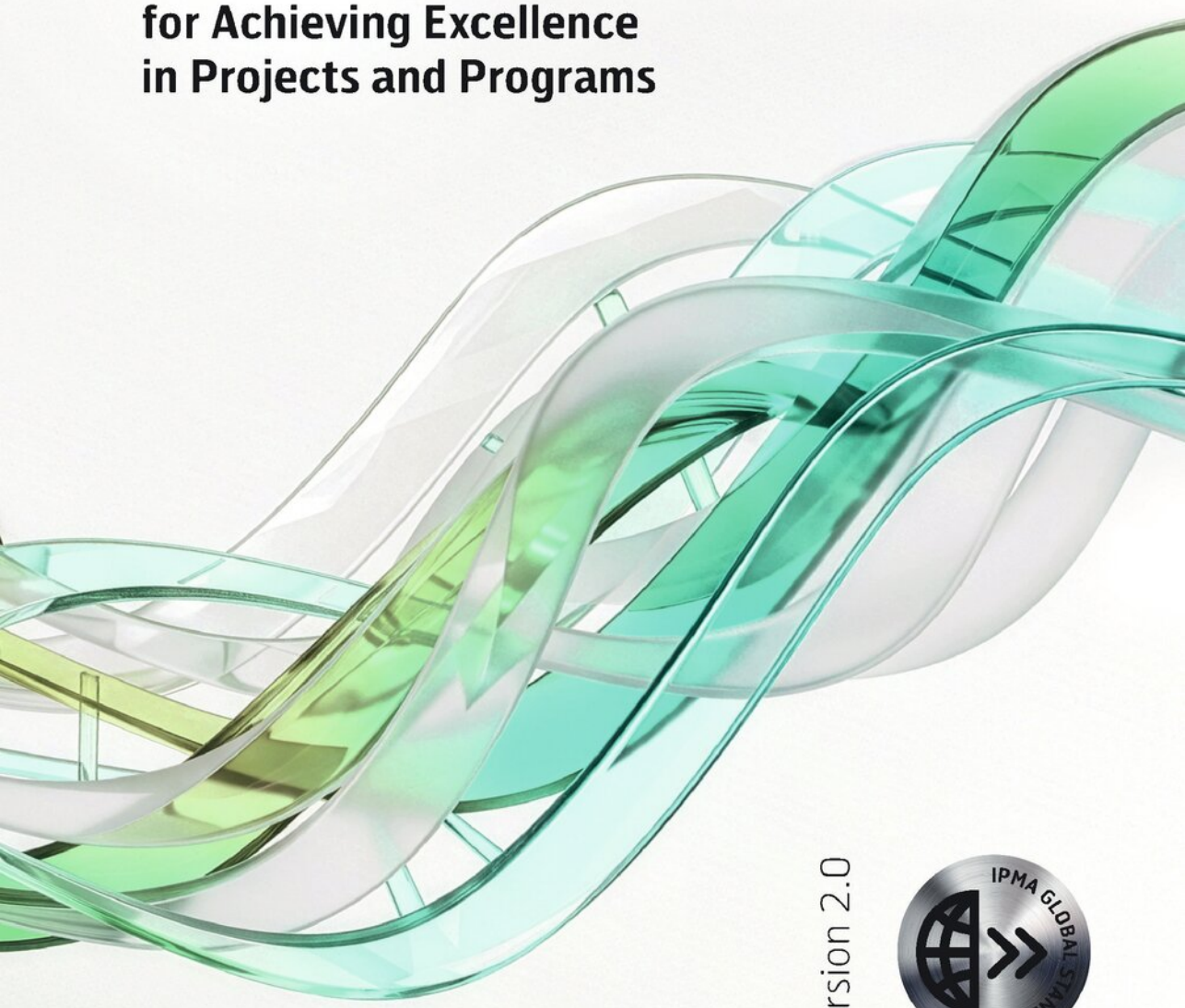
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IPMA

PROJECT EXCELLENCE BASELINE

for Achieving Excellence in Projects and Programs



version 2.0

IPMA GLOBAL STANDARD

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For Achieving Excellence in Projects and Programs

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Finalists and winnersContents

Foreword by IPMA President		**9**
IPMA Standards Framework		**12**
Purpose of the Framework		12
Relationship between the Standards		14
Common Foundation		15
Guiding Principles		15
Sustainability Principle		16
Common Terminology		17
Continuous Development of the Framework		17
Abbreviations		**18**
Summary		**19**
1.	**Introduction**	**23**
1.1.	IPMA PEB 2.0	23
1.2.	IPMA PEB links to IPMA Standards	25
1.3.	How to read this document	26
2.	**Purpose and Intended Users**	**28**
2.1.	Purpose of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline	28
2.2.	Common User Groups of the IPMA PEB	30
3.	**A project in its context**	**36**
3.1.	What is a project?	36
3.1.1.	Projects in organizations	36
3.1.2.	Outputs, Results, Benefits	41
3.1.3.	The project as a temporary organization	43
3.1.4.	Processes in a project	46
3.2.	A project in its external context	47
3.3.	Projects and Complexity	48
3.4.	A project in its organizational context	49
3.4.1.	Organizational Context	49
3.4.2.	Project governance	50
3.4.3.	The project in the context of a program and project portfolio	51
4.	**Introducing Project Excellence**	**53**
4.1.	The concept of excellence	53
4.2.	The concept of Project Excellence	54
4.3.	The Mindset for Project Excellence	56

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4.4.	Continuous improvement as a foundation for excellence	57
4.5.	Improvement Possibilities for Project Excellence	60
4.6.	The Role of Leadership, Governance, and Organizational Cultures as Enablers of Project Excellence	61
4.7.	The link between competence and excellence	62
4.8.	Stopping a project well	63
4.9.	The role of sustainability	64
4.9.1.	Defining Sustainable Project Management	64
4.9.2.	Global Frameworks and Principles	65
4.9.3.	The Responsibility of Project Leaders	66
4.9.4.	Sustainability Management and Assessment	67
4.9.5.	Value Creation and Reporting	67
5.	**Introduction to the Project Excellence Model**	**69**
5.1.	Principles behind the model design	69
5.2.	Structure of the model	70
5.3.	Areas of the model and interpretation of the overall results	71
5.4.	Interactions between the areas of the model	75
5.5.	Business value delivery using IPMA PEM	78
5.6.	Why organizations should adopt this model	81
5.7.	The model criteria	82
6.	**Description of the IPMA Project Excellence Model**	**89**
6.1.	Area A. People & Purpose	89
6.1.1.	A.1. Leadership & Values	89
6.1.2.	A.2. Objectives & Strategy	94
6.1.3.	A.3. Project Team, Partners & Suppliers	98
6.2.	Area B. Processes & Resources	102
6.2.1.	B.1. Project Management Processes & Resources	103
6.2.2.	B.2. Management of Delivery (technical) Processes & Resources	106
6.2.3.	B.3. Management of Support Processes & Resources	107
6.3.	Area C. Project Results	108
6.3.1.	C.1. Customer Satisfaction	109
6.3.2.	C.2. Sponsor Satisfaction	111
6.3.3.	C.3. Project Team, Partner and Supplier Satisfaction	113
6.3.4.	C.4. Other Stakeholder Satisfaction	115
6.3.5.	C.5. Project Results and Impact on the Environment	117
7.	**Project Excellence assessment as a strategic driver for an organization**	**122**
7.1.	Assess Project Excellence strategically	122
7.2.	Using the Project Excellence Model for self-assessment	125
7.2.1.	How to use the IPMA PEM in organizations with limited formal structures	126

7.2.2. Assessment of Project Excellence across project contexts and lifecycles 127
7.2.3. Scope of the assessment in projects, programs and portfolios 133
7.2.4. Assessment of representative projects in a portfolio 139
7.3. Build and apply competences 139
7.4. Use the insight from assessments 143
APPENDIX A The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award benefits/value 146
Benefits for stakeholders 146
Benefits for applicants 146
APPENDIX B Assessment of Project Excellence for the Project Excellence Award—the Process 148
APPENDIX C Scoring tables for the IPMA Project Excellence Model 162
APPENDIX D Projects and Complexity 166
Bibliography 170

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Table of Figures

Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards 13
Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier 15
Figure 3: The project organization in its context 41
Figure 4: PEB Value Creation Model 43
Figure 5: Strategy implementation according to ISO 21500:2021 47
Figure 6: The PDCA concept 59
Figure 7: The Areas of the Project Excellence Model 72
Figure 8: Leadership-Driven Project 74
Figure 9: Process-Driven Project 74
Figure 10: Balanced Project 75
Figure 11: Interaction between the model areas 76
Figure 12: Value delivered through interactions between model areas 79
Figure 13: The IPMA PEM Criteria 88
Figure 14: The use of IPMA PEM at various stages of the project lifecycle 127
Figure 15: Scope of the overall program management assessment 136
Figure 16: Scope of the assessment of an individual project within a program 137
Figure 17: Scope of the assessment of an entire program 138

Foreword by IPMA President

Projects are among the most powerful instruments through which organizations turn strategy into results, enable transformation, realize benefits, and create sustainable value. As the scale and complexity of change continue to grow, expectations of projects and those who lead them have also expanded. Success can no longer be understood only by delivering agreed outputs within time, cost, and scope. Projects must also demonstrate responsible leadership, stakeholder value, organizational learning, sustainability, and lasting positive impact.

It is in this context IPMA presents the **IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0**. This second edition builds on a long and distinguished history. The first IPMA Project Excellence Baseline was published in 2016, drawing on more than 15 years of experience with the IPMA Project Excellence framework and the assessment of projects through the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards. Over the decade that followed, the project environment continued to evolve, making it necessary to reflect new expectations, emerging practices, and a broader understanding of the value that projects create.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 provides a comprehensive and practical framework for understanding, assessing, and continuously improving Project Excellence.

It recognizes that projects are investments intended to produce meaningful results, realize benefits, and generate sustainable value. Excellent projects are therefore well managed. They are purpose-driven, outcome-oriented, ethically led, sustainably delivered, and appreciated by the stakeholders who participate in or are affected by them. The baseline is deliberately non-prescriptive and can be applied across sectors, cultures, organizational maturity levels, delivery approaches, and projects of different sizes and levels of complexity.

At the heart of the standard is the **IPMA Project Excellence Model 2.0**, structured around three mutually reinforcing areas: **People & Purpose, Processes & Resources, and Project Results**. Together, these areas demonstrate that excellence does not emerge from leadership, processes, or

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results in isolation. Strong leadership without robust and adaptable processes may produce success that cannot be repeated. Efficient processes without a clear purpose may fail to create meaningful value. Positive results without understanding how they were achieved may result in missed opportunities for learning and improvement. Sustainable Project Excellence is created through the interaction and balance of all three areas.

A particularly important development in this edition is the stronger integration of sustainability. The PEB 2.0 considers both **sustainability by the project**, the lasting value created through its outputs, results, and benefits—and **sustainability of the project**—the responsible, ethical, transparent, and resource conscious way in which the work is governed and delivered. This dual perspective encourages project leaders and organizations to consider economic, environmental, social, and governance impacts, as well as the longer-term consequences of project decisions.

The value of the PEB 2.0 extends far beyond the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards. It can be used at project start-up, during implementation, at closure, or following completion. It can support team self-assessments, internal organizational reviews, external assessments, benchmarking, governance, competence development, and portfolio-level learning. Its purpose is not merely to generate a score, but to provide insight, stimulate constructive dialogue, identify opportunities for improvement, and strengthen an organization's ability to deliver excellent and sustainable results consistently. Experience shows that the best story tellers and educators of the profession are the good project management practices and the people who managed to achieve them.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 also forms an essential part of the wider **IPMA Standards Framework**. Together with the Individual Competence Baseline, the Organizational Competence Baseline, and the Research Excellence Baseline, it connects competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and advancing professional knowledge. Although each standard has its own purpose, their greatest value is realized when they are applied together in support of sustainable value creation and lasting positive impact.

I invite project leaders, teams, sponsors, executives, assessors, educators, researchers, consultants, and organizations around the world to use this standard as more than an assessment framework. Let it serve as a source of reflection, dialogue, learning, and action. By applying its principles consistently, we can move beyond delivering individual successful projects

and build the organizational capability and culture required to pursue excellence systematically.

A standard of this significance can only be created through collective effort. On behalf of IPMA, I extend my sincere gratitude to our **Member Associations** and to the many practitioners, senior leaders, researchers, assessors, and other experts who contributed their knowledge and experience.

My special appreciation goes to **Michael Boxheimer, Project Lead**, for his leadership, perseverance, and commitment throughout this demanding undertaking. I also thank the members of his **team**, reviewers, and all those who supported the development of the standard. Their expertise, constructive dialogue, and dedication transformed many years of experience in Project Excellence into this coherent and forward-looking publication. Michael's contribution, together with those of the core team and IPMA coordination colleagues, is recognized in the publication credits.

I offer my deep appreciation to **Mary Koutintcheva, Vice President for Standards and Qualification and sponsor of the project**, for her vision, confidence, and constant support.

To our Member Associations, Michael, the core and extended teams, Mary, and every person who contributed to this journey: this standard is a testament to your professionalism, collaboration, and commitment to the continuous pursuit of excellence. On behalf of the entire IPMA community, you have our heartfelt thanks.



Prof. Dr. Mladen Vukomanović
President, International Project Management Association (IPMA)

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IPMA Standards Framework

Purpose of the Framework

Professional project management continues to evolve in response to changing organizational needs, growing complexity, technological advancement, and evolving societal expectations. Organizations increasingly rely on projects, programs, and portfolios to implement strategy, enable transformation, realize benefits, and create sustainable value. At the same time, expectations of project professionals and organizations have expanded beyond successful project delivery to include responsible leadership, organizational excellence, evidenceinformed practice, and lasting positive impact.

These developments demonstrate that no single perspective can fully describe the project management profession. Sustainable success is achieved through the interaction of individual competence, Project Excellence, organizational capability, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge through research.

For this reason, IPMA has developed the **IPMA Standards Framework** as an integrated system comprising four complementary baseline standards. Their relationship is illustrated through **the House of IPMA Standards** (Figure 1), which visually represent the framework and demonstrates how the standards operate as an integrated system to support sustainable value creation.

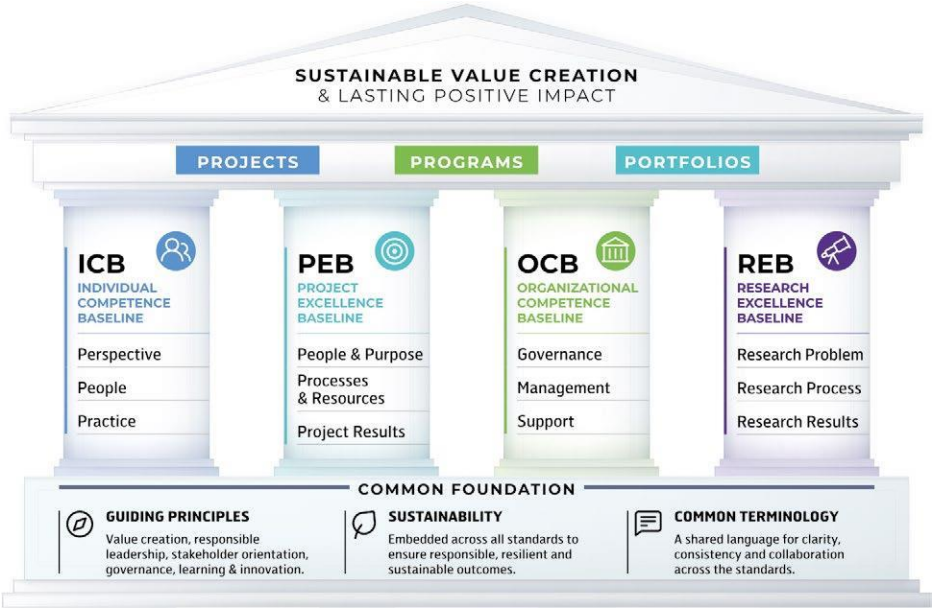


Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards

The four baseline standards share a common foundation of guiding principles, harmonized terminology, sustainability, ethical behavior, stakeholder orientation, effective governance, and continuous learning. This common foundation ensures consistency across the framework while allowing each baseline to address a distinct perspective of professional project management.

The **IPMA Standards Framework** comprises four complementary baseline standards:

- **IPMA ICB** defines the competences required by individuals to successfully lead and contribute to projects, programs, and portfolios.
- **IPMA PEB** defines the characteristics of project and program excellence and provides a framework for assessing, recognizing, and continuously improving project performance.
- **IPMA OCB** defines the organizational capabilities required to consistently enable projects, programs, and portfolios to deliver intended results and contribute to strategic objectives.

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- **IPMA REB** defines the criteria and approach for evaluating research excellence and provides a framework for assessing research quality, impact, and contribution to the advancement of the profession.

Together, these complementary baseline standards provide an integrated framework for developing competent individuals, achieving Project Excellence, strengthening organizational capability, and advancing professional knowledge through research. They support organizations and professionals in delivering projects, programs, and portfolios that achieve intended results, contribute to strategic objectives, create sustainable value, and generate lasting positive impact.

Although each standard serves a distinct purpose and may be applied independently, their greatest value is realized when they are applied together.

Relationship between the Standards

The **IPMA Standards Framework** recognizes that sustainable value is created through the combined contribution of competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge.

Projects, programs, and portfolios are the primary mechanisms through which organizations implement strategy, enable transformation, and achieve intended results. This is realized through a progression in which **deliverables** become **outputs**, outputs enable **outcomes**, outcomes generate **benefits**, benefits create organizational **value**, and value delivers lasting organizational and societal **impact**.

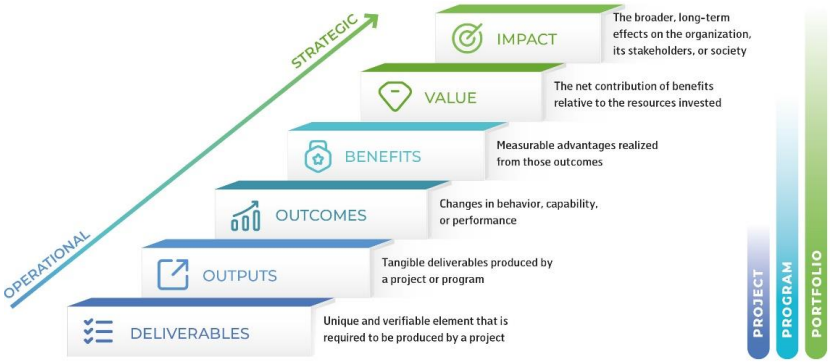


Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier

Achieving all these results is a continuous and interconnected process. Competent individuals lead and contribute to successful projects and programs within organizations that provide the governance, leadership, culture, and support required for consistent delivery and the delivery of intended results.

Experience gained from practice strengthens organizational capability, while research continuously advances professional practice, education, and the future evolution of the framework.

These interactions create a continuous improvement cycle in which professional practice, organizational capability, and research reinforce one another, enabling organizations to continuously enhance the results created through projects, programs, and portfolios.

Common Foundation

Although each standard has a distinct purpose and intended users, they share a common conceptual foundation that establishes the principles, concepts, and terminology supporting the consistent interpretation and application of all baseline standards.

Guiding Principles

The IPMA Standards Framework is supported by a common set of guiding principles that underpin all baseline standards.

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Collectively, the guiding principles promote:

- turning strategy into results;
- stakeholder orientation, collaboration, and ethical behavior;
- effective governance, accountability, and transparency; and
- sustainability and responsible leadership;
- continuous learning, research, innovation, adaptability, and improvement.

These principles should be applied according to the organization's context, objectives, governance environment, and the complexity of its projects, programs, and portfolios.

Sustainability Principle

Sustainability is a fundamental consideration across the IPMA Standards Framework. Sustainable project management integrates environmental, social, governance (ESG) and economic considerations into governance, leadership, decision-making, project delivery, and organizational development.

The framework recognizes two complementary perspectives.

- **Sustainability of the project** focuses on ensuring that projects are governed and delivered responsibly, ethically, and with appropriate consideration of resources and ESG factors throughout the project life cycle.
- **Sustainability by the project** focuses on the lasting impact created through the project's results, benefits, capabilities, and value delivered to organizations, stakeholders, society, and the environment.

Sustainability also requires sustainable leaders. Sustainable leadership integrates sustainability into organizational strategy, governance, culture, and project delivery. It promotes innovation, stakeholder engagement, and responsible decision-making in support of sustainable development.

Further guidance is provided in the IPMA Guide on Sustainable Project Management.

Common Terminology

Consistency across the IPMA Standards Framework is supported through the **IPMA Common Glossary**, which provides harmonized definitions of the terminology used throughout the standards. The glossary establishes a common language for practitioners, organizations, educators, researchers, assessors, certification bodies, and other stakeholders, enabling consistent interpretation and application of the standards across industries, sectors, cultures, and professional contexts.

Continuous Development of the Framework

The IPMA Standards Framework provides a stable international baseline for professional project management while recognizing that organizations, projects, and professional practice continue to evolve.

The standards focus on enduring competences, excellence characteristics, organizational capabilities, and guiding principles that remain relevant across industries, organizational contexts, cultures, and delivery approaches, while allowing the framework to evolve in response to significant developments in practice, research, technology, and society.

The framework is continuously informed by collaboration among practitioners, organizations, researchers, educators, Member Associations, certification bodies, and other stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures that future editions continue to reflect internationally recognized good practice while responding to the evolving needs of the profession.

Future editions may incorporate developments arising from research, professional practice, organizational experience, and emerging technologies. Complementary publications, including Practice Guides, Reference Guides, implementation guidance, assessment guidance, and other supporting materials, provide practical guidance while remaining fully aligned with the baseline standards.



Mary Koutintcheva
Vice President for Standards and Qualification

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Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
E&ESG	Economic, Environmental, Social and Governance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
HR	Human Resources
IPMA	International Project Management Association
IPMA ICB	IPMA Individual Competence Baseline
IPMA OCB	IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline
IPMA PEB	IPMA Project Excellence Baseline
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
L&M	Large and Mega-sized Project
MA	Member Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Not-for-Profit Organization
OKR	Objectives and Key Results
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act (Deming/Shewhart cycle)
PEB	Project Excellence Baseline
PEM	Project Excellence Model
PMO	Project Management Office
PPP	Project, Program and Portfolio

Summary

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0 (IPMA PEB 2.0) provides a comprehensive and practical framework for understanding, assessing and continuously improving Project Excellence. It is founded on the belief that project success cannot be reduced to delivering agreed outputs only within time, cost and scope constraints. Projects are investments made by organizations and stakeholders to create meaningful results, realize benefits and generate sustainable value. Therefore, excellent projects are not only well managed; they are purpose-driven, outcome-oriented, ethically led, sustainably delivered and appreciated by the stakeholders who are involved in or impacted by them.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 defines Project Excellence as the ability of a temporary organization to align people, purpose, processes, resources and results in a coherent way. It builds on the IPMA philosophy of competence, continuous learning and responsible leadership. It is closely connected with other IPMA standards, especially the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline, the IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline and the IPMA Research Excellence Baseline, but it has its own specific focus: how leadership, management approaches, competences and organizational support come together in a concrete project or program and lead to observable results. The IPMA Research Evaluation Baseline (IPMA REB) is built on the principles of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline and uses them for IPMA Research Awards.

The baseline is intentionally non-prescriptive. It does not promote a single project management methodology, delivery model or organizational setup. It can be applied to predictive, agile and hybrid projects; to small, medium, Large and Mega-sized projects; and, where appropriate, to programs as temporary organizations designed to realize change and benefits. This makes the IPMA PEB 2.0 relevant across industries, sectors, cultures and organizational maturity levels.

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At the core of the standard is the IPMA Project Excellence Model (IPMA PEM). The model is structured around three mutually reinforcing areas:

- **People & Purpose**—addresses leadership, values, stakeholder care, clarity of objectives, adaptability to change, team capability, collaboration, empowerment and the culture needed to achieve excellent results;

- **Processes & Resources**—covers the conscious selection, adaptation, implementation and improvement of project management, delivery and support processes, together with the resources required to achieve project success;

- **Project Results**—provides insight into the satisfaction of customers, sponsors, project teams and other stakeholders, as well as the realization of intended and additional results, including economic, social, environmental and governance impacts.

A fundamental principle of the model is that these areas cannot be assessed in isolation. Strong leadership without robust processes may lead to success that cannot be repeated. Efficient processes without a clear purpose may fail to create meaningful value. Positive results without understanding how they were achieved may lead to wrong conclusions and missed learning opportunities. Sustainable Project Excellence emerges from the interaction between people, purpose, processes, resources and results.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 reflects the increasing importance of sustainability in project management. Excellent projects consider not only sustainability by the project, meaning the sustainable value created through outputs and results, but also sustainability of the project, meaning the responsible, ethical and resource conscious way in which the project is delivered. This includes attention to economic, environmental, social and governance aspects, stakeholder participation, transparency, long-term value creation and the wider impact of project decisions.

The standard is intended to be used not only in the context of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award. Its wider value lies in its practical application within organizations. Organizations can use the IPMA PEB 2.0 to assess individual projects, programs or representative projects within a portfolio. Such assessments can be performed as self-assessments by project teams, as internal reviews supported by PMOs or quality functions, or as external assessments conducted by experienced assessors. In all these forms, the purpose is not merely to score a project, but to create insight, support

learning and strengthen the organization's ability to deliver excellent and sustainable results.

In organizational practice, the IPMA PEB 2.0 can be used to:

- support project start-up by checking whether purpose, stakeholder needs, governance, sustainability considerations and management approaches have been properly addressed;
- guide and assess projects during implementation, while corrective actions are still possible and lessons learned can still be applied within the same project;
- evaluate projects towards closure or after completion, including the extent to which results, benefits and sustainability impacts have been achieved;
- compare projects within a portfolio and identify patterns of strengths, weaknesses and improvement opportunities;
- support PMOs and senior leaders in improving project management systems, governance structures, competence development and project culture;
- provide a shared language for discussing Project Excellence across business units, functions, countries, partners and suppliers;
- complement existing audits, maturity assessments, quality reviews, ESG reporting and portfolio governance mechanisms.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 is particularly useful as a strategic management tool.

When applied consistently across a program and project landscape, it enables organizations to understand how well their programs and projects contribute to strategy execution, transformation, sustainability commitments and long-term competitiveness. It enables leaders to distinguish repeatable success from isolated achievements, to assess whether project practices are aligned with strategic intent and whether the organization is learning from its project experience.

The model also supports competence development. Organizations gain practical evidence of individual, team and organizational capabilities by assessing how project teams apply leadership, stakeholder engagement, collaboration, process design, adaptation, sustainability management and

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result measurement in real project situations. Assessment findings can be translated into coaching, training, mentoring, improved methods, communities of practice and targeted PMO support. In this way, the IPMA PEB 2.0 links project assessment directly with continuous competence development.

The use of the model should always be adapted to the context, size, complexity, delivery approach and phase of the project. For smaller projects, the assessment should remain proportionate and focus on whether the chosen leadership and management approach is suitable, disciplined and value oriented. For agile projects, the assessment should examine whether iterative working, stakeholder feedback, team autonomy and incremental delivery are used in a purposeful and transparent way to create valuable results. For hybrid projects, the assessment should consider whether predictive and adaptive elements are consciously integrated and whether they jointly support governance, learning, control and value creation.

Ultimately, the IPMA PEB 2.0 helps organizations move from delivering projects successfully to building the capability to deliver excellent projects systematically. It encourages a mindset in which projects are not seen only as temporary delivery mechanisms, but as vehicles for strategic change, sustainable value creation, organizational learning and societal contribution. Applied consistently, it becomes more than an assessment framework. It becomes a practical instrument for building a culture of Project Excellence.

1. Introduction

The first edition of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline (PEB 1.0) was published in 2016, building on more than 15 years of experience with the IPMA Project Excellence framework and assessment approach that had been used since 2002 in the evaluation of projects and Project Excellence awards. Since its publication, PEB 1.0 has served as a valuable source of guidance and inspiration for organizations seeking to strengthen their project management capabilities and improve project performance improve project performance, and to evaluate projects from different sectors and regions using a standardized methodology and process.

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0 (PEB 2.0) provides well-tested concept for striving for excellence. IPMA Project Excellence Model 2.0 (PEM 2.0) is a proven model for assessing and benchmarking project management, project results and their interdependencies. The experience gathered from the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards process (more than 200 finalists worldwide between 2002 and 2025) demonstrates a clear link between successful projects and having well-established project management methods in place—and still improve them further using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) approach.

After a decade of successful application, it was time to update the IPMA PEB 1.0 to reflect the significant developments that have shaped the project management ecosystem.

1.1. IPMA PEB 2.0

The body of the IPMA PEB 2.0 (Chapters 2–7) describes the broader context of Project Excellence for organizations including IPMA PEM 2.0 and provides a guideline for the overall assessment process.

Chapter 2 identifies the purpose of the IPMA PEB 2.0 and its intended users, as well as the various ways in which the baseline can be applied. It is for each user to decide how to use the IPMA PEB 2.0. For example, the application of the IPMA PEB 2.0 at the start of a project may inspire the adoption of

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principles that could contribute to Project Excellence during realization. It can also be used as a standard for self-assessment during or after a project to determine the extent to which the project management approach translates to excellent project results. In addition, the IPMA PEB 2.0 is the framework for external assessments and benchmarks (e.g., through the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards), to receive additional independent perspectives and benchmarking information, enabling a comparison at a global level of excellence across different industries, or within the organization itself.

Chapter 3 defines a project in its larger context, ranging from a narrow perspective (for instance, as part of a program or portfolio inside an organizational framework) to a wider perspective, for instance, in relation to its external environment.

Chapter 4 presents and explains the IPMA philosophy behind Project Excellence. IPMA PEB 2.0 is directly based on the IPMA concepts and values. It also explains the role of innovation. Excellence and Project Excellence are explained as well as the mindset for Project Excellence and the role of continuous improvement as a foundation for excellence. The chapter introduces sustainability as a relevant part of Project Excellence.

Chapter 5 introduces the IPMA PEM 2.0 by explaining the principles and the structure, especially the three basic building blocks of which it consists:

1. People & Purpose;

2. Processes & Resources;

3. Project Results.

Chapter 6 introduces the IPMA PEM 2.0 in detail, the above-mentioned areas, criteria, and sub-criteria.

Chapter 7 explains how to use PEB 2.0 and PEM 2.0 in an organization, to build and apply competencies for assessments and to use insights from assessments.

The appendices provide additional guidance and supporting information, and then:

- **Appendix A** describes the assessment process used in the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards.
- **Appendix B** presents the scoring methodology and assessment tables used for the awards.
- **Appendix C** outlines the benefits of participating in the awards program.
- **Appendix D** introduces the project complexity matrix and provides guidance on assessing project complexity.

1.2. IPMA PEB links to IPMA Standards

The three IPMA standards—IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB®), IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® (IPMA PEB) and IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®) are complementary and provide the baseline for excellence from an individual, project and/or organizational perspective. In addition to the IPMA PEB, the IPMA ICB provides a definition and overview of the competences expected from project management personnel; the IPMA OCB addresses the ability of organizations to integrate and align people, resources, processes, structures and cultures in projects, programs and portfolios within a supporting governance and management system.

Projects rely on people with their individual competences, but the presence of competent people in the project team alone is not a guarantee for success. Likewise, organizations may possess mature governance structures and strong project management capabilities, yet individual projects can still fail to achieve their intended results.

Only project leaders and teams that are able to clearly define the project objectives, align stakeholder needs, develop effective teams with necessary competences, adjust and integrate processes in their project and achieve results that lead to the satisfaction of all project participants and key stakeholders are considered to be excellent. The IPMA PEB draws upon the concepts of individual and organizational competences in project management (IPMA ICB and IPMA OCB) but focuses only on how all factors

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come together in a specific and concrete program and/or project, allowing the level of Project Excellence to be measured.

The IPMA Delta® assessment, which measures organizational competence to support projects, draws simultaneously on the IPMA PEB, IPMA ICB, and IPMA OCB. An organization preparing for an IPMA Delta assessment will undertake a self-assessment using both the IPMA PEB for programs and projects and the IPMA ICB for individuals involved in projects, followed by an external assessment against the IPMA OCB. Together, these assessments provide a holistic view of project management capability and organizational excellence.

1.3. How to read this document

The IPMA PEB 2.0 addresses a wide range of roles / user groups in organizations, and not every chapter is equally relevant to every one of them. This section indicates, per user group as introduced in Section 2.2, which parts of the document are most relevant, so that readers can focus their attention accordingly. All readers are encouraged to begin with the Summary and with Chapter 2, which explains the purpose of the baseline and the reasoning behind each group's engagement with it; the guidance below builds on that foundation rather than repeating it. Chapter 3 is also recommended for all user groups.

Senior leaders and executives will get most value from this introduction, from Sections 4.1 and 4.2 on the concept of excellence, and from Sections 5.2 and 5.3, which describe the structure of the model without descending into criterion-level detail. Section 7.1 explains how the baseline can support strategic decision-making at portfolio or organizational level. The detailed criteria in Chapter 6 are less essential at this level of engagement; reading the introductions to Areas A, B and C is generally sufficient to follow the reasoning of the model as a whole.

Project, program and portfolio managers, together with PMO leaders, are likely to use the baseline most directly and should read Chapter 3, which places the project in its wider organizational and external context, Chapter 4 in full, and Chapter 6 in full. Section 7.2 deserves particular attention, since it covers applying the model across project phases and in agile or hybrid settings, situations most readers in this group will recognize from their own practice. The award-specific detail in Appendices A to C can generally be left aside unless the organization is preparing an award submission.

Sustainability professionals will find the most direct route into the document through Section 4.9 on the role of sustainability, followed by the

Sustainability related content spread throughout Chapter 6, recognizable through references to ESG, WISE, PSIA and E&ESG. Criterion C.5, covering results and environmental impact, ties this content together and is worth reading closely.

Knowledge, quality and process management professionals should read Chapter 5 for the model's underlying principles, Area B of Chapter 6 in full, and Sections 7.3 and 7.4, which describe how competences are built and how assessment insight is used in practice. Sections 3.3 and 3.4.2, on project complexity and project governance respectively, are also worth reading before Chapter 6, since they explain much of the reasoning behind how Area B criteria are structured and scored. Areas A and C of Chapter 6 can be read at criterion level, without necessarily working through every example.

Academics, researchers and trainers will likely be most interested in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 in full, which lay out the conceptual and philosophical basis of the model, in Section 5.1 on the principles behind its design, and in Appendix D on project complexity. Chapter 6 can be read at criterion level unless the purpose is to teach assessment practice in detail.

IPMA Project Excellence Award assessors and trainers should read Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 in full, together with Appendices A to D, which set out the award benefits, the awards process, the scoring approach and the assessment of complexity. Chapters 3 and 4 remain useful background, though they are ordinarily already covered during assessor training.

Consultants, whether internal or external, are advised to read Chapters 5 and 6 in full, and Chapter 7, paying particular attention to the guidance on agile, hybrid and small and medium-sized projects, which reflects the range of contexts most advisory work encounters. Appendix B, describing the formal award assessment process, can also be a relevant input for this user group.

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2. Purpose and Intended Users

2.1. Purpose of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® (IPMA PEB) has been developed through the collaboration of an international network of experienced practitioners, senior leaders, and researchers representing diverse industries, organizational maturities, and cultural contexts. This diversity ensures that the baseline reflects globally validated practices while remaining adaptable to local realities.

At its core, the IPMA PEB defines what "Project Excellence" means in practice and provides a structured approach for organizations to assess, and continuously improve it. In an era characterized by the "projectification of society" and a shifting business paradigm—from a primary focus on shareholder value to a broader commitment to economic, environmental, social, and governance (E&ESG) outcomes—excellence can no longer be separated from sustainability.

The IPMA PEB moves beyond traditional project success criteria—such as time, cost, and scope—and establishes a broader perspective that integrates:

- Strategic and E&ESG alignment (mission, vision, and long-term objectives)— ensuring the project supports the organization's mission, vision, long-term objectives, and sustainability commitments (e.g., the UN Sustainable Development Goals);
- Leadership and stakeholder value creation—fostering inclusive engagement that respects the interests of all stakeholders, including impacted communities, supply chains and non-human stakeholders;
- The dual dimension of sustainability: Securing both sustainability by the project (delivering sustainable results and benefits) and sustainability of the project (utilizing responsible, ethical, and resource-efficient delivery processes);

- Organizational learning and continuous improvement—driving resilience and adaptability in the face of complex global challenges.

In alignment with the IPMA standards ecosystem:

- The IPMA ICB® focuses on individual competences
- The IPMA OCB® focuses on organizational capabilities
- The IPMA Guide on Sustainable Project Management focuses on sustainability in project management
- The IPMA PEB bridges these dimensions by focusing on excellence in projects
- The IPMA REB focuses on research excellence

In this way, the IPMA PEB acts as a bridge between strategy, people, and execution, ensuring that organizational intent is effectively converted into sustainable results.

The baseline is intentionally generic and non-prescriptive. The standard embeds a human-centric mindset across all criteria, integrating design thinking and customer experience management to strengthen attention to all stakeholders. It is agnostic, and does not enforce nor presuppose specific methodologies, tools, or delivery models. Instead, it provides a principle-based framework that can be applied across:

- all industries and sectors;
- different project approaches and applications;
- projects, programs, and portfolios;
- organizations of varying size and maturity.

This flexibility allows organizations to tailor the model to their specific context, while still maintaining alignment with internationally recognized principles of excellence.

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From a practical perspective, the IPMA PEB serves multiple purposes:

- Assessment tool—enabling organizations to evaluate current performance, sustainability impact, and maturity;
- Improvement framework—identifying gaps and guiding targeted development actions across all project dimensions;
- Benchmarking instrument—comparing performance internally and externally against global excellence standards;
- Governance support tool—strengthening decision-making at the executive level;
- Capability development guide—supporting education, training, coaching, and mentoring, including preparation for IPMA's certifications.

Ultimately, the purpose of the IPMA PEB is to help organizations transition from delivering projects successfully to systematically delivering excellent, sustainable projects, thereby creating a lasting competitive advantage and fulfilling their societal responsibilities.

2.2. Common User Groups of the IPMA PEB

Thanks to its adaptable and comprehensive design, the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline (PEB) appeals to a wide range of individuals and groups. While many can benefit from its use, there are seven main categories of users who most frequently engage with the framework.

Senior Leaders and Executives

For top executives, the IPMA PEB offers a valuable strategic viewpoint on both organizational capability and project performance. With this standard, they can:

- see how Project Excellence drives the execution of strategy and delivers real economic and E&ESG value;
- define their responsibilities in project sponsorship, oversight, and governance;
- determine if their project delivery approach is sustainable, scalable, and supports the company's objectives;
- pinpoint weaknesses across teams, processes, and results, including environmental and social impact gaps;
- launch improvement efforts based on clear, objective data.

Crucially, the PEB encourages senior leaders to manage projects as essential drivers of sustainable transformation, not as isolated undertakings.

Project, Program, and Portfolio Managers; PMO Leaders

For those managing delivery and overseeing project offices, the IPMA PEB serves as both a hands-on guide and a tool for boosting performance. It supports the mind shift from planning-and-control-oriented managers to co-creating, responsible leaders.

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This framework helps them:

- convert strategic and ESG goals into structured results that can be delivered;
- foster strong alignment between leaders, processes, and end results;
- drive improvements through self-assessment, and benchmarking against others;
- strengthen partnerships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders across and beyond the organization;
- build greater consistency, ethical conduct, and quality across multiple initiatives.

Additionally, the PEB establishes a shared language that bridges the gap between operations and upper management, supporting better governance and more informed decisions.

Sustainability Professionals

For the individuals tasked with developing and advising on an organization's sustainability goals and strategies, the IPMA PEB provides a critical bridge between corporate intent and operational reality. It allows them to:

- understand how overarching E&ESG targets are translated into temporary project structures;
- collaborate effectively with project professionals using a common excellence framework;
- ensure that corporate sustainability directives are operationalized within project delivery rather than treated as disconnected initiatives.

Knowledge, Quality and Process Management Professionals

Those tasked with learning, process optimization, and quality assurance find that the IPMA PEB offers a holistic, organization-wide perspective.

It allows them to:

- conduct thorough evaluations of project performance, including compliance with reporting standards (e.g., emerging sustainability standards), satisfaction and value delivered to stakeholders;
- detect inefficiencies and find opportunities for improvement;
- systematically capture and share lessons learned and innovative approaches;
- align project practices with broader organizational standards and governance requirements.

Through the PEB, these professionals can move from simply checking quality to actively building sustainable organizational capability.

Academics, Researchers and Trainers

For educators, trainers, and researchers, the IPMA PEB is both a conceptual anchor and a practical resource for advancing project management as a profession.

This framework supports them in:

- shaping research agendas and empirical studies on Project Excellence;
- designing educational and training programs grounded in real-world application;
- blending behavioral, contextual, and technical skills into their teaching;
- preparing future professionals to handle complexity, navigate the paradigm shift of sustainability, and achieve lasting results.

The PEB also shifts the focus from just teaching methods to developing a holistic understanding of excellence and responsibility in project work.

IPMA Project Excellence Award Assessors and Trainers

For those involved in the IPMA Project Excellence Awards, both the PEB and its associated Project Excellence Model (PEM) provide a standardized and internationally respected method for assessment.

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These experts use the framework to:

- measure projects against established excellence benchmarks;
- highlight strengths and identify best practices, as well as areas needing improvement;
- ensure assessments are consistent, impartial, and encompass both sustainability by and of the project;
- help organizations get the most out of the awards process.

Beyond competition, this process fuels learning, benchmarking, and global sharing of knowledge regarding sustainable Project Excellence.

Consultants (Internal and External)

Consultants rely on the IPMA PEB as a reference point for their advisory and change management roles.

It enables them to:

- carry out independent reviews, assessments and evaluations;
- spot opportunities to enhance people, processes, and results;
- design and implement targeted change initiatives;
- deliver training, coaching, and mentoring to develop in-house expertise;
- guide organizations in adopting sustainable practices for Project Excellence.

Their outside perspective, combined with the structure of the PEB, accelerates the organization's journey towards stronger capabilities and improved, sustainable results.

Conclusion

Regardless of the user group, the IPMA PEB is more than just a set of recommendations: it is a coherent framework that brings together:

- Individual competences (ICB®)
- Organizational strengths (OCB®)
- Project delivery excellence (PEB/PEM ®)
- Sustainable development principles

By integrating these areas, the PEB helps organizations build project management systems that are coherent, sustainable, scalable, and ready for future challenges.

Ultimately, those who apply the IPMA PEB effectively don't just see better project results, they develop the organizational capability needed to consistently keep striving for excellence, a key advantage for long-term success and societal contribution.

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3. A project in its context

The PEB is applicable to different types of temporary organizations. Throughout this baseline, the term "project" is used as a generic label for temporary organizations established to create value, deliver change, or realize specific results. Depending on the context, these temporary organizations may be referred to as projects, programs, product development initiatives, transformation initiatives, or organizational change initiatives (or other names). The baseline can be applied to any of these temporary forms, which have some persistence, usually months to years. Consequently, the scope and complexity addressed by the IPMA PEB differ from those of short-lived activities such as workshops, design sprints, or facilitated problem-solving sessions. Similarly, the baseline is not primarily intended for emergency response or crisis mitigation operations, where immediate action may take precedence over planning and structured governance. The decision to organize an initiative as a project or program is a strategic choice made by the sponsoring organization.

This chapter describes the project as a temporary organization. It discusses specific tasks and challenges faced by project leaders and teams in managing their projects in their internal and external context.

3.1. What is a project?

3.1.1. Projects in organizations

Organizations invest money, time, capabilities, talents, management attention and other scarce resources in order to create something new, or to improve a situation: to create new infrastructure, conduct specific research, build new assets, increase customer satisfaction, adhere to new rules and regulations, organize events, improve ways of working, cut costs, increase market share, improve living conditions, support education, or contribute to sustainable development. The range of potential project objectives is virtually unlimited. Project management provides an organized approach for ensuring that these investments lead to the expected results and make an

impact. Furthermore, many projects are delivered through collaboration among multiple organizations, requiring coordination across organizational boundaries, cultures and governance structures.

A project is defined as a 'unique, temporary, multidisciplinary and organized endeavor to realize agreed deliverables with defined requirements, within agreed constraints' (IPMA ICB). ISO (21500:2021) defines a project as a temporary endeavor to achieve one or more defined objectives. These two definitions differ in emphasis — IPMA ICB centers on agreed deliverables, ISO 21500:2021 on defined objectives. The IPMA PEB draws on both, since Project Excellence requires attention to what is delivered, what changes as a result, and whether the original objectives are achieved. *Project success* is defined as 'the appreciation of the project's results by the various involved and impacted parties'. This definition extends beyond the traditional view of success as delivering outputs within agreed time, cost and scope constraints. It recognizes that projects are undertaken to achieve results and create value, and that project leaders and teams have a responsibility to contribute to the realization of the objectives for which the investment was made. This perspective acknowledges that stakeholder expectations may evolve throughout the project lifecycle and that different stakeholders may evaluate success differently. It also recognizes that project accountability extends beyond execution performance to include broader economic, social, environmental and governance impacts. Consequently, Project Excellence requires consideration not only of efficiency and effectiveness, but also of the wider consequences of project decisions, ways of working and results, as well as the use of scarce resources and the impact on society and ecology. This also broadens what 'value' means in a business case: from a narrow, monetary measure of business value to a wider concept that includes, but is not limited to, financial return.

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Over many decades, project management methodologies and tools have been used and developed to manage these different types of projects. Nevertheless, the number of "failed projects" is still high, depending on the definition of failure. Projects are over budget, run over schedule and/or do not deliver the required quality. More importantly, they fail to reach the anticipated results. Analyses of the causes of failure show a range of issues. Among them:

- Starting projects based on an overly optimistic view of their value, cost, time and risks
- Allowing deliberate distortion of the project for commercial or political reasons
- A lack of understanding of the project goals
- A lack of strategic alignment or failing to adjust to changes in the project's environment.
- Other common issues are insufficient stakeholder engagement, lack of leadership, poor team organization, or poor processes.

For this reason, it is important to start with, and regularly carry out, analysis of project management performance to define critical success factors and promote good practices. The IPMA PEB provides a concept and the tools for conducting these assessments and for systematically improving Project Excellence over time.

The IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®) defines projects as a means for implementing organizational strategies and proposes the Balanced Scorecard as a tool for 'translating' the strategic goals from strategy to the project perspective. It is important at the end of a project to analyze whether the project results met the stated objectives as perceived by the stakeholders. Other checks may verify whether the project delivered outputs in the most efficient way using scarce resources effectively.

Project development or Product development?

Organizations often choose project management as the preferred approach for organizing investments and change initiatives. However, project-based delivery is not the only organizational model available. For example, organizations that continuously develop new features and enhancements to existing assets or continuously improve their services and the quality of

services could also choose to organize themselves successfully along value streams, and would be product delivery organizations. In many IT-heavy organizations, this is the case, since the assets created are easy to adjust and improve on (it is easier to add a feature to software than an additional line to a bridge). The PEB is not created to assess the success of these types of organizations, since the organization for impact is not temporary. Change is continuous, not stepwise. Nevertheless, the PEB may still be useful for assessing such organizations. The PEB is useful for stepwise change and stepwise improvements. It is less applicable for continuous change / improvements (usually signaled by continuous funding as well).

Projects and programs

Programs are also temporary initiatives. IPMA ICB defines a program as "A temporary organization of interrelated projects and business activities managed in a coordinated way to enable the implementation of change, and the realization of benefits to achieve a strategic goal." ISO (21500:2021) defines a program as a group of program components (projects, programs, other initiatives, routines) managed in a controlled way to realize benefits.

Often, program components will be projects. *Program success* is defined by the appreciation of the changes and benefits by the various involved and impacted parties. From this definition, it is clear that a program is not just a set of related projects; program steering focuses on the realization of benefits and change. The IPMA PEB can be applied for assessing programs just as well as for assessing projects. However, for example, the processes selected in in criterion B1, for steering a program, are different from the processes for projects.

In business practice, the term 'program' is used to describe a wide variety of concepts. The following classification is based on actual practice:

- Strategic programs are intended to bring the company an immediate strategic advantage.
- Operational programs coordinate activities to optimize existing processes so as not to disrupt day-to-day business.
- Multi-project programs are intended to leverage synergies between projects that have something in common (e.g. the same technology or the same bottleneck resource) but otherwise pursue different objectives.

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- Large-scale projects are sometimes referred to as programs simply because of their scale.

Project Organizations

Organizations differ in what they consider to be "within" or "outside" the project. Within this standard, the project teams (including external project teams), the project management team, the sponsor, and the steering committees or other governing bodies that directly steer the project are all considered internal to the project. Partners are likewise considered part of the project organization.

Suppliers are included where their relationship with the project—their influence on its success and their involvement in steering towards it—makes them effectively part of the project; a purely transactional, arm's-length supplier is considered to be part of the project's environment. The permanent (line) organization is also outside the project. Collectively, these internal parties are referred to as the *project organization*. For some partners or suppliers the line between "inside" and "outside" is thin. When assessing excellence, reach a joint decision with the project team and then apply the criteria consistently. The model will still provide the results necessary.

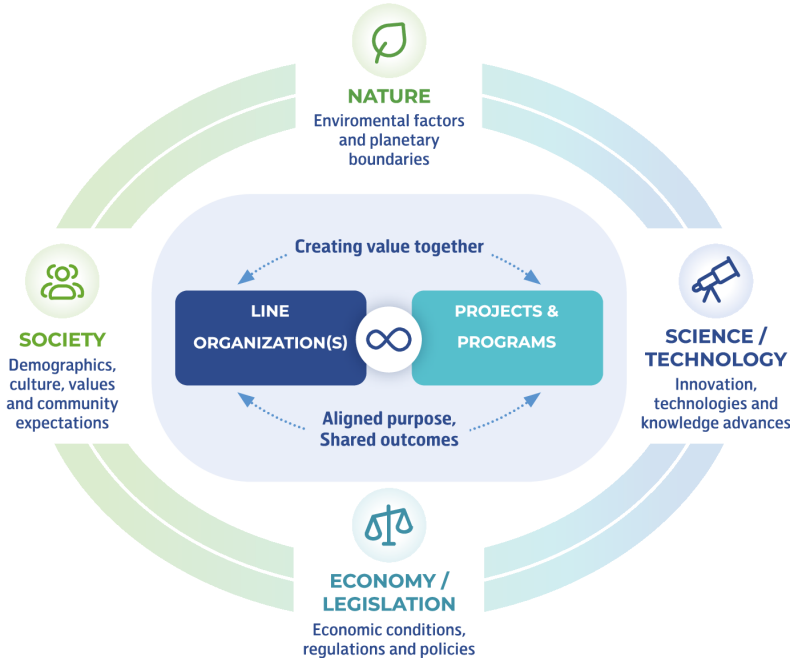


Figure 3: The project organization in its context

3.1.2. Outputs, Results, Benefits

Every project has a purpose: to create a better world by delivering benefits to partners, customers and society. Therefore, projects do not only deliver outputs. They do not just provide a new asset. Their outputs only provide the value anticipated, the objective, if they are used well, if they are maintained well, if they deliver the intended result and impact. The reason for starting the project, for investing scarce resources into this endeavor, can only be successfully reached if the project steers towards this and if enough attention is spent, within the project, from the start, to benefits realization. This is the core of the project.

ISO 21500:2021 defines output as the aggregated tangible or intangible deliverables that form the project's result, and result as the change resulting from the use of the output from a project.

Successful projects are usually underpinned by a live, maturing theory of change, a business case, considering the objectives of all constituent stakeholders. By ensuring user adoption, establishing the necessary

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supporting capabilities and organizational conditions, and integrating change management and benefits realization activities from the outset, projects significantly increase their ability to achieve their intended purpose and create lasting value. This outcome-oriented perspective reflects the fundamental reason for undertaking projects: not simply to produce deliverables, but to create meaningful change and realize expected benefits.

Results become visible after output is delivered and handed over. Real benefits start showing usually after results have been visible and measurable for a substantial amount of time. Projects that deliver intermediate results are able to steer based on real measurable results and potentially benefits. Projects that are unable to deliver intermediate outputs should ensure they develop and deliver the measurement approach. Otherwise no learning can ever take place. And, if measurement really is impossible during the lifetime of the initiative, assumptions should be created and validated. Usually, these are referred to as a "Theory of Change (ToC)". During the lifetime of the initiative, based on this ToC, data and evidence can be gathered to validate or invalidate it.

While projects focus on delivering outputs that enable results and benefits, programs focus on delivering results and organizational change in order to realize benefits and strategic value. When assessing a program using the PEB, Area C should be extended to cover benefits realization.

With the realization that results and benefits might only be measurable some time after initiative delivery, the initiative not only needs to ensure measurement of these expected results and benefits is delivered, but also needs to ensure that ownership of these is clear. Not only ownership of the measurements (performing them, reporting on them), but also ownership of subsequent actions should things change, during or after the initiative.

The PEB Value Creation Model shown in Figure 4 shows how the outside world (customers, regulators, competitors, technology etc) generates the need for starting / adapting an initiative. It also shows how this scopes the project or program, and how this generates change and value through its results, and lasting impact through its benefits, feeding back into the outside world. It also shows internal and external feedback loops.

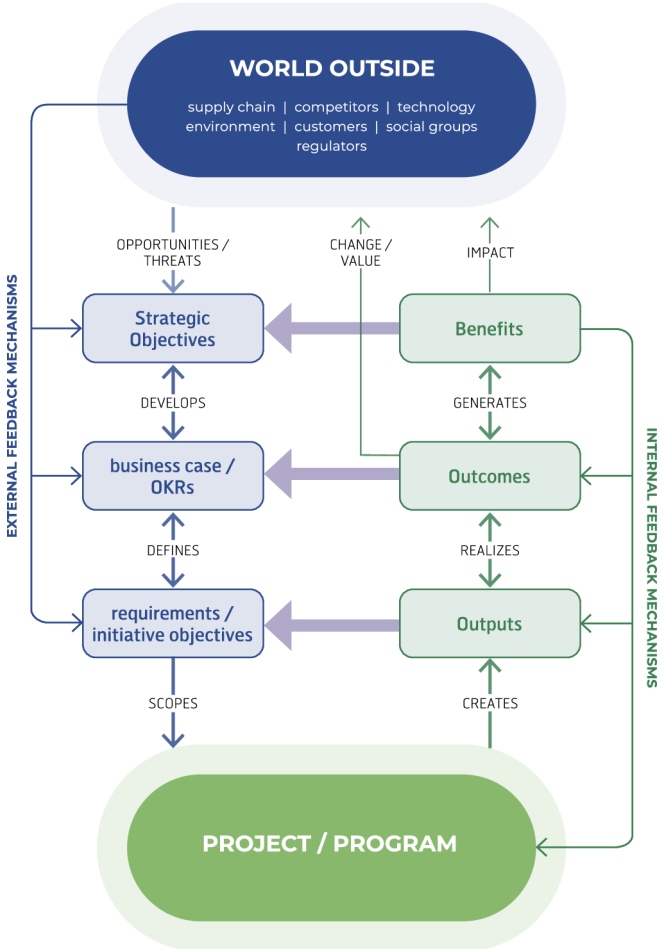


Figure 4: PEB Value Creation Model

3.1.3. The project as a temporary organization

ISO 21500:2021 differentiates projects from operations by stating that projects are performed by temporary teams, are non-repetitive and provide unique deliverables. Project management differs from other management disciplines because of the temporary and unique nature of projects. Temporary means that the project has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined, limited scope and resources.

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While projects and programs are non-repetitive and create unique outputs and results, they do not operate in isolation. They rely on people, capabilities, processes, technologies, materials, funding and other resources provided by the constituent organizations and stakeholders. Many of these supporting activities are ongoing, repetitive and operational in nature. Therefore, project work typically combines unique project-specific activities with established organizational capabilities and processes.

Projects may be established as independent temporary organizations, or as temporary structures that bring together people and resources from different departments, functions or organizations to achieve a specific objective. Team members may be assigned on a full-time or part-time basis, and governance arrangements may vary considerably. Consequently, projects can take many forms depending on their purpose, context, size and complexity.

The following characteristics distinguish projects and programs from businessasusual operations:

- Projects and programs are *unique and purpose-driven*. They are established to create new value, realize change and achieve results that justify the investment of scarce resources. Activities, responsibilities, governance arrangements and delivery approaches often need to be specifically designed for, or adapted to, the project context, rather than simply inherited from operational processes.

- A dedicated program or project organization needs to be *established*, either as a part of or in addition to the existing permanent organization, or even as a new, separate (legal) entity; A project never just "*is*"; it is created. An explicit decision is taken to start the project (and make the investments available), and usually explicit decisions are taken to stop a project (when the result is delivered, or when the project's cause is no longer valid).

- Employees from the constituent organizations may be *assigned to work* on a full-time or part-time basis for a project. In matrix environments, individuals often have dual responsibilities, contributing simultaneously to both the project and their functional organization, as well as receiving guidelines and expectations from both.
- Project teams need to *develop their own culture and management approach*— working relationships and project-specific internal procedures and guidelines that differ from those of the constituent organization(s).

The temporary project organization has its own rules, procedures, roles, communication and reporting structures, which can be set up quickly, then dismantled quickly after project results have been achieved (or when the project is disbanded). Even when project organizations are temporary, they will change during the project. This might be due to changes in the work of the project itself, or due to changes in the external environment causing the need to adapt, to fulfill the project's purpose.

Projects are seen as collaborative environments, in which people and organizations jointly work to achieve the purpose for which the project has been set up. A project therefore is a temporary, adaptive, social network, set up to achieve certain benefits. As soon as those benefits are reached, or no longer achievable, or no longer important, the social structure can be, should be, disbanded. Stakeholders actively choose to participate, to actively join the project, achieve their own (private) objectives through the project. Many successful projects therefore have adopted a "one team" approach, in which all objectives for all stakeholders are taken into account. This leads to the definition of project success as mentioned in Section 3.1.1. Viewing projects as collaborative social systems also highlights the importance of psychological safety, leadership, building culture, individual wellbeing and alignment with the purpose of the project and the benefits it seeks to deliver.

The IPMA OCB applies the concept of competences to groups of people (e.g. project teams and organizations). It emphasizes that team competence is much more than the collective competences of its individuals. The coherence of that group, with all the dynamic interactions between members and relevant stakeholders, constitutes a social system. Building and maintaining this collective capability is a key responsibility of project leadership. Consequently, a project can be viewed not only as a temporary organization, but also as a temporary social system with its own collective competence, culture and capability to create value.

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3.1.4. Processes in a project

ISO 21500:2021 defines a project as a unique set of processes consisting of coordinated and controlled activities with a start and end date, performed to achieve project objectives. The following three major types of project processes are defined in the international standard:

- Project (and program) management processes, which are specific to project management and determine how the activities selected for the project are managed.
- Delivery (product) processes, which result in the specification and provision of a particular product, service or results and which vary depending on the particular industry and type of project deliverable (e.g., design, construction, commissioning). In the agile world, specific iterative delivery processes and incremental delivery are common, leading to non-linear delivery.
- Support processes, which provide relevant and valuable support to product and project management processes (e.g. logistics, accounting, safety, HR etc.).

In general, all processes follow a plan-do-check-act approach, in such a way that they are evaluated and adapted to the situation-at-hand. The frequency and intensity of these feedback and adaptation cycles may vary depending on the nature of the process, the level of uncertainty and the complexity of the project and its environment.

Project leaders and teams are responsible for identifying the processes required to achieve project objectives, ensuring that the necessary resources and capabilities are available, and aligning these processes with the project's context and delivery approach. Processes should be consciously selected, tailored, continuously improved or even dropped or redesigned completely, to remain effective and relevant throughout the project lifecycle. Successful projects use these three types of processes in an integral, balanced, coherent, adaptive approach focused on delivering project success.

The same 3 types of processes also applies to programs. Program delivery processes encompass and coordinate the project management and delivery processes of individual projects that contribute to the program's objectives. The program management processes are specific to program management and potentially built upon a program management process standard.

3.2. A project in its external context

The project environment may impact the project performance and its success. ISO 21500:2021 defines factors of the project environment that the project team should consider:

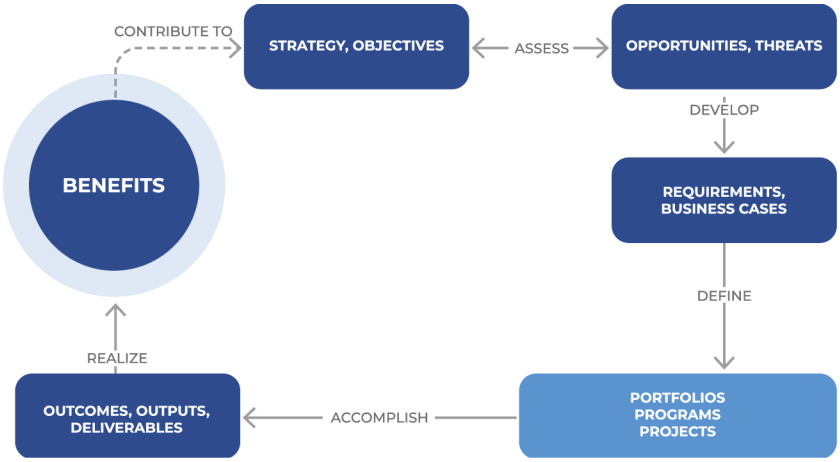


Figure 5: Strategy implementation according to ISO 21500:2021

- Factors outside the organizational boundary, such as socio-economic, geographical, political, regulatory, technological and ecological;
- Factors inside the organizational boundary, such as strategy, technology, project management maturity, resource availability, organizational culture, and structure.

According to ISO 21500:2021 '... factors outside the organizational boundary may have an impact on the project by imposing constraints or introducing risks affecting the project. Although these factors are often beyond the control of the project manager, they should still be considered'.

Projects are investments to change the world, to impact the project's environment in a positive way. While they provide outputs and achieve results, they also use (sometimes scarce) resources, and quite often have a negative impact, either during the project or afterwards. Project leaders and project teams need to take responsibility for sustainability, i.e. improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting ecosystems. If possible, projects should not only minimize depletion of valuable resources, minimizing CO_2 emissions, but also seek to

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have a broader regenerative impact. IPMA's Guide on Sustainable Project Management provides further insights.

Within the IPMA PEM, the integration of sustainable development concepts into all aspects of project management is considered essential, which should ensure that a balance is achieved between economic goals, social sustainability and environmental sustainability.

Applying a sustainability perspective often broadens the range of stakeholders that need to be considered. In addition to sponsors, customers and project participants, projects need to consider the interests of local communities, regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations, environmental groups, future users and other parties affected directly or indirectly by project results.

Projects are impacted by a variety of political, social and technological factors. These may provide additional constraints and should be considered by the project leader and the project team. Consequently, project management activities should be adjusted according to laws and regulations, which may apply in a specific country or industry.

The number, diversity and interdependence of internal and external factors affecting a project are important contributors to project complexity. As complexity increases, so does the need for effective leadership, stakeholder engagement, governance, adaptability and integrated management approaches.

3.3. Projects and Complexity

As noted above, projects do not exist in isolation. They operate within a broader context that both shapes the project and is shaped by it. That context may be relatively stable and predictable, allowing future developments to be anticipated with reasonable confidence. Or it may be dynamic and uncertain: shaped by technological disruption, shifting stakeholder expectations, market developments, geopolitical events, regulatory change and broader societal trends.

Because every project is unique, it often involves elements that are *complicated*: intricate, but knowable. These can be handled in the usual way: analyze the problem, develop and where useful prototype several possible solutions in parallel, test them, and implement good practice. *Complexity* is

different. It emerges when the environment turns volatile, changing in unexpected ways and at unexpected speed; when many stakeholders pursue shifting and competing needs that affect both the project and its environment; when new technology emerges, when society changes, when disruption reshapes the situation faster than it can be understood. In such conditions cause and effect are no longer clearly connected, more than one reading of events can be defensible, and change becomes unpredictable.

Projects operating in these conditions are best seen, and organized, as complex adaptive systems. Excellent projects recognize this and build the resilience and adaptability needed to succeed despite it. The capacity to sense change, interpret what it means, and respond deliberately is therefore a defining aspect of Project Excellence. It shapes leadership behavior, stakeholder engagement, team culture, decision-making and the design of management systems. In complex environments, adaptability matters more than planning, and learning and experimentation matter more than control.

3.4. A project in its organizational context

3.4.1. Organizational Context

A project is usually executed as an investment initiative of a permanent (parent) organization. In many cases, projects are also undertaken through partnerships, alliances or other forms of collaboration involving multiple organizations.

Project activities are usually linked with pre-project and post-project activities, such as business case development or transition to operations or maintenance. Projects might also be linked to activities during the project, regarding quality, intermediate deliverables, contracts, hiring, supply, facilities etc.

Projects (and programs) are temporary organizations. Standardized project management processes and value-added processes that are necessary for the realization of the project exist in many organizations. Even though these processes often significantly accelerate the planning of the project, they have to be adapted to the specific characteristics of a project so that they can be successfully executed.

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Project organizations are team-based and bring people together from different (functional) areas of an organization (e.g. sales, development, production, marketing, IT) to carry out new, interdisciplinary and often complex tasks. Their purpose is often to enable collaboration across organizational boundaries in order to achieve objectives that cannot be effectively delivered through existing operational structures alone. Sometimes, projects use reporting and decision-making processes that have been specially established for the project. In many organizations, these processes are standardized and possibly only need a little adaptation. Project personnel are usually allocated for the duration of the project to an agreed proportion of working time and according to established organizational rules. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities, both in the project and the constituent line organization, is an important prerequisite for efficient operations, enabling the project staff to complete their tasks effectively. Where project resource requirements create capacity constraints within the parent organization, additional measures such as backfilling operational roles may be necessary. Organizations introducing projects should execute the necessary organizational adjustments to align the project and the line organization. Failure to achieve such alignment may result in resource conflicts, unclear priorities and reduced organizational performance.

The organizational structure, culture, systems, and processes affect project processes, project team organization, and culture. The project management approach that works in one organization may not work efficiently in every organization and for every project.

3.4.2. Project governance

The IPMA OCB specifies governance as another key function to be considered in project, program and portfolio management. Organizational governance consists of the framework and principles by which an organization is directed and regulated. Project governance, as defined in ISO 21505:2017, 'includes, but is not limited to, those areas of organizational governance that are specifically related to project activities'. Project governance establishes organizational policies, processes and methodologies to be used in projects, the management structure, limits of authority for decision-making, etc. One of the IPMA PEM principles is that project leaders and the project team align their activities with principles and policies defined by the project governance. Effective governance is a key contributor to project success, while weak governance is frequently the most important cause of delays, cost overruns, strategic misalignment and failure to realize intended benefits.

Project governance sets guardrails for decision-making in three distinct areas:

- Compliance and accountability, ensuring that all activities and outputs generated by the project comply with the relevant rules and regulations.
- Purpose and value realization: ensuring that the business case and purpose of the initiative remain valid, and taking decisive action when the purpose changes, or when the purpose of the project might not be fulfilled by the anticipated results.
- External alignment and sustainability, ensuring that the project performs well in its external context, in its political, societal, economic, ecological, and technological environment.

Project Excellence requires governance mechanisms that effectively balance these three dimensions throughout the project lifecycle.

The three dimensions above also link to corporate governance. Corporate governance feeds into, and is implemented by, the project governance. Project governance should follow all applicable corporate governance rules.

3.4.3. The project in the context of a program and project portfolio

Projects are often initiated, planned and executed within an organization's program or portfolio (or sometimes as part of the portfolio of several organizations).

In IPMA ICB and IPMA OCB, a program is defined as a "temporary organization of interrelated program components (constituent initiatives) managed in a coordinated way to enable the implementation of change and the realization of benefits". Therefore, a program could partially consist of a number of projects that are designed to provide benefits and results on a strategic level, so it is more than the sum of all projects and their deliverables. Programs are also managed as a temporary organization and use project and program management methodologies. The IPMA PEB can be used to assess programs or individual constituent projects. It is not designed for assessing other constituent initiatives, which are neither a project nor a program.

A portfolio is defined as a "set of projects and/or programs, which are not necessarily related, brought together to provide for optimum use of the

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organization's resources and to achieve the organization's strategic goals while minimizing the level of portfolio risk". Portfolio management is a permanent operation and is about the centralized management of processes, methods, and technologies used in an organization to analyze and manage current or proposed projects based on key characteristics. The objectives are to select the most appropriate (based on the chosen strategy and the available resources) programs and projects from all proposed initiatives to determine the optimal resource mix for delivery and to schedule activities to achieve the organizational strategic, operational and financial goals, while observing constraints imposed by stakeholders and other internal or external factors.

Project and program objectives should be aligned with the organizational strategy, program goals, and KPIs or OKRs. Project management processes should be aligned with the program and project portfolio structures and processes.

The IPMA PEB can be applied to projects and programs as temporary organizations. It is not intended to assess portfolio management itself, as portfolio management serves a fundamentally different purpose and operates (continuously, not temporarily) through different governance, decision-making and management processes.

4. Introducing Project Excellence

4.1. The concept of excellence

Excellence means striving consistently to perform at a high level—not occasionally, not by accident, but through discipline, clarity, and continuous improvement. Striving for excellence is the ongoing approach of doing things better.

Excellence is characterized by the systematic and continuous pursuit of superior performance across all dimensions that matter: value creation, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, leadership quality, employee engagement, and sustainability. It is not a single achievement, but a repeatable approach built on discipline, learning, innovation, and accountability.

Excellence enables an organization to consistently create outstanding value for customers, employees, owners, and society.

To strive for excellence means to make a deliberate, ongoing effort to achieve the highest possible standard of performance—not just once, but consistently over time. It is based on a mindset and an ongoing practice. Studies have shown that the most important way to achieve excellent performance is to practice. It is more about committing to continuous improvement based, for example, on the PDCA approach than about trying to achieve perfection.

Basic principles of excellence are:

- Excellence is the pursuit of performance that exceeds ordinary expectations and consistently creates value.
- Excellence is a continuously moving target; it can never be fully reached, and there will always be room for improvement and development; so: striving for excellence is a continuous journey.
- Excellence is achieved through continuous learning, adaptation, innovation and disciplined practice.

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- Achieving excellence is not a short-term concept. It requires dedication and long-term efforts. It results in organizational capabilities that cannot easily be copied and that provide a competitive advantage.

4.2. The concept of Project Excellence

IPMA's mission is to promote the recognition of project management and engage stakeholders around the world in advancing the project management discipline. This is reflected by the IPMA PEB as the concept, the IPMA PEM as the assessment instrument, and the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards as a platform to promote role models for Project Excellence by rewarding excellent performance in project management. It facilitates the identification and spread of new and brilliant approaches to project management that have a proven link to project success.

Project Excellence is a set of characteristics that have been demonstrated in actual projects. Due to the nature of the developments and innovations in the project management field, it is not and will never be a clearly defined, prescriptive collection of approaches, methods or practices.

Excellent projects demonstrate excellent performance across all dimensions of project management, including the management of people, purpose, processes, resources and results. Results are only credited insofar as they are a consequence of leadership and management processes. Excellent projects apply the approaches and methods of project management in professional and innovative ways, reflecting on their own approach, methodologies and results in order to learn from them and take action for improvement when appropriate.

Excellent projects often experience the need to develop new approaches, which may go beyond, or even contradict, existing approaches or standards, methods, tools or techniques, in order to respond to the needs of the project. However, such decisions are always made after careful analysis of the situation and consideration of alternative solutions.

Innovations play an important role in project management by improving efficiency, adaptability, collaboration, and strategic value creation. Innovation is not simply the introduction of a new technology—it is the deliberate application of a novel management, technical, or organizational approach that creates measurable value and improves project performance or results. Innovation is the successful implementation of a new or significantly

improved product, service, process, governance model, or management approach that solves a project challenge, creates measurable value for stakeholders, and can be sustained or replicated beyond the project.

In the context of IPMA Project Excellence, innovation is demonstrated when it:

- addresses a real project challenge or opportunity;
- is intentionally designed and implemented;
- delivers measurable improvements compared with previous practice;
- creates value for stakeholders, the organization, or society; and
- can be sustained, scaled, or transferred to future projects.

For example, process innovations aim to use better workflows or methodologies, technological innovations offer the use of advanced tools and systems, organizational innovations cover changing team structures or adapting governance models. Organizations that integrate innovative practices into project management are generally better equipped to handle complexity, technological change, and competitive pressure.

Project Excellence encourages the responsible use of research, experimentation, learning and innovation to improve project performance. Innovation is not an objective in itself; its value lies in its contribution to achieving project objectives and creating sustainable results. The main focus remains the successful management of the project and its results.

The professional community can learn from excellent projects, enrich its knowledge and so advance project management as a discipline.

Excellent projects lead to added value beyond the actual project goals, thereby enriching businesses, societies, the environment, etc.

Striving for Project Excellence means executing the right projects in the right way, ensuring results are sustainable, aligned with organizational goals, and supported by engaged stakeholders. For a Portfolio Management Office or leadership team, striving for excellence means creating a culture and system in which the organization continually improves its abilities. A Portfolio Management Office can support project teams to continuously improve and spread experiences between projects.

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To strive for Project Excellence means to make a deliberate, ongoing effort to achieve the highest possible standard of performance—not just once, but consistently over time. For each project, it means selecting the most appropriate methods, approaches, processes, and resources, implement them, and check regularly throughout the project lifecycle whether they could be improved—and then planning and introducing improvements.

4.3. The Mindset for Project Excellence

The Mindset for Project Excellence is established when individuals and organizations consistently demonstrate behaviors that promote value creation, proactive leadership, and continuous improvement. Developing this mindset requires a clearly defined framework that sets expectations for project conduct and organizational support. The foundation is a shared understanding of what "excellence" represents in the specific organizational context. This includes a consistent leadership message that reinforces the approach to strive for excellence throughout the organization.

A central component of the excellence mindset is proactive leadership and ownership. Project managers and teams must be empowered to make informed decisions, raise concerns at an early stage, and take responsibility for guiding the project toward its intended results. This is supported by transparent decision rights, targeted development of leadership capabilities, and a culture in which early escalation is regarded as responsible conduct rather than a sign of weakness. Such an environment encourages professionals to act with foresight and to focus on value creation and result realization rather than procedural compliance.

Value orientation represents another key element. Projects must be planned, executed, and monitored with clear attention to results and benefits, not merely outputs or activity completion. This requires value-based planning, systematic benefit validation, and continuous alignment with business objectives. Regular stakeholder engagement reviews, prototypes, or early demonstrations help confirm that the intended value is being realized and serve as a safeguard against misalignment.

Leadership behavior is a determining factor in the development of the excellence mindset. Leaders and managers must exemplify the principles they expect others to follow—such as transparency, objectivity, integrity, value focus, and continuous improvement. They reinforce the mindset by responding constructively to early warnings, asking outcome-oriented

questions, and holding teams accountable for progress and learning. Leaders also play a key role in sponsoring and guiding change, by providing a clear sense of purpose, explaining why change is needed and how it supports the organization's long-term direction. They actively involve key stakeholders, listen to concerns, and help people make sense of what the change means for their daily work. By removing obstacles and providing the necessary resources, they make it easier for teams to experiment with new ways of working and to embed successful practices.

Systematic capability development completes the framework. This includes leadership development, coaching and mentoring structures, communities of practice, and recognition of outstanding project behavior. It also includes the systematic capture and sharing of lessons learned and good practices across projects and programs. When excellence is visibly supported and acknowledged, it becomes embedded in the organizational culture and is sustained over time.

In summary, the Mindset for Project Excellence is formed through a combination of clear (but regularly adapted when needed) and consistently communicated expectations, proactive leadership, results orientation, evidence-based decision-making, strong stakeholder relationships, supportive governance structures, role-model leadership, and continuous capability development. Realworld examples demonstrate that when these elements are consistently applied, organizations achieve sustained, high-quality project results even under complex conditions.

4.4. Continuous improvement as a foundation for excellence

When working towards Project Excellence, the emphasis should be on continuous improvement and constant learning. This continuous improvement principle is in line with the Deming/Shewhart (PDCA) cycle. This standard also links the PDCA cycle to continuous learning.

Project managers seeking to introduce excellence into their projects will develop and systematically adapt their project management approach from the principle of continuous improvement and learning.

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In principle this continuous improvement and learning cycle follows an iterative, four-step management method:

- **Plan**: In the start-up phase of the project, the project team selects procedures, methods, approaches and tools that are appropriate to plan, execute, monitor and control the project and reflect the complexity of the project. Sources considered by the team may include industry or company management standards, specific definitions of processes or process elements created for the project, etc. Where existing standards or methodologies do not adequately address the project's needs, the team adapts them or develops project-specific procedures, methods, approaches, and tools.
- **Do**: The project team implements the selected procedures, methods, approaches, and tools in the actual project and makes use of them.
- **Check**: The project team regularly evaluates the procedures, methods, approaches and tools used in the project to determine whether they are (still) appropriate and optimal for managing the project and whether they lead to expected results and/or need to be improved. They will also check whether the assumptions on which these were built are still valid. This evaluation supports both single-loop learning (improving execution) and double-loop learning (questioning underlying assumptions, decisions and approaches). The team should therefore ask not only whether activities were performed effectively, but also whether the chosen procedures, methods, approaches and tools remain the most appropriate.
- **Act**: Based on these evaluations, the project team analyzes and prioritizes the findings and agrees on the activities to be planned and executed to improve or completely change the project management approach.

Based on these findings, the PDCA cycle starts again:

- **Plan**: Based on the input from the previous cycle, the project team improves those procedures, methods, approaches and tools where potential for improvement has been identified. The team may also select, adapt or introduce new approaches where appropriate (e.g. a new procurement process for capital goods with long lead times)—based on double-loop learning;
- **Do**: The project team implements and starts using the modified or new procedures, methods, approaches and tools in the actual project;
- **Check**: The project team regularly evaluates the established/modified/new procedures, methods, approaches, and tools

used in the project to determine whether they are appropriate and optimal for managing the project and whether they lead to expected results and/or need to be improved; They will also check whether the assumptions on which these were built are still valid. Evaluating this will lead again to single and double loop learning.

- **Act**: Based on these evaluations, the project team analyzes and prioritizes the findings and agrees on the activities to be planned and executed to improve or change the project management approach.

Based on these findings, the PDCA cycle continues throughout the project lifecycle.

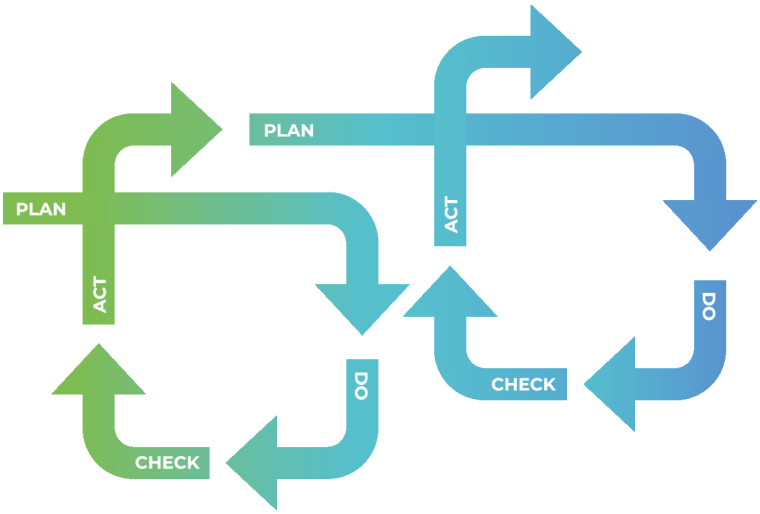


Figure 6: The PDCA concept

The PDCA approach leads to continuous improvement in the management of projects, using single loop and double loop learning. Therefore, it enables the project team to achieve benefits and strive for excellence.

SIDE NOTE: While important, triple-loop learning has not been explicitly incorporated into the IPMA PEB. Triple-loop learning focuses on examining and improving how individuals, teams and organizations learn, adapt and develop their capabilities. For organizations and projects where this is important, it can quite easily be addressed using the PDCA approach.

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4.5. Improvement Possibilities for Project Excellence

Organizations generate improvement possibilities for Project Excellence by establishing systematic mechanisms that reveal insights, expose weaknesses, and enable continuous refinement of project performance. This already begins at (or sometimes before) the start of the project: are the assumptions underlying the project explicit, transparent, realistic and regularly challenged? Another effective way is the introduction of structured learning cycles within and between projects: short retrospectives, milestone reviews, and cross-project exchanges that create a consistent flow of actionable lessons. These routines ensure that learning occurs during the full project lifecycle, not only at project closure.

A second lever is transparent performance measurement. Leading indicators such as requirement stability, risk exposure, stakeholder sentiment, and decision bottlenecks provide early signals of misalignment and highlight areas where improvements can be made. When these indicators are regularly monitored, organizations gain the visibility required to initiate timely corrective actions and support evidence-based decision-making.

Improvement opportunities also arise from data-driven analysis. Variance studies, scenario models, and root-cause analyses help identify recurring issues and systemic patterns. This evidence-based approach replaces anecdotal observations with reliable insights that can be translated into targeted enhancements in governance, processes, leadership practices or capabilities.

In addition, organizations can uncover improvement potential by actively engaging stakeholders. Structured feedback—through interviews, surveys, expectation-alignment workshops, or early demonstrations—reveals gaps in communication, value perception, and user needs. These insights support more effective alignment between stakeholder expectations and project results and identify improvement areas that might otherwise remain hidden.

Creating a climate of psychological safety is critically important. When team members (or anyone else in the project) can raise risks early, challenge assumptions, and express concerns without fear of negative consequences, previously unseen improvement opportunities emerge naturally. Transparency becomes a driver of learning and continuous improvement.

Finally, cross-functional forums, continuous improvement processes (potentially driven by the Project/Portfolio Management Office), and regular leadership reflection ensure that insights are not isolated but translated into organization-wide advancements. These mechanisms allow organizations to recognize patterns across the portfolio, adjust structures, refine methods, and strengthen capability development.

Together, these practices form a continuous and reliable source of learning and improvement opportunities that support the long-term development of Project Excellence and strengthen the organization's ability to consistently deliver successful and sustainable results.

4.6. The Role of Leadership, Governance, and Organizational Cultures as Enablers of Project Excellence

Leaders shape the culture of the organization and direct resources and efforts towards creating sustainable value, with excellence achievements serving as visible evidence of this value. Therefore, leadership quality is imperative and cannot be confined to the professional environment alone. It needs to be founded on personal maturity, integrity, self-awareness and a lifelong interest in personal development. However, the best kind of leadership is not about a 'one size fits all' approach. It is much more a matter of adapting to the context, values and expectations of the specific environment.

Project Excellence is an approach in which an organization combines strong leadership, effective governance, and a supportive organizational culture into a coherent system. Together, these three elements create the behavioral, structural, and environmental conditions under which projects can consistently deliver high-quality, value-driven results. Project Excellence is not only the result of individual effort but of an organizational ecosystem deliberately designed to support continuous improvement.

Leadership sets the direction and shapes the behavioral expectations for successful project delivery. Leaders articulate clear priorities, and communicate standards for value orientation, transparency, and risk handling. They grant appropriate decision rights, respond constructively to early escalations, and reinforce evidence-based decision-making. Leadership also establishes a learning mindset by encouraging reflection, acknowledging lessons learned, and treating feedback as a strategic asset. Through their

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day-to-day behavior, leaders act as role models and signal whether excellence-oriented behaviors (such as ownership, discipline, collaboration and adaptability) are genuinely expected.

Project governance provides the structural foundation that makes excellence repeatable and reliable. It clarifies roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, ensuring that project sponsors, owners, managers, and the Project Management Office operate within a transparent and consistent framework. Project governance defines decision-making structures and escalation paths, enabling timely and well-informed decisions. Through portfolio management, it ensures strategic alignment and appropriate resource allocation.

Project culture (potentially influenced by organizational cultures) determines whether the behaviors and structures needed for excellence are applied in practice. A culture that promotes transparency, trust, and psychological safety enables early risk reporting and honest communication—critical prerequisites for predictable project delivery. Culture also reinforces proactive behavior and ownership by encouraging individuals to take responsibility, challenge assumptions, and collaborate across functions. A strong learning culture ensures that retrospectives, feedback loops, and knowledge sharing are integral to how projects operate, creating a continuous flow of improvement opportunities. Moreover, a value-oriented culture ensures teams focus on meaningful results rather than simply completing activities or deliverables.

In an integrated way, leadership, project governance, and project culture enable Project Excellence. Leadership shapes the excellence mindset; project governance structures decision-making for excellence; project culture embeds the norms that make excellence sustainable. When these three elements are aligned, projects achieve consistent, high-quality project results and are better equipped to manage complexity, uncertainty, and strategic change.

4.7. The link between competence and excellence

Competence is the demonstrated application of knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve intended results in a specific context.

Competence is a fundamental pillar and crucial enabler for striving for Project Excellence because it determines the ability of individuals and teams to transform organizational expectations, governance structures, and leadership

guidance into reliable project results. Project Excellence is therefore not achievable without the right combination of technical, behavioral, and contextual competences applied consistent across the project lifecycle.

Two of the key IPMA standards, IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB®) and IPMA organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®), are built on the concept of competences for the individuals and organizations respectively. The concept of Project Excellence complements these two standards by providing a practical framework for assessing how competences are applied in real projects and how they contribute to successful results, learning, and continuous improvement throughout the lifetime of a project.

The IPMA PEB assumes that the potential of individual and organizational competences is used to achieve project success and to realize excellence. This is accomplished through a good understanding of the needs of the project and the potential of all key project stakeholders, while aligning leadership styles, project strategy and processes.

The IPMA PEB standard not only promotes continuous adaptation and improvement based on observed results, but also requires factual evidence that competences are continuously developed and used to achieve and improve project success. Assessing Project Excellence helps to identify which individual, team, and organizational competences can be further developed and how competence development can contribute to future project success and sustainable value creation.

4.8. Stopping a project well

There can be very good reasons to stop a project: when its rationale — the business case, the purpose — no longer holds; when the expected results can no longer be achieved, or no longer in time; or when support for the project has fallen away. Stopping for the right reasons, in the right way, at the right time is among the hardest decisions a project management team and its governing bodies face. This is not least because the natural tendency is to keep investing in a course already begun rather than accept that earlier investment is lost (sunk cost fallacy). And stopping is rarely a single act: winding a project down responsibly can itself take substantial time, effort and budget. It can also drain energy from people whose morale is already low, while not being seen as delivering a positive impact.

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Doing this well is a genuine mark of excellent management and governance. Stopping the wrong project at the right moment prevents further waste and frees scarce resources (people, funding, management attention) for endeavors that can still create value. Seen this way, a well-judged stop is a positive result, and both the decision and its execution can rightly be called excellent.

From a Project Excellence perspective, however, a distinction matters: managing a stop well does not make the project itself excellent. In this standard, excellence is ultimately demonstrated through the results (Area C): the satisfaction of customers, sponsors, team and other stakeholders, and the results and impact actually realized. A stopped project does not deliver these, so however well it is ended, it cannot be seen as an excellent project.

4.9. The role of sustainability

The integration of sustainability principles and objectives into projects commences well before a project starts, ensuring that long-term sustainable benefits are identified, addressed, and integrated into the project's management and governance. An essential part of this integration is the alignment of the project and its team with the organizational objectives, strategy, and reporting requirements concerning sustainability. Sustainability should therefore be considered throughout the project lifecycle, from project conception and initiation through delivery, transition, and benefits realization.

In the contemporary business paradigm, the traditional focus on short-term economic returns has shifted toward a broader responsibility. Organizations must consider the social and environmental impacts of their actions and decisions, a concept often referred to as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL)—encompassing People, Planet, and Profit. Increasingly, this is expanded into the Economic, Environmental, Social, and Governance (E&ESG) framework, which serves as the foundation for modern sustainability strategies and reporting standards.

4.9.1. Defining Sustainable Project Management

With the growing role of projects in implementing organizational strategy and driving societal change, projects bear a significant societal responsibility.

Sustainable Project Management is defined as the planning, monitoring, and controlling of project delivery and support processes, with consideration of the environmental, economic, and social aspects of the life cycle of the project's resources, processes, deliverables, and effects (IPMA Guide on SPM, 2025). It is aimed at realizing sustainable value and benefits for stakeholders and is performed in a transparent, fair, responsible and ethical way that includes proactive stakeholder participation.

A sustainable project must address sustainability from two distinct but interconnected perspectives:

- **Sustainability by the project**—the project realizes deliverables that contribute positively to sustainable development and organizational E&ESG goals.
- **Sustainability of the project**—the processes of performing, managing, and governing the project are conducted in a sustainable, ethical, and responsible manner.

A project with a sustainable deliverable is not automatically managed sustainably; excellence requires that both dimensions are actively addressed throughout the project life cycle. Likewise, a project that is managed responsibly does not automatically create sustainable results. Project Excellence therefore requires a balanced consideration of both sustainability by the project and sustainability of the project, ensuring that sustainable value is created through both the project's results and the way those results are achieved.

4.9.2. Global Frameworks and Principles

Excellent projects align their objectives with globally recognized sustainability frameworks. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provide a comprehensive blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. Projects are instrumental in the realization of these 17 goals, which highlight the deep connections between environmental protection, social equity, and economic development.

Furthermore, projects should continue to embrace the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment, and anti-corruption. These principles are derived from foundational declarations such

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as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Supporting standards, including ISO 26000 (Corporate Social Responsibility), the ISO 14000 series (Environmental Management), and ISO 50001 (Energy Management), provide practical guidance for implementing these principles.

4.9.3. The Responsibility of Project Leaders

The integration of sustainability requires a paradigm shift in project management, from a traditional task-oriented "predict and control" approach to a changeoriented "prepare and commit" mindset. Leaders of excellent projects have a responsibility to ensure that the impact of the project from a sustainability perspective is recognized, assessed, and actively managed to deliver sustainable results.

In practice, leaders of excellent projects:

- act as sustainability leaders, taking proactive responsibility for the project's impacts on society and the environment;
- behave in a socially responsible and ethical way, ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness;
- actively engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including impacted communities, environmental bodies, and marginalized groups, ensuring their voices are heard;
- apply life cycle thinking, recognizing that the impact of project decisions extends far beyond the project's closure into the full life cycle of the deliverable;
- adopt circular economy principles where applicable, focusing on resource efficiency, waste minimization, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

4.9.4. Sustainability Management and Assessment

When setting objectives, an excellent project ensures that it clearly addresses sustainability across the E&ESG dimensions. Where applicable, the project is expected to identify and implement specific project management processes, tools, methodologies, structures, and resources for managing areas such as:

- Project Sustainability Impact Assessment (PSIA): Utilizing tools to systematically evaluate the project's impacts on society and the environment across economic, social, and environmental criteria (e.g. the IPMA WISE model—Wheel of Impacts on Society and the Environment);
- Project Sustainability Management Plan (PSMP): Documenting the assessment, alignment, management, and governance of the project's sustainability impacts, ensuring they support the organization's strategic E&ESG goals;
- Security, safety and social responsibility;
- Environmental protection, including biodiversity preservation and climate change mitigation;
- Supply chain sustainability and ethical procurement;
- Appropriate sustainability monitoring, controls, performance measurement, and reporting.

Every excellent organization needs to understand that optimal decisions cannot be taken in isolation from the environment. Ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility play an important role in decision-making. The challenge is to understand the wider system, consider both short-term and long-term consequences, and then balance ambition with what is practical, feasible, and sustainable to achieve. These considerations should be monitored, reviewed, and managed throughout the project lifecycle.

4.9.5. Value Creation and Reporting

Transparency is a cornerstone of sustainability. Frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and emerging regulatory standards (e.g. the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, CSRD) drive sustainability reporting, enabling organizations to disclose their economic, environmental,

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and social performance and impacts. Projects must provide the necessary data and insights to support these organizational reporting requirements.

In addition to the value created, the benefits of sustainability management in projects include:

- Incorporated sustainability criteria into the design and planning of initiatives
- Continuous improvement, enhanced future potential, and competitive advantage;
- Development of a collaborative, system approach to sustainable projects;
- Improved project controls and risk management through the early identification of ESG-related risks;
- Benchmarking and assessing sustainability performance with respect to international laws, norms, codes, and voluntary initiatives;
- Demonstrating how the organization influences and is influenced by expectations regarding sustainable development.

Ultimately, the impact of this focus on sustainability and the environment should positively affect the visible project results and the perception of all stakeholders, even if such results are not explicitly demanded by the customer. Excellence in project management is inextricably linked to the sustainable development of society and the preservation of our planet.

5. Introduction to the Project Excellence Model

5.1. Principles behind the model design

The main purpose of the IPMA Project Excellence Model (IPMA PEM) is to provide guidance to organizations in assessing the ability of their projects and programs to achieve Project Excellence, as defined in the previous chapter. The model provides a structured framework for understanding how leadership, people, purpose, processes, resources, and results interact to create sustainable value and excellent project results. Its design is grounded in over two decades of experience with the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards, spanning all continents and application areas, together with the experiences gathered through IPMA's worldwide community, and the ICB assessments that have been conducted for over 3 decades.

The IPMA PEM focuses on a project or a program, complementing two other IPMA standards:

- IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB®)—designed to assess the individual competences of project, program and portfolio leaders;
- IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®)—designed to assess the competences of organizations that run projects.

Used together, the three standards provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and assessing excellence from individual, project and organizational perspectives.

The IPMA PEM can be used regardless of the project management approach applied to the project. The main reason for this is that the IPMA PEM does not enforce any particular approach to project decomposition, organization, or planning. It also does not suggest any particular project management tools or techniques. The main focus is on the conscious use of the most effective management approaches and methods that lead to expected results and enable continuous improvement.

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This means that the IPMA PEM is agnostic to methods and methodologies—it can be used for assessing the quality and effectiveness of project management in a wide variety of project environments. It can therefore be applied to predictive, agile, hybrid, and other delivery approaches. This makes the IPMA PEM a valuable companion to established project management methodologies, helping organizations assess their suitability for specific project situations and understand how the chosen approaches contribute to project results and excellence.

The IPMA PEM is designed to drive continuous improvement efforts regardless of the starting conditions of the project, its context, complexity, delivery approach, or level of performance achieved. Rather than rewarding the application of a particular methodology, it focuses on understanding whether the selected approaches are appropriate, effectively implemented, continuously improved, and capable of delivering successful and sustainable results.

The standard embeds a human-centric mindset across all criteria, integrating design thinking and customer experience management to strengthen attention to all stakeholders. This reflects the IPMA belief that excellent projects are ultimately delivered by people, for people, and with people.

5.2. Structure of the model

The basic structure of the model is simple. The model serves as a standard and offers guidelines for excellent projects regardless of the size of the project, its maturity and/or context.

The structure of the IPMA PEM enables easy reporting of the results on all management levels by introducing three levels of the model:

- **Areas**—This level shows the main components of Project Excellence (People & Purpose, Processes & Resources and Project). The first two areas are considered the enablers for excellent project management, and the third covers project results. The areas enable feedback on an executive level, showing the overall state of key enablers of excellence and their actual outcome. They provide a high-level, system-oriented view of project performance and value creation.
- **Criteria**—This level is primarily intended to define the key factors that make up the Project Excellence areas and enables measurement for development and benchmarking purposes. It translates the areas into

observable dimensions of performance, enabling structured assessment and comparison.

- **Examples**—The third level of the IPMA PEM refers to actual practices typically found in projects striving for excellence. Findings at this level can be used by project practitioners to improve their performance in executing projects and creating a sustainable environment for excellence. It also enables organizations to identify particular practices where methods could be enhanced and/or modified for a better alignment with project needs. Examples are intentionally illustrative rather than prescriptive and support practical interpretation of the criteria in real project contexts.

5.3. Areas of the model and interpretation of the overall results

The model is divided into the following three areas:

- **People & Purpose**—This area is considered the **foundation** of Project Excellence. The right people, led and supported by excellent leaders, all sharing a common vision for success, are crucial to drive project improvements and help the project to go beyond the established standards. It defines the strategic and human foundation for alignment, motivation, and value orientation.

- **Processes & Resources**—This area represents practices necessary to **reinforce** excellence through sound processes and adequate resources used in an efficient and sustainable way. It also serves as a basis for securing the result of innovation, turning it into a solid starting point for another wave of improvements. It ensures consistency, adaptability, and the reliable execution of project activities.

- **Project Results—**The project management approach can only be excellent if it leads to outstanding, sustainable results for all key stakeholders. This area provides the **validation** of the excellence of the results generated by the project. It reflects both the effectiveness of delivery and the perceived value from stakeholder perspectives.

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Figure 7: The Areas of the Project Excellence Model

Balance across the model as an indicator of quality

Assessing Project Excellence requires a holistic approach that goes beyond evaluating any single factor. As discussed earlier, true excellence comes from aligning people, purpose, processes, resources, and results in a unified system. This perspective aligns with the foundational principles of IPMA standards, which emphasize that competence is contextual, interconnected, and focused on achieving meaningful results.

The model is more than just an assessment framework; it serves as a strategic tool for guiding decisions. Leadership is concerned not only with project performance, but also with sustainability, reliability, and consistency. Projects that generate impressive short-term results without robust processes can pose long-term risks to the organization. On the other hand, projects with excellent processes but insufficient leadership or unclear objectives may produce efficient results that ultimately lack relevance.

Maintaining equilibrium among the three dimensions—People & Purpose, Processes & Resources, and Project Results—acts as a primary indicator of project quality. This balance allows executives to:

- Identify structural weaknesses before they impact results
- Understand trade-offs between adaptivity and control
- Assess whether success is repeatable or accidental
- Align project delivery with strategic intent and long-term value
- Recognize early signals of systemic imbalance across the project system
- Strengthen organizational learning loops across projects and programs

In this way, the model's balance serves as a reflection of organizational health in delivering projects. It shows not only execution capability but also the ability to learn, adapt, and expand.

The following archetypes—leadership-driven, process-driven, and balanced projects—demonstrate how various forms of imbalance appear in practice and highlight the importance of achieving equilibrium for sustainable excellence.

Leadership-driven projects with low process maturity

These projects are characterized by a very strong sense of purpose and great leadership. Having highly motivated and fully dedicated teams, such projects often demonstrate a high level of flexibility and deliver great results. However, their downside is a lack of well-established management processes. Typically, this leads to a high level of unnecessary and often repeated work, and therefore lower efficiency. In addition, these projects might have difficulties in transferring their experience and established routines effectively for the benefit of future endeavours.

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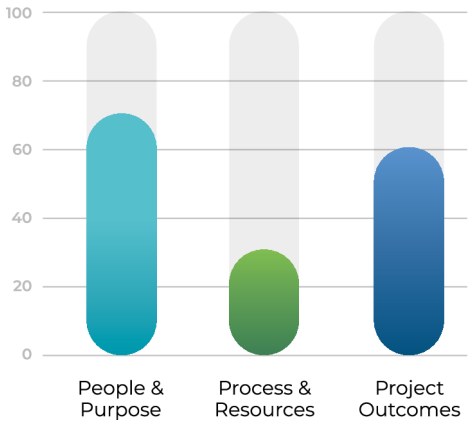


Figure 8: Leadership-Driven Project

Process-driven projects with low leadership and/or sense of purpose

Process-driven projects often deliver good, repeatable results. Usually, these are ensured by processes continuously improved over the years. The downside of such projects is a lack of strong leadership and/or a sense of purpose. As a result, such projects are often not very adaptable, less focused on delivering real value, and might find it difficult to cope with significant risks.

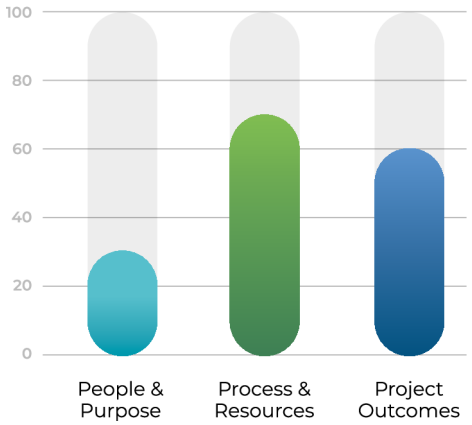


Figure 9: Process-Driven Project

Balanced project

Balanced projects combine great leadership and a strong sense of purpose with a strong process culture. This combination ensures high levels of team motivation, flexibility, and the ability to deliver great, repeatable results within and beyond a given project. Such projects prove to be able to deal with great challenges coming from complexity (e.g. economic, political, social, environmental, and technological aspects), while remaining effective and efficient.

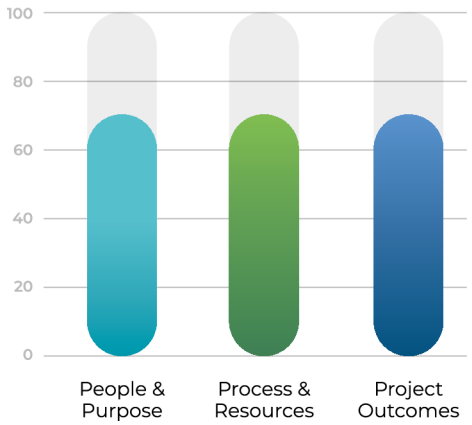


Figure 10: Balanced Project

5.4. Interactions between the areas of the model

All three areas of the model interact strongly with each other, as shown in Figure 11. None of the areas should be developed in isolation, and each of the areas should be actively used to develop excellence in the remaining two.

Whenever the IPMA PEM is used to assess projects or programs, analysis of the interactions between the areas of the model should be one of the key assessment efforts. Findings from such analyses can be used to define significant improvements at the systemic level, which will fundamentally improve the ability to reach excellence.

The three areas of the IPMA Project Excellence Model function together as a dynamic, interdependent system. The true value of the model is found in these interactions, which shape whether project success is fragile, context-dependent, or enduring.

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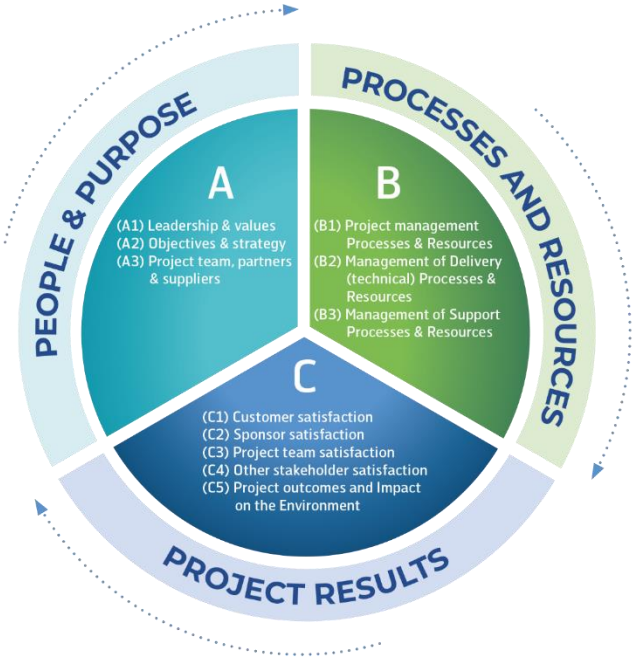


Figure 11: Interaction between the model areas

At a systemic level:

- **People & Purpose drive Processes & Resources**

Leadership, values, and clarity of objectives shape how processes are designed, selected, and applied. These should also regularly be reviewed and reassessed. Changes in objectives and stakeholders' needs lead to changes in processes and resources. This aligns with ICB principles, where behavioral and contextual competences influence technical execution.

- **Processes & Resources enable Project Results**

Well-designed and continuously improved processes transform intent into consistent delivery of results and value. Competent leaders do not blindly follow methodologies—they tailor them to context. They reduce variability, manage risk, and ensure that resources are used efficiently. From an OCB perspective, this is where organizational capability becomes visible and measurable.

- **Project Results inform People & Purpose**

Results—both quantitative and qualitative—feed back into leadership decisions, stakeholder alignment, and strategic direction. They influence motivation, trust, and future ambition. This feedback loop is essential for learning organizations and aligns with continuous improvement principles embedded in PEB.

Crucially, weakness in one area will inevitably constrain the others:

- Strong leadership without process discipline leads to hero-driven, non-repeatable success
- Strong processes without purpose lead to efficient delivery of limited value
- Strong results without understanding interactions lead to misinterpretation and stagnation

For organizations, analyzing these interactions provides insight beyond performance metrics. It enables:

- Identification of systemic root causes rather than symptoms
- Better prioritization of improvement initiatives
- Improved alignment between project execution and organizational strategy
- Enhanced resilience in complex and changing environments

Ultimately, real excellence is achieved not by perfecting isolated elements, but by enhancing the interplay among them.

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5.5. Business value delivery using IPMA PEM

The following business value can be secured by ensuring close interaction between the main areas of the model:

- **Performance**—People driven by purpose are motivated and strive to achieve results;
- **Effectiveness and efficiency**—The right processes and resources used by people driven by purpose increase their effectiveness and efficiency;
- **Reliability**—Well-established processes and adequately managed resources help to secure short- and long-term results;
- **Flexibility**—Regular observation of the results influences the perception of people and leads to a better understanding of the project objectives and continuous refinement of its strategy;
- **Continuous improvement—**Conclusions from the analysis of the results drive the development of processes and resources;
- **Scalability**—People driven by objectives look for opportunities to increase their abilities through the development and utilization of the right processes and resources.



Figure 12: Value delivered through interactions between model areas

Sustainability, as defined in previous chapters, can be observed both in terms of effects on the environment and longevity of the results. It is achieved through continuous delivery, monitoring, and use of the project results to govern the objectives, drive engagement of people, secure adequate processes and ensure responsible use of resources.

The IPMA Project Excellence Model serves as more than an assessment framework; it is a tool for generating value. Organizations that fully adopt and integrate the model advance from simply delivering projects to achieving ongoing business value. The real strength of this model stems from its capacity to turn alignment into measurable organizational benefits. This transforms excellence from an assessment result into an operating capability.

Performance and value realization

When teams unite around a clear purpose and strong processes, projects produce **results that truly matter, rather than mere outputs**. This helps ensure that investments yield tangible business benefits like revenue growth, cost efficiency, compliance, or improved strategic positioning. This value delivery system is operationalized through the processes and resources described in Area B.

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Effectiveness and efficiency at scale

Bringing together skilled individuals and suitable processes reduces waste, duplication, and unnecessary effort. Over time, this fosters **operational excellence**, enabling organizations to deliver top-quality results while utilizing resources efficiently.

Reliability

Balanced interactions among the areas of the model foster confidence in result delivery. Organizations can more accurately estimate timelines, costs, and results, which builds stakeholder trust and enables stronger portfolio-level decisions.

Strategic flexibility and adaptability

Ongoing feedback from project results to leadership and processes enables organizations to detect and respond to change. This adaptability is vital in environments marked by uncertainty, complexity, and rapid technological advancement.

Continuous improvement and organizational learning

The model incorporates learning cycles throughout all its areas. Lessons from results drive process improvements, which then strengthen individual and organizational capabilities. This fosters a self-reinforcing cycle of increasing professionalism, in line with both ICB (personal development) and OCB (organizational capacity building).

Scalability of success

A crucial business advantage is the ability to reuse success factors across multiple projects and programs. Balanced excellence guarantees that high performance becomes part of the organization's standard practices, rather than relying solely on specific individuals.

Sustainability and long-term impact

Sustainability is viewed not as a separate goal, but as a natural result of balanced excellence. Organizations attain:

- Long-term viability of project results
- Responsible use of resources
- Positive social, environmental, and economic impact

This approach directly addresses rising regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations, while also enhancing the organization's reputation.

5.6. Why organizations should adopt this model

In a context where many organizations continue to face inconsistent project results, the IPMA PEM provides a comprehensive and validated approach to:

- Move from project success to organizational excellence
- Bridge the gap between strategy and execution
- Reduce dependency on individual "heroes"
- Build repeatable, scalable capabilities
- Create a culture of accountability, learning, and continuous improvement

Organizations that adopt this model go beyond delivering improved projects— they enhance their overall capacity for project delivery, a fundamentally more valuable and transformative capability.

Essentially, the IPMA PEM shifts project management from a simple delivery function to a strategic organizational advantage.

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5.7. The model criteria

A. **People & Purpose**

The People & Purpose area follows the logic that Project Excellence starts with leaders, including sponsors, who define and follow the right values and consciously apply an effective leadership style. These leaders engage key stakeholders in the definition of the project objectives and strategy formulation. They build effective teams and engage the right partners and suppliers in order to achieve project success.

The People & Purpose area is divided into three criteria:

(A1) Leadership & Values;

(A2) Objectives & Strategy;

(A3) Project Team, Partners & Suppliers.

(A1) Leadership & values

Excellent projects are led in a way that anticipates the future and realizes it with persistence. The leaders (i.e. all the people involved in a leadership/managerial role within the project or from the client/line organization) act as role models for the project team with respect to values, morals, focus on objectives, working standards, self-management and cooperation and create a high-trust, high-inspiration environment. Leaders enable and authorize the project team to anticipate and act in time to achieve project success. They support a flexible project organization capable of adapting to changing circumstances.

(A2) Objectives & strategy

The objectives and strategies of excellent projects are defined and developed by the project leaders in alignment with stakeholders' needs and requirements. Assumptions about expected results, costs, timing and risks are evaluated and tested regularly. Also, the risks of potential changes because of political or commercial reasons are assessed.

They also take into account the project environment. Once agreed, objectives and strategies are regularly reviewed and, if necessary, adapted in response

to a changing environment or to stakeholder demands, or because assumptions have proven false.

Excellent projects use project objectives and overall project strategies to develop and continuously adapt their plans and procedures.

(A3) Project team, partners & suppliers

In excellent projects, project team members, partners, and suppliers are valued through the creation of a culture that allows the mutually beneficial achievement of organizational, project and personal goals. Fairness and equality are promoted within the project, with respect to integration and development of all involved parties. Fairness, inclusion, and collaboration are consistently reinforced across all relationships.

Achievements are communicated, rewarded and recognized in a way that motivates project team members, partners, and suppliers. This builds commitment and enables skills and knowledge to be used and developed in order to achieve project success. In excellent projects, achievements are communicated, rewarded, and recognized in a transparent, timely, and meaningful way that motivates project team members, partners and suppliers. This builds commitment and engagement, and enables skills and knowledge to be applied, shared, and developed to achieve project success and continuous improvement.

B. **Processes & Resources**

A project idea usually arises from a specific need or opportunity, for example, when a problem needs to be solved, a goal achieved, or an improvement implemented. The basis for deciding to implement the idea is that the project is meaningful, feasible and economically viable (benefits, costs, risks, resources). If the assessment is positive and the project fits in with the organization's strategy or operational goals, the project is officially approved. Legal obligations also form a basis to start a project.

Projects are decided at appropriate organizational levels to achieve objectives that create benefits for the organization (e.g. cost reduction, increased revenue and profit, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements). The decision to start the project is made by the person or committee that owns the business case, has the budget and decision-making authority.

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The Processes & Resources area is divided into three criteria:

(B1) Project management Processes & Resources;

(B2) Management of Delivery (technical) Processes & Resources;

(B3) Management of Support Processes & Resources.

(B1) Project management processes & resources

Teams striving for excellent projects identify the key project management processes and related resources necessary for project success in cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a PMO. During project design, the organizational structure, governance arrangements, methods, tools, project management processes and team building activities are selected and implemented. These elements are continuously developed and optimized throughout the project lifecycle to create a shared understanding of how project objectives will be achieved in the most effective and efficient manner. This is based on a thorough understanding of the project objectives, project needs and organizational capabilities. Project management processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure improvement and sustained alignment with objectives.

(B2) Management of Delivery (technical) Processes & Resources

Teams striving for excellent projects identify the key delivery (technical) processes and related resources required for project success in cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a PMO. During project design, delivery processes are selected or developed and implemented to establish a shared understanding of project objectives will be achieved effectively and efficiently. This is based on a sound understanding of project objectives, delivery requirements, and organizational capabilities.

Delivery processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure continuous improvements. They are domain-specific (e.g. software development, construction, product development), and vary significantly across industries. Together, these processes and resources form the project's value delivery system (see Section 5.5), converting objectives into results.

(B3) Management of Support Processes & Resources

Teams striving for excellent projects identify the relevant support processes and related resources required for project success in cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a PMO.

During project design, support processes are identified and implemented to establish a shared understanding of how project objectives will be achieved effectively and efficiently. This is based on a sound understanding of project objectives and organizational capabilities.

Support processes are typically established at the organizational level and are utilized by projects to enable effective execution and delivery of results. These processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure ongoing suitability and continuous improvement.

C. **Project Results**

The Project Results area consists of criteria that provide insight into the perceptions about the management of the project held by the customer, project sponsor, project team members and other stakeholders, expressed in terms of their satisfaction levels, as well as indicators that prove this satisfaction level. In addition, it covers other results that can provide insight into the level of excellence achieved by the project. Where relevant, project teams are encouraged to assess stakeholder experience using journey-based methods—capturing not only satisfaction levels but also the emotional and relational quality of interactions throughout the project lifecycle.

Balancing the expectations and demands of all parties involved, together with superior management processes, should lead to sustainable, outstanding results for all key stakeholders. The concept of sustainability as an important element of Project Excellence is explained specifically in Section 4.9 (The role of sustainability). As a fundamental principle, results can only be excellent if they are also sustainable, so fully evaluating the excellence of a project entails extrapolating from the results achieved at the end of a project, in order to estimate future levels of satisfaction and success.

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The Project Results area is divided into five criteria:

- (C1) Customer satisfaction;
- (C2) Sponsor satisfaction;
- (C3) Project Team, Partner and Supplier Satisfaction;
- (C4) Other stakeholder satisfaction;
- (C5) Project results and Impact on the Environment.

(C1) Customer Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high customer satisfaction—the project team checks the satisfaction level on a regular basis during the project lifecycle and takes action if appropriate. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative), engagement of customer representatives and their identification with the project. In well-managed organizations and projects, the customer alone decides on the perception of quality. The customer satisfaction criterion is a reflection of how well the project team understood and fulfilled their needs and requirements and how it interacted with them. Customer feedback is integrated continuously rather than only as formal milestones.

(C2) Sponsor satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high sponsor satisfaction. The perceived sponsor satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, engagement of the sponsor in the project and their identification with the project. The project team checks the sponsor's satisfaction level on a regular basis during the project lifecycle and takes action where appropriate.

(C3) Project team, Partner's and Supplier's Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high team member, partner and supplier satisfaction. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of project objectives, the quality of collaboration and leadership, the level of engagement and empowerment, and the extent to which individuals identify with the project's purpose, values and results.

(C4) Other stakeholder satisfaction

Projects striving for excellence achieve outstanding results while retaining high performance levels. Such results are achieved because of excellent management. Positive impact, on their organization, as well as on the organization's environment (socially, ecologically, economically, technologically).

Excellent projects achieve high stakeholder satisfaction. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative), engagement of the stakeholders' representatives and their identification with the project.

Stakeholders representing environmental aspects of the project are highly satisfied. Stakeholder satisfaction is actively managed throughout the project lifecycle and beyond delivery, reflecting long-term value creation and responsible project leadership.

(C5) Project results and Impact on the Environment

Excellent projects achieve outstanding results while keeping high performance levels. Such results result from excellent management and leadership. Their positive impact on the environment is also clearly visible.

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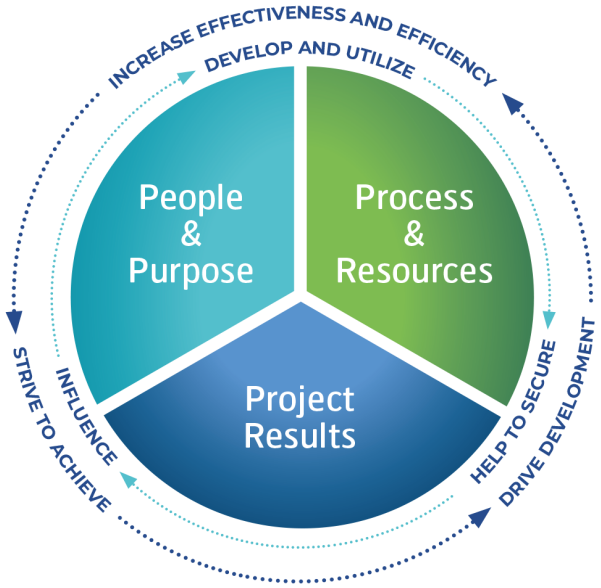


Figure 13: The IPMA PEM Criteria

6. Description of the IPMA Project Excellence Model

6.1. Area A. People & Purpose

The People & Purpose area follows the logic that Project Excellence starts with leaders, including sponsors, who define and follow the right values and consciously apply an effective leadership style. These leaders engage key stakeholders in the definition of the project objectives and strategy formulation. They build effective teams and engage the right partners and suppliers in order to achieve project success.

6.1.1. A.1. Leadership & Values

Excellent projects are led in a way that anticipates the future and realizes it with persistence. The leaders (i.e. all the people involved in a leadership/managerial role within the project or from the client/line organization) act as role models for the project team with respect to values, morals, focus on objectives, working standards, self-management and cooperation, and create a high-trust, high-inspiration environment. They model integrity, social responsibility and ethical conduct (e.g. as defined in the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles or the IPMA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct) and sustainable behaviour, within the project, and in the project's environment.

Leaders enable and authorize the project team to anticipate and act in time to achieve project success. They are experienced in driving and facilitating change, continuous improvement and business transformation, so they are able to support a flexible project organization capable of adapting to changing circumstances. They foster and encourage innovations in the project, in order to improve project success.

Leaders recognize the most important assets of the project: the people who are delivering value. They inspire staff, they lead by example, they role-model personal excellence and personal growth. They take time to learn, to reflect

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on their own role, their behavior, and personal impact. They show they can make mistakes and learn, creating a psychologically safe working environment that encourages learning and personal growth.

A.1a. Role models for excellence and learning

Leaders communicate and live up to their values (i.e. they 'walk the talk'), follow ethical standards and act as role models. They ensure that structures and norms are in place that enable project team members to work effectively and efficiently. Leaders build and strengthen a culture of excellence and continuous improvement both within and beyond the project. They observe and embody the Project Excellence concepts in a credible way and stimulate others to do the same.

In practice, leaders striving for excellent projects:

- Are role models for integrity, ethics and the Project Excellence philosophy, and ensure team members live up to these values;
- Are authentic, vulnerable, and purpose-driven in their behavior;
- Navigate complexity using appropriate sensemaking and interventions;
- Show leadership and resilience in difficult times, leading by example;
- Establish collaboration agreements especially between sponsor and project leader;
- Actively seek feedback from stakeholders to improve their leadership approach;
- Regularly reflect on their own role, behavior and impact, and improve accordingly;
- Actively promote values and culture that cultivate project success;
- Instigate and support change and improvement where it serves the project's objectives;
- Recognize that leadership is needed throughout the organization, not only at the top, and support leadership development and self-organization;

- Create a psychologically safe environment, treating mistakes as learning opportunities;
- Actively support learning, development and innovation for everyone involved;
- Inspire team members to strive for excellence in their behavior and methods;
- Actively seek new technologies (such as AI) to improve project success;
- Lead with empathy when new technology causes anxiety or uncertainty;
- Embrace, support and champion experimentation within the project;
- Model data- and information-driven improvement;
- Advocate sustainability and regeneration, in both deliverables and delivery processes;
- Promote diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging, developing talent for the future.

A.1b. Care for project stakeholders

Leaders care for internal and external stakeholders. They are proactively and constantly engaged in balancing the ever-changing needs and interests of different parties, supporting their development and striving to provide a good working environment. They see the project as a collaborative enterprise between stakeholders, possibly engaging in co-creation, even if the project cannot accommodate all stakeholders' wishes. They ensure that the impact of the project on its environment is recognized and actively managed to ensure sustainability and regeneration where possible. This also requires attention to psychological safety in stakeholder relationships, so that relevant concerns, weak signals and dissenting perspectives can surface early enough to be addressed constructively.

In practice, leaders striving for excellent projects:

- Behave in a socially responsible way, balancing all stakeholders' interests, including those with limited power;
- Recognize environmental and social bodies as project stakeholders, cooperating with them for mutual value;

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- Personally engage in dialogue with stakeholders throughout the project's lifetime;
- Create the space and capacity to maintain relations with key stakeholders;
- Adapt the project as stakeholders' wishes and relationships change over time;
- Understand the key elements of the project's environment, using data and analytics;
- Create a safety-conscious environment across the project and its wider environment;
- Create and promote continuous, structured dialogue that builds a good working atmosphere;
- Create conditions where stakeholders can raise concerns without fear of negative consequences;
- Observe signals of fear or defensive behavior, and intervene to restore trust and dialogue;
- Consider the impact of decisions on the wellbeing of team members, partners and suppliers;
- Meet regulatory requirements and standards geared towards caring for stakeholders and the environment;
- Promote sustainability and regeneration across the entire stakeholder field;
- Be an advocate diversity, equity and inclusion.

A.1c. Orientation towards project objectives and adaptability to change
Project leaders take responsibility for short- and long-term project results, ensuring successful value delivery and benefits realization. They ensure the sustainability of project deliverables, including, where applicable, the consequences for future generations and society. Resilience as a leadership mindset is cultivated by anticipating conditions that may challenge the achievement of results, while strengthening the team's shared ownership of the project purpose rather than treating disruptions only as a matter of formal risk control. They also actively engage with stakeholders, observe emergent patterns in the project environment, and champion adaptation,

experimentation and innovation while maintaining strategic focus. They create space for dialogue about different approaches and innovation.

In practice, leaders striving for excellent projects:

- Balance short- and long-term objectives, prioritizing value delivery over output delivery;
- Set and communicate a clear, long-term vision on result and impact;
- Include impact on society, ecology and ethics — including DEI and human rights — in objectives;
- Address the impact of changing technology, including AI, on objectives and results;
- Explicitly create and embody the project's culture and values;
- Review, adapt and realign the project strategy when necessary;
- Choose an appropriate project strategy for the complexity of what needs to be achieved;
- Unite staff and stakeholders in sharing and achieving the project vision and objectives;
- Actively remove obstacles that block the team from fulfilling their responsibilities;
- Adapt the project strategy and objectives as the environment changes;
- Build a flexible project organization able to respond to a changing environment;
- Actively involve stakeholders relevant to the project's long-term results and impact;
- Prepare the team mentally for difficult periods, reinforcing commitment to the purpose;
- Encourage the team to treat setbacks as moments for renewed focus and learning;

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- Enable partners and stakeholders to generate ideas and promote a culture of innovation.

6.1.2. A.2. Objectives & Strategy

The objectives and strategies of excellent projects are defined and developed by the project leaders in alignment with stakeholders' needs and requirements. They also take into account the project's environment. Once agreed, objectives and strategies are regularly reviewed and, if necessary, adapted in response to a changing environment or to stakeholder demands. Organizations striving for excellent projects use project objectives and overall project strategies to develop and continuously adapt their plans and procedures.

A.2a. Managing stakeholders' needs, expectations and requirements

Stakeholders, their needs, expectations and requirements are clearly identified and actively managed.

In practice, projects striving for excellence may consider these aspects:

- Systematically identify all relevant and potential stakeholders and their relationships;
- Understand the positive and negative impact stakeholders can have on the project's objectives;
- Observe and react to changes in the stakeholder landscape;
- Actively pursue interaction with stakeholders, involving them when appropriate;
- Define and implement effective stakeholder management processes;
- Develop approaches to understand, anticipate and respond to stakeholder needs;
- Identify stakeholder values and objectives to incorporate into project strategy;
- Actively seek common goals and create project allies among stakeholders;

- Proactively and transparently communicate decisions related to stakeholder requirements;
- Systematically compare project results against stakeholder expectations to monitor effectiveness;
- Actively integrate stakeholders into continuous learning throughout the project lifecycle;
- Use digital channels and AI-supported analytics to capture and prioritize stakeholder input at scale;
- Use short feedback loops to test and refine stakeholder assumptions;
- Communicate trade-offs early when priorities change;
- Segment stakeholders by change impact, readiness and influence;
- Perform benefits analysis, linking stakeholder needs to explicit results;
- Address resistance systematically and track follow-up actions;
- Involve stakeholders early in the design of business changes (co-creation);
- Continuously monitor stakeholder sentiment during change and adapt accordingly.

A.2b. Development and realization of project objectives

Project objectives are developed from comprehensive analysis of relevant information. Competing interests are dealt with. Stakeholders are familiar with the relevant objectives and understand their role in achieving them. Objectives are regularly reviewed, and adapted to changes in stakeholders' expectations and requirements when necessary.

In practice, projects striving for excellence in the development and realization of project objectives may consider:

- Seek relevant sources of information for developing project objectives, with proper prioritization;
- Interact intensively with the sponsor and client, involving other stakeholders where possible;

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- Use stakeholder analysis when developing objectives, considering E&ESG aspects;
- Align stakeholders' objectives with the project's objectives to maximize buy-in;
- Recognize competing interests and find appropriate solutions or consensus;
- Benchmark with similar projects to inform the development of objectives;
- Ensure objectives address sustainability, safety and legal/regulatory requirements;
- Recognize how achieving intended results may impact stakeholders and the environment;
- Verify that objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound;
- Secure the project team's commitment to the objectives;
- Ensure stakeholders understand and commit to relevant project objectives;
- Systematically adapt objectives as stakeholder needs and requirements change;
- Identify key factors and conditions for success;
- Use a balanced set of performance indicators to determine successful execution;
- Regularly check whether objectives remain achievable, and take corrective action if needed;
- Define measurable adoption and behavior-change results alongside technical objectives;
- Align objectives with data protection, cyber resilience and responsible AI use;
- Use data-driven forecasting and AI-supported scenario analysis to validate objectives;

- Cascade organizational strategy into coherent, prioritized sets of project objectives;
- Have project objectives approved through the proper governance structures before implementation, and check periodically that they remain aligned with the approved business case and corporate strategy.

A.2c. Development and realization of project strategy

In excellent projects, project teams develop and implement an overall project strategy based on an evaluation of the project objectives, context and environment (including its position in a program and/or project portfolio). Its development and realization are shaped by the project's governance environment, ensuring coherence between strategic intent, accountability and the conditions needed to maintain the project purpose throughout the project lifecycle. The project strategy, together with project objectives, enables the project team to focus on what is most important for the project to be successful.

In practice, projects striving for excellence in the development and realization of project strategy may consider:

- Understand the organization's own competences;
- Ensure the project team participates in developing the strategy and commits to it;
- Systematically monitor performance indicators to adapt the strategy accordingly;
- Ensure the strategy is agreed at the appropriate governance levels;
- Consider external and internal factors when developing the project strategy;
- Identify key project values and align the strategy with them;
- Decide on the most appropriate overall project strategy and business model;
- Align the project's strategy with that of the permanent organization;

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- Ensure the strategy addresses stakeholders' needs, expectations and requirements;
- Include the project governance approach within the strategy;
- Align the strategy with the organizational, legal and technical complexity of the project;
- Actively seek and evaluate innovation and learning opportunities;
- Develop strategies for business continuity throughout the project lifecycle;
- Ensure project results are transferred to stakeholders in a sustainable way;
- Use a digital strategy for architecture, data, integration and governance;
- Ensure end-to-end traceability between strategy, plans and results;
- Include a cybersecurity strategy proportionate to project risks;
- Define AI use cases, decision boundaries and required oversight;
- Define a change strategy for communication, training and stakeholder engagement;
- Choose appropriate change approaches based on organizational capacity and risk;
- Integrate benefits realization management into project strategies.

6.1.3. A.3. Project Team, Partners & Suppliers

In projects striving for excellence, project team members, partners and suppliers are valued through the creation of a culture that allows the mutually beneficial achievement of organizational, project and personal goals supporting effective integration, collaboration and development of all involved parties.

Achievements are communicated, rewarded and recognized in a way that motivates project team members, partners and suppliers. This builds commitment and enables skills and knowledge to be used and developed in order to achieve project success. In projects striving for excellence, achievements are communicated, rewarded and recognized in a transparent,

timely and meaningful way that motivates project team members, partners and suppliers. This builds commitment and engagement, and enables skills and knowledge to be applied, shared and developed to achieve project success and continuous improvement.

A.3a. Identification and development of competences

Leaders recognize the competences required for project success in all three domains: people, practice and perspective. They are aware of the capabilities, limitations and potential of their own organization and those of their partners and suppliers. The organizations' own staff and third parties are taken into account when developing the project setup. Competences are developed proactively, in a structured way, and adapted as project needs, technologies and external conditions evolve.

In practice, projects striving for excellence may consider:

- Recognize your own competences, capabilities and learning opportunities and seek support for further development;
- Identify the competences (the three ICB competence areas: perspective, people and practice) required for project success and resilience-building, considering future needs and trends;
- Recognize the competences and potential of team members, partners and suppliers;
- Develop adaptive staffing strategies that support agile or hybrid delivery;
- Ensure transparency, fairness, equal opportunity and diversity in project staffing;
- Manage staffing, development and release of team members in collaboration with relevant staff (HR, PMO);
- Adapt existing processes and policies to support the project's objectives;
- Have a system for the managed release of people who can no longer contribute to achieving the project goals;
- Seek opportunities for personal and professional growth for the project team, balancing personal development with project and organizational objectives, including building resilience;

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- Carry out adequate competence development activities, checking their effectiveness;
- Leverage learning opportunities beyond formal training, such as mentoring and retrospectives.
- Seek opportunities to leverage organizational learning involving partners and suppliers

A.3b. Recognition of achievements and empowerment

People are rewarded, recognized, and taken care of by leaders. Project team members, partners and suppliers are enabled to realize their full potential in achieving project objectives. They are involved in the ongoing processes and are empowered to take appropriate actions. Empowerment is strengthened when psychological safety enables people to use their mandate responsibly, including raising uncertainty, challenging assumptions and learning openly from difficult situations.

In practice, projects striving for excellence in recognizing achievements and empowerment may consider:

- Define areas of responsibility and give clear mandates to take independent action;
- Ensure team members have the authorization and access needed to information, tools, learning, resources and infrastructure they need, to contribute fully;
- Involve the team, partners and suppliers in defining and continuously improving project management processes;
- Recognize achievements in a timely, appropriate and open manner;
- Develop an open culture that encourages discussing mistakes, uncertainties, weak signals and asking for support, treating these as input for learning and project success;
- Encourage an open mindset and use of creativity to respond to challenges;
- Encourage team members, partners and suppliers to promote project values and take action when these are at risk;

- Ensure that opinions raised are followed up through structured, visible feedback and response mechanisms;
- Build intrinsic motivation beyond financial incentives;
- Encourage participation in initiatives that support organizational and societal benefit;
- Treat speaking up about mistakes and risks as a contribution to learning;
- Recognize, support and encourage behaviors that strengthen psychological safety.

A.3c. Collaboration and communication

The project organization and processes are designed in ways that enable project team members, partners and suppliers to communicate and cooperate efficiently both within the project and beyond. Effective collaboration also depends on the explicit management of team dynamics, including interaction patterns, informal roles and the way decisions, tensions and dependencies are handled in daily project work as an integral part of project governance and delivery.

In practice, projects striving for excellence may consider:

- Create a culture of open communication, trust, involvement, collaboration and accountability throughout the project;
- Explicitly manage team dynamics (including trust, balancing autonomy and alignment, conflict) to sustain effective cooperation over time;
- Build high-performance, integrated teams together with partners and suppliers;
- Ensure equal treatment of all team members, partners and suppliers;
- Develop and implement communication plans for effective internal and external communication at all levels;
- Encourage team members to proactively communicate and help solve problems;
- Ensure collaboration information is accurate, timely and accessible, using appropriate channels, including digitally;

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- Enable and encourage the sharing of information, knowledge and best practice;
- Proactively manage conflicts, with clear escalation rules and procedures in place;
- Gather regular feedback from project team members, partners and suppliers;
- Ensure continuous dialogue with the permanent organization to maximize mutual benefits;
- Proactively, transparently engage in escalations and conflict handling.

6.2. Area B. Processes & Resources

A project idea usually arises from a specific need or opportunity, for example, when a problem needs to be solved, a goal achieved, or an improvement implemented. The basis for deciding to implement the idea is that the project is meaningful, feasible, and economically viable (benefits, costs, risks, resources). If the assessment is positive and the project fits in with the organization's strategy or operational goals, the project is officially approved. Legal obligations also form a basis to start a project. This evaluation increasingly includes environmental, social and governance considerations.

The start of a project is decided at appropriate organizational levels to achieve objectives that create benefits for the organization (e.g. cost reduction, increased revenue and profit, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements). The decision to start the project is made by the person or committee that owns the business case, has the budget and decision-making authority. Who decides depends on the size and structure of the organization and on the importance of the project:

1. Management / Executive Board: for strategically important, risky or costintensive projects
2. Department or division management: for technical or internal projects

These decisions take governance and stakeholder considerations into account and may have impacts on society and the environment.

The development of project-specific processes or the adaptation of standard processes is a deliberate design approach that directly supports the achievement of objectives and value creation. The starting point is the derivation of clear project objectives from the overarching corporate strategy, operational objectives and legal obligations, followed by the consistent alignment of all project activities with these objectives. Based on this alignment, a process model is defined that regulates governance, decision-making logic and responsibilities, while taking cultural aspects into account. Particular emphasis is placed on transparency, controllability and risk minimization throughout the entire project life cycle. Through the systematic use of key performance indicators, regular management reviews and structured feedback mechanisms, the processes are continuously developed and improved to ensure project success.

The Processes & Resources area focuses on the management of key processes contributing to project success and the resources required to realize them effectively. Given their importance, project management processes and related resources receive special attention within the model. The project team carefully selects, adapts and develops these processes to ensure that project goals are achieved effectively and efficiently. Their adequacy in relation to the project needs and complexity is actively managed throughout the entire project lifecycle.

However, effective and efficient project management processes alone are not sufficient conditions for project success. Therefore project teams identify and manage other processes and resources required for project success, as well as how the project fits into its broader environment (e.g. corporate, legal and natural contexts).

While project management processes focus on planning, execution, coordination and governance, technical delivery processes describe what is produced and how the technical output of the project is created. Support processes complement both the technical and management project processes. They are typically established at the permanent organizational level (e.g. procurement, legal, HR, IT) and are used by projects to contribute significantly to the overall project success.

6.2.1. B.1. Project Management Processes & Resources

Projects striving for excellence identify and define or design the key project management processes and related resources necessary for project success.

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They do this in close cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a Project Management Office (PMO). During project design, the organizational structure, governance arrangements, methods, tools, project management processes and team building activities are selected and used. These elements are continuously developed and optimized throughout the project lifecycle to create a shared understanding of how project objectives will be achieved in the most effective and efficient manner. This is based on a thorough understanding of the project objectives, project needs and organizational capabilities. Project management processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure improvement and sustained alignment with objectives.

In practice, projects striving for excellence ensure that the project management approach is appropriate for the organizational, cultural, social, political, legal and technical complexity of the project and its environment.

In practice, projects striving for excellence in project management processes and resources may consider:

- Ensure project management processes are adequate for sustainability considerations (economic, environmental, social and governance) related to both the project and its results;
- Build competent project teams, engaging internal resources and external experts;
- Ensure that cultural differences among stakeholders are reflected in communication and collaboration
- Actively develop project teams to share a common understanding of the project objectives and delivery approaches
- Secure required resources in cooperation with organizational units;
- Define processes based on good practices, lessons learned and industry standards;
- Define how changing requirements are taken into account in a structured way;
- Manage, evaluate and improve processes and resources throughout the lifecycle;

- Contribute to the development of organizational competences of all parties involved;
- Align project management processes with corporate and project governance;
- Apply innovative project management approaches and value-adding improvements;
- Involve stakeholders in the identification, implementation and improvement of processes;
- Introduce processes and procedures to stakeholders and train them when required;
- Define and use measurable process performance indicators linked to objectives;
- Identify appropriate processes, tools and resources for managing scope, time, cost, risk and quality;
- Identify additional processes relevant to the project or sector context;
- Select and implement digitally enabled tools and systems for project purposes;
- Monitor process effectiveness and efficiency, taking corrective action where needed;
- Integrate project management processes into a coherent program management framework;
- Integrate benefits management, stakeholder engagement and change management processes as core elements of the project lifecycle;
- Conduct program-level planning and control reflecting organizational change capacity;
- Allocate and optimize resources for change activities alongside technical project work.

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6.2.2. B.2. Management of Delivery (technical) Processes & Resources

Teams striving for excellent projects identify the key delivery (technical) processes and related resources required for project success in cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a PMO. During project design, delivery processes are selected or developed and implemented to establish a shared understanding how project objectives will be achieved effectively and efficiently. This is based on a sound understanding of project objectives, delivery requirements and organizational capabilities.

Delivery processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure continuous improvements. They are domain-specific (e.g. software development, construction, product development), and vary significantly across industries. Together, these processes and resources form the project's value delivery system (see Chapter 5.5), converting objectives into results.

In practice, teams striving for excellent projects in the management of delivery (technical) processes and resources might consider:

- Ensure technical processes are appropriate for the project's type and complexity;
- Establish requirements and implement digitalization and AI-based systems;
- Select delivery approaches suited to the project context (predictive, agile, hybrid);
- Engage competent internal resources and external experts, in cooperation with HR;
- Provide the resources required to support delivery;
- Ensure technical processes support sustainable project results;
- Organize efficient handover and transition of results to operational management;
- Involve stakeholders in identifying and executing key technical processes;
- Prioritize efforts and investment based on their impact on project success;

- Select approaches to reduce waste, pollution levels, use of hazardous materials and encourage the use of recycled rather than raw materials;
- Identify appropriate technical processes and tools for the relevant delivery domain;
- Monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of technical processes and resources using relevant performance indicators;
- Transfer results of review and lessons learned to the project, organization and other stakeholders;
- Protect stakeholders' information assets through appropriate security measures;
- Apply innovative and value-adding delivery approaches when required;
- Introduce processes to relevant stakeholders and train them when needed.

6.2.3. B.3. Management of Support Processes & Resources

Teams striving for excellent projects identify the relevant support processes and related resources required for project success in cooperation with stakeholders and, where available, with the support of a PMO.

During project design support processes are identified and implemented to establish a shared understanding of how project objectives will be achieved effectively and efficiently. This is based on a sound understanding of project objectives and organizational capabilities.

Support processes are typically established at organizational level and are used by projects to enable effective execution and delivery of results. These processes are reviewed regularly during the project lifecycle to ensure ongoing suitability and continuous improvement.

In practice, teams striving for excellent projects in the management of support processes and resources might consider:

- Ensure support processes meet the project requirements and are appropriate for the project's type and complexity;
- Ensure support processes address sustainability considerations;

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- Align support processes with corporate and project governance;
- Involve stakeholders in identifying and executing necessary support processes;
- Define support processes based on good practice and industry standards;
- Identify appropriate support processes for areas such as legal, IT, HR and procurement;
- Align support processes with the program's change roadmap and benefits plan;
- Adapt HR processes to support transition to new roles and ways of working;
- Design training as multi-stage interventions rather than one-off events;
- Establish processes for transition, handover and long-term support after golive.

6.3. Area C. Project Results

The Project Results area consists of criteria that provide insight into the perceptions about the management of the project held by the customer, project team members and other stakeholders, expressed in terms of their satisfaction levels, as well as indicators that validate this satisfaction level. In addition, it covers other results that can provide insight into the level of excellence achieved by the project. Project results are assessed not only against traditional performance dimensions (time, cost, quality, scope) but also against the four sustainability categories (economic, environmental, social and governance), ensuring that sustainability results are a central dimension of Project Excellence.

Balancing the expectations and demands of all parties involved, together with robust management processes, should lead to sustainable and outstanding results for all key stakeholders. The concept of sustainability as an important element of Project Excellence is specifically explained in Section 4.9, "The role of sustainability". As a fundamental principle, results can, by definition, only be excellent if they are also sustainable, so fully evaluating the excellence of a project entails extrapolating from the results achieved at the end of a project, in order to estimate future levels of satisfaction and success.

6.3.1. C.1. Customer Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high customer satisfaction—the project team checks the satisfaction level on a regular basis during the project lifecycle and takes action if appropriate. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative), engagement of customer representatives and their identification with the project. In well-managed organizations and projects, the customer alone decides on the perception of quality. The customer satisfaction criterion is a reflection of how well the project team understood and fulfilled their needs and requirements and how it interacted with them.

C.1a. Customer perception

Customer representatives consistently express their satisfaction throughout the entire project lifecycle through structured and unstructured feedback channels.

Useful examples might be:

- Customer feedback on fulfilment of needs and expectations, leadership accessibility, responsiveness and quality of engagement;
- How the customer experiences the intended business change, within and beyond the contract;
- Sustainable project results and other longer-term benefits for the customer's business, originating from the project;
- Customer satisfaction with the project's sustainability performance and E&ESG alignment.
- Appreciation of the project management approach (planning, risk, communication, reporting);
- Satisfaction with the cooperation between the project team and the customer;
- Positive and ongoing long-term relationship with the customer, extending the relationship beyond the scope of the project;

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- Willingness to work on additional projects, and recommendations to other companies;
- Comments on human aspects, project ethics, values and principles;
- Positive lessons learned, taking learning and feedback into account;
- Written or verbal appreciation or recommendations from customer representatives;
- Satisfaction survey results and feedback from focus groups;
- Formal appreciation and awards for project achievements granted by the customer.

C.1b. Indicators of customer satisfaction

In excellent projects, the perception expressed by customer representatives (C1a) and relevant observable indicators are consistent and lead to the same conclusions about the customer satisfaction level.

Useful indicators might be:

- Actual performance against agreed scope and deliverables (budget, schedule, quality, deliverables);
- Alignment with customer's strategic and E&ESG goals
- System performance and acceptance;
- On-time delivery of goods and materials according to plan;
- Safety performance (incidents, timely permits);
- Number of unresolved faults/defects;
- Number and nature of revisions and technical queries;
- Amount of non-conformance costs;
- The tone and degree of acceptance in correspondence and sign-off;
- Timeliness of response to change requests, claims and complaints;

- Number, nature and result of change requests, claims and complaints, contract changes;
- Number and amount of penalties and/or liquidated damages applied (where contractually relevant);
- Requests of the customer for new projects or further services;
- Awards and formal appreciations received by the customer;

6.3.2. C.2. Sponsor Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high sponsor satisfaction—the project team assesses sponsor satisfaction level on a regular basis during the project lifecycle and takes appropriate De improvement action where needed. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative), engagement of sponsor representatives and their identification with the project. Sponsor satisfaction reflects how effectively the project team understands, manages and fulfils the sponsor's needs, expectations and strategic objectives, while maintaining a constructive and transparent relationship throughout the project lifecycle. In excellent projects, sponsor satisfaction also encompasses satisfaction with the project's sustainability performance, including its contribution to the sponsor's E&ESG alignment with the sponsor´s sustainability goals.

C.2a. Sponsor perception

Sponsor and sponsor representatives consistently express their satisfaction throughout the entire project lifecycle and the benefits realization period.

Useful examples might be:

- Sponsor feedback on fulfilment of needs, expectations and project management quality;
- Sponsor satisfaction with the realization of benefits stated in the business case;
- Sponsor's and project team's ability to realize the business case;
- How the sponsor experiences the intended business change;

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- Project sustainable results and other longer term benefits, originating from the project;
- Sponsor's perception of ecological, economic and social results.
- Achieved alignment with corporate and sponsor strategic goals;
- Sponsor perception of the project's ability to balance short-term delivery objectives with long-term strategic, sustainability and business transformation goals;
- Sponsor's confidence that governance arrangements (decision rights, escalation paths) enabled timely course correction;
- Positive and ongoing long term relationship with the sponsor, extending the relationship beyond the scope of the project;
- Willingness to work on additional projects or tasks;
- Positive lessons learned and improvements to the sponsor's business;
- Written or verbal appreciation or recommendations from sponsor representatives;
- Formal appreciation and awards for project achievements granted by the sponsor;

C.2b. Indicators of sponsor satisfaction

In excellent projects, the perception expressed by the sponsor and the sponsor's representatives and relevant observable indicators lead to the same conclusions about the sponsor satisfaction level.

Useful indicators might be:

- Benefits achieved as described in the business case;
- Feedback from benefit owners to the sponsor about their satisfaction;
- Alignment with the sponsor's strategic and E&ESG goals
- Actual performance against agreed scope and deliverables (budget, schedule, quality, deliverables);
- System performance and acceptance;

- On-time delivery of goods and materials according to plan;
- Safety performance (incidents, timely permits);
- Number of unresolved faults/defects;
- Amount of non-conformance costs;
- The tone and degree of acceptance in correspondence and sign-off;
- Timeliness of response to change requests, claims and complaints;
- Number, nature and result of change requests, claims and complaints;
- Requests of the sponsor for new projects or further services;
- Awards and formal appreciations received by the sponsor;

6.3.3. C.3. Project Team, Partner and Supplier Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high team member, partner and supplier satisfaction. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of project objectives, the quality of collaboration and leadership, the level of engagement and empowerment, and the extent to which individuals identify with the project's purpose, values and results.

C.3a. Perception of the project team

Project team members, partners and suppliers consistently express their satisfaction throughout the entire project lifecycle.

Useful examples might be:

- Satisfaction with leadership behavior, communication and collaboration in the team;
- Satisfaction with strategy, direction and confidence in project management;
- The degree of psychological safety;
- Respect, recognition and career development possibilities;

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- Team satisfaction with the project's sustainability performance and E&ESG alignment
- Autonomy of the team within clear goals, boundaries and escalation paths;
- Clarity of rules for acceptable use of AI tools;
- Access to current, consistent information in shared project repositories;
- Availability of tools, training and infrastructures supporting the way of working;
- Availability of support and training regarding the team's performance;
- Usefulness of coaching and facilitation from project management functions (e.g. a PMO);
- Clarity and consistency of communication about change and its rationale;
- Management of change load and avoidance of change fatigue;
- Ease of cooperation with organizational departments and external partners;
- Written or verbal appreciation;
- Feedback from satisfaction statements/surveys;

C.3b. Indicators of project team satisfaction

In excellent projects the perception expressed by team members, partners and suppliers (C3a) and relevant observable indicators lead to the same conclusions about the level of their satisfaction.

Useful indicators might be:

- Results of project team satisfaction surveys compared with planned results;
- Indicators for psychological safety of project and change teams;
- Sick leave (number of sick days), especially due to burnout;
- Turnover rate;

- Safety performance (incidents);
- DEI metrics: gender balance, representation, pay equity, accessibility.
- Number of training days and other competence development activities compared with the planned number;
- Recognition and awards, including from senior management;
- Number of innovations and ideas proposed by team members that meet innovation criteria (see Section 4.2);
- Number of sustainability improvement ideas proposed and implemented;
- Number of complaints and their follow-up;
- Number of impediments raised and average time-to-resolution;

6.3.4. C.4. Other Stakeholder Satisfaction

Excellent projects achieve high stakeholder satisfaction. The perceived satisfaction is consistent with the fulfilment of the project objectives, key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative), engagement of the stakeholders' representatives and their identification with the project and its intended result. Stakeholders representing environmental, political or social aspects of the project are highly satisfied. Stakeholder satisfaction is actively managed throughout the project lifecycle and beyond delivery, reflecting long-term value creation and responsible project leadership.

C.4a. Perception of the other stakeholders

Stakeholders consistently express their satisfaction throughout the entire project lifecycle. Positive impacts on the environment and society are measurable. Stakeholder perceptions are monitored proactively and used to steer project decisions and improvements. Whenever the project has a considerable impact on the natural or social environment, the satisfaction of respective stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, local communities and/or authorities) is actively assessed and taken into account.

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Useful examples might be:

- Stakeholders' perceptions of project management, involvement and long-term relationships;
- Stakeholder satisfaction (especially from social groups dedicated to sustainability) with the project's sustainability performance and E&ESG alignment;
- Environmental impact and consequences for society (pollution, land use, wellbeing);
- Environmental stakeholder satisfaction with biodiversity, circularity and climate impact management;
- Impacted community satisfaction with engagement and management of negative impacts;
- Stakeholders' satisfaction with transparency of project decision-making, taking into account external commitments and regulatory context;
- Stakeholder satisfaction with transparency and ethical conduct.
- Industry or economic partners appreciation of competitive advantage, innovation and business opportunities.
- Written or verbal appreciation expressed by stakeholders, and awards granted;
- Results from stakeholder satisfaction surveys and focus groups

C.4b. Indicators of other stakeholders' satisfaction

In excellent projects the perception expressed by stakeholders (C4a) and relevant observable indicators lead to the same conclusions about the level of stakeholder satisfaction. Qualitative perceptions and quantitative evidence are reviewed together to ensure a balanced, fact-based understanding of stakeholder sentiment

Useful indicators can be:

- Benefits achieved as outlined in the business case;
- Environmental KPIs: GHG emissions, biodiversity impact, pollution incidents;
- Social KPIs: community complaints, benefit results, human rights audit results;
- Governance KPIs: supplier audits, ethical violations, regulatory compliance rate;
- Economic KPIs: ROI, resilience;
- Number and results of citizens' initiatives and legal/contractual actions;
- Nature of stakeholder correspondence, and complaints and resolutions;
- Safety performance and timely permits;
- Awards and formal appreciations received by stakeholders.

6.3.5. C.5. Project Results and Impact on the Environment

Projects striving for excellence achieve outstanding results while retaining high performance levels throughout the project lifecycle. Such results are enabled by effective leadership, sound governance, and excellent project management practices. They create measurable value for the sponsoring organization and generate positive economic, social, environmental, technological and organizational effects within the broader ecosystem in which the project operates.

Projects generate results such as products and services, but their purpose is to bring about results such as financial benefits, changes (social, organizational, cultural, ecological, technological), market position, increased knowledge grown intellectual property etc.

Often projects are part of a longer-term transformation. The ambition is to create impact: on society, on the organization's longer-term position in its ecosystem or supply chain, and on behavior (e.g. health, safety, net-zero, biodiversity). While projects are not directly focused on generating impact,

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they influence such transformations, positively or negatively. Projects striving for excellence support the wider transformation positively, and try to reduce negative influence as much as possible.

C.5a. Realization of results as defined in project objectives

Projects striving for excellence realize and measure the results as defined in the project objectives (A2b).

The definitions of objectives related to project results might be found, for example, in:

- Project charter;
- Scope specification;
- Change project objectives;
- Organizational strategic plans;
- Technical specifications;
- Quality metrics;
- Acceptance criteria;
- Program benefits realization plan;
- Business case (e.g. for value to the sponsor, market share, profitability/return on investment levels, non-financial benefits).

Project objectives may be documented in multiple project-related sources, including contracts, specifications, business cases, scope statements, quality criteria and governance documents. Assessment should consider not only whether objectives were achieved, but also the effectiveness, efficiency, quality, sustainability and timeliness with which they were achieved.

Changes to project objectives during the project lifecycle should be evaluated in context. Projects that deliver only against the original baseline while failing to respond appropriately to emerging needs, learning opportunities or significant environmental or social changes should not be considered excellent. Likewise, unintended and unmanaged descoping that reduces intended result and value should be reflected negatively in the assessment.

Where results are delivered incrementally or through phased releases rather than a single "bigbang" implementation, evidence of intermediate result realization and benefit achievement should be taken into account.

From a perspective of result and impact, a project striving for excellence is expected to engage proactively and support the realization of sustainability objectives with evidence of:

- Contribution to the organization's E&ESG commitments;
- Economic results (ROI achieved, business resilience demonstrated, competitive advantage gained, future opportunities created);
- Social results (labor practices compliance, human rights respected, people developed, impacted communities benefited);
- Environmental results (biodiversity, climate mitigation, pollution prevention);
- Governance results (responsible supplier relationships, transparency, ethical conduct);
- Change results (changed behavior, improved collaboration, reduced friction, improved capabilities)
- Post-project sustainability and benefits evaluation, capturing long-term impact.

C.5b. Realization of results beyond project objectives, including impact on environment

Excellent project management and leadership often generate additional benefits, results and positive impacts beyond those originally defined in the project objectives. These may arise from innovation, learning, collaboration, stakeholder engagement, sustainability initiatives, or the project's influence on its broader organizational, social, economic and environmental context.

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Examples of results beyond objectives could, for example, be:

- Long-term benefits and cost savings;
- New or improved methodologies, technologies, products or governance approaches that create measurable value and can be sustained or replicated (innovation, as defined in Section 4.2)
- Knowledge and experience transfer, intellectual property rights, implementation of lessons learned;
- Improved or new ways of working, and organizational culture change;
- Improved collaboration in the network and supply chain;
- Low social resistance against, and social adoption of, the project.
- Social and governance legacy results that persist beyond the project's completion
- Public or sector recognition (media attention, becoming a benchmark);
- Awards, repeat orders and referrals

Examples of positive impact on the natural environment:

- Reduced pollution levels, or carbon-positive performance;
- Contribution to biodiversity net gain beyond regulatory requirements;
- Waste reduction or regeneration;
- Use of recycled or renewable materials;
- Circular economy contributions beyond project scope;
- Meeting or surpassing ecological requirements/regulations and certifications;
- Ecological or social spin-offs generated from the project

C.5c. Project performance

Excellent projects deliver their outputs and generate results and benefits effectively, efficiently and sustainably, while minimizing negative impacts on stakeholders, society and the environment. Project performance is assessed not only against traditional delivery criteria such as scope, schedule, cost and quality, but also against the long-term value created and the project's economic, social, environmental and governance performance

The following indicators of results delivery effectiveness and efficiency should be considered:

- Increased value delivered to the customer and the customer's customer;
- Cost and schedule performance;
- Avoidance of negative environmental and social impact;
- Usage of resources, use of (renewable) materials, reduction of waste;
- Prevention of safety incidents, and cost of (non-)quality.

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7. Project Excellence assessment as a strategic driver for an organization

Systematic assessment of Project Excellence helps an organization to deliver its strategy more reliably, manage its impacts on society and the environment and to strengthen its competitiveness in the long term. It also helps to achieve benefits more effectively, efficiently and sustainably, while minimizing negative impacts on stakeholders, society and the environment. Project performance is assessed not only against traditional delivery criteria such as scope, schedule, cost and quality, but also against the long-term value created and the project's economic, social, environmental and governance performance.

Assessing Project Excellence supports the overall knowledge and experience management strategy and processes of organizations. Running an assessment allows all participants to share experiences and learn. This happens not only through the tangible outputs (reports), but even more through the intangible ones (the conversations about improvements during the assessment). Therefore, assessments are part of the continuous improvement and adaptation cycles of the organization, increasingly delivering sustainable benefits and results.

Organizational learning on Project Excellence could be owned by a PMO if there is one.

7.1. Assess Project Excellence strategically

A well-considered approach to assessing Project Excellence gives organizations a clearer view of how projects shape overall organizational capability and create lasting economic, environmental, social and governance (E&ESG) value. When used consistently across the project landscape, it helps reveal shared strengths, recurring gaps, and opportunities for further development, while fostering a common understanding of excellence. In doing so, it supports continuous learning, evidence-based decision-making and

contributes to the strengthening of competitive advantage and societal responsibility.

Purpose of assessments in organizations

Through regular assessment of projects and programs, the organization gains a clearer understanding of how well it is able to realize its change objectives through projects. It also makes excellence tangible and turns it into a shared standard for all project teams creating transparency on performance, results and opportunities for improvement.

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® (IPMA PEB) is an adaptable and open concept and is designed for various purposes:

- Driving continuous improvement within projects;
- Regular monitoring of the project's ability to deliver sustainable results on different levels (objectives, sponsor, customer, employees, stakeholders, environment);
- Evaluating the project's sustainability performance across four categories: Economic, Social, Environmental, and Governance;
- Assessment and continuous improvement of project management methods based on the IPMA Project Excellence Model (IPMA PEM) assessment;
- Complementing project audit and quality assessment tools, and sustainability reporting requirements;
- Complementing project management maturity assessment tools;
- Supporting strategic portfolio decisions through insights into project performance, benefits realization and sustainability results;
- Identifying organizational capabilities, strengths and development needs across projects and programs.

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The IPMA PEM provides a framework that ensures the proper planning of project assessment activities, while taking into consideration all the key areas influencing a project's ability to succeed sustainably. The key benefits of using the model in this context are:

- Easy reporting on various levels, including sustainability impact visualization;
- Inclusion of responsible leadership as one of the key dimensions of management;
- Inherent link between observable sustainability plan, processes and results.

When a consistent assessment approach is applied across many projects in the portfolio, it becomes possible to identify trends and patterns in the organization's project culture. Over time, this creates a coherent picture of how Project Excellence evolves across the whole organization and supports the development of targeted improvement initiatives at project, program, portfolio and organizational levels.

Use of the model for project management maturity assessment

The IPMA PEM is not designed as a maturity assessment tool, as it follows a different philosophy. Most maturity models focus on the existence, standardization, optimization, and organization-wide use of particular management techniques and practices that are expected by their authors. The IPMA PEM focuses on a conscious adaptability and continuous improvement in areas of project management that go beyond processes. It also closely links the assessment of methods with achieved E&ESG results, which is not typical in most traditional maturity models.

Linking assessments with strategy and competitiveness

Project Excellence is closely linked to the organization's ability to implement its strategy, achieve its E&ESG commitments, and to react to a changing environment. Well-managed projects enable the organization to introduce green innovations, manage double materiality risks and use resources in an effective, circular and efficient way.

Organizations that systematically assess excellence in their projects build capabilities that are difficult for competitors to copy. They learn faster from

experience, align projects more clearly with strategic sustainability objectives, and are better able to balance expectations of all key stakeholders, including impacted communities and the environment. This contributes directly to sustainable business results, long-term value creation, and business resilience.

Building a shared Project Excellence culture

When self-assessments are applied consistently, they support the development of a common Project Excellence culture. Project teams begin to use the same concepts and criteria when discussing their work, regardless of the business unit, sector, or country.

The results of assessments, including qualitative feedback, Project Sustainability Impact Assessment (PSIA) outputs, and scores, can be shared between projects in a structured way. This allows good practices to be identified, compared, and transferred from one project to another, and also supports internal benchmarking. Over time, the organization can define internal reference levels for excellent, sustainable projects and use them as targets for new initiatives.

Assessment results can also be used to identify systemic issues, prioritize capability development initiatives and support strategic improvement programs.

By integrating self-assessment into existing governance processes, such as stage-gate reviews, portfolio boards or quality and environmental management systems, Project Excellence becomes a natural part of "how we work here". In this way, the Project Excellence Baseline gradually becomes a common standard used by all project stakeholders in the organization. Excellence becomes embedded in organizational culture, strengthening project success, sustainability performance, innovation and long-term organizational effectiveness.

7.2. Using the Project Excellence Model for self-assessment

Self-assessment can be carried out by the project team itself as well as by internal experts or external consultants. Assessors from outside the project team can be from among experienced project managers, quality and sustainability experts, and project management office/portfolio management

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office staff members. Participation in the IPMA PEM assessment will help to capitalize on their experience and will further develop their competences through observation and analysis of various project situations within assessed projects. It can also strengthen constructive dialogue between these groups of professionals, leading to joint improvement of management methods.

The same model and scoring logic as in the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award process (see Appendix B) can be used. Organizations may adapt the assessment ORGANIZATION

approach to the context, size, complexity, risk profile and lifecycle phase of the project while preserving the fundamental principles of the model. This makes the approach flexible and allows each organization to determine the appropriate level of detail, frequency and scope of assessment. As a result, the model can be applied consistently across a wide range of projects while remaining proportionate to their specific characteristics and needs.

Using the model in everyday practice encourages open discussions about leadership, objectives, processes, resources, sustainability impacts, and results. It invites project teams to reflect on their own work, recognize their achievements, and define ambitious but realistic improvement actions. The assessment process creates transparency regarding strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities, helping teams and organizations make better-informed decisions and continuously improve their ways of working. The assessment is not an audit but a learning opportunity that supports the Deming-Shewhart Plan-DoCheck-Act cycle. When applied regularly, self-assessment fosters a culture of excellence, accountability and continuous learning, helping organizations strengthen project performance, sustainability results and long-term strategic capability.

7.2.1. How to use the IPMA PEM in organizations with limited formal structures

Not every organization has a formal governance board, a dedicated HR function, or an established PMO. Smaller organizations, NGOs, public-sector bodies in developing institutional contexts, and organizations in cultures where authority and decision-making operate informally may deliver excellent projects without any of these structures existing in a recognizable, named form. In such contexts, the assessment should look for the function described in each criterion rather than the specific structure implied by the

example: a project governed through direct, trusted relationships with a small leadership team can satisfy A.2c's governance requirement just as validly as one governed through a formal board, provided decisions are made with comparable rigor and accountability. Similarly, competence development (A.3a) or sustainability reporting (C.5) may be evidenced through informal, relationship-based, or locally adapted practices rather than the certifications, systems, or disclosure frameworks referenced in the examples. Assessors and self-assessing teams should treat all references to specific organizational functions, roles, and reporting frameworks throughout this baseline as illustrative rather than required, and should exercise judgment in recognizing equivalent practices appropriate to the project's institutional and cultural setting.

7.2.2. Assessment of Project Excellence across project contexts and lifecycles

Every project has certain phases of development. A clear understanding of these phases allows managers and executives to maintain control of the project more efficiently. The project lifecycle may differ, in both the number of phases it has and the detail within each of these phases. Drawing on lessons learned from previous projects and defining the project holistically—from business needs, benefits, sustainability objectives and strategic results through costs, resources, governance arrangements, process design and continuous improvement mechanisms—significantly increases the likelihood of successful delivery and long-term value creation.

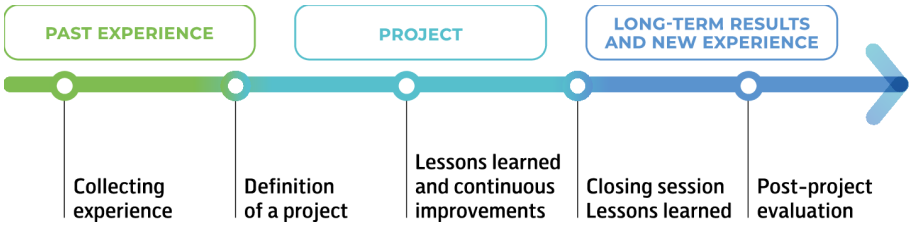


Figure 14: The use of IPMA PEM at various stages of the project lifecycle

Assessing a project during its different phases leads to a better understanding of the project context and the way it sets out to realize its objectives.

The assessment can be used to help identify the most appropriate leadership style, management processes and resources for the achievement of project

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success. At later stages, when the first results are visible, these can also be taken into account to see how the selected approach leads to performance. Assessing a project helps to identify areas that are going well, as well as areas for improvement that the project leaders need to address. It turns the IPMA PEB into a powerful tool to help leaders to achieve their objectives.

The Project Excellence assessment can be conducted focusing on the defined assessment criteria for project management, allowing strengths and improvement areas to be identified quickly. However, a full Project Excellence assessment also requires that the results, including both the economic return and the broader E&ESG impact, are assessed. This is normally possible only towards the end or after the delivery of the project.

How to use the IPMA PEM in the early project phases/midway through the project

The Project Excellence assessment can be conducted during the early project phases or regularly throughout the project. In this case, the focus will be on the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources criteria as these areas provide early indicators of the project's ability to achieve its intended objectives and results.

Results might not be fully assessable at this stage. Only certain results will be ready for assessment and some trends may be derived. Nevertheless, an assessment before the end of the project is beneficial and recommended. This will give the project team feedback on the project while corrective actions are still possible, help the project members to align their approach for the upcoming phases, and will make best use of the implementation of lessons learned. Two typical forms of an assessment during early project phases are:

- An assessment conducted during the planning phase that focuses mainly on whether the project has been set up so that the key success factors of the IPMA PEM have been considered and implemented in the project setup, including the initial drafting of the Project Sustainability Management Plan (PSMP);

- An assessment during implementation. This can be conducted on a regular basis (e.g. every 6 months) or at several key milestones to ensure the project is on track, following the project plan, and effectively managing its material sustainability impacts.

How to use the IPMA PEM in late project phases/towards project closure
At this point, the assessment can be conducted in full, with a strong focus on the Project results criteria of the model.

The assessment helps the project team to self-reflect on their own strengths and potential for improvement. It can also help the permanent organization ensure that the assessment feedback is considered in projects that are still at earlier stages in their lifecycle. This supports continuous organizational learning and contributes to the development of project, program and portfolio management capabilities.

In general, the IPMA PEM is an assessment that can be applied throughout the project lifecycle and serves as a strong backbone for implementing proven project success factors and identifying areas for further improvement. It also helps the project team to self-reflect and finally ensures a full project assessment (including assessment of results after completion and post-project sustainability evaluation), capturing lessons learned for future projects.

How to use the IPMA PEM in agile projects

Agile projects are characterized by short feedback cycles, incremental value delivery, frequent reprioritization, high stakeholder involvement and a strong reliance on team autonomy. Their management logic is based less on fixing detailed scope at the start and more on continuously learning what creates the highest value. For this reason, an excellence assessment in an agile project should not look for predictive planning artifacts where they are not appropriate. It should examine whether the agile way of working is purposeful, disciplined, transparent and effective in producing valuable results.

In the People & Purpose area, the assessment should consider how leaders and sponsors create clarity of purpose while allowing the team to adapt the solution. It should look at whether roles such as product owner, scrum master, agile coach, project leader or sponsor are understood and whether decision rights support fast learning and value-based prioritization. It should also examine whether psychological safety, empowerment, collaboration, stakeholder dialogue and team ownership are strong enough to support openness about impediments, uncertainty and changing needs while maintaining alignment with project objectives, governance requirements and sustainability commitments.

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In the Processes & Resources area, the assessment should focus on the quality of the agile system used by the project. Relevant evidence may include the product vision, product or project backlog, release roadmap, sprint or iteration goals, refinement practices, definition of done, review and retrospective results, risk and dependency management, quality assurance, technical excellence and the way impediments are removed. The model should be used to assess whether these practices are applied consistently, inspected regularly and improved when they do not lead to the expected results.

In the Project Results area, assessment should include both delivered increments and the results created through their use. Useful evidence may include stakeholder feedback from reviews, adoption data, release results, customer value indicators, quality indicators, predictability, team satisfaction, sustainability impact and learning achieved through experiments. Where the project is still in progress, partial results and trends should be interpreted in relation to the cadence of delivery and the maturity of the product or solution.

The assessment of agile projects should therefore verify whether agility is used as a disciplined approach to dealing with uncertainty, not as a justification for weak governance or unclear objectives. Excellent agile projects demonstrate a stable purpose, transparent priorities, frequent validation of value, responsible use of autonomy and a strong ability to adapt based on evidence.

How to use the IPMA PEM in hybrid projects

Hybrid projects combine predictive and agile elements in one management approach. This may be necessary when parts of the project require stable baselines, formal approvals, contractual control, regulatory compliance or long lead-time planning, while other parts benefit from iterative development, experimentation, user feedback and incremental delivery. Hybrid management is therefore not a compromise between two methods, but a deliberate design choice based on the nature of the work, the level of uncertainty and the needs of governance and stakeholders.

When the IPMA PEM is used in a hybrid project, the assessment should first clarify which parts of the project are managed predictively, which parts are managed adaptively, and how the interfaces between them are governed. It should examine whether this design was chosen consciously, whether it is understood by the team and stakeholders, and whether it helps the project

achieve its objectives more effectively than a single uniform approach would have done.

In the People & Purpose area, special attention should be given to alignment between sponsors, project leadership, product or solution owners, agile teams, technical functions and line management. Hybrid projects often create tension between different planning horizons, decision cycles and success measures. The assessment should therefore consider whether leaders create a common purpose, resolve priority conflicts, maintain trust and support collaboration across predictive and agile parts of the project.

In the Processes & Resources area, the assessment should look at the integration of governance, planning, reporting and delivery mechanisms. Relevant evidence may include a combined roadmap, stage-gate or milestone structure, release planning, backlog management, dependency boards, integrated risk management, change control rules, quality assurance, configuration management and transition arrangements. The key question is whether these mechanisms work together coherently, without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or leaving important decisions uncontrolled and whether they provide sufficient flexibility to respond to changing needs while maintaining transparency and accountability.

In the Project Results area, the assessment should consider both the predictability expected from the more structured parts of the project and the value learning expected from the adaptive parts. Indicators may include milestone fulfilment, release results, stakeholder satisfaction, adoption, quality, cost performance, benefit trends, sustainability impact, speed of response to change and the effectiveness of handover to operations. It is particularly important to examine whether the hybrid approach has contributed to better results, or whether it has created complexity, delays or unclear accountability.

Excellent hybrid projects show conscious tailoring, not accidental method mixing. They are able to combine control and adaptability in a transparent system, where governance protects strategic intent and compliance, while agile practices enable learning, innovation and early validation of value.

How to use the IPMA PEM in Small and Medium-sized projects

The IPMA PEM can also be used in small and medium-sized projects, provided that the assessment effort is proportionate to the project's significance, risk, stakeholder impact and available evidence. The model does not require a

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heavy assessment process. It offers a structured way of looking at whether the project has consciously selected an appropriate leadership approach, management practices, resources and result measures for its own situation.

For smaller projects, excellence should not be understood as the use of many formal documents or elaborate procedures. It should be understood as the ability to create value in a disciplined, transparent and adaptable way, using only those practices that are needed and useful. A small project can therefore demonstrate a high level of excellence when its purpose is clear, stakeholders are sufficiently involved, responsibilities are understood, decisions are traceable, risks are actively handled, and results are visible and appreciated by those for whom the project was undertaken.

In practice, the use of the model in small and medium sized projects differs from its use in large projects in several ways:

- the scope of evidence is usually narrower and may rely more on concise project records, decision logs, meeting notes, dashboards, stakeholder feedback and direct interviews than on extensive formal documentation;

- the assessment process should be lighter, often using a short self-assessment workshop, a focused review by the PMO or a peer review instead of a full multi-day assessment;
- the number of assessors and interviewees can be reduced, while still ensuring that the main perspectives are covered, especially the sponsor, customer, project leader, team and key affected stakeholders;

- scoring, where used, should be interpreted with care, as smaller projects may have limited quantitative trend data and fewer comparable benchmarks;

- the assessment should focus strongly on proportionality: whether the selected methods, controls and governance arrangements fit the project, rather than whether they resemble the practices of large or mega projects;

- innovation and good practice may appear in simple forms, such as fast stakeholder alignment, pragmatic risk handling, direct communication, disciplined prioritization or effective use of lessons learned;

- improvement actions should be few, concrete and immediately usable by the project team or by similar projects in the organization.

For medium sized projects, the assessment may need more structure than for small projects, especially when several organizational units, external partners or material sustainability impacts are involved. In such cases, the model can help determine which elements require more formalization and which can remain lightweight. This makes the IPMA PEM useful not only for judging the project, but also for preventing over-management or under-management thereby supporting an appropriate balance between governance, agility, efficiency and project success

7.2.3. Scope of the assessment in projects, programs and portfolios

One of the key decisions to be made when starting a Project Excellence assessment is the definition of the scope to be assessed. This decision is always made after considering the objectives of the particular assessment effort. In addition, the business context of the assessed project (e.g., organizational setup, cooperation model, links to other projects or programs, position in the overall portfolio) should be carefully analyzed and defined.

There are three typical scenarios in which an assessment can be carried out:

- Assessment of an individual project;
- Assessment of a program;
- Assessment of a representative project or program that is part of a portfolio.

Assessment of an individual project

When assessing an individual project, the scope of the assessment typically covers the entire scope of the project. It is also advised to cover the entire project lifecycle up to the day when the assessment is conducted, which is usually some time after the final delivery of the project. This ensures that findings show the improvement trends and demonstrate the effectiveness of the management through analysis of all available results (partial and/or final). This is especially important when assessing projects that were initially managed badly and/or have had to recover from major crises.

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When assessing an individual project, the assessors generally need to ask themselves for example:

- What is the complexity of the project in its context?
- To what extent should the influence of the overall management processes and leadership within the permanent organization be taken into account?
- How do we treat projects using mature, in-house management methodologies supported by effective tools provided by the permanent organization, given that the project leaders might be unable to influence these with respect to their project execution?
- How do we treat the cultural influence of the permanent organization and/or the dominating culture in a given region where the project is conducted?

It is advised to answer these questions keeping the following principles in mind:

- The IPMA PEM is designed to assess an individual project and its leadership, not the permanent organization (see the IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®) and IPMA Delta® for that purpose).
- Whenever the maturity of the permanent organization and quality of the leadership have a positive or negative impact on any of the model criteria, it should be reflected by the assessment results, e.g.:

» If the permanent organization provides a standardized and mature management model that is successfully implemented within the project and leads to success, it should receive an appropriate score in the relevant criteria (e.g. B1, B2, B3), just like any other project following an equally mature approach. However, the use of such an approach alone does not necessarily constitute innovation (as defined in Section 4.2) within that organizational context.

» If an inadequate leadership style or governance structure within the permanent organization jeopardizes project efforts (e.g. through the lack of proper sponsorship), the project should receive a lower score in the relevant criteria (e.g. A1, A2).

- What matters most in an IPMA PEM assessment is the conscious application and use of a suitable management approach and leadership style. Therefore, assessors should always verify to what extent the approach offered by the permanent organization was evaluated by the project leaders and consciously chosen for its fit with or adapted to the needs of the project.

- If there is no longer a valid justification for the project (e.g. because of external factors), the project should be stopped. A project may still demonstrate excellent leadership, governance or process management; however, a project that no longer delivers justified value cannot be considered excellent from an overall Project Excellence perspective.

- Whenever cultural norms in a given project context are in conflict with values (e.g. anti-corruption) promoted by the IPMA PEM, the context cannot be taken as an excuse for not following them. However, all efforts to live up to the values promoted within the IPMA PEM should be scored appropriately in the assessed project.
- Challenging strong cultural norms in a local environment can be considered innovation, especially when assessing the People & Purpose area, provided that such actions are ethically grounded and contribute positively to project objectives, stakeholders or society. For more guidance on innovation, please check section 4.2.

Assessment of a program

Programs play a central role in turning strategic intentions into lasting organizational change. Their results go beyond the individual deliverables produced by constituent projects and often include new ways of working, altered structures, behaviors and capabilities that together generate synergistic business or societal value. An assessment at program level should take this into account by looking at how the program shapes, coordinates and sustains these changes over time, and how it ensures that the combined effects of its components lead to the intended benefits for the organization and its stakeholders.

Many, if not most, megaprojects are in fact programs, and a proper understanding of the actual scope for the assessment is crucial in order to be clear on where the assessment efforts should be focused, as well as to understand the validity of the assessment results.

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This is also often the case in Small and Medium-sized projects, where a finished phase of a broader program is submitted.

There are three general approaches to assessing a program using the IPMA PEM (see Figures 15–17):

- Assessment of the overall program management;
- Assessment of the individual project within a program;
- Assessment of the entire program, including sub-programs and individual projects.

Assessment of overall program management

The primary goal of a program assessment as described below is to provide feedback on the level of excellence of the overall program management. It is a very efficient way to assess the overall condition of the program without the need to conduct a number of assessments of individual projects.

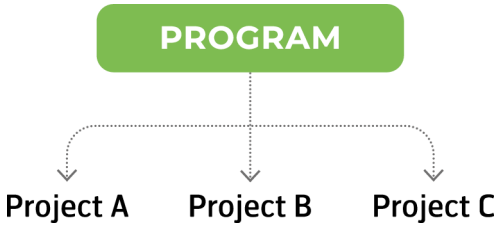


Figure 15: Scope of the overall program management assessment

In this case, the scope of the assessment of areas A and B of the model typically includes:

- Overall management of the program strategy, objectives and scope;
- Key stakeholder management from the perspective of the program management team;
- Leadership at the level of the program management team;
- Processes to manage the program as a whole and coordination of interactions between projects and, where appropriate, within individual projects.

Results are assessed from the overall program business case perspective including strategic value creation, benefits realization, stakeholder results and sustainability performance.

Whenever the project team is mentioned in the assessment criteria (e.g. in A3), the primary focus of the assessors should be on:

- The program management team;
- The program management/support office staff;
- The sub-program(s) and project managers.

Assessment of an individual project within a program

Principles for the assessment of an individual project within a program do not differ from assessing a standalone project that is not part of a program (earlier in Section 7.2.3).

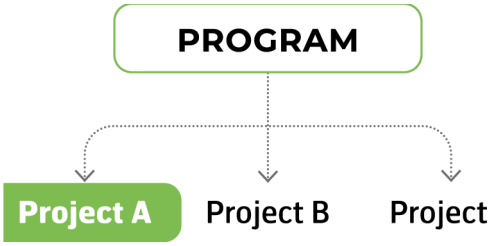


Figure 16: Scope of the assessment of an individual project within a program

However, in this case, assessor teams can experience difficulties related to interactions within the program. It is therefore essential to start this type of assessment with assessing the overall program structure and the interactions between its components. This should be followed by an adequate definition of the scope of the assessment. Processes provided by the program should only be taken into consideration when they directly impact the management of the individual project being assessed.

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Assessment of the entire program, including sub-programs and individual projects

Whenever there is a need to obtain a complete and detailed picture of the management excellence of a program, it is advised to include both the overall program management and the management of individual projects in the scope of the assessment.

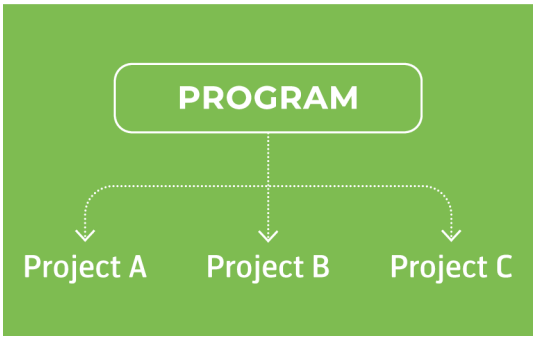


Figure 17: Scope of the assessment of an entire program

This is the most comprehensive and resource-intensive assessment approach and should therefore be planned and executed with particular attention to assessment objectives, scope definition, stakeholder engagement, assessor competence, resource availability, and the integration of findings across different organizational levels.

There are three possible approaches to such a complex assessment:

- **Assessment of the entire program**. Here, the program is assessed as a complex project, without dividing it into sub-components. Each of the projects or sub-projects is treated as a work package within a project.
- **Assessment of the overall program management level, combined with assessments of all the individual projects**. This approach combines the two approaches described in previous sections *(Assessment of the individual project within a program and Assessment of overall program management)*.

Findings from these assessments are then combined to provide a complete picture of the level of excellence of the program.

- **Assessment of the overall program management level, combined with assessments of a sample of individual projects**. This approach is similar to the one described above. It requires less effort while still providing quality findings on all program levels. The sample of projects should be carefully chosen in order to obtain objective results.

Regardless of the approach selected, assessors should consider how effectively the program integrates and coordinates its components, manages interdependencies, realizes intended benefits, and contributes to the organization's strategic, economic, social, environmental, and governance objectives. The assessment should also examine whether the program creates value beyond the sum of its individual projects through synergies, organizational learning, capability development, and long-term sustainable results.

7.2.4. Assessment of representative projects in a portfolio

Because the management of portfolios differs significantly from that of projects and of programs, the IPMA PEB cannot be applied directly to assess the excellence of portfolio management.

However, the model can be used to assess a sample of projects or programs within a portfolio. In this way, portfolio managers can obtain valuable feedback on the excellence of leadership and processes within these projects and programs and observe their impact on project results. This can lead to improvement suggestions for management processes and leadership at the portfolio and individual project or program management level.

7.3. Build and apply competences

Systematic use of the IPMA PEB helps to build the competences needed for excellent, sustainable project management and to apply them consistently in daily work. It creates a clear link between individual skills, project practices, and organizational capabilities.

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Understanding competences in the context of excellence

Competence is the demonstrated application of knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve intended results in a specific context. The IPMA PEB focuses on how individual and organizational competences come together in a specific project to achieve outstanding results.

The standard complements the IPMA ICB and the IPMA OCB. While these two standards describe what people and organizations should be able to do, the IPMA PEB concentrates on how these capabilities are actually used in projects. This perspective is essential for building real excellence, not only formal compliance.

In a project context, competence includes technical, behavioral and contextual aspects. Sponsors, leaders and teams need to understand the project's environment, manage stakeholders, design appropriate processes, and make sound decisions under uncertainty. Excellence emerges when these competences are aligned with clear objectives and ethical principles, and applied in a disciplined yet flexible way.

Developing competences through self-assessment

Self-assessment using the PEM provides structured and practical feedback to project teams about how they apply their competences. The criteria and examples in the model encourage reflection on leadership style, team composition, stakeholder engagement, process maturity and focus on delivering sustainable project success.

In the People & Purpose area the assessment examines how leaders embody values, act as role models for all behavior, care for stakeholders, and sustain a clear focus on objectives while guiding the project through change. It also looks at how teams are built, how partners and suppliers are involved (ensuring fair labor practices and transparent supply chains), and how a culture of fairness, learning and mutual benefit is created. This directly supports the development of competences related to leadership, collaboration and stakeholder management. The supporting documents on values, culture and strategy should indicate how ORGANIZATION

sustainability, openness to change, agility and innovation are expressed in the organization's ambitions and everyday behaviors.

With regard to 'Processes & Resources', the assessment focuses on how project management processes, methods and tools are selected, adapted and improved. It reviews how delivery processes (e.g. engineering, software development, logistics) specific to the type of project are defined, implemented and optimized to ensure sustainability of the project. The same approach is applied for the support processes (e.g. procurement, human resources, legal) that are relevant for a project. For all three types of processes, it is relevant how resources are planned and used efficiently.

To reflect expectations regarding sustainability, change management, agility and innovation. The assessment further considers how processes and resources enable responsible long-term results, effective change management, iterative working where appropriate, and also structured experimentation and learning.

The assessment is therefore extended with requirements that address environmental criteria (biodiversity, climate change, pollution, circular economy, energy and emissions) and social criteria (Labor Practices, Human Rights, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging), structured management of change, iterative and flexible approaches where appropriate, and space for controlled experimentation and learning.

The assessment of project results focuses on how the project is experienced by sponsors and customers, project team members and other stakeholders (including impacted communities), and on whether these views are reflected in objective evidence. It considers the degree to which the project achieves its intended results, generates added value beyond its original aims, and leaves a positive legacy in its organizational, social and environmental context. This enables teams to strengthen their competences in evaluating success, understanding diverse stakeholder perspectives and demonstrating lasting project value.

Whenever results of an assessment based on the IPMA PEM framework are presented, it is recommended to highlight the connection of findings in areas A ('People and Purpose') and B ('Processes & Resources') with project results and performance, observed as a result of area C ('Project Results') assessment. This gives an important perspective on the actual effectiveness of these processes and their impact on stakeholders' satisfaction and societal well-being.

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Linking individual, team and organizational learning

Findings from self-assessments can feed into competence development at different levels of the organization. At the individual level, they point to training needs, coaching opportunities or mentoring arrangements for sponsors, project leaders and team members.

At the team level, assessment results provide a basis for team development activities, such as workshops on roles and responsibilities, collaboration practices or conflict resolution. Teams can jointly review assessment feedback, celebrate strengths and agree on a small number of concrete improvement actions.

At the organizational level, aggregated assessment results across multiple projects show patterns in strengths and gaps. These insights can guide the design of competence development programs, the refinement of project management methodologies and the allocation of expert support.

Depending on how tasks are allocated within a given organization, these activities are usually shared between the PMO and the HR department.

Integrating competence development into the PDCA cycle

Building competences is not a one-off exercise but an ongoing effort that follows the PDCA cycle. In the planning phase, the organization defines competence requirements for different project roles and determines how the IPMA PEM will be used in assessments.

During execution, project teams apply their competences and use the model to check whether their approaches remain appropriate and effective. Regular reviews, based on the assessment criteria, help to detect early signals of issues and to adjust processes or behaviors.

In the checking and acting phases, assessment results are analyzed, and in the form of lessons learned, are translated into improvement actions at individual, team and organizational levels. The captured lessons learned are also made accessible for future projects, extending the learning loop beyond the project. By embedding this cycle into normal project and portfolio routines, competences are continuously reinforced and excellence gradually becomes part of the organizational culture and capability development.

7.4. Use the insight from assessments

Assessments create value only when their insights are actively translated into decisions, improvements, and organizational learning. The IPMA PEB offers a transparent framework that supports this learning process in a structured and practical way.

Turning assessment results into practical insight

An assessment according to the PEM produces both qualitative feedback and quantitative scores. The scores show the overall level of excellence and make it easy to compare projects or to monitor progress over time. The qualitative feedback explains why a certain score was given and which practices contributed to strengths or weaknesses.

For each criterion in the areas People & Purpose, Processes & Resources and Project Results, the assessors identify good practices, achievements and specific opportunities for improvement. This creates a balanced picture that recognizes what already works well and indicates where further development is needed, particularly regarding the project's alignment with the sustainability categories.

Organizations are encouraged to present assessment results in a simple and accessible way. Visual summaries, such as graphics showing the scoring results for the areas A, B and C or for sustainability impacts, short narratives, and concrete examples help stakeholders to understand the key messages without needing detailed technical knowledge of the model.

Feeding insight back into projects and portfolios

Immediately after an assessment, project teams should review the feedback and translate it into a focused set of improvement actions. These actions can concern leadership behavior, stakeholder communication, planning practices, risk management or other aspects covered by the model.

Not all improvement ideas can be implemented at once. It is therefore useful to prioritize them according to their expected impact on project success, feasibility and alignment with strategic objectives and E&ESG goals. The most important actions are then integrated into the project management improvement plan and monitored as part of regular project control.

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At portfolio level, assessment results from different projects can be consolidated to identify systemic issues and recurring strengths. For example, patterns in stakeholder satisfaction, team motivation or environmental performance may reveal where organizational policies or support functions need to evolve. Portfolio governance bodies can use this insight when selecting projects, allocating resources and shaping future project management standards.

Sharing lessons and best practices across the organization

Assessments provide rich material for knowledge sharing between projects. Experiences from highly rated projects can be documented as case examples that illustrate how excellence was achieved in specific contexts.

Workshops or communities of practice can be organized where sponsors, project leaders and team members discuss assessment findings and exchange ideas. Using the common language of the IPMA PEM, they can compare approaches to leadership, stakeholder management, processes and result measurement. This encourages peer learning and helps to avoid repeating mistakes.

Good practices identified through assessments can be integrated into organizational guidelines, methodologies, tools, templates and training materials. Over time, this leads to a steady evolution of the organization's project management approach, grounded in real project experience.

Using external and internal assessments in a complementary way

Organizations can benefit from combining internal self-assessments with external assessments, such as those conducted in the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award or IPMA Delta. Internal assessments are usually more frequent and closer to daily practice, while external assessments offer an independent perspective and international benchmarks.

By using the same core model and scoring logic, the organization ensures that insights from internal and external types of assessment are compatible. Lessons learned from external assessments can inspire internal improvements, and internal experience helps to prepare for external evaluations.

This integrated approach strengthens credibility and supports a culture of openness to feedback. It signals to employees and stakeholders that the

organization is committed to continuous improvement and to achieving excellence in a transparent and responsible way.

Embedding assessment insight into governance and decision-making

To fully benefit from assessments, their results should be embedded in existing governance and decision-making processes. For example, project start-up, phase reviews and closure meetings can include a structured discussion of assessment findings and their implications.

Management can use assessment scores, qualitative feedback, and PSIA outputs as inputs when deciding on project continuation, changes in scope, or resource allocation. This does not replace financial or risk analyses but complements them with a view on management quality, stakeholder satisfaction, and sustainability impact.

Over time, the organization can define target levels of Project Excellence for different categories of projects and monitor progress towards these targets. In this way, the IPMA PEB becomes an integral part of how decisions are made, how success is defined and how competitiveness and societal responsibility are built and maintained.

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APPENDIX A The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award benefits/value

Benefits for stakeholders

A central component of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award mission is to help organizations improve their performance in project management.

Organizations can use the IPMA PEB not only to apply for the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award competition, but also as a management tool to achieve excellence in project management. The combined results of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award and experiences gathered by organizations are used to educate businesses, government organizations, municipalities and communities on the benefits of improving their project management performance.

Organizations that reach the finalist level or become an award winner can reach a large audience and have the greatest chance for success in helping to spread the message about the benefits of following the Project Excellence concept and using the IPMA PEB to improve project performance.

Benefits for applicants

Organizations that reach the finalist level or become an award winner are recognized in front of a large international audience and join a select group of internationally acclaimed projects.

Applying for the award in itself gives a project team a ready-made opportunity to test their excellence in project management. If a project team uses the IPMA PEM to reflect on its own achievements, it will identify improvements and can address them actively.

The main benefit for applicants is in receiving feedback on the strengths and improvement potential of their project management. The project teams

applying for the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award receive a detailed written feedback report from the IPMA assessor team of qualified and experienced project experts in leading project management positions.

Benefits for projects striving for excellence, finalists and winners of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award will enjoy such benefits as:

- **The highest international honor for excellent project performance and worldwide recognition**. The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award is awarded to the project teams that achieve the best results based on the IPMA PEM, making them the most successful representatives of project management. The IPMA finalists, winners and projects striving for excellence gain confidence and additional support from their stakeholders, which will enhance their further success. The project team members will also gain confidence in their capability to manage future projects, and this will enhance their career prospects.

- **Multi-dimensional marketing opportunities for the applicant's organization on a worldwide scale**. The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award considerably enhances the prestige of IPMA award winners, prize winners, finalists and projects striving for excellence, because their names are officially publicized. The logo of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award is available for company documents and publications. This enables the team to show that they are one of the most successful project teams. IPMA award winners, prize winners and finalists are invited to pass on their experience of Project Excellence at the annual IPMA Global Project Excellence Award Winners Club and World Congress. This is an outstanding opportunity to show their status as a leading project management team and share experiences. The IPMA Global Awards Winners' Club provides a unique opportunity for Global Award finalists to share their expertise with other finalists and gain insights into other finalists' excellence and innovative approaches. The IPMA World Congress documents and other publications demonstrate the IPMA PEM and use the teams and organizations responsible as practical examples. Reaching the level of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award is the result of long-term dedication to excellence and improvement in project management.

- **Award continuity**: The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award is given once a year for a project of a given organization, but the same company/organization can participate in the following year and demonstrate how it has applied the improvements suggested by the IPMA award assessor team.

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APPENDIX B Assessment of Project Excellence for the Project Excellence Award—the Process

Recognition of projects that proved to be excellent based on the IPMA PEM assessment

IPMA rewards excellent projects through the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award. The award supports professional project management in recognizing high performance in projects.

B.1 Purposes of the Project Excellence Award Assessment

- The intention of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award is to increase the recognition of projects from different countries, different industries and different organizations, and to motivate project teams to develop and improve project management and to compare themselves against international benchmarks or set new ones. It supports professional project management in achieving high performance and identifies projects that exemplify excellent project management. By rewarding teams that prove their success in project management, IPMA recognizes and acknowledges excellent and innovative projects.

- Therefore, an external assessment by an IPMA Global Project Excellence Award assessor team offers a unique form of benchmarking for the project work. The feedback report gives the applicant's organization crucial feedback that could lead to better project results in the future, provided that it functions as a 'learning organization', able to take the necessary corrective actions for continuous improvement.

Projects that apply for the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award are required to be sufficiently advanced in the project lifecycle so that a full assessment can be carried out. More information about the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award and the assessment process in particular can be found in Appendix B and on the IPMA website.

B.2 The role and competences of Project Excellence Award Assessors for Large and Mega-sized Projects

The assessors are the heart of the assessment process. Their key responsibilities are to set up the process and to carry out an objective assessment based on the IPMA PEM criteria.

Characteristics of a Project Excellence award assessor:

- Strong project/program management competences and experience in the practice domain:
  - » Is an acting professional in the project/program management field, has an IPMA certification or an equivalent recognized certification;
  - » Has experience in working as a project manager and/or as a project management consultant and/or as a quality expert.
  - » Has an IPMA certification and is an IPMA Member Association;.
- Strong competences in people and perspective domains:
  - » Is a team player when working in an assessor team;
  - » Is flexible and open to new approaches, methods, procedures and tools;
  - » Is able to understand the context of the project and its complexity;
  - » Appreciates and understands cultural diversity;
  - » Is reliable and diligent in carrying out all duties in the assessment process from start to finish;
  - » Adheres to the principles of confidentiality and the IPMA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

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- Actively developed the IPMA PEM expertise:
  - » Has gone through regular Project Excellence assessment training and is an active participant in the PE assessor community;
  - » Has experience in using the IPMA PEM for project assessment;
- » Is able to write a feedback report with the assessment results describing strengths and areas for improvement based on the IPMA PEM criteria;
- » Acts as a good ambassador of Project Excellence, promoting the use of IPMA PEB.

The assessors who participate in the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award assessments are selected and allocated to one or more projects by the IPMA Awards Office and the IPMA Global Awards Director.

B.3 The assessment process for Large and Mega-sized projects

The categories for Large- and Mega-sized- Projects are:

- Large-sized project: with a budget between €50 million to €200 million;
- Mega-sized project: with a budget over €200 million

The applicant project or program must have been completed within the last 24 months preceding the Award application. All types of projects are eligible, and, in addition to completed projects, finished program phases are also eligible. Based on the number and variety of applications, the Awards Office has the right to announce the subcategories, or to merge the Large- and Mega-project categories.

This section describes a standard process of assessment that can be carried out by any organization, either internally (self-assessment) or as an external service. For more details on the assessment process used by the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award, please refer to Appendix C.

The assessors should not be members of the assessed project team. This helps ensure that results are objective and gives the opportunity to use assessment as a knowledge-sharing exercise.

For each project that goes through the assessment process, a Team Lead Assessor (TLA) is appointed. The TLA's role is to ensure a proper assessment process and to coordinate delivery of the assessment results in a feedback report.

Before the assessment, the TLA, often together with the assessor team, and project manager (or other relevant contact persons on behalf of the project) should agree on the following aspects of the assessment:

- Purpose;
- Objectives (e.g. expected results);
- Scope;
- Process (e.g. people involved, timelines, form of the report).

They should also clarify up front any documents they need in order to prepare for the assessment process (they can provide a list of the documents they require before the start of the assessment). All documents should be available for verification on-site during the assessment (documents might be available online or in a hard copy).

The TLA should ensure proper planning and coordination of all the assessors' activities ahead of and during the assessment. That includes the distribution of criteria among the assessors and the creation of interview plans.

From an individual assessor's perspective, the following steps have to be followed:

1. Familiarization with the assessment application report and list of documents
2. Initial IPMA PEM assessment based on documentation;
3. Together with the other assessors, reaching a common understanding of the initial assessment;
4. Creating a list of questions to ask during the interviews and a list of documents to review;

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5. During site visit: conducting interviews with key project stakeholders, reviewing project documents to address remaining questions based on the IPMA PEM and confirming earlier findings based on documentation;

6. Together with the other assessors, reaching consensus on the final assessment.

The assessment results are then documented in a Feedback Report and handed over to the IPMA Awards Office and interested parties (e.g., IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards Judges). The report should cover the assessed IPMA PEM criteria, including assessment information about strengths and potential areas for improvement where found.

During the assessment, different techniques are used:

- Interviews;
- Document analysis;
- Demonstration (e.g. of the tools);
- Site visit;
- Observation.

The IPMA PEM refers to qualitative and quantitative performance indicators that can be used during the assessment process:

- **Qualitative data** deals with descriptions and can, for example, be generated through interviews. Qualitative data can be observed but not measured. Descriptions of experience or situations, or observations of behavior, are examples of qualitative data.
- **Quantitative data** deals with numbers that can be measured objectively, such as length, height, area, volume, weight, speed, time, temperature, humidity, sound levels, cost, members, age and KPIs are examples of quantitative data.

B.4 The assessment process for Small and Medium-sized projects

The categories for Small and Medium-sized Projects are any finished project or program phase with a budget below € 50 million.

The applicant project or program must have been completed within the last 24 months preceding the Award application. All types of projects and programs are eligible.

This section describes a standard process of assessment that can be carried out by any organization, either internally (self-assessment) or as an external service. For more details on the assessment process used by the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award, please refer to Appendix C.

The assessment process is conducted by a team of individual assessors, led by a TLA. These assessors should not be members of the assessed project team or from the same geographical region as the applicant. This helps ensure that results are objective and gives the opportunity to use assessment as a knowledge-sharing exercise.

The assessment team might receive up to 3 different projects to assess in one annual award cycle.

The Small and Medium-sized Project assessment is based on the submitted Application Report, and the assessors may not contact the applicant during the process. Where clarification of the provided report is required, the assessors might request that the Awards Office organize a short online meeting with the applicant.

The meeting will be organized only if two assessors on the same project request clarification of a submitted document. During the meeting, the assessors may ask questions only related to the project Application Report, and cannot request any additional evidence or documents for review.

From an individual assessor's perspective, the following steps have to be followed:

1. Familiarization with the assessment application report and list of documents

2. Initial IPMA PEM assessment based on documentation;

3. Team comments and scoring normalization meeting led by TLA

The assessment results are documented as feedback for each assessed IPMA PEM criterion, including information on strengths and potential areas for improvement where found. The individual report is handed over to the IPMA

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Awards Office. Based on the received individual reports, the final feedback report is prepared.

During the assessment, different techniques are used:

- Document analysis;
- Potential interview.

The IPMA PEM refers to qualitative and quantitative performance indicators that can be used during the assessment process:

- **Qualitative data** deals with descriptions and can, for example, be generated through interviews. Qualitative data can be observed but not measured. Descriptions of experience or situations, or observations of behavior, are examples of qualitative data.
- **Quantitative data** deals with numbers and data, which can be objectively measured such as length, height, area, volume, weight, speed, time, temperature, humidity, sound levels, cost, members, ages, KPIs etc.

B.5 Scoring approach

Whenever the IPMA PEM is used for continuous improvement and/or benchmarking purposes, a scoring system is recommended to assess against the model criteria. The overall approach to scoring is described below, while detailed scoring tables can be found in Appendix C.

B.5.1 Scoring the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources criteria

Assessment of the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources criteria uses an approach based on the PDCA cycle. Findings in each of these criteria are scored individually on sub-criteria level (e.g. A.1.a) using the four-column table in Appendix C.1.

- **Plan (defining a sound approach).**

How the project team selects the overall project strategy, procedures, methods, approaches and tools that are appropriate to plan, execute, monitor and control the project and reflect the complexity of the project? Sources

considered by the team may include industry and/or company management standards and methodologies, specific definitions of processes or process elements created for the project, etc. Reference class projects provide valuable insights for creating and maintaining the plan. Further information to be collected: how did the applicant prepare the project management approach for the project (PM design), which steps did they take, did they select a standard PM approach provided by the company, modify a standard PM approach or develop a specific PM approach for the project, were team members/stakeholders involved to develop the PM approach, were workshops carried out etc.

- **Do (applying an approach systematically).**

How did the project team implement and establish the selected approach in the actual project. This column also verifies whether sufficient resources (human, technical, material) have been allocated for the successful execution of the planned approach. Did they train team members, which challenges did they face and how did they cope with them?

- **Check (monitoring and analyzing results of the chosen approach).** This column assesses two dimensions:

» **Project management**. Did the project team regularly check whether the processes and tools used in the project are (still) appropriate and optimal for it and will they lead to expected results; It also includes how the project team regularly assesses the assumptions on which the processes and tools were selected and implemented are still valid or need to be changed, to facilitate double loop learning and adaptation?

» **Project results**. How the project team regularly checks whether the progress of the project and achieved partial or final results are according to the plan? Did the expected outputs or actions lead to the expected results or effects? Are the assumptions leading to the delivery of results still valid, or need to be changed. So, not only check progress, but check validity of assumptions to adapt the process where necessary, facilitating double loop learning.

When regarding these categories, also look at intensity: how and how often did the project team check the chosen approach, in workshops, lessons learned sessions, which improvement potentials did they generate and identify, who contributed with suggestions—team members, stakeholders?

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Was this done regularly, in a fixed rhythm or event-driven (whenever necessary), and was it appropriate?

- **Act (improving and integrating the approach).**

This column is used to score the way the project team reacts to findings from the regular monitoring and results analysis. Further information to be collected: which improvement potentials were chosen to be implemented in the next PDCA cycle? As with the previous column, this column addresses two dimensions:

  - **Project management**. How the project team drives improvements or changes to procedures, methods, approaches and tools, in order to ensure they are optimally appropriate for planning, executing, monitoring and controlling the project. And (to facilitate double loop learning): did the project team really change the procedures, methods, approaches and tools when needed, choosing new ones, whenever the assumptions behind using them were no longer valid?
- **Project results**. How the project team develops and implements improvements and changes to bring the project back on track, or to improve its delivery performance. Also, when needed, did they adapt when needed, or change the delivery procedures, methods, approaches and tools when needed, choosing new ones, whenever the assumptions behind using them were no longer valid?

B.5.2 Scoring the various stakeholders' satisfaction levels

The assessment of the various stakeholders' satisfaction levels focuses on two dimensions:

- The stakeholders' own perception;
- Independent indicators.

Both dimensions are linked to the management approach and compared with an industry benchmark using a four-column scoring table on criteria level (e.g. C.1):

- **Perceived satisfaction level**. How a given group of stakeholders (e.g. customer representatives in criterion C.1) judge their satisfaction themselves. This column takes into account only the direct statements of

stakeholders, obtained, for example, by interviewing them, or by project satisfaction surveys, recommendation letters, press releases etc.

- **Expected satisfaction level according to indicators**. The satisfaction level that can be expected based on observing independent indicators, e.g. meeting acceptance criteria, amount and nature of claims, growth of the stakeholders' business as a result of the project etc.

- **Link between the approach and satisfaction level**. The extent to which the approach to managing the project has contributed to the observed satisfaction level. This column provides a key link to the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources criteria and, as such, should have a significant impact on overall score for a given criterion.

- **Comparison of the satisfaction level with the industry/sector benchmark.** How the actual satisfaction level of given stakeholders, also considering independent indicators, compares against the industry or sector benchmark. This column helps to calibrate the observed satisfaction level with what is usually expected in this kind of project within a given industry or sector. Even though satisfaction might not always be high (e.g. when lay-offs are part of the project), it might still be exceptional when compared with similar projects. *Note*: the project should make this comparison regularly as good practice. Assessors check whether and how the project did so, and use the result when scoring this column.

B.5.3 Scoring the project's results

The assessment of the project results (Criterion C.5) focuses on two dimensions:

- Results of the project as defined in project objectives and beyond (sub-criteria C.5.a and C.5.b);

- Project performance (sub-criterion C.5.c).

Sub-criteria C.5.a and C.5.b should be scored together as both relate to various project results, including impact on the environment. Separate scoring should be conducted for sub-criterion C.5.c, which focuses on project performance.

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Project results and performance are assessed using a four-column scoring table:

- **Realization of project objectives.** This column is used in order to compare project results and performance with objectives set for the project. Whenever this column is used for assessing results (criteria C.5.a and C.5.b), it is essential to take findings from both of these criteria into account. It is expected that excellent projects have a mostly positive impact on their environment and deliver results well beyond expectations.

- **Link between the approach and objectives realization.** This column is about the extent to which the approach to managing the project has contributed to the results and performance achieved. It provides a link to both the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources criteria and, as such, should have a significant impact on overall score for a given criterion.

- **Trends**. The purpose of this column is to assess whether the project achieved its results and performance consistently across all its phases. Good examples might include consistent on-time delivery, meeting quality requirements for all key deliverables or a consistently low number of incidents.

- **Comparison of results with the industry/sector benchmark**. This column helps to calibrate the observed results and performance level with those usually expected in this kind of project in a given industry or sector. In an excellent project, the leaders are aware of industry and sector benchmark projects and the relative position of their own project when compared with them.

B.6 Determining the project profile

The final result of the scoring process is a project profile that consists of three general scores, respectively for People & Purpose, Processes & Resources and Project results areas. Examples of such profiles can be found in the Section 5.3 of this baseline.

B.7 The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award assessment

IPMA annually awards project management prizes to project teams worldwide that achieve and can prove great feats in project management. The IPMA PEM is used as an assessment tool for projects that apply for the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award.

IPMA has a standardized process for project assessments consisting of the following steps:

- The IPMA Awards Office selects trained IPMA award assessor teams and appoints a Team Lead Assessor (TLAs) for each project;
- The assessors carry out their first individual assessment;
- Each of the assessor team discusses its findings and scores in a virtual team meeting and prepares a first Judges report;
- The assessor team carries out a site visit and prepares a second Judges report;
- The assessor team prepares a feedback report for the applicant organization;
- In relevant applicant categories, the Judges decides on:
  - » Projects striving for excellence;
  - » Project Excellence finalists (Bronze Project Excellence recognition);
  - » Prize winners (Silver Project Excellence recognition);
  - » Award winners (Gold Project Excellence recognition).

The IPMA Global Project Excellence Award assessment process

1. **IPMA Award assessor teams and TLA assignment**: The IPMA Award Vice President, IPMA Global Awards Director and the IPMA Award Office assign IPMA award assessors, the assessor teams and the TLAs. The appointed assessors for the current year must confirm their full commitment to participate in the full duration of the IPMA assessment process.
2. **First assessment result and first IPMA Award Judges meeting**: After receiving the Application Report, each IPMA award assessor carries out

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their individual assessment based on the IPMA PEM. The TLA consolidates and analyzes the assessor results. During the virtual team meeting, the assessor team discusses the individual results with the objective of reaching a common understanding. During this meeting, the assessors also compile a list of questions, topics for which additional information is needed and documents to be studied, to be provided at the site visit. The assessor team provides its results to the IPMA award Judges in the first Judges report. During their first meeting, the Judges collects questions and topics for the assessor team during the site visit and provides them to the TLAs.

3. **Site visit and final IPMA award Judges decision**: The TLA, with support from the IPMA award office, organizes the visit with the applicant. The purpose of the site visit is to collect additional information and perceptions for the final assessment of the project. During the site visit, the assessor team conducts interviews with all involved parties in the project. After the interviews, the TLA organizes a team meeting to finalize the assessment results from the site visit as per the IPMA PEM assessment criteria. The consolidated final results from all assessor teams are provided to the award Judges in a second Judges' Report. During the second award Judges meeting, the Judges analyses the assessment results, checks additional questions with the TLAs and decides which projects qualify as finalist(s) and which are the projects striving for excellence. From the finalist pool, the Judges decides on the IPMA prize winner(s) and IPMA award winner(s). This decision is kept strictly confidential until the IPMA awards ceremony, at which the results are officially announced.
4. **Feedback reports** are prepared by the assessor team and handed over to each applicant after the awards ceremony.

The site visit

The site visit process starts with the preparation for the visit and focuses on the IPMA award assessor team interviews with all interested parties (stakeholders) of the applicant's project. The TLA is responsible for the consolidation of the assessment results and consensus of the team on these results.

Site visit steps:

1. **Preparation for site visit**: The IPMA award office provides the TLA with the rules for the site visit, such as travel rules, behavior requirements during the site visit, etc. as agreed with the applicants, TLAs and Assessors. The

agenda for the interviews with the interested parties is agreed between the assessor team and applicant. The assessors also prioritize the most important questions, topics and documents they want to talk about and see during the site visit to find further information necessary for the assessment.

2. **Site visit and interviews**: The applicant presents the project and TLA presents the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award process and products. After these presentations, the interviews and document checks take place. During the interviews, the assessors seek evidence for the IPMA PEM criteria and assess them.
3. **Feedback consolidation and consensus on the final assessment**: The assessor team consolidates the information from all interviews. The results from the site visit are consolidated and written up in a second Judges report. The Judges Report consists of the findings of the assessor team as well as their recommendations to the Judges. In parallel, the assessor team starts work on writing the feedback report for the applicant.

B.8 The Award Judges' Assessment

The Judges plays an important role during the assessment process. The Judges members receive initial information from each applicant and are in contact with the TLAs during the assessment process. Two award Judges meetings are organized during the assessment.

1. During the first Judges meeting (a virtual meeting), the award Judges defines for each application which additional topics/questions need to be covered during the site visit. This information is provided to the respective TLAs.
2. During the second Judges meeting (a physical meeting) every TLA presents the results from the site visit. Based on this information and the consolidated results from the assessment (covering all IPMA PEM criteria) the award judges select the finalists and take the final decision on the winners.

The award judges prepare feedback that is reviewed with the TLA and is integrated in the Feedback Report. The Feedback Report is a document that is created for each applicant individually by the Assessor team. It provides the Applicant with an overview of strengths and areas for improvement with respect to each criterion of the IPMA PEM.

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APPENDIX C Scoring tables for the IPMA Project Excellence Model

These scoring tables are used in assessments for the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award. When the standard is used for other purposes, these tables can provide inspiration for scoring, although they may be more detailed than needed.

C.1 Scoring table for People & Purpose and Processes & Resources areas

The following table should be used for scoring each sub-criterion within the People & Purpose and Processes & Resources areas.

PLAN	DO	CHECK	ACT	Score
Defining a sound approach	Applying an approach systematically	Monitoring and analyzing validity and success of the chosen approach, and the assumptions behind it	Improving, adapting, integrating or changing the approach	
An innovative approach (See Section 4.2) is developed to meet the needs of the project	All relevant stakeholders are fully committed to the innovative/ significantly improved approach and systematically apply it	All relevant stakeholders are fully engaged in proactive forecasting of potential areas for improvement and measurement of the assumptions behind the approach	All relevant stakeholders are fully engaged in the proactive improvement of the approach, integrating beyond the project, and are fully engaged in changing the approach when assumptions are no longer valid	up to 100
A proven approach is significantly improved, and agreed by all relevant stakeholders, to meet the needs of the project		Proactive forecasting of potential areas for improvement, while measuring the assumptions behind the chosen approach	Proactive improvement of the approach, integration and changing the approach when assumptions are no longer valid	up to 80
An adequate approach is clearly agreed by all relevant stakeholders and fully aligned with the needs of the project	The approach is systematically followed by all relevant stakeholders	Proactive measurement of the approach, with timely signaling to decisionmakers	Effective actions are taken whenever analysis shows potential for improvement	up to 60
An approach is agreed with some relevant stakeholders and partially aligned with the needs of the project	Key elements of the approach are followed by relevant key stakeholders	Significant variances are noticed and reported to decisionmakers in time	All major variances observed in key areas of the project lead to improvement actions, or changes in the approach	up to 40

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PLAN	DO	CHECK	ACT	Score
Defining a sound approach	Applying an approach systematically	Monitoring and analyzing validity and success of the chosen approach, and the assumptions behind it	Improving, adapting, integrating or changing the approach	
An approach is agreed with some relevant stakeholders	Some elements of approach are followed by some of the relevant stakeholders	Major variances in key areas are noticed and signaled to decision makers	There are attempts to improve or adapt the approach when major variances occur	up to 20
No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	0

C.2 Scoring table for Customer, Sponsor, Project Team and Other Stakeholder Satisfaction

The following table should be used for scoring Customer, Project Team, Sponsor and Other Stakeholder Satisfaction criteria (C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4).

Separate scoring should be conducted for each of these criteria. The lowest level sub-criteria (e.g. C.1.a, C.1.b) are integrated within the scoring table (see first and second column below) and therefore should not be scored separately.

NOTE: when the satisfaction level is split over several areas (for example some positive, some negative), the score can never be higher than the category just above the lowest score. For example, if satisfaction is negative in some areas and exceptional in others, the maximum score is 20. If it is neutral in some areas and exceptional in others, the maximum score is 40.

Perceived satisfaction level (C.1.a/ C.2.a/C.3.a, C.4.a)	Expected satisfaction level according to indicators (C.1.b/C.2.b/ C.3.b / C.4.b)	Link between the approach and satisfaction level (IPMA PEM areas A&B)	Comparison of the satisfaction level with the industry/sector benchmark	Score
Exceptional and expressed proactively	Fully supports exceptional satisfaction	The approach evidently enabled the establishment of a new benchmark	A new benchmark established	up to 100
Exceptional		The approach directly led to exceptional satisfaction level	Outstanding in some areas	up to 80
Positive in all key areas	Positive in all key areas	Clear link in all key areas, with clear consistent evidence.	Good in all key areas	up to 60

Perceived satisfaction level (C.1.a/ C.2.a/C.3.a, C.4.a)	Expected satisfaction level according to indicators (C.1.b/C.2.b/ C.3.b / C.4.b)	Link between the approach and satisfaction level (IPMA PEM areas A&B)	Comparison of the satisfaction level with the industry/sector benchmark	Score
Positive in some areas	Positive in some areas	Clear link in some areas, clearly evidenced	Comparable to benchmark in most areas	up to 40
Neutral	Neutral	Weak link, minimal evidence, some indications	Below benchmark in some areas	up to 20
Negative	Negative	No evidence, or approach clearly leads to dissatisfaction	No evidence	0

C.3 Scoring table for Project results criteria

The following table should be used for scoring the Project results criteria (C.5).

Sub-criteria C.5.a and C.5.b (Realization of results as defined in project objectives and Realization of results beyond project objectives) should be scored together, as both relate to various project results. Separate scoring should be conducted for sub-criterion C.5.c (Project performance).

Realization of project objectives	Link between the approach and objectives realization (IPMA PEM areas A&B)	Trends	Comparison of results with the industry/ sector benchmark	Score
Substantially exceeded	The approach enabled the establishment of a new benchmark	Continuously substantially exceeded	A new benchmark established	up to 100
Exceeded	The approach led to exceeded objectives	Continuously exceeding expectations	Outstanding in some areas	up to 80
All realized	Clear link in all key areas	Continuously positive in all key areas	Good in all key areas	up to 60
Majority realized	Clear link in some areas	Continuously positive in some areas	Comparable to benchmark in most areas	up to 40
Some, or partly, realized	Weak link, minimal evidence, some indications	Ups and Downs	Below benchmark in some areas	up to 20
No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	0

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APPENDIX D Projects and Complexity

When assessing projects for the yearly Project Excellence awards, next to the scores by the assessment team, the judges also take into account the complexity of the project and its environment. Of two projects with similar scores, the one dealing with more complexity is rated higher.

As explained in Section 3.3, complicated and complex are distinct: complicated elements are intricate but knowable, while complexity involves genuine unpredictability. For award-scoring purposes, the dimensions below deliberately combine both, since a project can be challenging to deliver excellently for either reason. 'Complexity' is used below as shorthand for this combined difficulty, not as a repeat or replacement of the Section 3.3 definition.

Complexity criteria within the project include for example dimensions regarding size (money and length) of the project; amount or project participants, their maturity, competences and their objectives; innovative technology; number of countries and cultures involved; ambiguity, stability and focus of the project objectives; interrelations within the project; riskiness of the project.

Complexity criteria outside of the project involve for example political attention and stability; amount, number of project participants; number, power and diversity of external stakeholders; clarity of requirements and maturity of external customers and users; stability of regulations and the bodies controlling the project's context; complexity and stability of the project's physical environment; stability of interdependencies and activities outside the scope of the project influencing its success; stability of the commercial and supply chain environment of the project.

In several industries and application areas of projects, there are different factors that influence the complexity and the ways of dealing with complexity. In projects striving for excellence, we expect that in areas A and

B, the project recognizes the complexity factors and the risks associated with these, and organizes the development and decision making processes accordingly. When delivering results, we expect the project to use the assessment of the success to improve these processes.

While the Project Excellence baseline recognizes the role of complexity influencing Project Excellence, assessing project complexity is not part of the definition of the standard. The Project Excellence Baseline standard is applicable to projects within all types of contexts, and all levels of complexity, from relatively simple and stable to very complex and needing to adjust constantly. The applicants in the awards are expected to report an assessment of the complexity of the project, which is validated by the assessors.

Dimension 1 (internal): Complexity related to Objectives

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Lack of clarity or stability of objectives over the lifecycle of the project
- Conflicting or ambiguous objectives
- Level of acceptability of decision-making processes; project's objectives or results, for the internal stakeholders
- Level of mandate for change/adaptations (could be too high or too low)
- Complexity of contracts
- Availability and competences of talents and resources

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Dimension 2 (internal): Complexity related to people/cultures in the project

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Number and variety of stakeholders involved
- Stability of the stakeholder field
- Quality of the relationships between stakeholders, within or outside the project or besides the project.
- Number of cultures, countries, languages involved (and their interrelations)
- Number of locations and geographical spread of locations involved in the project.

Dimension 3 (internal): Complexity related to innovation, technology and delivery

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Technical or social complexity or innovation;
- Level of process innovations;
- Number of interfaces with and dependency of other projects or systems
- (social) acceptability of the project;
- Flexibility needed and room for experimentation;
- How many times has this solution, or this project, been delivered before in similar circumstances?

Dimension 4 (external): Complexity related to external stakeholders and power

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Political climate and influence of politics in steering the project;
- External stakeholders and their influence on the project;
- Communication channels, social media, public opinion and influencers and their influence on the project;
- Social and ecological acceptance of the project's results and processes.

Dimension 5 (external): Complexity related to the physical and regulatory context

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Regulatory and legal stability of the context of the project;
- Number of contractual and legal jurisdictions;
- Complexity of the project's physical environment;
- Communication channels, public opinion and influencers and their influence on the project;

Dimension 6 (external): Complexity related to impact from other external influences

Examples of this dimension to think about:

- Complexity of and influence on supply chain;
- Financial risks and access to funding;
- Other projects and programs influencing this project;
- External risks profile;
- Replace with: External risk profile; volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of the project's environment.

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PROJECT EXCELLENCE BASELINE

FOR ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Projects and programs are increasingly expected to deliver value in complex and changing environments. Success is no longer defined only by delivering agreed outputs. It also depends on creating meaningful outcomes, realizing benefits, generating value and achieving sustainable results for stakeholders.

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline, Version 2.0 (PEB2), provides a framework for understanding, assessing and developing excellence in projects and programs. It offers a common reference for project teams, leaders, organizations, assessors, educators, trainers, consultants and other stakeholders seeking to improve project performance and results.

PEB2 builds on the established IPMA approach to project excellence while strengthening the connection between people, practices and results. It places greater emphasis on value creation, outcomes, benefits, sustainability and the ability of projects and programs to respond to changing contexts.

PEB2 supports project and program teams in reflecting on their approaches, understanding their strengths, identifying opportunities for improvement and learning from experience. It can be used for self-assessment, benchmarking, development and recognition of project excellence, independent of a specific methodology, industry or delivery approach.

For organizations it provides a concept and the tools to continuously improve their approach to deliver value with projects and programs.

Excellence is not achieved through individual practices alone. It emerges from the way people, purpose, processes, resources and results work together to create value and sustainable outcomes.

We wish all project and program teams the insight, commitment and capability to pursue excellence, create lasting value and achieve meaningful, sustainable results for their stakeholders.

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