HUMANITARIAN ACADEMY · HUMANITAIRES JOBS

Project DPro (PMD Pro) Foundation exam preparation

Course handout · Day 4 : Phase 2: project set-up, governance and charter

Independent, free preparation for the Project DPro Foundation (PMD Pro) exam: 8 days of 6 hours to master the five project phases (identification and definition, set up, planning, implementation, closure), the logframe, governance, the critical path, risks, change control and the guide's five principles. Guided readings in the free PM4NGOs guide, graded deliverables, quizzes with explanations and three original mock exams, including a full one in the official format (75 questions, 2 hours, 65%). The official exam is taken and paid for with PM4NGOs; this preparation is neither endorsed nor accredited by PM4NGOs.

https://humanitairejobs.org/en/academy/preparation-examen-pmd-pro/jour-4/

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Day 4 : Phase 2: project set-up, governance and charter

Objectives

- Describe what happens between the funding agreement and detailed planning.
- Put the project's governance in place: roles, bodies, decision levels.
- Write a project charter and organise the launch with stakeholders.

What the set-up phase is for

Funding has been granted. Should activities start right away? No. The set-up phase **turns a proposal into an authorised, organised project**. It checks that the commitments made in the proposal (sometimes written months earlier) are still valid, then puts in place what is needed to plan and deliver.

It includes in particular: review of the contract and donor requirements, updating the proposal if the context has changed, governance, the project charter, the team, the launch and stakeholder engagement.

Project governance

Governance defines **who decides what**, at what level, and how information flows up. It usually relies on:

- a **sponsor** in the organisation, responsible for the project's justification;
- a **steering committee** that takes major decisions (major changes, decision gates);
- the **project manager**, responsible for day-to-day management within their delegated authority;
- representatives of partners, authorities and, as far as possible, communities.

Tolerances set the project manager's room for manoeuvre (for example a 10% variance on a budget line). Beyond that, they escalate the decision. A RACI matrix (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) clarifies roles; there should be only one "accountable" per decision.

The project charter

The **charter** is the document that **formally authorises** the project and gives the project manager authority to use resources. Short (2 to 4 pages), it covers: justification and objectives, scope and main deliverables, what is excluded, overall schedule and budget, main risks and assumptions, governance and roles, success criteria.

It is signed by the sponsor. For the exam, remember: the charter **authorises** and **frames**; it does not replace the detailed plans produced during planning.

The team and partners

Set-up organises the team: profiles, recruitment, organisation chart, job descriptions, security. With **implementing partners**, capacities are checked, an agreement is signed specifying roles, budget, reporting and compliance rules, and support is planned if needed.

Passing donor requirements on to partners (procurement rules, eligibility of expenditure, visibility, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse) must be explicit: the project manager remains accountable to the donor.

The launch and the decision gate

The **launch workshop** brings together the team, partners and key stakeholders: presentation of objectives, logical framework, governance, schedule, donor rules and complaints and feedback mechanisms. It is also the moment to tell communities what the project will and will not do.

The end-of-set-up decision gate checks that the project is authorised, governed and staffed, and that detailed planning can begin.

Exercise: tolerances and escalation

Situation. USD 180,000 project. Tolerances set by the steering committee: ± 10% per budget line and 3 weeks on the schedule. Three events: A) the "transport" line (USD 12,000) will be overspent by USD 1,500; B) the "materials" line (USD 60,000) will be overspent by USD 9,000; C) one borehole will be 2 weeks late with no effect on the end date.

Task. Who decides in each case?

Answer. A) 1,500 / 12,000 = 12.5%: beyond the 10% tolerance, escalate to the committee. B) 9,000 / 60,000 = 15%: beyond, escalate to the committee and check the donor's rules on transfers between lines. C) 2 weeks, within tolerance: the project manager handles it and reports it.

Key takeaways

- Set-up turns a funded proposal into an authorised, governed and organised project.
- Governance: sponsor, steering committee, project manager, tolerances, RACI with only one "accountable".
- The charter authorises the project and gives authority to the project manager; it does not replace detailed plans.
- Donor requirements are explicitly passed on to partners.
- The launch also tells communities what the project will and will not do.

Quiz

1. Which document formally authorises the project and gives the project manager authority to use resources?
   A. The inception report
   B. The risk register
   C. The project charter
   D. The detailed work plan

2. A forecast 15% overspend on a line, when the tolerance is 10%, must be:
   A. Absorbed by the project manager, who will report it
   B. Escalated to the competent governance body
   C. Offset by quietly reducing another line
   D. Postponed until the final report to be explained

3. In a RACI matrix, how many people should be "accountable" for the same decision?
   A. Only one
   B. All team members
   C. None
   D. Two, to be safe

4. Funding has just been granted, eight months after the proposal. What is the priority during set-up?
   A. Check that the context and proposal are still valid
   B. Prepare the interim report expected by the donor
   C. Recruit the whole team before looking at the context
   D. Launch all planned activities to catch up

5. Who remains accountable to the donor for an implementing partner's compliance with the rules?
   A. The communities, who follow the work on site
   B. The donor, who checks each partner itself
   C. The organisation holding the contract with the donor
   D. The partner alone, since it carries out the activities

6. What does a project charter normally contain?
   A. The detailed schedule of every task, day by day
   B. The detailed budget line by line, approved by the donor
   C. The staff list and job descriptions of the team
   D. Objectives, scope, overall budget and governance

7. Which element shows that a project is "well governed"?
   A. Roles, decision levels and tolerances are clear
   B. The donor decides on project activities day to day
   C. All decisions are taken by the project manager alone
   D. The steering committee approves every expense, however small

8. Why inform communities during the launch?
   A. To ask them for a financial contribution to the project
   B. So they know what the project will do and how to react
   C. To obtain their signature on the funding agreement
   D. To select the list of beneficiaries that very day

Quiz answers : 1. B · 2. C · 3. A · 4. B · 5. C · 6. B · 7. B · 8. B