
**Project, programme and portfolio
management — Guidance on
programme management**

*Management de projets, programmes et portefeuilles —
Recommandations sur le management de programmes*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 258, *Project, programme and portfolio management*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 21503:2017), which has been technically revised. The main changes are as follows:

- terms and definitions, figures and the text have been aligned with ISO 21500:2021 and ISO 21502:2020.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document provides guidance on concepts, prerequisites and practices of programme management that is important for, and has an impact on, the performance of programmes.

This document is intended for use by:

- executive and senior management and those individuals involved in the sponsorship of programmes;
- individuals managing and participating in programmes;
- developers of national or organizational standards;
- developers of programme management methods and processes.

This document can be tailored to meet the needs of any organization or individual, so that they can better apply concepts, prerequisites and practices of programme management.

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Project, programme and portfolio management — Guidance on programme management

1 Scope

This document gives guidance on programme management. It is applicable to any type of organization including public or private and any size or sector, as well as any type of programme in terms of complexity.

This document provides high-level descriptions of relevant terms, definitions, concepts, prerequisites and practices, including roles and responsibilities that form good practice in programme management. It does not provide guidance on processes, methods and tools.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

baseline

reference basis for comparison against which performance is monitored and controlled

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.5]

3.2

benefit

created advantage, value or other positive effect

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.6]

3.3

deliverable

unique and verifiable element that is required to be produced by a *project* (3.14) or *programme* (3.10)

[SOURCE: ISO 21502:2020, 3.9, modified — “or programme” has been added.]

3.4

governance

principles, policies and framework by which an organization is directed and controlled

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.25]

3.5

governing body

person, group or entity accountable for the *governance* (3.4) of an organization, organizations or a part of an organization

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.26]

3.6

outcome

change resulting from the use of the *output* (3.7) from a *project* (3.14) or *programme* (3.10)

[SOURCE: ISO 21502:2020, 3.13, modified — “or programme” has been added.]

3.7

output

aggregated tangible or intangible *deliverables* (3.3) that form the *project* (3.14) or *programme* (3.10) result

[SOURCE: ISO 21502:2020, 3.14, modified — “or programme” has been added.]

3.8

portfolio

collection of *portfolio components* (3.9) grouped together to facilitate their management to meet strategic objectives

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.42]

3.9

portfolio component

project (3.14), *programme* (3.10), *portfolio* (3.8), or other related work

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.43]

3.10

programme

group of *programme components* (3.12) managed in a coordinated way to realize *benefits* (3.2)

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.50]

3.11

programme benefit

assessable *outcome* (3.6) by managing interrelated *programme components* (3.12) together to achieve strategic and operational objectives

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.51, modified — “by managing interrelated programme components together to achieve strategic and operational objectives” has replaced “viewed as an advantage by programme stakeholders and contributing to the programme objectives”.]

3.12

programme component

project (3.14), *programme* (3.10) or other related work

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.52]

3.13

programme management

coordinated activities to direct and control the realisation of identified *benefits* (3.2) and *deliverables* (3.3)

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.54]

3.14**project**

temporary endeavour to achieve one or more defined objectives

[SOURCE: ISO 21502:2020, 3.20]

3.15**project management**

coordinated activities to direct and control the accomplishment of agreed objectives

[SOURCE: ISO 21502:2020, 3.24]

3.17**sponsor**

person responsible for obtaining the resources and executive decisions to enable success

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.78]

3.18**stakeholder**

person, group or organization that has interests in, or can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by, any aspect of the *project* (3.14), *programme* (3.10) or *portfolio* (3.8)

[SOURCE: ISO/TR 21506:2018, 3.79]

4 Concepts of programmes and programme management

4.1 General

This clause describes the concepts of programmes and programme management. It provides guidance to executive and senior management on how programme management should be integrated in an organization or organizations.

4.2 Concepts of programmes

4.2.1 General

This subclause describes the concept of programmes, and describes a programme's purpose, establishment, alignment, structure and stakeholders.

4.2.2 Programme characteristics

Programmes can be strategic, transformational or operational, and have one or more of the following characteristics:

- programmes comprise programme components that have interdependent and interrelated relationships to one another;
- programmes provide outcomes and benefits for stakeholders and contribute to strategic, transformational or operational objectives;
- programmes have complexity and uncertainty, which need to be managed and reduced where possible.

Complexity and uncertainty in relation to programmes can include:

- unclear and uncertain objectives to be achieved;
- context and other external factors;

- social, political, economic, sustainability and legal dynamics;
- technological aspects;
- constraints, such as time, cost, quality and risks;
- interdependencies and integration among the programme components;
- logistical issues;
- stakeholders' diverse viewpoints and expectations.

4.2.3 Purpose of the programme

The purpose of the programme should be to deliver outcomes and realize benefits, which are aligned to strategic and operational objectives, that cannot be realized when components are managed individually. The programme can also have objectives, such as improving efficiency, reducing threats and realizing opportunities.

4.2.4 Programme establishment

When establishing a programme, activities that should be considered include:

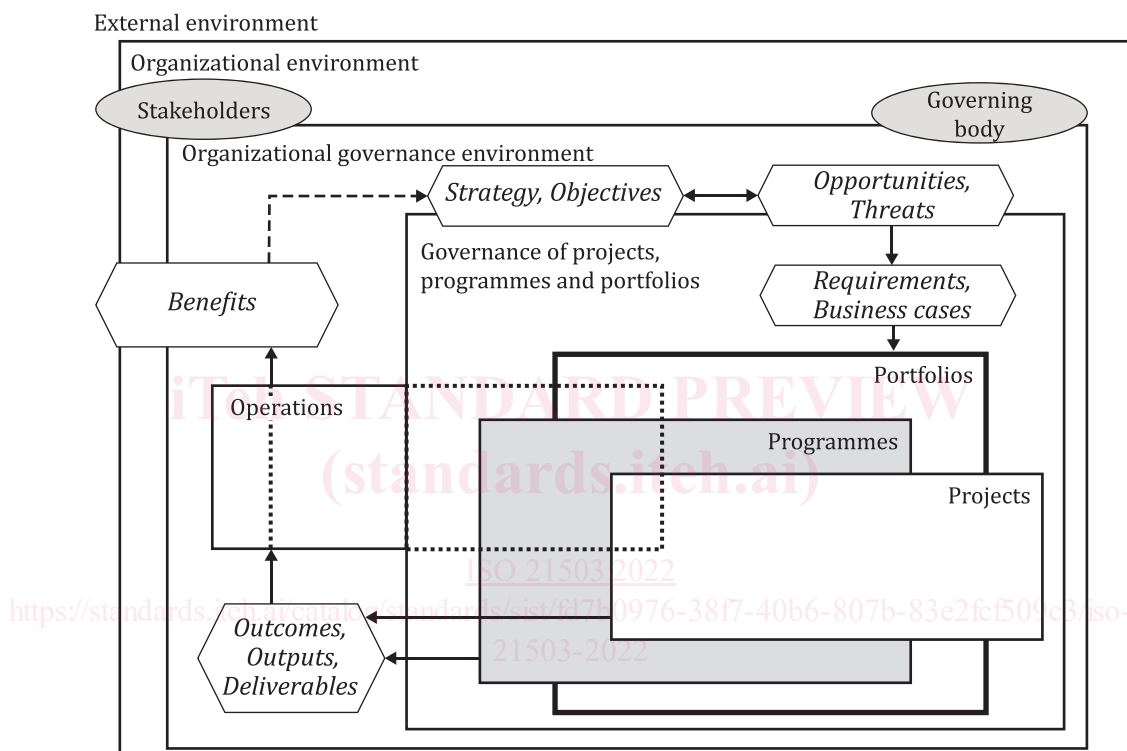
- developing a common approach to managing programme components;
- managing stakeholders' views and interests (see [6.4.8](#));
- communicating internal and external aspects of the programme;
- improving benefits realization, particularly in scheduling the early realization of benefits (see [6.6](#));
- optimizing the use of resources across programme components (see [6.4.5](#));
- optimizing cost, schedule and quality (see [6.4.6](#), [6.4.7](#) and [6.4.4](#));
- managing the risks and issues of the programme (see [6.4.2](#));
- steering and aligning the programme components (see [6.4.2](#));
- supporting a business rationale, which defines the objectives of the programme;
- identifying benefits to be realized by managing the individual components as a programme (see [6.6](#));
- aligning with one or more of the strategic, transformational and operational objectives.

When establishing a programme, organizational risk or uncertainty can be of concern. The considerations to be addressed include:

- level of complexity (see [4.2.2](#));
- level of risk associated with the achievement of the programme's objectives and potential changes;
- degree of organizational change required;
- level of risk regarding required resources.

4.2.5 Programme alignment

Programmes can be established in a single organization, across multiple organizations or within a portfolio. Programmes should be aligned to the governance framework. An example of programme alignment is shown in Figure 1, which illustrates a context and environment within which a programme can exist. The organizational strategy should be used to identify, document and evaluate opportunities, threats, weaknesses and strengths, which can help inform future action. Selected opportunities and threats can be further examined and justified resulting in a programme being initiated. The outputs from the programme are expected to deliver outcomes, which should realize benefits for the sponsoring organizations, as well as for internal or external stakeholders.



NOTE The dashed lines of the operations box indicate that operations can stretch into projects, programmes and portfolios (the dashed lines can be referred to as “other related work”).

Figure 1 — An example of programme alignment within an organizational context