

Project Plan Template

The project plan provides an understanding amongst the project team and other stakeholders of what the project is intended to do, how it will do it and when it will be done. The process of creating the project plan should allow the members of the project team to contribute their knowledge and views on the project and develop a sense of ownership of and commitment to the project goals. The project client should approve the project plan and be consulted as it develops when necessary.

Once the plan is established, changes are likely to be necessary as the project proceeds and you should expect this. However, these changes should only be made after careful consideration. Often, a change in one area of the project will have implications in one or more other project areas. A small change in one area can have a big impact elsewhere. Careful consideration of changes allows this to be properly taken account of. Projects often fail because this is not understood.

The sections that are included in this template are those that are usually appropriate for student projects. You may wish to add or delete sections as is appropriate for your own project. If you choose to do this you should be ready to justify your decision when you discuss it with your professor.

The recommended sections are:

1. **Introduction** Your introduction should summarise the content of the Project Plan, providing an overview for the reader. It should be written last.
2. **Project Scope** The project scope describes the objectives of your project – what is it that your project is intended to achieve? It is very important that you have agreement from the project client on the project scope statement and that the statement itself is unambiguous – its meaning should be the same to everyone who is involved in the project. It is often helpful to include what is not included in the scope – items that there may be confusion about as you complete the project. The project scope will serve as a reference point for most project decisions. It allows proposed changes to the project to be considered as to whether they are consistent with the achievement of the project scope or not. Changes to the project objectives that are not consistent with the project scope are known as Scope Creep, and are a major source of project failure.
3. **Project Milestones** Project milestones are achieved as the main stages or steps of the project are completed. This section should list the main milestones that will be achieved at the end of each project stage. The milestones should be clearly defined so that there is no confusion over whether or not you have completed them. For example, the acceptance of your project plan and its acceptance by the client is likely to be one of your milestones. This section should list all of your project milestones and the project stage that they are completed in.
4. **Schedule and Management Plan** The project schedule provides a detailed guide to project completion. It lists all of the project activities, the order that they will be completed in, when they will be completed and who will be responsible for the work. A simple process for creating your schedule is first to be clear about your project scope – knowing what you are working to achieve will determine the tasks that are required to complete it. Reviewing your Milestones will also be useful. Next, list all of the tasks that need to be completed in the project. The level of detail that you should use is that each task should be an easily defined piece of work (often called a work package) that will be allocated to a member of your team to complete. You should include the time that each task will take in your project task listing. Once the tasks are listed you can consider the order that they should be completed in. Some tasks have to be completed before others and some people will be completing more than one task. A Gantt chart should be sufficient for scheduling most student projects. After determining the order of your tasks you should decide on when they will be completed. Your completed schedule should be a Gantt chart that includes all of your project tasks, the time that each task will take, when it will be completed and who will do it. This section of your

plan will include the Gantt chart and a written explanation of its content. It will also include a description of how you will manage the schedule. This will cover the processes that you will use to monitor the schedule and who will be responsible for keeping it on track.

5. **Communications Management Plan** Communications is often said to be the main element in the project manager's job. It is often neglected and projects fail as a result. Your communications plan should detail how communications will take place within your project team, with your project client, with your professor and with other project stakeholders. It should include when and how you will communicate on a weekly basis with your client, how the project team will communicate with each other and how you will manage project data. The communications plan should include the creation of your project report and video presentation. You don't need to know the detail of this yet but you should consider it at this early stage in your project so that you are prepared for it when the time comes.
6. **Change Management Plan** The project plan is your detailed description of how your project will be completed. Ideally it is your best assessment of the work required to achieve the project objectives and the conditions and factors that will influence the completion. In most cases it will be inaccurate – unexpected things will happen in most projects and you should be ready to deal with them. You will also face pressures to change your project plan from project team members and project stakeholders. Some of the changes that are suggested will be sensible to incorporate in your project and some will not and could throw the project dangerously off track. It is very important that you have a project Change Management Plan that will allow you to consider suggested changes and make good decisions on whether or not to incorporate them in your project plan. Consider a change management plan that is appropriate to your project. What process will you go through to consider suggested changes made by team members or project stakeholders (including your client). Clearly define what you will do to consider them and how you will ensure that any accepted changes will be properly incorporated in your plan.
7. **Quality Management Plan** Every project can be completed but produce a poor quality result. You will want to ensure that your project produces exceptional results for your client – it allows you to demonstrate your capability to your client and your peers and may benefit your future career. Your project Quality Management Plan describes how you will achieve the level of quality with your project activity that you desire. It will first define the critical quality aspects of your project results – what are the elements of your result which will determine whether or not it is achieving your client's expectations. Where possible your definition of these elements should be quantified – clear metrics should be established that can be used to drive your project activity. Where quantitative measures are not possible you should strive to define the elements as clearly as possible. Once you have identified the critical elements in your project quality you can determine the activities that you will need to include in your project that will monitor the work being done to ensure that it remains on track, and allow you to act if it is not before a minor issue becomes a major disaster that you cannot rectify before the project is complete.
8. **Risk Management Plan** Every project has risks that are associated with it which may jeopardise your achievement of the project results. It is important that you identify the risks to your project and decide on your response to them, documenting this in your project plan. Remember – risks change as projects proceed. Some risks may decline and disappear as tasks are successfully completed while others that were not anticipated may appear that you will need to plan a response to. Project risk management is not a one time task at the start of the project – it needs to be continually reviewed as the project proceeds.
9. **Human Resources Management Plan** Your project human resource plan provides profiles of the members of your project team, describes the various roles that will be performed within the team and who will perform them and sets out the rules by which the team will operate. It should include a single point of contact for the project client and responsibility for managing the project team itself.
10. **Sponsor and Professor Acceptance** The final part of your project plan is the formal acceptance of it by your client and professor. They should both give formal approval of your plan, indicating not just that they approve of you completing it but also that they will contribute where necessary to its success.