

# Programme and Project Management

The words 'programme' and 'project' are, in most cases, interchangeable. In theory, a programme is large scale, and often consists of a number of projects. But a project can be pretty big too, and can certainly appear very challenging to those in charge of it. Programmes and projects should therefore be managed in pretty much the same way, using the approach outlined below.

## Programme/Project Initiation & planning

Before you do anything else, sit down and think hard about the following issues:

- What is the result you want to achieve?
- What are the causal factors that influence that result?
- What policy interventions will make a difference?
- What is the evidence?
- Who do you rely on to deliver?

## Critical Success Factors

You should also think hard, up front, about the following three critical factors for successful delivery

Critical Success Factor 1: The right scope:

- Any investment of time or money must be linked to clear outcomes that support strategic objectives.
- Goals must be realistic and based on knowledge of what is achievable

Critical Success Factor 2: Adequate skills and resources:

- These must be matched to the demands of the programme/project

Critical Success Factor 3: Good processes for delivery

- Ensure that your delivery processes are based on approaches that are likely to work.

## Planning for Delivery

Once you have thought long and hard about the above issues, and ensured that Ministers and other key stakeholders agree with your conclusions, you can settle down to detailed planning. The following are the nine main questions you will need to answer. You should therefore prepare and circulate, including to Ministers, a detailed plan which answers each of these questions.

1: What is the scope? What is to be delivered - and when?

2: What resources and capabilities (people, physical resources and funding) will you need?

3: What are the potential sources of such capabilities?

4: Who will carry out the required processes and policies?

5: Who will be accountable for what.

6: Which similar projects have succeeded – and why?

7: What is an acceptable balance of cost, benefit and risk?– and how should they be managed?

8: How you will work with other delivery agents and stakeholders to share information and knowledge?

9: How will you monitor and report progress? What performance measures and incentives will you need?

There are more detailed notes, below, on each of these subjects

And finally:-

### **Remember the major causes of failure**

Last, but not least, consider whether your programme or project might not be affected by one of the most frequent causes of failure, which are:

- unclear objectives and success criteria;
- insufficient involvement of key stakeholders;
- weak risk management;
- unclear roles and responsibilities;
- lack of appropriate skills;
- weak financial control;
- poor market knowledge.

They won't happen to you? I wonder!

### **More Detail**

Here are more detailed notes on each of the 9 subjects listed above:-

#### **1: Determine the scope: what to deliver and when**

- Describe why the work needs to be done – for example, to meet a policy imperative or respond to a business driver for change.
- Describe the required outcome in measurable, time based terms – what you want to change and how you will know that you have changed it.

- Identify high level benefits, how they contribute to strategic objectives and how they will be measured. Identify the causal factors – what needs to be in place for the outcome to happen?
- Describe the actions/projects that need to be undertaken.
- Identify high level options for meeting the business need; identify the option with the most acceptable mix of cost, benefit and risk.

## **2: Estimate the resources and capabilities (people, physical resources and funding) you will need**

- Base your estimates on what others have done, wherever possible.
- Look at the dependencies between current programmes and projects in your organisation to arrive at the optimum allocation of resources. Establish the skills and expertise you need (capability to do the job) and the numbers of people who will be required over the lifetime of the project (capacity).
- Estimate the whole-life cost of the change – people and physical resources (buildings, technology etc).
- Consider whether your organisation has enough experience and skills to manage new arrangements where they involve working with others.
- Determine the budget/resource limits and where the costs will fall.

## **3: Identify potential sources of capability**

- Investigate who could deliver the required outcome. Look at the whole supply chain – your organisation, business partners, suppliers and their suppliers, your advisers and your customers.
- Consider innovative ways of delivery, such as collaborating with the private sector where there are appropriate incentives for them to do so.
- Look at what others are doing.
- Where relevant, look at opportunities to exploit technology to deliver the capability you need.

## **4: Decide who will carry out the required processes and policies**

- Look at the proposed way/s forward in the context of the business, its current portfolio and priorities; check that they fit with the organisation's strategy.
- Check for opportunities to collaborate with others and for overlaps with projects already planned or underway; look at the interfaces with other initiatives/organisations.
- Establish how much is new or changing in terms of people and the way they work, services and physical resources such as buildings and IT. Make a realistic assessment of the likelihood of success, given your organisation's existing commitments, priorities, capability and capacity.
- Consider whether critical business processes would be affected
- Consider breaking the work down into smaller packages instead of doing everything at once.
- Revisit the priorities; in addition, expect the unexpected – could you cope with unforeseen change?

## **5: Determine who will be accountable for what**

- Establish who will be responsible for making investment decisions (for example, the Board, partners) and who will be senior individual responsible for the project/programme as its owner.
- Check that the right person is given the role, in terms of their authority and responsibilities in relation to the proposed change.
- Define high level governance structures and responsibilities; consider how different responsibilities fit together and how everyone involved will understand their role and responsibility.
- Define high level arrangements for reporting downwards on policy and business requirements, reporting upwards on progress, performance and risks and taking prompt action as required.
- For joint projects, identify the additional arrangements that need to be in place.
- Ensure that reporting lines will be kept as short as possible.

#### **6: Identify similar projects that have succeeded**

- Compare your project with other ways of delivering a similar outcome – public/private sector and internationally.
- Take account of factors that could affect success, such as cultural differences.
- Identify why others have succeeded – or failed – and the lessons learned from their experiences.

#### **7: Determine an acceptable balance of cost, benefit and risk – and how they should be managed**

- Confirm the solution that offers best value for money; obtain approval from senior management.
- Revisit the key risks to performance and delivery.  
*Risks relating to performance could include lack of public interest leading to poor take-up of a service; risks relating to performance could include overambitious timescales, inadequate resources and lack of essential skills.*
- Consider the whole supply chain, including intermediaries, and how risks could be allocated and managed.
- For the proposed way forward, identify an acceptable balance of costs, benefits and risk.
- Consider a wide range of possibilities and the tradeoffs associated with each.
- If it is an innovative approach, consider how to manage the risks and how well your organisation could cope with the scale of change proposed by more radical options.
- Establish that each of the proposed options are practical, realistic and viable; consider how well each option meets stakeholder needs.
- Contingency plans need to be outlined at this stage.

#### **8: Determine how you will work with other delivery agents and stakeholders to share information and knowledge**

- Consider who your stakeholders are and what they want – the people who will be involved in/affected by the change and/or influence the outcome.
- Resolve any conflicting demands.

- Think about how you will achieve stakeholder buy-in and overcome any resistance to the change.
- Consider the perceptions that might have to change and how behaviours could be changed.

**9: Determine arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress. Identify the performance measures and incentives you will need**

- Set milestones – that is, progress checkpoints at specified intervals – against intermediate targets towards the required outcome.  
*These milestones will enable you to track progress against plans and take action on any feedback relating to progress.*
- Identify performance measures that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based); determine mechanisms for reliable and regular performance information.
- Think about the incentives for staff, partners and suppliers that will encourage a successful outcome.
- Check that performance information can be collected efficiently and in good time to take remedial action if required.