A *quick* Guide to the

Program DPro

Program Management for Development Professionals
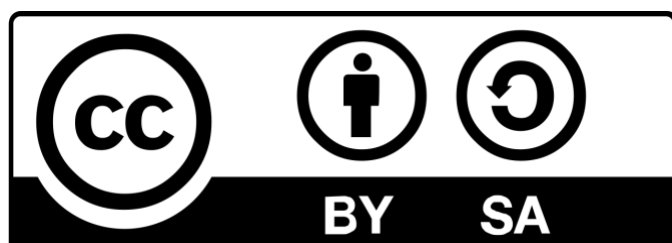
Publisher

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- Rebranded

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Introduction

Changing the world through programs

Successful programs are delivered by groups of people, inside and outside an organization, working together toward achieving the same goal.

A Program Manager's role is to link the strategic management team with the Project Managers through an intentional set of activities and objectives.

This pamphlet is a brief introduction to PM4NGOs' Guide to Program Management for Development Professionals (Program DPro), which is for:

- Experienced Program Managers to provide a valuable source of advice, tools, and frameworks for understanding the work they already do;
- Aspiring Program Managers to help them gain the insight they need to make informed decisions about whether or not to pursue roles at this level;
- Country and Regional Directors to provide a useful resource in shaping the types of roles needed in their teams;
- Recruiters to benefit from insight into the skills and competencies outlined for these roles;
- Advisory and support teams will find it a helpful guide to working effectively with their Program Manager;
- Individuals and organizations including development, humanitarian, or environment professionals working at the local, national, or international levels.

Managing Complexity

Multiple strategies and interventions are often required to address the complex causes of poverty, violence, disease, social injustice, environmental degradation, and humanitarian disaster. The Program Manager's role is to:

- Keep a close eye on local, national and global dynamics, to work closely with senior management;
- Provide insight into how the outputs of separate interventions can be leveraged to achieve a greater impact for communities;
- Ensure that a group of projects are integrated into a single program to achieve economies of scale and secure funds from an institutional donor;
- Make sound judgments regarding the implementation of programs, projects and activities;
- Offer leadership for Project Managers and their teams.

While project staff focus on the implementation of activities that contribute directly to agreed outputs and outcomes, the Program Manager must focus on the challenge of coordinating, creating synergies and finding ways to increase the impact of the overall program.

PMD Pro and Program DPro

Project Managers around the world will be familiar with PM4NGOs' Guide to Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD Pro) and the suite of online learning materials (PMD Pro Forward and PMD Pro Starter). The PMD Pro approach has already achieved widespread success and numerous international NGOs are applying PMD Pro standards to organizational systems and structures.

The guide for Program Managers (Program DPro) complements the PMD Pro approach, bringing fresh ideas and comprehensive tools and advice for Program Managers to achieve the standards necessary to deliver high quality development, humanitarian and environmental programs.

The PMD Pro introduces the six-phase lifecycle of a project and provides a framework for project managers to create a formal, structured approach to their work. It outlines key principles and disciplines, and provides tools, techniques and terminology for them to develop the skills necessary to complete a project on time, on budget and within scope. Within a short space of time, it has resulted in standardized ways of working that are helping to raise standards across the development sector.

Building on the PMD Pro approach, Program DPro integrates the concepts and tools recommended for Program Managers into a framework to improve the management of multiple interrelated projects as part of a coordinated program.

The Guide describes the key distinctions between program management and project management, and provides guidance on the application of program management tools to support the work of leaders and managers in the development sector.

It includes a focus on vision and strategy, the integration of leadership skills, maintaining a 'big picture' approach, the importance of integrating learning and change throughout the life of a program, and an understanding of the increased complexity of managing multiple outcomes.

Program DPro fits logically alongside PMD Pro, as many of the principles, disciplines and tools remain relevant in the context of managing programs. The difference lies in how the Program Manager makes use of these tools, and the extent to which they are adapted to reflect the higher-level requirements of a more strategic role.

While familiarity with PMD Pro is not a prerequisite for learning from Program DPro, it is assumed that anyone using the Guide already has a good understanding of project management practices. Therefore, Program DPro does not cover (in detail) the principles and tools outlined in PMD Pro, although they are often reiterated in summary to help explain how they are specifically relevant to the program environment.

Projects, Programs, and Portfolio Management

In the development sector the terms 'project', 'program', and 'portfolio' are used frequently but not always with rigor or precision. Sometimes the terms are even used interchangeably. Here are the definitions of the terms project, program and portfolio as they are largely agreed across the management literature:

Portfolio	Program	Project
The Portfolio Manager is a high-level leader who is accountable for the totality (or part) of an organization's investment in the changes required to achieve its strategic aims and objectives. Characteristics: • Establishes long-term vision for entire organization • Provides overview and organizational insight • Sets policies, standards, priorities and plans • Understands cross-organizational issues • Manages high-level strategic risk • Takes tough decisions • Well-rounded knowledge of context (internal and external) • Ability to oversee a mix of programs, projects and other activities	The Program Manager coordinates, directs and oversees the implementation of a set of related projects and activities (usually over several years) in order to deliver outcomes related to an organization's strategic objectives. Characteristics: • Establishes and clarifies strategy and vision within program boundaries • Engages with stakeholders at all levels (internal and external) • Directs and oversees the implementation of project activities • Manages strategic and operational risk • Understands and resolves inter-project issues • Focuses on quality and outcomes • Ensures the delivery of measurable benefit and impact	The Project Manager is responsible for coordinating temporary structures that have been created for the purpose of delivering one or more outputs. Characteristics: • Manages and coordinates • Delivers outputs • Time, cost, and scope • Focuses on fit-for-purpose outputs that meet requirements and enable benefits realization • Business case is budget based • Focuses on project risks • Manages issues related to deliverables • Plans for the successful execution of deliverables and activities

How the Guide is organized

The Program DPro Guide is organized into two sections, **Phases** and **Principles**.

The **first** section of the Guide identifies <u>four critical Phases</u> of program management throughout the program lifecycle:
1) **Identification:** This phase is crucial in developing ideas and identifying the needs, gaps, and opportunities for targeted communities. This process is done collaboratively with key stakeholders in order to identify high-level goals and outcomes that can be turned into tangible concepts. Obtaining funding and "buy-in" from stakeholders will be sought for the concepts developed in this phase.

2) **Design:** After the program concept is identified, it's time to set the foundations of the program by showing how each of its diverse elements will fit together. This is sometimes called a roadmap or a blueprint. It is the framework through which Program Managers can control, monitor, and execute all of the components associated with implementation. Once the program is underway, its design is regularly reviewed and adapted as part of the learning and improvement process.

3) **Planning and Implementation:** Assuming that the program is funded and the Identification and Design phases are complete, it is now time to start developing plans and scheduling activities. These will continue to be modified and adjusted throughout the life of the program. Program Managers invest time in managing and leading different teams, engaging key stakeholders, responding to the challenges and risks (known and unknown) of multiple projects, and overseeing internal controls.

4) **Closure:** Programs should always come to a natural end, closing when each of their constituent projects are completed, with their benefits realized and accepted by all stakeholders. This should also involve a transition period through which an NGO transfers responsibility and accountability for sustaining the program outcomes and benefits to another agency or means.

The **second** section of the Guide identifies five essential principles that are common to all phases of the program lifecycle:

1) **Well-Governed:** Good governance is essential to the program's success and should be emphasized at all times in the program's lifecycle. The principle of Well-Governed provides the management framework in which program decisions are made. It also defines the roles, responsibility, authority, and accountability for each component project.

2) **Participatory:** Programs should be as inclusive as possible with the Program Manager seeking the perspectives of stakeholders throughout each phase. Using the participatory principle in program management ensures that the implementation reflects the current context and capacities of all those involved.

3) **Comprehensive:** A good program plan needs to demonstrate a thorough understanding of how each component part (project) fits together to create a greater whole. Additionally, incorporating this principle provides the opportunity to show how each of the elements combines to provide the leverage and added value of working in a comprehensive way.

4) **Integrated:** It is essential that processes be aligned and coordinated throughout all phases of the program lifecycle. The integrated principle ensures that each component part of the project combines effectively in order to operate smoothly as a whole.

5) **Adaptive:** This principle highlights the importance of ensuring that management processes are revisited and repeated throughout the life of the program. The reason this is so important is to ensure that designs and plans are still relevant and ensure that ongoing learning is captured, and acted upon to improve efficiency and allow for adjustments to be made to keep the program on track.

Program Essentials

Along with the phases and principles, there are four **Program Essentials** that will be fundamental to the Program's success:

1) **Plan, Do, Review:** This process is a way of working that enables the Program Manager and the team to be flexible and adaptive in the approach.

2) **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning:** Achieving goals and being accountable are central concepts for the Program Manager.

3) **Theory of Change (ToC):** This concept is being used increasingly in the NGO sector. It's a tool that outlines the strategic intent of the organization by illustrating how the change will take place (or flow) from projects and activities all the way up to the portfolio level of the organization. In essence, it describes how the organization will realize the change it would like to see.

4) **The Six Disciplines of Program Management** are essential skills which can all be developed and practiced. The most important element is to be able to combine them in a strategic context. They are not included as a separate section in the Guide but rather are embedded as essential competencies within each phase and covered in greater detail within the sections detailing the **Comprehensive** and **Integrated** principles of program management.

   i. **Justification:** Throughout each program phase, it is important to step back and assess whether approaches are still relevant and justifiable. There may be contextual changes that require activities to be delayed, delivered in a different way, or stopped altogether. A funding stream may need to be re-allocated, resulting in a delay to your program. The context within which a program operates may change, for example as a result of a drought or heightened conflict, requiring all program activities to stop immediately. Also, it is the job of the Program Manager to maintain a high level of support from stakeholders, internal (e.g. senior leaders within the organization, support teams such as finance and logistics) and external (e.g. donors, government officials, local community members). This requires a well-designed and executed communication and engagement plan.

   ii. **Time:** Delivery of a program - to scope, on budget and on time - are the three essential attributes that must be delivered effectively for the successful completion and closure of a program. Taken together, the relationship between these is often referred to as the 'Project Management Triangle', or 'Triple Constraint'. 'Time' refers to the actual length of time that is needed to produce a deliverable, and from a program perspective, this often means multiple deliverables related to each of its project components within its scope.
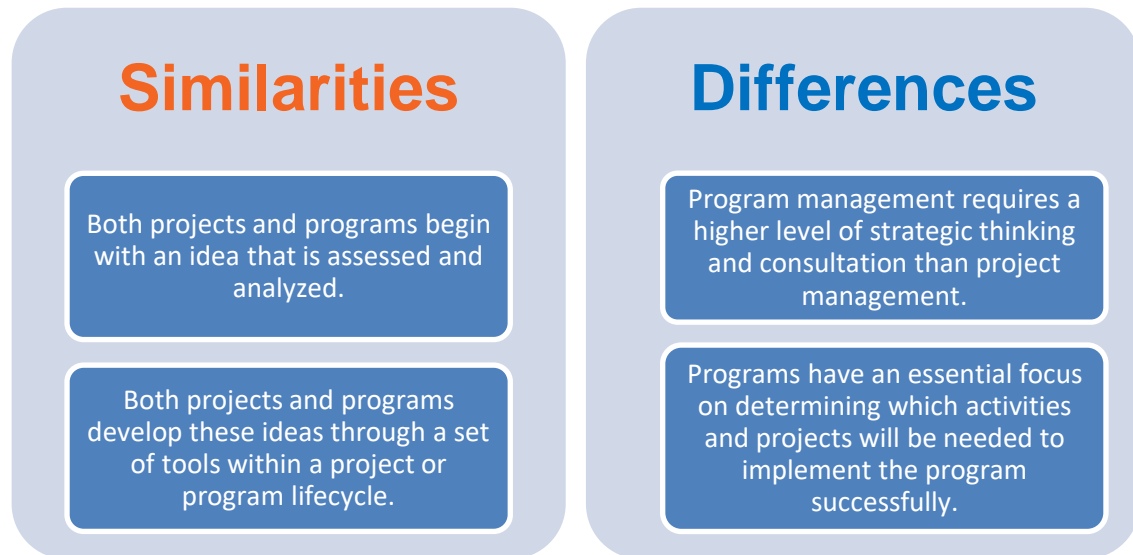
iii. **Scope:** It is important to understand and describe all of the work, activities and resources needed to achieve the overall goals and aims of a program. At a project level, this information is captured in Project Implementation Plans (which draw on data gathered through the use of tools such as the Work Breakdown Structure, Network Diagram and Gantt Chart) that are regularly updated. The Program Manager may need to consider a number of Project Implementation Plans in order to develop a comprehensive Program Implementation Plan, which provides a live overview of all aspects of the program.

iv. **Financial:** The Program Manager doesn't need to be an accountant but does need to understand and formulate budgets, forecast financial needs, and complete spreadsheets that can be rolled up or down for different purposes and audiences. Larger international organizations will have finance departments to advise, provide templates and deliver accounting activities, but in smaller organizations more responsibility may fall to the Program Manager. *The difference in the skills level between a Project and a Program Manager lies in the ability to analyze and interpret different data sources that relate to the complexity and overview of multiple program activities, and projects.*

v. **Risk:** Being able to manage and control risks that could impact program deliverables involves a mix of being able to interpret complex data arising from a wide range of activities, to identify risks, to put a risk plan in place, to judge when a risk has become an issue, and to take appropriate action when required. Program Managers work alongside their teams, regularly assessing progress and ensuring that reporting mechanisms are in place to capture potential issues, ensuring that staff regularly complete Risk Registers and Issue Logs, and that these are acted upon and resolved.

vi. **Stakeholders:** All programs will involve a wide range of stakeholders, including program and project team members; support staff (in Finance, HR or Communications Departments); internal and external advisors and specialist teams; partners and civil society organizations; rights holders and beneficiaries; and allies and consortiums, especially when delivering programs with global impact. The program team will identify stakeholders critical to the program during the Identification phase and determine how they will be involved over the lifecycle of a program. RACI diagrams are the most commonly used tool for identifying the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders – determining who are Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed during each of the program phases. In the context of a dynamic environment, stakeholders may change over the lifecycle of a program, and the most critical part of stakeholder management is to ensure that expectations are managed and lines of communication conducted in an open and transparent way.

The Phases

Phase 1: Program Identification

Programs, like projects, begin as an idea or need, which evolve into more tangible concepts or reality as it moves through the first phase of the program lifecycle. As we begin to dig further into the Identification Phase of program management, it is important to understand how projects and programs differ in this phase and how they are similar. Let's take a look:

Similarities	Differences
Both projects and programs begin with an idea that is assessed and analyzed.	Program management requires a higher level of strategic thinking and consultation than project management.
Both projects and programs develop these ideas through a set of tools within a project or program lifecycle.	Programs have an essential focus on determining which activities and projects will be needed to implement the program successfully.

Ideally, a Program Manager will be appointed before or during the Identification phase. The Program Manager, Owner, and Board will engage with a variety of internal and external stakeholders to start formulating the foundations of the program. It is at this point where several key questions must be asked:

- Is this program in line with the organization's strategy and vision?
- Will this program fulfill a need?
- Do we have the time and resources to invest in developing this program at this time?
- Will the formulation of this program enable the organization to achieve outputs that are "greater than the sum of their parts"?

There are several **INPUTS** that will go into the program identification process.

➢ **Organizational Strategy:** To position the program in the best way possible, the Program Manager needs to have a high level of institutional knowledge. All activities, projects, and programs should also contribute to the organization's Theory of Change (ToC) – see later.

➢ **Organizational Assets:** Existing assets should also be considered when identifying the program, whether that be infrastructure, staff, or key partners,

organizational assets can add value to program design. One form of organizational asset that often gets overlooked is the historical experience. Ask the question: "What have we done that's similar in the past?" Evaluation reports often contain valuable perspectives and lessons that will enable the program team to learn from mistakes and build on the successes of the past.

➢ **Funding Knowledge:** Funding trends and opportunities should be explored thoroughly to identify and target donor proposals effectively. At some point you may even want to bring in a specialist fundraising team for guidance and advice. Larger organizations will usually have a team dedicated to support grant management and fundraising, so it is at this point that they should be consulting.

➢ **Existing Context Knowledge:** We have already mentioned the various types of analyses (internal, external, operating) that can be conducted to better understand the context. Very few identification phases start with no pre-existing knowledge of the context in which the program will be operating.
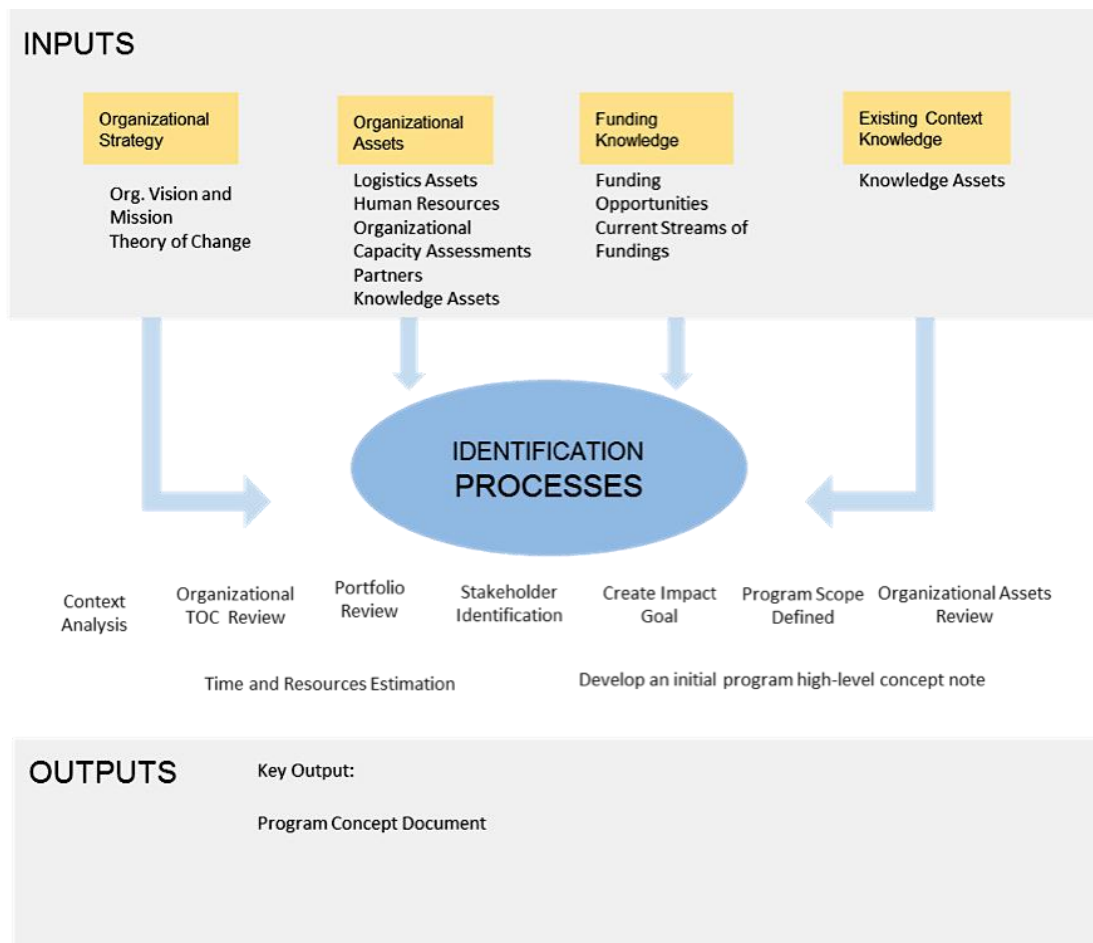
Once you have gathered the documents and analysis inputs for the identification of the program, you will want to start to provide some structure to the discussions. These structured discussions will generate the context analysis and knowledge that will provide the foundation for the program. The Identification **PROCESSES** include:

➢ **Context Analysis:** Conducting a context analysis is crucial for understanding the internal and external environment for a program. You will want to hold discussions with a wide array of stakeholders to gain a thorough understanding of the root causes and symptoms of the problem that needs to be addressed. In this process, the target and impact (beneficiary) groups are identified. The context analysis process will also assist the Program Manager in relating the problem to specific pathways in the Theory of Change and provide essential information needed to define the goals of the program. Some of the analyses could include the following:

- Needs Analysis
- Problem Tree
- Objectives Tree
- Power Mapping
- High Level Risk Identification

➢ **Organizational Theory of Change (ToC) Review** is a description of how and why a desired change will happen in a given context. This is usually done at a high level to inform an organization's strategic aims and objectives and guide the work done in the Identification Phase. It will provide key inputs for the program identification process such as:

- The long-term goal(s) the organization is committed to achieving;
- The pathways, or objectives, needed to deliver the ToC;
- The preconditions required to achieve long term goal(s);
- The pathways of changes, pathways standards, breakthroughs and indicators.

➢ **Portfolio Review:** Portfolios are typically managed at a Country Director, regional, or global level and ensure that programs and projects are in line with overall strategic goals. Therefore, taking the time to understand how a program fits with the overall portfolio is important. This review should involve:

- Creating a matrix of present and recent projects and activities that contribute to an organization's strategic intent;
- Identifying areas within the matrix that strengthen the case for a program.

The results of a portfolio review should be consolidated and presented to staff and local partners in a format that is accessible and appropriate for these stakeholders.

➢ **Stakeholder Identification:** You probably know from your experience that undesirable and unexpected outcomes occur when stakeholders are overlooked or misunderstood in the design of a program, or their interests are poorly engaged or excluded during the planning and implementation process. As a Program Manager you need make sure that the right stakeholders are informed and involved, at the right time. To map the stakeholders identify the Internal and External Stakeholders and the strength of their relationship to the program.

➢ **Program Impact Goal Creation**: If an organization already has a Theory of Change (ToC), the vision and goal for achieving long-term social change over a 5 to 10-year period will be defined. This provides the direction that the Program Manager needs to then create an impact goal for the proposed program. The impact goal will be informed by the insight already gained through the context and stakeholder analyses, and an enhanced understanding of the needs and aspirations of the program's primary stakeholders (the beneficiaries).

➢ **Organizational Assets Review:** It is important to understand and make use of assets that have been developed to enhance the delivery of programs. These assets are:
   o Tried and tested planning tools, templates, policies, procedures, or guidelines that provide direction on how to perform different areas of work;
   o Internal program specialists and peers should also be treated as assets and consulted for their expertise and advice;
   o Organizational assets such as good practice recommendations, lessons learned, and evaluation reports;
   o Physical assets that may impact decisions around the location or scope of the program.

➢ **Time and Resource Estimation:** At this point, you will be providing a 'best-guess' assessment of what will be required to deliver the scope of the program and suitable tolerances. Relatively accurate budget estimates can be achieved through a combination of techniques:
   o *Specialist Point-of-View* – a small number of people with expertise in budgeting for programs of a similar scope, estimating top-down and bottom-up;
   o *Analogue Estimating* uses the performance of previous but similar programs;
   o *Parametric Estimating* is like analogue estimating but additionally uses statistical data;
   o *Phased Estimating* – this method is useful in providing a sense of costs over the duration of a program that Donors often require.

➢ **Program Concept Document Development** (2-5 pages) is the final stage in this process. The document usually includes the following sections:
   o Name of organization and any key partners
   o Organization's goals and Theory of Change
   o Title of proposed program
   o Program description – and fit with an organization's strategic intent
   o Expected outcomes – summary of what will be achieved
   o Indicators of achievement – how success will be measured
   o Main activities
   o Key target beneficiary population
   o Summary budget

The key **OUTPUT** of the identification phase is the **Program Concept Document** as described above. This is usually put together quickly and distributed to key internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of refining and testing the initial ideas.

Phase 2: Program Design

The Program Design phase is similar to developing a prototype for a car or an architectural drawing for a building. All the different pieces are put in place to provide an outline or 'blueprint' that shows exactly what the program will look like. The program team will use a variety of tools and processes to build upon the analyses conducted in the Identification phase, using the Program Concept Document as a basis for defining how the program will deliver their organization's strategic intent (vision, mission, and values) and Theory of Change (if this is in place), in greater detail.
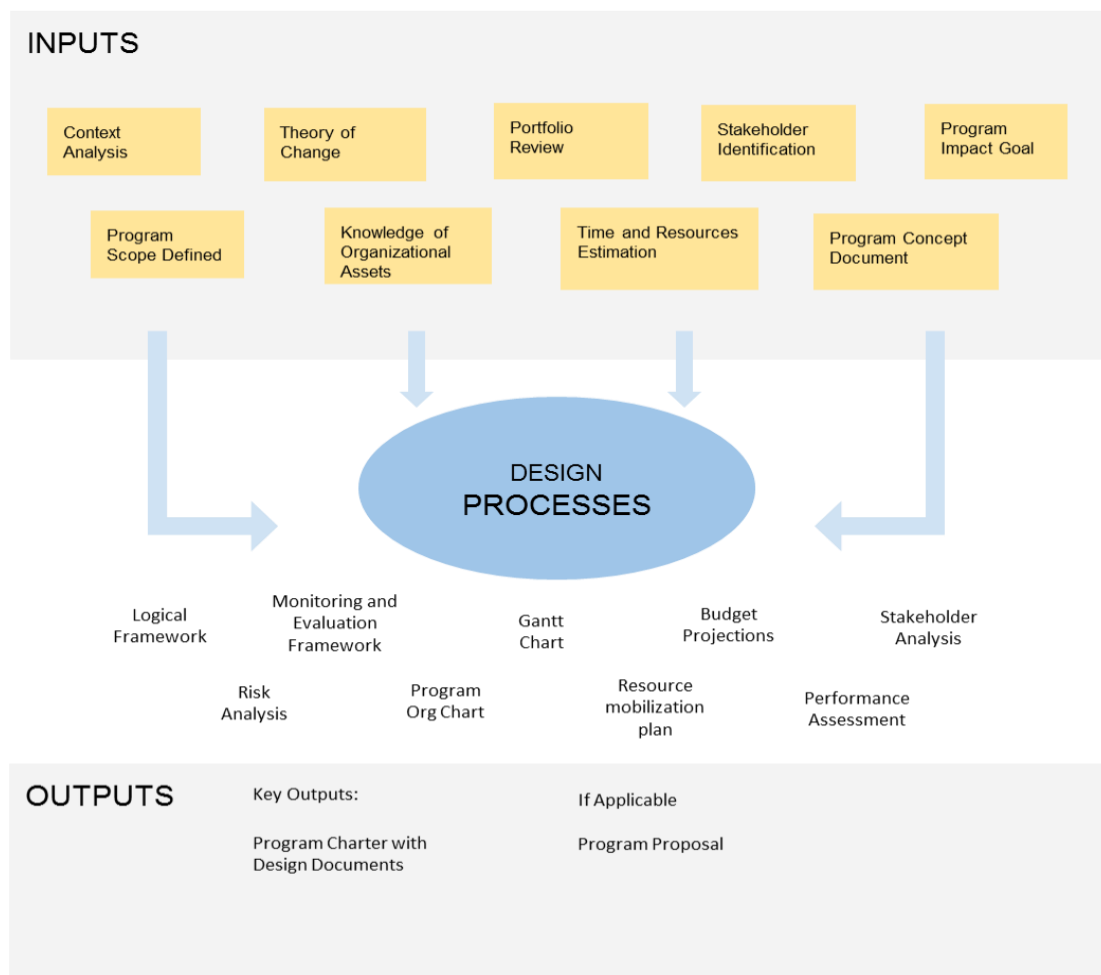
There are several **INPUTS** needed for the Design phase. Most of these documents were first introduced and developed in the Identification phase. These inputs are essential to completing the tools, frameworks and plans for the program design. Other input documents, if available, are also useful references to use during this phase.

Inputs from the Identification Phase

- Context Analysis
- Theory of Change (ToC) Review
- Portfolio Review
- Stakeholder Identification
- Program Impact Goal

- Program Scope Defined
- Knowledge of Organizational Assets
- Time & Resource Estimation
- Program Concept Document

Other Inputs - if available

- Program Scope

- Program Schedule

- Budget Information (from time/cost estimates)

- Organization charts for your organization and others (e.g partners)

- Governance structure for your organization

- Tolerance levels for your organization and other organizations involved

As you move through the Design phase, you will need work through several **PROCESSES** to ensure increasing levels of detail needed to build out the 'blueprint':

➢ **The Logical Framework (Logframe)** is a tool used to communicate the program logic, facilitate planning, and acts as the foundation for the monitoring and evaluation processes. It is also a visual representation of how a program aligns to an organization's strategy or program Theory of Change (ToC). The way it works is by creating clear linkages between the successful implementation of program activities (projects) and the realization of programmatic outcomes and goals.

➢ A **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework** outlines the indicators the program team will use to measure a program's performance against its stated objectives and outcomes. It will become part of the **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**. Establishing this framework during the Design phase is the best way to ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes are embedded within the Planning and Implementation phase, allowing for regular and iterative reviews of performance and the refinement and adjustment of program activities.

➢ **Gantt Charts** are scheduling tools commonly used at a project level. In this strategic version, program elements are recorded in blocks, or stages, according to the program's timeline from start to end date, providing a useful overview of the dependences and relationships between different elements. Once each element has been logged, these can be put together to reflect the timeline for the whole program. The longest deliverable is the program's **critical path.**

➢ **Budget Projections:** We discussed the estimation techniques in the Identification phase. Additionally, estimates for the amount of time and resources needed to deliver the proposed program are identified and included in the **Program Charter** (a key output of this phase). Now, you will develop more concrete projections based upon your analysis of the various activities & components.

➢ **Stakeholder Analysis:** It is now time to review the list of stakeholders that was identified and mapped in the Identification phase to deepen knowledge and build a more comprehensive (but not exhaustive) view of the key interests and levels of influence. A **Stakeholder Power/Interest Grid** is another useful tool for capturing more detailed information about stakeholder interests and their ability to influence the development of a program.

➢ **Risk Analysis:** The Program Manager and design team should consult with a variety of stakeholders for the risk analysis. The design team can make decisions about how to categorize each risk and develop appropriate solutions. All Risks should be recorded in a **Risk Register** – a live document that is monitored and updated during subsequent phases.

➢ The **Program Organizational Chart** provides a visual depiction of the program's governance structure, component projects and non-project related functional teams (e.g. support services such as finance, HR, compliance). It is used to outline the key roles and responsibilities of the various members of the program team and 'good enough' for authorization as part of the Program Charter.

➢ The **Program Resource Mobilization Plan** identifies all the activities needed to fund a program and decisions about whom will be responsible for securing them.
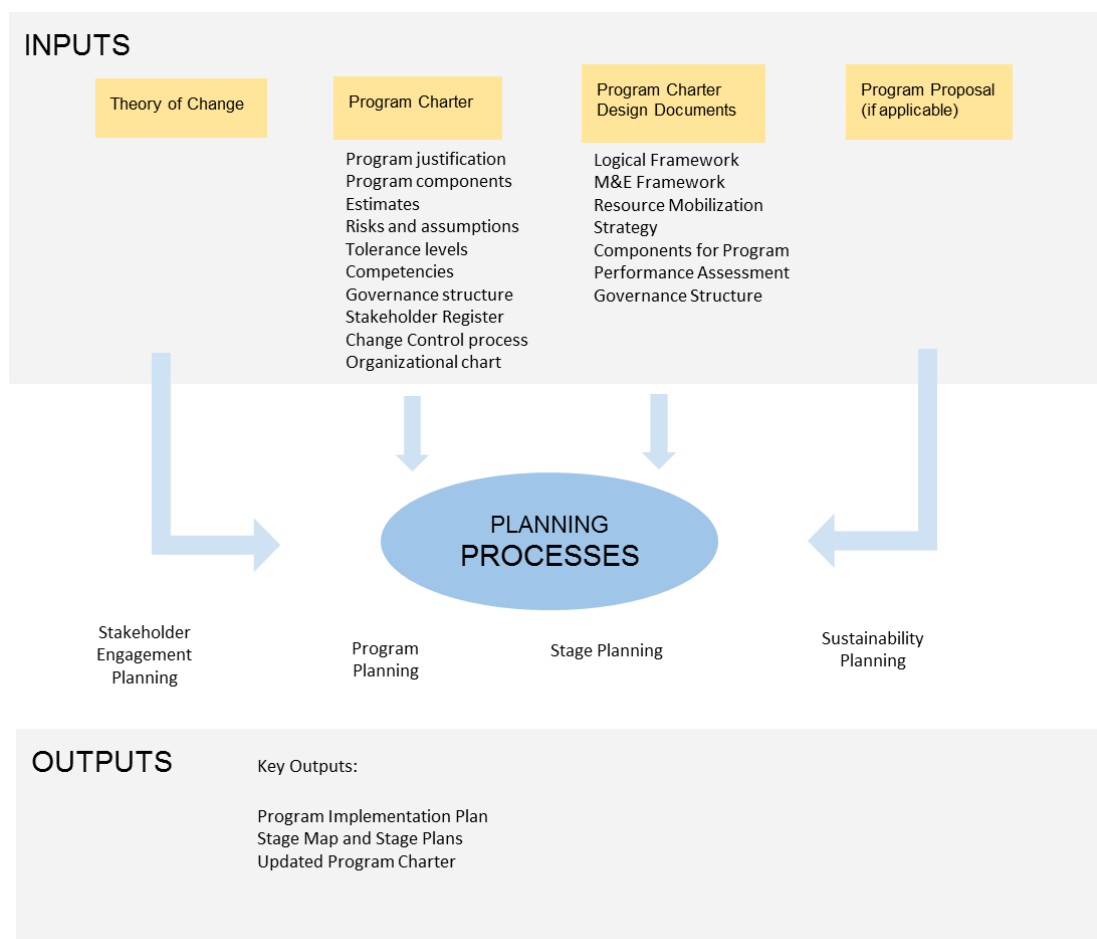
The key **OUTPUTS** of this stage are:

• The **Program Charter** that describes what the expected outcomes of the program will be and clearly defines the strategies you will use to achieve the overall vision and goals. It will cover:

  o *Justification:* Presents the case for initiating the program and describes why and how its pathways contribute to a Theory of Change (ToC).
  o *Components:* Shows how constituent projects and other activities are configured together to achieve the desired results.
  o *Estimates:* Includes "educated-guess" estimates of the time, cost, and scope of a program.
  o *Risks and Assumptions:* risks and response strategies logged in a Risk Register.
  o *Tolerance Levels:* These are the levels of hierarchy required to authorize program deliverables.

• A **Program Proposal** can be produced to engage support and get funding for the program, if requested by the donor.

The main question you need to ask at this point is, 'Do we proceed?' A **Decision Gate** in the Design phase is the critical 'go or no-go' decision that uses information presented in the **Program Charter** to decide whether or not you should move into the Program Planning and Implementation phase.

Phase 3: Program Planning & Implementation

Program Planning and Implementation are integrally linked. As a Program Managers, you and your team will work to plan ahead to determine what is needed to implement program and project activities. However, it is likely that the external environment of the Program will be constantly shifting, requiring that the plans be adapted. After establishing a high-level **Program Implementation Plan**, the implementation process provides an opportunity for ongoing fine-tuning and adjusting to ensure that activities continue to reflect the dynamic environment. This iterative process – of planning, implementing and re-planning (or Plan, Do, Review) – is often referred to as *'rolling wave'* planning.

INPUTS

| Theory of Change | Program Charter | Program Charter Design Documents | Program Proposal (if applicable) |

Program justification
Program components
Estimates
Risks and assumptions
Tolerance levels
Competencies
Governance structure
Stakeholder Register
Change Control process
Organizational chart

Logical Framework
M&E Framework
Resource Mobilization Strategy
Components for Program Performance Assessment
Governance Structure

PLANNING PROCESSES

Stakeholder Engagement Planning

Program Planning

Stage Planning

Sustainability Planning

OUTPUTS

Key Outputs:

Program Implementation Plan
Stage Map and Stage Plans
Updated Program Charter

There are a number of documents that were developed in the Design phase that will be needed as **INPUTS** for the Planning & Implementation phase:

Organizational Theory of Change
- All planning documents flow from an organization's Theory of Change (if available), or other strategic documents, such the Annual Plan, Strategic Plan, Vision and Mission.

Program Charter
- Program justification
- Program components
- Estimates (schedule, budget, scope)
- Risks and assumptions (including a Risk Register)
- Tolerance levels
- Competencies (required for key roles)
- Governance structure
- Stakeholder Register
- Change Control process
- Organizational chart

Design Documents
- Logical Framework
- M&E Framework
- Resource Mobilization Strategy
- Components for Program Performance Assessment
- Governance Structure

During **PLANNING** the following **PROCESSES** are recommended to help structure discussions that take place.

➢ **Stakeholder Engagement Planning** is a vital part of successful program management and must be supported by a **Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**. Having this strategy in place will ensure:

- Buy-in and ownership of the program;

- That program and project plans include stakeholder management activities in their stage plans;

- Cooperation and participation throughout the life of the program;

- Vertical and horizontal accountability to stakeholders.

➢ **Program Planning** can seem like a daunting task, it is like putting together a complicated puzzle. However, it will be helpful to focus on setting a clear direction and remember that the intention is to develop a plan that informs others about what needs to be done. You have already done preparatory work using tools in the Identification and Design Phases and these can now be built upon, with more detailed information, in this phase. There is no point in replicating or duplicating work – so work with the program team and ask Project Managers to develop detailed plans for their projects, which can then be developed into an overall **Program Implementation Plan**.

The first step is to understand the overarching planning framework, which is outlined in the following steps:

- Appoint/Nominate the Program Team
- Communicate Program Goals

- Review Tools, Processes, and Templates
- Develop a Program Stage Map
- Develop Subsidiary Plans and Detailed Plan for the First Stage
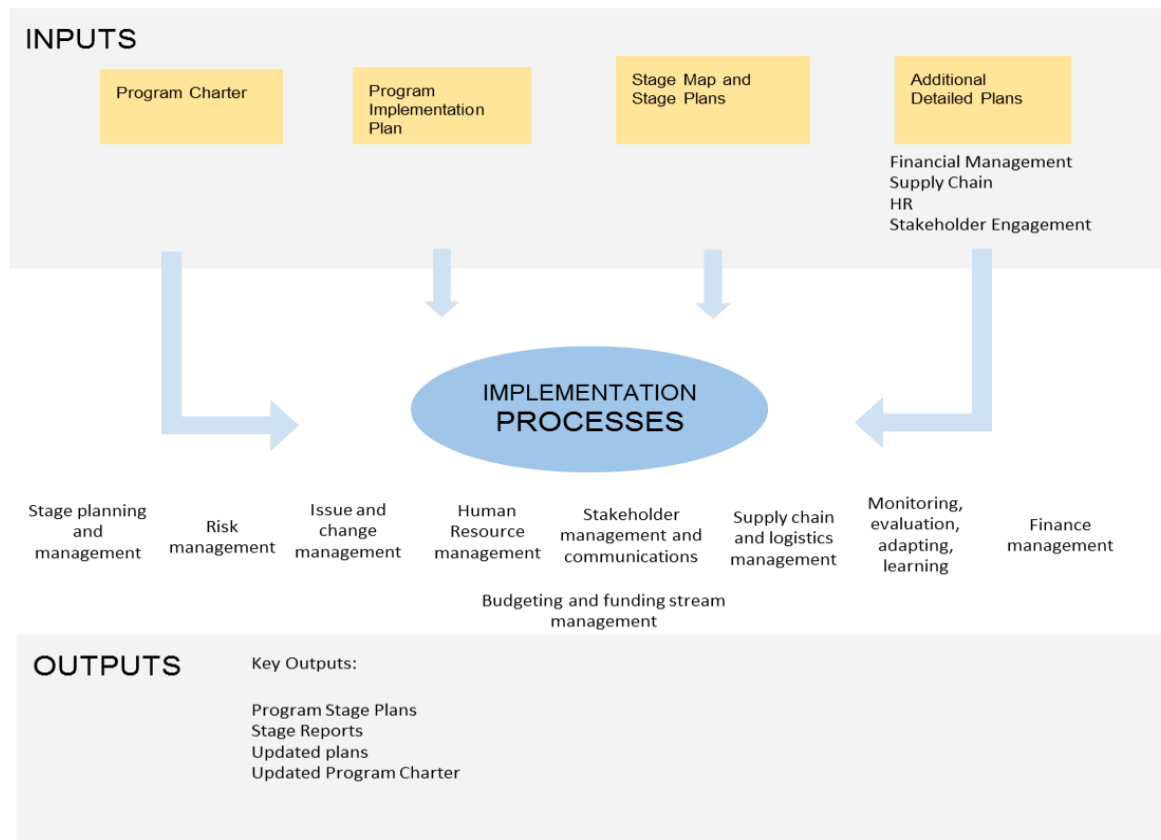- Keep Plans Up-to-Date

➢ **Stage Planning**. Since the timeline for a program can last several years, breaking the work down into multiple time-bound stages is a good way to develop comprehensive and detailed plans. The **Program Stage Map (PSM)** is a visual illustration of how different areas of a program – its overall tasks, project activities, resource requirements, and funding processes - interact.

➢ **Sustainability Planning:** One of the key measurements of a program's success is the extent to which outputs can be sustained after the program has closed. Comprehensive program plans should always include an end of program transition plan that documents how the program will evolve.

OUTPUTS from the **PLANNING** Stage are a Program Implementation Plan, a Program Stage Map and an updated Program Charter (if necessary).

Planning is now complete. The Program Charter has been authorized and the Program Stage Map and first phase Stage Plans are finished. Donor proposals have been submitted and awarded so funds are available to proceed. All of the stakeholders critical to the program are informed. It's now time to start **IMPLEMENTING** program and project activities.

The following documents and plans are the **INPUTS** to a successful **IMPLEMENTATION** of a program. In fact, when a program is underway, the primary work of the Program Manager will inevitably result in their regular review and upkeep.

- Program Charter

- Program Implementation Plan

- Stage Map and Stage Plans

- Additional Detailed Plans
  - Financial Management Plan
  - Supply Chain Plan
  - HR Plan
  - Stakeholder Engagement Plan

INPUTS

| Program Charter | Program Implementation Plan | Stage Map and Stage Plans | Additional Detailed Plans |

Financial Management
Supply Chain
HR
Stakeholder Engagement

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

Stage planning and management   Risk management   Issue and change management   Human Resource management   Stakeholder management and communications   Supply chain and logistics management   Monitoring, evaluation, adapting, learning   Finance management

Budgeting and funding stream management

OUTPUTS   Key Outputs:

Program Stage Plans
Stage Reports
Updated plans
Updated Program Charter

During the **IMPLEMENTATION** phase you will be managing a variety of different **PROCESSES**:

➢ **Stage Planning and Management:** Stage planning uses the *rolling wave* planning framework to ensure that learning from one stage can influence the next. As each stage concludes, a detailed plan is created for the next. Adjustments can be made to continually improve performance and ensure that operations are responsive to external or internal change. Just remember, when a significant change needs to be made, this must be authorized by the governance structure.

As the Program Manager, you must ensure that project teams have the training and skills needed to deliver detailed and comprehensive stage planning. This critical information is essential for overview stage program plans. The management of this process also involves effective risk and issue management, with the **Risk Registers** and **Issue Logs** being updated regularly by project teams and escalating issues and changes, appropriately, for decision-making and action (with tolerances for different levels of decision-making which are set during the Design Phase).

➢ **Risk Management:** At the program level, risk management involves a high level of coordination with projects. It is the job of the Program Manager to know what is happening in each component project, to maintain strong relationships with Project Managers, and to ensure that there is a constant flow of information

going back and forth. In this way Risk Registers can be kept up-to-date, giving the Program Manager a comprehensive view of the program so that risks from one project that may impact an activity in another project are managed appropriately. Keep in mind that risk management requires a participatory approach and the ability to be creative and adaptive in identifying response strategies.

➢ **Issue and Change Management:** While risk management focuses on anticipating and mitigating future problems, issue management focuses on dealing with immediate problems quickly and effectively. As issues occur at a project level, they are captured in an Issue Log and either dealt with by the project team, if tolerances allow, or escalated to the next level. As the Program Manager, you should be aware of issues that arise at a project level and feel confident that the right processes are in place for these to be managed effectively. The program level Issue Log is a useful tool for capturing problems that arise in multiple projects, enabling the Program Manager to see if a delay or problem in one project could have an impact on another, and then communicating with relevant teams to ensure a prompt response.

➢ **Human Resources Management:** Effective leadership and performance management are, of course, essential program management requirements. However, this is not a topic for in-depth consideration in this guide. International organizations will have well-established HR processes for developing staff. Other than stressing the importance of developing the capacity of individuals, the focus of this guide addresses the practicalities of managing the right staffing levels and approaches for the effective delivery of a program, which requires looking at staffing requirements from a holistic perspective. They need to be able to:

- Manage across multiple levels, upwards as well as downwards;
- Involve the right people at the right time;
- Staff planning at the highest level to recruit the skills at the right time;
- Mentor & oversee staff development.

➢ **Stakeholder Management & Communications:** The Stakeholder Analysis and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan now need to be put into practice:

- Consult early & often
- Listen & learn
- Plan, plan, plan
- You may be missing something
- Relationships are key
- Simple but not easy
- Tune not risk
- Stakeholder expectations
- Good governance
- Don't forget your team

➢ **Supply chain & logistics management:** Implementing a program requires the purchase and supply of numerous resources. Supply chain also involves the management of supporting infrastructure (e.g. warehouses, vehicles), financial, and human resources. These activities are usually conducted at a project level, with the Program Manager accountable for making sure that purchasing processes are followed correctly and maintaining an overview of inter-project and program dependencies so that the overall supply chain is managed cost-effectively. The role of the Program Manager is to make sure that these processes work effectively, developing overview plans as necessary.

➢ **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning** should occur throughout all phases of program management, especially during implementation when you are doing 'rolling wave' stage planning. This provides an opportunity in which multiple projects and the overall program can be adjusted to ensure that all projects and components are integrated and are working towards achieving the overall goal. The ongoing learning from your monitoring and evaluation processes is a great and indispensable knowledge tool for other programs and an important organizational asset.

➢ **Finance Management.** Effective financial management is a continuous process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the financial activities of the program and its component projects. It involves establishing high quality systems and processes that ensure that program funds are used in a consistent and responsible manner. A coherent set of accounting procedures and standards are a must with all transactions recorded accurately and a complete audit trail facilitating transparent reviews of expenditure. The same standard financial processes should be used by all projects within the program. To add to the complexity, funding streams often come with their own set of timelines, requirements, and stakeholders. When a program or project has more than one source of income, it can present a number of planning challenges. A tool called a **Funding Grid** can be used to overcome this challenge.
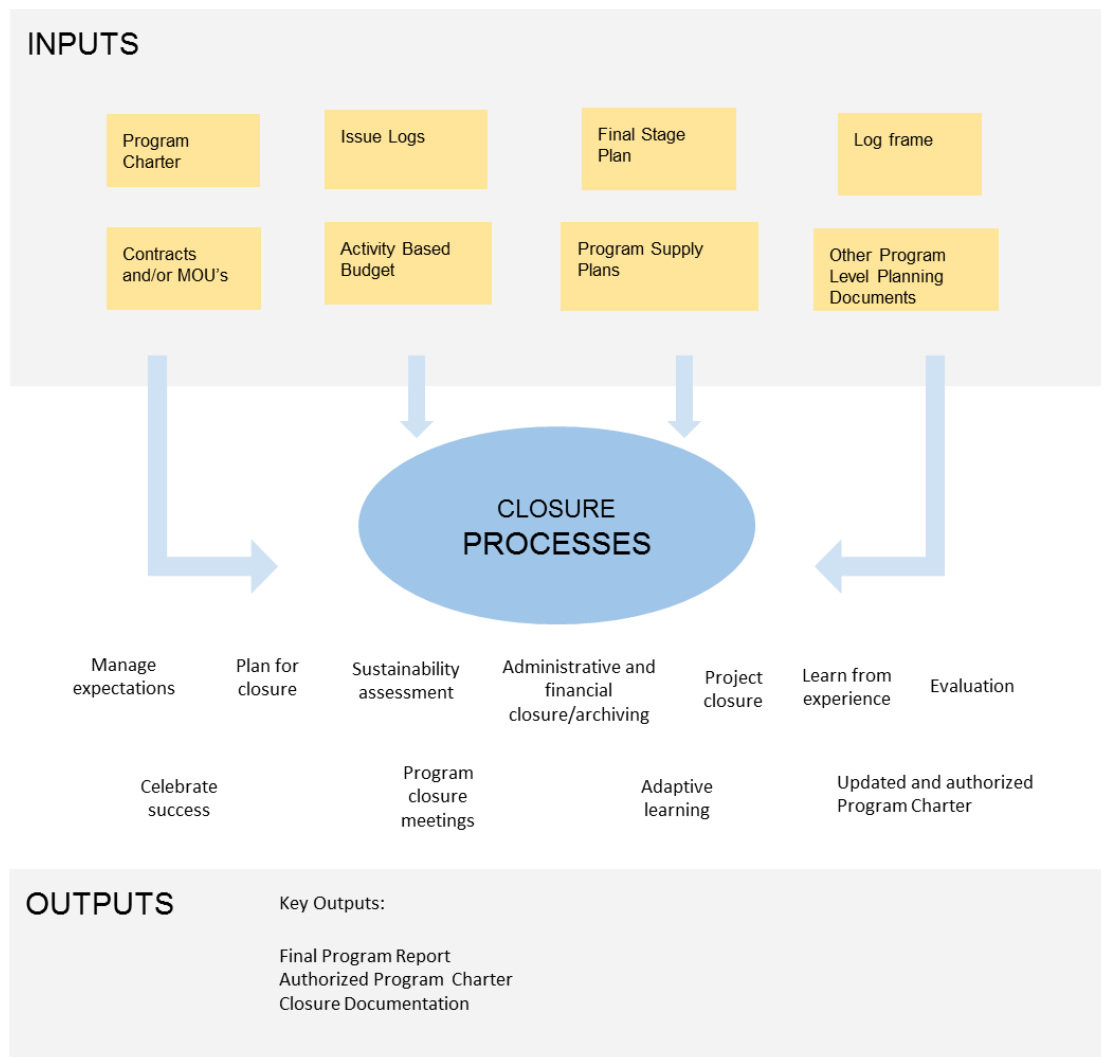
The most important **OUTPUTS** of the **IMPLEMENTATION** Phase are the program and project deliverables. You, as the Program Manager need to ensure that this happens by monitoring, checking, and amending plans while maintaining excellent communication with project teams and other stakeholders. The documents that are continually assessed and revised (also known as "living documents") during implementation are:

• *Program Stage Plans:* New or updated stage plans are developed as the program and projects move through the implementation process.

• *Stage Reports:* A short report on the performance of the previous stage is useful for planning the next stage and serves as a program update for stakeholders.

• *Updated Plans:* Finance, Supply Chain, HR, and Stakeholder Engagement Plans should be reviewed and updated at each stage to reflect the progress of the program and the dynamic and changing operating environment.

• *Updated Program Charter:* As adaptions are made to program plans; the Program Charter should be updated and shared with the governance authority or Board.

The **Planning & Implementation** phase of a program can last for many months, or even years. You will have planned, implemented, reviewed, re-planned and implemented again, until finally, your program is ready to close and your Theory of Change pathway has been achieved. You have had useful conversations with stakeholders about how your valuable work will be sustained in the future. As we move into this last final phase, your plans for Closure are already clearly defined. Your team members are starting to move on but you are confident that you have the right team in place to close down all activities in a professional way.

Phase 4: Program Closure

Programs should come to a natural end when their goals and objectives have been achieved. As was mentioned previously, when a Theory of Change is developed for a program, it represents its 'pathway'. Through this pathway, the designated outcome(s) have been achieved and all the constituent projects and components concluded and accepted by stakeholders.

INPUTS

| Program Charter | Issue Logs | Final Stage Plan | Log frame |

| Contracts and/or MOU's | Activity Based Budget | Program Supply Plans | Other Program Level Planning Documents |

CLOSURE PROCESSES

Manage expectations · Plan for closure · Sustainability assessment · Administrative and financial closure/archiving · Project closure · Learn from experience · Evaluation

Celebrate success · Program closure meetings · Adaptive learning · Updated and authorized Program Charter

OUTPUTS

Key Outputs:

Final Program Report
Authorized Program Charter
Closure Documentation

INPUTS: The following documents are essential for the closure process:

- Program Charter
- Program level contracts and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), with e.g. donors, suppliers, government departments.)
- Issue Logs
- Program and project budgets
- Final Stage Plan
- Program Supply Plans
- Log frame
- Other program level planning documents (e.g. Human Resource, Finance, Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation)

The following **PROCESSES** are recommended to ensure that program activities are closed down systematically and thoroughly. Processes may differ depending on the organization; the key point is to be sure that you are being as thorough as possible in your closing procedures

➢ **Manage expectations.** The expectation that a program will close at some point should be set from the outset and communicated effectively throughout the Program Planning and Implementation Phase. Relationships with all stakeholders will have been carefully managed through all program stages and when it's time to move into the Program Closure Phase, this should never come as a surprise.

➢ **Planning for closure** is critical to a smooth and successful program closure. During this last phase, program staff will be looking for other jobs or programs to manage, so think ahead and make sure that there are sufficient resources – and staff in place - to manage this process. Some of the tools we have used throughout the program will continue to be helpful in the Closure phase - Risk Register, Issue Log, Work Breakdown Structure and knowing the Critical Path.

➢ **Sustainability assessment:** The Program Closure Phase is the point at which the Program Manager makes sure that sustainability activities at project and program levels have been completed and are effective so there is a smooth handover to the supporting organization. If one or more sustainability activities have not been completed or are not working, it needs to be escalated to the Program Owner immediately so that the governance structure can determine what action to take. It may be that the program is not ready to close and additional work needs to be undertaken.

➢ **Administrative and financial closure and archiving:** All administrative, financial, and contractual elements of a program must be completed and closed. The following processes are critical because they reduce the risk of disputes with suppliers, employees, and donors regarding the status of accounts. Almost all programs will be audited at some point and working through each of the following processes, step-by-step, will make it easier for the auditing team to find what they need in the program documentation:

- *Contract Closure*: All of the contracts are closed out for suppliers, subcontractors, donors and implementing organizations. Donors will need to review and accept the program and project deliverables before agreeing contract closure.

- *Financial Closure:* All payments to external suppliers are paid; all receivables - project advances, travel advances, and advances to suppliers - must be liquidated or transferred to another program/project or accounting code.

- *Administrative Closure:* Program and project personnel are released or reassigned; project equipment, vehicles or office space is reallocated, sold or transferred; and all program and project reports and closure documents completed.

- *Archiving:* All program files are up to date and relevant paperwork is stored in a location that is accessible for future needs.

➢ **Documentation completion and archiving:** Closure is the time when all documentation related to the program and component projects is completed and archived. It is a systematic process that results in a final report and other documents related to closure, including insight from the program Owner/Board. This process also lays the groundwork for further post-program activities, and will ensure that all documentation is already in place for program audits (organizational or external donor-related) and other impact evaluations.

➢ **Project closure:** Have all the projects in the program been closed? Have all project documents been archived? Are there any outstanding risks and issues that need to be dealt with at a project level?

➢ **Learn from experience:** The lessons learned over the lifecycle of a program are important and should be available to future programs. Ideally, the program team has developed a **Lessons Learned Log** and tracked issues as they arose, or at major evaluation points or milestones throughout the program. The same lessons learned process should also have been in place at the project level. It is important to capture learning about processes and how things really happened.

➢ **Evaluation**: The Program Manager works with monitoring and evaluation colleagues (and follows donor and any other rules) to appoint evaluators. The role of the evaluator is to analyze to what extent the program achieved its outcomes. Evaluators will often explore additional components related to the program. These components for evaluation need to be developed by the program team at the early phases of the program. After the evaluation is delivered, draft findings are usually discussed with the program leadership team and maybe the Board. There is an opportunity to then go back to the evaluators for points of clarification before the final report is submitted. Once accepted by the Board, it is then sent to the donor and other relevant stakeholders.

Organizations should choose their evaluation approaches based on their learning objectives. Three evaluation approaches extensively used in the development sector are: final evaluations, mid-term evaluations and ex-post evaluations.

➢ **Celebrate success:** Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of a program through launch activities, a Program Manager should also formally acknowledge the closure of a program. This involves thanking and recognizing the efforts of team members and key program stakeholders, and expressing appreciation to individuals and groups who were critical for program success. It may also be beneficial to raise awareness of the program's accomplishments both within an organization and to the outside world.

➢ **Program closure meetings:** Conducting face-to-face meetings with stakeholders are a good way to formally close a program. It helps to strengthen the future sustainability of program activities and to gauge the extent to which stakeholders are satisfied with the program outcomes. It is also important to celebrate the completion of program deliverables with those who have been involved all the way through.

➢ **Adaptive learning:** Being able to adapt and shift the orientation of programs as a result of learning is an essential program management skill and the best way to ensure that a program realizes its outcomes and achieves full potential. The end of the program should be no exception. As the program prepares to close, the program team should ask the question: "How will the lessons learned here impact on future program designs, proposals, implementation processes, and other sustainability plans?"

➢ **Updated and authorized Program Charter:** Ensuring that the program charter is fully updated and signed off by the by Program Manager and Program Owner/Board formally confirms that all program deliverables have been completed. This is essential for reference for future work and sustainability plans. This typically includes the acceptance of:
- Program vision
- Program strategic alignment
- Program governance, during and after closure
- Assumptions and constraints of program needs
- Risks and actions taken
- Issues and lessons learned
- Recommendations for future interventions
- Benefits achieved
- Handover or program activity continuance after closure
- Record keeping is in compliance with regulations
- The charter will be accessible to future generations of technical, management and support staff

OUTPUTS: The final output of program closure is not a single document but rather a few key documents that communicate the effectiveness of the program (final program report) as well as demonstrate that all appropriate steps have been taken to formally close the program (signed-off Program Charter and relevant closure documentation).

The Principles

Introduction

Program Managers are accountable for the performance of their programs and each of their constituent projects. They assess and address all of the tactical components of program implementation, such as project schedules and deliverables, budgets, or compliance with donor policies and regulations. They have the skills and insight needed to configure and build teams, communicate with different audiences, and leverage social capital to gain trust and motivate key stakeholders. They understand and apply principles of transparency, integrity, accountability, and business ethics. To achieve success, all programs should model the five essential principles of good program management. It is the Program Manager's role to ensure that this happens and that these approaches shape all program and project activities.

Principle 1: Well-Governed

Good governance is essential to a program's success and should be emphasized and re-emphasized through each phase of the lifecycle.

Program governance is the process by which managers and organizations define the specific roles, responsibilities, and levels of authority and accountability (i.e. ownership) for the program. The governance structure is included and authorized in the Program Charter as part of the **Design** phase.

Effective program governance provides a clear framework for control, accountability, tolerance, support, and decision-making at all levels. When a program is well governed, it provides a lot of benefits such as:

- Ongoing clarity about the links between the overarching strategy and portfolios, programs, and projects. It is through this that programs maintain their alignment with the strategic direction. It also helps to illustrate how dependencies that link projects can be better understood.
- Programs have clear levels of authority and accountability, including agreed tolerance levels and processes for decision-making so that the Program Manager and project teams understand when and how issues should be escalated 'up the line', to the higher authority to whom the Program Manager is accountable. Defining these processes ensures that issues are dealt with quickly and not left to become a risk to the program.

- The program maintains a focus on responding to primary stakeholder needs and does not get side tracked by other issues. An important part of this process is to ensure that the voices of primary stakeholders are heard at the governance level and that they are included as participants in decision-making processes.
- The program has well designed processes, systems and tools for effective communication between all key stakeholders, for both upward and downward accountability.
- Risk management strategies are owned by the governance structure, which then holds the Program Manager and project teams responsible for adhering to policies, processes, systems and procedures. This provides essential support for the Program Manager who can escalate issues as appropriate and must account for effective risk management throughout the program and its projects.
- A productive work environment is created in which teams have the clarity of purpose that they need to feel motivated and deliver great work. They know that decisions will be taken quickly and that, where necessary, the governance structure can help to clear 'roadblocks' and/or pull in additional resources that will help the program be successful. This in turn enhances commitment, improves retention rates, and reduces the negative impact of changes within a program.
- Program and project teams perceive the Program Charter as a critical and relevant document that is used for reference. It also outlines the processes and tools that will keep internal and external stakeholders informed.
- Governance structure members often serve as internal and external ambassadors for a program, and contribute to building an environment that allows the program to flourish.

High quality program governance brings many benefits including clear management roles, accountabilities, processes and structures and effective, efficient decision-making. When done badly, it can increase bureaucracy, confuse accountabilities, roles and responsibilities, and result in micro-management and a lack of effective oversight. It's important to clearly define how the governance benefits for each program can best be achieved. If the governance structure isn't working, this should be raised with the Program Owner and adaptations made according to the context of the program and its stakeholders.

Principle 2: Participatory

The Program Manager is responsible for ensuring that program activities are conducted in an inclusive and participatory way. It is important for them to encourage the contribution and participation of individuals in meetings, workshops, or focus groups to ensure that opinions are heard and considered and channels of communication are open and transparent. The benefits are:
- Expectations are managed
- Design, Implementation and Planning Phases are comprehensive
- Communication is clear
- Sustainability is promoted
- Stakeholders are engaged

Stakeholders have different levels of involvement in a program – some need to be updated and informed while others are intimately connected to its delivery and performance. Those who are most involved should be included and consulted in a way that cultivates trust and strengthens their buy-in to the overall program. Constructing a RACI chart can be useful, identifying who is **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, should be **C**onsulted or who should be **I**nformed.

Programs have a higher chance of succeeding if everyone's contribution is valued and if everyone works together.

Principle 3: Comprehensive

The Program Manager needs to intuitively understand how each of a program's components fit together to achieve an impact that is greater than the sum of its parts. It is partly about being able to step back to gain an overview of all activities, and also about being able to adapt and change approaches to achieve leverage and added value for an organization. To align with the Principle of Comprehensive, the Program Manager needs to:

- Understand how an organization works in order to 'get things done' on behalf of a program.
- Look at issues through a variety of lenses – balancing the detail and the bigger picture vision – and making decisions based on both of these.
- Be a good leader, using strong interpersonal and communication skills to build a strong team and sense of ownership among project teams.
- Build effective teams, recruiting people with the right level of skills and competency to deliver great work.
- Understand the role and remit of an organization's support services, building relationships with teams in Human Resources, Logistics and Supply Chain services, and others such as Finance or Communications and Media. These teams need to have a clear explanation of the goals and needs of a program so that they can identify how best to participate and support.
- Identify and influence senior managers who can add value and help to solve problems quickly.
- Be realistic and ensure that scope, time and cost estimates are firmly based on a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the program. This includes direct and indirect work.
- Streamline external requests for goods and services by combining orders to local suppliers, reducing time and complexity, and presenting a professional face.
- Be aware of their own personal strengths, exercising judgment about when to involve another to complement areas of weakness. This could be someone from another team with more experience in a given area or an external consultant and will result in better and more adaptable situational leadership. The balance of skills needed to manage a program will develop and change as it moves through its lifecycle.

To achieve a comprehensive approach to program management, it is important to reflect back on and employ each of the six **disciplines** of program management (Justification, Scope, Time, Resource, Stakeholder, and Risk Management) outlined in the **Program Essentials** section above.

Principle 4: Integrated

The Program Manager takes a step back and maintains an elevated view of all of the components that make up a program, managing these as an integrated whole, not as individual parts. It is important to have a holistic understanding of the environment in which it will operate (organizational, cultural and geographical), an ability to use and apply management tools appropriately, and interpersonal skills needed to build relationships with all of the stakeholders involved. To align with the Principle of Integrated, the Program Manager needs to:

- Coordinate the allocation and deployment of resources between projects, saving time and resources, and reducing the risk of delays. This is sometimes called 'achieving economies of scale', a process through which wise purchasing and resource management (including staff time) results in programs being delivered in more timely and cost-effective ways. [SEP]
- Understand how to use and interpret different forms of data and reporting, dealing with issues as they arise in a in a timely way. [SEP]
- Ensure that deadlines and major program milestones are met, communicating and reporting on progress - upward, sideways and downward as required. [SEP]
- Set clear priorities for project staff so that they understand how their work and deliverables fit with other projects, and the overall program. [SEP]
- Identify and manage dependencies between projects. If an element of one project is critical for the implementation of another, it will be important to ensure that timelines cohere so that all aspects are delivered smoothly.
- Be accountable for maintaining a high level of quality in all program deliverables, meeting standards that are defined during the Identification and Planning phases. [SEP]
- Be able to work with and manage a diverse range of stakeholders, with different viewpoints - some of whom will be engaged with program activities and others who may have competing interests. [SEP]
- Be aware the implementation of one project may impact on elements of another, and taking steps to manage processes, deal with issues and readjust schedules if needed. [SEP]
- Communicate well, ensuring that there are clear lines of reporting between projects, and upwards and downwards within the program. This involves having strong verbal communications and leadership skills. [SEP]
- Ensure that program and project staff and managers are supported with a high quality performance management process, setting objectives that reflect the need to work collaboratively, and providing open and honest feedback. [SEP]

- Manage and share knowledge that arises during all phases of a program and project(s) activities – taking time to learn from situations as they arise and making adjustments to joint activities to ensure that the overall program remains on track. Documentation should be created, collated and stored for future learning and evaluations.

For integration to be effective, a Program Manager should ensure that the six **disciplines** of program management, outlined in the **Program Essentials** section above, are understood and adhered to throughout a program's lifecycle. As well as being able to always **justify** the existence of program, it is essential to manage its **scope**, **timeline**, **resources,** associated **risks** and relationships with **stakeholders** effectively. Applying consistent attention to each of these areas will ensure that the program and all component projects are managed in an intentional and balanced way. Time should also be taken to monitor & evaluate program activities, learning lessons from this process.

Finally, effective integration plays a key role in knowledge management. The Program Manager is in the unique position of being able to bring everything together so that lessons that transcend individual projects are not lost. It is important to ensure that lessons learned are documented, safeguarded and communicated effectively with internal and external audiences.

Principle 5: Adaptive

Adaptive program management is integral to high quality program performance. If programs are not modified and adapted to suit a dynamic and changing environment, they are more likely to fail. Program plans should always be seen as 'live' documents and the means by which adjustments can be made to ensure that activities are always responsive and relevant.

The overall benefit of an adaptive and agile program is that it is the pathway to success. Maintaining consistent focus on the responsiveness of the program to its internal and external environment helps to build a program team that is confident that their work can be justified.

In an adaptive environment, the scope of the program can be adjusted to suit changing contexts, and timeline and resource requirements modified for cost and efficiency savings. Program teams need to be able to spot problems and deal with issues and potential risks quickly and efficiently. The Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, developed in the Design Phase of the Program, is a valuable tool for this.

Adaptive ways of working reinforce good practice because the staff making decisions will have a deeper and more intuitive knowledge about the internal and external context of their program and projects.

Stakeholders can be instrumental in embedding agility into a program. Some may open doors to external change processes that increase opportunities for a program

to achieve results. Others, such as partners and direct beneficiaries, are best placed to recommend where modifications need to be made to increase community involvement, impact or greater efficiency.

To align with the Adaptive Principle, the program manager should:

- Fully understand the overall objectives and goals of their organization; the Theory of Change that it aspires to in all of its work.
- Develop strong sectorial knowledge (development, humanitarian, environmental), drawing on external thinking and expertise.
- Think in terms of 'outcomes' – the bigger picture results of the activities and outputs of project activities.
- Understand the dependencies that exist between projects and judge when to make adjustments to activities.
- Interpret information and data in a critical and logical way, reflecting and finding solutions to complex issues.
- Be systematic and planned, so that all stakeholders understand the logic for making adjustments to program activities.
- Facilitate adaptive processes that don't disrupt the overall flow of program and project activities, embedding an expectation of adjustment and change as the desired approach from the outset.
- Be an observer – talking to and listening to others, stepping back to reflect and think through options, and working through solutions with teams.
- Work with humility and empathy, acknowledging other areas of expertise, and seeking advice as necessary.
- Make decisions, sometimes ones that require radical thinking and a courageous approach, e.g. making a decision to stop a program.
- Bring new ideas and fresh approaches, an ability to challenge established processes (up/down, change management, internal and external) and embed a culture of listening and learning.
- Possess an innate understanding of the importance of developing strong frameworks for monitoring and evaluation through all phases of a program.
- Build a peer network to liaise with, learn from and support other program and portfolio managers, and help others to understand the role of the Program Manager.

Program Managers, like Project Managers, can sometimes feel that they spend most of their time in 'reactive' mode, constantly having to troubleshoot problems and 'put our fires'. This usually happens when decision gates have not been scheduled and open and honest discussions are not taking place with teams. If this doesn't happen, a culture is created in which difficult conversations and problems are buried, and the program itself become backward facing, rather than where it should be – on learning and adapting. Building in the time to make small changes before problems occur mitigate some issues from happening in the first place.

Next steps

We hope you now have a good understanding of the basics of program management for development professionals – the critical phases, the important principles and the program essentials. If you are an experienced or aspiring program manager you should now study the full guide to Program DPro. It covers the phases, principles and essentials in much more detail, with lots of practical advice of how to run development programs in the real world. It is an essential guide and reference document for program managers, and it's downloadable for free from the PM4NGOs website at http://www.pm4ngos.org.

www.pm4ngos.org