

Everything you wanted to know about Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O®) in less than one thousand words!

White Paper October 2009

What is P3O?

Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O®) is the latest guidance to be published about portfolio, programme and project management. It covers the set up and running of support offices for all levels of change within an organisation. It offers advice to organisations on current Best Management Practice thinking on what previously has been referred to as PSO (Programme or Project Support Office) or PMO (Programme or Project Management Office).

P3O is owned and was sponsored by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in the UK, who also own PRINCE2, MSP, M_o_R and ITIL. It was published by TSO in October 2008 and like all other OGC publications, P3O is published as a practitioners manual, a pocketbook and an introduction to the subject entitled 'Think P3O'.

The P3O guidance is not a method, it is a body of knowledge to be dipped into. Whereas PRINCE2 and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) tell practitioners how to set up and run an individual project or programme, P3O offers guidance for setting up a successful environment for the running of multiple programmes and projects within an organisation, ensuring change is balanced with business as usual.

Although P3O is inextricably linked with the full OGC library of methods, it is equally applicable in organisations where other industry standards are used, such as the PMI or APM BoKs.

P3O bridges the gap between the strategy and policy makers and the delivery arm of the organization. It covers both the question of "what are the right programmes and projects to help us achieve our business strategy" and the question of "how do we balance change with operational delivery and ensure that change is delivered consistently and well".

What does the P3O guidance offer?

- An introduction to P3O – Discussing why, when and how to use P3O models including the difference between portfolios, programmes and project environments and their different requirements
- Value - What value P3Os can bring to the organization including a business case, funding models and performance measures
- Example models – An overview of the different P3O models that organisations may implement
- Lifecycle of P3O including the set up, sustainability and continuous improvement
- Practical application of P3O - functions, services, tools and techniques

How are P3O services delivered?

The P3O model will consist of multiple offices which work together to provide support to the governance backbone of the organisation. Decisions about change initiatives are taken at the appropriate level and information is provided once as a single source of truth and escalated / amalgamated through the different management layers to a single point at the head of an organisation. There is no "one size fits all" in the development of a P3O model and scalability is a key focus to make the P3O guidance relevant to all kinds of organisations.

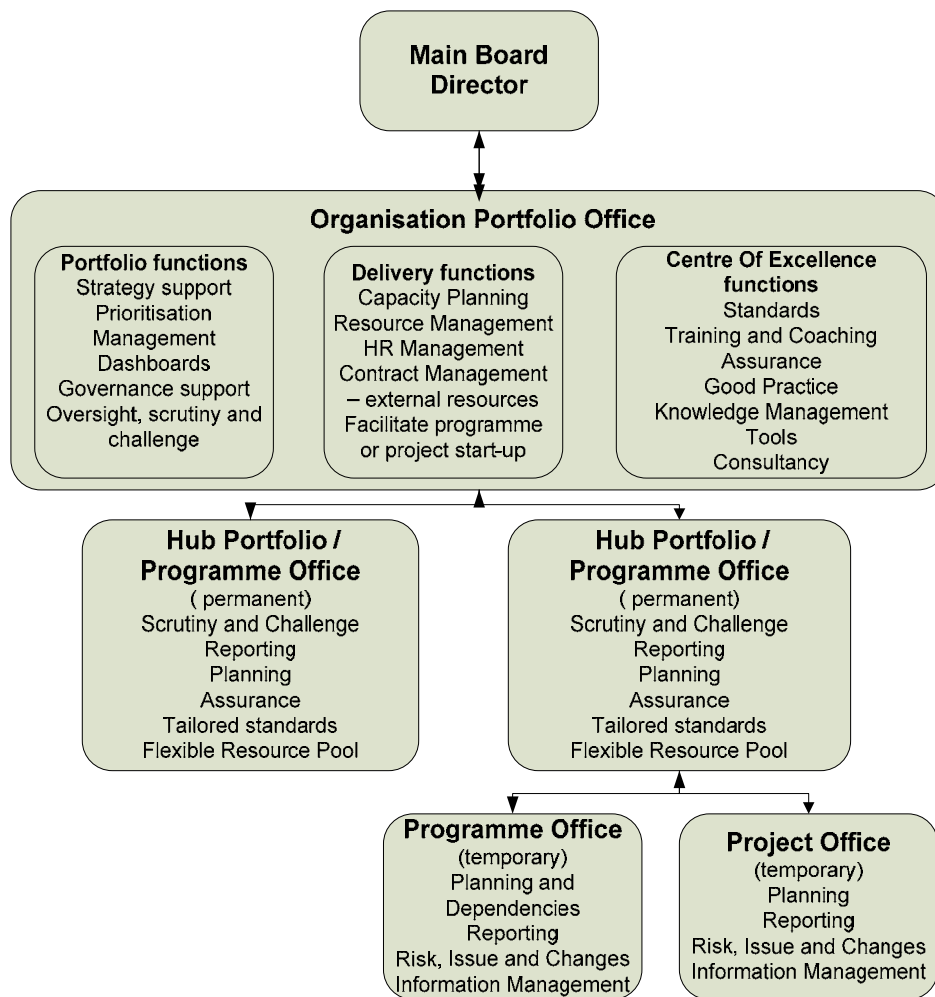


Figure 1 – Large Organisation P3O model – Crown Copyright OGC

A **portfolio office** will provide the decision support engine behind successful portfolio management. It will be responsible for advising senior management on the composition of the portfolio, its progress against plans and any problems with conflicting priorities, risks and issues. Its key function is to ask 'Are we doing the right things and are we getting business benefit from our investments?'

A **hub Portfolio or Programme Office** is usually found in a large organisation and is focussed on a division, department or geographical location, providing local support.

A **Centre of Excellence** ensures that change is delivered consistently and well, through standard processes and trained competent staff. This function develops standards, ensures consistency of methods and processes and provides knowledge management, assurance and training across the full portfolio of change. This may be a team or function within the corporate portfolio office or may be set up as a separate office.

Temporary **programme or project offices** are set up to support a new initiative and may be a team for a large programme or a single person supporting a programme or project manager. They only exist for the life of the delivery of the programme or project and they may be staffed from a central flexible resource pool or use locally sourced people who follow standards set by the Centre of Excellence.

What services or functions does P3O deliver?

There are 3 key functional areas we can identify to explain the focus of an individual team or unit within a P3O model. Individuals may specialise in one or more of the functional areas:

Strategic planning or portfolio support – focus on supporting management decision making, includes portfolio analysis and prioritisation, management dashboards and provision of oversight, scrutiny and challenge role.

Tactical or delivery support – focus on the practical hands on support to the delivery of change, sometimes through a central flexible pool of delivery support staff.

Capability support – focus on the development of standard methods and processes, encouraging consistent working practices and ensuring they are deployed appropriately (tailored) and well.

P3O	Strategic Planning	Portfolio Build, Prioritisation, Analysis and Reporting
		Programme and Project Set up and Closure
		Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
		Planning and Estimating
		Capacity Planning and Resource Management
		Benefits Management
		Performance Monitoring
	Tactical Delivery	Monitor, Review and Reporting
		Risk, Issue and Change Management
		Finance
		Commercial (including Supplier Management)
		Assurance and Quality
		Information Management (including Configuration and Asset Management)
		Transition Management
		Secretariat
	Capability	Standards and Methods (Processes and Tools)
		Internal Consultancy
		Organisational Learning and Knowledge Management
		People and Skills (PPPRM competencies)

Figure 2 – High level functions / services table (this is supported in P3O by a services / functions appendix detailing activities applicable to their use within a strategic portfolio office, how a centre of excellence can help or how a temporary programme or project office can implement them) – Crown Copyright OGC.

Roles within P3O

There are 2 sets of outline role descriptions in P3O. The first set covers management or generic roles and the second set is focussed on key functions. All role descriptions are intended to be used as a

“pick and mix” set to create customised job descriptions. Management and Generic role descriptions include Head of P3O or Programme / Project Office; Portfolio Analyst, Specialist and Programme/Project Officer. Functional roles cover all the functions outlined in figure 2.

Training and Certification

Several accredited training organisations (ATOs) offer a selection of courses, ranging from overviews to examination events. There are two certificates available: Foundation and Practitioner.

Acknowledgements

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For Further Information

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