# International Development Project Management: Principles of Best Practice

The **Principles of Best Practice for Program Management** were developed by the Bond Project Management Group. It is a living document which functions as a self-assessment tool for organisations or teams running international development projects to review their project management practices. It can also be used to help design new project management toolkits, training or guidance. The principles were designed as a high level reference guide, specifically with international development projects in mind, to ensure maintenance of best practice and **quality** throughout the project life cycle and to increase chances of project success.

The principles are methodology and tool agnostic and can be applied to any project. They can be used by new project managers who are in the early planning stages of their project and are looking to establish the project framework and processes; or they can be used by experienced project managers as a checklist reminder for establishing all the essential criteria required for best project management practice.

This tool is also useful as a checklist throughout your project to ensure that there is continuity of process and project quality for the duration of the project. The table lists all the criteria that the Bond Project Management Group have identified as essential to best practice project management, grouped into six categories.

| Principle | Criteria | Not at all | Partially | Completely |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Governance** Projects are well-governed, with links to organisational strategy and good leadership. | **1.1 Strategy & Impact** Are projects aligned with a wider strategy, and overall programme goals, in order to ensure that they are focused on achieving a positive impact? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **1.2 Continued Validity** Is the continued justification and relevance of projects considered and reviewed throughout the project cycle, to ensure that the project plan and outcomes are still relevant to the project's overall objectives? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **1.3 High Level Buy In** Is there high-level buy in and support for projects? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **1.4 Leadership** Is there good leadership of the project which allows decisions beyond the project manager's authority to be made quickly and appropriately? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **2. Process** Clear, consistent processes guide project management. | **2.1 Appropriate Process** Is there a project management process which is appropriate and can be adapted to the specific external, organisational and/or team context? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **2.2 Clear Stages** Are projects managed in recognizable stages, with clear decision gateways after each? This will likely include project identification, inception, implementation and closure stages, with equal emphasis on each stage. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **2.3 Planning** Are projects well-planned at their outset with all stages mapped out and more detailed plans in place for initial stages? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **2.4 Quality** Are there defined standards and processes for quality that help us to determine if the project is being executed "well" and to an acceptable standard? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **2.5 Documentation/documented projects (clearly defined projects?)** Are projects clearly defined and documented? | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| Principle | Criteria | Not at all | Partially | Completely |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **3. Participation**<br>A wide range of stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the project. | **3.1 Inter-Disciplinary** Is the project approach inter-disciplinary, including an appreciation and embodiment of the range of skills and expertise required (for example, financial management)? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **3.2 Communication** Do all stakeholders have timely access to information they require on the project? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **3.3 Upwards accountability** Is there upwards accountability to project donors and senior managers? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **3.4 Downwards accountability** Is there downwards accountability to beneficiaries and partners, and is success defined through stakeholder perspectives? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **3.5 Transparency** Is there transparency amongst the stakeholder group about decisions made and project progress? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **4. Team and Individual**<br>There is a project team which has the appropriate skills and environment to manage the project. | **4.1 Project management** Is there a defined project manager with a specialist skill-set which allows them to effectively undertake their role? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **4.2 Roles and responsibilities** Are roles and responsibilities clearly identified and allocated across the project team, with clear lines of matrix, horizontal and/or upwards management as required? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **4.3 Team skills** Is there an explicitly defined project team that collectively has a full complement of skills necessary to manage the project, particularly including content-specific expertise? This team will need to cover both direct and indirect project work (including include HR, IT, procurement etc). | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **4.4 Enabling environment** Does the wider organisation have adequate systems, processes and the culture to enable good project management (for example, are there good internal finance practices)? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **5. Decision-making**<br>Risks and issues are managed through clear decision-making. | **5.1 Issue Management** Are known and emerging issues effectively logged, managed and regularly reviewed? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **5.2 Risk Management** Are risks (both negative and positive) actively managed during the project and regularly reviewed? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **5.3 Tolerances/Escalation Route** Are tolerances in project variances defined, with routes to escalate issues known to the whole project team and to partners? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **5.4 Triple constraint (time/cost/scope)** Are projects managed with consideration on balancing the triple constraints of time, cost and scope? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **6. Learning**<br>There is an emphasis on learning and making changes to the project as a result. | **6.1 Capturing lessons** Are lessons clearly captured by the project team? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **6.2 Communicating learning** Are key learning points shared with relevant stakeholders both within and outside the project team? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **6.3 Adapting/learning** Are plans adapted throughout to learn from progress to date and/or respond to changes in context? | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | **6.4 Decision-making based on learning** Are decisions based on learning (be it from prior experience, best practice and/or project progress to date), and is this learning actively sought out? | ○ | ○ | ○ |

These principles of best practice for international development project management were developed by the Bond Project Management Group in 2016. They are based on group members' experience of managing international development projects and project management standards, particularly including input from LINGOs on the content of PMD (Project Management for Development) Pro. For further guidance on project management best practices, please reference:

PMD Pro Manual: www.pm4ngos.com/the-guide-to-the-pmd-pro

Quick Guide to PMD Pro: www.projectmanagersagainstpoverty.org/docs/QuickGuideToPMDPro.pdf

PMD Pro Starter Kit: http://pmdprostarter.org

If you have any comments or suggestions for changes please email them to peter@pmap.email. We would also love to hear the different ways in which you are using the principles to help you in the projects you manage!