

# Managing projects

---

## Fact sheet 4: Planning of Project Coordination

### *What is project coordination?*

Project coordination refers to the planning, monitoring and control of all aspects of a project and the motivation of all those involved in it, to achieve the project objectives on time and to the specified cost, quality and performance. To carry out these tasks, the project partners must set up a management structure and appoint a project manager whose main task is to manage the project effectively.

### *Key elements of project coordination*

#### **Project Plan**

The project plan establishes the scope, aims, objectives, and method that will be used for the project, as well as the way in which the project activities will be performed, the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and the time and cost estimates. It can thus serve as a basis for the project manager(s) and project team to monitor the project's progress and to make decisions

#### **Supporting Plans**

To detail aspects of the project plan, supporting plans need to be developed. While the relevance of specific supporting plans depends on the scope and size of the project, relevant supporting plans could include the following::

- *Budget plan* outlining the anticipated costs of the project, considering the various relevant budget posts
- *Human resource plan*, detailing the number and types of staff to be involved in the project, and estimating their input expressed in number of work days. If possible, names of people could be provided.
- *Communications plan*, detailing the ways in which progress will be communicated to the project partners and stakeholders
- *Risk management plan*, identifying possible risks to the success of the project and stating contingencies, thus enabling a pro-active risk management.
- *Evaluation plan*, providing an outline of how the quality of project implementation, outputs and outcomes will be evaluated.
- *Dissemination plan*, outlining how the visibility and sustainability of the project outputs and outcomes will be maximized

#### **Management structure**

Each project should set up a management structure to ensure that effective methods for planning, communicating, and decision making are in place; that the project work is performed on schedule; that deliverables and reports are delivered on time and within the allocated budget; and that the project objectives and outcomes are achieved. Each project should develop a project management framework that works best depending on its scope and the work that

needs to be performed. However, the management structure should at least identify a project manager and project team. For larger projects, a management committee could also be appointed. The relationship between these functions can be detailed in an organigram.

### **Project Manager**

The role of the project manager varies depending on the scope and nature of the project. Typical tasks for the project manager include:

- Coordinate and manage project work
- Monitor project progress and performance
- Ensure that project outputs are delivered on time
- Identify risks, problems, and issues, and escalate them as appropriate
- Manage communication within the project
- Prepare progress, final, and other reports
- Arrange meetings and write the minutes
- Manage project resources, including the budget
- Coordinate work on any legal agreements (e.g., consortium or license agreements)
- Maintain the project web site
- Maintain project documentation
- Maintain contact with the sponsors

To carry out these tasks, project managers should have the necessary skills and capacities. The top 10 qualities a project manager should have are: visionary leadership, ability to communicate with people at all levels, integrity, enthusiasm, empathy, competence, ability to delegate tasks, ability to act under pressure, team building and problem solving capacities. Furthermore, the organisation should provide the manager with the mandate and time to effectively manage the project. Therefore, it is important to have a clear, written agreement on the proportion of time the manager will devote to project management.

### **Project Team**

Staffing requirements will have been thought through when writing the project proposal. Staff may work on the project full time or part time. During the project, the programme manager should be informed of any changes in staffing.

### **Management Committee**

While the project manager plans the project work and ensures that project outputs are delivered on time, project partners will want to review progress, discuss issues, and have input into project decisions. A management committee provides a forum for discussion and decision making, and allows the partners and team members to buy into the project work and spread the responsibility. The management committee may include representative(s) of each project partner organisation, key project staff (e.g., the project manager), project stakeholders, champions, experts, or advisors. The role of the management committee is to:

- Advise the project team and manager
- Steer and guide the project
- Review progress and outputs
- Review outcomes and their impact
- Represent the interests of the project partners

- Agree important decisions and changes to plan
- Discuss risks, problems, issues, and explore solutions

It is useful to draw up terms of reference for the management committee, so that all concerned understand its role and operation.

### **Project meetings**

An important way to communicate within the project partnership is through organising project meetings. These meetings can serve to inform partners about the project development, deliverables, outputs or issues; plan further steps in the project implementation; and facilitate communication and networking between the partners.

Meetings should be organised throughout the project lifetime. The rate of meetings can vary, but it is recommended to meet at least once or twice per year. Meetings also can have different purposes:

- A *kick-off meeting* is the first meeting of the project, and typically serves to detail the project objectives, activities and planning, while enabling new partners to make acquaintance.
- *Update meetings* are subsequent meetings which cover the progress of the project, and enable project partners to share results and knowledge.
- *Thematic meetings* focus on a topic of interest, e.g. dissemination, evaluation, or standards.
- *End of programme meetings* are meant to present the results of the project, usually to a broader group of stakeholder.

The project coordination plan should specify the time of each meeting and their purpose. In addition to these meetings it is also possible to hold smaller events for project staff to exchange ideas on common problems or issues and develop strategies. Sometimes it is also necessary for the project manager to meet with partners individually to discuss plans and progress in detail. These meetings are more difficult to foresee and plan, but it is recommended to foresee in the possible necessity of additional meetings.

### **Core project documents**

A project coordination plan should foresee in a core set of documents that will be needed to guide the project, indicate how the project work will be implemented, report on progress, and report the final results. Apart from the project plan and supporting plans mentioned above, these documents also include:

- Minutes of meetings
- Interim and final reports
- Terms of reference for the management committee
- Agreements with partners and other stakeholders (e.g., consortium or license agreements)

The project coordination plan should specify these documents as “internal deliverables” and include them in the timetable.

## Further reading

- Barry T (2009). Top 10 qualities of a Project manager. [www.projectsart.co.uk](http://www.projectsart.co.uk)
- Bennis, W., 1997. "Learning to Lead," Addison-Wesley, MA.
- Kouzes, J. M: "The Leadership Challenge," Jossey-Bass Publishers, CA.
- Project Management Infokit. Jisc Infonet. <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk>
  
- [CHECKLIST FOR PROJECT COORDINATION PLAN](#)