MANAGING PROJECTS

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Summary

This fact sheet discusses what project management is, what common issues are, and how to improve project management practices. Project management is important for your community because it helps organize a project's size, funding, timing and other components that relate to management.

Keywords: managing the process, direction setting, planning team

What Is Project Management?

Project management has a step-by-step lifecycle methodology which is broken down into 5 phases, shown in Figure 1:
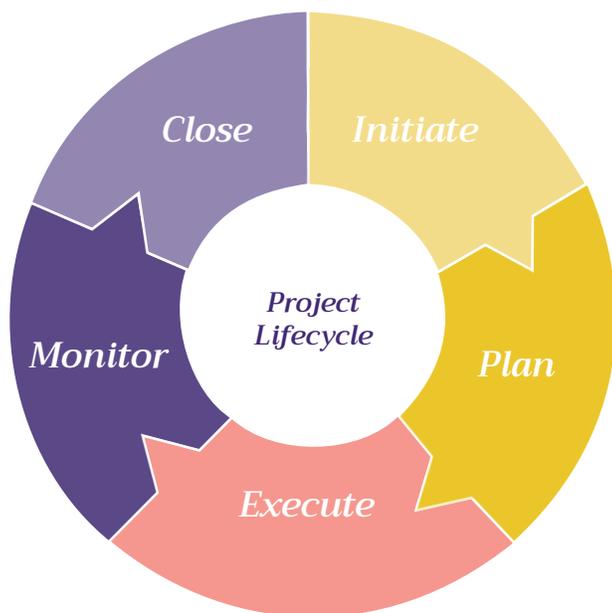

Figure 1 | *Project Management Lifecycle Methodology.*

Adapted from (Singh, A. "A step-by-step project lifecycle methodology guide to boost project performance" Digital image. *GetApp*. April 4, 2019. Accessed January 28, 2020. https://lab.getapp.com/step-by-step-project-lifecycle-methodology/.)

Project management uses processes, skills, knowledge, and results to project activities and create a clear direction for your project.[1] A project is planned and coordinated to achieve a certain goal. Projects can either be an individual or collaborative effort and will often have main objectives that are defined by desired outcomes for your community. Questions you may want to consider when designing a project can include:

How much time will this project will take? How much will it cost? Who will be a part of my project? In addition, to many other considerations.

Why Is Project Management Important?

Projects are often under pressure to be completed on time and if they are not planned properly, they may lack the necessary time and resources needed to finish. Project management is important because it gives direction to tasks by establishing clear goals and objectives. It can help you determine if your project is realistic by setting expectations for deadlines, budgets, balancing resources, and assigning tasks to other team members.

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The purpose of project management is to ensure that quality is being delivered at every stage of the process. Leadership is important in project management because it allows for a team to create a vision and receive coaching. Finally, leaders can help inspire the team to perform at its best.

What Are the Key Components of Project Management?

1 Project Initiation

This process begins by recognizing a committment to the project and identifying a need within the community. This can come in the form of an expression of interest, a call for proposals or directly from your community.[2] The need to apply for funding or sources of funding should be identified in this stage. Additionally, the project manager can direct team members to conduct research and gather data in preparation for the planning phase.[3]

2 Project Planning

Create a workable plan for how your community or team will complete the project and meet your goals. This workplan can include information such as what activities will be accomplished, what the budget will be, member roles and duties, and project deliverables. The level of depth needed for each workplan varies; e.g., a comprehensive community plan (CCP) would require much more pre-planning than a one-time community engagement event. Factors such as detailed phases, limited funding, specific objectives and criteria, and short time frames could all affect such an important project like a CCP.[4]

> ### S.M.A.R.T. Goals
>
> To make sure your goals are clear and reachable.

Project goals should be set out in this phase and can include a goal-setting process, such as S.M.A.R.T. Goals. This process identifies how to create goals that are clear and measurable, as shown in Table 1.

3 Project Execution

This phase includes carrying out the workplan created in the planning section and considering how resources will be distributed to certain areas of the project. This can include how team members will use their time toward certain tasks and how the team will stay on track with their identified goals. During this phase, tools such as status reports and regular meetings can help a project stay on task and remind members of their responsibilities.

4 Project Monitoring

The focus of this phase is to ensure that the project's main objectives are being met. Project managers are responsible for monitoring the success of the goals set out in the initial planning phases and checking if they align with the original workplan. Monitoring is important to ensure that the project has moved in the right direction and that progress has been documented.

Ways to document, monitor, or control projects include progress reports, final reports, or reviewing key performance indicators (KPIs). KPI indicators can include:

1. *Project objectives:* measuring if a project is on schedule and if progress matches stakeholder objectives.

2. *Quality deliverables:* measuring if tasks are being completed.

3. *Cost tracking:* keeping financial statements and tracking spending on a project.

4. *Project performance:* monitoring if any changes have taken place throughout the length of the project and identifying what challenges were encountered.

> For more information on KPIs, see the *Understanding KPIs* fact sheet.

Table 1 | *S.M.A.R.T. Goals.*
Adapted from (Eby, K. "Demystifying the 5 stateges of project management." Digital image. Smart Sheet. May 29, 2018 Published. Accessed January 28, 2020. https://www.smartsheet.com/blog/demystifying-5-phases-project-management.)

	Description	Question
Specific	Be clear and specific	Why is this goal important?
Measurable	Track your progress	How many? How much?
Achievable	Be realistic to be successful	How can I accomplish this?
Relevant	Ensure your goal matters	Is this the right time?
Time-bound	Set deadlines	What can I do today?

5 Project Closure

The final phase of the project includes wrapping up all tasks outlined within the workplan.

Closing tasks can involve:

1. *Deliverables:* Completing all deliverables outlined in the initial planning process. Deliverables can include: visual elements, final reports, and presentations. E.g., CCP

2. *Debrief:* Conducting meetings with team members to identify successes and challenges.[5]

3. *File Management:* Storing or archiving important documents for a period of a year.[6] This is essential for providing information to whoever may need it in the future.

Following the completion of the project you may want to provide a report to the community describing what took place during the project and the overall results. This may include presenting to the community and/or to Chief and Council for a final approval of the project.

What are Some Common Challenges?

Challenges may arise during projects. Common challenges and potential solutions are identified below:

1 Team Conflict

Schedule a team meeting to discuss challenges and ways to move forward with a mutually agreed upon plan.

2 Undefined Goals

Clarify goals with team members and stakeholders to ensure identified goals meet the intent of the project and your community.

3 Unrealistic Deadlines

Create a detailed schedule to prioritize tasks that are overdue or of greater importance.

4 Risk Management

Identify potential risks associated with the project ahead of time but also identify new risks as they arise.

> For more information on identifying risks, see the *SWOT Analysis* fact sheet.

Critical Roles in Project Management?

In order to have a successful project, you need the right people for the right roles! Figure 3 includes team members' roles and responsibilities.

Project Manager

The project manager will plan, oversee, budget, and document all aspects of the project.

Team Leader

The team leader reports directly to the PM. They are an initiator, negotiator, coach, and a working member of the project.

Team Members

Team members bring a variety of needed skills to the project, including problem-solving, organization, interpersonal, and more.

Project Steering Committee

A steering committee consists of stakeholders or sponsors. They oversee items such as budgets, schedules, and key project elements.

Figure 3 | *Critical roles in Project Management.*
Adapted from (Harvard Business Review Staff "Five Critical Roles in Project Management." *Harvard Business Review*. November 3, 2016. Accessed January 28, 2020. https://hbr.org/2016/11/five-critical-roles-in-project-management .)

Developing a Project Management Checklist[7]

☐ Project title, start date, finish date

☐ The project coordinator and team members

☐ The value of the project, and funding sources

☐ The reporting requirements (by date)

☐ Key contacts - consultants, funding officers

☐ Final comments section

☐ Management or Chief and Council sign off - closing the file

Figure 2 | *Group work.*
Source (Kozminski University. "Group Work." Digital image. *Flickr*. December 10, 2011. Accessed January 25, 2020. https://flic.kr/p/eByJSr.)

Final Thoughts

Project management can help your team stay on track. The project manager and team members are responsible for setting clear goals and completing tasks.

Each phase in the project management process can help the team understand where it needs to improve or if it's on the right track. If the team works together and identifies how it can track its progress, then it will have a better chance of being successful. Project management can help you stay on time, be successful, and produce results that the team is proud of.

Further Reading

Indigenous Economic Reconciliation: Recommendations on Reconciliation and Inclusive Economic Growth for Indigenous Peoples and Canada by the National Economic Indigenous Board

http://www.naedb-cndea.com/reports/NIEDB%20-%20Economic%20Reconciliation%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

First Nations Communications Toolkit by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021860/1100100021862

Endnotes

1   Association for Project Management, "What is Project Management," Association for Project Management. 2020. Accessed January 28, 2020, https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/what-is-project-management/
2   Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, "Project Management: A Practical Guide for Aboriginal Management," Aboriginal Financial Association of Canada. 2020. Accessed January 28, 2020. https://www.afoa.ca/afoadocs/L3/L3a%20-%20Project_Management.pdf
3   AFOA, 2020, p. 5.
4   AFOA, 2020, p. 5.
5   APM, 2020.
6   APM, 2020.
7   AFOA, 2020, p.10.

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