

Programme Planning

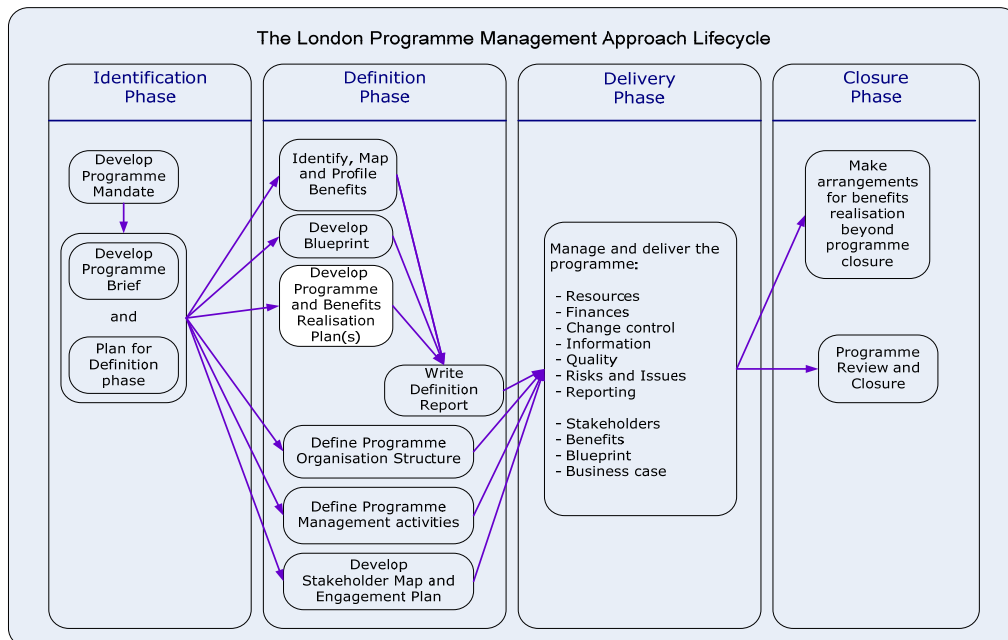
Guidance

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The purpose of this guidance is to explain how to create an effective programme plan to enable the programme manager and business change manager to track, control and deliver the programme outcomes and benefits.

This guidance is not accompanied by a template.

Programme plans will take many different forms dictated by the nature of the programme, the available tools and the preferences of the individuals concerned.



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Introduction

Effective programme planning is the key to ensuring that the programme and business change manager are able to track, control and deliver the programme outputs and benefits.

Please note that the examples in the following sections are for illustrative purposes designed to indicate the kind of information that is recorded. They are not complete working examples.

1. The Benefits of Planning

Programme planning is a key activity during the Definition Phase of a programme. There are many ways to approach it, but ultimately, it is about ensuring that the projects and activities needed to deliver the outcomes and benefits are organised in a way that is coherent and manageable.

The benefits of a robust Programme Plan include:

- Integrating into one document the projects, activities and benefits so as to understand the relationship between them and the knock-on effects of changes to one part of the plan on other parts
- De-risking the programme by using the plan as a tool to control and monitor delivery
- Ensuring that individual project and activity plans work within the constraints of the Programme
- Building confidence among senior stakeholders, the Programme Manager and Business Change Manager that there is a workable plan to deliver the programme
- To ensure and demonstrate a coherent approach to delivery.

2. Developing Projects and Activity Lists

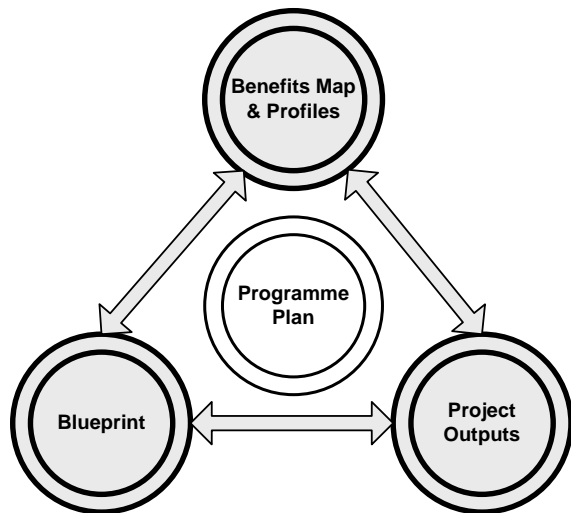
It is essential to compile a list of all intended projects. The purpose of this is to record key information about each project and how it relates to other projects and contributes to the programme benefits.

2.1 Project List

A Project List may have already been started as part of the Programme Brief. However, other activities carried out during the Definition Phase may have brought to light the need for new or changed projects.

For example, in building the Benefits Map it may have become apparent that the original anticipated list of projects is not adequate to deliver the benefits sought. The Project List should therefore be checked against the Blueprint and the Benefits Map to ensure that all required projects have been identified. Key information about each project should then be recorded.

The creation of the Benefits Map, the Blueprint and the Programme Plan becomes an iterative process and is integrated as shown in the diagram below. The Blueprint is developed when there is a good understanding of benefits and the project outputs needed are considered once the Blueprint has started to take shape. All three elements are continually adjusted during the Definition phase as more detail emerges. The project outputs needed inform the list of projects that will go into the Programme Plan.



The list below is a suggestion for what information should be recorded about each project:

- Project Name
- Project Description / Output
- Project Executive
- Project Manager
- Team
- Duration
- Milestones
- Dependencies
- Contribution to benefits
- Costs

2.2 Programme Activities

As well as listing all the projects it is also essential to list all other programme activities which are not projects, for example, ongoing communications and stakeholder engagement activities and benefits realisation activities. As with the Project List the inclusion of key information will ensure that there is a complete view, as far as is possible, as to all the activities, the time needed and costs to deliver the programme.

As with the Projects List an Activity List may have already been created in the Programme Brief.

Example
(Every Child Matters Programme)

Programme Activities						
Programme Activity	Description /Output	Lead Person	Team	Milestones	Dependencies	Costs
Ongoing Programme Management	Dedicated programme manager for programme	M Brown – Prog Mgr	Prog Mgr Prog Support Etc.	N/A	N/A	£80K per annum costs of employment
Programme Communications	Regular update to all stakeholders through a variety of channels, including two-way feedback	J Smith - Comms Lead officer	J Smith and Service Heads	Completion of Press Campaign by X date	N/A	£40K per annum costs of employment £40K annual budget
Stakeholder engagement	Partner engagement event to gain buy-in to programme	J Smith	Programme team and facilitator	All stakeholder groups consulted by X date	Completion of proposal for organisational restructure	£1K for facilitator + £1K for venue hire

3. Creating a Programme Plan

The creation of a Programme Plan is an iterative process and is built ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’. For example, the first draft of the Plan may be built ‘bottom-up’ i.e. a consolidation of the key information from a set of individual project plans. It will then need to be reviewed and adjusted from the perspective of the key milestones and dates set at the programme level. Or, the first draft may be at the programme level, and further iterations will be required in order to align with the ability of individual projects to deliver.

It’s important to remember that building a Programme Plan can take time so set aside enough time to do this key activity. It is important to involve the various stakeholders who can ensure that the end result is sound and coherent, such as project and service managers.

3.1 Tranches

Tranches are groups of projects structured around distinct step changes and benefits delivery. Depending on the programme, tranches may be used to reduce the risk of realising benefits only after the entire programme has been completed. For example, in a programme to deliver a new Customer Service Centre the first tranche may be delivery of the Call Centre to enable customer transactions via telephone and the second tranche may be delivery of web-enabled transactions. In this case, benefits will start to be accrued immediately after delivery of the first tranche. The setting up of a Call Centre so that customer transactions can be managed in a single call can be planned in one year and creates immediate benefits for the customer. Implementing web-enabled transactions requires extensive changes to existing systems which need to be planned over three years.

Within the tranches, projects and activities need to be sequenced in order of priority and dependencies; e.g. some will deliver early wins in order to build confidence

among stakeholders, while others will be pre-requisites for other projects which will deliver benefits.

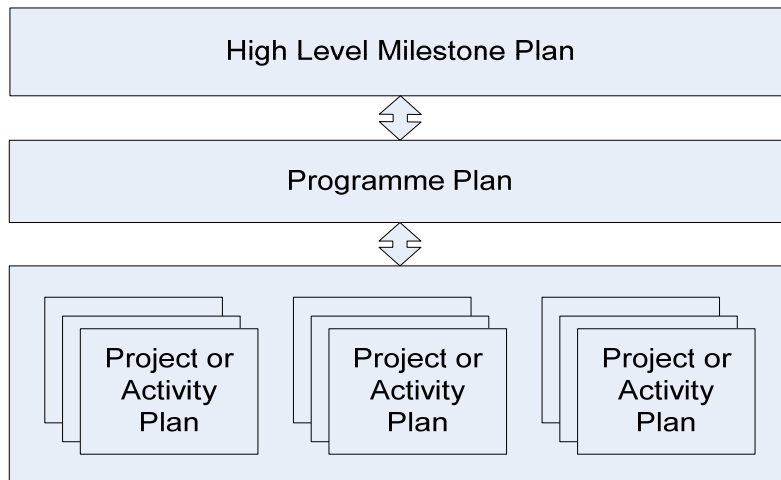
3.2 Building the Plan

The Programme Manager and the Business Change Manager need to both be satisfied that the Programme Plan contains all the elements needed to deliver the outputs, outcomes and benefits and that it is realistic. As such it is recommended that both the Programme Manager and Business Change Manager are involved in creating the Programme Plan and updating it when changes to the programme are required.

The following is a suggested list of minimum requirements for a robust Programme Plan:

- Projects and their duration
- Other activities and their duration, including benefits realisation activities
- Dependencies
- Milestones and dates
- Tranches – if required
- Indication of who (or which team) and what resources are needed for the successful completion of the project or activity
- Any major reviews – e.g. Gateway Review
- Major meeting and events which are critical dates for the programme, e.g. Cabinet sign off meetings

The Programme Plan will capture at high level all the relevant information needed to track and control the programme. There will usually be individual project and activity plans that feed into it. The Programme Plan may also be a reference point for extracting information about key milestones for stakeholders such as the Programme Board or Cabinet. This is illustrated in the diagram below.



There are a variety of tools that can be used to build the Plan, such as MS Project and MS Excel. There are advantages and disadvantages for each, i.e. not everyone will have MS project software on their PC and therefore, Excel might be a better tool

for sharing information. However it is important to use what you are most comfortable with and what suits the organisation.

4. Sign off

The Programme Plan should be reviewed and signed off by the Programme Board at the following stages in the programme life:

- Defining a Programme – before starting the first tranche
- When there are major changes to the definition, scope, delivery status and expected benefits of the programme
- Before transitioning to the future state (confirm understanding of stakeholders)

5. Programme Plan - Check

Does the Programme Plan satisfactorily answer the following questions?

Programme Plan		
Key Question	Section	Sub Question
Is there a robust and realistic Programme Plan that allows outputs, outcomes and benefits to be tracked and controlled?	Projects List	Is there a complete list of projects, their target timescales and costs?
	Programme Activities	Is there a complete list of activities, including benefits realisation activities?
	Grouping, sequencing and tranches	Are the projects and programme activities grouped and sequenced so that they deliver timely outcomes? This may involve the use of tranches.
	Schedule	Has a Plan (schedule) been created that displays the grouping and sequencing of projects and activities, including resources, milestone dates and dependencies? Is the Plan realistic?
	Sign off	Are the Programme Manager and Business Change Manager satisfied that the Plan will deliver the programme? Is the Plan realistic?