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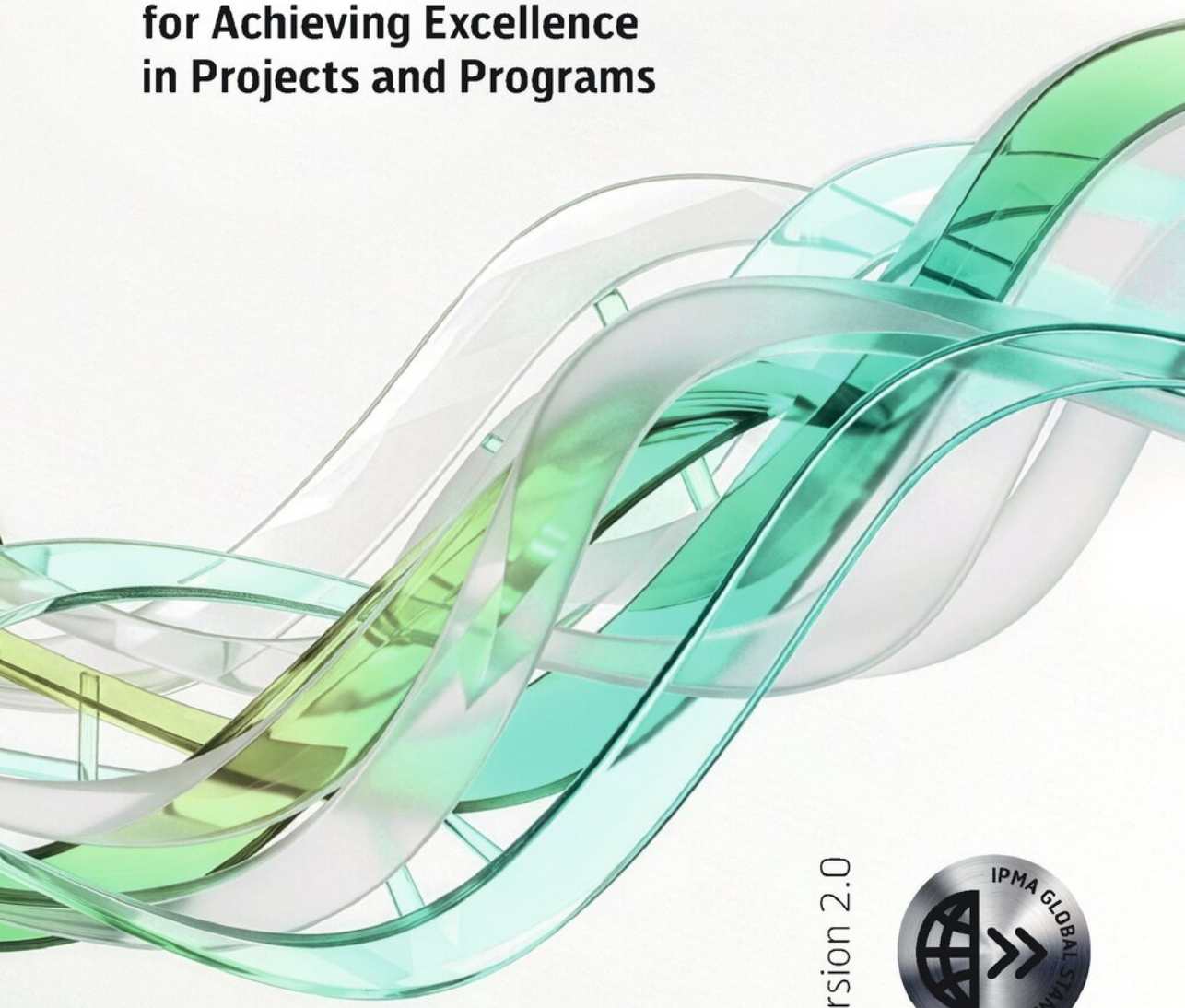
IPMA

PROJECT EXCELLENCE BASELINE

for Achieving Excellence in Projects and Programs



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Foreword by IPMA President

Projects are among the most powerful instruments through which organizations turn strategy into results, enable transformation, realize benefits, and create sustainable value. As the scale and complexity of change continue to grow, expectations of projects and those who lead them have also expanded. Success can no longer be understood only by delivering agreed outputs within time, cost, and scope. Projects must also demonstrate responsible leadership, stakeholder value, organizational learning, sustainability, and lasting positive impact.

It is in this context IPMA presents the **IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0**. This second edition builds on a long and distinguished history. The first IPMA Project Excellence Baseline was published in 2016, drawing on more than 15 years of experience with the IPMA Project Excellence framework and the assessment of projects through the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards. Over the decade that followed, the project environment continued to evolve, making it necessary to reflect new expectations, emerging practices, and a broader understanding of the value that projects create.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 provides a comprehensive and practical framework for understanding, assessing, and continuously improving Project Excellence.

It recognizes that projects are investments intended to produce meaningful results, realize benefits, and generate sustainable value. Excellent projects are therefore well managed. They are purpose-driven, outcome-oriented, ethically led, sustainably delivered, and appreciated by the stakeholders who participate in or are affected by them. The baseline is deliberately non-prescriptive and can be applied across sectors, cultures, organizational maturity levels, delivery approaches, and projects of different sizes and levels of complexity.

At the heart of the standard is the **IPMA Project Excellence Model 2.0**, structured around three mutually reinforcing areas: **People & Purpose, Processes & Resources, and Project Results**. Together, these areas demonstrate that excellence does not emerge from leadership, processes, or

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results in isolation. Strong leadership without robust and adaptable processes may produce success that cannot be repeated. Efficient processes without a clear purpose may fail to create meaningful value. Positive results without understanding how they were achieved may result in missed opportunities for learning and improvement. Sustainable Project Excellence is created through the interaction and balance of all three areas.

A particularly important development in this edition is the stronger integration of sustainability. The PEB 2.0 considers both **sustainability by the project**, the lasting value created through its outputs, results, and benefits—and **sustainability of the project**—the responsible, ethical, transparent, and resource conscious way in which the work is governed and delivered. This dual perspective encourages project leaders and organizations to consider economic, environmental, social, and governance impacts, as well as the longer-term consequences of project decisions.

The value of the PEB 2.0 extends far beyond the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards. It can be used at project start-up, during implementation, at closure, or following completion. It can support team self-assessments, internal organizational reviews, external assessments, benchmarking, governance, competence development, and portfolio-level learning. Its purpose is not merely to generate a score, but to provide insight, stimulate constructive dialogue, identify opportunities for improvement, and strengthen an organization's ability to deliver excellent and sustainable results consistently. Experience shows that the best story tellers and educators of the profession are the good project management practices and the people who managed to achieve them.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 also forms an essential part of the wider **IPMA Standards Framework**. Together with the Individual Competence Baseline, the Organizational Competence Baseline, and the Research Excellence Baseline, it connects competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and advancing professional knowledge. Although each standard has its own purpose, their greatest value is realized when they are applied together in support of sustainable value creation and lasting positive impact.

I invite project leaders, teams, sponsors, executives, assessors, educators, researchers, consultants, and organizations around the world to use this standard as more than an assessment framework. Let it serve as a source of reflection, dialogue, learning, and action. By applying its principles consistently, we can move beyond delivering individual successful projects

and build the organizational capability and culture required to pursue excellence systematically.

A standard of this significance can only be created through collective effort. On behalf of IPMA, I extend my sincere gratitude to our **Member Associations** and to the many practitioners, senior leaders, researchers, assessors, and other experts who contributed their knowledge and experience.

My special appreciation goes to **Michael Boxheimer, Project Lead**, for his leadership, perseverance, and commitment throughout this demanding undertaking. I also thank the members of his **team**, reviewers, and all those who supported the development of the standard. Their expertise, constructive dialogue, and dedication transformed many years of experience in Project Excellence into this coherent and forward-looking publication. Michael's contribution, together with those of the core team and IPMA coordination colleagues, is recognized in the publication credits.

I offer my deep appreciation to **Mary Koutintcheva, Vice President for Standards and Qualification and sponsor of the project**, for her vision, confidence, and constant support.

To our Member Associations, Michael, the core and extended teams, Mary, and every person who contributed to this journey: this standard is a testament to your professionalism, collaboration, and commitment to the continuous pursuit of excellence. On behalf of the entire IPMA community, you have our heartfelt thanks.



Prof. Dr. Mladen Vukomanović
President, International Project Management Association (IPMA)

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IPMA Standards Framework

Purpose of the Framework

Professional project management continues to evolve in response to changing organizational needs, growing complexity, technological advancement, and evolving societal expectations. Organizations increasingly rely on projects, programs, and portfolios to implement strategy, enable transformation, realize benefits, and create sustainable value. At the same time, expectations of project professionals and organizations have expanded beyond successful project delivery to include responsible leadership, organizational excellence, evidenceinformed practice, and lasting positive impact.

These developments demonstrate that no single perspective can fully describe the project management profession. Sustainable success is achieved through the interaction of individual competence, Project Excellence, organizational capability, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge through research.

For this reason, IPMA has developed the **IPMA Standards Framework** as an integrated system comprising four complementary baseline standards. Their relationship is illustrated through **the House of IPMA Standards** (Figure 1), which visually represent the framework and demonstrates how the standards operate as an integrated system to support sustainable value creation.

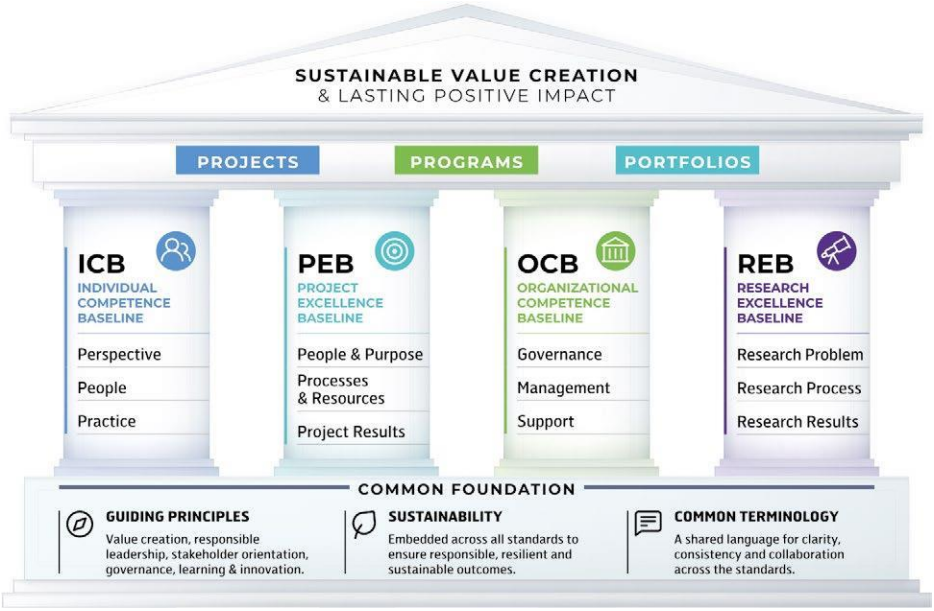

Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards

The four baseline standards share a common foundation of guiding principles, harmonized terminology, sustainability, ethical behavior, stakeholder orientation, effective governance, and continuous learning. This common foundation ensures consistency across the framework while allowing each baseline to address a distinct perspective of professional project management.

The **IPMA Standards Framework** comprises four complementary baseline standards:

- **IPMA ICB** defines the competences required by individuals to successfully lead and contribute to projects, programs, and portfolios.
- **IPMA PEB** defines the characteristics of project and program excellence and provides a framework for assessing, recognizing, and continuously improving project performance.
- **IPMA OCB** defines the organizational capabilities required to consistently enable projects, programs, and portfolios to deliver intended results and contribute to strategic objectives.

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- **IPMA REB** defines the criteria and approach for evaluating research excellence and provides a framework for assessing research quality, impact, and contribution to the advancement of the profession.

Together, these complementary baseline standards provide an integrated framework for developing competent individuals, achieving Project Excellence, strengthening organizational capability, and advancing professional knowledge through research. They support organizations and professionals in delivering projects, programs, and portfolios that achieve intended results, contribute to strategic objectives, create sustainable value, and generate lasting positive impact.

Although each standard serves a distinct purpose and may be applied independently, their greatest value is realized when they are applied together.

Relationship between the Standards

The **IPMA Standards Framework** recognizes that sustainable value is created through the combined contribution of competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge.

Projects, programs, and portfolios are the primary mechanisms through which organizations implement strategy, enable transformation, and achieve intended results. This is realized through a progression in which **deliverables** become **outputs**, outputs enable **outcomes**, outcomes generate **benefits**, benefits create organizational **value**, and value delivers lasting organizational and societal **impact**.

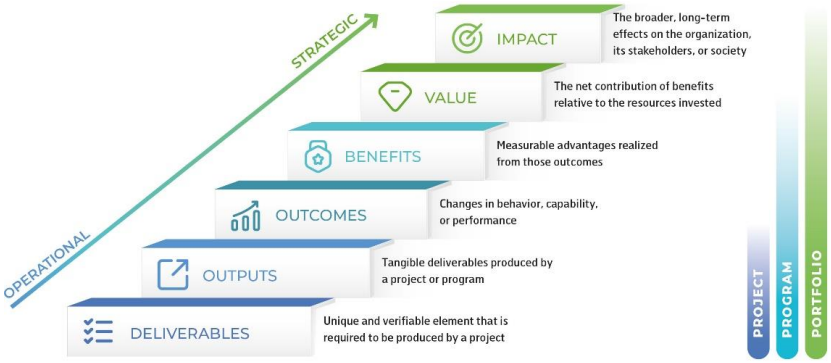

Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier

Achieving all these results is a continuous and interconnected process. Competent individuals lead and contribute to successful projects and programs within organizations that provide the governance, leadership, culture, and support required for consistent delivery and the delivery of intended results.

Experience gained from practice strengthens organizational capability, while research continuously advances professional practice, education, and the future evolution of the framework.

These interactions create a continuous improvement cycle in which professional practice, organizational capability, and research reinforce one another, enabling organizations to continuously enhance the results created through projects, programs, and portfolios.

Common Foundation

Although each standard has a distinct purpose and intended users, they share a common conceptual foundation that establishes the principles, concepts, and terminology supporting the consistent interpretation and application of all baseline standards.

Guiding Principles

The IPMA Standards Framework is supported by a common set of guiding principles that underpin all baseline standards.

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Collectively, the guiding principles promote:

- turning strategy into results;
- stakeholder orientation, collaboration, and ethical behavior;
- effective governance, accountability, and transparency; and
- sustainability and responsible leadership;
- continuous learning, research, innovation, adaptability, and improvement.

These principles should be applied according to the organization's context, objectives, governance environment, and the complexity of its projects, programs, and portfolios.

Sustainability Principle

Sustainability is a fundamental consideration across the IPMA Standards Framework. Sustainable project management integrates environmental, social, governance (ESG) and economic considerations into governance, leadership, decision-making, project delivery, and organizational development.

The framework recognizes two complementary perspectives.

- **Sustainability of the project** focuses on ensuring that projects are governed and delivered responsibly, ethically, and with appropriate consideration of resources and ESG factors throughout the project life cycle.
- **Sustainability by the project** focuses on the lasting impact created through the project's results, benefits, capabilities, and value delivered to organizations, stakeholders, society, and the environment.

Sustainability also requires sustainable leaders. Sustainable leadership integrates sustainability into organizational strategy, governance, culture, and project delivery. It promotes innovation, stakeholder engagement, and responsible decision-making in support of sustainable development.

Further guidance is provided in the IPMA Guide on Sustainable Project Management.

Common Terminology

Consistency across the IPMA Standards Framework is supported through the **IPMA Common Glossary**, which provides harmonized definitions of the terminology used throughout the standards. The glossary establishes a common language for practitioners, organizations, educators, researchers, assessors, certification bodies, and other stakeholders, enabling consistent interpretation and application of the standards across industries, sectors, cultures, and professional contexts.

Continuous Development of the Framework

The IPMA Standards Framework provides a stable international baseline for professional project management while recognizing that organizations, projects, and professional practice continue to evolve.

The standards focus on enduring competences, excellence characteristics, organizational capabilities, and guiding principles that remain relevant across industries, organizational contexts, cultures, and delivery approaches, while allowing the framework to evolve in response to significant developments in practice, research, technology, and society.

The framework is continuously informed by collaboration among practitioners, organizations, researchers, educators, Member Associations, certification bodies, and other stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures that future editions continue to reflect internationally recognized good practice while responding to the evolving needs of the profession.

Future editions may incorporate developments arising from research, professional practice, organizational experience, and emerging technologies. Complementary publications, including Practice Guides, Reference Guides, implementation guidance, assessment guidance, and other supporting materials, provide practical guidance while remaining fully aligned with the baseline standards.



Mary Koutintcheva
Vice President for Standards and Qualification

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Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
E&ESG	Economic, Environmental, Social and Governance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
HR	Human Resources
IPMA	International Project Management Association
IPMA ICB	IPMA Individual Competence Baseline
IPMA OCB	IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline
IPMA PEB	IPMA Project Excellence Baseline
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
L&M	Large and Mega-sized Project
MA	Member Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Not-for-Profit Organization
OKR	Objectives and Key Results
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act (Deming/Shewhart cycle)
PEB	Project Excellence Baseline
PEM	Project Excellence Model
PMO	Project Management Office
PPP	Project, Program and Portfolio

Summary

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0 (IPMA PEB 2.0) provides a comprehensive and practical framework for understanding, assessing and continuously improving Project Excellence. It is founded on the belief that project success cannot be reduced to delivering agreed outputs only within time, cost and scope constraints. Projects are investments made by organizations and stakeholders to create meaningful results, realize benefits and generate sustainable value. Therefore, excellent projects are not only well managed; they are purpose-driven, outcome-oriented, ethically led, sustainably delivered and appreciated by the stakeholders who are involved in or impacted by them.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 defines Project Excellence as the ability of a temporary organization to align people, purpose, processes, resources and results in a coherent way. It builds on the IPMA philosophy of competence, continuous learning and responsible leadership. It is closely connected with other IPMA standards, especially the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline, the IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline and the IPMA Research Excellence Baseline, but it has its own specific focus: how leadership, management approaches, competences and organizational support come together in a concrete project or program and lead to observable results. The IPMA Research Evaluation Baseline (IPMA REB) is built on the principles of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline and uses them for IPMA Research Awards.

The baseline is intentionally non-prescriptive. It does not promote a single project management methodology, delivery model or organizational setup. It can be applied to predictive, agile and hybrid projects; to small, medium, Large and Mega-sized projects; and, where appropriate, to programs as temporary organizations designed to realize change and benefits. This makes the IPMA PEB 2.0 relevant across industries, sectors, cultures and organizational maturity levels.

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At the core of the standard is the IPMA Project Excellence Model (IPMA PEM). The model is structured around three mutually reinforcing areas:

- **People & Purpose**—addresses leadership, values, stakeholder care, clarity of objectives, adaptability to change, team capability, collaboration, empowerment and the culture needed to achieve excellent results;

- **Processes & Resources**—covers the conscious selection, adaptation, implementation and improvement of project management, delivery and support processes, together with the resources required to achieve project success;

- **Project Results**—provides insight into the satisfaction of customers, sponsors, project teams and other stakeholders, as well as the realization of intended and additional results, including economic, social, environmental and governance impacts.

A fundamental principle of the model is that these areas cannot be assessed in isolation. Strong leadership without robust processes may lead to success that cannot be repeated. Efficient processes without a clear purpose may fail to create meaningful value. Positive results without understanding how they were achieved may lead to wrong conclusions and missed learning opportunities. Sustainable Project Excellence emerges from the interaction between people, purpose, processes, resources and results.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 reflects the increasing importance of sustainability in project management. Excellent projects consider not only sustainability by the project, meaning the sustainable value created through outputs and results, but also sustainability of the project, meaning the responsible, ethical and resource conscious way in which the project is delivered. This includes attention to economic, environmental, social and governance aspects, stakeholder participation, transparency, long-term value creation and the wider impact of project decisions.

The standard is intended to be used not only in the context of the IPMA Global Project Excellence Award. Its wider value lies in its practical application within organizations. Organizations can use the IPMA PEB 2.0 to assess individual projects, programs or representative projects within a portfolio. Such assessments can be performed as self-assessments by project teams, as internal reviews supported by PMOs or quality functions, or as external assessments conducted by experienced assessors. In all these forms, the purpose is not merely to score a project, but to create insight, support

learning and strengthen the organization's ability to deliver excellent and sustainable results.

In organizational practice, the IPMA PEB 2.0 can be used to:

- support project start-up by checking whether purpose, stakeholder needs, governance, sustainability considerations and management approaches have been properly addressed;
- guide and assess projects during implementation, while corrective actions are still possible and lessons learned can still be applied within the same project;
- evaluate projects towards closure or after completion, including the extent to which results, benefits and sustainability impacts have been achieved;
- compare projects within a portfolio and identify patterns of strengths, weaknesses and improvement opportunities;
- support PMOs and senior leaders in improving project management systems, governance structures, competence development and project culture;
- provide a shared language for discussing Project Excellence across business units, functions, countries, partners and suppliers;
- complement existing audits, maturity assessments, quality reviews, ESG reporting and portfolio governance mechanisms.

The IPMA PEB 2.0 is particularly useful as a strategic management tool.

When applied consistently across a program and project landscape, it enables organizations to understand how well their programs and projects contribute to strategy execution, transformation, sustainability commitments and long-term competitiveness. It enables leaders to distinguish repeatable success from isolated achievements, to assess whether project practices are aligned with strategic intent and whether the organization is learning from its project experience.

The model also supports competence development. Organizations gain practical evidence of individual, team and organizational capabilities by assessing how project teams apply leadership, stakeholder engagement, collaboration, process design, adaptation, sustainability management and

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result measurement in real project situations. Assessment findings can be translated into coaching, training, mentoring, improved methods, communities of practice and targeted PMO support. In this way, the IPMA PEB 2.0 links project assessment directly with continuous competence development.

The use of the model should always be adapted to the context, size, complexity, delivery approach and phase of the project. For smaller projects, the assessment should remain proportionate and focus on whether the chosen leadership and management approach is suitable, disciplined and value oriented. For agile projects, the assessment should examine whether iterative working, stakeholder feedback, team autonomy and incremental delivery are used in a purposeful and transparent way to create valuable results. For hybrid projects, the assessment should consider whether predictive and adaptive elements are consciously integrated and whether they jointly support governance, learning, control and value creation.

Ultimately, the IPMA PEB 2.0 helps organizations move from delivering projects successfully to building the capability to deliver excellent projects systematically. It encourages a mindset in which projects are not seen only as temporary delivery mechanisms, but as vehicles for strategic change, sustainable value creation, organizational learning and societal contribution. Applied consistently, it becomes more than an assessment framework. It becomes a practical instrument for building a culture of Project Excellence.

1. Introduction

The first edition of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline (PEB 1.0) was published in 2016, building on more than 15 years of experience with the IPMA Project Excellence framework and assessment approach that had been used since 2002 in the evaluation of projects and Project Excellence awards. Since its publication, PEB 1.0 has served as a valuable source of guidance and inspiration for organizations seeking to strengthen their project management capabilities and improve project performance improve project performance, and to evaluate projects from different sectors and regions using a standardized methodology and process.

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline 2.0 (PEB 2.0) provides well-tested concept for striving for excellence. IPMA Project Excellence Model 2.0 (PEM 2.0) is a proven model for assessing and benchmarking project management, project results and their interdependencies. The experience gathered from the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards process (more than 200 finalists worldwide between 2002 and 2025) demonstrates a clear link between successful projects and having well-established project management methods in place—and still improve them further using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) approach.

After a decade of successful application, it was time to update the IPMA PEB 1.0 to reflect the significant developments that have shaped the project management ecosystem.

1.1. IPMA PEB 2.0

The body of the IPMA PEB 2.0 (Chapters 2–7) describes the broader context of Project Excellence for organizations including IPMA PEM 2.0 and provides a guideline for the overall assessment process.

Chapter 2 identifies the purpose of the IPMA PEB 2.0 and its intended users, as well as the various ways in which the baseline can be applied. It is for each user to decide how to use the IPMA PEB 2.0. For example, the application of the IPMA PEB 2.0 at the start of a project may inspire the adoption of

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principles that could contribute to Project Excellence during realization. It can also be used as a standard for self-assessment during or after a project to determine the extent to which the project management approach translates to excellent project results. In addition, the IPMA PEB 2.0 is the framework for external assessments and benchmarks (e.g., through the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards), to receive additional independent perspectives and benchmarking information, enabling a comparison at a global level of excellence across different industries, or within the organization itself.

Chapter 3 defines a project in its larger context, ranging from a narrow perspective (for instance, as part of a program or portfolio inside an organizational framework) to a wider perspective, for instance, in relation to its external environment.

Chapter 4 presents and explains the IPMA philosophy behind Project Excellence. IPMA PEB 2.0 is directly based on the IPMA concepts and values. It also explains the role of innovation. Excellence and Project Excellence are explained as well as the mindset for Project Excellence and the role of continuous improvement as a foundation for excellence. The chapter introduces sustainability as a relevant part of Project Excellence.

Chapter 5 introduces the IPMA PEM 2.0 by explaining the principles and the structure, especially the three basic building blocks of which it consists:

1. People & Purpose;

2. Processes & Resources;

3. Project Results.

Chapter 6 introduces the IPMA PEM 2.0 in detail, the above-mentioned areas, criteria, and sub-criteria.

Chapter 7 explains how to use PEB 2.0 and PEM 2.0 in an organization, to build and apply competencies for assessments and to use insights from assessments.

The appendices provide additional guidance and supporting information, and then:

- **Appendix A** describes the assessment process used in the IPMA Global Project Excellence Awards.
- **Appendix B** presents the scoring methodology and assessment tables used for the awards.
- **Appendix C** outlines the benefits of participating in the awards program.
- **Appendix D** introduces the project complexity matrix and provides guidance on assessing project complexity.

1.2. IPMA PEB links to IPMA Standards

The three IPMA standards—IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB®), IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® (IPMA PEB) and IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (IPMA OCB®) are complementary and provide the baseline for excellence from an individual, project and/or organizational perspective. In addition to the IPMA PEB, the IPMA ICB provides a definition and overview of the competences expected from project management personnel; the IPMA OCB addresses the ability of organizations to integrate and align people, resources, processes, structures and cultures in projects, programs and portfolios within a supporting governance and management system.

Projects rely on people with their individual competences, but the presence of competent people in the project team alone is not a guarantee for success. Likewise, organizations may possess mature governance structures and strong project management capabilities, yet individual projects can still fail to achieve their intended results.

Only project leaders and teams that are able to clearly define the project objectives, align stakeholder needs, develop effective teams with necessary competences, adjust and integrate processes in their project and achieve results that lead to the satisfaction of all project participants and key stakeholders are considered to be excellent. The IPMA PEB draws upon the concepts of individual and organizational competences in project management (IPMA ICB and IPMA OCB) but focuses only on how all factors

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come together in a specific and concrete program and/or project, allowing the level of Project Excellence to be measured.

The IPMA Delta® assessment, which measures organizational competence to support projects, draws simultaneously on the IPMA PEB, IPMA ICB, and IPMA OCB. An organization preparing for an IPMA Delta assessment will undertake a self-assessment using both the IPMA PEB for programs and projects and the IPMA ICB for individuals involved in projects, followed by an external assessment against the IPMA OCB. Together, these assessments provide a holistic view of project management capability and organizational excellence.

1.3. How to read this document

The IPMA PEB 2.0 addresses a wide range of roles / user groups in organizations, and not every chapter is equally relevant to every one of them. This section indicates, per user group as introduced in Section 2.2, which parts of the document are most relevant, so that readers can focus their attention accordingly. All readers are encouraged to begin with the Summary and with Chapter 2, which explains the purpose of the baseline and the reasoning behind each group's engagement with it; the guidance below builds on that foundation rather than repeating it. Chapter 3 is also recommended for all user groups.

Senior leaders and executives will get most value from this introduction, from Sections 4.1 and 4.2 on the concept of excellence, and from Sections 5.2 and 5.3, which describe the structure of the model without descending into criterion-level detail. Section 7.1 explains how the baseline can support strategic decision-making at portfolio or organizational level. The detailed criteria in Chapter 6 are less essential at this level of engagement; reading the introductions to Areas A, B and C is generally sufficient to follow the reasoning of the model as a whole.

Project, program and portfolio managers, together with PMO leaders, are likely to use the baseline most directly and should read Chapter 3, which places the project in its wider organizational and external context, Chapter 4 in full, and Chapter 6 in full. Section 7.2 deserves particular attention, since it covers applying the model across project phases and in agile or hybrid settings, situations most readers in this group will recognize from their own practice. The award-specific detail in Appendices A to C can generally be left aside unless the organization is preparing an award submission.

Sustainability professionals will find the most direct route into the document through Section 4.9 on the role of sustainability, followed by the

Sustainability related content spread throughout Chapter 6, recognizable through references to ESG, WISE, PSIA and E&ESG. Criterion C.5, covering results and environmental impact, ties this content together and is worth reading closely.

Knowledge, quality and process management professionals should read Chapter 5 for the model's underlying principles, Area B of Chapter 6 in full, and Sections 7.3 and 7.4, which describe how competences are built and how assessment insight is used in practice. Sections 3.3 and 3.4.2, on project complexity and project governance respectively, are also worth reading before Chapter 6, since they explain much of the reasoning behind how Area B criteria are structured and scored. Areas A and C of Chapter 6 can be read at criterion level, without necessarily working through every example.

Academics, researchers and trainers will likely be most interested in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 in full, which lay out the conceptual and philosophical basis of the model, in Section 5.1 on the principles behind its design, and in Appendix D on project complexity. Chapter 6 can be read at criterion level unless the purpose is to teach assessment practice in detail.

IPMA Project Excellence Award assessors and trainers should read Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 in full, together with Appendices A to D, which set out the award benefits, the awards process, the scoring approach and the assessment of complexity. Chapters 3 and 4 remain useful background, though they are ordinarily already covered during assessor training.

Consultants, whether internal or external, are advised to read Chapters 5 and 6 in full, and Chapter 7, paying particular attention to the guidance on agile, hybrid and small and medium-sized projects, which reflects the range of contexts most advisory work encounters. Appendix B, describing the formal award assessment process, can also be a relevant input for this user group.

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2. Purpose and Intended Users

2.1. Purpose of the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline

The IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® (IPMA PEB) has been developed through the collaboration of an international network of experienced practitioners, senior leaders, and researchers representing diverse industries, organizational maturities, and cultural contexts. This diversity ensures that the baseline reflects globally validated practices while remaining adaptable to local realities.

At its core, the IPMA PEB defines what "Project Excellence" means in practice and provides a structured approach for organizations to assess, and continuously improve it. In an era characterized by the "projectification of society" and a shifting business paradigm—from a primary focus on shareholder value to a broader commitment to economic, environmental, social, and governance (E&ESG) outcomes—excellence can no longer be separated from sustainability.

The IPMA PEB moves beyond traditional project success criteria—such as time, cost, and scope—and establishes a broader perspective that integrates:

- Strategic and E&ESG alignment (mission, vision, and long-term objectives)— ensuring the project supports the organization's mission, vision, long-term objectives, and sustainability commitments (e.g., the UN Sustainable Development Goals);
- Leadership and stakeholder value creation—fostering inclusive engagement that respects the interests of all stakeholders, including impacted communities, supply chains and non-human stakeholders;
- The dual dimension of sustainability: Securing both sustainability by the project (delivering sustainable results and benefits) and sustainability of the project (utilizing responsible, ethical, and resource-efficient delivery processes);

- Organizational learning and continuous improvement—driving resilience and adaptability in the face of complex global challenges.

In alignment with the IPMA standards ecosystem:

- The IPMA ICB® focuses on individual competences
- The IPMA OCB® focuses on organizational capabilities
- The IPMA Guide on Sustainable Project Management focuses on sustainability in project management
- The IPMA PEB bridges these dimensions by focusing on excellence in projects
- The IPMA REB focuses on research excellence

In this way, the IPMA PEB acts as a bridge between strategy, people, and execution, ensuring that organizational intent is effectively converted into sustainable results.

The baseline is intentionally generic and non-prescriptive. The standard embeds a human-centric mindset across all criteria, integrating design thinking and customer experience management to strengthen attention to all stakeholders. It is agnostic, and does not enforce nor presuppose specific methodologies, tools, or delivery models. Instead, it provides a principle-based framework that can be applied across:

- all industries and sectors;
- different project approaches and applications;
- projects, programs, and portfolios;
- organizations of varying size and maturity.

This flexibility allows organizations to tailor the model to their specific context, while still maintaining alignment with internationally recognized principles of excellence.

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From a practical perspective, the IPMA PEB serves multiple purposes:

- Assessment tool—enabling organizations to evaluate current performance, sustainability impact, and maturity;
- Improvement framework—identifying gaps and guiding targeted development actions across all project dimensions;
- Benchmarking instrument—comparing performance internally and externally against global excellence standards;
- Governance support tool—strengthening decision-making at the executive level;
- Capability development guide—supporting education, training, coaching, and mentoring, including preparation for IPMA's certifications.

Ultimately, the purpose of the IPMA PEB is to help organizations transition from delivering projects successfully to systematically delivering excellent, sustainable projects, thereby creating a lasting competitive advantage and fulfilling their societal responsibilities.

2.2. Common User Groups of the IPMA PEB

Thanks to its adaptable and comprehensive design, the IPMA Project Excellence Baseline (PEB) appeals to a wide range of individuals and groups. While many can benefit from its use, there are seven main categories of users who most frequently engage with the framework.

Senior Leaders and Executives

For top executives, the IPMA PEB offers a valuable strategic viewpoint on both organizational capability and project performance. With this standard, they can:

- see how Project Excellence drives the execution of strategy and delivers real economic and E&ESG value;
- define their responsibilities in project sponsorship, oversight, and governance;
- determine if their project delivery approach is sustainable, scalable, and supports the company's objectives;
- pinpoint weaknesses across teams, processes, and results, including environmental and social impact gaps;
- launch improvement efforts based on clear, objective data.

Crucially, the PEB encourages senior leaders to manage projects as essential drivers of sustainable transformation, not as isolated undertakings.

Project, Program, and Portfolio Managers; PMO Leaders

For those managing delivery and overseeing project offices, the IPMA PEB serves as both a hands-on guide and a tool for boosting performance. It supports the mind shift from planning-and-control-oriented managers to co-creating, responsible leaders.

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This framework helps them:

- convert strategic and ESG goals into structured results that can be delivered;
- foster strong alignment between leaders, processes, and end results;
- drive improvements through self-assessment, and benchmarking against others;
- strengthen partnerships with a broad spectrum of stakeholders across and beyond the organization;
- build greater consistency, ethical conduct, and quality across multiple initiatives.

Additionally, the PEB establishes a shared language that bridges the gap between operations and upper management, supporting better governance and more informed decisions.

Sustainability Professionals

For the individuals tasked with developing and advising on an organization's sustainability goals and strategies, the IPMA PEB provides a critical bridge between corporate intent and operational reality. It allows them to:

- understand how overarching E&ESG targets are translated into temporary project structures;
- collaborate effectively with project professionals using a common excellence framework;
- ensure that corporate sustainability directives are operationalized within project delivery rather than treated as disconnected initiatives.

Knowledge, Quality and Process Management Professionals

Those tasked with learning, process optimization, and quality assurance find that the IPMA PEB offers a holistic, organization-wide perspective.

It allows them to:

- conduct thorough evaluations of project performance, including compliance with reporting standards (e.g., emerging sustainability standards), satisfaction and value delivered to stakeholders;
- detect inefficiencies and find opportunities for improvement;
- systematically capture and share lessons learned and innovative approaches;
- align project practices with broader organizational standards and governance requirements.

Through the PEB, these professionals can move from simply checking quality to actively building sustainable organizational capability.

Academics, Researchers and Trainers

For educators, trainers, and researchers, the IPMA PEB is both a conceptual anchor and a practical resource for advancing project management as a profession.

This framework supports them in:

- shaping research agendas and empirical studies on Project Excellence;
- designing educational and training programs grounded in real-world application;
- blending behavioral, contextual, and technical skills into their teaching;
- preparing future professionals to handle complexity, navigate the paradigm shift of sustainability, and achieve lasting results.

The PEB also shifts the focus from just teaching methods to developing a holistic understanding of excellence and responsibility in project work.

IPMA Project Excellence Award Assessors and Trainers

For those involved in the IPMA Project Excellence Awards, both the PEB and its associated Project Excellence Model (PEM) provide a standardized and internationally respected method for assessment.

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These experts use the framework to:

- measure projects against established excellence benchmarks;
- highlight strengths and identify best practices, as well as areas needing improvement;
- ensure assessments are consistent, impartial, and encompass both sustainability by and of the project;
- help organizations get the most out of the awards process.

Beyond competition, this process fuels learning, benchmarking, and global sharing of knowledge regarding sustainable Project Excellence.

Consultants (Internal and External)

Consultants rely on the IPMA PEB as a reference point for their advisory and change management roles.

It enables them to:

- carry out independent reviews, assessments and evaluations;
- spot opportunities to enhance people, processes, and results;
- design and implement targeted change initiatives;
- deliver training, coaching, and mentoring to develop in-house expertise;
- guide organizations in adopting sustainable practices for Project Excellence.

Their outside perspective, combined with the structure of the PEB, accelerates the organization's journey towards stronger capabilities and improved, sustainable results.

Conclusion

Regardless of the user group, the IPMA PEB is more than just a set of recommendations: it is a coherent framework that brings together:

- Individual competences (ICB®)
- Organizational strengths (OCB®)
- Project delivery excellence (PEB/PEM ®)
- Sustainable development principles

By integrating these areas, the PEB helps organizations build project management systems that are coherent, sustainable, scalable, and ready for future challenges.

Ultimately, those who apply the IPMA PEB effectively don't just see better project results, they develop the organizational capability needed to consistently keep striving for excellence, a key advantage for long-term success and societal contribution.

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