



US Government to invest in improving programme management capability on federal projects.

It would be a rare document indeed that linked the President of the United States with the topic of Programme Management. However, this unlikely pairing has now become a reality. The US Government Program Management Improvement Accountability Act was passed by the US Senate on 1st December 2016. It now awaits presidential approval.

The aim of the Act is to dramatically improve accountability and best practice in project and programme management across the federal government. Once approved, the Act will introduce the following key measures:

- Creation of a new body, the Program Management Policy Council. This will establish a five-year strategic plan for programme and project management, oversee implementation of the Act and facilitate the sharing of knowledge on programme management approaches. The bill requires each Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in each agency to designate a Program Management Improvement Officer (PMIO), to serve on the Council and develop a strategy to improve program management at the agency. This applies to all arms of government except the Department of Defense;
- Definition, creation and implementation of programme and project management standards and policies for executive agencies consistent with generally accepted standards for planning and delivery. This will involve engaging with the private sector to identify best practice that would improve federal program and project management;
- Create a people-based framework for programme and project managers that identifies key skills and competencies, formalises the grading structures and establishes a new career path:
- Perform portfolio reviews to address programmes identified as high risk by the Government Accountability Office;
- Conduct portfolio reviews of agency programs at least annually to assess the quality and effectiveness of programme and project management.

By way of background, the federal government is estimated to spend more than \$4 trillion in fiscal year 2017. With even minor improvements to productivity and efficiency the belief is that the investment in programme and project management through senior level leadership, improved training, and common standards will result in significant cost savings.

Of course, the focus here is on the US government aiming to achieve higher levels of efficiency from their truly exceptional expenditure on programmes and projects. However, there will be many organisations of size in the UK who themselves have major investments in project related activity but who have relatively low levels of programme and project management maturity. This is a less than ideal combination. To help ensure that precious investment dollars in programmes and projects are spent wisely, it would be worth senior executives reviewing how their own firms are equipped with regards to project and programme management. If found wanting they may wish to take a look at the US Government proposals as a potential start point.

In conclusion, it looks like the critically important discipline of programme and project management is about to be taken very seriously indeed, at least as far as the US government is concerned. It might be a catalyst for other organisations to review their own arrangements to see what improvements they could make.

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