



## Robotic Process Automation Governance Guide

The Benefits of an Automation Operating Model and Center of Excellence

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# Introduction

Governance is a key component of any RPA initiative. RPA governance requires a detailed and clear strategy, effective risk management, discipline and commitment, proper documentation and information sharing, and constant self-evaluation. A single automation is very likely to have contact with multiple parts of an organization, therefore it is crucial to consider how governance will fit into the organization's business roadmap.

With a structure in place to control it, RPA becomes more responsive, more agile, much less bureaucratic, and enables the organization to reduce risks when scaling automation across the enterprise. Since software robots can integrate and access multiple legacy systems across the organization, a lack of governance can result in issues that can have a negative impact on an organization's operations leading to failure of critical back-office processes and platforms.

To avoid these issues, risks, and failures it is important to deploy a robust governance framework. Without these elements, organizations can introduce security risks into their processes and overlap solutions that use different development and technology standards. For organizations to successfully deploy an RPA initiative, from pilot to full-scale RPA implementation, it is necessary to understand some fundamental concepts.



What is the Automation Operating Model (AOM), its structure, and why it is important.



What is the Center of Excellence (CoE), how it ties into the AOM, and what are its components.

It is crucial to implement best practices for RPA governance, a well-maintained infrastructure for the RPA program, and a detailed architectural strategy.

## Automation Operating Model (AOM)

### Why Do Organizations Need the AOM?

The Automation Operating Model (AOM) provides a blueprint of the RPA program and the necessary elements to scale such as executive vision, IT automation readiness, controls framework, and citizen model and attended strategy. The AOM is a top-down activity and is driven from upper-level leadership and it is promoted with enterprise-wide objectives. Additionally, the AOM is unique to each organization and is critical to scaling automation effectively. The operating model includes a map of how all the stakeholders and participants will interact. It defines the interaction requirements and role descriptions to ensure all participants know their processes and expectations. Besides defining interaction guidelines, the AOM defines how automation technologies, will be included in the organization's approach to providing service to the enterprise. In addition, the AOM defines the guidelines, standards, and execution rules for the automation program.

A well-planned development and maintenance of an AOM allows an organization's automation initiative to transform into a holistic and un-siloed enterprise program that returns significant value to the business.

The AOM provides an organization with the basis of an automation strategy to engage executives and maintain continued sponsorship by:

- Maintaining sponsorship from upper leadership to continue to drive new and better automation deployments.
- Allowing for a detailed map to ROI and benefits realizations
- Enabling art-of-the-possible visioning
- Allowing the organization to align RPA to broader business strategies.

The AOM includes outlines the governance and support structures need to deploy robots at scale by:

- Defining standards for every automation development and support action.
- Guaranteeing controls for pre and post deployment stages, ensuring the protection of operations.
- Implementing consistent prioritizations and assessment practices so the automation efforts are focused, and the investment is maximized.

The AOM provides the interaction model to engage the needed stakeholders for the RPA initiative by defining how to:

- Bring on-board additional support functions like security and audit roles. Doing this minimizes roadblocks and delays.
- Drive and reinforce a partnership with IT and the CIO, this ensures alignment to support models.
- Encourage business and process owners to identify pain points and submit automation ideas to the Center of Excellence (CoE).

## Principles of AOM Design

The Automation Operating Model has four principles that help define the success of an organization's automation program.

It is key to design a comprehensive governance model that can balance the speed of deployment without sacrificing quality and controls

Design a path-to-production that drives maximum automation potential and ensures control and procedural compliance

Deploy an operating model that can adapt to support functions and changing resource models with ease

Leverage existing tools, processes, and best practices where possible in the AOM design.

## AOM Design Drivers

The Automation Operating Model maps out who and how an organization will deploy its automation strategy. An Operating Model ensures that governance and the processes are in place to control and scale automation operations. Four of the key drivers of the AOM are:

1. Organizational goals, priorities, and the expected outcome

2. Desired automation and organizational maturity
3. The decision and operating autonomy of the entity, business unit, and function
4. The scope of the automation program, this includes regions, entities, and business units.

## MATURING THE AOM DESIGN

There are four stages that organizations will go through on their journey to scaling automation. As an organization's automation program moves along these stages the AOM will mature.

### **STAGE 1 - PROVE**

In the first stage, the prove stage, initial processes identified for automation begin to test the automation technology and develop a sponsor for the value. The prove stage generally takes place in a single business unit with less than 10 software robots as the initial processes are meant to ensure that RPA works as intended in their specific environment. For some organizations Stage 1 can take up to three months while others move through a pilot much faster, sometimes the Prove stage takes as much as a couple of weeks.

### **STAGE 2 - ESTABLISH**

During Stage 2 the focus is on production and delivery of multiple processes, which usually are being deployed within a single business unit. This stage can take anywhere between three to six months. During the Establish stage organizations are at risk of stagnation if the automation pipeline is primarily sourced from one business unit and if the organization has created limited RPA awareness across the enterprise.

Additionally, if the leader of the business unit is not setting and holding the organization accountable to discover and deliver a significant business outcome with automation, the ability to demonstrate the potential of RPA is diminished.

Every organization is different, therefore their AOMs will be different. This means that every organization's automation operating model will go through iterations to finally be set on the right approach to fundamental elements, such as organizational structure, automation intake strategy, governance, risk controls, and change management.

### **STAGE 3 - EXPAND**

During Stage 3, the AOM is fully developed, and it outlines the standards to approach and onboard additional business units to the RPA strategy. The Expand stage lifetime can go from one to three years as the full benefits of RPA are understood at the top levels of the enterprise and multiple business units become engaged and start to automate at scale.

It is during this stage that key performance indicators (KPIs) are defined in detail and measured. Since developers in the automation Center of Excellence (CoE) will be focused on high-ROI automation opportunities, organizations will start to understand that to address many simple, team-level, and personalized automation opportunities, organizations must reskill their employees. By reskilling their workforce, organizations are helping their employees to become citizen developers to build automation for their respective teams, business units, or for themselves.

### **STAGE 4 - SCALE**

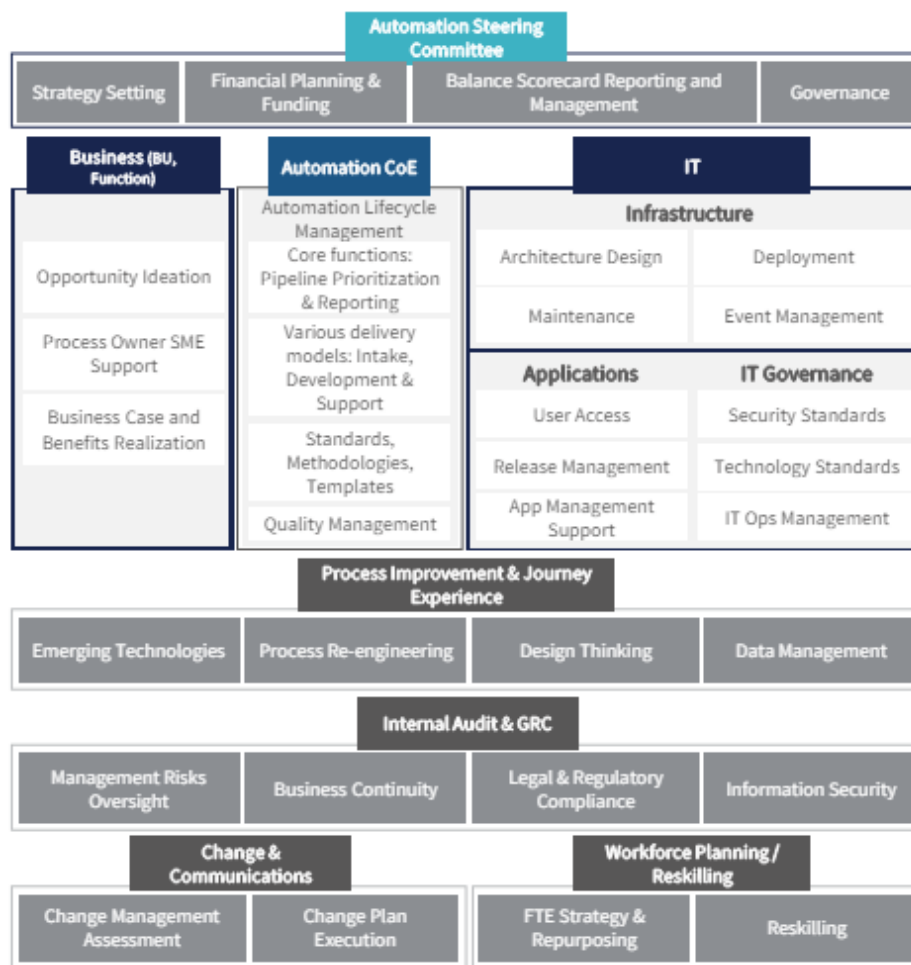
During the fourth stage of the AOM maturity journey, the CoE is now able to develop and deploy sophisticated automations using a combination of technologies to serve the workforce’s needs across the enterprise.

It is during the Scale stage that the vision of having a robot assistant for every person has taken root and the organization’s business champions are spread across the enterprise to support and encourage adoption of RPA across business units.

At Stage 4, citizen developers are deploying bottom-up, employee-driven automations. In this stage, the RPA sponsor role is taken by the CEO, or the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and RPA has become part of the foundation for other digital transformation initiatives within the organization.

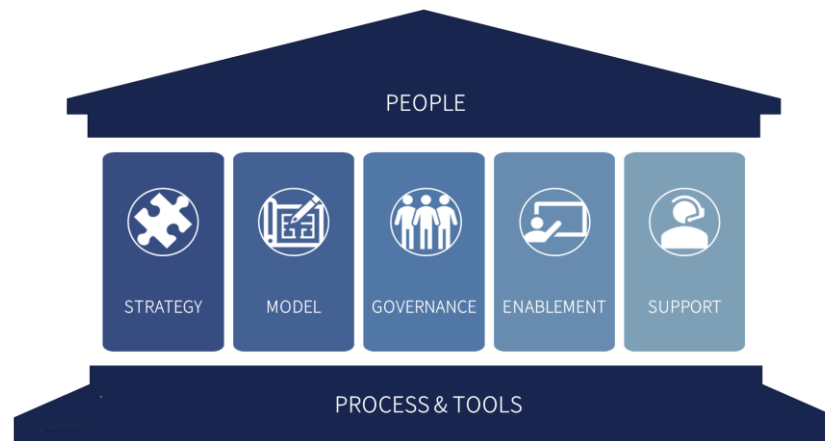
## Automation Operating Model Structure

The AOM illustrates who and how an organization will execute its RPA strategy, ensuring governance and processes are properly set and ready to scale. A narrow focus on the CoE often leads to challenges to scale. A more comprehensive view of the organizational requirements will support the RPA program at all levels of maturity.



## RPA Center of Excellence (CoE)

An RPA Center of Excellence ties elements of success together in a centralized programmatic fashion to ensure the people, process, and tools within the structure are all moving in the same direction and generating impact in a scalable manner. Checks and balances for the scoping, designing, development, testing and deployment can be added to ensure communication is seamless within the business unit or organization.



For instance, every house begins with a solid foundation. Process and Tools within RPA are common denominators for any RPA program. There must be an overarching process to take ideas for automation and turn them into reality. There must also be tools used to do so. In this instance, we recommend the UiPath platform due to its ease of use, community of support and industry leading best practice capabilities. A well-documented and understood process for the RPA delivery lifecycle coupled with a powerful and easy to use RPA platform becomes the solid foundation for any CoE.

The ceiling of the house RPA built are the stakeholders, the users and the RPA development team within the CoE structure. These are the executives expecting impact, the developers and testers delivering automation and all the human glue in between ensuring that the CoE is capable of delivering against any level of complexity or volume of output. Think of the People within the CoE as forming the umbrella that protects the structure of the CoE. If everyone has a stake in the game and works together, the CoE runs smoothly with continual impact being generated – like a factory.

The people within the CoE should be supported by pillars of success within the CoE. These pillars provide the procedures, expectations and operating guidelines to ensure the RPA process and tools are used within corporate boundaries and guidelines to ensure the impact is driven for the stakeholders and RPA team. These pillars of success can be based on function as seen in a centralized model, and can also be based on region, support group or operating unit as seen in a federated or segmented model.

The pillars for a CoE are driven by the CoE program lead and usually consist of the following:

## **STRATEGY**

Establishes goals and delivery expectations for any external and internal providers of operational delivery to the CoE. This pillar should include a listing of expectations in delivery toward goals set by the stakeholders. The CoE strategy pillar can also be created to provide guidance to another organization through a federated operating model.

## **OPERATING MODEL**

Determines the structure of the team positioned to scope, design, develop, test and deploy automation within the business unit or organization.

## **GOVERNANCE MODEL**

Determines how the CoE will be governed and establishes communication methods and the RPA delivery lifecycle. This pillar also creates, measures and drives performance criteria for the output of automation.

## **ENABLEMENT**

Determines how impact will be measured and shared throughout the business unit or organization. Also, ensures all resources are certified and qualified to perform their duties as outlined within the roles of the Operating Model.

## **SUPPORT**

Provides ongoing training, staffing, performance measurement, pipeline management and quality assurance within any RPA project.

A solid Center of Excellence with a foundation of Process and Tools and strong pillars of success will hold the weight of RPA stakeholder's expectations, timeline and desired ROI as the RPA team deploys automation. The CoE structure provides the method to guarantee an ongoing output of automation based on RPA candidates, development capabilities and future scalability. The most difficult part of establishing a CoE is getting started. If you have 1 or 100 RPA deployed, it's never too late to put in the structure to ensure future scalability within your RPA deployment.

## **Establishing a CoE**

The following steps can be used to establish the framework for an RPA Center of Excellence:

1. Build the skills and capacity for RPA.
2. Create a scalable, functional, and technical environment.
3. Articulate an effective governance model. Providing guidelines and templates for assessment, design, development, and deployment.
4. Enable the CoE and prepare to scale up. The CoE team will meet strategic expectations through a growth plan.

## **Responsibilities of the CoE**

Even though the responsibilities of a Center of Excellence depend on each organization's governance model, some of the most common responsibilities an RPA CoE include:

- Drive process automation across the enterprise, upskilling teams and increasing awareness of RPA across business units.
- Evaluate the quality of the developed automations and how critical these are, ensuring that best practice and standards are applied.
- Monitor how software robots are performing and guarantee that execution Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are met.
- Follow and report the main development stages of the RPA initiative.
- Guarantee the execution of established governance guidelines, frameworks, and processes across the enterprise.
- Guarantee the continual improvement of automations and tools.

## Recommendations for the CoE

As with AOM's, each CoE will be unique to the organization and development model it supports. The following recommendations should be considered when establishing an RPA Center of Excellence:

1. **Treat RPA as an Enterprise Capability** - By treating RPA as an enterprise capability, organizations resist the temptation to make quick wins by implementing automation with a siloed approach. A siloed approach makes it difficult to scale automation initiatives.
2. **Focus on Developing RPA Skills** - Make it a priority to develop the skills and capabilities of your Robotic Operating Team, with clear roles, responsibilities, and SLAs. Focusing on this ensures a strong set-up of the organization's RPA service delivery. Build a reliable relationship between Business and IT.
3. **Develop a Mature Communication Plan** - Leadership is crucial for an automation program. Select a strong implementation manager. This manager will focus on the key aspects, by selecting the best process to develop a proof-of-concept. The process must be well-documented, high volume, repetitive, and rules based.

## RPA Quick Start Program

NSS's Quick Start Program is a dedicated program to help enterprises realize value deployment while setting your program up for long term success. The RPA Quick Start journey begins with NSS providing a high touch, automation assessment to right-size your engagement and document high quality automation candidates. As your automation program begins to scale beyond its first couple of engagements, we move your organization out of "workflow thinking" and into "automation program thinking" with a Center of Excellence (CoE) under a robust Automation Operating Model (AOM).

## RPA Assessment

NSS believes that initial scoping on engagements and building a robust automation pipeline is vital to realizing year-one ROI. NSS provides a high touch automation assessment to right-size your engagement and find high-quality automation candidates.

## RPA Development and Deployment

NSS provides a mature skill mix of Business Analysts, Program Management, Solution Architects, and RPA Developers that operate under an Agile development methodology for development. NSS uses incremental deployments throughout the implementation lifecycle for continuous value delivery.



## AOM and CoE Management

The Automation Operating Model (AOM) sets the blueprint for all the necessary elements to scale in any automation direction. An RPA Center of Excellence consolidates efforts into a streamlined methodology to assess, deploy, and measure the impact of automation.

## Reducing Risk through Proper RPA Governance

Implementing an RPA Automation Operating Model and establishing an RPA Center of Excellence (CoE) can significantly reduce risks within an RPA environment in several ways:

1. **Standardization and Governance:** An RPA Automation Operating Model provides a standardized framework for implementing and managing RPA initiatives across the organization. This includes defining clear roles and responsibilities, establishing governance processes, and ensuring compliance with regulations and internal policies. The RPA CoE oversees the adherence to these standards, ensuring that all automation projects follow best practices and meet regulatory requirements, thus reducing the risk of non-compliance.
2. **Risk Assessment and Mitigation:** The RPA CoE conducts thorough risk assessments for each automation project, identifying potential risks and developing strategies to mitigate them. This proactive approach helps to address risks early in the automation lifecycle, preventing issues from escalating into larger problems that could disrupt operations or lead to compliance issues.
3. **Quality Assurance:** By implementing standardized development methodologies and quality assurance processes, such as code reviews, testing frameworks, and documentation standards, the RPA CoE ensures the reliability and accuracy of automated processes. This reduces the risk of errors or malfunctions that could impact business operations or data integrity.
4. **Change Management:** The RPA CoE oversees change management processes to effectively manage updates, enhancements, and scalability of automated processes. By following structured change management procedures, organizations can minimize the risk of introducing disruptions or errors when implementing changes to RPA solutions.
5. **Training and Knowledge Management:** The RPA CoE provides training and support to RPA developers, business users, and stakeholders, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively leverage automation technologies. This reduces the risk of implementation delays or failures due to skill gaps or misunderstandings about how to use RPA tools and platforms.
6. **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement:** The RPA CoE establishes mechanisms for monitoring the performance of automated processes and identifying opportunities for optimization and enhancement. By continuously monitoring RPA operations and collecting feedback from stakeholders, the organization can proactively address issues and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of automation solutions, reducing the risk of performance bottlenecks or inefficiencies.

Overall, the combination of an RPA Automation Operating Model and an RPA CoE provides a structured framework for managing and mitigating risks throughout the RPA lifecycle, from planning and development to deployment and maintenance. This approach helps organizations to realize the full benefits of RPA while minimizing potential risks and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

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