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Project DPro (PMD Pro) Foundation exam preparation

Complete manual

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/

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Day 1 : The exam, the Project DPro Guide and project management basics

Objectives

- Know the real format of the Project DPro Foundation exam and how to register with PM4NGOs.
- Define project, programme, portfolio and operations, and place the project manager in the development and humanitarian sector.
- Describe the five-phase model, the decision gates and the four competency areas of the guide.

What exactly you are preparing for

This preparation targets the **Project DPro Foundation** exam (formerly PMD Pro level 1), designed for project managers in NGOs, development agencies and humanitarian action. The reference is the **Project DPro Guide, 2nd edition**, published free of charge by PM4NGOs under a Creative Commons licence.

Official exam format, as stated by PM4NGOs at the time of writing:

- **75 multiple-choice questions**, with no negative marking;
- **2 hours** (120 minutes);
- pass mark: **65%**, i.e. 49 correct answers;
- **open book**: you may consult the guide, but any AI help (ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) is forbidden;
- taken online on the PM4NGOs exam platform, one attempt per exam purchased.

Some official questions ask for several correct answers, to complete a sentence or to put steps in order. Our mock exams use one correct answer per question, but our quizzes and exercises also practise the order of steps.

> **Important.** This preparation is independent. It is not endorsed or accredited by PM4NGOs. Project DPro and PMD Pro belong to PM4NGOs. The official exam is taken and paid for only with PM4NGOs (pm4ngos.org), which sets the fee according to your situation. Always check the format and price on their website before you register.

Project, programme, portfolio and operations

A **project** is a **temporary** effort that produces a **unique** result with limited resources: rehabilitate 15 water points in 10 months, train 300 community health workers, distribute seeds to 2,000 households before the rainy season.

A **programme** brings together several related projects, managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits that no single project would produce. A **portfolio** is all the projects and programmes of an organisation, chosen and steered to serve its strategy. **Operations** are ongoing: payroll, vehicle maintenance, running a permanent warehouse.

In the exam, the classic trap is to call an activity with no end and no unique deliverable a "project". Ask three questions: is there an end date? a result of its own? a dedicated budget?

The life cycle: five phases and decision gates

The guide organises a project's life cycle into **five phases**:

1. **Identification and definition**: understand the need, analyse the problem and the actors, choose a strategy and formalise it (logical framework, proposal).
2. **Project set-up**: obtain authorisation to start, put in place governance, the charter and the team.
3. **Planning**: detail scope, schedule, resources, budget, risks, procurement, communication and monitoring.
4. **Implementation**: do the work, monitor, control, manage changes and issues.
5. **Closure**: deliver, hand over, close contracts and accounts, learn lessons.

Between the phases there are **decision gates**: at each gate, an authorised body decides to continue, adjust, go back or stop the project. A gate is not a formality: stopping a project that no longer has a reason to exist is a good management decision.

The phases are not perfectly separate. Monitoring, evaluation and control run through the whole cycle, and a phase can be repeated, for example if security changes and forces you to re-plan.

The project manager's competencies

The guide describes four broad competency areas:

- **Project management technical**: tools and methods (logical framework, schedule, budget, risks, monitoring).
- **Leadership and interpersonal**: lead the team, negotiate, communicate, manage conflict.
- **Personal and self-management**: organisation, stress management, ethics, continuous learning.
- **Development sector specific**: know the context, donors, humanitarian principles, accountability to affected people.

An exam question may describe a technically brilliant project manager who ignores communities: the missing competency belongs to the development sector area, not the technical one.

Project constraints

Every project balances linked constraints: **scope** (what is delivered), **time**, **budget**, together with **quality**, **risks** and **resources**. If one changes, at least one other moves. Example: the donor cuts the budget by 20%; you must reduce the scope, accept a higher risk on quality, or find other funds.

Our sector adds constraints from the **context** (security, access, seasons), **donor rules** and **accountability** to the people we serve. The right exam reflex: when a constraint changes, the correct answer analyses the impact on the others and has the competent body decide, instead of silently absorbing the change.

A working method to pass

Because the exam is open book, the challenge is not to memorise everything but to **know where to look quickly** and to **understand the logic** of the guide. Simple rule: 120 minutes for 75 questions is 1 minute 36 seconds per question. A question that needs more than 3 minutes of searching should be flagged and revisited at the end.

- Download the free guide in your language and build your own one-page index (where the phases, principles, glossary and learning objectives are).
- Each day: lesson, exercise, guided reading in the guide, deliverable, then a quiz with explanations.
- Take the three mock exams in real conditions: timer, guide open, no AI.

Exercise: project or operation?

Situation. The fictitious NGO Tamani manages in Koro district: A) the monthly payroll of 40 staff; B) building 3 classrooms by June; C) a 6-week livestock vaccination campaign; D) the ongoing maintenance of a fleet of 8 vehicles; E) a set of four projects (water, nutrition, livelihoods, protection) coordinated to reduce malnutrition in the district.

Task. Classify each item (project, programme, operation) and justify in one sentence.

Answer. A and D: operations (ongoing, no planned end). B and C: projects (temporary, unique result, deadline). E: programme (related projects managed together for a shared benefit).

Key takeaways

- Foundation exam: 75 questions, 120 minutes, 65% (49 correct answers), open book, no AI, paid to PM4NGOs.
- Project = temporary and unique; programme = related projects; portfolio = strategy; operations = ongoing.
- Five phases: identification and definition, set-up, planning, implementation, closure.
- Decision gates make it possible to continue, adjust or stop: stopping can be the right decision.
- With an open book, search speed matters: about 1 min 36 s per question.

Quiz

1. For five years an NGO has run the maintenance of its central warehouse under the name "logistics project". It is rather:
   A. A project, because the activity has its own budget and manager
   B. A portfolio, because the activity supports the office's strategy
   C. A programme, because several departments take part every year
   D. An operation, because the activity is ongoing, with no unique deliverable

2. Which sequence follows the order of the guide's phases?
   A. Identification and definition, planning, set-up, implementation, closure
   B. Identification and definition, set-up, planning, implementation, closure
   C. Planning, identification and definition, set-up, implementation, closure
   D. Set-up, identification and definition, planning, implementation, closure

3. At a decision gate, the analysis shows that the need has disappeared after the displaced people returned home. The decision most consistent with the guide's logic is:
   A. Continue so as not to lose the funding
   B. Stop or redirect the project with the authorised body
   C. Go straight to implementation to save time
   D. Wait until the end of the project to tell the donor

4. A project manager masters the schedule and budget perfectly but never consults communities. Which competency area should they mainly strengthen?
   A. Project management technical, to plan field visits better
   B. Personal and self-management, to get better organised
   C. Leadership and interpersonal skills with the team
   D. Development sector specific competencies

5. The donor cuts the budget by 20% without changing the deadline. What should the project manager do first?
   A. Stop the project, as the original contract can no longer be met
   B. Analyse the impact on the other constraints, then have it decided
   C. Keep the scope and count on savings along the way
   D. Reduce the quality of materials to keep the full scope

6. During the official Project DPro Foundation exam, which of these is forbidden?
   A. Consulting your personal revision notes
   B. Using an AI assistant such as ChatGPT
   C. Going back to a question flagged earlier
   D. Consulting the downloaded Project DPro Guide

7. A set of water, nutrition and livelihoods projects, coordinated to reduce malnutrition in a province, is:
   A. A programme
   B. An operation
   C. A portfolio
   D. A phase

8. With 75 questions in 120 minutes, which strategy is safest?
   A. Answer in order and never go back to a question
   B. Check every answer in the guide, even the simplest ones
   C. Leave difficult questions blank to avoid mistakes
   D. Aim for about 1 min 30 per question and come back to the long ones

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

Day 2 : Phase 1: project identification and definition

Objectives

- Carry out the needs, stakeholder and problem analysis that justifies a project.
- Move from the problem tree to the objective tree, then choose a strategy through analysis of alternatives.
- Explain what a project proposal must contain to pass the decision gate.

Why this phase is decisive

A well-executed but badly designed project is still a failure: it solves the wrong problem, in the wrong place, for the wrong people. The identification and definition phase answers four questions: **what is the real need? who is concerned? what are its causes? which strategy is most likely to succeed?**

It ends with a decision: whether or not to invest in a project, based on a reasoned proposal. In our sector, this proposal often takes the form of a concept note and then a full proposal to the donor.

Collect data and analyse needs

Data combine **secondary sources** (existing reports, cluster assessments, national statistics) and **primary sources** (interviews, focus groups, surveys, observation). The right reflex: start with secondary data so as not to exhaust communities with repeated surveys.

The analysis distinguishes **needs** (the gap between the current situation and a desirable one), existing **capacities** and specific **vulnerabilities** (women, children, people with disabilities, minorities). Data should be disaggregated by sex, age and disability whenever possible.

Stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder is any person or organisation that influences the project or is affected by it. They are identified, then their **interest**, **influence**, expectations and attitude (supportive, neutral, opposed) are analysed.

The influence / interest matrix guides engagement: **manage closely** (high influence and interest), **keep satisfied** (high influence, low interest), **keep informed** (high interest, low influence), **monitor** (both low). Affected communities often have little formal power but maximum interest: participation and accountability require that they be genuinely involved.

Problem tree and objective tree

The **problem tree** places the core problem at the trunk, its **causes** at the roots and its **effects** in the branches. Example: core problem "high prevalence of diarrhoeal disease among

children under 5"; causes: unsafe water, lack of latrines, hygiene practices; effects: malnutrition, school absenteeism, health expenses.

The **objective tree** turns each negative situation into a desired positive one: causes become means, the core problem becomes the objective, effects become ends. "Cause → effect" links become "means → end" links.

Exam trap: the objective tree does not yet say what the project will do. The analysis of alternatives chooses the branches to keep.

Analysis of alternatives and choice of strategy

Several possible strategies are compared (for example: boreholes, spring rehabilitation, household water treatment) using explicit criteria: needs covered, cost, technical feasibility, sustainability, risks, the organisation's capacities, donor priorities, presence of other actors, communities' views.

A weighted scoring matrix makes the choice transparent. The strategy chosen defines the project's **scope**: what will be done and, just as important, what will not.

The proposal and the decision gate

The proposal brings together: justification and context analysis, theory of change and logical framework, target groups, main activities, estimated budget, risks and assumptions, monitoring and evaluation approach, sustainability. It must be consistent: every activity contributes to a result, every cost matches an activity.

The end-of-phase decision gate asks: is the need demonstrated? is the strategy the best option? does the organisation have the capacity? is funding likely? If the answer is no, the proposal is improved or the project is dropped.

Exercise: from problem tree to objective tree

Situation. In Koro, an assessment shows that 38% of children under 5 had diarrhoea last month. Causes found: only 4 functioning water points for 9,000 inhabitants; 22% of households have a latrine; handwashing with soap is rare. Effects: malnutrition, health costs, school absenteeism.

Task. 1) Write the problem tree. 2) Turn it into an objective tree. 3) Suggest three criteria to choose between a "water" strategy and a "sanitation and hygiene" strategy.

Answer. 1) Trunk: high prevalence of diarrhoea among under-5s; roots: insufficient access to safe water, low latrine coverage, risky hygiene practices; branches: malnutrition, health expenses, absenteeism. 2) Trunk: prevalence reduced; roots: increased access to safe water, increased latrine coverage, improved hygiene practices; branches: better nutritional status, lower expenses, better attendance. 3) Examples: cost per person covered, sustainability (who maintains?), presence of other actors on the same cause.

Key takeaways

- Start with secondary sources, then add primary data disaggregated by sex, age and disability.
- Influence / interest matrix: manage closely, keep satisfied, keep informed, monitor.
- Problem tree: causes below, problem in the middle, effects above; the objective tree is its positive image.
- The analysis of alternatives, with explicit criteria, sets the strategy and therefore the scope.
- The phase ends with a decision gate on the proposal.

Quiz

1. In a problem tree, "lack of latrines" is placed:
   A. At the trunk, as the core problem of the tree
   B. Outside the tree, as a project assumption
   C. In the causes, below the core problem
   D. In the effects, above the core problem

2. What is the best first data source for a needs analysis?
   A. Data from a similar project in another country
   B. A full household survey in every targeted village
   C. The priorities and figures provided by the donor
   D. Reports and assessments already available

3. A local authority has strong influence on the project but little interest in its results. The recommended engagement strategy is:
   A. Monitor it and check its attitude from time to time
   B. Keep it satisfied by informing it of what concerns it
   C. Leave it aside, since it is not a beneficiary
   D. Manage it closely by involving it in all decisions

4. When moving from the problem tree to the objective tree, "cause → effect" relationships become:
   A. "Risk → impact" relationships
   B. "Activity → budget" relationships
   C. "Means → end" relationships
   D. "Assumption → indicator" relationships

5. The objective tree is finished. What remains to be done to define what the project will do?
   A. Recruit the team, who will then choose the activities
   B. Analyse the alternatives and choose the branches to address
   C. Write the detailed budget of each objective in the tree
   D. Nothing: all the objectives of the tree become the project

6. Which of these criteria has no place in an analysis of alternatives?
   A. Sustainability of results after the project ends
   B. Presence of other actors on the same need
   C. The project manager's personal preference
   D. Cost per person helped for each strategy

7. Why should data be disaggregated by sex, age and disability?
   A. Because needs and barriers differ between groups
   B. Because averages are always wrong in the field
   C. Because donors require it in every report
   D. Because it makes focus groups unnecessary

8. At the end-of-identification decision gate, which question is essential?
   A. Is the need demonstrated and the strategy the best?
   B. Have the critical path and floats been calculated?
   C. Has the donor approved the inception report?
   D. Have the main supplier contracts been signed?

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

Day 3 : The logical framework, theory of change and indicators

Objectives

- Build a consistent logical framework: vertical logic, horizontal logic, assumptions.
- Write SMART indicators with means of verification, baseline and target.
- Link the logical framework to the theory of change and to the monitoring and evaluation plan.

The theory of change

The **theory of change** explains how and why the project's actions should lead to the intended change. It makes the intermediate steps and necessary conditions visible. Example: "If households have access to safe water within 500 m *and* adopt handwashing, *then* diarrhoea among children will decrease, *because* the main transmission routes will be cut, *provided that* the water points are maintained."

The theory of change is broader and more explanatory; the logical framework is its concise, measurable version, expected by most donors.

Vertical logic

The logical framework is read from bottom to top:

- **Activities**: what the team does (drill, train, distribute).
- **Outputs**: what the project directly delivers and controls (15 functioning water points, 300 people trained).
- **Outcomes** (or specific objective): changes in behaviour or situation among beneficiaries (households use safe water).
- **Impact** (or goal): the long-term change to which the project contributes along with others (reduced child mortality).

The project manager is responsible for outputs. They influence outcomes but do not fully control them. Impact depends on many actors.

Assumptions and the "if… and… then" logic

Assumptions are external conditions, outside the project's control, needed to move from one level to the next. The reading is: *if* the activities are carried out *and* the assumptions at this level hold, *then* the outputs will be achieved; and so on.

An assumption must not be a condition the project can guarantee itself (otherwise it is an activity to add). A very likely assumption does not need to be written; a very unlikely and decisive one is a "killer": the design must be reviewed.

Horizontal logic: indicators and means of verification

Each level has its **indicators**, its **means of verification** (where and how the data will be collected) and its assumptions. An indicator states the **baseline** (at the start), the **target** and the deadline.

A good indicator is **SMART**: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Weak example: "improved hygiene". Correct example: "% of targeted households reporting handwashing with soap at key times, from 15% (baseline, March) to 60% (end of project), KAP survey".

From the logical framework to the monitoring and evaluation plan

The logical framework is not a document to file away after signature. It feeds the **monitoring and evaluation plan**: for each indicator, the definition, collection method, frequency, person responsible, tool and planned use of the data. It also sets the evaluation points (mid-term, final) and the questions they will ask.

PM4NGOs also publishes a free specialised guide on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, MEAL DPro, which details these tools.

Exercise: repair a logical framework

Situation. A colleague proposes: impact "train 300 health workers"; outcome "15 water points built"; output "30% reduction in diarrhoea"; assumption "the team will carry out the activities on time".

Task. Find the four mistakes and rewrite correctly.

Answer. 1) "Train 300 workers" is an activity or output, not an impact. 2) "15 water points built" is an output, not an outcome. 3) "Reduction in diarrhoea" is an outcome or a contribution to impact, not an output. 4) Carrying out activities on time is under the project's control: it is not an assumption. Correct version: impact "contribute to reducing child mortality"; outcome "30% reduction in diarrhoea prevalence among under-5s"; outputs "15 functioning water points, 300 workers trained"; assumption "management committees maintain the water points".

Key takeaways

- Vertical logic: activities → outputs → outcomes → impact, read with "if… and… then".
- The project controls outputs, influences outcomes and contributes to impact.
- An assumption is external; if the project can guarantee it, it is an activity.
- SMART indicator with baseline, target, deadline and means of verification.
- The logical framework feeds the monitoring and evaluation plan (see also MEAL DPro).

Quiz

1. "15 water points built and functioning" is, in a logical framework:
   A. An assumption
   B. An impact
   C. An output
   D. An outcome

2. Which of these is a correct assumption?
   A. Cement prices remain stable
   B. 100% of the budget will be spent
   C. The project will build 15 water points
   D. The team will recruit an engineer

3. Which indicator is the most SMART?
   A. Clear improvement in access to safe water across the district
   B. % of targeted households using an improved source: 30% → 80% by December
   C. Number of people made aware of hygiene during the project
   D. Communities' satisfaction with the water points built

4. The correct reading of the vertical logic is:
   A. If the impact is achieved, then activities can start in the field
   B. If indicators are carefully chosen, outputs will be delivered
   C. If outputs are delivered and assumptions hold, then outcomes follow
   D. If the budget is approved by the donor, the impact is guaranteed

5. An assumption is judged both decisive and very unlikely. What should be done?
   A. Review the design
   B. Keep it as it is
   C. Turn it into an indicator
   D. Remove it from the framework

6. What is the project manager directly responsible for?
   A. National policies
   B. The assumptions
   C. The outputs
   D. The impact

7. Which column of the logical framework states where and how the data will be collected?
   A. Intervention logic
   B. Project assumptions
   C. Means of verification
   D. Objective indicators

8. How does the theory of change complement the logical framework?
   A. It details the schedule and budget of each activity
   B. It explains why and under what conditions change happens
   C. It replaces the logframe when the donor accepts it
   D. It sets the numerical targets of each project indicator

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

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

Day 5 : Phase 3: planning scope and schedule

Objectives

- Break the scope down into a work breakdown structure (WBS) down to work packages.
- Sequence activities, estimate durations and build a Gantt chart.
- Calculate the critical path and the float of an activity.

Why plan in detail

The proposal and the charter give the frame. The planning phase produces the **detailed plans** needed to carry out and control the work: scope, schedule, resources, budget, procurement, risks, communication, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability. These plans are **integrated**: changing one changes the others.

Planning is not predicting perfectly. In an unstable context, you plan the near term in detail and the rest more broadly (rolling-wave planning), and revise regularly.

Scope and the work breakdown structure

The **scope** describes all the work needed, and only that. The **work breakdown structure** (WBS) breaks it down hierarchically: project → outputs → sub-deliverables → **work packages**. A work package is small enough to be estimated (duration, cost), assigned to someone and monitored.

The 100% rule: the sum of the elements at one level represents 100% of the work of the level above, no more, no less. What is not in the WBS is not in the project: it is the best defence against scope creep.

A **WBS dictionary** describes each package: content, deliverable, person responsible, acceptance criteria.

Activities, dependencies and estimates

Each work package is broken down into **activities**, then their **dependencies** are set. The most common is "finish-to-start": activity B only starts when A ends (you do not pour the slab before digging). There are also start-to-start, finish-to-finish and, rarely, start-to-finish.

Durations are estimated by analogy with past projects, by expert judgement, or with the three-point method: (optimistic + 4 × most likely + pessimistic) / 6. Example: 4, 6 and 14 days give (4 + 24 + 14) / 6 = 7 days.

In our sector, include real calendar constraints: rainy season, holidays, import lead times, administrative authorisations, the agricultural calendar.

The Gantt chart and milestones

The **Gantt chart** shows activities as bars on a time scale, with their dependencies. Everyone can read it and it is used for monitoring: actual progress is compared with the planned bar.

Milestones are zero-duration events that mark an important point: contract signed, end of drilling, mid-term evaluation, interim report to the donor. They are useful for governance and reporting.

The critical path

The **critical path** is the longest sequence of dependent activities: it sets the minimum duration of the project. Any critical-path activity that is late delays the whole project. Other activities have **float** (time they can slip without moving the end date).

Example. A (5 d) then B (10 d) then D (4 d); in parallel, A then C (6 d) then D. Path A-B-D = 19 days; path A-C-D = 15 days. The critical path is A-B-D, project duration 19 days, and C has a float of 10 − 6 = 4 days.

To shorten a project, act on the critical path: add resources (crashing, at a cost) or run activities in parallel (fast tracking, at a risk). Shortening a non-critical activity changes nothing to the end date.

Exercise: calculate the critical path

Data. A: site survey, 6 days. B: purchase of materials, 15 days, after A. C: training of committees, 8 days, after A. D: construction, 20 days, after B. E: commissioning, 3 days, after C and D.

Task. 1) List the paths and their durations. 2) What is the critical path? 3) What is C's float? 4) The supplier announces a 5-day delay on B: effect on the project?

Answer. 1) A-B-D-E = 6 + 15 + 20 + 3 = 44 days; A-C-E = 6 + 8 + 3 = 17 days. 2) A-B-D-E, 44 days. 3) C must finish at the latest on day 41 (start of E); it finishes at the earliest on day 14; float = 27 days. 4) B is critical: the project moves to 49 days, unless D is crashed or another supplier is found.

Key takeaways

- The WBS breaks the whole scope down to work packages; 100% rule.
- Most common dependency: finish-to-start. Three-point estimate: (O + 4M + P) / 6.
- Gantt = bars over time; milestone = zero-duration event.
- The critical path is the longest path; it sets the project duration; its activities have zero float.
- To shorten the project, act on the critical path (crashing or fast tracking).

Quiz

1. According to the 100% rule applied to the WBS:
   A. The project must be 100% complete before the first report
   B. Each work package must represent the same share of the budget
   C. All activities in the WBS are on the critical path
   D. One level covers all the work of the level above, no more, no less

2. Three-point estimate: optimistic 3 days, most likely 6 days, pessimistic 15 days. Estimated duration?
   A. 7 days
   B. 9 days
   C. 8 days
   D. 6 days

3. Paths: A-B-E = 30 days; A-C-E = 24 days; A-D-E = 27 days. What is the float of activity D?
   A. 6 days
   B. 3 days
   C. 0 days
   D. 27 days

4. To finish earlier, the project manager adds a team to a non-critical activity. Effect on the end date?
   A. The end date moves forward by the days saved
   B. No effect: the activity is not on the critical path
   C. The end date slips, because the project cost rises
   D. The critical path changes and the end moves a week earlier

5. What is a milestone?
   A. A long activity on which everything else depends
   B. A budget line reserved for unforeseen costs
   C. A monthly meeting of the steering committee
   D. A zero-duration event marking a key point

6. Pumps cannot be installed before drilling is finished. This is a dependency:
   A. Finish-to-finish
   B. Start-to-finish
   C. Finish-to-start
   D. Start-to-start

7. In an unstable context, which planning practice fits best?
   A. Plan the near term in detail and revise regularly
   B. Plan only the current week, with no overall view
   C. Plan every day for 3 years and never revise the plan
   D. Let the donor plan and follow its instructions

8. Running two activities in parallel that were planned one after the other, to save time, is called:
   A. Fast tracking, which increases risk
   B. Early closure of both activities
   C. Crashing, which costs nothing extra
   D. Levelling, which shortens the project

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

Day 6 : Phase 3 (continued): resources, budget, procurement, risks and related plans

Objectives

- Build a budget from the WBS and identify the donor rules to follow.
- Plan human resources, logistics and procurement.
- Analyse and respond to risks; prepare the communication, monitoring and sustainability plans.

Resources and budget

The budget is built **from the work packages**: for each one, the resources needed (staff, materials, transport, services) multiplied by their unit costs. Support costs (office, security, management) are added according to donor rules, and possibly a contingency if allowed.

The budget is linked to the schedule: the **planned spending curve** is used for financial monitoring and cash requests. Donor rules (eligible costs, flexibility between lines, exchange rates, indirect costs) must be known before spending.

Resource levelling moves activities within their float so that the same person or vehicle is not used twice at the same time.

Procurement and logistics

The **procurement plan** lists what to buy, when, with which procedure (according to the organisation's and donor's thresholds: direct purchase, request for quotations, tender) and who decides. It is linked to the schedule: an international tender can take several months, often on the critical path.

Logistics also plans storage, transport, asset management and distribution. The basic principles: transparency, competition, segregation of duties, traceability of decisions.

Risk management

A **risk** is an uncertain event that, if it occurs, affects the objectives. The process: **identify** (workshops, checklists, past lessons), **analyse** (probability × impact), **plan the response**, **monitor**.

Responses to negative risks: **avoid** (change the plan to remove the risk), **reduce** (lower probability or impact), **transfer** (insurance, contract), **accept** (with or without a fallback plan). Each risk has an **owner**.

Do not confuse: a risk is future and uncertain; an **issue** has already happened and is managed in the issue log.

Communication and stakeholders

The **communication plan** says who receives what information, in what form, how often and from whom: donor reports, coordination meetings, information to communities in their language, feedback to authorities. It includes accessible and safe complaints and feedback channels.

It flows from the stakeholder analysis: each person receives the information useful at their level of engagement.

Monitoring and evaluation plan, and sustainability

The **monitoring and evaluation plan** details each indicator of the logical framework (definition, method, frequency, person responsible, tool), the schedule of data collection and evaluations, and how the data will feed decisions.

The **sustainability plan** prepares from the planning stage what will remain after the project: who will maintain, with what resources, which skills will be transferred, how authorities or communities will take over. Thinking about sustainability at the end is too late.

Together, these plans form the **project implementation plan**, approved by governance before moving to implementation.

Exercise: risk register

Situation. Water project in Koro. Risks identified: A) 25% inflation on cement; B) rainy season blocking access to sites from July to September; C) a management committee that does not maintain the pumps; D) attack on the main road.

Task. For each: probability and impact (low, medium, high) and a response (avoid, reduce, transfer, accept).

Possible answer. A) likely, medium impact: reduce (fixed-price contract, early bulk purchase). B) almost certain, high impact: avoid (schedule works outside the season); it is almost a scheduling constraint. C) medium, high impact on sustainability: reduce (training, user contributions, post-project follow-up). D) low to medium, high impact: reduce (security analysis, alternative routes) and accept the residual risk with a suspension plan.

Key takeaways

- Budget built from the work packages, linked to the schedule, compliant with donor rules.
- The procurement plan follows thresholds and can be on the critical path.
- Risks: identify, analyse, respond (avoid, reduce, transfer, accept), monitor; one owner per risk.
- Risk = future and uncertain; issue = already happened.
- Plans are integrated; sustainability is prepared from the planning stage.

Quiz

1. Taking out insurance for the project's vehicles is a risk response of the type:
   A. Reduce
   B. Avoid
   C. Transfer
   D. Accept

2. The project schedules works outside the rainy season so as not to be blocked. This is a response of the type:
   A. Exploit
   B. Avoid
   C. Transfer
   D. Accept

3. The materials truck has already been stuck at the border for three days. It is no longer a risk but:
   A. A change request to have approved
   B. A risk to record in the risk register
   C. An assumption to add to the logframe
   D. An issue to record in the issue log

4. How do you build a solid project budget?
   A. Start from the WBS packages and cost their resources
   B. Estimate salaries, then add a fixed percentage
   C. Divide the donor's ceiling by the number of months
   D. Take the budget of a similar project and adjust it

5. Moving an activity within its float so that the same technician is not scheduled in two places on the same day is called:
   A. Transferring the risk to the supplier
   B. Schedule crashing
   C. Resource levelling
   D. Change control

6. When should the sustainability plan be prepared?
   A. From planning onwards, then throughout the project
   B. During closure, when assets are handed over
   C. Never, as it is the local authorities' role
   D. After the final evaluation, according to its findings

7. What should the communication plan include?
   A. Minutes of the team's internal meetings
   B. The list of journalists and media to contact
   C. Only donor reports and their submission dates
   D. Who receives what information, how and how often

8. A risk has high probability and high impact on the objectives. What is the priority?
   A. Address it first, with a response and an owner
   B. Transfer it to the donor, who bears major risks
   C. Remove it from the register as probably exaggerated
   D. Note it and wait for it to happen before acting

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

Day 7 : Phase 4: implementation, monitoring, control and change management

Objectives

- Lead implementation: coordinate the team, partners and suppliers.
- Monitor progress, compare it with the plan and decide on actions.
- Manage changes, issues and reporting according to governance rules.

Doing the work

Implementation carries out the plan: mobilise the team and partners, launch procurement, carry out activities, deliver outputs. The project manager coordinates, motivates, removes blockages, protects the team and ensures quality and accountability.

Everyday tools: short regular meetings, monthly work plan, task tracking board, field visits, meetings with partners and community committees.

Monitor and control

Monitoring collects and analyses information on progress (activities, outputs, spending, schedule, risks, indicators). **Control** compares reality with the baseline plan and decides on **corrective** actions (to get back on plan) or **preventive** ones (to avoid a future variance).

Example: at mid-term, 40% of the budget is spent while 60% of the planned work should be done, and only 35% actually is. The project is **behind schedule** (35% done instead of 60% planned) and **costs more than planned for the work done** (40% spent for 35% done). Analyse the causes before acting.

Change control

A change in scope, schedule or budget is never decided alone and verbally. The **change control** process: 1) written request; 2) analysis of the impact on all constraints (scope, time, cost, quality, risks, beneficiaries); 3) decision at the competent level according to tolerances, and by the donor if the contract requires; 4) update of the plans; 5) informing stakeholders.

Scope creep is the gradual addition of unapproved work ("while you are here, also build…"). It consumes budget and time without a decision. The reflex: thank the person, record the request and put it through the process.

Issues, decisions and lessons along the way

The **issue log** records each issue: description, date, impact, owner, action, deadline, status. The **decision log** keeps track of who decided what and why, useful for audit and adaptive management.

Lessons should not wait until the end: a short review after each important stage makes it possible to correct course during the project.

Reporting and accountability

Reports serve decision-making, not only the donor: monthly internal report (progress, spending, risks, issues, decisions requested), narrative and financial reports to the donor, feedback to communities on what has been done and on the follow-up given to their complaints.

A good report is accurate, compares actual with planned, explains variances and proposes actions. It does not hide problems: transparency is an accountability requirement.

Exercise: change request

Situation. The village chief asks the project to add 2 water points near the school, on top of the 15 planned. Estimated cost: USD 14,000; extra time: 4 weeks; tolerances: 10% of the budget (USD 180,000) and 3 weeks.

Task. What do you tell the village chief, and what path does the request follow?

Answer. Thank them and explain that any change must be studied and decided, without promising anything. Write a change request and analyse the impact (14,000 / 180,000 = 7.8% of the budget, within tolerance; but 4 weeks, beyond the 3-week tolerance; a change of output, so outside delegated authority). The decision belongs to the steering committee, and probably to the donor since an output changes. Then update the plans and tell the community the answer.

Key takeaways

- Monitor = collect and analyse; control = compare with the plan and act (corrective or preventive).
- Compare work done with work planned and with actual spending before concluding.
- No change of scope, time or budget without a written process and a decision at the right level.
- Scope creep is fought by putting every request through change control.
- Issue log, decision log, honest reports and feedback to communities.

Quiz

1. A local donor verbally suggests that the project manager extend the project to a second village. What should be done?
   A. Refuse without review, as the scope is already signed
   B. Start the works and regularise at the next report
   C. Record the request and follow change control
   D. Accept at once so as not to lose this funding
2. Planned to date: 50% of the work. Done: 40%. Spent: 45% of the budget. What do you conclude?
   A. Ahead, and cheaper than planned for the work done
   B. On time, and on budget for the work done
   C. Behind, but cheaper than planned for the work done
   D. Behind, and more costly than planned for the work done
3. An action taken to prevent a variance from happening in the future is:
   A. Preventive
   B. Avoidance
   C. Corrective
   D. A closure action
4. What is scope creep?
   A. The gradual fall of the exchange rate
   B. The gradual addition of unapproved work
   C. The gradual delay of a key supplier
   D. The gradual departure of team members
5. What does the issue log contain?
   A. Issues that occurred, the action, owner and status
   B. Steering committee decisions, with their date
   C. Beneficiaries' complaints, sorted by village
   D. Future risks, with their probability and impact
6. In a donor report, how should a major delay be handled?
   A. Change the baseline schedule to erase it
   B. Not mention it until a solution has been found
   C. Attribute it to the partner to protect the organisation
   D. Present it with its causes, impact and actions

7. A change request adds an output to the logical framework. Who must usually approve it?
   A. The project manager alone, who knows the field
   B. The village committee that made the request
   C. The supplier in charge of the additional works
   D. Project governance, and the donor if needed

8. Why keep a decision log?
   A. To keep track of who decided what, when and why
   B. To record the team's leave and absences
   C. To replace the risk register during implementation
   D. To track spending committed on each budget line

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

Day 8 : Phase 5: closure, Project DPro principles and final review

Objectives

- Close a project: deliverables, contracts, finances, resources, handover, lessons.
- Explain the five Project DPro principles and tailor the method to the size of the project.
- Apply an exam strategy and analyse your mistakes in the mock exams.

Project closure

Closure is often rushed, yet it protects the organisation and sustainability. It includes:

- **verification and acceptance of deliverables** by their recipients (authorities, communities, partners);
- **handover** of assets and responsibilities according to the sustainability plan and donor rules;
- **closing contracts** (suppliers, partners) and commitments;
- **financial closure**: expenses justified, payments settled, final financial report, audit if planned;
- **human resources**: end of contracts, work certificates, support to the team;
- **final reports**, **evaluation** if planned, and **archiving** of documents for the required period;
- **lessons learned**, shared to improve future projects.

A project can also be closed **early** (insecurity, end of funding, need disappeared): the same steps apply, in an orderly way.

The five Project DPro principles

The guide presents five principles that should guide all project management:

- **Well-governed**: clear roles, responsibilities and decision levels, and a project justification checked throughout the cycle.
- **Participatory**: stakeholders, starting with the people concerned, are involved in decisions.
- **Comprehensive**: the project is managed in all its dimensions (scope, schedule, resources, risks, quality, sustainability), not just activities.
- **Integrated**: plans and processes are linked with each other and with the organisation's functions (finance, logistics, HR).
- **Adaptive**: the project learns and adjusts to the context, within a controlled decision framework.

In the exam, a situation often describes a failure: identify the principle concerned.

Tailoring the method to the project

The method is **tailored** to the project's size, complexity, risk and context. A 3-month, USD 20,000 project does not need the same documents as a 5-year, 10-million programme. But no phase disappears: you simplify the tools, not the logic (justify, authorise, plan, control, close).

Exam-day strategy

- **Before**: check your connection and browser, have the digital guide open with your index, and no AI open.
- **During**: read the last sentence of the question first (what is being asked?), identify the phase concerned, eliminate answers that contradict a principle (deciding alone, hiding a problem, ignoring communities).
- **Time**: about 50 questions by the end of the first hour; keep 15 minutes for flagged questions.
- **No blanks**: there is no negative marking, answer everything.

Our mock exams do not show you the correct answers, so you train as on exam day. After each mock exam, work on your weak points with each day's quizzes and explanations.

After you pass

The official Project DPro Foundation certificate is issued by PM4NGOs after your exam is validated. Our mock exam certificate only shows that you passed our training: it does not replace the official certification and must not be presented as such.

Possible next steps: the Practitioner level offered by some PM4NGOs partners, the MEAL DPro guide for monitoring and evaluation, or our Project Management and AI Mini MBA to go further.

Exercise: which principle is at stake?

Situations. A) The project was designed at headquarters without any consultation of villages. B) The project manager alone changes the location of an output without telling anyone. C) The budget was made with no link to the procurement plan or schedule. D) Although a road has been closed for 4 months, the plan has never been revised. E) The project tracked activities and budget, but never quality or sustainability.

Task. Match each situation with the principle not respected.

Answer. A) Participatory. B) Well-governed. C) Integrated. D) Adaptive. E) Comprehensive.

Key takeaways

- Closure: acceptance, handover, contracts, finances, HR, reports, archives, lessons; also for early termination.
- Five principles: well-governed, participatory, comprehensive, integrated, adaptive.
- Tools are tailored to the size of the project, never the logic of the phases.
- On exam day: read the question, locate the phase, eliminate what contradicts a principle, answer everything.
- Our mock exam certificate does not replace the official certification issued by PM4NGOs.

Quiz

1. The project was designed at headquarters without consulting communities. Which principle is not respected?
   A. Comprehensive
   B. Integrated
   C. Adaptive
   D. Participatory

2. The main road has been closed for four months and the plan has never been revised. Which principle is at stake?
   A. Comprehensive
   B. Participatory
   C. Well-governed
   D. Adaptive

3. The budget was prepared with no link to the procurement plan or schedule. Which principle is at stake?
   A. Participatory
   B. Adaptive
   C. Integrated
   D. Well-governed

4. Insecurity forces the project to stop three months before its end. What must be done?
   A. Let the partner handle the end of the project alone
   B. Leave without formalities to protect the team as fast as possible
   C. Close in an orderly way, adapting to the security situation
   D. Wait for the planned end date to start closure

5. Which activity is part of financial closure?
   A. Open a new line for end-of-project expenses
   B. Recruit an accountant to prepare the next project
   C. Revise the logframe with the new expenses
   D. Justify expenses, settle payments, produce the report

6. For a small three-month project, how should the method be applied?
   A. Simplify the tools while keeping the logic of the phases
   B. Remove closure, for lack of time at the end
   C. Apply all the documents of a large programme
   D. Remove planning, which is useless for three months

7. The project tracked activities and budget, but never quality or sustainability. Which principle is at stake?
   A. Well-governed
   B. Comprehensive
   C. Participatory
   D. Adaptive

8. During the exam, 20 minutes remain and 15 questions are unanswered. What should you do?
   A. Search each answer in detail in the guide, one by one
   B. Leave blank the questions you hesitate on
   C. Leave the exam to retake it in better conditions
   D. Answer them all, eliminating non-compliant answers

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