



Contract Data Requirements List (CDRL) Reviews and Agile

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Document Markings

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The Problem Statement

Question: *Does the Contract Data Requirements List (CDRL) review and approval process change under Agile?*

Answer: *It depends!*

Historically, CDRL deliveries (approval CDRLs¹ in particular) are scheduled on a periodic basis. For example:

- Preliminary Design Review (PDR) –45 days
- Critical Design Review (CDR) –60 days

Govt Program Office typically has 30 days to review, respond, and approve

- Small “army” of reviewers/SMEs needed
- Large effort in short amount of time

¹ Approval CDRLs are those deliverables that require formal government review and approval before they can officially be accepted.

Agile Impacts

One of the 12 Agile Principles state: “*Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.*”²

Why can't this be applied to documentation as well?

Recall “*Working software over comprehensive documentation*” in the 4 key principles of the Agile Manifesto.

- Documentation is software—right up until you cue it to the printer!
- DoD programs tend to be documentation heavy, depending on several variables (e.g., certification requirements of the system, sustainment approach – gov't vs. contractor, etc.). Some of the documentation is needed to support other related activities.

² “*The 12 Principles Behind the Agile Manifesto*”,
<https://www.agilealliance.org/agile101/12-principles-behind-the-agile-manifesto/>

Prime Contractor (Developer) Considerations

- Have the end-state of the document in mind
- Determine what portions of the content can be worked on
 - Include the basic outline
 - Frequency of delivery
 - Deliveries based on a Sprint cycle (2+ weeks) would not necessarily be achievable given approvals needed
 - Consider larger frequencies (e.g., quarterly) to allow time for staffing and feedback
 - Lends itself to incremental development and delivery
- Consider making the documentation updates part of the Definition of Done criteria at the Sprint level
- Revision changes/updates will need to be identified between deliveries (e.g., change bars) for the reviewers
- Could there be a Scrum team handling documentation?

Govt Program Office Considerations

- Fundamental process (delivery, review, comments and consolidation, acceptance determination) would remain the same, however
 - Smaller amount of content to review
 - After initial delivery, subsequent deliveries would focus on revisions
 - Decrease in amount of review time needed
 - Smaller, more frequent deliveries of content would decrease review time (gives them back more time for other tasks)
- Two key considerations for this approach:
 - Staffing is consistent
 - Determination needs to be made & agreed upon on what would be “acceptance” milestones contractually

Tool Use & Authoritative Source Considerations

Historically the CDRL cycle involved

- Contractor creating the document
- Delivery of the document to the govt Program Office for review & approval
- Updating the document file with noted changes for regeneration later

What if a different method (supporting collaboration) such as a Wiki was used instead?

- Potential to speed up the process
- Wiki would serve as the authoritative source of the document
- Could be generated from the Wiki for final delivery
- Precedents for this approach already exist³

³ https://mdotwiki.state.mi.us/design/index.php/Collaborative_Milestone_Review_Process & <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK82274/>

Problem Statement Revisited

Question: *Does the Contract Data Requirements List (CDRL) review and approval process change under Agile?*

Answer: ~~*It depends!*~~ *It can and it should!*

Agile methods for CDRL delivery, review and acceptance can be achieved

- Requires collaboration, coordination & planning (both sides)
- Requires reviewer (staff) consistency by the government Program Office

Questions



References

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