Project Management Challenge 2022/23

Information Pack

APM Thames Valley Branch

Contents

About the PM Challenge

The Thames Valley Branch (TVB) Project Management (PM) Challenge is an annual competition for developing project management professionals.

The PMC aims to improve the competitors' project management skills in a real-life environment with the support of a mentor from within their organisations. It is run over several months and culminates in a prestigious Finals Night. The objectives and benefits of the challenge are further detailed within this information pack.

APM Five Dimensions of Professionalism

The Association for Project Management (APM) supports professional values and the FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism provide a framework that helps people develop their career.

Project professionals make a direct contribution to the economy, environment and society by managing effective change. They are capable, accountable and committed to their profession working in all sectors and all types of projects and programmes. They experience unprecedented variety and a track-record of achievement; this provides project professionals with the benefits of exceptional job satisfaction, professional status and other rewards.

APM Body of Knowledge

The APM Body of Knowledge (BoK) defines the breadth of the project, programme and portfolio management profession. It makes up one of the FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism and is based on the project lifecycle.

APM Competence Framework

The APM Competence Framework is one of the FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism sets out the competences required for effective project, programme, portfolio management and project management office (PMO). The framework consists of 29 competences based around outcomes that project professionals need to achieve. Each competence includes a series of criteria covering knowledge and application.

During the TVB PM Challenge, the expectation of the Project Judges is that teams will demonstrate the appropriate use of project management techniques and methods, thus utilising elements of both the APM BoK and the APM Competence Framework.

PM Challenge Objectives & Benefits

The aim of the PM Challenge is to deliver a range of professional learning benefits to individual team members. The competition is open to new entrants to the project management profession and students of project management and the key objectives of the competition are to provide participants with:

- The opportunity to gain early career recognition.

- An excellent opportunity to develop and practice project management in a practical, competitive, yet safe, environment.
- A benchmark of knowledge, understanding and capability against peers.
- The opportunity to be mentored.
- Attendance at an award ceremony in recognition of their project.

Benefits of the scheme include:

- A structure where entrants are challenged in a friendly yet competitive environment.
- Use of project management methods to plan, implement and deliver a successful project.
- Evidence project management theory and skills on a real project.
- Experience real life hard and soft project management skills.
- Develop an understanding of success criteria required to deliver a winning project.
- Develop the qualities needed to become an effective and successful Project Manager.
- To gain a unique addition to your CV.
- Networking opportunities.

Project Theme

As we move into a new phase and way of working and building on last year's theme of resilience, the theme for this year's competition is **'Regeneration'.**

The act of improvement and re-growth

This could cover a vast array of project topics for example: Physical/ building regeneration, environmental regeneration, systems/ process improvements, social enterprises.

It is not necessary to collaborate with a charity, no additional points will be awarded for doing so. However, Teams are encouraged to consider how their projects will benefit others and/ or the world around them and several interesting projects have been borne out of charity collaboration with additional aspects of learning being achieved.

Teams are reminded to follow guidance for the Project Proposal to ensure their projects objectives are SMART and the project is suitably challenging and deliverable.

The PM Challenge Rules

Terms of Reference

- The choice of project is up to each team; however, teams should ensure that their project aligns to the theme of the year. APM reserves the right to limit the number of teams to 12. Should the total number of teams entered exceed 12, the number of teams submitted from each organistaion may be reviewed with a view to reducing the overall numbers. Therefore, organisations should be prepared to prioritise their teams.

- The PM Challenge consists of 4 Phases and teams should refer to the schedule section.

- Teams will be required to submit the following/ attend:

    o An entry form
    o Project Proposal
    o Status Interview; and
    o Final Report.

- Project Proposals will be reviewed by the Project Judges and teams informed of their successful entry into the competition.

- Teams should consider the format of any documents submitted to the Project Judges, with specific consideration being given to content, layout and readability.

- The marks obtained for the Status Interview and Final Report will be used by the Project Judges to determine which teams are selected as Finalists.

- Up to five finalist teams will be selected to present on Finals Night.

- Each of the Finalist teams will be required to prepare and deliver a 10-minute presentation which will be followed by up to five minutes of questions from the Project Judges and other guests.

- There will be prizes for:

    o The best presentation as judged by the Thames Valley Branch of APM on the night of the awards ceremony.
    o The best overall project – based on points awarded by the judges during the PM Challenge (including those awarded for the presentations).

- All teams who are not presenting at the Finals Night will present a poster on the same night. This will be judged separately and attracts its own prize. The basis of the poster judging is detailed at Annex A.

- Additionally, there may be a discretionary prize on the night for the Most Improved Team.

- Each team will be required to attend the Finals Night Phase of the competition. Even if a team does not progress to the presentation stage, there is benefit in watching the presentations and

guest speaker and speaking to, and networking with, other teams and guests. It is also a great way to celebrate all the hard work of the teams over the previous months.

- Project funding for project delivery will not be available from APM and should be provided by the organisation sponsoring the team. This should be a maximum of £500 per team, with funding provided by the sponsoring organisation. This money should be used by the teams for resources/ materials to undertake their projects.

- In addition to the project funding, each team will be required to submit a PM Challenge entry fee of £500 to cover administration and the cost of a table at the Finals Night awards ceremony.

- Teams should raise a Purchase Oder and submit to APM before end January 2023, to allow APM to invoice for the entry fee.

- Teams that do not pay their invoice within the required timescales will not be invited for their Status Interviews and will not progress to the next stage of the challenge.

- Teams will require the support of a Mentor and they should be provided by the sponsoring organisation.

Teams

- Corporate entries should be limited to teams comprising apprentices, graduates or trainees with up to three years' full or part time employment, or employees with fewer than three years' experience in the project management profession.

- Student entries must be enrolled and attending a course at a University at the time of the challenge.

- Teams should comprise of a **minimum four and maximum six** members per team.

Project Time scales

- Teams should take note of and adhere to dates in the [schedule section](#).

- The project completion date will not be set by APM. Teams should adequately plan their project timescales to enable a completion date that allows enough time to create the final report, and importantly conduct the project throughout its whole lifecycle.

Deliverable Formats and Content

- Teams should carefully consider the [PM Challenge Competency Framework as applied to the PM Challenge](#) prior to completion of deliverables.

- Where **appendices** are provided with the final report, these must be specific, distinct, relevant and not a continuation of the report. For example, a Risk Register would be acceptable as an annex, but the description of the risk plan would not be. Negative scoring may be incurred if Judges feel the annexes are not in-line with this guidance.

The *Project Proposal*

- The Project Proposal will be used to determine successful entry into the competition.
- Please see Annex C for Project Proposal Guidance.

The Status Interview

- Teams will be invited to a Status Interview, where they will report on project progress.
- Teams will be given time and date options for their interview.
- Teams should prepare a short presentation that lasts no longer than 15 minutes. No supporting information is allowed.
- This should address as a minimum and where applicable:
    - Key Milestones achieved (Planned v Actual).
    - Scope changes.
    - Budget, spend to date and forecast spend.
    - Top five risks and corresponding mitigation action.
    - Key challenges faced in the project so far.
- Judges will have up to 10 minutes to ask the questions pertinent to the information provided by the Teams.
- Teams should concentrate on succinctly communicating the current status of the project in a professional manner.
- Not all the team members need to speak during the interview, but all members should be present for the interview.

The Final Report

- The final Report must:
    - Consist of no more than 20 pages at font size 11.
    - If reports longer than 20 pages are submitted, they will only be reviewed up to the last complete sentence on page 20 and remaining pages over the page limit will be ignored.
    - The 20-page limit excludes title page, table of contents, management summary and appendices.
    - Appendices should be limited to a maximum of 8 pages in total.
    - The report must be based on a post project/ implementation review or lessons learnt meeting, therefore the project must be complete in time to undertake this review and write the report.
    - The report will be a comprehensive report addressing all the key factors in the project. See Annex C for the format.
    - The report must demonstrate the level of achievement reached against the project objectives & plans.

    ○ The report should include an overall management summary of the project with further sections on learnings for key project management competencies.

Budget

- All budget expenditure must be accounted for and be limited to a maximum of £500 per team (supplied by the company).

- Time spent by team members in executing the project is not costed as part of the £500, however teams should budget and schedule their hours to ensure they are sufficient to deliver the project and sustainable. Whether all or some of these hours are undertaken in working time is at the discretion of the sponsoring organisation.

- Supporting resources from outside the core team should be proportionate, appropriately tailored and declared within the project reports (i.e. if using corporate support functions).

- Project expenditure must be managed within the defined budget.

- A summary budget position should be submitted within the Final Report.

Finals Night - Presentations

The finalist teams selected to present on Finals Night will have at least three weeks to prepare and each team will be expected to make a 10-minute presentation on their project and to undertake a five-minute question and answer session facilitated by the Project Judges.

The format of the 10-minute Finals Night presentation is entirely up to the teams who reach that phase of the PM Challenge, but the presentation must be within the following constraints:

    ○ Presentation media will be via MS PowerPoint.

    ○ Animations are allowed but not videos.

    ○ No new project materials should be created specifically for the Finals Night, Judges will not review new materials presented to them on the night. However, teams may wish to display relevant project documents or materials used in their project on their team table.

    ○ A computer will be provided for the presentations. The PC will be standalone, so all files needed for the presentation will have to be held on a single portable storage device.

Teams presenting at the Finals Night are expected to:

    ○ Focus their efforts on the content of the presentations, not on the 'packaging'.

    ○ Include commentary on lessons learnt.

    ○ Ensure their presentations are completed within the allocated time slot.

Finals Night - Poster Competition

Non-finalist teams will be asked to create posters as an opportunity to share project information and win a prize. Each team will have at least three weeks to prepare their poster, and these will be judged on Finals Night in a separate competition. Please see Annex A.

Schedule & Phases

The PM Challenge consists of 4 key phases and 8 milestones:

1. Phase 1 Launch and entry form submission

   APM TVB PM Challenge is launched, and teams submit entry forms.

2. Phase 2 Submission of proposals

   Teams submit a robust Project Proposal using the guidance provided.

   Proposals will be reviewed by the Project Judges and feedback is provided intime.

   Teams should start their projects as soon as proposals are submitted.

3. Phase 3 Project Delivery

   Teams work with support from their mentor to successfully deliver their project.
   A Status Interview is attended, and a Final Report is submitted by the milestone dates below for review and feedback by the TVB Project Judges.

4. Phase 4 Finals Night

   The finalist teams present their projects and the non-finalist display their posters. The winning team is selected, and prizes awarded (Overall Winner, Best Presentation, Best Poster).

TVB PM Challenge Schedule & Milestones (MS)	Dates
Phase 1 – Submit Entry Form with Project proposals and start Projects –MS1 & MS2 *Teams should start their project immediately and not wait for feedback. Any subsequent feedback should be taken into account in the delivery of the project*	*Friday 2 December*
Phase 2 – Review of Project Proposals *Project Judges complete review and teams informed of comments – MS3*	*Friday 9 December 2022*
Phase 3 – Delivery of Projects	
Status Interview take place – MS4	*30 January - 10 February 2023* *Exact times and dates to be confirmed*
Feedback on Status Interviews provided to Teams – MS5	*17 February 2023*
Final Report submitted by Teams – MS6	*Wednesday 12 April 2023*

Review of Final Reports completed, and *teams informed of results, who will be a finalist and who will be in the poster competition*– MS7	*10 May 2023*
Finalist presentations to be sent to APM	*6 June 2023*
Phase 4 - Finals night and Awards Ceremony – MS8	*Exact date to be confirmed – likely to be first week in June*

Communications

APM TVB appoint a Project Manager to coordinate the PMC each year.

The Project Manager is assisted by support from APM Head Office, Ibis House and various Task Managers on the Committee.

An MS Teams Page will be set up for this year's competition, and APM will provide access to Teams as soon as the entry form is sent in, and team numbers are agreed.

There will be one general MS Teams channel for announcements, reminders and other communications to all Teams.

In addition, each Team will have its own private channel where private message can be sent, and project deliverables can be uploaded. Confirmations and feedback from APM will also be manged through these private channels.

Assessment Criteria & Weighting

Teams should consider the format of any documents submitted to the Project Judges, with specific consideration being given to content, layout, page limits and readability.

The weighting and of each document is as follows:

Phase	Weighting
Project Proposal	Pass / Fail
Status Interview	25%
Final Report	55%
Finalist Presentation	20%

Evaluation of each stage will be against the competencies as outlined in Annex B.

The marks obtained for the Status Interview and Final Report will be used by the Project Judges to determine which teams are selected to present at the Finals Night. Late attendance to the Status Interview (over 10 minutes late) and/ or Final Reports submitted after the due date and time, will both be judged as a non-conformance and unless appropriately managed by the Teams (i.e., prior

notice and suitable recovery plans), will mean the Team does not progress to the next stage of the competition. Feedback will be provided on each submission; however, scores are not shared with teams. The Project Judges' decision is final.

Roles & Responsibilities

Mentor

Each team entering PM Challenge must have a Mentor.

The Mentor is to provide experienced professional Project Management advice and guidance to enable teams to execute the projects effectively.

Each team must interface regularly with their Mentor to ensure they are focused and gain maximum benefit from the competition.

Where there are concerns about the competition, teams should communicate with the Mentor in the first instance.

The role of the Mentor is to be a source of information/ knowledge, act as a sounding board and a facilitator. Project teams are not obliged to accept the advice provided. The Mentor should:

- Be an experienced Project Management Professional

- Be approachable, reliable and prepared.

- Strategically assess and monitor progress and give advice for effectiveness and efficiency.

- Mentors should not provide solutions (nor do the work) but facilitate the process to stimulate the project team's own thinking and develop their own solutions.

- Share their experience - Mentors are to enhance the project teams' academic learning with industry best practices.

It is recommended that an interface plan between the project team and mentor is established for the duration of the project. This should cover, for example how often to meet, format of meeting and communications channels etc.

A maximum would be a weekly face to face meeting. Mentors should be realistic as to how much face to face time they can continuously devote to the team.

Tutor or Corporate Sponsor

The role of the tutor or corporate Sponsor is to ensure that their teams get the most out of the PM Challenge evaluating everyone's skill development beyond that of the theoretical education.

If there are concerns about the PM Challenge or areas for enhanced benefit the first point of contact should be the Mentor. The Mentor and Sponsors should then work together to achieve the most benefit for each student and the project team.

Project Teams

Each Project team is to assign a Project Manager who will act as the primary contact for the duration of the competition. Communication with the APM, Mentor and Corporate Sponsor should be channelled through each team's Project Manager. Any changes to Project Managers are to be sent to communicated to APM as soon as possible.

Where there are concerns about your Mentor the first point of contact should be with the Mentor for discussion to jointly come to a satisfactory resolution. If this is unsuccessful, then the concerns should be raised to the project Sponsor.

The Project Judges

The Project Judges will assess the deliverables submitted by each team, provide feedback and decide upon the overall PM Challenge Winner.

The Project Judges will consist of at least three members incorporating Thames Valley Branch Committee members and experienced APM members.

Finalists Night & Presentation

The PM Challenge entry fee includes the cost of a table (10 seats) at the Finals Night and Teams are expected to attend with their Mentors and Sponsors.

Additional tables will be available for other attendees such as staff from Teams' companies and guests. Further detail will be available closer to the date.

There will be a guest speaker and the evening will end with the presentation of awards. The evening is planned to allow all presentations, judging and presentation of awards.

Annex A – APM TVB PM Challenge Poster Competition Requirements

Theme:	The poster shall:
Size	Fit on a single standard flip chart stand (A1 sized) that will be provided
Presentation/ Look	Be attractive and easy to review and understand
Content	The poster should describe/ show, as a minimum:
	• project objectives
	• what was achieved (i.e. outputs against objectives)
	• how it was done (i.e. processes used, activities carried out)
	• risks assessed
	• lessons learned (i.e. how to improve project execution in the future)
	• what the team got out of the project (i.e. individual or team benefits)

Annex B – APM Competency Framework as applied to APM TVB PM Challenge

The Project Judges will consider the following competencies from the APM Competence Framework when reviewing team submissions at the designated stages of the competition. It is the responsibility of each team to identify which knowledge/ application is the most appropriate to demonstrate the delivery of their specific projects, lessons and challenges. As a general guide Teams should look to use 2 or 3 criteria per competency.

Competency	APM Ref	Application
Theme/topic	n/a	The project theme/topic is robust and aligns with the parameters set by the Project Judges.
Format/content	n/a	Document content, layout and readability is of a good standard. Page count including annexes is not exceeded.
Aims & Objectives	n/a	The project has clear aims, SMART objectives and will provide tangible outputs.
Schedule Management	23	The ability to undertake time-based planning with an emphasis on activities and resource.
Budget & Cost Control	26	The ability to develop and agree budgets for change initiatives and understanding where costs fall over time.
Risk & Issue Management	28	The ability to identify and monitor risks (threats and opportunities); to plan and implement responses to those risks and respond to issues that affect a change initiative.
Governance Arrangements	2	The ability to establish and maintain governance structures that define control of deployment for delivery of change initiatives, and that align with organisational practice.
Stakeholder & Communications Management	13	The ability to work with people, both internally and externally, to build support to achieve intended outcomes.
Quality Management and Reviews	21 & 8	The ability to ensure that outputs are delivered in accordance with requirements. The ability to manage progression through the life cycle of a change initiative.
Change Control	29	The ability to manage variations and change requests in a controlled way.
Benefits Management	12	The ability to identify and agree the benefits and determine how they will be measured, monitored and managed throughout a change initiative until they are realised.

Annex C – APM TVB PM Challenge – Project Proposal Guidance

Project Proposals

Your proposal should include the following summary information:

- Sponsoring Organisation
- Team Name (if known)
- Number of Team Members
- Project Title
- Project Manager contact details (name, contact email & telephone)
- Project Team members and email addresses (for adding to MS Teams)
- Team Mentor contact details (name, contact email & telephone)

The proposal should provide a persuasive synopsis of your team's project including an outline, high-level schedule of how you will achieve your objective.

The whole proposal must not exceed five pages and should include at least the following:

- project objective.
- project scope.
- project schedule.
- budget; and
- planned resources/ organisational chart.

Project Objective

In selecting your project objective, remember the acronym **SMART**.

S = SPECIFIC. Make sure that whatever your project delivers, it is clearly defined.

M = MEASUREABLE. What will be the benefits? How will they be measured? What are your success criteria?

A = ACHIEVEABLE. Remember that you only have a limited time in which to deliver. Remember also that your studies or corporate work must also continue, so time management will be critical.

R = REALISTIC. Ensure that whatever you set out to deliver in the time must be realistic.

T = TIMELY. Manage your time so that you will be able to deliver on time (and within budget and to a defined quality level).

Other considerations

Stakeholders:

Who will have a stake in the deliverables and the benefits from your project?

How will you engage suppliers, customers, partners, end-users, employees, fellow students, families, etc.?

New businesses:

Will there be a new business benefit because of your project?

Will it continue to provide new products and services?

What will be your Unique Selling Points (USPs)?

Collaborative ventures:

Are there other businesses that you can collaborate or partner with?

Are there charities you would like to collaborate with?

Risk Management:

Is there anything you can do related to regulatory and legislative requirements that can benefit your stakeholders?

Annex D – APM TVB PM Challenge – Final Report Format and Content

Product Title:	*APM Thames Valley Branch - PM Challenge – Final Report*
Purpose:	*The final report will be used by the judging panel to assess how each competing team has reflected on the execution and delivery of a successful project, taking into consideration how the individual members of each team have developed their overall project management experience and competence.*
Composition:	*The following headings <u>may</u> be included:* 1. *Management Summary (no more than two pages, providing key information to assess the outcome and overall success of the project).* 2. Consolidated Planning (including how the *Project Management Plan was developed and implemented).* 3. Budgeting & Cost Control *(including establishing a budget, securing funding, management of changes and a summary budget position).* 4. *Project* Governance *(including* organisation, *how effectively the project team was managed, how the individuals in the team developed their knowledge and experience, individual accolades for good performance).* 5. *Project Quality Management (including preparation of a quality plan, use of quality criteria, effective quality control, quality assurance and continuous improvement, lessons learnt).* 6. *Risk*, Opportunity & Issue *Management (including how effectively risks, problems and issues were managed).* 7. Reviews, *Monitoring and Control (including maintenance of the schedule, monitoring of progress against the baseline, change control process).* 8. *Stakeholder Management & Communication (including stakeholder analysis, effectiveness of the communications plan).* 9. *Benefits and Success Management (including establishment of the benefits and success criteria, ongoing monitoring and eventual outcome).* 10. *Stakeholder Feedback (including evidence of stakeholder feedback throughout and as part of the post project review from each Sponsor and Mentor/ lessons learnt for the benefit of future projects).* A table of the competences used and the specific knowledge/ application teams used in the execution of the project MUST be included.
Format / Presentation:	*The report should be well structured, with a clear table of contents, concise sections and good use of graphics and appendices. Presented as a single A4 PDF document of no more than 22 pages at type face 11 point, excluding title page, table of contents, management summary and appendices.* *Appendices up to a maximum of 8 pages in total may be submitted.* *The report must be based on a post project/ implementation review or lessons learnt meeting.*
Quality Checking Method:	*Before submission it is recommended that the report undergoes a formal Quality Review by the whole project team and Final sign-off and approval from the Project Sponsor.*