AACE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

56R-08

COST ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM – AS APPLIED IN ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT, AND CONSTRUCTION FOR THE BUILDING AND GENERAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES

AACE INTERNATIONAL

AACE International Recommended Practice No. 56R-08

COST ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM – AS APPLIED IN ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT, AND CONSTRUCTION FOR THE BUILDING AND GENERAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES

TCM Framework: 7.3 – Cost Estimating and Budgeting

Rev. August 7, 2020

Note: As AACE International Recommended Practices evolve over time, please refer to web.aacei.org for the latest revisions.

Any terms found in AACE Recommended Practice 10S-90, *Cost Engineering Terminology*, supersede terms defined in other AACE work products, including but not limited to, other recommended practices, the *Total Cost Management Framework*, and *Skills & Knowledge of Cost Engineering*.

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August 7, 2020

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1. PURPOSE

As a recommended practice of AACE International, the *Cost Estimate Classification System* provides guidelines for applying the general principles of estimate classification to project cost estimates (i.e., cost estimates that are used to evaluate, approve, and/or fund projects). The *Cost Estimate Classification System* maps the phases and stages of project cost estimating together with a generic project scope definition maturity and quality matrix, which can be applied across a wide variety of industries and scope content.

This recommended practice provides guidelines for applying the principles of estimate classification specifically to project estimates for engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) work for the building and general construction industries. It supplements the generic cost estimate classification RP 17R-97 [1] by providing:

- A section that further defines classification concepts as they apply to the building and general construction industries.
- A chart that maps the extent and maturity of estimate input information (project definition deliverables) against the class of estimate.

As with the generic RP, the intent of this document is to improve communications among all the stakeholders involved with preparing, evaluating, and using project cost estimates specifically for the building and general construction industries.

The overall purpose of this recommended practice is to provide the building and general construction industry with a project definition deliverable maturity matrix that is not provided in 17R-97. It also provides an approximate representation of the relationship of specific design input data and design deliverable maturity to the estimate accuracy and methodology used to produce the cost estimate. The estimate accuracy range is driven by many other variables and risks, so the maturity and quality of the scope definition available at the time of the estimate is not the sole determinate of accuracy; risk analysis is required for that purpose.

This document is intended to provide a guideline, not a standard. It is understood that each enterprise may have its own project and estimating processes, terminology, and may classify estimates in other ways. This guideline provides a generic and generally acceptable classification system for the building and general construction industries that can be used as a basis to compare against. This recommended practice should allow each user to better assess, define, and communicate their own processes and standards in the light of generally-accepted cost engineering practice.

2. INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this document, the term *general construction* is assumed to include both new construction as well as renovation construction projects. It is intended to be used for building (vertical) construction, as well as site/civil projects. It is intended to cover projects which are repetitive and repeatable. Examples for buildings include: residential construction, commercial buildings, hotels, resorts, offices, retail, etc. This also includes site/civil projects. Examples for site/civil projects include: site development, utility infrastructure, telecommunications, water pipelines, sanitary sewer pipelines, storm water and water resources projects. The common thread among these industries for the purpose of estimate classification is their reliance on project definition documents (basis of design) and schematic drawings as primary scope defining documents. These documents are key deliverables in determining the degree of project definition, and thus the extent and maturity of estimate input information.

Estimates for buildings center on functional space requirements, structural requirements, site requirements, architectural elements, sustainability, and supporting mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and life-safety systems.

This RP specifically does not address cost estimate classification in process industries, environmental remediation, transportation (horizontal) infrastructure, dams, reservoir, tunnel, processes such as assembly and manufacturing, “soft asset” production such as software development, and similar industries. This RP does not cover “one-of-a-kind” type project, like concert halls, sports stadium, research building, health facilities, science laboratories and hi-tech manufacturing. Future cost estimate classification recommended practices may be defined for these specific industries.

The owner, agency, or contractor may require individual cost estimates at each of these estimate classifications or phases. The owner, agency or contractor may provide specific input on the project data or design deliverable requirements.

This guideline reflects generally-accepted cost engineering practices. This recommended practice was based upon the practices of a wide range of companies in the building and general construction industries from around the world, as well as published references and standards. Company and public standards were solicited and reviewed and the practices were found to have significant commonalities.

This RP applies to a variety of project delivery methods such as traditional design-bid-build (DBB), design-build (DB), construction management for fee (CM-fee), construction management at risk (CM-at risk), and private-public partnerships (PPP) contracting methods.

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3. COST ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION MATRIX FOR THE BUILDING AND GENERAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES

A purpose of cost estimate classification is to align the estimating process with project stage-gate scope development and decision-making processes.

Table 1 provides a summary of the characteristics of the five estimate classes. The maturity level of project definition is the sole determining (i.e., primary) characteristic of class. In Table 1, the maturity is roughly indicated by a percentage of complete definition; however, it is the maturity of the defining deliverables that is the determinant, not the percent. The specific deliverables, and their maturity or status are provided in Table 3. The other characteristics are secondary and are generally correlated with the maturity level of project definition deliverables, as discussed in the generic RP [1]. Again, the characteristics are typical but may vary depending on the circumstances.

	Primary Characteristic	***Secondary Characteristic***		
ESTIMATE CLASS	**MATURITY LEVEL OF PROJECT DEFINITION DELIVERABLES** Expressed as % of complete definition	**END USAGE** Typical purpose of estimate	**METHODOLOGY** Typical estimating method	**EXPECTED ACCURACY RANGE** Typical variation in low and high ranges at an 80% confidence interval
Class 5	0% to 2%	Functional area, or concept screening	SF or m^2 factoring, parametric models, judgment, or analogy	L: -20% to -30% H: +30% to +50%
Class 4	1% to 15%	or Schematic design or concept study	Parametric models, assembly driven models	L: -10% to -20% H: +20% to +30%
Class 3	10% to 40%	Design development, budget authorization, feasibility	Semi-detailed unit costs with assembly level line items	L: -5% to -15% H: +10% to +20%
Class 2	30% to 75%	Control or bid/tender, semi-detailed	Detailed unit cost with forced detailed take-off	L: -5% to -10% H: +5% to +15%
Class 1	65% to 100%	Check estimate or pre bid/tender, change order	Detailed unit cost with detailed take-off	L: -3% to -5% H: +3% to +10%

Table 1 – Cost Estimate Classification Matrix for Building and General Construction Industries

This matrix and guideline outline an estimate classification system that is specific to the building and general construction industries. Refer to Recommended Practice 17R-97 [1] for a general matrix that is non-industry specific, or to other cost estimate classification RPs for guidelines that will provide more detailed information for application in other specific industries. These will provide additional information, particularly the *Estimate Input Checklist and Maturity Matrix* which determines the class in those industries. See Professional Guidance Document 01, *Guide to Cost Estimate Classification* [18]

Table 1 illustrates typical ranges of accuracy ranges that are associated with the building and general construction industries. The +/- value represents typical percentage variation at an 80% confidence interval of actual costs from the cost estimate after application of appropriate contingency (typically to achieve a 50% probability of project overrun versus underrun) for given scope. Depending on the technical and project deliverables (and other variables) and risks associated with each estimate, the accuracy range for any particular estimate is expected to fall within the ranges identified. However, this does not preclude a specific actual project result from falling outside of the indicated range of ranges identified in Table 1. In fact, research indicates that for weak project systems and complex or otherwise risky projects, the high ranges may be two to three times the high range indicated in Table 1. [20]

In addition to the degree of project definition, estimate accuracy is also driven by other systemic risks such as:

- Level of familiarity with technology.
- Unique/remote nature of project locations and conditions and the availability of reference data for those.
- Complexity of the project and its execution.
- Quality of reference cost estimating data.
- Quality of assumptions used in preparing the estimate.
- Experience and skill level of the estimator.
- Estimating techniques employed.
- Time and level of effort budgeted to prepare the estimate.
- Market and pricing conditions.
- Currency exchange.
- Regulatory, community, landowner, and political risks.
- Third parties, including utility owners.
- Political risks and bias.

Systemic risks such as these are often the primary driver of accuracy, especially during the early stages of project definition. As project definition progresses, project-specific risks (e.g. risk events and conditions) become more prevalent (or better known) and also drive the accuracy range.

Another concern in estimates is potential organizational pressure for a predetermined value that may result in a biased estimate. The goal should be to have an unbiased and objective estimate both for the base cost and for contingency. The stated estimate ranges are dependent on this premise and a realistic view of the project. Failure to appropriately address systemic risks (e.g. technical complexity) during the risk analysis process, impacts the resulting probability distribution of the estimate costs, and therefore the interpretation of estimate accuracy.

Figure 1 illustrates the general relationship trend between estimate accuracy and the estimate classes (corresponding with the maturity level of project definition). Depending upon the technical complexity of the project, the availability of appropriate cost reference information, the degree of project definition, and the inclusion of appropriate contingency determination, a typical Class 5 estimate for a building and general construction industry project may have an accuracy range as broad as -30% to +50%, or as narrow as -20% to +30%. However, note that this is dependent upon the contingency included in the estimate appropriately quantifying the uncertainty and risks associated with the cost estimate. Refer to Table 1 for the accuracy ranges conceptually illustrated in Figure 1. [21]

Figure 1 also illustrates that the estimating accuracy ranges overlap the estimate classes. There are cases where a Class 5 estimate for a particular project may be as accurate as a Class 3 estimate for a different project. For example, similar accuracy ranges may occur if the Class 5 estimate of one project that is based on a repeat project with good cost history and data and, whereas the Class 3 estimate for another is for a project involving new technology. It is for this reason that Table 1 provides ranges of accuracy range values. This allows consideration of the specific circumstances inherent in a project and an industry sector to provide realistic estimate class accuracy range percentages. While a target range may be expected for a particular estimate, the accuracy range should always be determined through risk analysis of the specific project and should never be pre-determined. AACE has recommended practices that address contingency determination and risk analysis methods. [22]

If contingency has been addressed appropriately approximately 80% of projects should fall within the ranges shown in Figure 1. However, this does not preclude a specific actual project result from falling inside or outside of the indicated range of ranges identified in Table 1. As previously mentioned, research indicates that for weak project systems, and/or complex or otherwise risky projects, the high ranges may be two to three times the high range indicated in Table 1.

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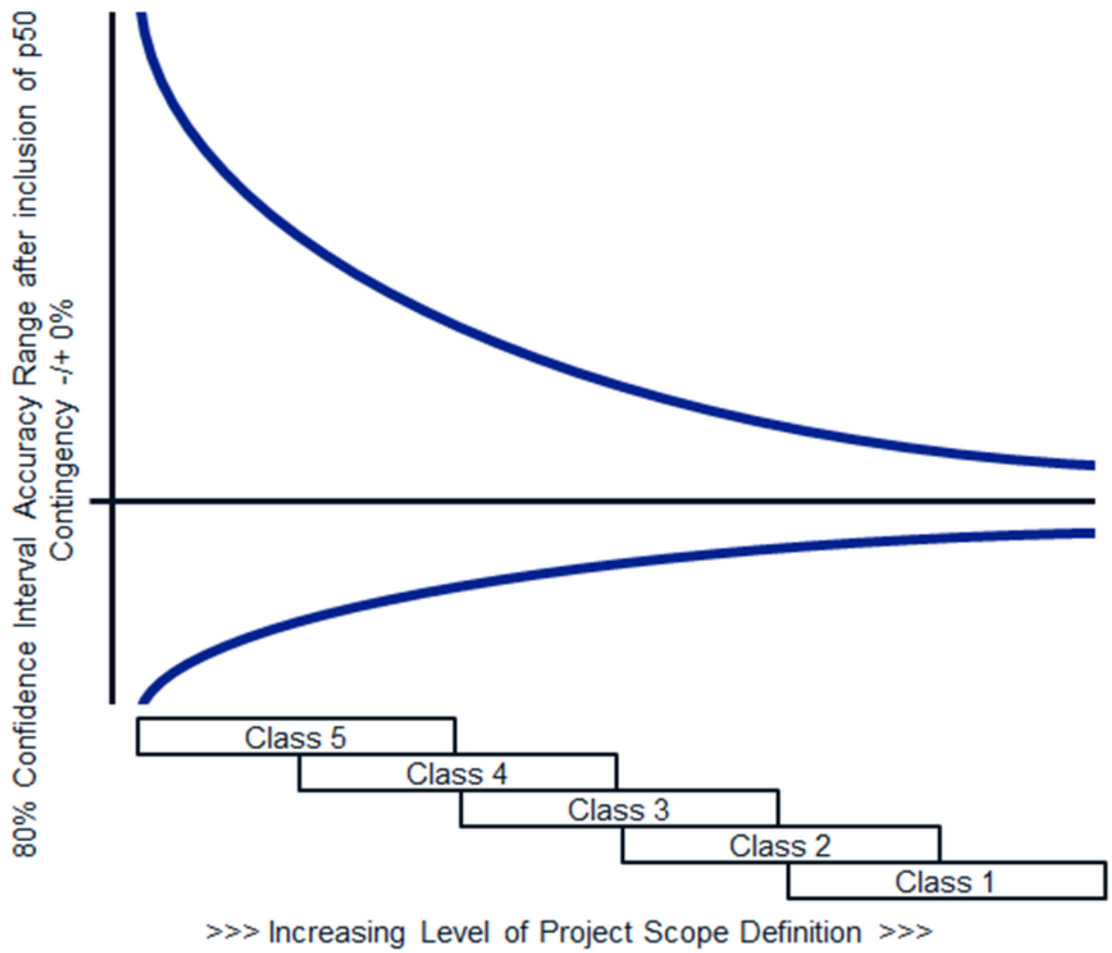

Figure 1 – Illustration of the Variability in Accuracy Ranges for Building and General Construction Industry Estimates

4. DETERMINATION OF THE COST ESTIMATE CLASS

For a given project, the determination of the estimate class is based upon the maturity level of project definition based on the status of specific key planning and design deliverables. The percent design completion may be correlated with the status, but the percentage should not be used as the class determinate. While the determination of the status (and hence the estimate class) is somewhat subjective, having standards for the design input data, completeness and quality of the design deliverables will serve to make the determination more objective.

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ESTIMATE CLASSES

The following tables (2a through 2e) provide detailed descriptions of the five estimate classifications as applied in the building and general construction industries. They are presented in the order of least-defined estimates to the most-defined estimates. These descriptions include brief discussions of each of the estimate characteristics that define an estimate class.

For each table, the following information is provided:

- **Description:** A short description of the class of estimate, including a brief listing of the expected estimate inputs based on the maturity level of project definition deliverables.

- **Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables (Primary Characteristic):** Describes a particularly key deliverable and a typical target status in stage-gate decision processes, plus an indication of approximate percent of full definition of project and technical deliverables. Typically, but not always, maturity level correlates with the percent of engineering and design complete.

- **End Usage (Secondary Characteristic):** A short discussion of the possible end usage of this class of estimate.

- **Estimating Methodology (Secondary Characteristic):** A listing of the possible estimating methods that may be employed to develop an estimate of this class.

- **Expected Accuracy Range (Secondary Characteristic):** Typical variation in low and high ranges after the application of contingency (determined at a 50% level of confidence). Typically, this represents about 80% confidence that the actual cost will fall within the bounds of the low and high ranges if contingency appropriately forecasts uncertainty and risks.

- **Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:** This section provides other commonly used names that an estimate of this class might be known by. These alternate names are not endorsed by this recommended practice. The user is cautioned that an alternative name may not always be correlated with the class of estimate as identified in Tables 2a-2e.

CLASS 5 ESTIMATE	
Description: Class 5 estimates are generally prepared based on very limited information, and subsequently have wide accuracy ranges. As such, some companies and organizations have elected to determine that due to the inherent inaccuracies, such estimates cannot be classified in a conventional and systemic manner. Class 5 estimates, due to the requirements of end use, may be prepared within a very limited amount of time and with little effort expended—sometimes requiring less than an hour to prepare. Often, little more than proposed building type, location, functional space building requirements (SF or m2), and number of stories are known at the time of estimate preparation. **Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables:** Key deliverable and target status: Total building area and number of stories agreed upon by stakeholders. 0% to 2% of full project definition. **End Usage:** Class 5 estimates are prepared for any number of strategic business planning purposes, such as but not limited to market studies, assessment of initial viability, evaluation of alternate schemes, project screening, project location studies, evaluation of resource needs and budgeting, long-range capital planning, etc.	**Estimating Methodology:** Class 5 estimates generally use stochastic estimating methods such as area factors and other parametric and modeling techniques. For example, historical unit prices or functional use unit prices driven. **Expected Accuracy Range:** Typical accuracy ranges for Class 5 estimates are -20% to -30% on the low side, and +30% to +50% on the high side, depending on the construction complexity of the project, appropriate reference information and other risks (after inclusion of an appropriate contingency determination). Ranges could exceed those shown if there are unusual risks. **Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:** Block schematic estimate, functional area-based estimate or scoping study estimate, concept design, ratio, rough order of magnitude, idea study, concept screening estimate, prospect estimate, rule-of-thumb.

Table 2a – Class 5 Estimate

CLASS 4 ESTIMATE	
Description: Class 4 estimates are generally prepared based on limited information and subsequently have fairly wide accuracy ranges. They are typically used for project screening, determination of feasibility, concept evaluation, and preliminary budget approval. Typically, engineering is from 1% to 15% complete, and would comprise at a minimum the following: preliminary room layouts, new proposed site plan, existing site plan, markups of existing drawings for demolition and utilities, design criteria report or technical memorandum by division of work. **Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables:** Key deliverable and target status: Functional space requirements have been fully indentified. 1% to 15% of full project definition. **End Usage:** Class 4 estimates are prepared for a number of purposes, such as but not limited to, detailed strategic planning, business development, project screening at more developed stages, alternative scheme analysis, confirmation of economic and/or technical feasibility, and preliminary budget approval or approval to proceed to next stage.	**Estimating Methodology:** Class 4 estimates generally use stochastic estimating methods such as parametric models, and assembly driven models. For example, functional space unit price or model driven. **Expected Accuracy Range:** Typical accuracy ranges for Class 4 estimates are -10% to -20% on the low side, and +20% to +30% on the high side, depending on the construction complexity of the project, appropriate reference information and other risks (after inclusion of an appropriate contingency determination). Ranges could exceed those shown if there are unusual risks. **Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:** Schematic design estimate or pre-feasibility estimate, feasibility, screening, top-down, feasibility, authorization, factored, pre-study, concept study.

Table 2b – Class 4 Estimate

CLASS 3 ESTIMATE	
Description: Class 3 estimates are generally prepared to form the basis for budget authorization, appropriation, and/or funding. As such, they typically form the initial control estimate against which all actual costs and resources will be monitored. Typically, engineering is from 10% to 40% complete, and would comprise at a minimum completed design information for the following: defined site civil information such as site plan, existing site conditions, demolition drawings, utility plan, site electrical plans, room layouts, mechanical system layouts, plumbing layouts, and one-line electrical diagram. **Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables:** Key deliverable and target status: building code or standards requirements; exterior closure description; and finishes descriptions and requirements, are all defined. 10% to 40% of full project definition. **End Usage:** Class 3 estimates are typically prepared to support full project funding requests, and become the first of the project phase "control estimates" against which all actual costs and resources will be monitored for variations to the budget. They are used as the project budget until replaced by more detailed estimates. In many owner organizations, a Class 3 estimate is often the last estimate required and could very well form the only basis for cost/schedule control.	**Estimating Methodology:** Class 3 estimates generally involve more deterministic estimating methods than stochastic methods. They usually involve a high degree of unit cost line items, although these may be at an assembly level of detail rather than individual components. Factoring and other stochastic methods may be used to estimate less-significant areas of the project. For example, assembly driven, with some detailed items and engineering/design assumptions and specifications if known. **Expected Accuracy Range:** Typical accuracy ranges for Class 3 estimates are -5% to -15% on the low side, and +10% to +20% on the high side, depending on the construction complexity of the project, appropriate reference information and other risks (after inclusion of an appropriate contingency determination). Ranges could exceed those shown if there are unusual risks. **Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:** Budget, scope, sanction, semi-detailed, authorization, preliminary control, concept study, development, basic engineering phase estimate, target estimate.

Table 2c – Class 3 Estimate

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<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">CLASS 2 ESTIMATE</th></tr>
<tr><td>Description:
Class 2 estimates are generally prepared to form a detailed contractor control baseline (and update the owner control baseline) against which all project work is monitored in terms of cost and progress control. For contractors, this class of estimate is often used as the bid estimate to establish contract value. Typically, engineering is from 30% to 70% complete, and would comprise at minimum completed design information. All drawings, plan views, elevation drawings and section drawings are complete; except detailed design schedules, architectural details and control diagrams, which may still be in draft form.

Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables:
Key deliverable and target status: draft specifications, building systems, and soils and hydrology report are defined.
30% to 75% of full project definition.

End Usage:
Class 2 estimates are typically prepared as the detailed contractor control baseline (and update the owner control baseline) against which all actual costs and resources will now be monitored for variations to the budget, and form a part of the change management program.</td><td>Estimating Methodology:
Class 2 estimates generally involve a high degree of deterministic estimating methods. Class 2 estimates are prepared in great detail, and often involve tens of thousands of unit cost line items. For those areas of the project still undefined, an assumed level of detail takeoff (forced detail) may be developed to use as line items in the estimate instead of relying on factoring methods. For example: assembly and detail items, with draft specifications across most divisions of work; limited engineering/design assumptions; detailed labor, material, equipment, subcontractor and other costs; or some quotations.

Expected Accuracy Range:
Typical accuracy ranges for Class 2 estimates are
-5% to -10% on the low side, and +5% to +15% on the high side, depending on the construction complexity of the project, appropriate reference information and other risks (after inclusion of an appropriate contingency determination). Ranges could exceed those shown if there are unusual risks.

Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:
Design development estimate, detailed estimate, control, forced detail, execution phase, master control, engineering.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2d – Class 2 Estimate

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">CLASS 1 ESTIMATE</th></tr>
<tr><td>

Description:
Class 1 estimates are generally prepared for discrete parts or sections of the total project rather than generating this level of detail for the entire project. The parts of the project estimated at this level of detail will typically be used by subcontractors for bids, or by owners for check estimates. The updated estimate is often referred to as the current control estimate and becomes the new baseline for cost/schedule control of the project. Class 1 estimates may be prepared for parts of the project to comprise a fair price estimate or bid check estimate to compare against a contractor's bid estimate, or to evaluate/dispute claims. Typically, engineering is from 70% to 100% complete, and would comprise virtually all engineering and design documentation of the project, and complete project execution and commissioning plans.

Maturity Level of Project Definition Deliverables:
Key deliverable and target status: all deliverables in the maturity matrix complete. 65% to 100% of full project definition.

End Usage:
Generally, owners and designers use Class 1 estimates to support their change management process. They may be used to evaluate bid checking, to support vendor/contractor negotiations, or for claim evaluations and dispute resolution.

Construction contractors may prepare Class 1 estimates to support their bidding and to act as their final control baseline against which all actual costs and resources will now be monitored for variations to their bid. During construction, Class 1 estimates may be prepared to support change management.

</td><td>

Estimating Methodology:
Class 1 estimates generally involve the highest degree of deterministic estimating methods, and require a great amount of effort. Class 1 estimates are prepared in great detail, and thus are usually performed on only the most important or critical areas of the project. All items in the estimate are usually unit cost line items based on actual design quantities. For example, detailed bottoms up estimate, with detailed labor, materials, equipment, subcontractor and other costs, with specific quotations, based upon detailed drawings and specifications. This would be a unit price estimate driven by crews and productivity.

Expected Accuracy Range:
Typical accuracy ranges for Class 1 estimates are
-3% to -5% on the low side, and +3% to +10% on the high side, depending on the construction complexity of the project, appropriate reference information and other risks (after inclusion of an appropriate contingency determination). Ranges could exceed those shown if there are unusual risks.

Alternate Estimate Names, Terms, Expressions, Synonyms:
Construction document estimate, pre-tender estimate, pre-construction estimate, or project control estimate, full detail estimate, release, fall-out, tender, firm price, bottoms-up, final, detailed control, forced detail, execution phase, master control, control, control estimate, fair price, bid/tender definitive, change order estimate (if in construction phase).

</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2e – Class 1 Estimate

6. ESTIMATE INPUT CHECKLIST AND MATURITY MATRIX

Table 3 maps the extent and maturity of estimate input information (deliverables) against the five estimate classification levels. This is a checklist of basic deliverables found in common practice in the building and general construction industries. The maturity level is an approximation of the completion status of the deliverable. The degree of completion is indicated by the following descriptors:

General Project Data:

- **Not Required (NR):** May not be required for all estimates of the specified class, but specific project estimates may require at least preliminary development.
- **Preliminary (P)**: Project definition has begun and progressed to at least an intermediate level of completion. Review and approvals for its status has occurred.
- **Defined (D)**: Project definition is advanced, and reviews have been conducted. Development may be near completion with the exception of final approvals.

Technical Deliverables:

- **Not Required (NR)**: Deliverable may not be required for all estimates of the specified class, but specific project estimates may require at least preliminary development.
- **Started (S):** Work on the deliverable has begun. Development is typically limited to sketches, rough outlines, or similar levels of early completion.
- **Preliminary (P):** Work on the deliverable is advanced. Interim, cross-functional reviews have usually been conducted. Development may be near completion except for final reviews and approvals.
- **Complete (C):** The deliverable has been reviewed and approved as appropriate.

MATURITY LEVEL OF PROJECT DEFINITION DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION				
	CLASS 5	CLASS 4	CLASS 3	CLASS 2	CLASS 1
	0% to 2%	1% to 15%	10% to 40%	30% to 75%	65% to 100%
GENERAL PROJECT DATA:					
A. SCOPE:					
Project Scope of Work Description	P	P	D	D	D
Site Infrastructure (Access, Construction Power, Camp etc.)	NR	P	D	D	D
B. CAPACITY:					
Functional Space - SF or m2	P	P	D	D	D
Electrical Power Requirements (when not the primary capacity driver)	NR	P	D	D	D
Mechanical Systems	NR	P	D	D	D
C. PROJECT LOCATION:					

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MATURITY LEVEL OF PROJECT DEFINITION DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION				
	CLASS 5	CLASS 4	CLASS 3	CLASS 2	CLASS 1
	0% to 2%	1% to 15%	10% to 40%	30% to 75%	65% to 100%
Building and/or Other Project Elements	P	P	D	D	D
D. REQUIREMENTS:					
Anti-Terrorism Force Protection	P	D	D	D	D
No. of Building Floors	P	P/D	D	D	D
Security System	NR/P	P	D	D	D
LEED Certification Level	NR/P	P/D	D	D	D
Codes and/or Standards	NR	P	D	D	D
Communication Systems	NR	P	D	D	D
Exterior Closure Description	NR	P	D	D	D
Finishes Descriptions	NR	P	D	D	D
Fire Protection and Life Safety	NR	P	D	D	D
Environmental Monitoring	NR	NR	P	P	D
E. TECHNOLOGY SELECTION:					
N/A					
F. STRATEGY:					
Contracting / Sourcing	NR	P	D	D	D
Escalation	NR	P	D	D	D
G. PLANNING:					
Logistics Plan	P	P	P	D	D
Integrated Project Plan[1]	NR	P	D	D	D
Project Code of Accounts	NR	P	D	D	D
Project Master Schedule	NR	P	D	D	D
Regulatory Approval & Permitting	NR	P	D	D	D
Risk Register	NR	P	D	D	D
Stakeholder Consultation / Engagement / Management Plan	NR	P	D	D	D
Work Breakdown Structure	NR	P	D	D	D
Startup and Commissioning Plan	NR	P	P/D	D	D
Storm Water Management Plan	NR	P	P/D	D	D
H. STUDIES					
Environmental Impact / Sustainability Assessment	NR	P	D	D	D
Environmental / Existing Conditions	NR	P	D	D	D
Soils and Hydrology	NR	P	D	D	D

[1] The integrated project plan (IPP), project execution plan (PEP), project management plan (PMP), or more broadly the project plan, is a high-level management guide to the means, methods and tools that will be used by the team to manage the project. The term integration emphasizes a project life cycle view (the term execution implying post-sanction) and the need for alignment. The IPP covers all functions (or phases) including engineering, procurement, contracting strategy, fabrication, construction, commissioning and startup within the scope of work. However, it also includes stakeholder management, safety, quality, project controls, risk, information, communication and other supporting functions. In respect to estimate classification, to be rated as *defined*, the IPP must cover all the relevant phases/functions in an integrated manner aligned with the project charter (i.e., objectives and strategies); anything less is *preliminary*. The overall IPP cannot be rated as *defined* unless all individual elements are defined and integrated.

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MATURITY LEVEL OF PROJECT DEFINITION DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION				
	CLASS 5	CLASS 4	CLASS 3	CLASS 2	CLASS 1
	0% to 2%	1% to 15%	10% to 40%	30% to 75%	65% to 100%
TECHNICAL DELIVERABLES:					
Site Plan	S	P	C	C	C
Design Specifications	NR	S/P	C	C	C
Electrical One-Line Drawings	NR	S/P	C	C	C
General Equipment Arrangement Drawings	NR	S/P	C	C	C
Plot Plans / Facility Layouts	NR	S/P	C	C	C
Room Classification Datasheet	NR	S/P	C	C	C
Room Layout Drawings	NR	S/P	C	C	C
Construction Permits	NR	S/P	P/C	C	C
Building Plan Views, Sections and Elevations	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Civil / Site / Structural / Architectural Discipline Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Codes and Standards Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Demolition Plan and Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Erosion Control Plan and Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Exterior Elevations	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Finish Schedule	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Fire Protection and Life Safety Drawings and Details	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Furniture Plans, Schedules and Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Interior Section Views	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Landscaping Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Plumbing Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Roof Plan, Drawings and Details	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Storm Water Drawings	NR	S/P	P	C	C
Window Schedules	NR	S/P	P	P/C	C
Door Schedules	NR	S/P	P	P	C
Restroom Schedules	NR	S/P	P	P	C
Signage Drawings and Schedules	NR	S/P	P	P	C
Partition or Wall Types	NR	S/P	S/P	C	C
Electrical Schedules	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Equipment Datasheets	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Equipment Lists: Electrical	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Equipment Lists: Process / Utility / Mechanical	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Instrument and Control Schedules	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Instrument Datasheets	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Piping Schedules	NR	NR/S	P	P/C	C
Piping Discipline Drawings	NR	NR/S	S/P	C	C
Spare Parts Listings	NR	NR	P	P/C	C
Electrical Discipline Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
Facility Emergency Communication Plan and Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
HVAC Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C

MATURITY LEVEL OF PROJECT DEFINITION DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATE CLASSIFICATION				
	CLASS 5	CLASS 4	CLASS 3	CLASS 2	CLASS 1
	0% to 2%	1% to 15%	10% to 40%	30% to 75%	65% to 100%
Information Systems / Telecommunication Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
Instrumentation / Control System Discipline Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
Mechanical Discipline Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
Room Discipline Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P/C	C
Interior Lighting Plan and Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Lighting Control Diagram	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Lighting Schedules	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Lightning Protection Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Mechanical / HVAC Schedules	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Motor Control Diagram	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Plumbing Details	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Security Plan and Drawings	NR	NR	S/P	P	C
Instrument List	NR	NR	S	P/C	C
Building Envelope / Moisture Protection / Flashing Details	NR	NR	S	P	C
Interior Elevations	NR	NR	S	P	C

Table 3 – Estimate Input Checklist and Maturity Matrix (Primary Classification Determinate)

7. BASIS OF ESTIMATE DOCUMENTATION

The basis of estimate (BOE) typically accompanies the cost estimate. The basis of estimate is a document that describes how an estimate is prepared and defines the information used in support of development. A basis document commonly includes, but is not limited to, a description of the scope included, methodologies used, references and defining deliverables used, assumptions and exclusions made, clarifications, adjustments, and some indication of the level of uncertainty.

The BOE is, in some ways, just as important as the estimate since it documents the scope and assumptions; and provides a level of confidence to the estimate. The estimate is incomplete without a well-documented basis of estimate. See AACE Recommended Practice 34R-05 *Basis of Estimate* [19] for more information.

8. PROJECT DEFINITION RATING SYSTEM

An additional step in documenting the maturity level of project definition is to develop a project definition rating system. This is another tool for measuring the completeness of project scope definition. Such a system typically provides a checklist of scope definition elements and a scoring rubric to measure maturity or completeness for each element. A better project definition rating score is typically associated with a better probability of achieving project success.

Such a tool should be used in conjunction with the AACE estimate classification system; it does not replace estimate classification. A key difference is that a project definition rating measures overall maturity across a broad set of project definition elements, but it usually does not ensure completeness of the key project definition deliverables required to meet a specific class of estimate. For example, a good project definition rating may sometimes be achieved by progressing on additional project definition deliverables, but without achieving signoff or completion of a key deliverable.

AACE estimate classification is based on ensuring that key project deliverables have been completed or met the required level of maturity. If a key deliverable that is indicated as needing to be complete for Class 3 (as an example) has not actually been completed, then the estimate cannot be regarded as Class 3 regardless of the maturity or progress on other project definition elements.

An example of a project definition rating system is the *Project Definition Rating Index* developed by the Construction Industry Institute. It has developed several indices for specific industries, such as IR113-2 [15] for the process industry and IR115-2 [16] for the building industry. Similar systems have been developed by the US Department of Energy [17].

9. CLASSIFICATION FOR LONG-TERM PLANNING AND ASSET LIFE CYCLE COST ESTIMATES

As stated in the Purpose section, classification maps the phases and stages of project cost estimating. Typically, in a phase-gate project system, scope definition and capital cost estimating activities flow from framing a business opportunity through to a capital investment decision and eventual project completion in a more-or-less steady, short-term (e.g., several years) project life-cycle process.

Cost estimates are also prepared to support long-range (e.g., perhaps several decades) capital budgeting and/or asset life cycle planning. Asset life cycle estimates are also prepared to support net present value (e.g., estimates for initial capital project, sustaining capital, and decommissioning projects), value engineering and other cost or economic studies. These estimates are necessary to address sustainability as well. Typically, these long-range estimates are based on minimal scope definition as defined for *Class 5*. However, these asset life cycle “conceptual” estimates are prepared so far in advance that it is virtually assured that the scope will change from even the minimal level of definition assumed at the time of the estimate. Therefore, the expected estimate accuracy values reported in Table 1 (percent that actual cost will be over or under the estimate including contingency) are not meaningful because the Table 1 accuracy values explicitly *exclude scope change*. For long-term estimates, one of the following two classification approaches is recommended:

- If the long-range estimate is to be updated or maintained periodically in a controlled, documented life cycle process that addresses scope and technology changes in estimates over time (e.g., nuclear or other licensing may require that future decommissioning estimates be periodically updated), the estimate is rated as *Class 5* and the Table 1 accuracy ranges are assumed to apply for the specific scope included in the estimate at the time of estimate preparation. Scope changes are explicitly excluded from the accuracy range.

- If the long-range estimate is performed as part of a process or analysis where scope and technology change is not expected to be addressed in routine estimate updates over time, the estimate is rated as *Unclassified* or as *Class 10* (if a class designation is required to meet organizational procedures), and the Table 1 accuracy ranges cannot be assumed to apply. The term *Class 10* is specifically used to distinguish these long-range estimates from the relatively short time-frame *Class 5* through *Class 1* capital cost estimates identified in Table 1 and this RP; and to indicate the order-of-magnitude difference in potential expected estimate accuracy due to the infrequent updates for scope and technology. Unclassified (or Class 10) estimates are not associated with indicated expected accuracy ranges.

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In all cases, a *Basis of Estimate* should be documented so that the estimate is clearly understood by those reviewing and/or relying on them later. Also, the estimating methods and other characteristics of Class 5 estimates generally apply. In other words, an *Unclassified* or *Class 10* designation must not be used as an excuse for unprofessional estimating practice.

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APPENDIX: UNDERSTANDING ESTIMATE CLASS AND COST ESTIMATE ACCURACY

Despite the verbiage included in the RP, often, there are still misunderstandings that the class of estimate, as defined in the RP above, defines an expected accuracy range for each estimate class. This is incorrect. The RP clearly states that "while a target range may be expected for a particular estimate, the accuracy range should always be determined through risk analysis of the specific project and should never be predetermined." Table 1 and Figure 1 in the RP are intended to illustrate only the general relationship between estimate accuracy and the level of project definition. For the building and general construction industries, typical estimate ranges described in RP 56R-08 above are shown as a range of ranges:

- Class 5 Estimate:
    - High range typically ranges from +30% to +50%
    - Low range typically ranges from -20% to -50%
- Class 4 Estimate:
    - High range typically ranges from +20% to +30%
    - Low range typically ranges from -10% to -20%
- Class 3 Estimate:
    - High range typically ranges from +10% to +20%
    - Low range typically ranges from -5% to -15%
- Class 2 Estimate:
    - High range typically ranges from +5% to +15%
    - Low range typically ranges from -5% to -10%
- Class 1 Estimate:
    - High range typically ranges from +3% to +10%
    - Low range typically ranges from -3% to -5%

As indicated in the RP, these +/- percentage members associated with an estimate class are intended as rough indicators of the accuracy relationship. They are merely a useful simplification given the reality that every individual estimate will be associated with a unique probability distribution correlated with its specific level of uncertainty. As indicated in the RP, estimate accuracy should be determined through a risk analysis for each estimate.

It should also be noted that there is no indication in the RP of contingency determination being based on the class of estimate. AACE has recommended practices that address contingency determination and risk analysis methods (for example RP 40R-08, *Contingency Estimating – General Principles* [23]). Furthermore, the level of contingency required for an estimate is not the same as the upper limits of estimate accuracy (as determined by a risk analysis).

The results of the estimating process are often conveyed as a single value of cost or time. However, since estimates are predications of an uncertain future, it is recommended that all estimate results should be presented as a probabilistic distribution of possible outcomes in consideration of risk.

Every estimate is a prediction of the expected final cost or duration of a proposed project or effort (for a given scope of work). By its nature, an estimate involves assumptions and uncertainties. Performing the work is also subject to risk conditions and events that are often difficult to identify and quantify. Therefore, every estimate presented as a single value of cost or duration will likely deviate from the final outcome (i.e., statistical error). In simple terms, this means that every point estimate value will likely prove to be wrong. Optimally, the estimator will analyze the uncertainty and risks and produce a probabilistic estimate that provides decision makers with the probabilities of over-running or under-running any particular cost or duration value. Given this probabilistic nature of an estimate, an estimate should not be regarded as a single point cost or duration. Instead, an estimate actually

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reflects a range of potential outcomes, with each value within this range associated with a probability of occurrence.

Individual estimates should always have their accuracy ranges determined by a quantitative risk analysis study that results in an estimate probability distribution. The estimate probability distribution is typically skewed. Research shows the skew is typically to the right (positive skewness with a longer tail to the right side of the distribution) for large and complex projects. In part, this is because the impact of risk is often unbounded on the high side.

High side skewness implies that there is potential for the high range of the estimate to exceed the median value of the probability distribution by a higher absolute value than the difference between the low range of the estimate and the median value of the distribution.

Figure A1 shows a positively skewed distribution for a sample cost estimate risk analysis that has a point base estimate (the value before adding contingency) of $89.5. In this example, a contingency of $4.5 (approximately 5%) is required to achieve a 50% probability of underrun, which increases the final estimate value after consideration of risk to $93. Note that this example is intended to describe the concepts but not to recommend specific confidence levels for funding contingency or management reserves of particular projects; that depends on the stakeholder risk attitude and tolerance.

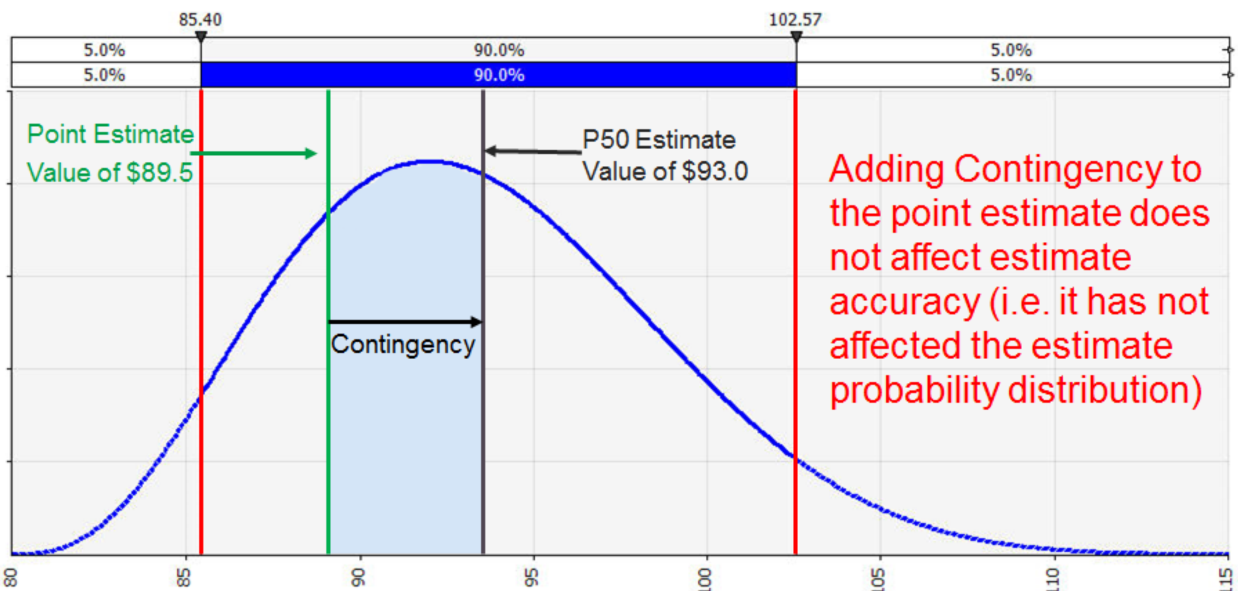

Figure – A1: Example of an Estimate Probability Distribution at a 90% Confidence Interval

Note that adding contingency to the base point estimate does not affect estimate accuracy in absolute terms as it has not affected the estimate probability distribution (i.e., high and low values are the same). Adding contingency simply increases the probability of underrunning the final estimate value and decreases the probability of overrunning the final estimate value. In this example, the estimate range with a 90% confidence interval remains between approximately $85 and $103 regardless of the contingency value.

As indicated in the RP, expected estimate accuracy tends to improve (i.e., the range of probable values narrows) as the level of project scope definition improves. In terms of the AACE International estimate classifications, increasing levels of project definition are associated with moving from Class 5 estimates (lowest level of scope definition) to Class 1 estimates (highest level of scope definition), as shown in Figure 1 of the RP. Keeping in mind that accuracy is an expression of an estimate's predicted closeness to the final actual value; anything included in that final actual cost, be it the result of general uncertainty, risk conditions and events, price escalation, currency or anything else within the project scope, is something that estimate accuracy measures must communicate in some manner. With that in mind, it should be clear why standard accuracy range values are not applicable to individual estimates.

The level of project definition reflected in the estimate is a key risk driver and hence is at the heart of estimate classification, but it is not the only driver of estimate risk and uncertainty. Given all the potential sources of risk and uncertainty that will vary for each specific estimate, it is simply not possible to define a range of estimate accuracy solely based on the level of project definition or class of estimate.