Project coordination comprises planning, execution, monitoring and control of the different aspects of a project, as well as the motivation of those involved in it, to achieve the project objectives in a cost-effective, efficient and timely manner. To undertake these tasks, the project partners must set up a management structure and appoint a project manager who is responsible for managing the project effectively.

**Key Elements of Project Coordination**

- **Project Plan**
  The project plan establishes the scope, goals, and methodology of the project, as well as the time and cost estimates, the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and the way in which the project activities will be performed. It can thus serve as a basis for monitoring the project’s progress and making decisions.

- **Supporting Plans**
  Supporting plans need to be developed to provide details for different aspects of the project plan. Different projects require different supporting plans, depending on the scope and size of the project. Possible supporting plans could include:
  - **Budget plan** that outlines the expected costs of the project.
  - **Human resource plan** that provides details of the number and types of staff required in the project, and estimates their input in terms of number of work days.
  - **Communications plan** that provides details of the ways in which progress will be communicated to all the stakeholders.
  - **Risk management plan** that identifies possible risks to the success of the project and states contingencies, thus enabling pro-active risk management.
  - **Evaluation plan** that outlines the ways in which the quality of project implementation, outputs and outcomes will be evaluated.
  - **Dissemination plan** that outlines the way the visibility and sustainability of the project outputs and outcomes will be maximized.

- **Management Structure**
  A management structure should be set up for each project to make sure that effective methods for planning, communication, and decision-making are in place. It would also help ensure that the project work is performed according to...
the schedule; that deliverables and reports are delivered in a timely and cost effective fashion; and that the project’s goals and objectives are achieved. A project management framework should be developed for each project, depending on its scope and the work that needs to be undertaken. Nevertheless, the management structure should at least identify a project manager and project team.

✓ **Project Manager**

The role of the project manager varies according to the project’s nature and scope. Generally, the project manager is responsible for the following:

- Manage and coordinate project work
- Monitor the project’s progress and performance
- Make sure that project outputs are delivered on time
- Identify problems, issues, and risks, and escalate them as appropriate
- Maintain project documentation
- Manage communication with stakeholders
- Maintain the project web site
- Prepare progress reports
- Arrange meetings and take minutes of meetings
- Manage project resources
- Coordinate work on legal agreements
- Maintain contact with the sponsors

To undertake these tasks, project managers should have a variety of skills and qualities. The top 10 qualities a project manager should have are:

- Visionary Leadership
- Integrity
- Communication
- Enthusiasm
- Empathy
- Competence
- Team Building
- Problem Solving
- Pressure Handling
- Task Delegation

Moreover, the organization should provide the manager with the mandate and time to effectively manage the project. Therefore, it is pertinent to have a written agreement on the proportion of time the manager will be required to give to project management.

✓ **Project Team**

The staffing requirements of the project are generally thought through while writing the project proposal. However, if any changes in staffing are made during the project, then the program manager should be informed of it.
✓ **Management Committee**

A management committee provides a forum for discussion and decision making. It also allows the partners and team members to agree on the project work and share the responsibility. The management committee may include key project staff, partner organizations representatives, project stakeholders, experts, or advisors. The management committee is responsible for:

- Advising the project team and manager
- Steering and guiding the project
- Reviewing the progress and outputs
- Reviewing outcomes and their impact
- Representing the interests of the project partners
- Agreeing on important decisions and changes to plan
- Discussing risks, problems, issues, and exploring solutions

It is always helpful to draw up the terms of reference for the management committee so that all members of the committee understand their roles and responsibilities.

✓ **Project Meetings**

Project meetings facilitate communication and networking between the partners. They serve to inform partners about the project development, deliverables, outputs or issues. They also allow for partners to sit down together and plan further steps in the project implementation. It is recommended that meetings be organized throughout the project lifetime. While the rate of meetings can vary, it is recommended to meet at least once or twice a year. Meetings can serve different purposes, including:

- **A kick-off meeting** is the project’s first meeting and generally serves to detail the project aims and objectives, activities and planning, and enable new partners to make acquaintance.

- **Update meetings** cover the progress of the project, while enabling project partners to share results and knowledge.

- **Thematic meetings** focus on topics of common interest, such as evaluation or standards.

- **End of program meetings** present the results of the project, usually to a larger group of stakeholders.

The project coordination plan should specify the time and purpose of each meeting. Additionally, it is also a good idea to hold smaller events for project staff to exchange ideas on common problems or issues and develop strategies to overcome these problems. At times, it the project manager is required to meet different partners individually to discuss plans and progress in detail.
✓ **Core Project Documents**

A project coordination plan should foresee a core set of documents that will be needed to guide the project, indicate the step for the execution of the project work, report on progress of the project, and report the final results. Apart from the project plan and supporting plans, these documents may also include:

- **Minutes** of meetings
- **Interim** and final reports
- **Management** committee’s terms of reference
- **Agreements** with partners and stakeholders

These documents should be specified as ‘internal deliverables’ in the project coordination plan and included in the timetable.

---

**Authored By**: Shakeel Ahmed Bhatti

The Author is a dynamic construction project management specialist, analytical thinker and highly dedicated Civil Engineer/Technologist with over 20 years’ experience of planning, designing and directing the construction and maintenance of Public/Industrial Buildings.

© 2013 Bhati Group.com All Right Reserved