in applying these guidelines.
- ✓ Remember the related CANADEM guidelines & procedures that run parallel with the OPP, especially:
 - Subsidiarity & *Primaries*
 - Integrated Risk Management
 - Operations Gaming
 - Financial Management.

Note to non-CANADEM

- ✓ Of course, feel free to use this powerpoint, and adapt it for your use. We hope it is useful.
- ✓ Try watching it in ***slide show*** mode, as some slides have animations that you might find useful, and you can easily go to the Animation Pane to build in pauses if you are training.
- ✓ CANADEM's in-house powerpoint is more extensive.
- ✓ If you are interested in contracting CANADEM to help you customize this presentation or provide training assistance, please contact

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