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National public projects implementation systems: How to Improve public projects delivery from the country level

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Abstract

Motto

I do not ask what public project may do for their governments. I ask what governments should do to assure their projects success.

National Public Projects Implementation System (NPPIS) is the whole environment of public projects implementation in given country. It may be perceived as an extension of the concept of Project Management Office for the country level. It consists of six basic areas. The Public Projects Portfolio Management area is responsible for selecting, initiating and modifying the set of public projects in a given country. The Organizational Units area covers units engaged in implementing public project. It ranges from single PM agents through national level PMOs to advisory boards responsible for overseeing and improving the whole systems of public projects implementation. The Processes and Methodologies area covers processes related to project management in given country. Its main components are processes of project implementation and processes for project assurance and governance. The Knowledge Management area is responsible for providing knowledge to public projects actors (trainings, knowledge exchange etc.) and for knowledge exchange with project stakeholders (e.g. communities of citizens). Public projects are implemented by their actors: the most important of them are project managers and vendors. The approach to managing them is covered by the Actors area. The sixth area of NPPIS is the area of development of public projects implementation. It may range from establishing NPPIS in countries where there is no such system to sophisticated NPPIS improvement processes.

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1. Introduction

A public project is a project executed by a public administration or with the participation of a public administration, or implemented with the involvement of funds from the budget of such an administration. Public administrations spend more and more budget on public projects. There exist a need to build consistent, comprehensive methodology describing how institutions of public administration should support delivery of their public projects.

This paper is a result of an analysis of practices of public projects implementation in four countries (and its component states): the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. The analysis consisted of three phases: review of internet resources, survey and interviews with selected actors engaged in public projects management. The next chapters describe six areas of practices of public projects management: portfolio management, institutions supporting project management, procedures and processes, knowledge management, actors of public projects and development of project implementation systems. These areas together make National Public Projects Implementation System (NPPIS, Gasik, 2014).

2. Public Project Portfolio Management

Public project portfolio management covers the processes of selecting, initiating and modifying the set of public projects in a given country or state. An organization's strategy usually makes up the basis for project portfolio management (e.g., PMI, 2013b). Government agencies must have strategic plans, for example, for periods of no less than five years (White House, 1993), which set out the objectives to be achieved through the implementation of programs. The strategic plan must also include an assessment of ways to achieve these objectives, i.e. the ways to measure the effectiveness of the programs. The annual plan defining a set of programs to be implemented by the agency must be consistent with the strategy of the agency. This approach ensures that only projects aligned with the strategy of government agencies will be selected for execution.

Public projects or programs may be also initiated as a result of occurrence of a specific situation which had not been foreseen by the strategy. This approach is often used in UK (cf. Barker Report (Barker, 2004), Latham Report (Latham, 1994)).

3. Organizational Units

There are two basic types of organizational units engaged in and supporting public projects delivery: Public Projects Management Offices (PPMO) and advisory bodies.

PPMOs have been established in many countries. Their objective is always to improve public projects delivery. PPMO's are placed in different locations and at different levels of organization structures. For example, the Major Projects Authority (MPA UK, 2013) in the UK is a part of Cabinet Office, Major Project Facilitation Unit (MPFU Australia, 2013) in Australia is a component of Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development. In the United States, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB USA, 2013), reports directly to the president. PPMO may be also located at other organizational levels.

PPMOs perform different functions. Sometimes they are fully responsible for implementation and management of projects (MPA UK, 2013, EPMO New York, 2013). In other countries PPMOs provide staff for major public projects – this is the solution adopted in New South Wales (PS NSW, 2013) .

PPMOs may facilitate project execution like in Australia at the Commonwealth level (MPFU Australia, 2013) or in Western Australia (DSD WA, 2013). Within this function they are responsible, among others, for removing all administrative barriers and obstacles, related, for instance to receiving all needed permits in complicated organizational environment. When public projects implementation involves many government agencies, PPMOs coordinate this involvement (MPMO Canada, 2013, OPMP Alaska, 2013, MPA UK, 2013).

PPMOs may also perform separate project management services for government units. They provide general advisory services to project management teams. They develop the business case and feasibility studies (e.g., PM Missouri, 2013), provide services in the area of determining project governance rules (POCD California, 2013;

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