

The Plan Before The Project

Why integrated capital planning and management creates better decisions before funding, procurement, or delivery begins

Executive Summary

Capital planning is often treated as an annual budgeting exercise: needs are collected, projects are ranked, and a multi-year plan is produced. But the factors that determine what should happen next, including asset condition, operational performance, institutional priorities, available capital, market conditions, incentives, financing options, procurement pathways, and delivery strategies, are constantly changing.

At the same time, aging infrastructure, growing capital backlogs, labor constraints, time-sensitive incentives and rebates, and increased scrutiny of spending are creating a more dynamic planning environment. In this setting, the ability to evaluate opportunities against a clear capital strategy is increasingly important.

Integrated Capital Planning & Management takes a broader approach. It brings facility intelligence, project prioritization, sequencing, financial strategy, procurement, and implementation into a single, continuously managed framework. The goal is not simply to identify projects, but to create a decision-making structure that allows organizations to adapt as conditions, priorities, and opportunities evolve.

That distinction matters because there is rarely one ideal way to fund or deliver an entire capital program. One priority may warrant direct capital investment, while another may align with a bond program. Energy-related improvements may qualify for utility incentives or on-bill financing. A larger modernization initiative may be better suited for performance contracting, while grants may help accelerate specific components. In many cases, the strongest strategy combines multiple approaches across different projects and phases.

The capital plan provides the foundation for making those choices. By understanding asset condition, operational risk, project dependencies, timing, and institutional priorities before selecting a funding or delivery mechanism, organizations can evaluate each available option based on where it creates the greatest value.

+ The strongest capital strategies do not begin by asking how a particular funding or delivery vehicle can be used. They begin by determining what the organization needs to accomplish, and then selecting the right tools to accomplish it.

THE CHALLENGE

Most Organizations Have a Capital Plan. Fewer Actively Manage One.

Facility needs rarely emerge in clean, independent categories. A roof nearing the end of its useful life may affect rooftop HVAC replacement, solar viability, moisture risk, insulation performance, and the timing of future construction. Controls limitations may influence energy performance, staffing requirements, equipment life, and the economics of a larger modernization effort.

Yet these needs are commonly evaluated through separate budgets, departments, assessments, and procurement events. The resulting project list may be accurate at a moment in time while still failing to show how decisions interact across the portfolio.

The same fragmentation can occur on the financial and delivery side of the equation. District capital, bond proceeds, grants, utility incentives, on-bill financing, performance contracting, cooperative procurement, and traditional project delivery each create different opportunities, limitations, economics, and timing considerations.

None of these mechanisms is inherently right or wrong. The risk arises when the mechanism begins determining the capital strategy rather than serving it.

The Cost of Fragmented Planning

- **Strategic Risk:** Projects begin to follow available funding rather than organizational priorities
- **Operational Risk:** Dependencies between assets, systems, and projects remain hidden
- **Financial Risk:** Organizations miss opportunities to sequence projects effectively, leverage incentives, and avoid redundant spending

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A static plan answers, “What do we know today?” An integrated management process also answers, “What changed, and what should we do differently because of it?”

The Integrated Capital Planning & Management Model

Integrated Capital Planning & Management connects five recurring decisions. The sequence is continuous rather than linear; new information can change priorities, timing, packaging, funding, or the most appropriate path to implementation.

Management Function	What It Establishes
1 — Establish	A reliable portfolio baseline: assets, condition, performance, risk, dependencies, and known capital exposure.
2 — Prioritize	A defensible hierarchy based on operational consequence, timing, institutional objectives, and available resources.
3 — Sequence	A multiyear roadmap that coordinates enabling work, avoids stranded investment, and preserves future options.
4 — Align	The most appropriate combination of available capital, bond proceeds, grants, incentives, financing, procurement, and delivery methods for each priority or phase.
5 — Manage	A living decision process that updates the roadmap as conditions, budgets, markets, regulations, funding opportunities, and institutional priorities change.

PROOF IN PRACTICE

When a Roof Becomes Part of the Energy Strategy

The following scenario is illustrative. It is intended to show how an integrated capital framework can improve decision-making when new information changes the available path to implementation.



The Starting Point

A school district initially focused on aging HVAC infrastructure and inconsistent building performance. As discussions expanded, leadership discovered that roof condition, controls fragmentation, electrical constraints, and future priorities were all influencing the same decision.

Rather than forcing every need into one project, funding source, or delivery model, the district establishes a phased capital roadmap. Immediate operational and infrastructure priorities are identified, system dependencies are documented, and future needs remain visible even when they are not included in the first phase.

The New Information

A later funding opportunity expands eligibility to include certain enabling technologies. Roofing may now qualify when necessary to support an eligible energy or infrastructure project.

The grant does not create the district's roofing problem. Nor does it automatically make every roof a priority.

The Integrated Decision

Because roof condition, HVAC needs, project timing, and facility priorities have already been organized within one capital framework, leadership can evaluate the opportunity strategically:

- Which roof work was already a documented capital priority?
- Where does roof condition constrain HVAC, solar, electrification, or other planned improvements?
- Would combining the work reduce disruption, avoid duplicated cost, or improve project sequencing?
- Does the grant accelerate an established priority—or merely make a lower-priority project appear attractive?
- What work should remain outside the grant and proceed through another funding or delivery path?



The opportunity is not the grant itself. The opportunity is having enough institutional knowledge to recognize what the grant changes—and what it does not.

The Principle Extends Beyond Grants

The same decision framework applies when other circumstances change. A new utility incentive may improve the economics of an established energy project. On-bill financing may allow a priority to move sooner without competing for the same capital allocation. A bond issuance may create an opportunity to address larger infrastructure needs together. Performance contracting may provide an appropriate delivery and risk-management structure for certain measures. Available district capital may remain the simplest and most economical path for others.

This challenge extends well beyond school districts. Healthcare systems, universities, manufacturers, commercial real estate firms, and any organization responsible for aging facilities will have to balance changing priorities, funding options, and long-term risk.

The purpose of Integrated Capital Planning & Management is not to favor one of these approaches. It is to create the institutional framework necessary to determine which approach best serves each priority.

What the Example Demonstrates

- Enabling technologies are often inseparable from the projects they support.
- A whole-portfolio view creates options that a project-specific assessment can miss.
- Funding readiness is an outcome of disciplined capital management, not a reaction to an application deadline.
- Different components of one modernization strategy may appropriately use different funding, procurement, financing, and delivery vehicles.
- New opportunities can accelerate or reshape execution without redefining the underlying institutional priorities.
- The roadmap retains its value even when an external opportunity changes or disappears.

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Questions Every Organization Should Ask

Portfolio Intelligence

- Do we have a current, centralized view of asset condition and capital exposure across the portfolio?
- Can we see the dependencies among roofing, HVAC, controls, electrical infrastructure, building envelope, and future energy projects?
- Is critical facility knowledge institutional—or does it reside primarily with individuals and vendors?

Capital Prioritization

- Are projects prioritized according to risk, operational consequence, and organizational goals—or primarily according to which funding is available?
- Does our roadmap distinguish immediate needs, enabling work, and investments that can be timed strategically?
- Can leadership explain why one project should proceed before another?

Funding, Procurement & Delivery

- Are available capital, bond proceeds, grants, incentives, financing, procurement pathways, and performance-based delivery treated as tools within the plan rather than substitutes for the plan?
- Are we evaluating multiple execution strategies before assuming one vehicle should apply across an entire capital program?
- Can a single initiative be separated into components or phases and matched with the most appropriate vehicle for each?
- When a new opportunity appears, can we evaluate it quickly without rebuilding the underlying business case?
- Are we preserving future options—or making decisions today that unnecessarily constrain tomorrow's choices?

Conclusion

Integrated Capital Planning & Management is not simply a more detailed facility assessment or a longer project list. It is a continuous decision-making discipline that connects what an organization owns, how its facilities perform, which risks matter most, what should happen next, and how each priority can be executed responsibly.

Its value becomes clearest when circumstances change. A new grant, enhanced utility incentive, financing program, bond allocation, performance-contracting opportunity, regulatory requirement, equipment failure, or institutional priority should inform the capital strategy without redefining it.

Organizations that maintain an integrated view can respond deliberately because the underlying needs, relationships, dependencies, and priorities are already understood. They can determine when available capital is appropriate, when outside funding should accelerate an established need, when projects should be packaged together, when they should remain separate, and when an opportunity simply does not fit the plan.

The objective is not to identify a single preferred way to finance, procure, or deliver capital improvements. It is to maintain enough institutional intelligence to choose deliberately among them.

About Mantis

Mantis Innovation helps organizations connect energy markets, facility operations, building performance, and capital planning into practical strategies that reduce risk, improve efficiency, and support long-term organizational success. Through energy advisory, facility management, building controls, and operational optimization services, Mantis helps clients make more informed decisions about the facilities and resources they manage every day.

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The question is not simply, “What projects can this funding or delivery vehicle support?” It is, “Which parts of our established strategy should this opportunity advance?”

