

# Project Management

Social Action

## What is a Project?

The Project Management Institute (PMI) has defined a project as "a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service" (PMI, 2001, p. 167)

Other definitions include:

- Any non-repetitive activity;
- A low-volume, high variety activity;
- Any activity with a start and a finish;
- "A unique set of coordinated activities, with definite starting and finishing points, undertaken by an individual or organization to meet specific performance objectives within defined schedule, cost and performance parameters."

There is a rich variety of projects to be found in our society. Although some may argue that the construction of the Tower of Babel or the Egyptian pyramids were some of the first "projects", it is probable that cavemen formed a project to gather the raw material for mammoth stew. It is certainly true that the construction of Boulder Dam and Edison's invention of the light bulb were projects by any sensible definition. Modern project management, however, is usually said to have begun with the Manhattan Project. In its early days, project management was used mainly for very large, complex research and development (R & D) projects like the development of the Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile and similar military weapon systems. Massive construction programmes were also organized as projects - the construction of dams, ships, refineries, and freeways, among others.

More recently, the use of project management by international organizations, and especially organizations producing services rather than products, has grown rapidly. Advertising companies, global mergers, and capital acquisitions are often handled as projects, and the methods have spread to the nonprofit sector.

## Difference between a Project and a Programme

### Definition of a Project

A project is a temporary entity established to deliver specific (often tangible) outputs in line with predefined time, cost and quality constraints. A project should always be defined and executed and evaluated relative to an (executive) approved business case which balances the costs, benefits and risks of the project. The project business case should be managed under change control.

## Definition of a Programme

A programme is a portfolio comprised of multiple projects that are managed and coordinated as one unit with the objective of achieving (often intangible) outcomes and benefits for the organization.

## Difference between a Project and a Programme

The following table summarizes the main areas of difference between a project and a programme.

	Project	Programme
Objectives	Outputs - tangible; relatively easy to describe, define and measure; tending towards objective.	Outcomes - often intangible; difficult to quantify; benefits often based on changes to organizational culture and behaviors; introducing new capabilities into the organization; tending towards subjective.
Scope	Strictly limited; tightly defined; not subject to change during the life of the project.	Not tightly defined or bounded; likely to change during the life cycle of the programme.
Duration	Relatively short term; typically three to six months.	Relatively long term typically eighteen months to three years.
Risk Profile	Project risk is relatively easy to identify and manage. The project failure would result in relatively limited impact on the organization relative to programme risk.	Programme risk is more complex and potentially the impact on the organization if a risk materializes will be greater relative to project risk. Programme failure could result in material, financial, reputational or operational loss.
Nature of the Problem	Clearly defined.	Ill-defined; often disagreement between key stakeholders on the nature and definition of the problem.
Nature of the Solution	A relatively limited number of potential solutions.	A significant number of potential solutions with disagreement between stakeholders as to the preferred solution.

Stakeholders	A relatively limited number of potential stakeholders.	A significant number of potential stakeholders.
Relationship to Environment	Environment within which the project takes place is understood and relatively stable.	Environment is dynamic; and programme objectives need to be managed in the context of the changing environment within which the organization operates.
Resources	Resources to deliver the project can be reasonably estimated in advance.	Resources are constrained and limited; there is competition for resources between projects.