



The **vision**  
to stay ahead

MSP<sup>®</sup> in under 2000 words

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The fourth revision of the globally recognised best practice framework for Programme Management, called ‘Managing Successful Programmes’ was released in 2011 by the Office of Government Commerce. It was first released in 1999 when it first crystallised the evolving concepts of business change from projects. In 2003 a second version was released which reflected the increasing maturity of the concepts. The 2007 version captured the evolving knowledge in this discipline whilst remaining true to the original concepts. The latest update includes new tools and techniques and adds a greater depth of explanation to help organisations and individuals effectively implement the programme management successfully.

MSP® defines programme management as “the action of carrying out the coordinated organisation, direction and implementation of a dossier of projects and transformational activities (i.e. the programme) to achieve outcomes and realise benefits of strategic importance to the business”.

The MSP® framework is designed to enable the delivery of transformational change and the achievement of an organisation’s strategic objectives. Programmes exist in the tension zone between the strategic direction of the organisation, the delivery of change capability by projects and the need to maintain business performance and stability whilst realising and exploiting the benefits from the investments.

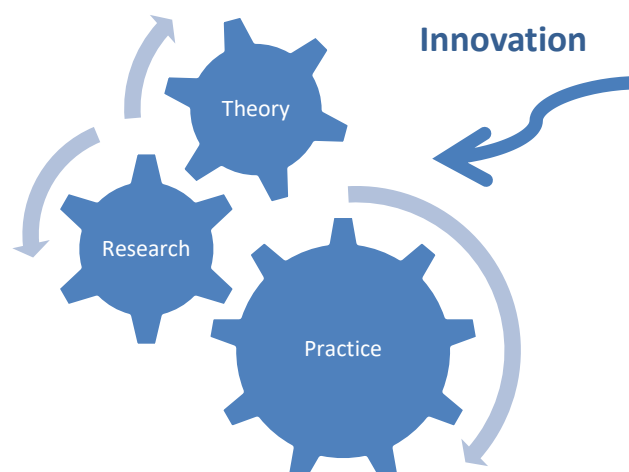
There are a number of business benefits to adopting a structured approach to programme management including:

- 1. Improved and coherent governance structure** that addresses the issues of linking business strategy, organisational change and project delivery. By establishing clear sets of accountabilities and responsibilities that cover, not only the projects and the control structure for the programme manager, but also ensure there is clear ownership and accountability for delivering change through the role of Business Change Managers. Accountability for the whole programme is embedded in a single role, the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). This structure enables effective hierarchical control of direction by the executive, whilst ensuring business requirements are paramount during design and delivery, with the pace of change remaining under strategic control.
- 2. Having the agility to react to change** because a critical requirement for a programme is to have clarity of the “As Is” state of the organisation and the intended “To Be” state to be delivered. By having this clarity, it enables rapid impact assessments of changing circumstances and re-alignment to the new needs of the organisation. Where there are a number of programmes running, the impact assessments can be taken across the portfolio equally as effectively. Making organisations agile increases their competitive edge during turbulent times which contributes to the increasing take-up of MSP® .
- 3. Improved strategic alignment and clarity of direction** is a fundamental requirement of any programme approach. Within an MSP® programme, this alignment is achieved through two core concepts: the Blueprint, which is a detailed description of what the programme will leave behind once completed, and the detailed benefit profiles, explaining how they will be achieved, by whom, and how they will be measured.

Without the Blueprint to focus the projects on their outputs, and the benefit profiles to describe how their outputs will be leveraged, programmes find it very difficult to set priorities and can quickly lose direction and focus. A common problem, as many of you reading this will be aware.

4. **Focus on delivering benefits from effective business change** is a critical advantage once MSP® has been adopted. The focus of programmes moves from co-ordinating project delivery to preparing for, delivering and establishing change which enables sustainable benefits to be delivered. A characteristic of organisations with embedded programme management is that they do fewer projects but achieve more benefits because their efforts are focused on doing the important things.
5. **A foundation for improving organisation performance** from the proven track record of the Managing Successful Programmes framework worldwide. There is an OGC<sup>1</sup> accredited industry providing qualifications, trainers, consultancies and tools to support organisations adopting and developing their capabilities. The most important tool for this, from an MSP® perspective is P3M3<sup>2</sup>, which provides a maturity model which can be used by organisations to target their investment to maximise short and long term benefits from adoption.

All the UK Government products are innovative; they integrate the latest mix of research and theory but most of all practical experience to bring the best possible mix of advice and guidance. MSP® is the definitive best practice guide to programme management accepted across the world, and Aspire has been at the head of this development having provided the Lead Author and reviewers for 2007 and 2011 versions.



<sup>1</sup> UK Office of Government Commerce

<sup>2</sup> Portfolio Programme Project Management Maturity Model

## The Managing Successful Programme Framework

There are three types of programmes MSP® endeavours to address; each will require a different focus and intensity of resources and control.

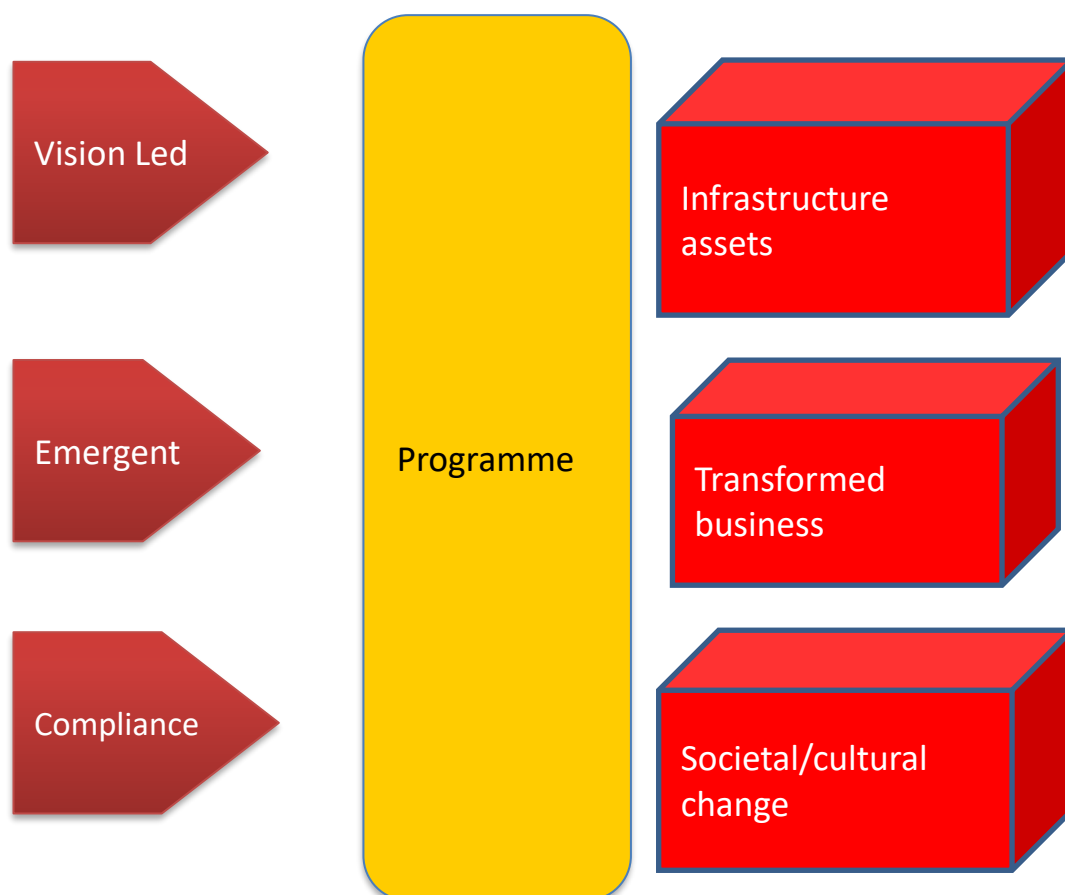
**Vision led** programmes that start with a clearly defined vision have a top down approach and focus on strategic or innovative opportunity with radical transformation of business, culture or both.

**Emergent programmes** evolve from current uncoordinated initiatives, where there is recognition of the value of joined-up approach with an emergent vision and end goal.

**Compliance programmes** can also be called ‘must do’ programmes. The organisation has no choice but to change due to, for example market forces or the potential negative impact of not changing.

Unlike project management, which thrives on certainty, programme management recognises and exploits the ambiguity within which it exists.

The impact of programmes will tend to be in three areas. The delivery of a major infrastructure asset, business transformation or societal/cultural change.



When picking up the manual, you will note that it has three main sections,

**The Introduction** describes the context of Programme Management, and also introduces the Programme Management principles. These apply to every programme, have been proven in practice and empower individuals to deliver successfully:

### **MSP® Principles**

These seven principles outline the key characteristics of successful programmes:

**Remaining aligned with corporate strategy** - A programme is typically a large investment that should make a significant contribution towards achieving corporate performance targets, maintaining good links with sometimes volatile corporate strategy

**Leading change** - In a programme, leading change includes giving clear direction, engendering trust, actively engaging stakeholders, appointing the right people at the right moments, and living with a measure of uncertainty

**Envisioning and communicating a better future** - A programme is relevant where there is a need to achieve transformational change. In order to achieve such a beneficial, future state, the leaders of a programme must describe a clear vision of that future and then communicate it consistently

**Focusing on the benefits and threats to benefit realisation** - The programme should be aligned to satisfying strategic objectives by realising the end benefits. Thus, the programme's boundaries, including the projects and activities that become part of the programme, are determined to enable the realisation of these end benefits and the effective management of any risks related to that realisation

**Adding value** - A programme only remains valid if it adds value to the sum of its constituent projects and major activities. If it is found to add nothing then it is better to close the programme and allow the projects to proceed, coordinated independently by corporate portfolio management

**Designing and delivering a coherent capability** - The programme will deliver a business architecture or final capability. This should be released into operational use according to a schedule delivering maximum incremental capability (and therefore benefits), with minimal operational impact

**Learning from experience** – A programme should review and improve its own performance during its life. Good governance requires managing the different themes with regular adjusting and adapting on the basis of experience and results so far

### **The Governance Themes**

These are a set of references that explain how key elements of the programme should be delivered during its delivery lifecycle. The Governance Themes cover subjects that will need to be constantly managed to a greater or lesser extent on a daily basis:

**Organisation** describes how governance should be applied, through the Sponsoring Group and Programme Board, and provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities for the main roles, Senior Responsible Owner, Business Change Manager and Programme Manager. It also recommends additional roles.

**Vision** is required for the delivery of any programme. MSP® sets out the key contents and how it should paint a picture of a better future for the organisation.

**Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership** is critical to any programme as change requires effective leadership. MSP® emphasises the need to not only identify and communicate with stakeholders, but also provides analysis tools to generate greater understanding of their needs, perceptions and priorities.

**Blueprint Design and Delivery** is the foundation for the programme. What is the “to be” state for the organisation when the programme completes, and in fact, what is our starting point (“as is” state). Transformation is delivered in step changes through Tranches.

**Benefits Management** is the core difference between projects and programmes. The active exploitation of the opportunities that are offered by the investment in projects deliverables is complex, with each benefit having its own profile and a supporting plan to deliver the changes and release the dividend.

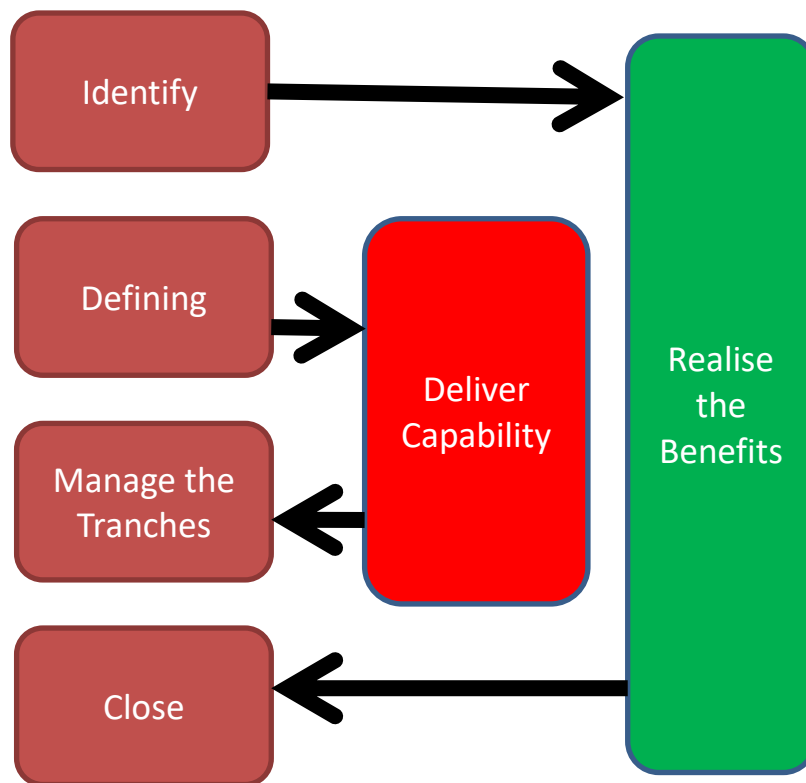
**Business Case** will be in place for all programmes, with MSP® highlighting the need for the programme to have an overarching Case, and each project having its own Business Case too.

**Risk and Issue Management** offers advice and guidance on how to avoid the realisation of the events that will cause the programme to fail. It not only focuses on the need to manage threats, but also to exploit opportunities. There are four perspectives, Strategic, Programme, Operation and Project risk.

**Planning and control** are covered in detail to explain how to develop the Programme Plan and maintain internal control.

**Quality and Assurance Management** describes how there should be optimal management of people, resources, suppliers, processes, assets, information and strategic alignment. It also outlines the core principles of assurance.

## Transformation Flow



Transformation Flow is the term used to describe the lifecycle of the programme; it uses “Flow” to reflect the evolving nature of the journey the programme takes and the adjustments that will need to be made. It passes through the following stages:

**Identifying a Programme** takes an outline idea, and undertakes analysis of stakeholders, clarification of the strategic requirements and market consultation to turn it into a business concept that gains strategic support.

**Defining a Programme** confirms the vision, undertakes detailed analysis of options and designs the programme infrastructure to deliver, resulting in a business case and strategic commitment.

**Managing the Tranches** describes the cyclical activities involved in managing and proving the coordinating interface between projects, business change and strategic direction.

**Delivering the Capability** explains how the alignment of the projects and other activities that deliver the Blueprint will be managed and controlled.

**Realising the Benefits** outlines the preparing, delivering and reviewing activities to take the capability delivered by projects, transition it into the business operations and embed it within the business operations to realise the intended benefits.

**Closing the Programme** structures the end to the programme, consolidating & embedding the change, closing down all programme activity and completing Stakeholder Engagement.

This article has been written by Aspire Europe Ltd, Rod Sowden, Managing Director of Aspire Europe Ltd and Lead Author for MSP® and P3M3®

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