



# Managing Successful Programmes - 2011 Edition



**Written by Rod Sowden, Managing Director of Aspire Europe Ltd, who have offices in the UK and Australia and are an APM Group Accredited Consultancy and Training Organization. The purpose of this brochure is to explain why the decision was made to update MSP®, provide an overview of MSP and to describe the main improvements that have been made.**

## Why has MSP been updated ?

All of the Best Management Practice products undergo regular review and as MSP was released in 2007 it was time for it to undergo the same process. Programme Management has been one of the fastest growing disciplines and the body of knowledge associated with the guidance has developed accordingly.

The 2007 rewrite was a major change, and expanded significantly the breadth of guidance to include chapters on Blueprint and Vision which hadn't existed before. The number of words in the guide actually doubled between the 2003 and 2007 version.

The result has seen the popularity and adoption of MSP grow across the world as it has been established as the de facto standard for programme management.

The changes in 2007 solved many of the problems practitioners were having or needed more guidance on, however, this resulted in some areas that needing further clarification and improvement.

This version is a refresh not a rewrite, which has given an opportunity to give facelifts to the content of three important chapters whilst seeking clarifying and improving some of the concepts introduced in 2007.

## What are the key elements of MSP?

At first impressions the guidance looks very similar, it still has the three key sections, however you will find some of the chapter names have changed, here is a quick summary of what you will find in the guide.

### MSP Principles

These outline the key characteristics of successful programmes. The seven principles are:

**Remaining aligned with corporate strategy** - A programme is typically a large investment that should make a significant contribution towards achieving corporate performance targets, maintaining good links with sometimes volatile corporate strategy

**Leading change** - In a programme, leading change includes giving clear direction, engendering trust, actively engaging stakeholders, appointing the right people at the right moments, and living with a measure of uncertainty

**Envisioning and communicating a better future** - A programme is relevant where there is a need to achieve

transformational change. In order to achieve such a beneficial, future state, the leaders of a programme must describe a clear vision of that future and then communicate it consistently

**Focusing on the benefits and threats to benefit realization** - The programme should be aligned to satisfying strategic objectives by realising the end benefits. Thus the programme's boundaries, including the projects and activities that become part of the programme, are determined to enable the realization of these end benefits and the effective management of any risks related to that realization

**Adding value** - A programme only remains valid if it adds value to the sum of its constituent projects and major activities. If it is found to add nothing then it is better to close the programme and allow the projects to proceed, coordinated independently by corporate portfolio management

**Designing and delivering a coherent capability** - The programme will deliver a business architecture or final capability. This should be released into operational use according to a schedule delivering maximum incremental capability (and therefore benefits) with minimal operational impact

**Learning from experience** - A programme should review and improve its own performance during its life. Good governance requires managing the different themes with regular adjusting and adapting on the basis of experience and results so far

## MSP Governance Themes

The Governance Themes provide guidance on concepts that are continual through the life of the programme, most have a cycle of associated activities that enable appropriate controls to be maintained to keep the programme on course, these are:

- **Programme Organization** – the main change in this chapter is further clarification of the role of the BCM and their supporting team. Work has continued on differentiating accountability from responsibility, which was a key factor in the 2007 version. The chapter meets the need for the combination of defined roles, clear responsibilities of each of these roles, and management structures and reporting arrangements that are needed to deliver the programme's desired outcomes
- **Vision** – this chapter has only had minor changes, which help to differentiate between the overarching Vision and the actual Vision Statement, both of which are foundations for the programme. The Vision Statement communicates the outcomes and delivered benefits of the programme, an enabler for the buy-in, motivation and activity-alignment of stakeholders
- **Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement** – this chapter had a significant change during the 2007 update and has remained very similar. The Stakeholder Engagement Process is now called a cycle and a new

concept of the Stakeholder Register has been included, but the focus on the need for, and nature of, leadership in transformational change is stressed. That stakeholders must be actively analysed, understood and engaged with, and not just managed or communicated to, is also stressed

- **Benefits Management** – has changed its name and undergone a significant facelift. One of the issues with the 2007 chapter was that a lot of the terminology was subtly different from other parts of the book. Terms like “enabler” did not appear anywhere else, for example, the refresh also considered that benefits were still a problem area for many organisations so the guidance needed to be simplified. The chapter itself maintains the relationship between change and achieving benefits is still very explicit with increased focus on the need for active exploitation of project outputs and delivered capability to achieve benefits. There is more focus on the concepts of capability and extra guidance on the different types of categories that can be used for benefits
- **Blueprint Design and Delivery** – the 2007 chapter provided excellent guidance on the concepts of Blueprints and little has changed in the refresh. Where people will notice a difference is with some additional guidance on Tranches, Step Change in Capability and Intermediate Blueprints. The chapter explains how the programme's Vision

Statement provides a description of the desired benefits and outcomes of the programme. This is expanded and developed into a Blueprint, which explains the processes, the organizational structures, technology and management information that the programme will deliver. The chapter explores how the Blueprint acts as a measure and touchstone for defining the detailed capabilities that the programme will deliver. The chapter emphasises the need for detailed understanding of the current state as a basis for understanding the complexity of the change

- **Planning and Control** – has developed the clarity about Tranches and included additional references that help understand the relationship between programme and project control points. It also now refers to change control processes and has more detail on the role of the Monitoring and Control Strategy. The Transition Planning content has increased reference to the Realizing the Benefits chapter, where most of the guidance now sits. The chapters continue to emphasize that whilst planning and control are both key to the success of any transformation programme, they should be seen as distinctly separate concepts and activities

- **The Business Case** - provides the vital test of the viability of the programme. It answers the question: 'Is the investment in this programme still worth it?'. This need for ongoing viability of the Business Case is stressed. The relationship between ongoing commitment to the programme (with effective stakeholder engagement) and lifting the net benefit line is also explored in more detail. The changes to this chapter have been relatively minor, with some clarification of the types and sources of cost that should be included in the Business Case
- **Risk and Issue Management** – a new title, this chapter has undergone a significant refresh to help with the application of risk management in a programme environment. It is still very much based on the Management of Risk (M\_o\_R®) framework and cycle. In this chapter now you will find reference to risk aggregation, guidance on the use of early warning indicators and further development of need to manage opportunities and threats as risks. Significant work has been undertaken to improve the guidance on Issue Management with a new supporting cycle that includes change control
- **Quality and Assurance Management** – has a new title to reflect the increased focus on the role of integrated assurance and setting out a strategy to achieve this which is a major new section. Quality management has been re-

aligned to focus on two areas, the achievement of the Principles, if they are the characteristics of successful programmes then there should be commitment to following them and also a refresh of the scope of quality. It is similar to the 2007 version but has been updated and is now more focused, with a particular emphasis on people development, which wasn't there before.

## The Transformational Flow

There have been no changes to the programme lifecycle, there are still six processes and a set of the activities within the processes are still fundamentally the same. The processes are:

- **Identifying a programme** – this is the initial set of activities that takes the programme from idea to a concept that the organisation can support. Minor changes of wording and emphasis about how the SRO (Senior Responsible Owner) and governance boards come together have provided increased clarity
- **Defining a programme** – has had very few changes applied other than to ensure the activities are aligned with the new content associated with Themes
- **Managing the Tranches** – more guidance on the role of a Tranche and the criticality of the end of Tranche reviews

- **Delivering the Capability** – a number of enhancements that improve the guidance on the interface and controls between a project and a programme, and the criticality of the Blueprint as a source of requirements for the projects
- **Realizing the Benefits** – has been realigned to the new Benefits Management theme chapter and has more information on performance measurement and transition planning
- **Closing the Programme** – the activities have been re-arranged into a more logical sequence than in the 2007 version with additional guidance to support each of the activities.

## What are main changes that will be found in the new version?

There are a lot of valuable additions to the manual that will make things clearer for practitioners and people who are new to programme management, these include:

- Each Governance Theme chapter now has a section outlining how that Theme relates to each of the Transformation Flow processes
- Throughout the guidance there are new "Hints" on practical ways to apply the guidance, one of these is the introduction of the Workstream concept for example
- The concept of the Tranche has been clarified, with specific guidance on the risk of overlapping Tranches

- All the Governance Theme “processes” have now been renamed “cycles” to avoid confusion with the Transformational Flow processes
- Improved guidance for each key role, through updated tables in the Transformational Flow and more practical “Area of Focus” advice at the end of each of the Theme chapters
- The role guidance in the Governance Themes and Transformational Flow for the Sponsoring Group and Programme Board has been removed, to focus the attention on the individuals who sit on these groups rather than the collective responsibility which can reduce clarity
- Benefits Management chapter has practical advice on techniques and categorisation, a new cycle of activities with better vocabulary integration with the other chapters
- New references to the relationship between the programme Blueprint and project requirements
- Quality Management includes a significant new section on Assurance
- Risk and Issue Management chapter has applied the Management of Risk guidance specifically to the programme environment and the section of issue Management has significantly improved
- Appendix A has been refreshed with a new layout for the way the information is presented and some rationalisation has been undertaken.

## Conclusion

The refresh has taken 18 months to mature through four reviews by experienced practitioners and consultants. The guidance is now mature and valued by organisations across the world, so great care had to be taken that changes were adding value, not destabilising other elements of the guide and achieved the mandate provided to the authoring team.

The result, we hope you will agree, is a guide, with additional and improved guidance that has built on the experience and body of knowledge that will help organisations deliver better programmes in the future and cements the MSP position as the thought leading guidance on delivering transformational programmes.





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