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BUSINESS ANALYSIS REFERENCE GUIDE

(BARG™)

6. PLAN

A Comprehensive Guide to Implementing Business Analysis, with Practical Examples

Includes insights into how Artificial Intelligence can enhance Business Analysis processes

6. PLAN

This chapter includes the processes related to planning a specific Business Analysis initiative within the organization or a specific department: '*Determine Solution Templates*', and '*Determine Business Analysis Stages and Stakeholder Engagement*'.

Plan, as defined in *Business Analysis Reference Guide (BARG™)*, is applicable to the following:

- Business Analysis initiatives in *any* industry
- Products, services, or any other results to be delivered to Stakeholders
- Business Analysis Initiatives of any size or complexity

Business Analysis can be applied effectively to any initiative in any industry—from small initiatives or teams with as few as two team members to large, complex initiatives with up to several thousand members in several teams.

To facilitate the best application of the Business Analysis framework, this chapter identifies inputs, tools, and outputs for each process as either "mandatory" or "optional." Inputs, tools, and outputs denoted by asterisks (*) are mandatory, or considered critical to success, whereas those with no asterisks are optional.

It is recommended that the inexperienced Business Analysts and those individuals being introduced to the Business Analysis framework and processes focus primarily on the mandatory inputs, tools, and outputs; while experienced Business Analysts, and other more experienced Business Analysis practitioners, including Sponsors and relevant Stakeholders strive to attain a more thorough knowledge of the information in this entire chapter.

This chapter is written from the perspective of a single Business Analysis initiative within the company or a specific department, and follows:

- The *Setup* chapter, where the Business Analysis function is established for the entire organization or a specific department.

- The *Initiate* chapter, where Accepted Business Needs are determined, and the Business Analysis Team and Stakeholders who will work on the specific initiative are identified.

The outputs from this chapter will serve as valid inputs to the *Implement* (Chapter 7) and *Enhance* (Chapter 8) Business Analysis activities, which are discussed in subsequent chapters.

The *Plan* phase begins with the *Determine Solution Templates* process, as the Business Analysis Team collaborates with Stakeholders—who will ultimately approve or use the outputs from the Business Analysis initiative—to finalize the preferred Solution Template or format for presenting Business Analysis results.

This is followed by *Determine Stages and Stakeholder Engagement* process, where the Business Analysis Team proceeds to determine the Business Analysis stages (also referred to as phases or steps) required to:

- break down the Accepted Business Needs into Requirements,
- refine those Requirements to create Refined Requirements,
- develop Designs that help further define the Requirements or assist in creating the Solutions,
- validate the Refined Requirements and Designs with customers and relevant Stakeholders at various stages as needed,

- create Solutions—based on the selected Solution Template—that satisfy the Business Needs, validated Requirements, and validated Designs, and
- ultimately, obtain approval for those Solutions from customers and relevant Stakeholders.

The Business Analysis Team also works to identify all required or desired interactions with various Stakeholders during the different stages of the Business Analysis process.

It is also important to realize that although all phases and processes are defined uniquely in the Business Analysis Reference Guide, they are not necessarily performed sequentially or separately. At times, it may be more appropriate to combine some phases and/or processes, depending on the specific needs of each initiative.

Figure 6-1 provides an overview of the Initiate phase processes, which are as follows:

6.1 Determine Solution Templates—In this process, the Business Analysis Team for the specific Business Analysis initiative aims to finalize the preferred Solution Template or format for presenting Business Analysis results to Stakeholders who will ultimately approve or use the outputs from the initiative. Determining Solution Templates ensures that outputs are delivered in the most useful format for decision-making and implementation.

6.2 Determine Stages and Stakeholder Engagement—In this process, the Business Analysis Team proceeds to determine the Business Analysis stages (also referred to as phases or steps) required to successfully complete the Business Analysis initiative. The Business Analysis Team also works to identify all required or desired interactions with various Stakeholders during the different stages of the Business Analysis process.

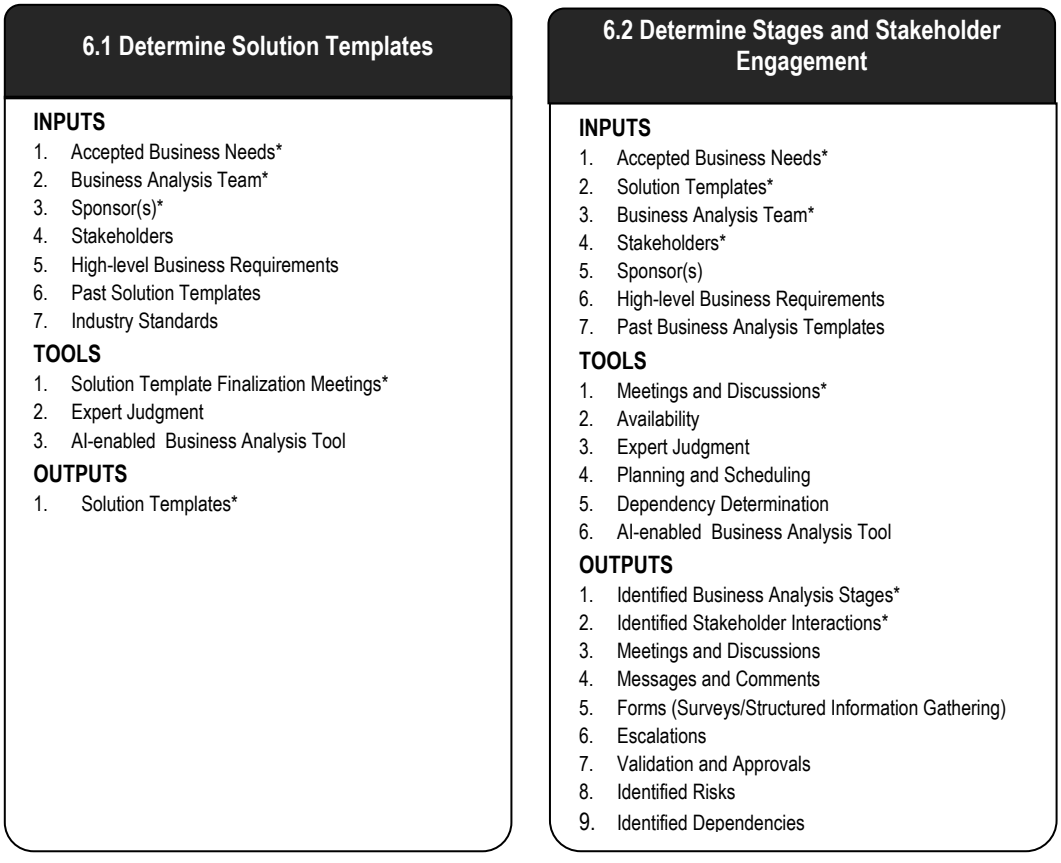

Figure 6-1: Plan Overview

Note: Asterisks (*) denote a "mandatory" input, tool, or output for the corresponding process.

Figure 6-2 below shows all the mandatory inputs, tools, and outputs for processes in the Plan phase.

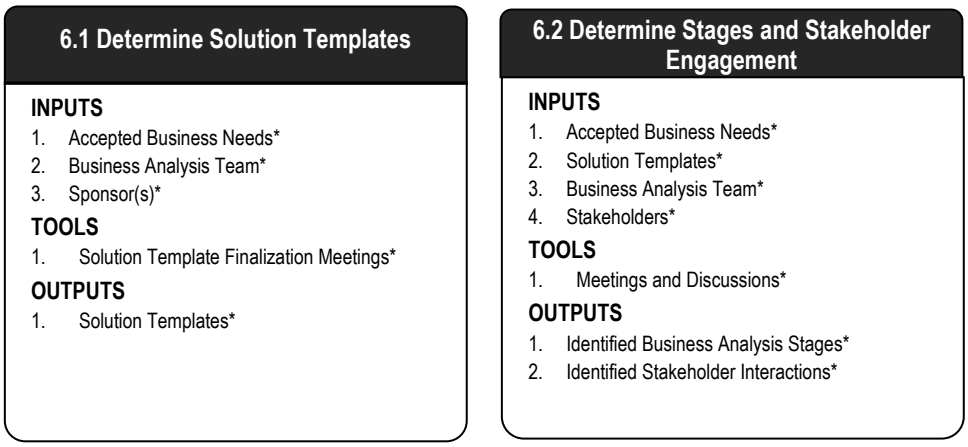

Figure 6-2: Plan Overview (Essentials)

Note: Asterisks (*) denote a "mandatory" input, tool, or output for the corresponding process.

6.1 Determine Solution Templates

The *Determine Solution Templates* process, conducted by the Business Analysis Team for the specific Business Analysis initiative, aims to finalize the preferred Solution Template or format for presenting Business Analysis results. This helps ensure effective communication and alignment between the Business Analysis Team and the Stakeholders who will ultimately approve or use the outputs from the Business Analysis initiative. Determining Solution Templates ensures that outputs are delivered in the most useful format for decision-making and implementation.

Figure 6-3 shows all the inputs, tools, and outputs for *Determine Solution Templates* process.

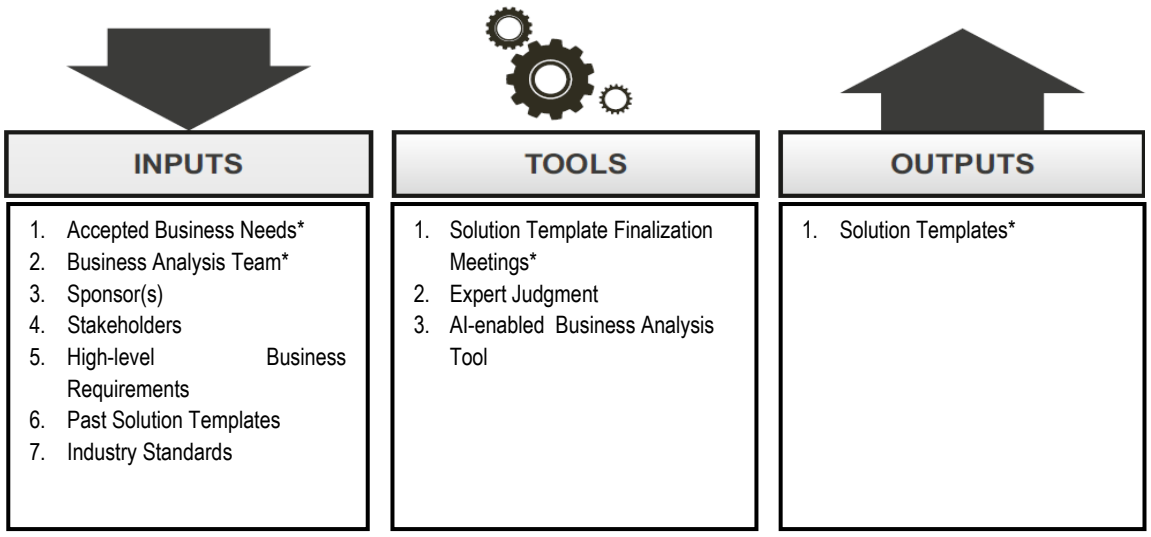

Figure 6-3: Determine Solution Templates—Inputs, Tools, and Outputs

Note: Asterisks (*) denote a "mandatory" input, tool, or output for the corresponding process.

6.1.1 Inputs

6.1.1.1 Accepted Business Needs*

Accepted Business Needs serve as the foundation for defining Solution Templates, ensuring alignment with organizational goals, Stakeholder expectations, and required business outcomes for effective implementation.

For more information, refer section 5.3.3.1.

6.1.1.2 Business Analysis Team*

The Business Analysis Team consists of Business Analysts who play a key role in creating Solution Templates by leveraging their expertise, ensuring alignment with business needs, and developing structured frameworks for the Business Analysis initiative.

For more information, refer section 5.4.3.1.

6.1.1.3 Sponsor(s)

Sponsor(s) provide guidance in creating Solution Templates by offering strategic direction, ensuring alignment with business goals, and supporting resource allocation for effective Solution development and implementation.

For more information, refer section 3.2.2.

6.1.1.4 Stakeholders

Relevant Stakeholders contribute to creating Solution Templates by providing Requirements, feedback, and insights to ensure alignment with business objectives and user needs. Project Managers of projects typically require Business Analysis results in the form of Requirements Documents, Scope Statements, Risk Assessments, Process Flows, Status Reports, and Stakeholder Analysis to ensure successful project execution. Product Owners in Agile projects, such as Scrum and Kanban, typically require Business Analysis Solutions in the form of Epics, User Stories, Acceptance Criteria, or Task Groups to guide development and ensure alignment with business goals.

For more information, refer section 3.2.3.

6.1.1.5 High-level Business Requirements

High-level Business Requirements guide the creation of Business Analysis Solution Templates by ensuring alignment with business goals, Stakeholder needs, and project objectives.

For more information, refer sections 5.1.3.2 and 5.2.3.2.

6.1.1.6 Past Solution Templates

Past Solution Templates help the Business Analysis Team by providing proven frameworks, ensuring consistency, reducing rework, and accelerating analysis, leading to more efficient requirement gathering, documentation, and Solution development aligned with business needs.

Some AI-enabled Business Analysis tools, such as Vabro, allow users to quickly clone past projects or work, significantly reducing the time required to finalize Solution Templates.

6.1.1.7 Industry Standards

Industry standards for providing Business Analysis Solutions ensure consistency, quality, and effectiveness in delivering business value. These standards are typically defined by globally recognized organizations and frameworks. Standardized formats help ensure clarity, consistency, and effectiveness when documenting and presenting Business Analysis results. These formats are guided by globally recognized standards, methodologies, and best practices.

Examples of Business Analysis Documentation Standards

- IEEE 830 and IEEE 29148 (Software Requirements Specification - SRS)
    - Provides guidelines for structuring requirement documentation in IT projects.
- ISO/IEC 25010 (Software Product Quality Model)
    - Establishes standards for evaluating software quality attributes in business Solutions.

Table 6-1 captures the Common Solution Templates for Business Analysis Reports

Project Type	Recommended Solution Templates	Reasoning
Agile Development	User Stories, Epics, Acceptance Criteria	Aligns with Agile methodologies for iterative delivery.
Process Improvement	BPMN Process Flow Diagrams, Gap Analysis Reports	Helps visualize process inefficiencies and improvements.
Software Implementation	BRD, FRD, Use Cases, Wireframes	Ensures clarity in functional and technical Requirements.
Executive Decision-Making	Business Case, SWOT Analysis, Dashboards	Provides high-level insights for strategic decisions.
Regulatory Compliance	Compliance Reports, Risk Assessments, Audit Logs	Meets industry-specific regulatory Requirements.

Table 6-1: Common Solution Templates for Business Analysis Reports

Some examples of Visual and Data-Driven Reporting Standards include:

- BPMN (Business Process Model and Notation) – Industry standard for process modeling.
- UML (Unified Modeling Language) – Used for visualizing system Designs.
- Dashboards and Metrics Reporting – Tools like Vabro, Power BI, Tableau, and Google Data Studio for real-time reporting.

6.1.2 Tools

6.1.2.1 Solution Template Finalization Meetings *

To ensure effective communication and alignment between the Business Analysis Team and Stakeholders, it is crucial to discuss the preferred Solution Template or format for Business Analysis results. This ensures that outputs are delivered in the most useful way for decision-making and implementation. Below is a step-by-step guide on how to conduct this discussion:

1. Preparation before the Discussion

Before meeting with Stakeholders, the Business Analyst team should prepare by:

- Reviewing Accepted Business Analysis Needs: Understand the business needs, goals, and Requirements provided by Stakeholders.
- Identifying Stakeholders: Determine key Stakeholders involved in the discussion, such as business Sponsors, product owners, project managers, customers, and end-users.
- Defining Available Solution Templates: The Business Analysis Team should identify commonly used Solution Templates, such as Epics, User Stories, Use Cases, Wireframes, Reports, and Process Diagrams.
- Setting Discussion Objectives: Establish clear goals for the discussion, such as agreeing on Solution Templates that best support decision-making and implementation.

2. Conducting the Discussion

A. Opening the Discussion

- Introduce the Purpose: Explain why the discussion is necessary and how it will help in streamlining Business Analysis outputs.
- Clarify Accepted Business Analysis Needs: Reconfirm the key business needs with Stakeholders to ensure alignment.
- Explain Available Solution Templates: Briefly describe different Solution Templates and their benefits (e.g., visual models for quick understanding, detailed reports for compliance).

B. Gathering Stakeholder Preferences

- Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage Stakeholders to share their expectations regarding the format of the results. Example questions:
    - What type of documents or templates do you currently use for decision-making?
    - Do you prefer high-level summaries or detailed documentation?
    - Would you find visual representations (e.g., flowcharts, wireframes) more useful than text-based documents?
    - Do you need the results in a format compatible with specific tools (e.g., Vabro, Jira, Confluence, Excel)?

- Consider Different Stakeholder Roles: Different Stakeholders may have different preferences. For example:
    - Product Owners may prefer User Stories and Epics.
    - Project Managers typically require Requirements Documents, Scope Statements, Risk Assessments, Process Flows, Status Reports, and Stakeholder Analysis

- Developers may require Process Flows and Use Cases.
- Senior Management may need Dashboards and Summary Reports.

3. Aligning on the Preferred Format

- Summarize Stakeholder Feedback: Repeat key points to confirm understanding.
- Resolve Conflicts: If Stakeholders have differing preferences, find a compromise (e.g., providing multiple formats or summaries).
- Document the Agreed Solution Template: Record the preferred result format and ensure all parties acknowledge it.
- Confirm Next Steps: Outline how the Business Analysis Team will deliver results and when Stakeholders can expect them.

4. Follow-Up Actions

- Document Meeting Minutes: Capture the discussion details, decisions made, and action items.
- Share a Sample Output: Provide a draft or sample Solution Template for validation.
- Review and Adjust: If necessary, refine the Solution Template based on feedback before finalizing the Business Analysis results.

By following these steps, the Business Analysis Team can effectively collaborate with Stakeholders to ensure that Business Analysis results are presented in a format that is clear, useful, and actionable.

6.1.2.2 Expert Judgment

Expert judgment is a key technique used by Business Analysts to determine the most appropriate Solution Templates for presenting Business Analysis results. It involves leveraging the experience, domain knowledge, and expertise of industry professionals, Stakeholders, and subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure the results are clear, actionable, and aligned with business needs.

Expert judgment considers company-specific templates and documentation standards. Example: A company using Vabro for Agile development might prefer Epics, User Stories, and Acceptance Criteria.

Experts decide whether results should be high-level summaries (executive dashboards) or detailed technical specifications (functional Requirements). Example: A compliance-focused project may require detailed regulatory documentation, while a UX project may need wireframes and prototypes.

Best Practices for Using Expert Judgment

- Engage the Right Experts – Include Business Analysts, Product Owners, Project Managers, and SMEs.
- Validate with Stakeholders – Ensure the chosen format meets business and technical expectations.
- Refer to Industry Standards – Align with BARG, BPMN, and other frameworks.
- Iterate Based on Feedback – Continuously refine documentation formats based on Stakeholder input.

6.1.2.3 AI-enabled Business Analysis Tool

An AI-enabled Business Analysis tools can assist in finalizing Solution formats by automating documentation, analyzing Stakeholder preferences, and ensuring alignment with industry standards. These tools streamline the process of selecting the most effective format for presenting Business Analysis results.

How AI Helps in Finalizing Business Analysis Solution Formats

1. Automated Documentation and Formatting
    - AI tools can generate Business Requirement Documents (BRDs), User Stories, Process Flows, and other formats based on input data.
    - Example: Vabro and Jira AI Assist can automatically structure Requirements into Agile-friendly formats like Epics and User Stories.
2. Historical Data Analysis
    - AI analyzes past successful projects and suggests the most commonly used formats.
    - Example: If similar projects used BPMN diagrams and Use Cases, AI recommends them as the best fit.
3. Stakeholder Preference Identification
    - AI can track Stakeholder interactions and preferences, adjusting formats accordingly.
    - Example: If executives frequently request dashboards, AI suggests Power BI or Tableau reports for final output.
4. Industry Standards Compliance
    - AI tools ensure Solution formats align with BARG, IEEE, and ISO standards.
    - Example: AI-enabled compliance checkers validate whether documentation meets ISO 29148 (SRS standards).
5. Real-Time Feedback and Adaptation
    - AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants help refine formats by collecting real-time feedback from Stakeholders.
    - Example: AI-enabled assistants in Confluence or Notion adjust requirement formats based on team discussions.

Table 6-2 captures examples of AI-enabled Business Analysis Tools

Tool	Key Features	Use Case
Vabro	Comprehensive AI-enabled SaaS platform to manage all workflows, projects, OKRs and DevOps	Automates managing all Business Analysis activities
Jira AI Assist	AI-driven User Story and Epic generation	Agile backlog management
IBM Watson AI	AI-driven Business Analysis insights	Predicts optimal Solution formats
Power BI with AI	AI-enabled dashboard generation	Data-driven reporting
Lucidchart AI	AI-assisted process modeling	Auto-generates BPMN and UML diagrams

Table 6-2: Examples of AI-enabled Business Analysis Tools

Benefits of Using AI for Finalizing Business Analysis Solution Formats

- Increased Efficiency – Automates documentation, reducing manual effort.
- Consistency and Accuracy – Ensures standardization across multiple projects.
- Stakeholder-Centric – Adapts to user needs and preferences.
- Data-Driven Decisions – Uses historical insights to recommend the best format.
- Faster Approvals – Speeds up Stakeholder alignment and decision-making.

For more information, refer section 4.4.3.1.

6.1.3 Outputs

6.1.3.1 Solution Templates*

To ensure effective communication and alignment between the Business Analysis Team and Stakeholders, it is crucial to discuss the preferred Solution Template or format for Business Analysis results. This ensures that outputs are delivered in the most useful way for decision-making and implementation.

Figure 6-4 shows "Setup Your Workspace with Vabro Genie AI" screen, allowing users to select workspaces like "Business Analysis," offering project templates, and displaying workflow setup progress:

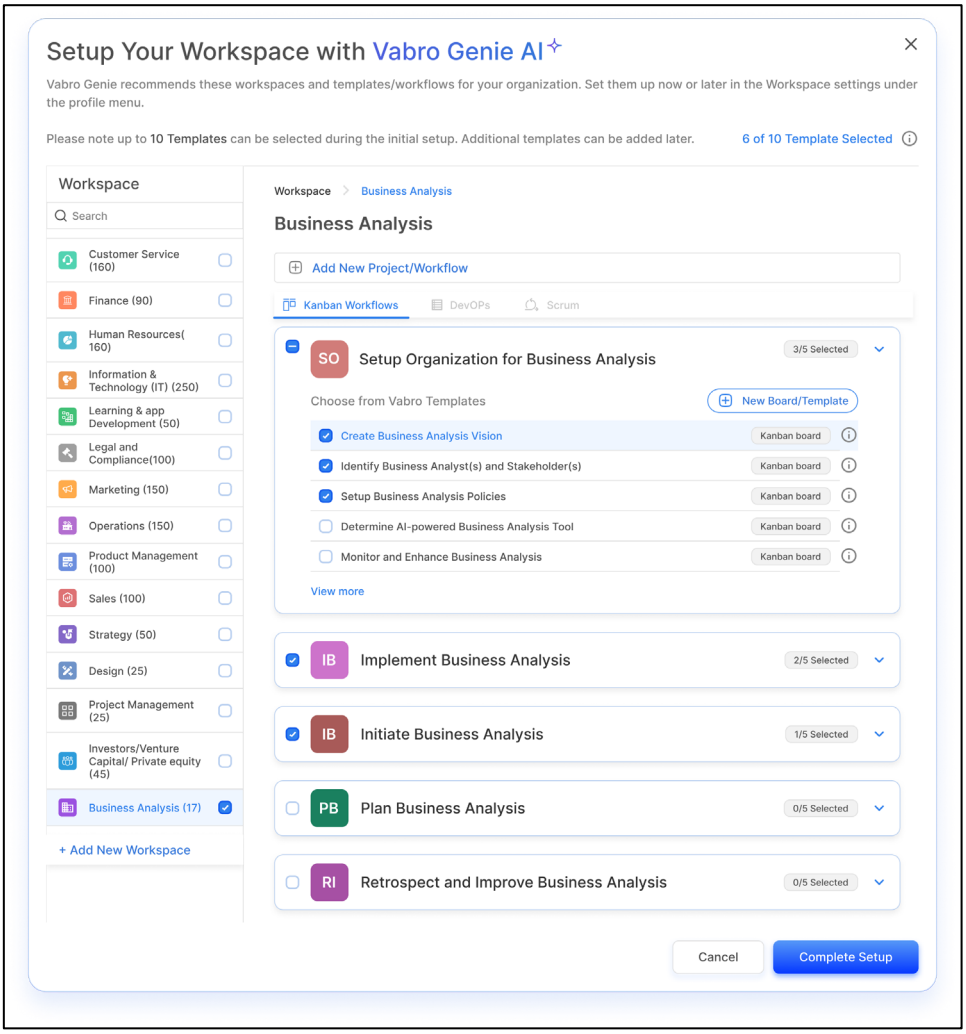

Figure 6-4: Selection of a Solution Template in an AI-enabled Business Analysis Tool (Source: Vabro)

Determining the Solution Templates should preferably be done before the Business Analysis Team begins breaking down the business needs into Requirements. The created Solution Templates should be reviewed, ratified, and approved by the customers or other Stakeholders who will receive the Solution upon completion of the Business Analysis initiative. This ensures that both the customers or Stakeholders who provided the Accepted Business Need, and the Business Analysts responsible for developing the Solution, have a shared understanding of the desired format, level of detail, and other parameters for the expected output.

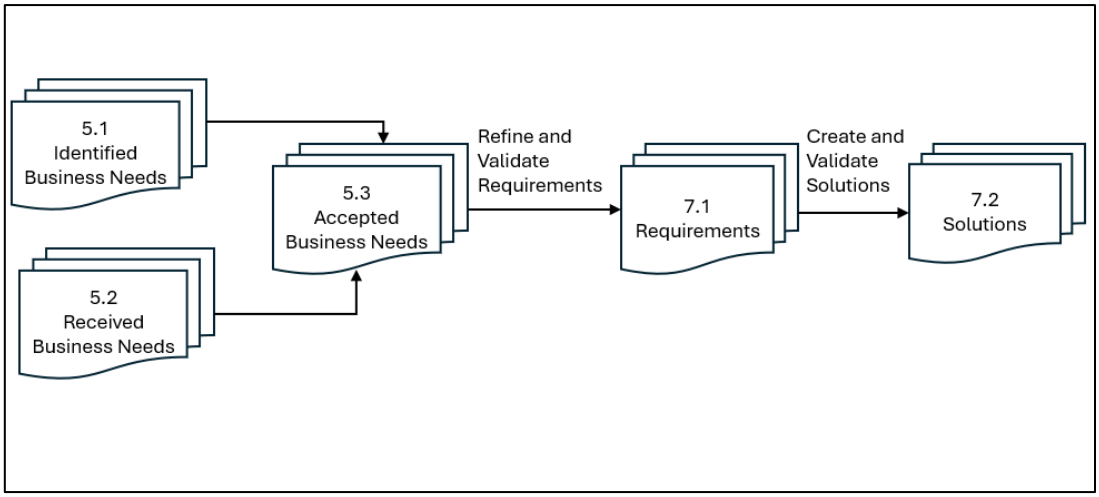

Figure 6-5: Important Artifacts created during Business Analysis

The figure above shows important artifacts created by the Business Analysis Team. First, the *Identified Business Needs* and *Received Business Needs* are evaluated to determine the *Accepted Business Needs*, which will be addressed by the Business Analysis Team. Then, the *Accepted Business Needs* are broken down into refined and validated *Requirements*. Finally, *Solutions* for the Business Analysis initiative are created which are then approved by the customers or relevant Stakeholders. Some popular Solution Templates used by Business Analysts are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list, as the choice of Solution Templates depends on the industry, the level of detail required, and the format in which the final Solution must be delivered to the customers or Stakeholders.

1. Epics and User Stories in Agile Frameworks (such as Scrum and Kanban):

In Agile projects—such as those using Scrum or Kanban—Business Analysis teams play a critical role in shaping the product backlog by creating Solutions in the form of Epics and User Stories. These are essential tools for communicating Requirements and ensuring the development team builds what the business truly needs. Business Analysts bridge the gap between Stakeholders and developers by turning business needs into actionable epics and user stories. This ensures that Agile teams deliver value continuously and iteratively.

- Epics

  What they are: Large, High-level Business Requirements or features that deliver value.

  Purpose: Provide a strategic view of what the business needs; often aligned with business goals or initiatives.

  Role of Business Analyst: Work with Stakeholders to define these epics based on business value, customer needs, and product vision.

  Example: *"Implement user authentication and authorization system."*

- User Stories

  What they are: Smaller, actionable work items that define specific user needs within an epic.

  Purpose: Guide the development team by clearly explaining what needs to be built, who it's for, and why.

Format: As a [type of user], I want [some goal] so that [some reason].

Role of Business Analyst: Break down epics into user stories, prioritize them with the Product Owner, and ensure each story has clear acceptance criteria.

Example: *(from the Epic above): "As a user, I want to log in with my email and password so that I can access my account."*

2. Business Analysis Activities in Scrum and Kanban Contexts

In Scrum:

- Collaborate with the Product Owner to refine the product backlog.
- Participate in Sprint Planning to ensure stories are ready for development.
- Support the team with clarifications during the sprint.
- Help with review and feedback during Sprint Reviews.

In Kanban:

- Continuously refine the Kanban backlog based on flow and capacity.
- Provide clear, well-defined user stories that can be picked up at any time.
- Ensure work items meet the definition of ready before entering the workflow.

3. Business Requirements Documentation (BRD) in traditional/Waterfall projects

The Business Requirements Document (BRD) is a foundational document in traditional project management, especially in Waterfall. Typically created by Business Analysis Teams within a company—sometimes in collaboration with Product Owners, Project Managers, and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)—the BRD captures what the business needs, not how to build it. A BRD outlines the business needs, goals, and Requirements of a project. It serves as a formal agreement between business Stakeholders and the project team, ensuring everyone is aligned before development begins.

Benefits of creating a BRD:

- Ensures alignment between business and tech teams.
- Acts as a reference document throughout the project lifecycle.
- Reduces scope creep and miscommunication.
- Supports sign-off and approvals from Stakeholders.

Typical Contents of a BRD

A. Executive Summary
- A high-level overview of the project.
- Includes purpose, scope, and key objectives.

B. Business Objectives
- Clear, measurable goals the project aims to achieve.
- Often aligned with broader company strategy or KPIs.

C. Background / Business Problem
- Description of the current state or problem driving the need for the project.

- Context about why the project is being undertaken.

D. Scope
- In-Scope: What will be delivered.
- Out-of-Scope: What will not be addressed.

E. Stakeholders
- List of all key Stakeholders (internal and external).
- May include roles, responsibilities, and communication needs.

F. Business Requirements
- Detailed list of what the business needs.
- Typically numbered for reference (e.g., BR-001, BR-002).
- Focuses on what is needed, not how to build it.

Table 6-3 shows the example Business Requirement (BR)

ID	Requirement Description	Priority	Stakeholder
BR-001	System shall allow customers to view their order history	High	Sales Team
BR-002	System must send monthly usage reports via email	Medium	Operations

Table 6-3: Example Business Requirement (BR)

G. Assumptions and Constraints
- Assumptions: Conditions considered true for the purpose of planning.
- Constraints: Limitations like budget, time, technology, regulations, etc.

H. Current Process and Proposed Changes
- Description of existing workflows or systems.
- Explanation of how the new Solution will change or improve them.

I. Requirements Traceability Matrix (RTM)
- A table linking each business requirement to its related functional, technical, and test cases to ensure full coverage.

J. Glossary
- Definitions of business terms, acronyms, and technical jargon used in the document.

4. Software Requirements Specification (SRS) in complex software projects

A Software Requirements Specification (SRS) is a comprehensive, formal document that outlines the complete Requirements for a software system. It serves as a contract between the business Stakeholders and the technical team, ensuring that all parties have a shared understanding of what the software will do.

Typically created by the Business Analysis Team within a company, the SRS is a highly useful document for:

- Project Managers – for planning and tracking
- Clients/Stakeholders – for validation and approval
- Designers/Architects – to create system architecture
- Developers – to build the system

- Testers – to write test cases

Purpose of an SRS

- Define the functional and non-functional Requirements.
- Provide a single source of truth for the project.
- Serve as a basis for design, development, testing, and validation.
- Help prevent misunderstandings and scope creep.
- Act as a benchmark for validation and testing.
- Reduce project risks and rework.
- Help with cost estimation and scheduling.

Standard Structure of an SRS Document

1. Introduction

- Purpose: Why the SRS exists.
- Scope: What the software will (and won't) cover.
- Definitions, Acronyms, and Abbreviations: Clarifies terminology.
- References: Documents, standards, or tools referenced.

2. Overall Description

- Product Perspective: How the software fits into the larger system or business.
- Product Functions: A summary of major features/functions.
- User Classes and Characteristics: Who will use the system.
- Operating Environment: Hardware, OS, software Requirements.
- Assumptions and Dependencies: Any external factors assumed.

3. Functional Requirements

- Detailed descriptions of features and behavior the system must have.
- Often organized by use case or module.
- Usually written in numbered format (e.g., FR-001, FR-002).

Example:
FR-001: The system shall allow users to log in using a username and password.

4. Non-Functional Requirements

- Performance: Speed, response time, scalability.
- Security: Authentication, encryption, data protection.
- Usability: User experience, accessibility.
- Reliability and Availability: Downtime, failover Requirements.
- Maintainability and Portability: Ease of updates and system migration.

5. System Interfaces

- Details about communication with:
    - Hardware
    - Other software systems
    - APIs or external services

6. Constraints

- Technical limitations
- Regulatory Requirements
- Programming language or framework constraints

7. Use Cases or User Stories (Optional)

- Visual or narrative description of user interactions.
- Often includes diagrams (e.g., UM L, flowcharts).

8. Appendices

- Supporting material, mockups, wireframes, etc.

9. Requirements Traceability Matrix (RTM)

- Maps each requirement to its corresponding test cases, design elements, or objectives.

6.2 Determine Business Analysis Stages and Stakeholder Engagement

In this process, the Business Analysis Team—having already received the Accepted Business Needs and finalized the Solution Templates—proceeds to determine the Business Analysis stages (also referred to as phases or steps) required to:

- break down the Accepted Business Needs into Requirements,
- refine those Requirements to create Refined Requirements,
- develop Designs that help further define the Requirements or assist in creating the Solutions,
- validate the Refined Requirements and Designs with customers and relevant Stakeholders at various stages as needed,
- create Solutions—based on the selected Solution Template—that satisfy the Business Needs, validated Requirements, and validated Designs, and
- ultimately, obtain approval for those Solutions from customers and relevant Stakeholders.

The Business Analysis Team also works to identify all required or desired interactions with various Stakeholders during the different stages of the Business Analysis process.

Figure 6-6 shows all the inputs, tools, and outputs for *Conduct Daily Standup* process.

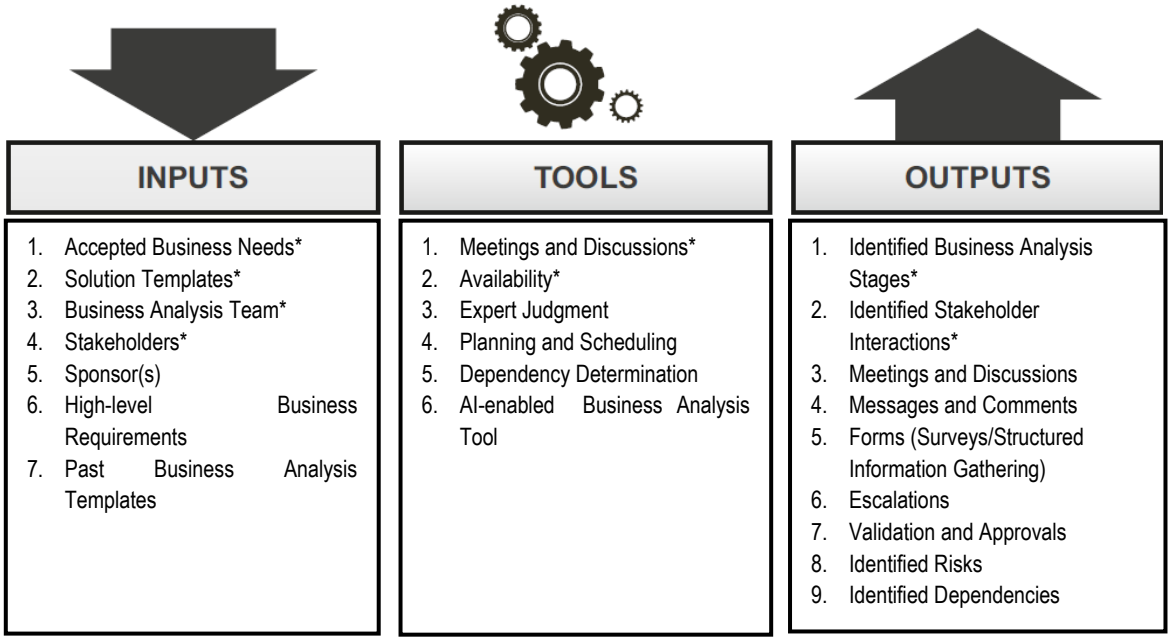

Figure 6-6: Conduct Daily Standup—Inputs, Tools, and Outputs

Note: Asterisks (*) denote a "mandatory" input, tool, or output for the corresponding process.

6.2.1 Inputs

6.2.1.1 Accepted Business Needs*

Accepted Business Needs serve as a key input to determine the steps in the Business Analysis process, guiding planning, elicitation, analysis, and Solution development to address validated business goals.

For more information, refer section 5.3.3.1.

6.2.1.2 Solution Templates*

Solution Templates help guide the different stages in the Business Analysis process by providing predefined structures and formats, ensuring consistency, clarity, and alignment across planning, requirement gathering, Solution design, and validation activities.

For more information, refer section 6.1.3.1.

6.2.1.3 Business Analysis Team*

The Business Analysis Team determines the different stages in the Business Analysis process based on business needs, project scope, Stakeholder input, and organizational objectives.

For more information, refer section 5.4.3.1.

6.2.1.4 Stakeholders*

Relevant Stakeholders can provide valuable inputs to help determine the different stages in the Business Analysis process by sharing insights, expectations, constraints, and priorities aligned with business objectives and project goals.

For more information, refer sections 3.2.3. and 5.4.3.2

6.2.1.5 Sponsor(s)

Sponsor(s) help determine the different steps in the Business Analysis process by providing strategic direction, approving business needs, and aligning analysis activities with organizational goals and priorities..

For more information, refer section 3.2.2.

6.2.1.6 High-level Business Requirements

High-level Business Requirements can influence the different stages in the Business Analysis process by shaping scope, guiding analysis activities, and aligning Solutions with strategic business objectives.

For more information, refer sections 5.1.3.2 and 5.2.3.2.

6.2.1.7 Past Business Analysis Templates

Typically, 75%–90% of Business Analysis work in companies follows similar Solution Templates and, therefore, can use the same or similar Business Analysis stages to move from Accepted Business Needs to Business Solutions. As a result, past Business Analysis templates outlining the stages followed in previous activities can greatly assist in finalizing the steps for the current Business Analysis assignment. Some AI-enabled Business Analysis tools, such as Vabro, allow users to quickly clone past projects or work, significantly reducing the time required to finalize the Business Analysis stages.

6.2.2 Tools

6.2.2.1 Meetings and Discussions*

Meetings and discussions to determine Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder engagement are coordinated by the Business Analysis Team. These sessions involve key Sponsors and relevant Stakeholders to ensure alignment on project objectives, scope, and deliverables. Through structured workshops and planning meetings, the Business Analysis Team defines the stages or phases of Business Analysis, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and maps Stakeholder influence and interest. Engagement strategies are developed to guide timely communication, feedback, and decision-making throughout each stage. By conducting these meetings and discussions effectively and consistently, the Business Analysis Team ensures that business needs are accurately captured, risks are minimized, and Business Analysis outcomes are successfully supported and delivered.

6.2.2.2 Availability*

The availability of the Business Analysis Team and relevant Stakeholders is essential throughout all Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder engagements. Consistent involvement ensures timely input, informed decision-making, and alignment with project goals, enabling accurate analysis, effective collaboration, and successful delivery of desired business outcomes.

For more information, refer section 5.3.2.2.

6.2.2.3 Expert Judgment

Expert judgment from Subject Matter Experts, Senior Business Analysts, Sponsor(s), and experienced Stakeholders is vital during the process ‘Determining Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder Engagements’. Their knowledge and experience provide valuable insights that help define analysis phases, identify key Stakeholders, assess engagement needs, and ensure the approach aligns with organizational goals, ultimately supporting successful analysis and project outcomes.

6.2.2.4 Planning and Scheduling

Planning and scheduling are essential to effectively determine Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder Engagements. They help establish clear timelines, allocate resources, and coordinate Stakeholder involvement at appropriate phases. Structured planning ensures that each stage of analysis is executed efficiently, while scheduling promotes timely communication, decision-making, and alignment with overall Business Analysis objectives and deliverables.

For more information, refer section 5.4.2.3.

6.2.2.5 Dependency Determination

Dependency determination is essential in defining Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder engagements, ensuring tasks, decisions, and resources are aligned for effective planning and execution.

For more information, refer section 5.4.2.8.

6.2.2.6 AI-enabled Business Analysis Tool

An AI-enabled Business Analysis tool can significantly enhance the process of determining Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder Engagements. By leveraging data-driven insights, the tool can analyze Accepted Business Analysis Needs, identify patterns, and suggest optimal analysis phases. It can also map Stakeholders based on influence and involvement, recommend engagement strategies, and automate scheduling. This leads to improved accuracy, faster decision-making, and better alignment with business goals. Overall, AI tools streamline the analysis process, enabling more informed planning and effective Stakeholder collaboration.

For more information, refer section 4.4.3.1.

6.2.3 Outputs

6.2.3.1 Identified Business Analysis Stages*

As the Business Analysis Team has the Accepted Business Needs and Solution Templates, they proceed to determine the Business Analysis stages (also referred to as phases or steps) required to:

1. Break down the Accepted Business Needs into Requirements,
2. Refine those Requirements to create Refined Requirements,
3. Create Designs, which help in better defining the Requirements or help in creating the Solutions. Examples of Designs could include:
    - Activity Diagrams: Visual representations of workflows and processes.
    - Feature Mind Maps: Organizing and visualizing features and functionalities.
    - Product Roadmaps: Outlining the planned development and release of a product.
    - Organizational Charts: Mapping out the structure and hierarchy of an organization.
    - User Interface Wireframes: Visual representations of the layout and structure of a user interface.
    - Process Flow Diagrams: Illustrating the steps involved in a business process.
4. Validate the Refined Requirements and Designs with customers and relevant Stakeholders at various stages as needed,
5. Create Solutions based on the provided Solution Template that satisfy the Business Needs, validated Requirements and validated Designs, and
6. Ultimately get approval for those Solutions from customers and relevant Stakeholders.

It is important to note that the different Business Analysis stages may interact with one another and may be repeated or performed iteratively. These stages can also be defined based on similar work completed by Business Analysis Teams in previous assignments.

Identifying and documenting the Business Analysis stages helps the team determine the tasks required to successfully complete their Business Analysis initiative.

Additionally, identifying these stages supports the team in recognizing and planning all Stakeholder interactions, as described in Section 6.2.3.2.

Example: Business Analysis Stages for a Business Analysis Team to create user stories for an eCommerce project, laid out in a practical and structured way:

1. Clearly articulate the Accepted Business Needs

- Create User Stories for an eCommerce project.
- Understand Stakeholders' expectations (product owner, marketing, logistics, etc.).
- Identify the main business goals (e.g., increase sales, improve user experience).

2. Understand the desired Solution Format

- Since this would be an Agile project, the Stakeholders would like the Solution in the form of Epics and User Stories, and a refined Prioritized Product Backlog for the ecommerce project.
- Additional Supporting Artifacts such as wireframes, workflow diagrams and Data Models should also be provided

3. Research and Gather Requirements which satisfy the Accepted Business Needs

- Conduct Stakeholder interviews, surveys, or workshops.
- Analyze current systems, user behavior, and competitor platforms.
- Identify functional (e.g., product search) and non-functional (e.g., performance, security) Requirements.

4. Define User Roles / Personas

- Define key user types (e.g., Guest Shopper, Registered User, Admin, Seller).
- Map each persona's needs and journeys.

5. Break Down High-level Requirements into Epics

- Group large functions into Epics, like:
    - User Registration and Login
    - Product Browsing and Search
    - Shopping Cart and Checkout
    - Order Tracking
    - Payment Integration

6. Write User Stories

For each Epic, write User Stories using the format:
As a [user], I want [feature] so that [benefit].
Example:
As a registered user, I want to save items to a wishlist so that I can purchase them later.

7. Define Acceptance Criteria

Specify what “done” means using Given–When–Then or a checklist.
Example:

Given I am logged in
When I click "Add to Wishlist"
Then the item should appear in my wishlist

8. Validate User Stories with Stakeholders

- Review user stories with Product Owner and team.
- Confirm alignment with business goals.
- Refine based on feedback.

9. Create Supporting Artifacts

- Wireframes or mockups
- Workflow diagrams
- Data models

10. Provide Final Solution: Prioritized and Refined Prioritized Product Backlog

- Use techniques like MoSCoW or Value vs Effort Matrix.
- Add Identified Epics, User Stories, Supporting Artifacts to the product backlog.

11. Validate from the Stakeholder (Product Owner) that the Solution satisfies his Business Need

Example: Business Analysis Stages for a Business Analysis Team to create a Functional Requirements Document (FRD) for a small construction project.

1. Understand the Accepted Business Need

- Review the project charter, high-level objectives, and timelines.
- Understand what part of the construction process the FRD will support (e.g., procurement, scheduling, quality control, etc.).

2. Identify Relevant Stakeholders (done as part of 5.4. Finalize Business Analysis Team and Stakeholders)

- Project Manager
- Architects and Engineers
- Site Supervisors
- Procurement Officers
- Clients / Owners
- IT/System Support Teams (if applicable)

3. Gather Requirements

Use methods such as:

- Interviews and meetings with Stakeholders
- Site visits and observation
- Reviewing existing documentation or tools
- Workshops or brainstorming sessions

4. Refine and Validate Requirements

Split into:

- Business Requirements – high-level needs (e.g., "Track material deliveries")
- Functional Requirements – detailed system behavior (e.g., "System must allow input of delivery date and supplier name")
- Non-Functional Requirements – performance, reliability, usability (e.g., "System must be usable on a tablet on-site")
- Ensure all Requirements are correct, complete, and feasible

5. Document Functional Requirements in Solution Template as determined in Section 6.1 (FRD Format)

Include sections like:

- Introduction – Overview and purpose of the document
- Project Background – Context of the construction project
- Scope of Work – What's in/out of scope
- User Roles – Who will use the system/process
- Functional Requirements – Detailed, testable Requirements
- Assumptions and Constraints – Budget, tools, regulatory standards
- Process Flows / Diagrams – Visuals to support understanding
- Glossary – Construction and technical terms

Example functional requirement:

FR-01: The system shall allow the site supervisor to log daily progress updates, including work completed, labor count, and material usage.

6. Create Designs (as required by the Stakeholders)

- High-level drawings or 3D models from architects/engineers
- Small scale model for the planned construction

6. Create and Validate Solution with Stakeholders

- Create the final FRD documentation
- Walk through the FRD with Stakeholders
- Get sign-off (formal approval)

7. Version and Maintain the FRD

- Track changes with version numbers
- Update when changes are made during the project lifecycle

Keep archived versions for reference

6.2.3.2 Identified Stakeholder Interactions*

After identifying and finalizing Stakeholders in Section 5.4, *'Finalize Business Analysis Team and Stakeholders,'* and as the Business Analysis Team defines the stages in Section 6.2.3.1, *'Identified Business Analysis Stages,'* the Business Analysis Team also works to identify all required or desired interactions with various Stakeholders during the different stages of the Business Analysis process.

It is highly recommended that an AI-enabled Business Analysis tool is used to manage all Stakeholder interactions by tracking communications, analyzing engagement patterns, and ensuring timely collaboration throughout the Business Analysis initiative.

6.2.3.3 Meetings and Discussions

Several meetings and discussions could be planned in the different Business Analysis Stages, such as:

- Initiation and Planning Phase
  - Kick-off Meeting
    Introduces the project, team roles, objectives, and expectations.
  - Stakeholder Identification Workshop
    Collaboratively maps Stakeholders and analyzes their interests and influence.
  - Scope Definition Meeting
    Aligns on project scope, boundaries, and key deliverables.
  - Determining Solution Templates Meeting
    Finalizing the Solution Template for the Business Analysis initiative.
- Ongoing Throughout the Project
  - Daily/Weekly Stand-ups or Syncs
    Short updates on progress, blockers, and next steps.
  - Stakeholder Check-ins
    Regular engagement to maintain alignment.
  - Issue Resolution Meetings
    Resolve conflicts or ambiguity in Requirements or priorities.
  - Status Update Meetings
    Track deliverables and communicate project health.
- Gathering Requirements and Designs
  - Elicitation Sessions
    Interviews, workshops, focus groups, or surveys with Stakeholders.
  - Brainstorming Sessions
    Explore possible Solutions or identify business needs.
  - Document Review Discussions
    Review existing documentation (policies, procedures, system docs).
  - Process Walkthroughs
    Discuss current state business processes with SMEs.
  - Use Case/User Story Workshops
    Define functional Requirements from end-user perspectives.

- Refining and Validating Requirements and Designs
  - Requirements Review Meeting
    Validate and prioritize gathered Requirements with Stakeholders.
  - Gap Analysis Discussion
    Compare current vs. future states to identify changes needed.
  - Prototyping Feedback Sessions
    Collect feedback on mockups or wireframes.
  - Feasibility Review Meeting
    Engage technical, business, and financial reviewers.
  - Requirements Sign-Off Meeting
    Formal approval of final business Requirements.
  - Change Impact Analysis Meeting
    Discuss implications of scope/requirement changes.
  - Test Planning Sessions
    Collaborate on UAT scenarios and validation planning.
- Creating and Validating Solutions
  - Solution Review and Approval Meeting
    Review and approval of Solutions created by the Business Analysis.
  - Implementation Planning Meeting
    Align on deployment timelines and readiness.
  - Training and Knowledge Transfer Sessions
    Deliver training to end-users or support teams.
- Review and Retrospect
  - Identify Reusable Templates
    Determine which templates from the completed Business Analysis initiative can be reused for future assignments.
  - Post-Implementation Review
    Reflect on lessons learned and Stakeholder satisfaction.

6.2.3.4 Messages and Comments

Messages and comments between Business Analysis teams and Stakeholders are key for maintaining alignment, transparency, and informed decision-making throughout the project.

Types of messages and comments include clarifications, approvals, feedback, questions, suggestions, status updates, follow-ups, decisions, reminders, and issue resolutions.

Figure 6-7 shows a clean "My Messages" interface with a contact list on the left and a chat window on the right, showing a conversation with "Henrietta Lesch V" that includes text messages and shared documents:

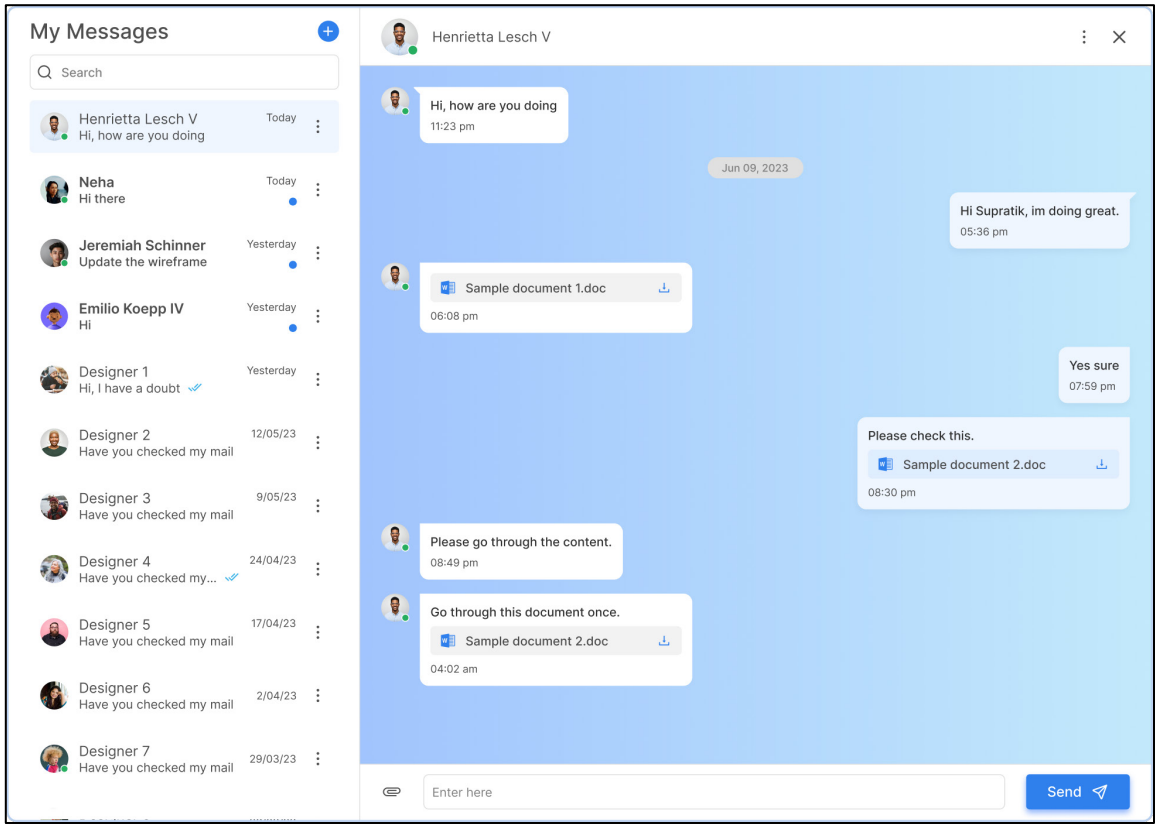

Figure 6-7: Use of messages and comments for collaboration in an AI-enabled Business Analysis tool (Source: Vabro)

Messages could be sent through several methods, such as:

- Email (Outlook, Gmail) – formal updates, document sharing
- Instant Messaging (Slack, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat, Vabro Messages) – quick discussions, informal clarifications
- Comments in Docs (Google Docs, Microsoft Word, Confluence) – contextual feedback directly on deliverables
- Meeting Tools (Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet) – verbal discussion with chat/comment features
- Project or Workflow Management Tools (Vabro, JIRA, Trello, Asana, ClickUp) – comment threads on tasks or Requirements, notifications
- Requirement Management Tools (Vabro, Jama, DOORS, Azure DevOps) – centralized discussions on requirement items
- Shared Drives/Platforms (SharePoint, OneDrive, Dropbox) – collaborative workspaces with comment options
- Surveys and Forms (Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, Typeform, Vabro Forms) – structured input collection
- Feedback Tools (Miro, Figma comments, InVision) – visual feedback on prototypes or process diagrams

Figure 6-8 shows "ClickUp" interface for a "Release Project" showing a "Chat" view, displaying a conversation between "Courtney" and "Julie" regarding a design posting:

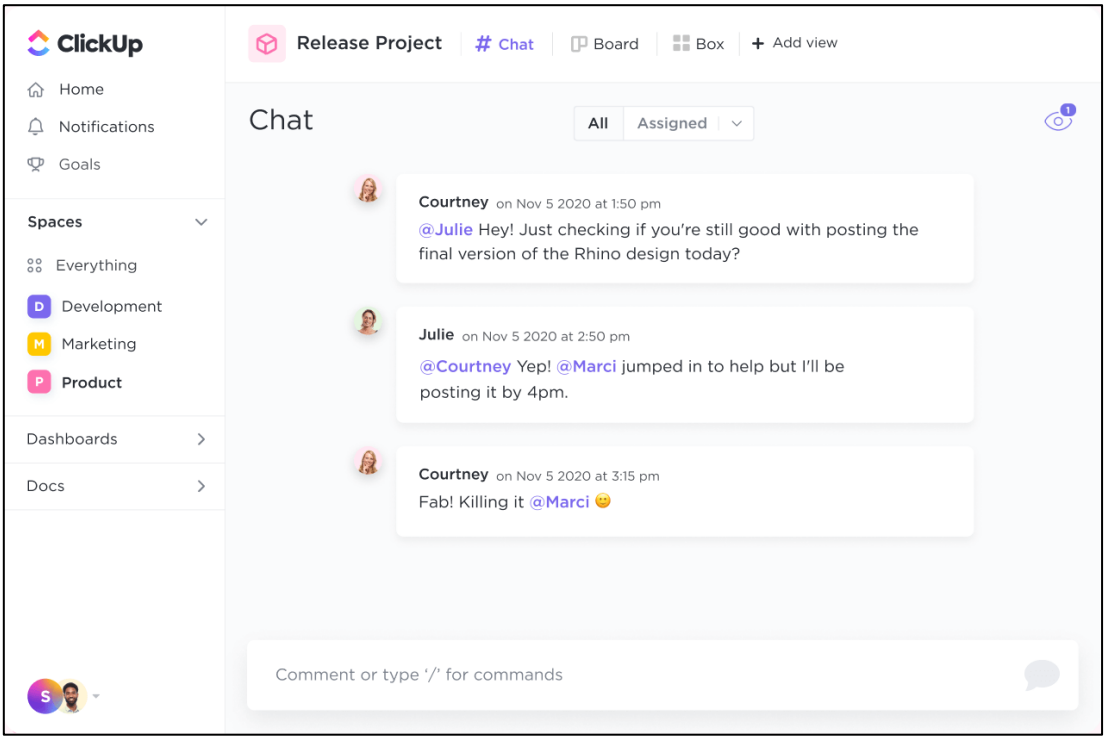

Figure 6-8: Use of messages and comments for collaboration (Source: ClickUp)

6.2.3.5 Forms (Surveys/ Structured Information Gathering)

Forms play a key role in Business Analysis initiatives by helping gather, organize, and validate information efficiently from Stakeholders and team members.

Some sample forms used in Business Analysis initiatives (this is not an exhaustive list but offers an idea of how effective forms can be in ensuring formal Stakeholder engagement)**:**

- Stakeholder Identification Form
  - Captures names, roles, influence, interest, and communication preferences.
  - Used during Stakeholder analysis.
- Requirements Gathering Form
  - Structured form to collect functional and non-functional Requirements.
  - Includes fields for priority, description, owner, and rationale.
- Business Needs Assessment Form
  - Documents business problems, goals, success criteria, and urgency.
  - Helps define the business case.
- Change Request Form
  - Used to formally propose changes to Requirements, scope, or processes.
  - Tracks impact, reason for change, approval status.

- Risk Assessment Form
  - Records identified risks, likelihood, impact, and mitigation plans.

- Gap Analysis Form
  - Compares current vs. desired state to identify functional gaps or process inefficiencies.

- Meeting Summary / Feedback Form
  - Captures key points from Stakeholder meetings or workshops.
  - Includes action items and follow-up questions.

- Process Review Form
  - Used during as-is/to-be analysis.
  - Records current process steps, issues, and improvement suggestions.

- Requirements Traceability Matrix (RTM) Form
  - Tracks each requirement from origin through development and testing.
  - Ensures coverage and change control.

- User Acceptance Testing (UAT) Feedback Form
  - Collects user feedback during system validation.
  - Captures test scenarios, pass/fail results, and comments.

Tools to Create Forms

- Vabro Forms – customizable forms tied to all Business Analysis workflows.
- Google Forms / Microsoft Forms – quick and easy for surveys and input.
- Excel/Word Templates – formal documentation with consistent formatting.
- JIRA / Azure DevOps / Vabro – customizable issue types or work items as structured forms.
- Notion / Airtable – flexible database-like forms for collaborative analysis.

Figures 6-9 shows digital "Forms" builder interface, for a "Leave Management" system, where users can drag and drop various input components to create forms, and configure their properties and validation rules:

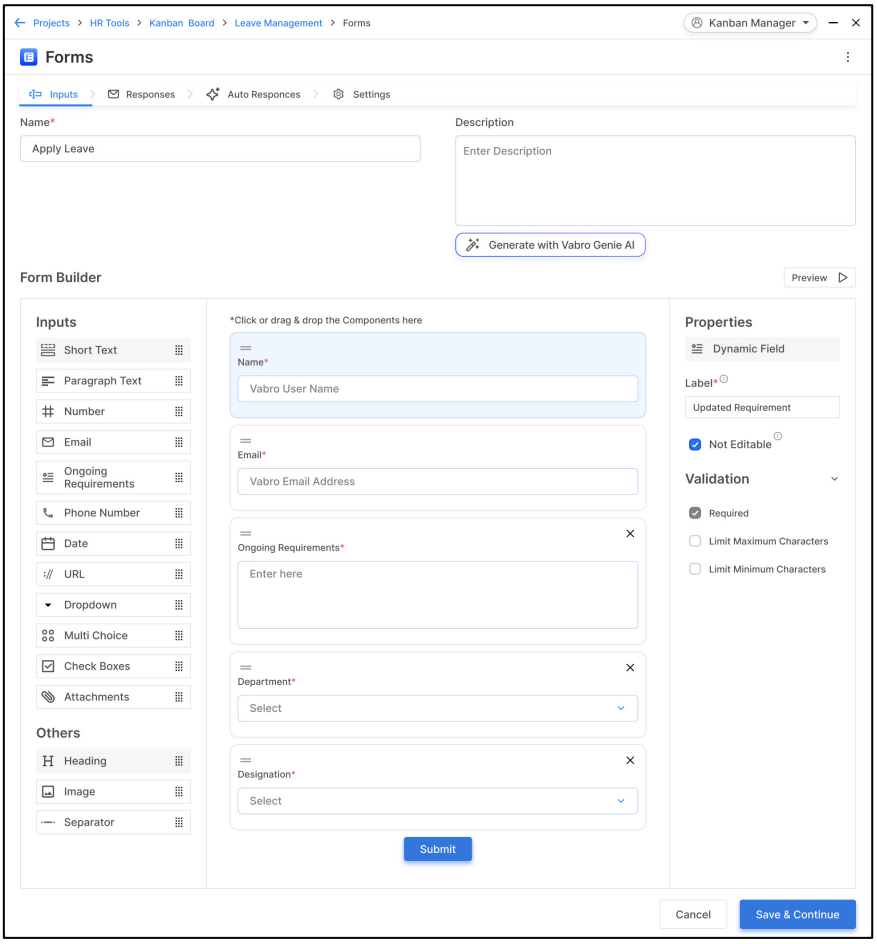

Figure 6-9: Use of Forms for Collaboration (Source: Vabro)

Figure 6-10 shows a form builder interface with options to add name and email fields, various question types (text, number, select, date), and form actions like delete, share, and publish. Background has a light gray grid pattern."

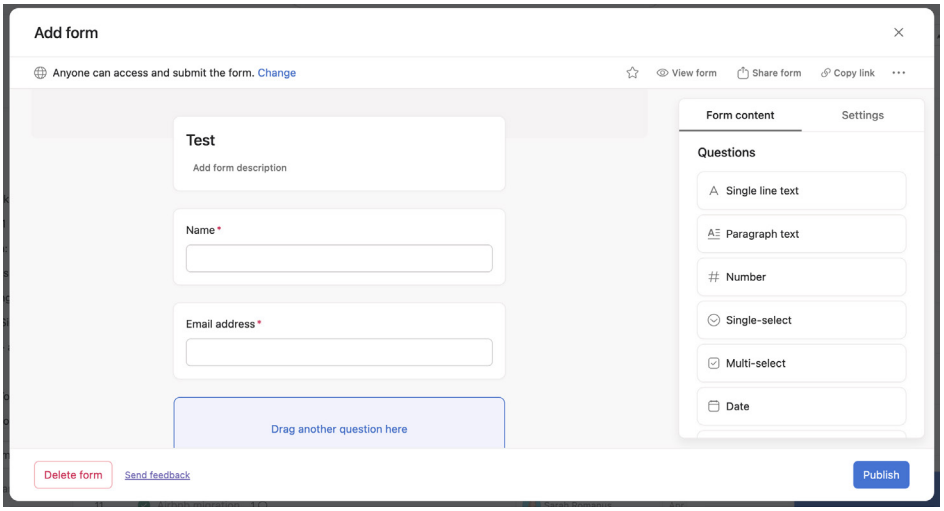

Figure 6-10: Use of Forms for Collaboration (Source: Asana)

6.2.3.6 Escalations

Managing escalations in Business Analysis initiatives involves promptly identifying critical issues, documenting impacts, notifying appropriate Stakeholders, and following defined escalation protocols to resolve conflicts, clarify Requirements, and minimize delays—ensuring alignment with project goals and maintaining Stakeholder trust throughout the process.

How to Manage Escalations in Business Analysis

- Early Identification
  - Monitor for red flags: unclear Requirements, repeated delays, conflicting Stakeholder expectations.
  - Track unresolved issues in a risk or issue log.
- Assess the Situation
  - Understand the impact (timeline, scope, budget, quality).
  - Categorize the severity: low (internal resolution), medium (manager review), high (executive involvement).
- Document the Escalation
  - Clearly define the problem, impact, Stakeholders involved, and attempts made to resolve it.
  - Use a structured Escalation Form or Issue Log entry.
- Follow Defined Escalation Path
  - Use your organization's escalation hierarchy (e.g., Business Analyst Lead → Project Manager → Steering Committee).
  - Respect communication protocols to avoid confusion or bypassing roles.
- Engage the Right Stakeholders
  - Inform those directly affected and those who can take action.
  - Ensure transparency and involve decision-makers early.
- Propose Solutions
  - Include options with pros/cons to help decision-makers act quickly.
  - Keep the focus on project goals and Stakeholder value.
- Track and Follow Up
  - Monitor resolution progress.
  - Update the issue log and communicate the outcome to all relevant parties.
  - Capture lessons learned for process improvement.

Tools to Support Escalation Management

- Issue Tracker (Vabro, JIRA, Excel, SharePoint)
- Escalation Matrix (defines levels, contacts, timelines)
- Communication Tools (MS Teams, Email, Slack, Vabro)
- Documentation Repositories (Confluence, Notion, OneDrive)

Figures 6-11 shows a Kanban board interface with task categories (Texts Required, Independent Tasks), severity level SLAs, escalation workflows, and sections for Questioner Tickets, In Progress, and Oncoming tasks. Includes action buttons like Edit and Withdraw Escalation:

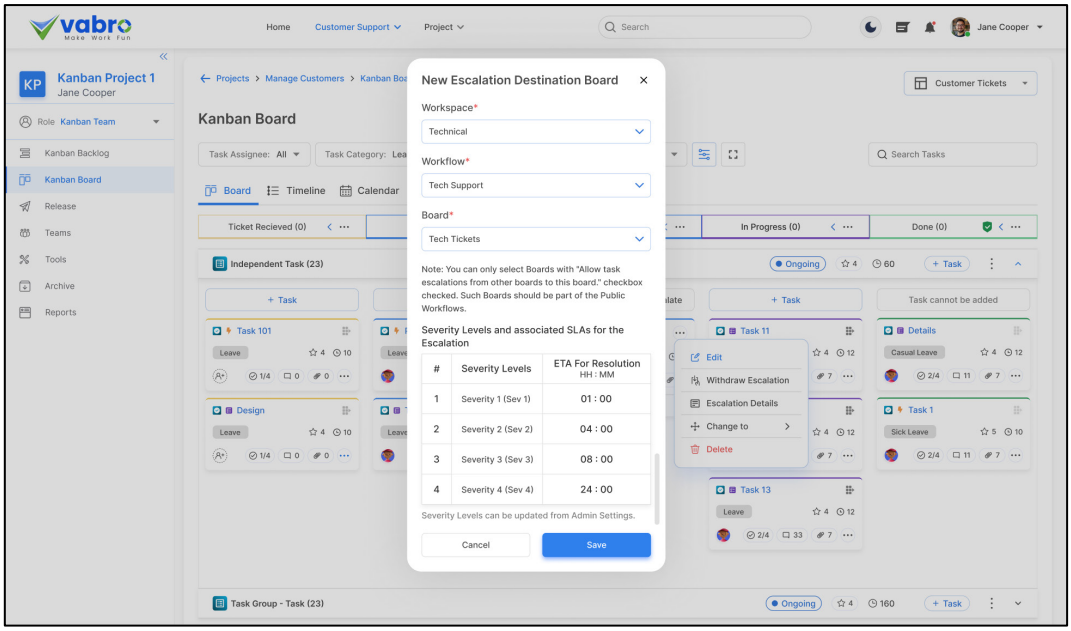

Figure 6-11: Escalation Management in Business Analysis (Source: Vabro)

Figure 6-12 displays a Kanban workflow with status labels showing progression from open to resolved, including intermediate steps like waiting for customer and escalated, with edit history visibility.

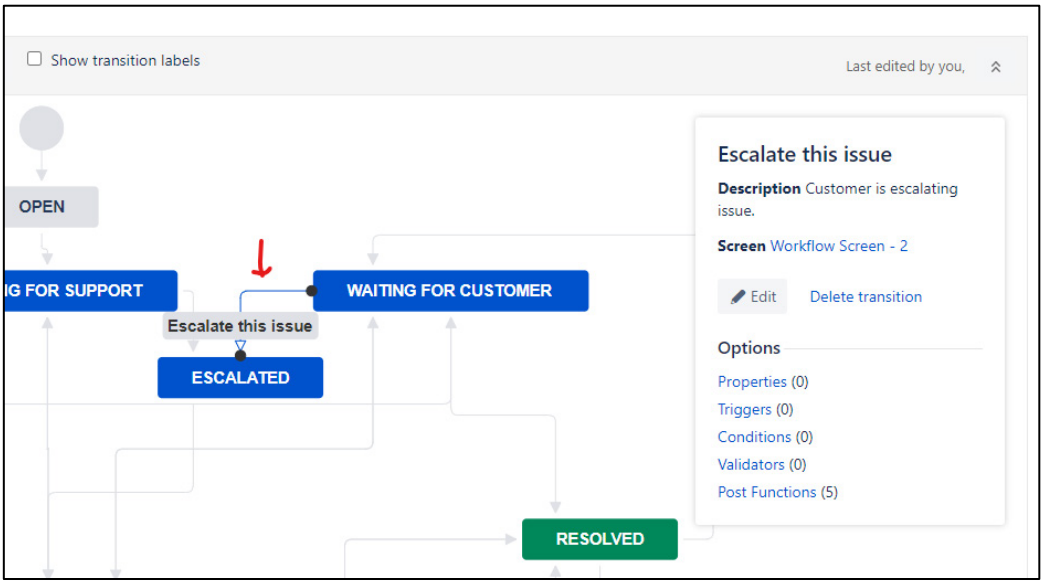

Figure 6-12: Escalation Management in Business Analysis (Source: Jira)

6.2.3.7 Validation and Approvals

Validations and approvals in Business Analysis initiatives ensure that Requirements, Designs and Solutions are accurate, complete, and aligned with Accepted Business Needs. Stakeholders review, confirm, and formally approve deliverables to support informed decision-making and successful project execution. Validations and approvals are critical checkpoints in the Business Analysis process to ensure that all Business Analysis Requirements and deliverables are accurate, aligned with Stakeholder needs, and ready for implementation. Here's how they are typically managed:

Key Validation Activities**:** To confirm accuracy, completeness, and relevance of Requirements and other deliverables before formal approval.

- Requirements Review Sessions - Stakeholders and SMEs review documented Requirements for clarity and correctness.
- Walkthroughs and Peer Reviews - Collaborative review of business models, process flows, and use cases.
- Prototypes/Mockups Demonstrations - Validate assumptions with visual representations.
- Test Case Mapping - Ensure Requirements are testable by linking them to test scenarios.
- Stakeholder Feedback Collection - Structured feedback via forms, comments, or UAT sessions.

Approvals in Business Analysis: To obtain formal agreement on Requirements and deliverables from relevant Stakeholders. Common Approval Mechanisms include:

- Sign-off Documents - Formal signature (digital or manual) on final requirement specifications.
- Email Confirmations - Accepted for less formal or internal projects.
- Requirement Management Tools - Tools like Vabro, JIRA, or Azure DevOps can log and track approvals.
- Meeting Approvals - Documented in meeting minutes with confirmation from approvers.

Tools Commonly Used for Validations and Approvals:

- Requirement tools: Vabro, JIRA, Jama, Azure DevOps
- Document-based: Word, Excel, PDF with signature fields
- Collaboration platforms: Confluence, SharePoint
- Forms: Vabro Forms, Google Forms, MS Forms (for validation feedback)

Best Practices:

- Involve the right Stakeholders early.
- Keep an audit trail of validations and approvals.
- Use a Validation and Approval Log to track status across deliverables.

Figures 6-13 shows a Kanban Board with task lists, user stories, task groups, comments, and attachments. It includes numerous tasks marked as "In Progress" and options for approval and documentation:

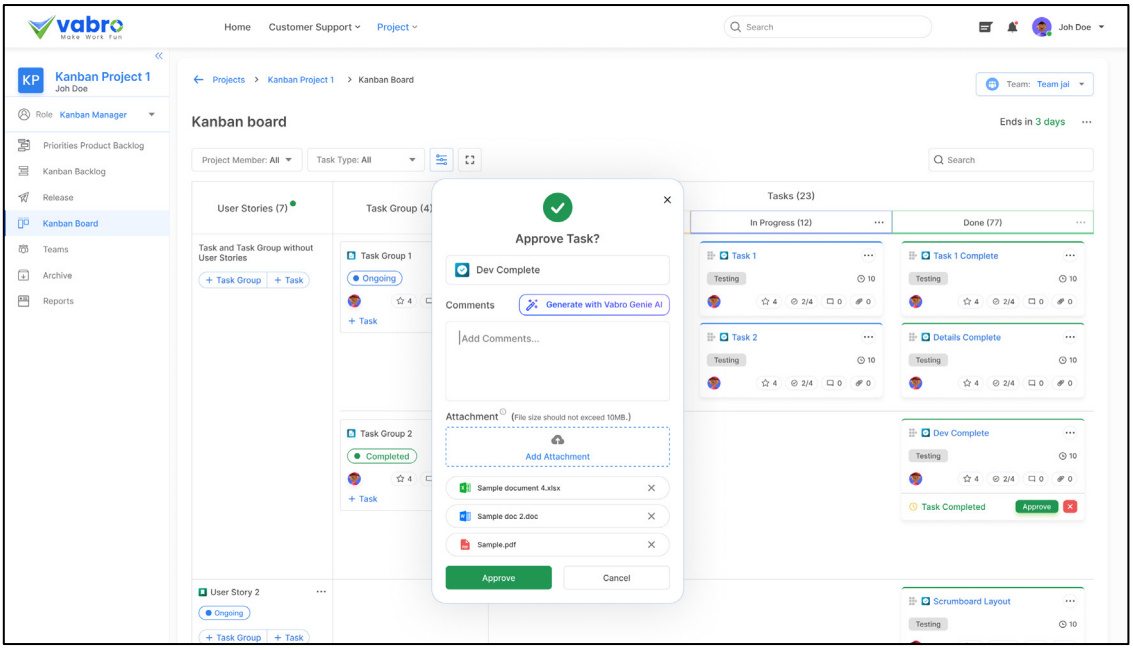

Figure 6-13: Task Approval (Source: Vabro)

Figure 6-14 displays Product Requirements with sections like Introduction, Code Name, and Run Status. It includes standards, technical specs, test procedures, and pass/fail results for validation steps.

Figure 6-14: Validation and Approval (Source: Visure)

6.2.3.8 Identified Risks

Risks are identified while determining Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder engagements, as the Business Analysis Team gains a deeper understanding of the initiative and its context. Through Stakeholder interactions and detailed planning, potential challenges, gaps, and uncertainties emerge, enabling the team to proactively address risks and enhance the success of the Business Analysis initiative.

For more information, refer section 3.6.

6.2.3.9 Identified Dependencies

Dependencies are identified while determining Business Analysis stages and Stakeholder Engagements, as the Business Analysis Team gains a clearer understanding of the initiative and its context. Through interactions with Stakeholders and detailed analysis, interrelated tasks, systems, and decisions are recognized, enabling better coordination, planning, and execution throughout the Business Analysis process.

For more information, refer section 5.4.2.8.

Business Analysis Reference Guide (BARG™)

A Comprehensive Guide to Implementing Business Analysis, with Practical Examples

The *Business Analysis Reference Guide (BARG™)* presents a structured and practical framework for the application of Business Analysis across industries, organizations, and project types. Developed to support both experienced practitioners and individuals new to the discipline, this guide offers a clear, methodical approach to identifying business needs, analyzing problems and opportunities, and defining effective solutions.

BARG™ emphasizes the critical role of Business Analysts as facilitators of alignment between stakeholders and implementation teams, enabling the delivery of value-driven outcomes that support organizational objectives. Drawing on the collective insights of professionals involved in thousands of initiatives globally, the guide standardizes Business Analysis practices to enhance consistency, effectiveness, and return on investment.

Designed with accessibility in mind, the guide follows the Pareto principle—enabling readers to grasp the majority of essential concepts through a concise portion of the content. Additional material is available for in-depth reference when addressing complex or specialized challenges.

This publication is supported by BALearning.com, where readers may access free certifications, webinars, instructional videos, and study resources. Furthermore, BARG™ addresses the evolving landscape of the profession by incorporating the use of modern tools and artificial intelligence to solve practical business problems.

The guide also illustrates how Business Analysis can be effectively integrated with established methodologies and frameworks such as Scrum, Waterfall, Kanban, DevOps, and OKRs, offering a versatile reference for cross-functional teams and multidisciplinary environments.

Business Analysis Reference Guide (BARG™) stands as a definitive resource for those seeking to develop a strong foundation in Business Analysis or to refine their existing practice through proven methodologies and globally accepted best practices.

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