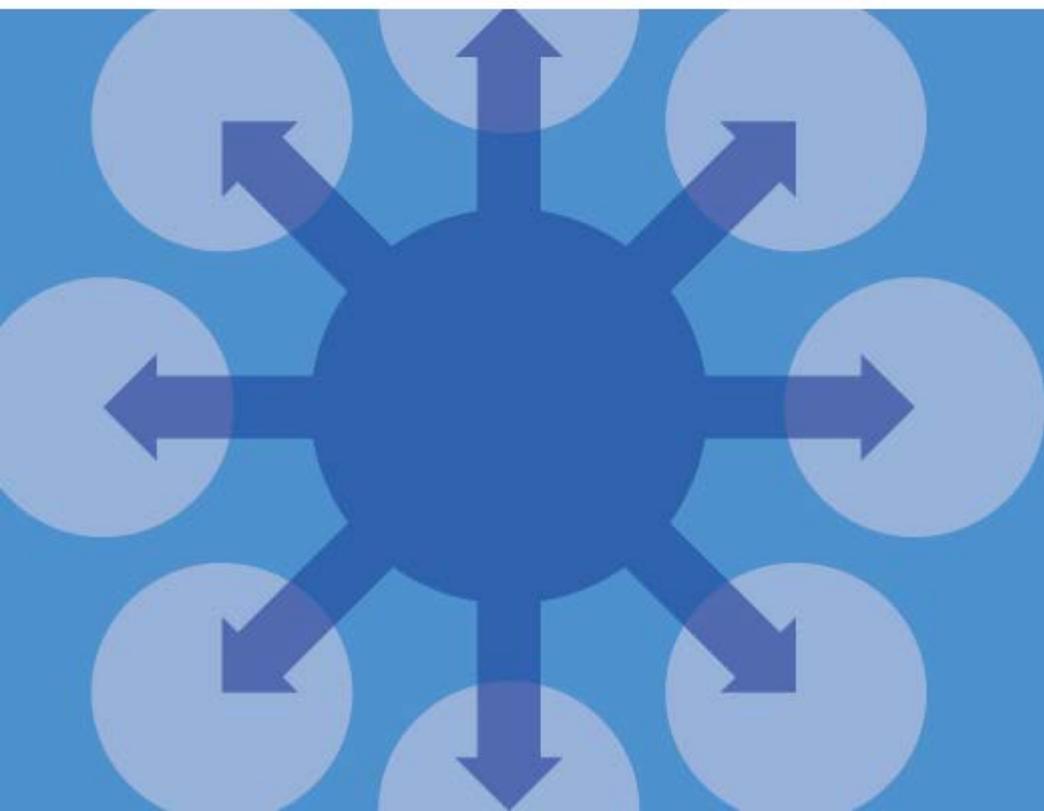


**APM Introduction to
Programme Management**
Second edition



APM Introduction to Programme Management

Second edition

Association for Project Management

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Introduction and purpose of guide

The first edition of *APM Introduction to Programme Management* was published over a decade ago and this aspect of the project management profession has come a long way in that short time. The purpose of this guide is to give the reader an insight into **programme management** – what a programme is, how it functions and how to view it. And who is the reader? Our target audience is those who are relatively new to programme management: an interested **stakeholder** seeking to engage with a programme about to have a major impact on their life; someone joining a programme team who wants to understand the fundamental principles of programme management; or a member of a project management team seeking to understand how they should interact with a programme – this guide is for you and for anyone like you. This is not a guide for programme management experts – but for anyone less than an expert, this guide should offer you value through its insights or through the opportunities it gives you to compare your first-hand experiences with a 'typical' programme, and thereby gives you the **opportunity** to challenge what you see going on around you.

Programme management is not about delivering large and complex projects; it is about delivering change – in the physical, professional, business, societal or organisational **environment**. This publication will help you to understand the organisational and strategic context in which programmes exist, and the differences and relationships between portfolios, programmes, projects and 'business-as-usual' activities, and it highlights some of the keys to understanding successful programme delivery.

APM Introduction to Programme Management 2nd edition is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides an overview of programme management, and Section 2 seeks to explain programme management from the outside looking in through the programme management **life cycle**. Section 3 aims to offer the reader some conceptual frameworks and insight into what a programme manager should be thinking about in order to optimise the prospects of success and avoid the trap of being drawn into another level of project management.

Programme management – an overview

As programme management practitioners engage with our expanding share of the world, it becomes ever more challenging to satisfy stakeholders while delivering value and benefits in a new and unfamiliar global environment. Programme professionals find themselves operating in complex environments grappling with problems associated with climate change, technological advances, globalisation, sustainable development, overpopulation, security and economic regeneration and growth, as well as bringing about change and transformation in organisational performance. Meeting these challenges requires a systematic approach, implemented in a **controlled** environment that is founded on sound principles, practices and tools.

Programmes endeavour to deliver change by bringing related projects and activities together in order to manage their relationships, whilst maintaining a strategic view of the work in order to align and coordinate it in support of specific business strategies. Programmes provide a bridge connecting individual projects to a rapidly changing business environment and often a constantly evolving strategy. Programmes are therefore a key delivery mechanism for strategic **objectives**.

Organisations benefiting most significantly from programme management approaches will normally be those seeking to deliver beneficial and sustainable change to an organisation or society in line with a defined strategy. Where there is change there will be complexity, uncertainty, risk, many interdependencies to manage and conflicting priorities to resolve. By employing sound programme management policy and practices (as opposed to just project management) considerable advantages can be achieved, for example through clearer management focus on the delivery of outcomes and realisation of benefits. Programme management allows the many aspects of the business environment to be abstracted away from the individual component projects, allowing the project manager to focus on delivering the project.

Programme management is still an emerging discipline for delivering transformational change, playing a pivotal role in managing the transition of the

Programme management – an overview

solutions developed and delivered by projects into business operations to realise benefits, thus providing the crucial link between strategy and delivery. Where the tools, approaches and mind-sets of practitioners are well developed for project management, those for programme management are still developing: this is an area of opportunity.

2

The programme life cycle

2.1 A high level programme management life cycle

In spite of the variation in size of programmes, from a handful of people and a few projects through to thousands of people on large, complex undertakings, each one can be deemed to follow a standard life cycle. The key phases of this standard programme life cycle are shown in Figure 2.1.

Other representations of programme life cycles may vary in terminology for the individual phases, but each follows the fundamental principles of concept, definition, delivery and closure. It should also be noted that some representations (or organisations) might use additional sub-phases to those proposed here.

It is important in life cycle terms to differentiate between the steady-state operations of a business (or of a social environment) and the change itself. Figure 2.2 illustrates how a programme is aimed at introducing change, not at running the steady-state activities, and how these different elements align with

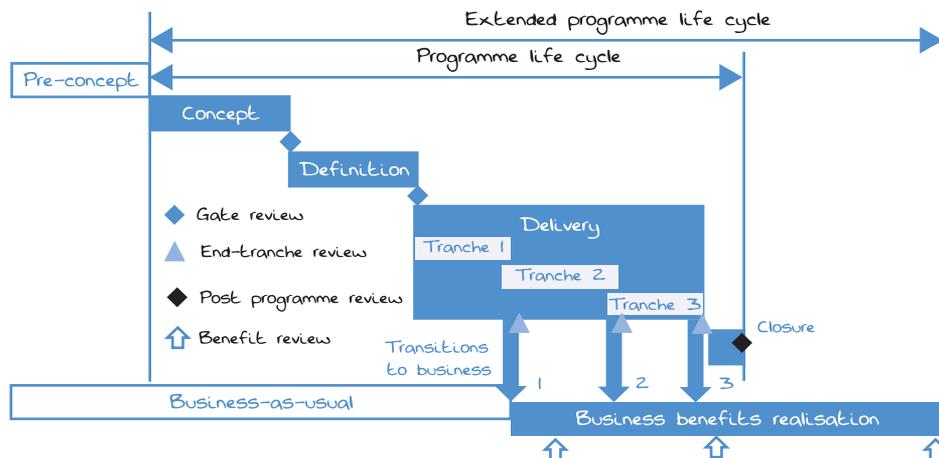


Figure 2.1 Programme life cycle representation (adapted from *APM Body of Knowledge*, Chapter 1.1.6).

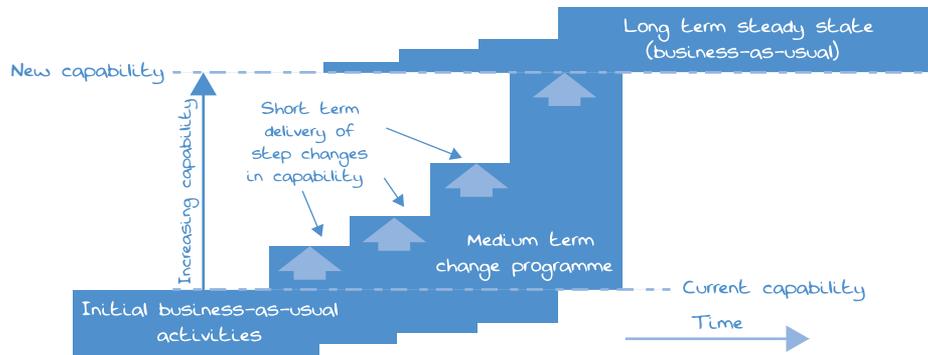


Figure 2.2 Change programme vs. steady-state activities

perceptions of short, medium and long-term timescales. Programmes typically develop change by stepping through sub-divisions that facilitate approval *gates* and deliver increments in capability (these are known as *tranches*¹⁰) with resulting transitions into the business operations (or social environment), as illustrated in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.

The programme life cycle is aimed at establishing a firm platform for the overall change journey, whether this is for a business or societal transformation, the introduction of a new capability, or the launch of a new product into its operating environment. Figure 2.3 shows one conceptual description of this journey, illustrating the key relationships between the business objectives, the definition of the programme, the individual projects and their outputs, the programme outputs and the resulting benefits, and how these underpin the resulting business performance.

2.2 Life cycle strategy considerations

Prior to the start of a programme, there may be a period of uncertainty while an organisation understands and decides that a change of some description is required and that some form of investment in change is needed. In some cases this may be a formally recognised strategic phase of activities (for example, it may be called a 'genesis', 'foundation' or 'pre-concept' phase), and in others it may be less clearly

¹⁰ Tranches are covered in greater detail in Section 2.5.

The programme life cycle

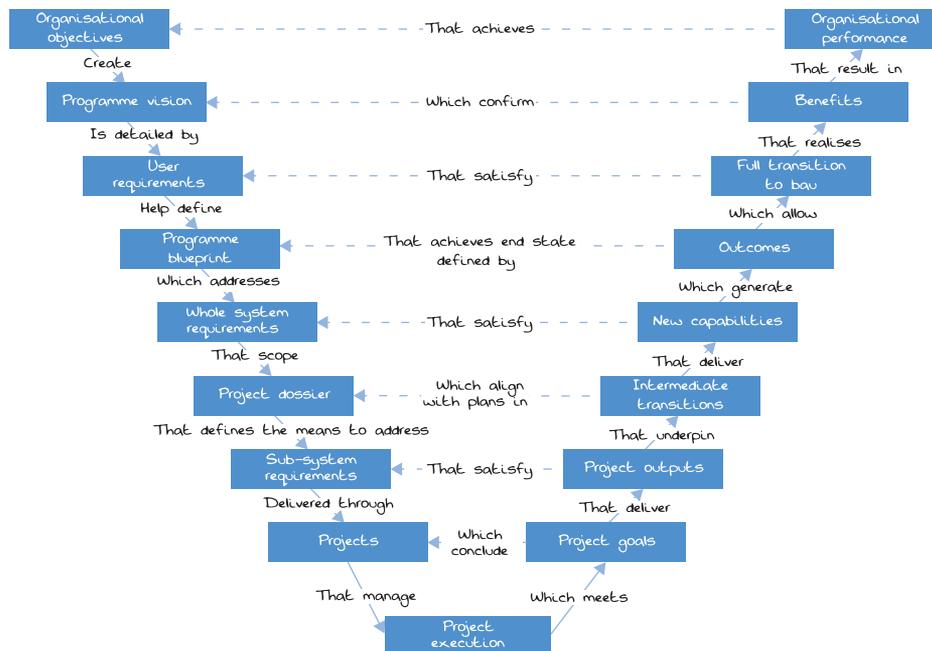


Figure 2.3 Conceptual representation of programme change journey showing validation and verification relationships based on the [Vee Model](#)

defined or revolutionary. In theory, all organisations should have clearly defined and agreed business change strategies, the implementation of which requires the initiation of programmes. Indeed, if the organisation is undertaking programmes within the framework of portfolio management then the programmes will be fully aligned with strategic plans.¹¹ Within such an environment (or where the business undertakes regular change or introduction of new complex products), the business will have defined a business change life cycle specific to its needs, and so the individual programme life cycle will have to be aligned with this generic business framework. This alignment is an important part of defining a specific strategy for the overall programme approaches, i.e. the definition of its programme life cycle.

Another important consideration for the programme life cycle is the selection of the *approach* the organisation would like to take in the delivery phase of an individual programme (or potentially introducing the overall change through

¹¹ For further information, refer to *APM Body of Knowledge 6th edition*, Chapter 1.1.3, 'Portfolio management'.