



**King County**

**Property Assessment Appeals  
eFiling Project  
Project Charter**

**Date:** February 23, 2012

**Version:** 1.3

## **Document Purpose**

The purpose of this charter is to document commitment from the project sponsor and to authorize the King County Information Technology Project Management Office (KCIT PMO) to begin or continue work on the Property Assessment Appeals eFiling project.

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## 1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The King County Strategic Plan 2010-2012 provides high-level business strategy for future County goals, objectives, and services. Opportunities associated with online services, citizen collaboration, customer service, and government transparency are priorities for King County. Specifically, the plan states the following about the use of technology in constituent interactions:

*Throughout the planning process we heard about the challenges in contacting and communicating with county government. Although our Web site was rated highly, residents felt that we should be more accessible, more helpful when contacted, and more responsive.*

On December 13, 2010, King County Council passed Motion 13392, directing the Executive to identify the top five eGovernment/digital government initiatives. The King County Department of Information Technology (KCIT) worked with all departments and agencies while leveraging the County's IT Governance boards, to identify possible eGovernment initiatives. Those initiatives, which included online filing capability, were analyzed and prioritized through a collaborative process. As a result, the number one priority identified was Online Property Assessment Appeals.

Presently, if a property owner wants to appeal their property valuation, it is a manual and paper-intensive process. It requires property owners to provide written notice and forms to the County. The County then manually processes the forms and related data, and over several months performs research that is shared (via paper-based communication) with the property owner. In some cases, multiple versions of the forms are produced (a.k.a. "in triplicate").

This project would provide an online form and back-office workflow to enhance the property valuation appeals process. This new appeals process would create the ability for property owners to perform this process using an online form, and as it is automated, the process could eventually become paperless. Given the complexity of the overall process, this effort will be performed in stages, with various elements of the process addressed and automated over time.

This project will, therefore, involve more than simply creating an online form for valuation appeals. It will also include development of a full business architecture of the workflow process of valuation assessments and board of appeals services. The project will identify opportunities for both improved services and streamlined operations. These improvements will include integration points as information proceeds between property owners and the County, including how the data is managed by existing and future applications in the Department of Assessments.

## 2. PROJECT SCOPE

The current process for property owners to appeal their property valuations is paper-intensive and relies upon forms and the U.S. Postal Service. Overall, the process has both opportunities to create online tools to support citizen-to-government communication, and opportunities to automate back-office operations.

## Objectives/Outcomes

Within the scope of this project, it is expected that the following business and operational outcomes will be achieved:

- Improve customer service for King County property owners. Property owners will be able to file appeals within their filing period window remotely at their own convenience, check on the status of their appeal online, interact electronically with County employees during the discovery process, and view the Assessor's response and Board of Equalization decision online.
- Better inform property owners. The electronic appeal process will include features that will provide property owners with the details that make up their property valuation, such as property details, comparable property valuations, valuation histories, and electronic access to the Tax Advisors' Office. This will help to inform property owners about how their valuation was determined. When property owners indicate their wish to file an appeal, they will be encouraged to view and research details before proceeding.
- Improve the efficiency of King County staff. By receiving appeals as digital data and later managing the appeals file in electronic form, County employees will not need to manually enter appeals information. Additionally, electronic files reduce the amount of paper documents, saving money on paper and in storage space for paper documents.
- Improved valuations by the Department of Assessments. The electronic appeal process will provide the Department of Assessments with additional information about how the Board of Equalization arrived at its decision on respective appeals. This additional information will help the Department of Assessments improve their valuation process.
- Improve the tax refund process/tax roll correction process. As the final step in the workflow, the electronic appeal process will automate the tax refund and tax roll correction program. Once the Department of Assessments receives a Board of Equalization appeal decision, the tax roll correction can occur immediately, triggering a corrected tax statement and/or a refund issued as the property owner has previously stipulated.

## In Scope

The project will implement such improvements incrementally, so that improved property owner services may be accomplished quickly. The project is planned to have four "stages" of work. Activities and product deliverables within each stage are as follows:

### Stage 1 – Online Appeals

- Design, create and implement a property tax appeals "web portal" within the County's Internet site (kingcounty.gov) that includes:
  - improved online content for property owner information and education about tax values.
  - consolidated source for tools to research comparable values.
  - streamlined access to Tax Advisor Office for assistance and frequently asked questions.
- Also implement within the tax appeals portal an online form for property owners to initiate a property valuation appeal.
- Develop the capability to deliver the property owner appeal/petition form to the applicable agencies/offices/ departments for initiating the appeal processes.

### Stage 2 – Appeal Workflow Management

- Develop a comprehensive business analysis and workflow/architecture of the appeals process, identifying opportunities for both streamlining and enhancement of services, and including a “future state” model.
- Using the business architecture and identified opportunities, design, build, and deploy within the applicable agencies:
  - tools necessary for managing an electronic appeal file.
  - scanning capabilities to convert appeals submitted in paper into an electronic appeal file.
  - automated workflow management to automate data entry of appeals data into systems of record, and support the management of the appeal throughout the process.
  - electronic correspondence methods to exchange information with property owners (email).
- Develop and deliver training for King County employees in the use of the new tools and related changes to their work activities.
- Create an online inquiry capability that allows property owners to review the status of their appeal through the tax appeal portal, which would include the ability to look up post-decision dispositions.
- Further enhance property owner education and online services by creating both access protocols and applications that are accessible through personal devices and smart phones.

### Stage 3 – Improved Disposition Management

- Automate tax refund processing and tax roll corrections based on Board of Equalization decisions, which includes:
  - automated collection of disposition and decisions.
  - integration with both Assessor and Treasury systems.
  - workflow to support the decision, the acceptance of the decision, and the issuance of funds.
- Design, develop and implement capabilities to perform post appeal analytics to assess Board of Equalization findings and improve future valuations, which would include changes to the disposition process that collects key facts from the Board of Equalization that can be used in the analysis.

### Stage 4 – Virtual/Video Hearings

- Develop capabilities required to support video hearings, including:
  - support for property owners to use free video tools that is integrated with a secure site access to interact with the Board of Equalization.
  - software, computer equipment, and training for Board of Equalization members to host video hearings.
- Implement system logic to allow property owners to determine the method of attending their hearing.

## Out of Scope

The following activities, products and/or services are specifically excluded from the project scope:

- Procurement of any document management/file system.
- Procurement of any video hosting, management, or archiving system, except for the hardware requirements identified as in-scope above.
- Major upgrades or enhancements to existing computing systems supporting assessments and/or appeals, except as reasonable to accommodate data integration.
- Replacement of existing applications with new developed or Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) applications.

In the event any of these items are necessary for the successful completion of the project, they either are considered the operational responsibility of the stakeholder agencies to resolve outside the efforts of the project, or the project scope would need to be changed to accommodate them. Such decisions would be made by the Principals' Group and addressed by them as management leaders.

## 3. ASSUMPTIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND SUCCESS

### Assumptions

The following assumptions were based on current knowledge have been used in planning the project. If these factors prove to be different from reality, it could materially affect the project.

- The County is implementing an enterprise document scanning and storage system, which will be sufficient to meet the future digital document management needs of this project.
- The County has various tools within its Microsoft Enterprise Agreement for software (such as Lync, Live Meeting, SharePoint, and Office 365) that will be sufficient to support various components of this project, like video meetings, online forms, and workflow management.
- In parallel to this project, KCIT is managing a project to re-host applications that currently reside on the County's mainframe computer, including assessor applications that may be impacted by this project.
- The Mainframe Re-Hosting Project will be completed by December 2013.
- The future computing platform for the re-hosted assessor applications will be a Microsoft Windows Server/.NET/SQLServer environment.
- Operational staff from the Department of Assessments, Board of Equalization, and Ombudsman/Tax Advisor Office is available to function as subject matter experts on this project – in at least a limited availability capacity – over the next 24 months.
- KCIT resources, both technical and project team, will no longer be needed to work on the Accountable Business Transformation (ABT) Project and available to support this project after March 2012.

## Constraints and Dependencies

The following factors may limit the project team's options with respect to the project's future schedule and/or resource plans.

- Delays or issues with the January 2012 go-live of ABT may impact KCIT's resources and thus its ability to support the initiation of this project.
- The planned retirement of the Clerk of the Board of Equalization in mid-year 2012 may impact the Board's ability to engage on this project.
- Specific components of this project related to back-end system integration may be impacted by other computing changes within the Department of Assessments, which includes but may not be limited to:
  - the re-hosting of application off the mainframe.
  - any future project to replace core assessor applications.
  - the adoption of new end-user technology including iPad devices.
- The stakeholder organizations on this project operate in explicit autonomy. Future decisions may result in a fracturing of the Principals' Group, without any binding authority available to address such conflicts.
- If KCIT is unable to retain Term-Limited Temporary (TLT) staff to support the full duration of the project, either contract resources or vendor support may be required.

## Critical Success Factors

This project will be considered *minimally* successful when the following factors have been achieved:

- The County deploys an online form for property owners to be able to initiate a property tax appeal through the County's website.
- The County deploys other online tools that enhance customer support by providing access to assessment information, including the status of an existing appeal.
- The Department of Assessments and the Board of Equalization adopt some level of automated processing of appeals, which includes integration of appeal data into computer systems and the storage/use of an electronic/digital appeals file.

## 4. TIMEFRAME, MILESTONES, AND COSTS

The timeframe for this project is 24 months with phased deliverables implemented at the conclusion of each stage, and with a planned start in Q1 2012.

### Estimated Budget

The total project cost estimate is \$720,000 with an additional 15 percent contingency of \$108,000. The Project Cost/Benefit Analysis has been filed with Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB) and the Project Review board (PRB), and will be updated as project costs are refined.



## Milestone Schedule

Major Milestones	Planned Completion		Status
	Date	Cost	
Project Initiation	Q1 2012	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Baseline Online Form Operational and Technical Design	Q2 2012	\$52,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Property Owner Appeals Portal with Online Form Implemented	Q2 2012	\$75,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Comprehensive Business Architecture	Q3 2012	\$25,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Appeal Digital File and Automated Workflow Implemented	Q3 2013	\$450,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Automated Disposition, Refund and Roll Correction	Q4 2013	\$82,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Video Hearings Implemented	Q1 2014	\$25,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed
Project Close-Out	Q1 2014	\$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Completed

## 5. PROJECT GOVERNANCE

The scope of this project impacts multiple agencies that reside under different branches of King County's government, as well as an independent board. Therefore, this project will be governed by a "Principals' Group" comprised of senior representatives of these stakeholder organizations.

### Project Sponsors

The Sponsors for this project are **David Goff, Manager/Clerk, King County Board of Appeals and Equalization**, and **John Arthur Wilson, Chief Deputy Assessor, Department of Assessments**.

### Principals' Group

The Principals' Group that will govern this project is as follows:

- Amy Calderwood, Ombudsman, King County Office of Citizen Complaints/Tax Advisor
- Rebecha Cusack, Director of Strategic Policy Initiatives, King County Council (non-voting member)
- David Goff, Manager/Clerk, King County Board of Appeals and Equalization

- Bill Kehoe, County Chief Information Officer (CIO), Director of the King County Department of Information Technology
- John Arthur Wilson, Chief Deputy Assessor, Department of Assessments (Chair)

The Principals' Group will convene as deemed necessary by the group but not less than bimonthly during the first 12 months of the project. The "Consensus Decision-Making" model will be used by the group. If during the decision process consensus is deemed "blocked," the four voting members will take a formal vote to reach the decision. There will be no provision for resolving disputes in the case of a 2-2 tie, with no individual having "veto" or "tiebreaker" authority.

The Principals' Group will be responsible for the following as it pertains to the project:

- Review of project status reports.
- Approval of the project schedule and any changes to the schedule.
- Approval of the overall project budget and any variances to the budget.
- Discussion and resolution of any scope changes that are requested during the project.
- Review and approval/acceptance of all major project deliverables.
- Resolution of risks or issues that cannot be resolved by the project team or designated project stakeholders.

### **Project Management Team**

This project will be managed and staffed by the KCIT Project Management Office. Key PMO staff that will comprise the project management team for this initiative are as follows:

- IT Project Manager (dedicated project manager)
- IT Business Analyst (dedicated business analyst/architect)

In addition, the stakeholder organizations will designate matrix resources to be part of the project team. These stakeholders will be dedicated for specific periods of time, to perform identified project tasks. In some cases, they may serve as subject experts providing information resources to other members of the project.

The IT Project Manager will perform this project in alignment to the County's Project Management Methodology. In compliance with the methodology, the Project Manager will create a project plan, roles and responsibilities plan, and a resource plan with tasks identifying the individuals necessary for the successful completion of the project, when applicable to the project.

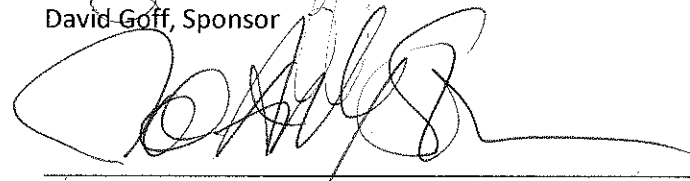
### **Project Oversight**

This project will comply with all practices and policies of the County as prescribed for Information Technology projects in both Executive Policy and the King County Code. This includes the reporting of status, health, and progress to the Project Review Board, and complying with the PRB practices for funding releases.

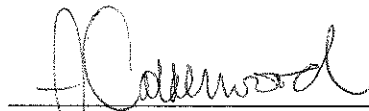
**6. SPONSOR AND STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT**

As the project sponsor, I authorize the KCIT Project Management Office to begin managing the Property Assessment Appeals eFiling Project based on the information described in this document.

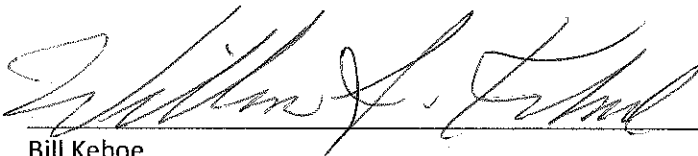
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David Goff, Sponsor 3/15/12  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Arthur Wilson, Sponsor 3/9/12  
Date

We, the undersigned, accept the scope and direction of the Property Assessment Appeals eFiling Project, based on the information described in this document, and agree to support this initiative through our participation in the Principals' Group.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy Calderwood 3/9/12  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecha Cusack 3/9/12  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Kehoe 3/9/12  
Date

