

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A. What makes a project?

A project:

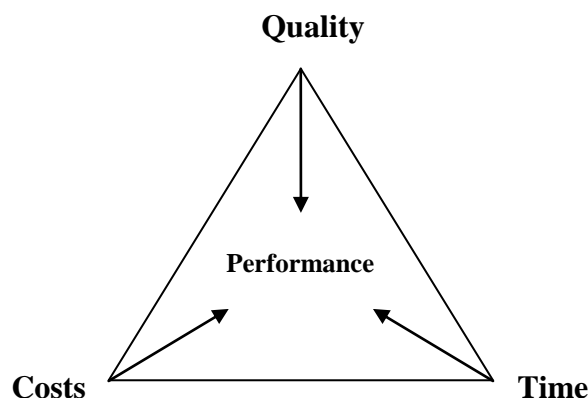
- a) has a defined and specific purpose;
- b) focuses on the needs and expectations of NGO beneficiaries;
- c) is comprised of activities which are linked together in a way which contributes to the desired result;
- d) has a clear time schedule;
- e) often involves people working in different departments;
- f) counts with unknowns and uncertainty and requires flexibility;
- g) has cost constraints which must be clearly defined for the project to remain financially viable; and
- h) Involves risks which must be managed to retain the focus on the desired results.

Any project is defined by **four key dimensions:**

- 1) time**
- 2) cost**
- 3) performance**
- 4) quality**

They must be:

- clearly defined at the beginning of the project,
- monitored throughout its duration,
- Carefully managed and controlled at all times.



These key factors are both connected and inter-dependent and failure in any one dimension will make the project not fully successful.

Defining these factors early in the project helps us clarify, what the result we expect (performance), in what quality, by when and at what cost. If costs have to be reduced during the project, this will likely affect the

quality. Or if we need to complete the project earlier than planned, our costs will go up or quality down, or both.

A project depends on **three key components: people, process, and tools**. The **people component** comprises capabilities of persons managing and implementing the project. The motivation of people is then influenced by organizational culture (e.g. its values) as well as alternative employment opportunities. The **process component** comprises activities which must comply with policies and procedures, whether set by the organization, government institutions, or donors. The **tools component** includes technological and methodological tools used by the organization when managing the project. These may be tools to control budgets, track progress or evaluate performance.

To achieve project objectives, the project management needs to employ people, processes, and tools in the right balance.

B. Project management cycle as a conceptual framework for project management

Project management often relies on **conceptual frameworks**. The two such frameworks which are frequently used by NGOs are the **Project Management Cycle (PMC)** and the **Logical Framework Approach (LFA)**, which are complementary. Below, we describe individual phases of the PMC framework.

Project management cycle (PMC)



Project Management Phases

Source: Project Management Cycle - PM4DEV

PMC is a framework which leads through all phases of a project: a project is initiated, planned, implemented, monitored, adapted, and closed.

When **initiating** a project, a project manager needs to diagnose and analyze the problem, and suggest strategies to achieve benefits or address the identified problems. Also, it needs to be checked whether the project idea is in line with NGO’s mission, vision and strategy.

In this phase the project manager considers questions such as:

- Does the project idea respond to clearly identified problems and opportunities and does it help potential beneficiaries?
- Has there been a feasibility study, a baseline survey or a situation analysis performed previously?
- Have all the necessary partners been properly identified?

In the **planning** phase, plans are formulated at two levels: (1) core plans which are required in the project proposal to be approved funding, and (2) facilitating plans to manage the implementation of the project.

The former include a detailed project budget and schedule. The latter include plans to manage the project: project team, stakeholders, risk etc.

Typically, the planning seeks to answer the following questions:

- A. *Where are we now?* (baseline situation)
- B. *Where do we want to get?* (goals, objectives)
- C. *How are we going to get there?* (activities)
- D. *How will we know that we have actually achieved the goals?* (monitoring, evaluation)
- E. *How much is it going to cost us?* (schedule and budget)

In terms of scheduling, the time plan is often shown in the form of **Gantt chart** such as the one below:

	Activity	Project duration (months)											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Developing detailed implementation plan												
2	Planning in working groups												
3	Public discussion on proposed strategy												
4	Developing action plan for Year 1												
5	Approval of strategy by local government												

Implementation includes taking actions to complete project activities and produce project outputs. Initial actions include, for example, forming a team and acquiring equipment required to start the project.

Implementation includes providing project leadership, developing and coordinating the project team, assuring quality, producing progress reports, procuring the necessary resources and taking corrective action.

Outputs from this phase are the *project deliverables, progress reports and communication to project stakeholders*.

Monitoring involves measuring the progress of a project against its objectives, looking at deviations from the plan and taking corrective steps. In line with the four key project dimensions mentioned above, monitoring typically focuses on the project **scope, schedule, budget** and **quality**. It helps to keep the project on-track, on-time, and within budget.

Adapting means responding to inputs from the monitoring and taking corrective action to meet needs which have changed or been modified.

It also refers to the changes to the original processes, strategies and methods planned to achieve project objectives. It includes lessons learning in the form of a feedback loop of experience, learning and practice.

The project enters the **closing phase** when it has achieved the planned objectives and all deliverables have been produced. The project may also be closed earlier if required by factors such as change of strategy, lack of funding, or substantial changes in working conditions which prevent the project from being completed.

The closing phase involves closing contracts, re-assigning staff, compiling lessons learned, and producing project reports and other documentation.

The last step in the closure phase involves evaluation, whether internal or external, initiated by the organization or the donor.

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