

Certified Public Manager®

Project Plan Guidelines



Arkansas Public Administration Consortium

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OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Project Plan

Each participant in the CPM program is required to submit a Project Plan in order to obtain the Certified Public Manager® designation.

The Project Plan has a three-fold purpose:

1. Give you the opportunity to apply the information you have gained from CPM courses;
2. Provide you with an occasion to display your professional knowledge—gained both from experience and formal study—and direct it to the improvement of programs or services for which you are responsible;
3. Bring to the attention of your superiors the needs of the section, division, bureau, department, agency, organization, etc., and your proposal for their resolution or diminution.

Given such purposes, you should be aware that your Project Plan should be primarily directed at your superiors and your colleagues at work. It is the culmination of the CPM certification process and it is intended to be more than an academic exercise. The plan should propose real action with real consequences.

Focus of the Project Plan

The main thrust of the Project Plan is to *recommend* a course of action which, in your opinion, will serve to improve your section, bureau, division, department, agency, organization, etc. The scope of your proposal can be narrow, such as one specific project, or wide, such as a series of projects which, when taken as a whole, represent a larger improvement plan.

Anything in between these two approaches, such as two or three specific projects, is also acceptable. Bear in mind, however, that whether the scope is narrow or wide, you still must respond to all of the stipulations and guidelines outlined in this document.

Elements of the Project Plan

Your CPM Project Plan must address *all* of the following elements:

- Cover Page
- Introduction
- Statement of the Problem
- Description of the Project
- Anticipated Project Benefits
- Estimated Cost of the Project
- Project Time Frame
- Extent of Cooperation Required
- Evaluation

PROJECT PLAN WRITING

Developing your project (Conceptualizing)

Make sure that the project is managerial in nature. For example: If your challenge is to hire a new person, you need to reflect on the process of hiring; what person you want and why; or, if you need to redesign a manual, a seemingly mundane activity, it should be evident after reading the project that you have thought about timing, who should be involved in the process and why, and address which elements of the manual should be changed and why.

In other words, there should be some evidence that there is an identifiable reason and purpose to the activity that explains how it benefits the members of the department and the people it serves.

Writing your Project Plan (Composing)

Your Project Plan is written for a group of people that you are not very familiar with and who may not know you or your work environment intimately. As a written document, a certain formality is required to assure that your points are communicated clearly.

Make sure that each of the **required elements** addresses the problem to be solved. This starts with the title on your cover page. The title should be descriptive of the project to be addressed.

The reading of the plan should flow. Have someone read your plan who is not involved in it or in your agency/division, to ensure that it makes sense. If that person has questions, it is likely that others will, too.

Check for errors. Check for errors. Check for errors. If you have errors in spelling, grammar, in the logical flow, or in the reality of the project, it may not be seen as a professional document.

Professional Integrity

In order to uphold the integrity of the certifications offered through APAC as well as your own professional integrity, plagiarism¹ and cheating are not allowed. Professional integrity means that you will write all presented work yourself and cite all sources² if you did not write the work yourself. It also means that you will not “give, receive, offer, or solicit information”³ for this paper.

Depending on the severity of the plagiarism or cheating, sanctions will be imposed. These might include participants being required to rewrite their Project Plan. APAC may choose to fail the student on their Project Plan, choose not to allow the participant to complete the certification, inform the participant’s supervisor of the offense, and/or impose additional sanctions.

Technical Assistance

Direct assistance is provided by APAC staff, upon request.

¹ A more thorough definition of plagiarism can be found at <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/plagiarism>

² You may choose any citation style (i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago Style), for your citations within the text and your reference section.

³ Taken from the UALR Student Handbook found at <http://ualr.edu/deanofstudents/section-vii-administration/academic-offenses/>

PROJECT PLAN REQUIRED SECTIONS

Please note that it is beneficial to read through all required sections as you begin your Project Plan. This will help you understand how each element works together to form the plan.

COVER SHEET

- Use the template located at the end of this document and a WORD copy is provided on the APAC Website to allow editing. **Do not** change the format of this page.

INTRODUCTION

- Provide a brief description of your project and any background information required to understand it.
- Include a brief background statement (one-half to one page) that talks a little bit about your agency in relation to understanding the context for your project.
- Provide enough background information for the reader to judge the appropriateness of the project and the solution you propose.
- Avoid jargon typical of your work setting that is not likely familiar to a reader outside your work place.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- This is the “why” stage of your project (justification, significance).
- What is the problem that your project attempts to address?
- What is its significance and for whom?
- Who benefits (and how) if this issue gets addressed?
- What is your role in the project (the reader needs to know in order to be able to judge the appropriateness of the measures proposed)? For example: If you are in charge of the project, as opposed to implementing the project that someone else is overseeing, let the reader know.
- State why, or even how, it has come to your attention that this is something that requires attention or resolution.
- Explain the problem with concrete information. Avoid hunches, rumors and hearsay. State the problem in hard, verifiable facts. It helps to provide research here if you have it that shows with facts that there is a problem.

- If the reader does not understand what the problem is, it is near impossible to judge if what you are proposing is likely to resolve the problem.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT - DEVELOPING A SOLUTION

- Write about the project itself: Clearly define the focus of the project and detail the steps needed to complete the project.

ANTICIPATED PROJECT BENEFITS

- Explain what you seek to accomplish through your project in as measurable, “target-level” manner as possible (i.e., man-hours of work you expect to save, number of additional clients to be served, etc.)
- If you can express benefits in dollar figures, do so. If you seek qualitative rather than quantitative improvements, take particular pains to explain how quality of service will be enhanced.

ESTIMATED COST OF THE PROJECT

- What financial resources do you need (your budget)?
- The proposed budget expenditures should reflect stated problems to be addressed.
- Use charts and graphs, especially in the budget, when appropriate.
- Are there options built into the budget? This is especially important if the implementation of your project proposal may not get the approval or support from all the players and you may have to revise it. This is your role as manager to anticipate such eventualities.
- Your Project Plan is but a wish unless you attach a well-reasoned cost estimate. If you are not comfortable with cost estimation, seek assistance from budget people.
- Be sure to identify all pertinent costs (i.e., initial costs such as capital purchases, operating costs per year, principal cost elements, and other relevant expenditures).

PROJECT TIME FRAME

- How much time is needed to complete the project (timeframe)?
- Include project dates for each significant step of your proposed project.
- The proposed timeline must coincide with budget requests. If it’s a multi-year project, there should be a budget for several time periods.
- Show the timeline as a chart for easy reading. Include alternative timelines to match your budget requests if needed.

- Be sure to include the preferred time to begin and to end the project. If the project is subdivided into phases, explain the timeframe by phase.

EXTENT OF COOPERATION REQUIRED

- Who will be involved and in what ways? What will be their concerns/issues with the project? How will you address those concerns/issues to obtain their cooperation?
- Whose approval do you need (chain of command; co-workers; legislature) and how will you obtain it? Who must be involved to develop and implement the project (i.e., project manager, actual implementer, etc.)? The most obvious parties are, of course, your supervisor or unit head and your coworkers. But some projects will require negotiations with other departments because you may need to work with an employee there.
- If you put a team of your employees together to address the problem, what issues might you face or have to consider?
- Propose strategies for overcoming resistance.
- Ask yourself if there are political or ethical challenges that are posed by your project and that may require consultation with additional players that may not be directly involved in the design of the solution but will/may be affected by the outcome.

EVALUATION PLAN

- What will you measure to determine the success of your project and how? What are the outputs, outcomes and impacts? How will you measure the outputs, outcomes and impacts of your project? When? What specifics will you measure/track? It helps to look at your anticipated benefits section to give you an idea about what you might want to track.
- Propose, as concretely as possible, the means for measuring or monitoring the success of the proposed project.
- As manager you need to think about this issue ***when you begin the project***, as measurements may have to be built into the process from the start and be budgeted for!
- You may also not want to wait until the project is completed but monitor its progress while it is ongoing in order to intervene if things are not going as projected. You could avoid cost-overshoots and some embarrassment later.

SUBMISSIONS

Submission Schedule (subject to change)

All submissions are sent as a Word Document (no PDF documents, except for the signed Cover Page) to the CPM Program Manager by email (bmlumpkin@ualr.edu).

1st submission due as a Word Document- Date **November 4, 2019**

- *Draft* — Signed Cover Page (PDF)
- *Draft* — Introduction
- *Draft* — Statement of the Problem
- *Draft* — Description of the Project

2nd submission due as a Word Document- Date **January 13, 2020**

- *Draft* — Include 1st Submission with any revisions
- *Draft* — Signed Cover Page (PDF)
- *Draft* — Anticipated Project Benefits
- *Draft* — Estimated Cost of the Project
- *Draft* — Project Time Frame
- *Draft* — Extent of Cooperation Required
- *Draft* — Evaluation

Final submission- Date **March 9, 2020**

- Cover Page without signature (Word Document)
- Cover Page with signature (PDF)
- Full Project Plan

Supervisor's Signature

The Project Plan must be submitted to your supervisor for review. Your supervisor's *approval* is not necessary, nor is implementation of the Project Plan. However, your supervisor's written signature (not typed) is required on the document to ensure that he/she has *considered* your proposal.

His/her written signature is required on all three submissions. This is to ensure that both you and your supervisor are on the same page about the project and to avoid any misunderstandings.

Project Plan Review

The first two submissions are reviewed by the CPM Program Manager. Feedback is given to review its alignment with the Project Plan requirements. The final submissions are reviewed by members of the Certified Public Manager Advisory Council. Final submissions are approved, needs minor revisions, needs major revisions, or not accepted. Project Plans that require revisions will be returned with feedback to the author. The author will be asked to revise their Project Plans and submit for additional reviews. The CPM Program Manager will present a new timeline in which author will be required to submit a new Project Plan that meets all Project Plan requirements. This will be reviewed by the CPM Program Manager and, when ready, submitted to members of the CPM Advisory Council. Project Plans that are in "not accepted" status will delay graduation from the CPM Program.

Late Submissions

Late final submissions will not be considered for the Best Project Plan Award. In addition, late submissions for any deadline will be reviewed as time allows. Feedback will not be guaranteed on any late submissions.

Outstanding Project Plan Award

The top three Project Plans will be reviewed by APAC Directors at UA Little Rock, UA Fayetteville and ASU. The top plan will win the Best Project Plan Award.

Certified Public Manager® Program

Project Plan
Title

Submitted by:

Name
Address (Agency)
Date

Supervisor's Certification

This is to certify that (Name) submitted this Project Plan for my consideration.

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor's Name (Typed) _____

Supervisor's Title _____