

Project Context

A project is often part of a broader context within a business. That broader context may include a hierarchy of elements such as a Strategic Plan, a Portfolio, a Program, Projects and Subprojects.

It is important to understand this overall context in order to see where your project fits in the “big picture”. This can help you manage the project better.

Project Context

A project is often part of a broader context within a business. That broader context may include a hierarchy of elements such as a Strategic Plan, a Portfolio, a Program, Projects and Subprojects.

It is important to understand this overall context in order to see where your project fits in the “big picture”. This can help you manage the project better.

Project Context

The PMI® PMBOK® Guide defines a program as follows:

A Program is a group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually.

For example:

*An auto manufacturer bringing a new car to market sets up a **Program** to develop and introduce the vehicle. Within that program they would coordinate many different projects with unique activities and deliverables.*

- *a Design project to develop the car,*
- *a Sales project to determine how to sell it,*
- *a Manufacturing project to ensure the factories could produce the car,*
- *a Service and parts project to establish these key areas,*
- *and so on.*

Project Context

Projects can be subdivided into manageable components called **subprojects**.

Subprojects can be contracted out to other departments or to other organizations.

A subproject may related to a single phase of a project, or may be set up to take advantage of some specific technical or people skills required. On very large projects, the subprojects themselves may be further subdivided into sub-subprojects.

Project Context

A **portfolio** is a collection of projects or programs and other work that is grouped together to make it easier for an organization to meet broader, strategic business objectives.

The individual elements in the portfolio may not necessarily be related or interdependent. Typically a portfolio has goals of its own to achieve and is managed by senior level managers within the organization.

For example:

A software applications company may have several related products that it wants to include in its portfolio of product offerings. That portfolio might consist of:

- *A strategic plan that identifies the key industry sectors it wants to develop software for.*
- *A program to coordinate the activities for each individual product*
- *A set of other programs divided into multiple projects and subprojects: Applications development; Ongoing Technical support; Service; Sales and Marketing; Advertising; Documentation, etc.*

Project Context

Many organizations set up a special unit called a **Project Management Office (PMO)** to centralize and coordinate the management of projects.

There are many different ways to implement a PMO.

- Some organizations use the PMO simply to support clerical and financial administration of projects.
- Other PMOs assume responsibility for all aspects of project management including assigning Project Managers, defining standards, training, tools, software and so on.

There is a wide range of types of PMO used by different organizations.

Project Context

Projects are typically divided into groups of logically related activities called **Phases** which allow for better control over the project and divide the project into manageable sections.

Collectively, these project phases are known as the **Project Lifecycle**.

Each phase will produce one or more deliverables.

A deliverable is any tangible, measurable and verifiable outcome, result or item that must be produced to complete a project or part of a project.

Project Context

Often there are industry or organization common practices which determine what the life cycle will look like. There may be rigorous governmental or regulatory body requirements that must be complied with. Or it may be up to the Project Manager to determine the best approach.

Usually the project phases defined in the project life cycle are sequential and are separated by “gate reviews” or “checkpoints, accompanied by a deliverable that is approved.

Refer to the PMBOK® Guide to see good graphical illustrations of the characteristics of the project lifecycle. You can also find several examples on the Internet.

Project Context

Good project management practice has shown that the application of **project management processes** to a project will improve the chances of having a successful project.

A process is a set of interrelated actions and activities that are performed to achieve a pre-specified set of products, results or services.

The **project management processes** can be organized into five groups of one or more processes each.

- Initiating Processes
- Planning Processes
- Executing Processes
- Controlling Processes
- Closing Processes

Project Context

Initiating Processes are those processes related to starting a project or a project phase. They include any activities that allow a reasonable definition of what the project needs to achieve. This includes activities such as:

- determining the project objectives,
- identifying the reasons for launching a project,
- giving a basic description of the high-level project scope,
- determining deliverables,
- specifying the project timetable, or
- identifying any assumptions or constraints that will affect the project.

Two key documents are produced:

- the **Project Charter**, which defines the rationale for the project, and
- the **Preliminary Scope Statement**, which provides initial, high-level definition of what the project will do.

Project Context

Planning Processes are used to gather information from many sources and assemble it into a **Project Management Plan**.

The project management plan identifies and defines the project scope, costs, schedule and activities. Dependencies between activities are determined. Risks are analyzed and contingency plans are made. Stakeholder requirements are determined and are factored into the project.

A significant portion of the project planning processes occur at the start of a project, however, planning carries on throughout the project as new project information is discovered.

Project Context

Executing Processes carry out the project plan by performing the activities identified in the planning processes.

The project team works together to execute the activities necessary to deliver the project. Tasks are completed. The project communications management plan is executed. Outside contracts or service providers are engaged. Approved project changes are handled. Work is performed.

Project Context

Controlling Processes consist of those things done to observe the project execution and monitor it so that progress can be reported, and that problems can be detected and resolved quickly.

Project performance is tracked against the project plan. Any deviations from that plan, such as, slippages in time, scope creep, risks occurring and so on are identified and monitored.

Actions to correct these deviations are planned, approved, and executed.

Project Context

Closing Processes describe the project and administrative things needed to bring the project to an orderly end.

This will include disbanding the project team, looking at lessons learned and closing out any third-party contracts among other things.

These processes interact with each other in complex ways. Large and complex projects may have some processes that will be applied iteratively to define and meet the needs of the stakeholders. A small project may simply follow the processes sequentially. It is up to the project manager and the project team to determine how to apply the processes to their particular project.