

Project

Contemporary business and science treat as a **project** (or program) any undertaking, carried out individually or collaboratively and possibly involving research or design, that is carefully planned (usually by a project team) to achieve a particular aim.^[1]

An alternative view sees a project managerially as a sequence of events: a "set of interrelated tasks to be executed over a fixed period and within certain cost and other limitations".^[2]

A project may be a temporary (rather than permanent) social system (work system), possibly constituted by teams (within or across organizations) to accomplish particular tasks under time constraints.^[3]

A project may be a part of wider programme management or an *ad hoc* structure.

Note that open-source software "projects" (for example) may lack defined team-membership, precise planning and time-limited durations.

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Overview

The word *project* comes from the Latin word *projectum* from the Latin verb *proicere*, "before an action" which in turn comes from *pro-*, which denotes precedence, something that comes before something else in time (paralleling the Greek *πρό*) and *iacere*, "to do". The word "project" thus originally meant "before an action".

When the English language initially adopted the word, it referred to a plan of something, not to the act of actually carrying this plan out. Something performed in accordance with a project became known as an "object". Every project has certain phases of development.

Formal definition in the project-management realm

A project consists of a concrete and organized effort motivated by a perceived opportunity when facing a problem, a need, a desire or a source of discomfort (e.g., lack of proper ventilation in a building). It seeks the realization of a unique and innovative deliverable, such as a product, a service, a process, or in some cases, a scientific research. Each project has a beginning and an end,^[4] and as such is considered a closed dynamic system. It is developed along the 4 Ps of project management: Plan, Processes, People, and Power (e.g., line of authority). It is bound by the triple constraints that are calendar, costs and norms of quality,^[5] each of which can be determined and measured objectively along the project lifecycle. Some projects produce some level of formal documentation, the deliverable(s), and some impacts, which can be positive and/or negative.^[6]

Specific uses

School and university

A project is an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned and researched about by students. At schools, educational institutes and universities, a project is a research assignment - given to a student - which generally requires a larger amount of effort and more independent work than that involved in a normal essay assignment. It requires students to undertake their own fact-finding and analysis, either from library/internet research or from gathering data empirically. The written report that comes from the project is usually in the form of a dissertation, which will contain sections on the project's inception, analysis, findings and conclusions.^[7]

Project management

In project management a project consists of a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result.^[8] Another definition is: a management environment that is created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products according to a specified business case.^[9] Projects can also be seen as temporary organization.^[10]

Project objectives define target status at the end of the project, reaching of which is considered necessary for the achievement of planned benefits. They can be formulated as SMART criteria:^[11]

- Specific
- Measurable (or at least evaluable) achievement
- Achievable (recently Agreed to or Acceptable are used regularly as well)
- Realistic (given the current state of organizational resources)

- Time terminated (bounded)

The evaluation (measurement) occurs at the project closure. However a continuous guard on the project progress should be kept by monitoring and evaluating.

Civil and military construction and industry infrastructure

In civil, military and industry (e.g. oil and gas) infrastructure, capital projects refer to activities to construct and install equipment, facilities and buildings. As these activities are temporary endeavors with clear start and end dates, the term "project" is applied. Because the results of these activities are typically long-standing infrastructure, with a life measured in years or decades, these projects are typically accounted for in financial accounting as capital expenditures, and thus they are termed "capital projects".

Computer software

In computer software, a project can consist of programs, configuration definitions and related data. For example, in Microsoft Visual Studio a "solution" consists of projects and other definitions.^[12]

State project

It can be defined as "a set of state policies and/or agencies unified around a particular issue or oppression".^[13] Therefore, these kinds of projects involve constant change and dynamism due to the social constructions evolve among time. State projects have to adapt to the current moment. They are mostly community services based.

Types

Some analyses of project-oriented activity distinguish - using military-style terminology - between grandiose **strategic projects** and more trivial or component operational projects: **tactical projects**.^{[14][15]}

Notable examples

- Human Genome Project which mapped the human genome
- Manhattan Project, which developed the first nuclear weapon
- Polaris missile project: an ICBM control-system
- Apollo program, which landed humans on the moon
- Soviet atomic bomb project
- Soviet manned lunar programs
- Project-706
- Great Pyramid of Giza

Topics associated with projects

- Megaproject
- Program management
- Project governance
- Project Management Institute (PMI)
- International Project Management Association (IPMA)
- Project management software
- Project planning
- Small-scale project management
- PRINCE2

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- "What is a project? definition and meaning" (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/project.html>). *BusinessDictionary.com*. Retrieved 2018-06-10. "project [...] Planned set of interrelated tasks to be executed over a fixed period and within certain cost and other limitations."
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- Mesly, Olivier (2017) [2016]. *Project Feasibility: Tools for Uncovering Points of Vulnerability* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=K4wmDwAAQBAJ>). Systems Innovation Book Series. New York: CRC Press. p. 52. ISBN 9781315295237. Retrieved 17 June 2019. "Figure 1.5[:] Toward a definition of an average project. [...] The outputs, according to my model, are expressed by a deliverable (e.g., a product), by some formal knowledge [...], and by some impacts (positive and/or negative). [...] As mentioned, small projects do not naturally lead to formalized knowledge or have an impact. Large projects, however, see the creation of some form of official knowledge and do have impacts on the way of life of the population they serve."

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