

Product Backlog

An organized, prioritized view of the work-to-be-done landscape

SIMPLIFIED, ONE-PAGE SUMMARY (SOS)



WHAT is a Product Backlog?

A **Product Backlog** is an ordered list of everything that needs to be done to develop a successful product. Typical product backlog items include user stories, features, epics, bugs, and spikes (i.e. timeboxed learning).

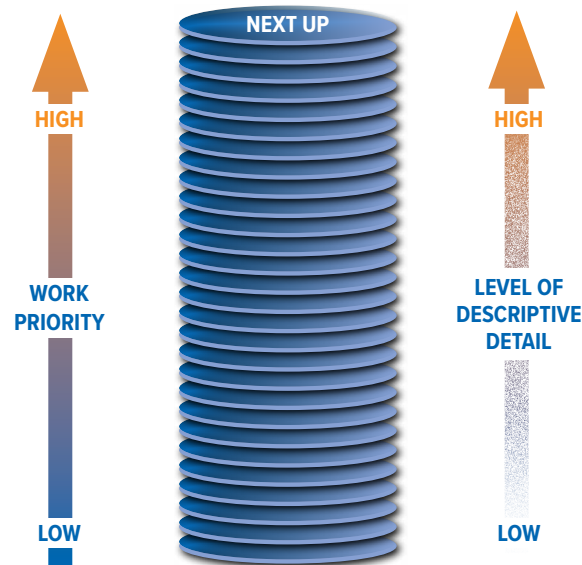
WHY use a Product Backlog?

- Organize and sequence value delivery to ensure the team is always focused on the most important work.
- Keep all work visible to the team and all stakeholders.
- Develop a shared understanding of desired outcomes and the requirements needed to deliver those outcomes.

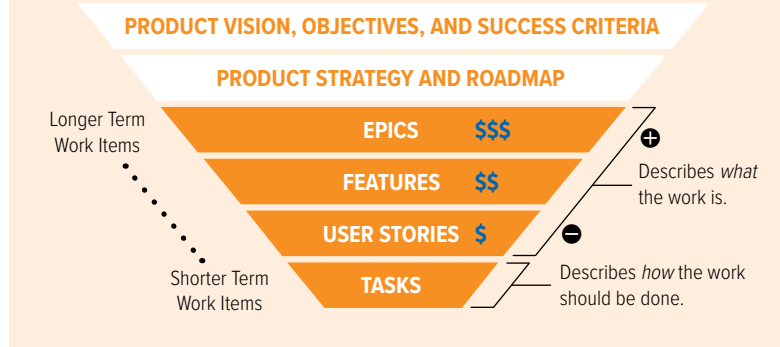


PRODUCT BACKLOG AS A “STACK”

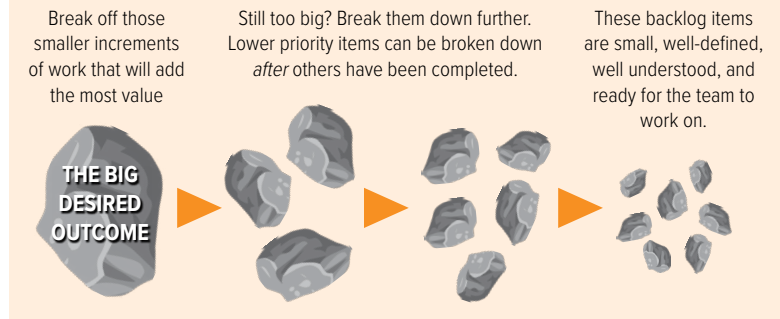
- ▶ The position in the stack indicates the priority and therefore the order in which items are to be pulled for work. If a lower priority item becomes more important, it moves higher up the stack.
- ▶ As capacity and readiness permit, teams may pull multiple items from the stack at once.
- ▶ Items lower in the stack are commonly only roughly defined. As they filter upward, additional detail should be provided regarding their requirements and success criteria.



TYPICAL PRODUCT BACKLOG HIERARCHY



PROGRESSIVE ELABORATION & INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT



DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

- Visible by team and stakeholders
- Prioritized to maximize value delivery over the long-term
- Coherent with the product's vision and strategy
- Items are well-defined and understood by whole team
- Progressive elaboration over time with more fidelity near-term
- Items are broken down in a way that delivers value incrementally
- All items are within the team's scope and responsibility
- Comprehensive—no major gaps in plan-able, forecastable work

TIPS & TRAPS

- Focus on incremental delivery of valuable outcomes instead of listing out tasks
- Use a just-in-time approach to break down and develop more detailed requirements for backlog items
- Try to avoid investing too much time elaborating items lower in the stack or further out in time as change is likely
- The whole team contributes to the backlog, not just the Product Owner
- Encourage the team to develop heuristics for backlog item duration (e.g. an epic is generally 2-3 months of work)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- The Scrum Guide by Schwaber & Sutherland bit.ly/3LRqw9J
- Story Mapping by Jeff Patton bit.ly/3a46goh
- Agile Alliance Glossary: Product Backlog bit.ly/3a64sLy
- Product Owner in a Nutshell bit.ly/3t0twTt

