



Royal College of Music Project Management Strategy

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Royal College of Music

Project Management Strategy

Background

This strategy aims to provide guidance to all staff at the College are involved in any aspect of a project, whether as the Project Manager or a member of the Project Board or the Project Team. It is intended mainly for large-scale projects, although, elements of it may also be useful (in full or in part) for small or medium sized projects. If there is any doubt about whether or not a project may be considered “large” the decision will rest with the Director.

Relevant application of techniques

Project management techniques will be useful in dealing with many activities, for example:

- Departmental reorganisations, which might involve changes to staffing structures, administrative procedures, budgets, accommodation;
- Changes to the estate or to equipment resources;
- The introduction of a new system, such as revised quality assurance procedures, a new IT system, or the way key areas are managed;
- Where projects cross more than one department/faculty.

The level and scope of resources allocated to project management will depend on the impact of a specific project. This should be assessed through the College’s formal risk process, and project management should be one control used to reduce the residual risk from an activity.

Methodology

The College will adopt PRINCE2 project management principles for all major projects to implement change. PRINCE2 is a flexible project management method which can be tailored to suit any working environment and projects of any scale. It provides a framework covering the wide variety of disciplines and activities required within a project, giving direction on the management, control and organisation of a project. Benefits of using PRINCE2 include a project management method that is repeatable and teachable, which builds on previous experience. It ensures that everyone involved knows what to expect, where, when and how. It allows for early warning of problems and can accommodate for sudden, unexpected events, by encouraging project members to be proactive, not reactive to events.

Project Initiation

Before a project commences it is essential to define clearly the objectives for the project and the project scope and all major projects should start with a Project Initiation Document. This is a document that brings together the key information needed to start the project on a sound basis. It will define clearly all major aspects of a project and form the basis for project management and assessment of success. It gives a defined structure for delegation, authority and communications within the project. A major part of the Project Initiation Document is the overall Project Plan that will define flexible decision points in order to break up the project into manageable stages for accurate planning. It should be conveyed to all those involved in or impacted by the project and should be agreed and signed off by the Directorate and reported to Council.

The Project Manager

The Project Manager will manage all aspects of the project for the RCM. Therefore, it is important to choose the right person as Project Manager. Whether a manager is chosen from inside or outside the College will depend upon the scale of the project. Consideration must be given as to whether the role can be carried in addition to existing work or whether a person should be seconded to the role with cover for existing work, or whether a Project Manager should be bought in from outside. An internal Project Manager may have certain skills but limited experience of project management, whereas an outside Project Manager may have the experience but limited expertise in the area concerned.

The Project Manager's role is to manage the project in-line with the College's organisational priorities, resources and timescales (managing technical inputs where necessary). A Project Manager should have the following skills/attributes:

- a leader, giving the Project Team a vision of what they are to achieve together, and supporting them in doing it;
- a manager, setting long-term and short-term targets for the Project Team, monitoring progress on their achievement, and deploying resources accordingly;
- an administrator, seeing that project records are maintained, keeping to reporting schedules, and ensuring co-ordination among different project activities;
- a technician, using project management tools effectively;
- a communicator, keeping in close touch with the parts of the organisation affected by the project, with the top management, with any outside organisations involved, as well as with the Project Team itself.

The Project Manager should be involved in the appointment of an independent Chair of the Project Board when such a board is set up.

The Project Board

A Project Board should be constituted for all major projects and the Board will have overall responsibility to the Directorate and/or Council for the successful delivery of a project. The Project Board will normally develop overall objectives for the project, secure resources (the need to identify necessary resources is crucial), monitor progress and contribute to decisions relating to changes in objectives and outputs. They should have clear guidance and necessary authority from the Director. Membership of the Project Board should normally comprise:

- a Chair (for major projects this might be one of the Directors; for large building projects might be a member of Council);
- the Project Manager (also acts as board secretary);
- a representative from the lead RCM department/area (the 'client');
- a representative of the lead contractor;
- a member of the Project Team;
- a member of senior management or delegate (may be Chair);
- other expertise, to be agreed at each project.

For smaller projects the Project Board may be less formal, made up of the Project Manager, a Director and/or head of department and a representative the 'client' (and where appropriate a representative from the contractor). However, the principles remain the same.

Terms of Reference (Business Case)

One of the first tasks of the Project Board is to set the terms of reference for the Project. These should normally include:

- project rationale;
- name of the project;
- name of the 'client' (e.g. the head of a department);
- objectives;
- background (including approvals given);
- deliverables (what will be seen when the project is completed, e.g. a smooth procedure, a new building, a refurbished state-of-the-art lecture room);
- resources assumed to be available;
- budget (showing time limits; virement or other constraints on flexibility);
- roles and responsibilities of all involved;
- timings;
- dependencies (i.e. who will be affected by the project, what do they need to know and what do they need to do);
- post-implementation review.

The Terms of Reference should be constantly reviewed at decision points throughout the project to check its validity.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance for projects may be undertaken by the Project Board, or where appropriate by an independent group (e.g. internal audit)

Project Chair

If a Project Board is constituted there should be a Project Chair. The Chair's role will vary from project-to-project and for cross-departmental it may be appropriate to appoint an independent chair. The chair will work closely with the Project Manager, and will play an important role in agreeing and reorganising priorities of the different departments involved in order to meet project/College objectives. The Project Chair should expect to receive regular updates on a project from the Project Manager and will generally manage by exception (e.g. where the project was adversely deviating from the Project Plan)

Project Sponsor

The Project Sponsor will 'sponsor' the project, publicise it and report on progress to Directorate, Senate, Council, and/or any other appropriate body of the College. The Project Chair might also be the Project Sponsor.

Project Team

For large projects it is likely that the Project Manager will need to establish a Project Team to support him/her in undertaking the project (in smaller projects, most of the work will fall on the Project Manager, with perhaps one or two others undertaking specific tasks).

The Project Team is different from the Project Board and they report to the Project Manager for their work on the project. Selecting the right people for the job is essential in order to enable an appropriate team with the right skills to be drawn together - members of the team may change depending on work being undertaken at a particular time.

Project Team meetings and the respective roles of the members must be carefully set out in order to be successful and the team should be motivated to work as a team to achieve targets and successful completion of the project. Team members must be given clear instruction from the Project Manager about the tasks involved, the budget limitations, the Critical Path and the milestones to be achieved along the way in order to achieve completion by the due date. Being a member of a Project Team may also provide a good staff development opportunity.

Project Administrator

For large projects a Project Administrator should be part of the Project Team. This person will assist the Project Manager in all aspects of the project. The role includes:

- communicating (orally or with documentation) – with the Project Team, Project Board, Project Sponsor, relevant committees;
- applying relevant regulations;
- protecting the Project Manager from inappropriate work;
- record keeping;
- acting as secretary to the Project Board.

In smaller projects, it is likely that this role will fall on the Project Manager.

Project Plan

All projects should have a Project Plan and this should provide the basis for achieving the objectives laid out in the Project Initiation Document, to agreed timescales and budgets. The Project Plan should consist of three main components: a work breakdown structure (a Critical Path); a schedule; and a budget. Carefully considered and logical decision-making is critical to successful project management. Evidence of structured decision-making will also provide justification of why things were done as they were (if needed for a later review). There are seven fundamental resources required to implement almost any project:

- people;
- money;
- equipment;

- facilities;
- materials and supplies;
- information;
- technology.

Some of these resources may already be available for the project. Resource requirements should be determined by assessing and determining the needs for each milestone on the Critical Path. It should be borne in mind that extra help or extra time may be required in order to ensure that a team member's other duties are covered, for example the Payroll mechanism will still have to function even if the system were being changed. The Project Plan guides the work from start to finish and serves as a tool for communicating with stakeholders and the Project Team. The plan needs to set realistic project deadlines which recognise other important non-project deadlines that members of the Project Team have. In larger projects, the Project Plan will be split into smaller Stage Plans, in order to more easily manage team workloads and objectives.

Critical Path

Within the Project Plan it is important to agree a Critical Path to completion of a project, with realistic deadlines. The Critical Path should include a milestone plan, which sets out the key stages of the project, with budgets if appropriate, and how they relate to one another. Responsibility for each milestone should be clearly established with each member of the Project Team. The Project Manager should track progress and spot delays as soon as they occur. The Critical Path should allow for unplanned items, such as staff illness and be structured to should produce smooth changes in resource allocation over the period of the project.

Computer software (Microsoft Project being probably the most widely used) is available for large-scale projects that require Critical Path Analysis, but this may be too complex a tool for most projects of small and medium scale.

Risk Assessment

The College's Risk Assessment Policy must be applied to all projects and risk assessments should be carried out at each milestone and included on the Critical Path at appropriate points. Further information may be found in the College's risk strategy, which can be found on the website.

Reporting (Communication)

The team, stakeholders, managers, and customers (and where appropriate the Council) should receive informed communication about their project on a timely basis. Regular status reports should report on current progress, schedule changes, and budgets. In larger projects, there may be cost-variance reports and other formal documentation to track specific aspects of the project. In addition, team members may require an update report to emphasise important priorities, issues or deadlines. Such reporting procedures enable the team to stay on track. However, simplicity is important and where appropriate pro-forma reports will be used. These may include:

- Schedule reports: team members should be notified each time the 'map' changes so they can review the Critical Path and adjust their duties to match.
- Resources reports: to enable resources to be ordered prior to need.
- Status reports: each team member should provide the Project Manager with regular updates/reports on the status of their own goals - the report should include:

- tasks completed since the last status report, with dates completed;
- tasks in progress with forecasted completion dates;
- tasks planned with expected completion dates;
- budget expenditures;
- issues that need attention;
- recommendations for project improvements or changes;
- question or items that require other people's approval or input;

It will also be important to communicate with, and receive feedback from, those who may not be involved in the project, but whose work is directly or indirectly affected.

From this the Project Manager can compile a status report for the Project Board and foresee and manage problems before they become too difficult to resolve. Reporting procedures should be documented for all team members at the start of the project so it is clear from the beginning what they are required to do. Unnecessary bureaucracy wastes time and energy and if any reporting procedures become redundant, too frequent, too long they should be changed or removed.

Success/failure factors

A post-mortem is often useful at the end of a project, so that mistakes can be avoided next time. Questions that might be asked include:

- Did the project retain the attention of senior management throughout? (only appropriate where senior management attention required).
- Was the project properly defined at the start, and was that definition kept to?
- Was the planning of the project sound, with clear milestones, well-defined activities, realistic timescales and adequate resources?
- Did the Project Team have the right people and the right status?
- Was the Project Team suitably organised?
- Were members of the Project Team too often pulled back to their 'real' jobs?
- Were communications good within the team, between the team and the College management/staff, and with external contributors?
- Were the control mechanisms and reporting effective?
- What lessons can be learnt from this project which may be useful to future projects?

End of the project

The Project must have a defined end and at the project end, there should be a formal handover to operational managers. At this stage procedures should be agreed for initial teething problems and ongoing support. However, it is important to have a clear cut-off date and transfer of ownership from the Project Manager to an operational manager. It should be recognised that all systems encounter initial implementation issues, and operational staff should be encouraged to manage these proactively and avoid a culture of blame. Operational staff must also understand the projects objectives, in order to understand areas which were not included in a project.

A review of the benefits realised from the project after completion may need to be assessed at intervals beyond the scope of the project, as defined at the project initiation.

Staff Development

The College is fortunate to have a depth of expertise in the area of the project management and where necessary the HR department may be able to arrange suitable training, using external consultants, internal practitioners and internal experts. Indeed, this guidance has drawn heavily on an AUA publication “Milestones along the Critical Path” by Tony Barton and Paul Temple. Being a member of a Project Team/Board may also provide a good staff development opportunity.

Capital programmes

The capital programme includes all expenditure on land, buildings, equipment and furniture and associated costs whether or not they are funded from capital grants or capitalised for inclusion in the College’s financial statements. Expenditure of this type can only be considered as part of the capital programme approved by the Council.

The Director of Finance and Estates will establish protocols for the inclusion of capital projects in the capital programme for approval by the Council. These will set out the information that is required for each proposed project as well as the financial criteria that they are required to meet. They are summarised at Appendix G of the College’s Financial Regulations and are shown in more detail in financial procedures.

The Director of Finance and Estates will also establish procedures for the approval of variations, including the notification of large variations to the HEFCE, as laid down in HEFCE guidelines.

The Director of Finance and Estates is responsible for providing regular statements concerning all capital expenditure to Finance and General Purposes Committee (and the Estates Committee, where appropriate) for monitoring purposes.

Following completion of a capital project, a post-project evaluation or final report should be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and/or Estates Committee including actual expenditure against budget and reconciling funding arrangements where a variance has occurred as well as other issues affecting completion of the project. Post-project evaluations may also need to be sent to the relevant HEFCE, as laid down in HEFCE guidelines.

Protocols for proposed capital projects

Proposed capital projects should be supported by:

- a statement that demonstrates the project’s consistency with the strategic plans and Estates Strategy approved by the Council;
- an initial budget for the project for submission to the planning and resources committee and the Estates Committee. The budget should include a breakdown of costs including professional fees, VAT and funding sources;
- a financial evaluation of the plans together with their impact on revenue plus advice on the impact of alternative plans;
- an investment appraisal in an approved format which complies with HEFCE guidance on option and investment appraisal;

- a demonstration of compliance with normal tendering procedures and HEFCE regulations. This will require careful consideration where partnership arrangements are in place;
- a cash flow forecast.

Protocols for proposed major developments

The proposal should be supported by a business plan for three years which sets out:

- a demonstration of the proposal's consistency with the strategic plans approved by the Council and with the College's powers under current legislation;
- details of the market need and the assumptions (based on reference data) of the level of business available;
- details of the business and what product or service will be delivered;
- an outline plan for promoting the business to the identified market and achieving planned levels of business;
- details of the staff required to deliver, promote and manage the business, together with any re-skilling or recruitment issues;
- details of any premises and other resources required;
- a financial evaluation of the proposal together with its impact on revenue and surplus, plus advice on the impact of possible alternative plans and sensitivity analyses in respect of key assumptions;
- contingency plans for managing adverse sensitivities;
- consideration of taxation and other legislative or regulatory issues;
- a three-year financial forecast for the proposal including a monthly cash flow forecast and details of the impact on the College cash flow forecast for the financial years in question.

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