

AIMS Lessons Learnt Review

10 October 2022 – Final Report



Introduction

When the new Archives Collections Platform went live on 11 February 2022 significant issues and challenges were identified by the public, specialist researchers and staff.

Recognising that there are lessons that can be learned from this experience, Te Tari Taiwhenua commissioned ForeConsulting to undertake a lessons learnt review of the Archival Integrated Management System (AIMS) Project.

As detailed in the AIMS Lessons Learned Scope Document, dated 20 July 2022, we have endeavoured to answer the following questions:

- What were the **key decisions, drivers and changes** that led to significant business and technology changes being introduced that inadvertently impacted kaimahi, customers and Archives NZ and DIA's reputation negatively?
- How did you go about **managing the risks** and the consequential outcomes of the project?
- What are the valuable **lessons and insights** that can be learned by Archives NZ and DIA?

Our review findings and opinions presented on the following pages of this report are based on information shared with us by review participants in the form of written materials and interview style discussions during August and September 2022. Thank you to everyone that provided their time and assistance during this review.

We look forward to discussing the review findings with you.

Ngā mihi nui,

David Miler, Director, ForeConsulting



Review approach

Discovery and Initiation

- Confirmed project scope, approach and timeline
- Agreed input / reference documents and stakeholders to interview (see appendix 1 for details)

1

Stakeholder Interviews

- Interviews to understand project roles, probe what happened and discuss potential lessons for the future

2

3

Analysis & Draft Report

- Analysis of key documents and stakeholder discussions
- Follow-up questions / information requests
- Draft report

4

Final Report

- Presentation of draft report
- Review cycle
- Finalisation of report

Reviewer

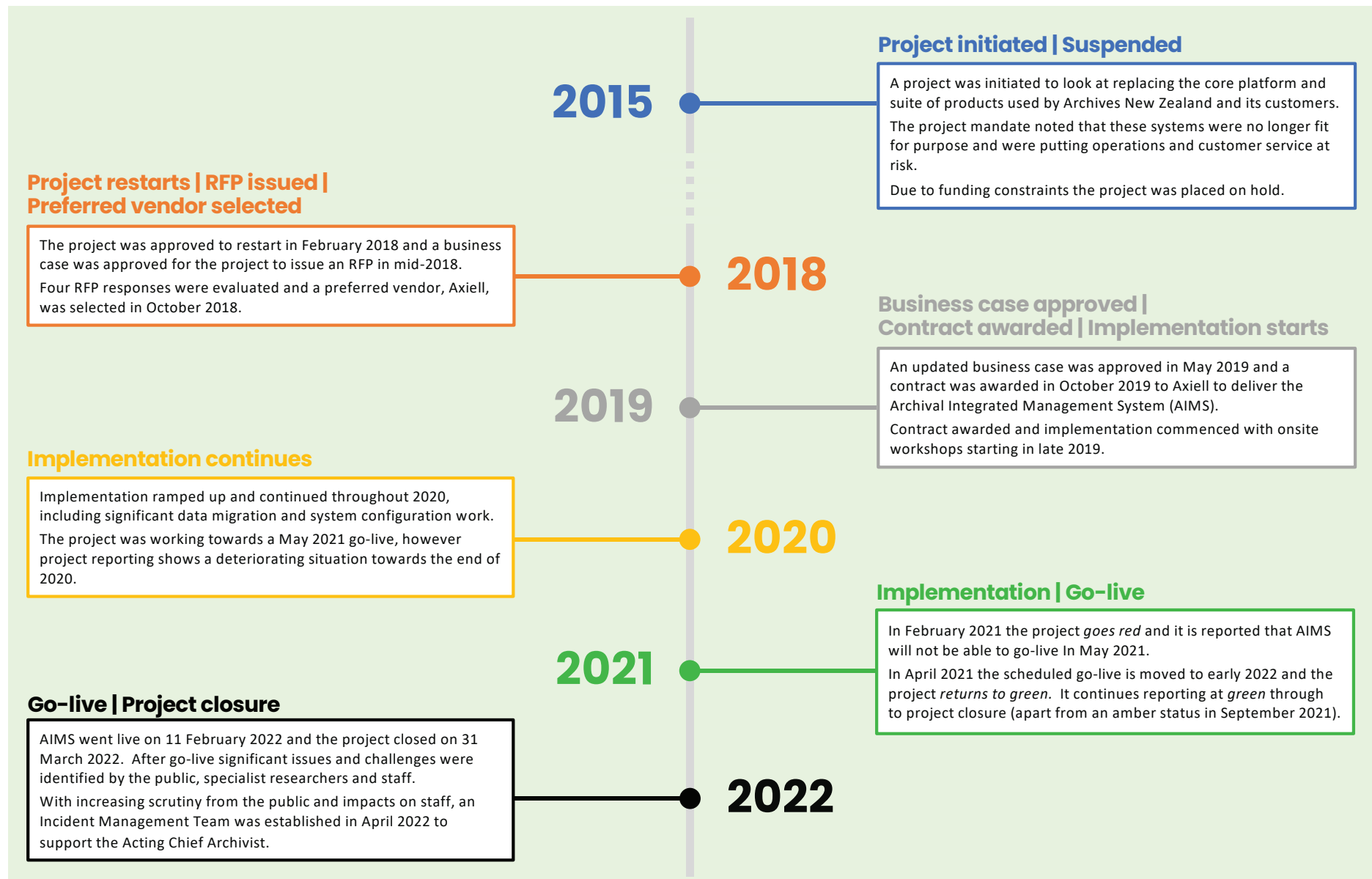


David Miller
Director

David has held senior roles in the public and private sectors in health, education, IT and management consulting in the UK, US and New Zealand, and worked with organisations throughout the world.

- +25 years senior management and consulting roles across a range of sectors
- +20 years programme and project management
- +15 years public sector experience (central and local government)

Project timeline

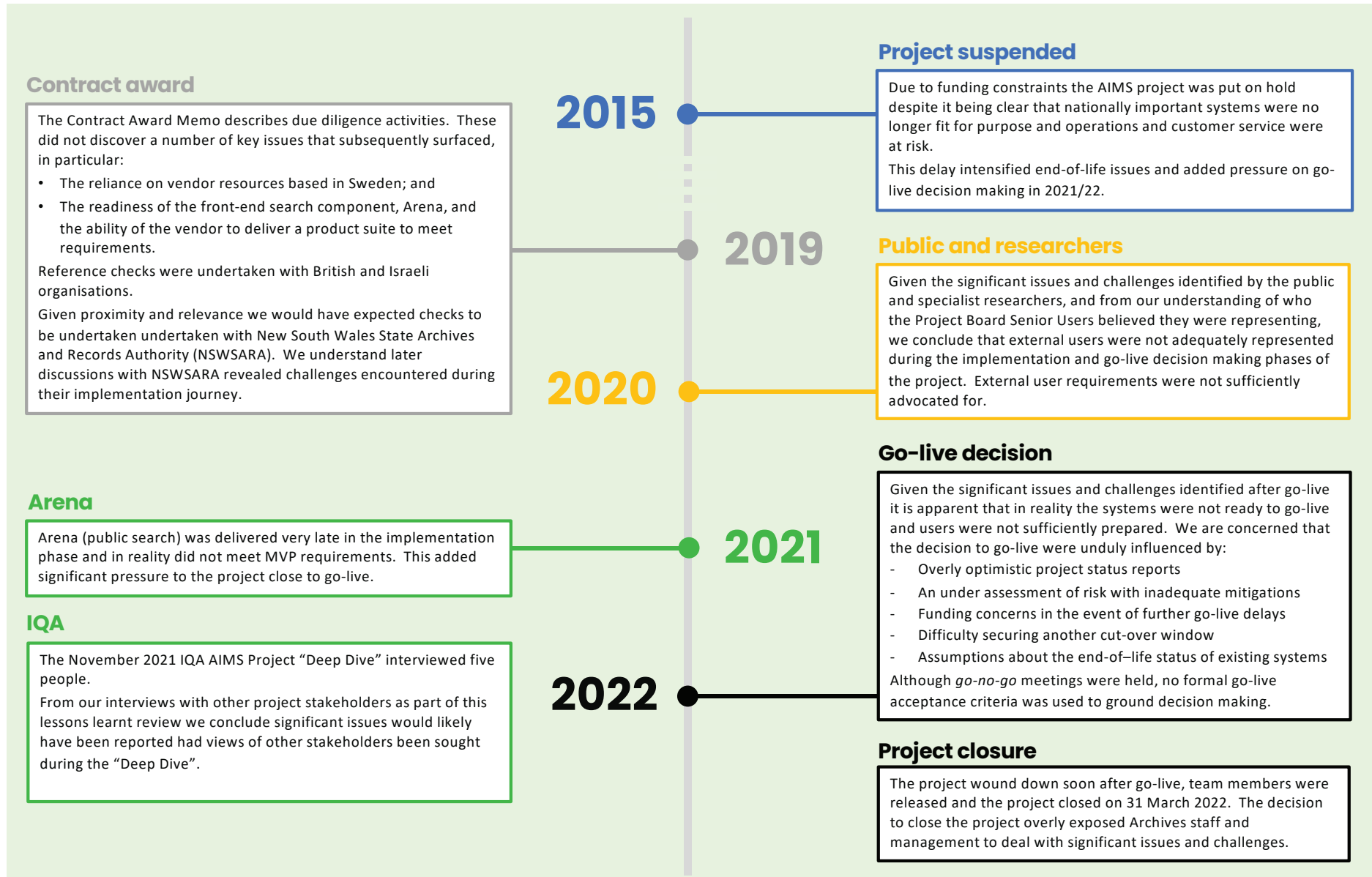


Context

- 1** AIMS scope was not trivial – replacing a set of nationally important operational systems that were rapidly approaching end-of-life.
- 2** Archives NZ has limited experience of major change programmes, including change to significant operational systems.
- 3** AIMS was a long project with personnel turnover at every level (executive, governance, project and operational).
- 4** The implementation and go-live phases of the project were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and go-live occurred during the 2022 parliamentary protests.
- 5** Vendor delivery resources were based in Australia and Sweden presenting challenges of working across multiple time zones during a period when travel was heavily restricted.



Critical decisions and events



Project dynamics

- 1 The project team were heavily invested in the project. A few core members had a deep understanding of the project and the intended deliverables – far more than the operational / BAU teams. Project status was reported largely green all the way up to go-live and this appears unchallenged.
- 2 The project team and the receiving organisation were fatigued and relationships were strained during the run-up to go-live. There was *very little in the tank* to deal with significant post go-live issues.
- 3 The Project Executive changed multiple times throughout the life of the project. At the point when go-live decisions were taken the Project Executive was a capable senior manager but they had the no direct operational skin in the game.
- 4 The reporting line upward from the Project Executive was not adequately used and there appears to have been a disconnect between the AIMS Project and the Archives Leadership Team.
- 5 Project board members did not universally understand their roles and there was no effective public / specialist researcher representation.
- 6 Project personnel were not available when the significant issues began to occur and the operational / BAU teams were underprepared for what hit them.

Management of risk

From our review of project documents we see that risk management activities were undertaken throughout the project – albeit somewhat inconsistently.

Noting (1) the significant issues that transpired post go-live; and (2) the documented assessment of risk related to these issues prior to go-live, we conclude that risk management was not effective.

From discussions with risk owners, some at least, had no clear understanding of their role and accountabilities around *their* risks.

In project status reports before go-live, the risk of external stakeholder dissatisfaction was identified. However this risk was assessed as having a mitigated likelihood / impact of *Possible but Unlikely / Minimal*.

Both the likelihood of this risk occurring and its impact were understated and the documented mitigating action was inadequate.

Critically, this risk of external stakeholder dissatisfaction was there to see in plain sight. Had this risk been effectively managed then the significant issues experienced by external stakeholders could have been better managed or avoided.



Recommended Lessons Learnt

- 1 Ensure nationally important operational systems are appropriately lifecycle managed – align investment plans to upgrade or replacement plans well in advance of end-of-life situations when pathways can become limited.
- 2 Ensure all governance roles and accountabilities are clearly understood, and that role holders collectively have the right skills, experience and skin in the game to govern a project. Cultivate an environment of healthy challenge around the governance table.
- 3 Ensure all key user groups are actively represented in a project’s key decisions – avoid representation by proxy.
- 4 Ensure project sponsors are holders of a leadership position within the organisation and have control or influence over the business area or resources into which the project outcomes will be delivered¹.
- 5 For projects that are replacing nationally important operational systems, ensure independent quality assurance engages with all key user groups / stakeholders and reports directly to the Chief Archivist / Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Executive as well as the project.
- 6 For projects that are replacing nationally important operational systems, prior to authorising go-live, at minimum undertake an independent review that examines the project in the same way as the Gateway Review Process, Review 4 – Readiness for Service².

¹ See UK Infrastructure and Projects Authority, Project delivery guidance: The role of the senior responsible owner (July 2019)

² See Treasury’s Gateway Review Process, Review 4 – Readiness for Service Workbook (March 2018)

Recommended Lessons Learnt

- 7 At a portfolio level ensure standard risk markers are in place to identify projects that require elevated monitoring / assurance and that reporting for these is direct to Chief Archivist / Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Executive. Markers could include operational importance, project length, history of delays, over budget projects, vendor concerns, high personnel turnover.
- 8 Agree and document clear and detailed acceptance criteria with all key user segments well ahead of go-live to avoid late de-scoping / quality erosion. Do not be tempted to deviate without significant consideration of the consequences and consultation with all key user groups / stakeholders.
- 9 Ensure go-live decision making is always grounded back to the agreed acceptance criteria. Seek senior authority outside the project to override this criteria i.e. Chief Archivist / Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Executive. Consider the counterfactual – what could the consequences of going live be.
- 10 Ensure pre-contract vendor due diligence activities are well considered, risk informed and for higher risk projects reported directly to the Chief Archivist / Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Executive as well as the project. It is important that vendor references should be taken from only the most comparable / relevant projects. Ensure responses to adverse findings from due diligence are built into project activities.
- 11 For projects that are replacing nationally important operational systems, ensure project resources are engaged for an extended period after go-live to be on-hand to support (inevitable) post go-live issues.

Appendix One

Stakeholders interviewed and key documents reviewed

Stakeholders interviewed³

Stakeholder	Role / Relationship to Project
Out of Scope	Product Owner
Out of Scope	Subject Matter Expert
Out of Scope	Senior Supplier
Out of Scope	Director Digital Delivery
Out of Scope	Online Channels / Arena
Out of Scope	Manager Research Services
Out of Scope	Senior User
Out of Scope	Test Manager
Out of Scope	Senior User
Out of Scope	Regional representation
Out of Scope	Regional Archivist
Out of Scope	Commercial
Out of Scope	Architect
Out of Scope	Project Executive
Out of Scope	Operational Support

³ We asked to meet with the following individuals but they were unavailable:

- Out of Scope Project Manager
- Out of Scope Business Change Manager

Key documents reviewed⁴

Document	Version / Date
AIMS Business Case	Version 0.22, 13 May 2019
AIMS Project Initiation Document	Version 1.4, 8 November 2021
AIMS Contract Award Memo	2 October 2019
Tāhuhu Programme IQA: AIMS Project Deep Dive	November 2021
AIMS Project Status Reports	April 2018 to February 2022
AIMS Project Status Report: Close Out	March 2022
Archway Programme/Project Mandate	November 2015
Options to restore usability of the Archives Collections Platform	12 May 2022
AIMS Lessons Learned Log	February 2022

⁴ We reviewed other documents, however those listed formed a key part of our review.



People, Practices and Technology

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