

Setting up the P3O – Checklist of questions to ask when creating a P3O or reviewing the operation of an existing P3O

P3O is also known as a Programme Management Office (PMO) or less frequently a Project Support Office (PSO). In this paper we have used the term from provided by the UK Office of Government Commerce, owners of the PRINCE2® and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®) and Management of Portfolios (MoP™) approaches which is P3O® – Portfolio, Programme and Project offices.

- Does the head of the P3O offer only advice and guidance to programmes or does the P3O have a remit to oversee projects?
- Does the head of the P3O have the authority to step in and replace resources on failing programmes or projects?
- Does the P3O have a responsibility to recommend changes in management (Project Boards and Programme Boards) in failing programmes or will the line managers who 'employ' the programme and project managers have this authority?
- If a programme manager consistently fails to report to or utilise the services of the P3O, what action can the head of the P3O take, if any?
- Does the P3O have the responsibility and the authority to review resource usage across the portfolio or programmes and projects to ensure that:
 - Sufficient resources remain to undertake business as usual activities?
 - Individuals with skills and experience in high demand do not face an unrealistic burden of project and programme related work in addition to their business as usual roles?
 - Recommendations are made in how to prioritise resource usage for maximum effect
 - Monitor usage of non-human resources such as buildings and IT to ensure conflicts are identified and resolved
- Does the P3O have the authority to decide on resource usage for competing resources across programmes or does this have to be escalated to directors for a decision?
- Does the P3O have access to additional financial resources to assign to programmes for risk mitigation or change management activities, to support the raising of issues and risks from the programmes to the P3O?
- Does the P3O ensure that contribution to projects and contribution to business as usual are reflected in appraisals, job descriptions, reward mechanisms (including eligibility for promotions), or does this remain the responsibility of individual programme or project managers?