Turing Institute Programmes Context
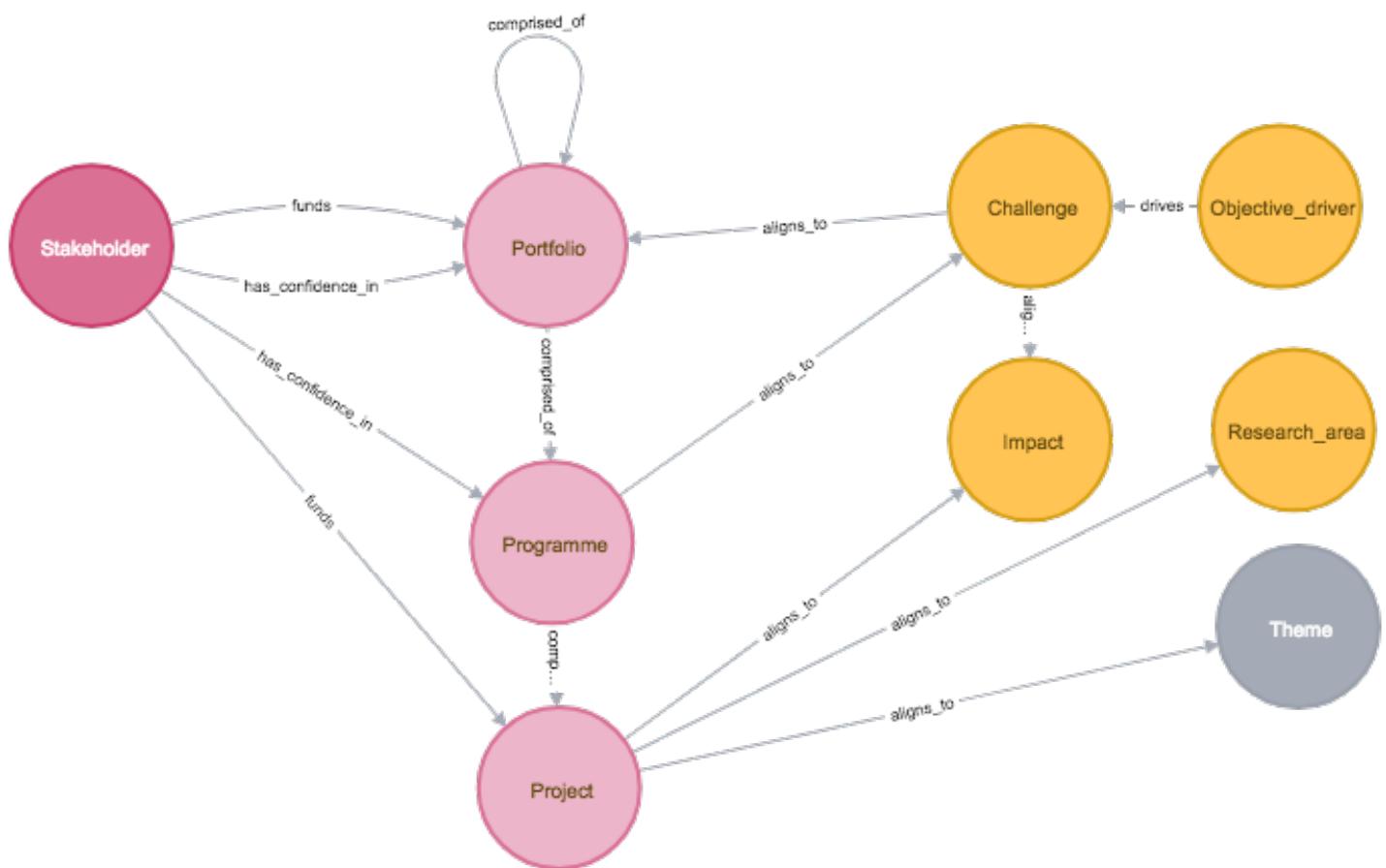
Purpose of memo: To open up a question of what the big issues and opportunities are, to start discussion with a view to putting in place the programme measures that fit the real need.

Confidence: Highly speculative, probably mostly wrong.

Strategic context

Within the Institute, projects and programmes deliver against various strategy elements:
1. Research challenges
2. Research themes
3. Research areas

Each Fund and Stakeholder will have its own priority list.Strategic alignment must therefore be traced without double-counting, but whilst crediting multiple ledgers. There may not yet be a clear distinction made between research impact and research exposure/sharing.

Programmes of interest
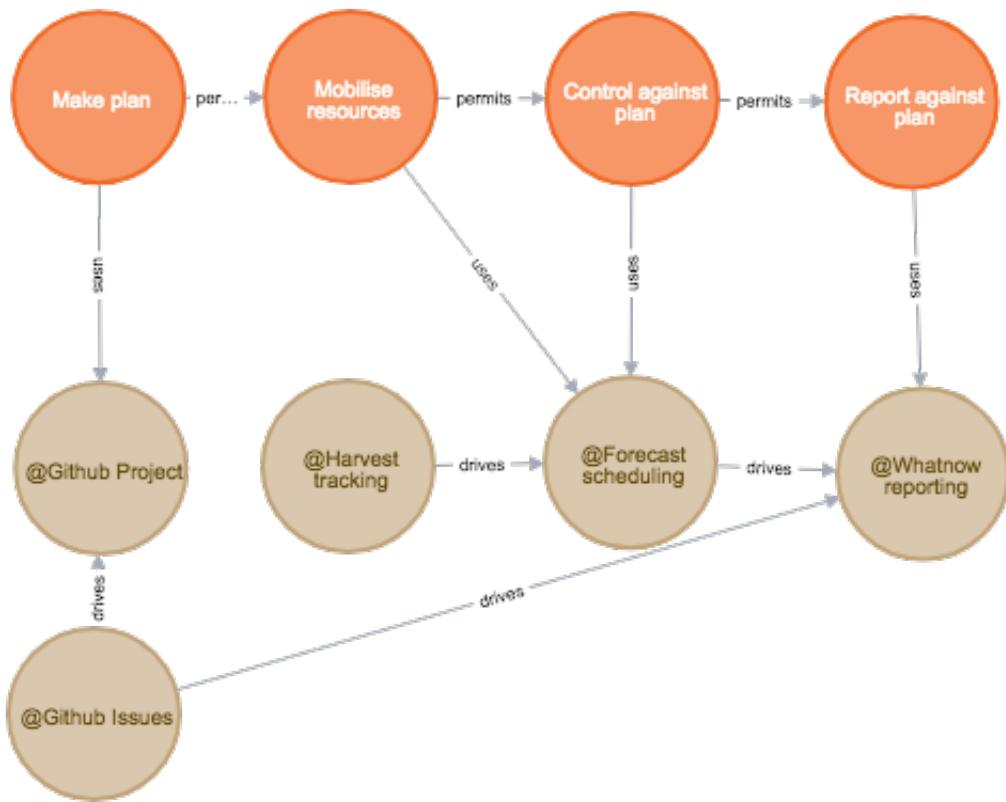
Special attention is required to provide a strong interface with ASG, which is a new programme that cuts across a number of existing programmes.

Likely challenges

1. It is not always clear which projects are 'live' and should be worked on
2. Failing projects dont get cancelled or de-scoped
3. Programme Managers often don't understand what the Programme is about
4. Programme Managers cannot evaluate the likelihood of success, based upon conversations with researchers
5. Not enough exciting but risky projects get commissioned
6. There are not yet deep governance arrangements between departments in the organisation
7. As a young organisation the links to regular business departments are one-off and needs based
8. Programmes and funders are in the ascendent relative to the regular business departments, but this will eventually have to rebalance.
9. Issues get reported on, but it is not clear if this is for information, or if a senior needs to act on it.

Example Turing Project delivery model

There are likely to be a number of project delivery models in operation. Some will be waterfall based, many will be an agile variant. Some will be hybrids, or will start as waterfall and become agile or vice versa. This is normal, but can be confusing.

It is possible to operate across multiple modalities, with appropriate control. As a young organisation, there will be increasing pressure to systematise, and this should be done, but crucially it can be done as a light touch, without nnecessary overhead administrative complexity.

For example, it is likely that project management resource has already become a constraint. Programme Managers will be spread thinly, and there may also be a second order issue in the control of researchers.
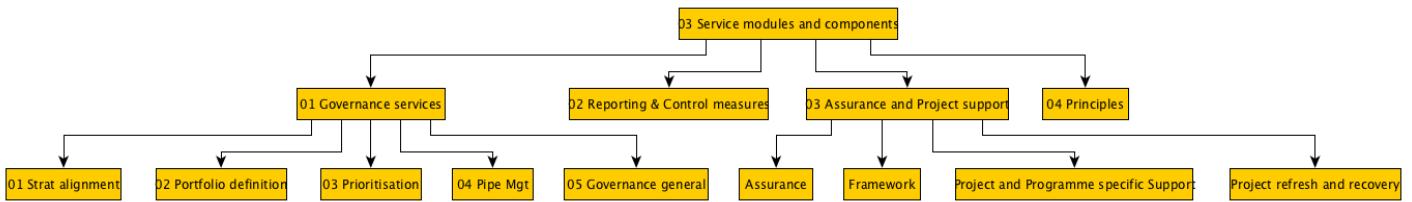
One approach

Portfolio level structures

- i.e. working aross all programmes
  Easiest way is to have three portfolios:
- innovation portfolio
- core business portfolio.
- Manage ASG as an overlapping portfolio

Project go-ahead (i.e risk tolerance) rules should be different between innovation /core portfolios.

Govern, Control, Report, Support

Governance includes strategic alignment
1. Impact statements tie back to objective, in-world outcomes.
2. Use the data structure instantiated by the Turing website to keep track of the multiple paths to strategic contribution. An alignment view needs to be maintained, rather than refreshed once or twice a year.

Governance arrangements will ensure programmes are set-up properly. There needs to be money at risk.But projects that are core to the business must succeed.
- Say 10% of true innovation projects succeeds.
- But we also need 90% of Core business to succeed.

Reporting Often there is too much time on reporting dashboards, not enough on controls and decisions.Crucially, the programme manager 'makes the market' between research and funding, and then has to sustain that market throughout the project. i.e. the main aim is to reliable and useful information on the investment, so that the funder can understand the level of risk and the level of likely benefit at all times. The rest is second order, but even here, the reporting should focus on helping to decide between courses of action, rather than providing lots of information.

Control measures are often the same factors as in reporting, but used up-front to constrain action. Crucially, a slim project and proposal framework should track what projects are actually live and what can be worked on. i.e. Distinguish between
1. pre-proposal idea
2. in proposal
3. money for seed project only
4. main project authorised
5. main project live
6. main project suspended or completed, no more work to be done.
Resourcing allocation will also need to be managed. But this is normally a team-cultural issue rather than an administrative one. And crucially, it should be treated as as a comparative advantage for the Programmes Director - because the allocation of Programme Managers becomes a control measure for the pace and sequence of programme delivery- rather than a resourcing algorithm to be optimised.

Programme support arrangements can deploy support a failing project. Consequential assurance provides a graduated response, from support, to project closure. Programme Managers should be coached how to:
-probe and challenge research claims at the delivery level
-accurately distinguish between short/medium /long term time frames as discussed by researchers
-frequently and succinctly explain why the work as configured is likely to succeed
- worry if they cannot do this.
-identify and propose projects for early termination which will not succeed.

PrM development should focus on what the team agree the role of PrM is within the Institute. My guess is that the key competencies are likely to be:
- trustworthiness
- practicality
- realism.

Principles are actually most important, because they are few in number and agreed by the team, and assist the team to manage when procedures disagree

Possible principles for Programme Managers here

1. retain *trust* up to funding bodies that progress is being made
2. whilst retaining trust across to researchers that actual progress can be safely shared
3. Act as a administrative shield to allow researchers to focus on the job
4. Build a track record of accurate judgements of Programme success
5. put effort into retaining credibility with Institute and Funders:
6. Can be trusted as a reliable anti-lock brake for a runaway work-package

Summary

Take decisions at different levels on different timeframes. Full delivery oversight requires that:
1. the right programmes are defined
2. programmes are delivered in the right way
3. failing projects are dealt with.

Rowland 07-28-2020

STRATEGY

PORTFOLIO

PROJECTS

RIGHT PLAN

Decisions

Information

Plan

RIGHT PERFORMANCE

Communicate

Information

RIGHT DELIVERY

Decisions

Information

Deliver