

What is Project Management?

What is a project?

A project is a finite endeavour - having specific start and completion dates - undertaken to create a unique product or service which brings about beneficial change or added value.

What is project management?

Project Management is the discipline of planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives. The primary challenge of project management is to achieve all of the project goals and objectives while adhering to classic project constraints—usually scope, quality, time and budget.

What is the history of PRINCE?

PRINCE stands for Projects in Controlled Environments. It is a project management method covering the organisation, management and control of projects. The Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA), now part of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), first developed PRINCE® in 1989. The intention was to produce a UK Government standard for IT project management.

Since its introduction, PRINCE has become widely used in both the public and private sectors and is now the UK's de facto standard for project management. Although originally developed for the needs of IT projects, PRINCE has also been used on many non-IT projects. The latest version of the method, PRINCE2, is designed to incorporate the requirements of existing users and to enhance the method towards a completely generic, best practice approach.

What is PRINCE2?

PRINCE2 is a process-based approach to project management providing an easily tailored and scalable method for the management of all types of projects. Each process is defined with its key inputs and outputs together with the specific objectives to be achieved and activities to be carried out.

The method describes how a project is divided into manageable stages enabling efficient control of resources and regular progress monitoring. The various roles and responsibilities for managing a project are fully described and are adaptable to suit the project's size and complexity and the skills of the organisation. Project planning using PRINCE2 is product-based which means the project plans are focused on delivering results and are not simply about planning when the various activities on the project will be done.

Driving any PRINCE2 project is the business case, which describes the organisation's justification, commitment and rationale for the deliverables or outcome. The business case is reviewed regularly during the project so as to ensure the business objectives, which often change during the lifecycle of the project, are still being met.

What are the benefits of PRINCE2?

PRINCE2 provides organisations with a standard approach to the management of projects. The method embodies proven and established best practice. It is generic, non-proprietary and widely recognised.

As well as helping the managers and directors of a project, PRINCE2 also offers benefits to the organisation as a whole. These are achieved through the controllable use of resources and the ability to manage business and project risk more effectively. PRINCE2 enables projects to have:

- a controlled and organised start, middle and end

- regular reviews of progress against plan and against the Business Case
- flexible decision points
- automatic management control of any deviations from the plan
- involvement of management and stakeholders at the right time and place during the project
- the necessary controls and breakpoints to work successfully within any required contractual framework
- a common language across all interested parties thereby ensuring effective communication channels between the project team, project management and the rest of the organisation

How is PRINCE2 implemented?

The single most common reason for failure of a PRINCE2 project is the absence or wavering of management commitment to the PRINCE2 approach. Thus, the most important prerequisite to implementing PRINCE2 is awareness and buy-in at the most senior level of the organisation. Once this has been achieved, project staff (from sponsors right through to team members) can be trained to a level of competence appropriate to their individual roles. This training also provides staff with the skills necessary to oversee the PRINCE2 implementation, though often these are augmented by use of external consultancy. This can inject in-depth knowledge not just of PRINCE2, but of the ways in which both the method and the organisation's existing business processes must be married together to create an environment in which PRINCE2 can deliver maximum benefit.

What training is available?

Courses are available at three levels: Overview, Foundation and Practitioner. The Overview is aimed at managers new to formal project management methods, plus senior managers and executives considering the introduction of PRINCE2 into their organisations. The Foundation is typically for those who will be involved in projects, but not necessarily in a leading role, such as project support staff. The Practitioner level is for anyone requiring an in-depth understanding of PRINCE2, particularly current or prospective project managers. Both the Foundation and Practitioner training lead to optional examinations that will provide successful delegates with an internationally recognised qualification.

Why AFA?

Unlike other training organisations, which deliver a wide range of training events covering many unrelated topics, AFA's core business is based on the Best Practice methodologies. AFA trainers and consultants have served on the editing teams and review panels for all recent updates of the guidance manuals; several AFA consultants also act as examiners and assessors for one or more of the methodologies; AFA's managing director was commissioned by OGC to write 'Tailoring PRINCE2'.

For ten years AFA has specialised in providing consultancy and training services predicated on the three Best Practice methods – MSP™ programme management, PRINCE2 project management and M_o_R® risk management. Our ethos is to work with client organisations, retaining existing robust processes and further developing them in line with Best Practice guidance. Training events are also tailored to suit the current level of understanding within an organisation; a pathway of progression can be offered to allow understanding and skills to improve and grow. AFA has two main advantages over large consultancy and training organisations:

- We tailor our services to suit the client rather than relying on a set of 'products'
- We focus on the Best Practice methods rather than dabbling in many methodologies or offering a wide and disjointed range of training topics