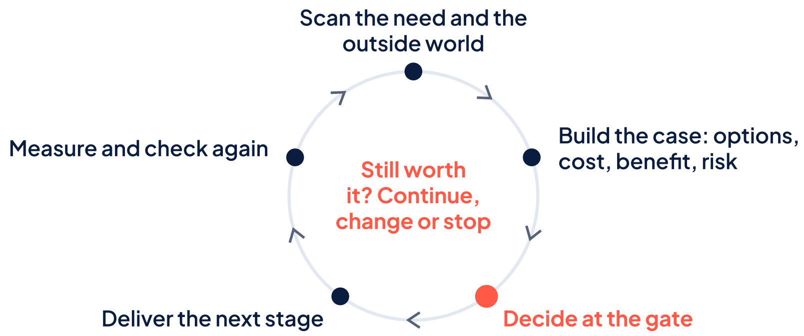
The living business case

Justify a project with options, costs, benefits and risks, and keep the case valid.



Our own cycle, after ICB4 (IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline) 4.3.1.3 and APM (Association for Project Management) BoK 8 (APM's Body of Knowledge) §2.4.3. It runs until the benefits are measured.

WHAT IT IS

A **business case** states the need, compares options, including doing the minimum, on cost, benefit and risk, and recommends one. The **sponsor** owns it; the project manager often writes it. Check it at every gate and after any big change, inside or outside the organisation; then continue, change course or stop. Only what is **still to come** counts: money already spent is gone.

HOW IT WORKS

01 Scan outside forces (PESTLE): political, economic and social; technological, legal, environmental.

02 Compare the options, including doing the minimum.

03 Name the owner, the assumptions and the gates.

04 At each gate, weigh cost still to come against benefits still to come.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city wants resident parking permits online, at a cost of about €640,000 over eight months.

The project manager drafts three options with the sponsor: do the minimum (online payment only), full online permits, or wait for a city-wide portal. Full online wins: €640k against savings of €140k in year 1 and €250k a year for 3 more, €890k in all.

In the exam: Name the owner, the options you compared, the gates, and one decision based on what was still to come, not on what was spent.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months for about €13.5 million, with funds released at gates and a council election in month 20.

At each gate, the project manager tests the case with the board: benefits per service, cost still to come, outside changes. The last release waits for the council election, so she shows what could stop safely there.

In the exam: Show the case as the board's decision tool: who may stop or re-scope, what each gate tests, and how outside changes reach it.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · *PMBOK® GUIDE* 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.3.1.3: the business or organisational justification, kept valid	Guide pp. 115–116: a business document. Exam outline: Process task 3; Business Environment task 8	BoK §2.4 Business cases, a living document. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objective 4 (tools such as PESTLE)

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026); Aguilar, Scanning the Business Environment (1967)