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AES SYSTEMS THINKING FRAMEWORK

THE SCALE WORKBOOK

A rapid SCALE review for one programme, public-service, or support workflow

NGOS AND STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES / PARASTATALS

One workflow | Five lenses | One 30-day improvement

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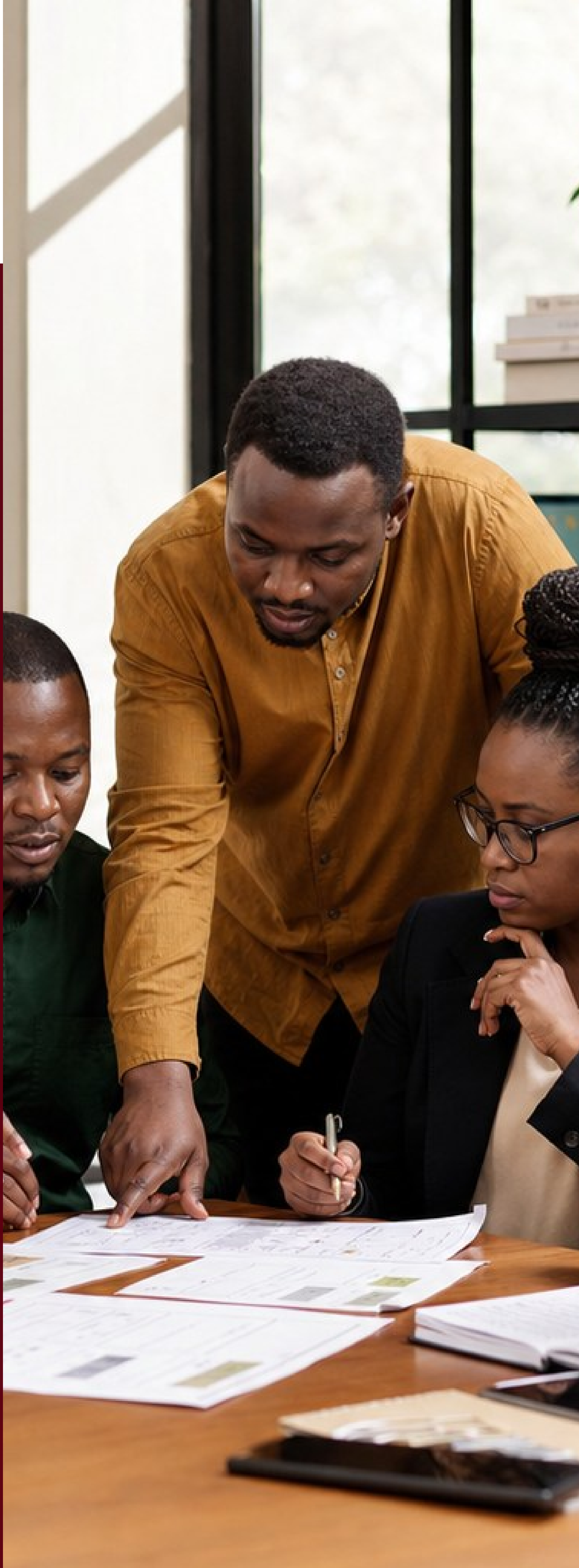


SEE THE WORK
Actual workflow

CLARIFY THE SYSTEM
Ownership and decisions

IMPROVE WITH EVIDENCE
30-day experiment

01

EFFORT-DRIVEN VS SYSTEM-DRIVEN GROWTH

Choose one recurring workflow; do not turn this into a whole-organization review.

Use this workbook to examine one recurring workflow where governance-heavy routines, duplicated checks, weak status visibility, or unclear handoffs slow delivery. It is designed to improve flow while keeping necessary policy, funding, procurement, accountability, and public-interest controls visible.

EFFORT-DRIVEN GROWTH

Results depend on extra effort, memory, personal rescue and repeated chasing. Growth adds strain because the workflow itself is not dependable.

- Staff repeatedly chase files, signatures, email responses, or system updates to keep routine work moving.
- The same request details are captured in programme, procurement, finance, and manual records without one reliable status view.
- A file crosses several offices for checks that appear to repeat the same purpose.
- Routine, policy-compliant decisions still rise to a senior leader because operating authority is unclear.
- A request stalls when one experienced officer, approver, or records custodian is absent.
- Delays are treated as normal features of governance instead of evidence to review.

SYSTEM-DRIVEN GROWTH

The workflow makes the result repeatable: ownership, decisions, information, controls and learning work together even when pressure increases.

- The actual request-to-result workflow and all required controls are visible to the people doing the work.
- One accountable workflow owner and a capable, authorized backup are named.
- Routine decision limits and genuine escalation conditions are documented and understood.
- Authorized users can see one current status, next action, owner, and due date.
- Delays, returned requests, complaints, and exceptions are reviewed by cause and lead to a tested change.
- An improved method is piloted, documented, and trained before it is applied more widely.

SELECT THE WORKFLOW

Choose the process causing the most repeated delay, rework, complaint, dependency or confusion.

ORGANIZATION

REVIEWER / TEAM

REVIEW DATE

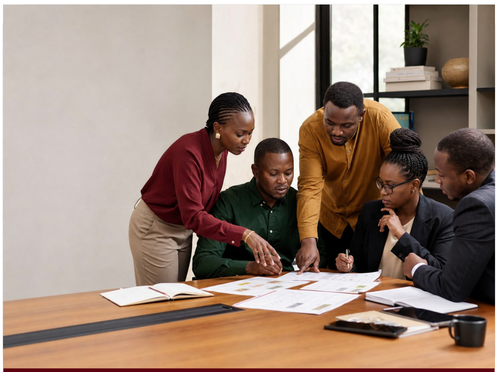
CURRENT WORKFLOW OWNER

WORKFLOW SELECTED *Name one request-to-result process.*

RECURRING PAIN *What keeps happening, and who feels the effect?*

START EVENT

COMPLETED RESULT



RUNNING EXAMPLE

Programme or Service Supplies: Purchase Request to Supplier Payment

02

REVIEW THE WORKFLOW THROUGH SCALE

Write one evidence-based observation for each lens.

S

SEE THE WHOLE WORKFLOW

Map the work from request to result, including the informal steps.

PRACTICAL QUESTION

What actually happens, not what the policy says should happen?

Use: Where does the purchase request really begin, and what event proves that supplier payment is complete? | Which desks, inboxes, systems, calls, messages, meetings, and physical files does the...

YOUR OBSERVATION / EVIDENCE

C

CLARIFY OUTCOMES AND OWNERSHIP

Define the expected result, owner, backup, decision rights, and escalation limits.

PRACTICAL QUESTION

Who owns the result and what can they decide without waiting?

Use: Who is accountable for the complete request-to-payment result, rather than only one departmental step? | Who is the named backup, and can that person access the information and authority needed t...

YOUR OBSERVATION / EVIDENCE

A

ALIGN PEOPLE, PROCESS, INFORMATION, AND TOOLS

Remove conflicting instructions, duplicate records, unnecessary handovers, and tool gaps.

PRACTICAL QUESTION

Do the roles, workflow, data, and technology support the same outcome?

Use: Where is the same request information written, typed, verified, or approved more than once? | Do the form, policy, tracker, roles, and actual approval route describe the same process? | Which handoff...

YOUR OBSERVATION / EVIDENCE

L

LEARN FROM FEEDBACK AND EXCEPTIONS

Review delays, rework, complaints, quality failures, and unusual cases.

PRACTICAL QUESTION

What is the process teaching us, and what should change?

Use: What do recent delays, returned files, requester complaints, and supplier queries have in common? | Which exception repeats often enough that it should have a defined response? | Who...

YOUR OBSERVATION / EVIDENCE

E

EXPAND ONLY AFTER THE CORE WORKS

Standardize the improved method, train the team, then add volume, people, branches, or technology.

PRACTICAL QUESTION

Are we scaling a reliable process or multiplying confusion?

Use: Has the improved method worked consistently on a small, representative set of requests? | Can another trained employee follow it without relying on one experienced person's memory? | What...

YOUR OBSERVATION / EVIDENCE

03 TEST DEPENDENCY, AUTHORITY AND RELIABILITY

A strong average does not cancel a critical dependency.

DEPENDENCY RED FLAGS

- [ ] Only one person can locate the current file or explain the true status.
- [ ] A routine stage stops when the usual officer or approver is absent.
- [ ] Access credentials, approval rights, or essential records have no tested backup arrangement.
- [ ] Staff send routine, compliant matters to a senior leader because they are unsure who may decide.
- [ ] Requesters or suppliers depend on personal relationships to obtain updates or move work forward.
- [ ] A critical handoff is verbal or informal and leaves no clear owner, due date, or evidence.

DECISION-RIGHTS CHECK

- Who may confirm that a request is complete and ready to enter the procurement route?
- Who may approve routine purchases within defined value, budget, and risk limits?
- Who may reject or return incomplete work, and what reason must be recorded?
- Who may resolve a known documentation or delivery exception without senior escalation?

END-TO-END OWNER

ROUTINE AUTHORITY / LIMIT

BACKUP AND ESCALATION TRIGGER

RATE THE CURRENT WORKFLOW: 1 = FRAGILE, 5 = SYSTEM-DRIVEN

Use consistent evidence, not the best recent case.

		1	2	3	4	5
VISIBILITY	1: No one can see the complete route or current status without asking several people. 5: The actual workflow, current status, owner, next action, due date, and required control evidence are visible to authorized users.	○	○	○	○	○
CONSISTENCY	1: The route changes by person, office, or urgency, and similar requests receive different treatment without a recorded reason. 5: A documented standard route is followed for routine work, with defined and recorded exception paths.	○	○	○	○	○
OWNERSHIP	1: Each department owns its activity, but no one is accountable for the complete result or able to resolve a stalled handoff. 5: An end-to-end owner, stage owners, backups, decision limits, and escalation points are named and understood.	○	○	○	○	○
RESILIENCE	1: Absence, inaccessible records, a missed handoff, or one unusual case can stop the workflow. 5: Backups, access, handovers, continuity steps, and known exception routes allow controlled work to continue.	○	○	○	○	○
LEARNING	1: Delay, rework, complaints, and supplier queries recur without a structured review or process change. 5: The team records recurring failure causes, tests corrective actions, and updates the working method when evidence supports a change.	○	○	○	○	○

TOTAL / 25	AVERAGE / 5	INTERPRETATION

21-25	System-driven / scale-ready
17-20	Generally reliable
13-16	Developing system
9-12	Effort-dependent
5-8	Fragile / critical

WHAT THE AVERAGE MEANS

The average is the total divided by five. It shows the typical reliability of this workflow across the five factors: 1.0 is person-dependent and fragile; 3.0 is developing; 5.0 is consistently system-driven.

RED-FLAG OVERRIDE

If any red flag is selected, act on that exposure even when the total score is high. The interpretation will display + RED FLAG.

04 CHOOSE ONE 30-DAY IMPROVEMENT

Use a controlled experiment: one root cause, one owner, one measure and one review date.

WHAT TO PUT IN THESE FIELDS

- Focus: the recurring failure or root cause to improve.
- Change: the smallest practical system change to test.
- Measure: the number or evidence that will show whether it worked.
- Review: adopt, adjust or stop based on Day 30 evidence.

IMPROVEMENT FOCUS / ROOT CAUSE

OWNER AND BACKUP

CHANGE / EXPERIMENT *What will be different in the workflow?*

BASELINE *Current evidence*

30-DAY TARGET *Desired evidence*

MEASURE AND DATA SOURCE

SECTOR EXAMPLE

Focus: Improve first-time completeness and status visibility for routine supplies requests without removing required controls.

Change: Pilot one complete intake cover sheet and one shared status register showing the owner, next action, due date, and reason for any return. Confirm the purpose of each existing approval before changing the route.

Measure: Percentage of pilot requests complete at first submission; Median calendar days from complete request to issued order and from verified receipt to payment approval; Number of status-chasing contacts and returned files;...

WEEKLY CHECKPOINTS

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

DAY 30 EVIDENCE AND DECISION *Adopt, adjust or stop - and why.*

SAVE YOUR WORK, THEN CHOOSE THE NEXT STEP

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ACCESS THE PROFESSIONAL EDITION