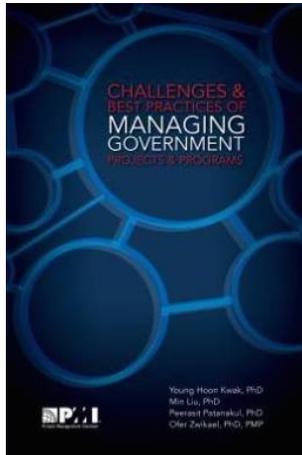


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Challenges & Best Practices of Managing Government Projects & Programs***

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Introduction

Projects and programs funded by governments are designed to achieve strategic long-term goals but due to their fundamental characteristics and how they are structured, often lead to failure with profound disruptions and financial ramifications. Government funded initiatives undertaken in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia are researched. Project data associated with 39 large-scale and mega-projects (18 in USA, 6 in UK & 15 in Australia), collected from government audit reports across three principal sectors including Infrastructure and Transportation (13), Information Technologies/System (9), Defense (8) and Diverse/involving more than one sector (9), was analyzed. With an average cost of US\$ 13 billion, the duration of all projects and programs was 8.8 years.

The research identified 6 key characteristics of Government Funded Projects and Programs (GFPP), and present 28 recommendations to improve processes and success factors. The analysis and recommendations presented in the book reinforces the importance of utilizing project/program management principles and systems that would lead to successful implementation of projects and thereby, reduce and/or prevent waste of taxpayers' monies in the process.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book consists of seven chapters. The **Chapter 1-Introduction**, includes three sections that cover Motivations & Objectives, Literature Review & Research Approach & Data Analysis, while **Chapter 2-Key Characteristics of Government Projects & Programs**, covers six sub-sections describing 6 key characteristics and features of GFPP and builds the case for the next chapter. The 6 key characteristics include: (I) Non-Financial Benefits, (II) Political Environment, (III) Formal Process, (IV) Megaprojects, (V) Long Product Life Cycle and (VI) Multiple Stakeholders.

The **Chapter 3-Recommendations for Government Projects & Programs**, is the central part of the book and presents recommendations in each of the 6 key categorized characteristics outlined in chapter 2. The authors presented 28 key recommendations described in six categories.

The **Chapter 4-Discussion**, consists of five sub-sections and summarize the principles utilized, critical factors that affected outcomes with statistical analysis of data, and key findings and implications, while **Chapter 5-Concluding Remarks**, summarizes the findings, recommendations and their implementations in policy and decision making useful for governmental officials and other stakeholders. Chapter 5 is followed by an Appendix with a list of the 39 projects and programs analyzed during the research with project name, country, sector and government owner. The book is enriched with References for easy retrieval of subject matters.

In order to equip the reader with the core subject matter, the authors devote less than 20% of the contents with introductory materials including introduction and 6 key characteristics of GFPP. More than 50% of the book deals with the core subject matter of recommendations for government projects and programs, and 30% of the remaining chapters include discussion, concluding remarks, appendix and reference.

Highlights & What I liked!

The successful implementation of large-scale and megaprojects is complex, very involved and requires teamwork, planning, controls and accountability. Management of GFPP is challenging for all stakeholders due to complexity in formal processes typical of government funding requirements. Public sector projects with non-financial returns, political goals specially when outcomes do not necessarily need to concur with delivery per Key Performance Indicators (KPI) criteria, and costs & benefits of deliverables are complicated to quantify, push such projects/programs to perform in extra high-demand & highly-challenged environments. Government mega projects with multiple stakeholders are long-term operations and continue for years with modifications in scope and costs, waste of taxpayer's monies thru multiple costly payables, are just a few of realities that make GFPP challenging.

The research is based on review of government audit reports of 39 large-scale and megaprojects in three developed countries (USA, UK & Australia). The authors identified 6 unique key characteristics of GFPP and present 28 recommendations. However, there is no information on how projects were structured with sub-contractors including Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) firm/s typically engaged on GFPP for accountability. The human capita based attributes of performance and implications of project management leadership (sponsor & prime contractor) that are crucial for successful implementation of projects are also not addressed.

The nature of large-scale and megaprojects with multiple stakeholders presents obvious ethics quality gaps, particularly in culturally diverse teams that must be addressed and remain enforced during the entire project cycle. Such projects present high risks, and pressures to cut corners are also high especially in view of the

prolonged project lifecycle. This means that ramifications of a particular action/event (e.g. placement of concrete without reinforcement, forged QA/QC and status reports by the contractors in association with the M&E firm, excessive payouts to project managers/directors, approval of substandard work by the contractor and overlooked by the sponsor etc.) may not come to light for years or perhaps never.

I particularly valued the success of the authors in identifying 6 key and unique factors of GFPP based on government audit reports. This knowledge can help prevent potential bottlenecks if the stakeholders are acquainted with the processes and risks involved and help them prepare and guide throughout the project cycle. In addition, recommendations to help improve project management performance and outcomes based on key characteristics are of practical importance for all project stakeholders.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Over the last few years, an increasing number of high profile GFPP have come to light in spectacular failure and some caused significant financial loss of tax payers' monies and in some cases disruption of public programs (e.g. Implementing the Affordable Care Act, Solyndra-Renewable Energy, Department of State's Development and Capacity Enhancement initiatives, Harrisburg's Failed Infrastructure/Environmental project/ programs in USA, to name a few). The majority of projects are hindered by poorly defined business cases that not only grossly underestimate the costs and complexity of problems but also lack of qualified and ethical managers/directors, and poor governance & risk management and diffused accountability by the funding agencies.

This book is a valuable guide for practicing project and program management professionals (managers/directors) including project sponsors to better understand the diversified and often intertwined nature of complex large-scale and megaprojects funded by public agencies. An understanding of inner workings of government funded initiatives, know-how of project Failure Promoting Factors (FPF), and key characteristics of GFPP described in the book with recommendations, is of practical value for policy makers, government officials, project managers/directors and other stakeholders.

Conclusions

Government funded Projects and Programs (GFPP) are prolonged for years with large budgets and consist of multiple stakeholders. The research analyzed 39 large-scale and megaprojects funded by governments of the USA, UK and Australia in three major sectors including Infrastructures & Transportation (33%), IT/IS (23%), Defense (21%), and Diversified project portfolios (23%), and present 28 recommendations in 6 key characteristics of GFPP identified during the research. The project data collected from government audit reports and other public sources was utilized for analysis. Majority (46%) of the projects analyzed were in the USA, while projects accounting for 39% of project data analyzed were from Australia and 15% from the UK. The research contributes to the understanding of how large-scale and megaprojects with distinct

characteristics lead to failure of GFPP. The analyses of failed projects offer lessons for improvement in future projects. Based on unique characteristics of GFPP, the authors offer practical recommendations for success including among others, use of public-private partnership (PPP), splitting the initiatives into smaller and manageable projects, and engaging consulting/management business experts to ensure that processes are aligned with delivery of value for funding/s.

Stakeholders in general and project managers/directors, sponsors and prime contractors in particular, should examine the potential pitfalls and risks to help prevent project failure. The research did not take into account Failure Contributing Factor/s (FCF) associated with project management leadership, cultural and ethical (including fraud and/or fraudulent operations) aspects and the conduct of the prime contractor, consultant and sub-consultants. This book is an excellent resource and offers a fast-track learning of GFPP body of knowledge to address and manage large-scale and megaprojects. It addresses the significance of project management tools, techniques and systems that must be utilized for successful implementation.

In USA, many public agencies are reflecting on high demand and successfully delivering projects for their constituencies using Best Practices Project/Program Management. The team-defined Best Practices in project/program management are strategies and applications that contribute to success in delivering projects and could be well applied in Government Funded Projects and Programs.

For more about this book, go to:

<http://marketplace.pmi.org/Pages/ProductDetail.aspx?GMProduct=00101546901>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, PM World and the Dallas Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI Dallas Chapter – www.pmidallas.org). Publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. Reviewers can keep the books and claim PDUs for PMP recertification. PMI Dallas Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net.

About the Reviewer



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Javed Azam has more than 25 years of technical/engineering and management experience in conducting and leading projects in more than 15 countries (USA, W-Europe and SE-Asia). He served in progressively responsible positions as Regional Director, Program/Project Director and Chief Operating Officer of consulting engineering firms, and demonstrated his management, operations and leadership skills in the acquisition and implementation of complex and multidisciplinary projects (capacity enhancement, geotechnical, inspection/testing, environmental, infrastructure & water resources development) projects in often culturally challenging environments.

In addition to his technical certifications, Javed is a Licensed Professional Geoscientist (P.G., Geologist), Certified Professional Geologist (CPG), and a Certified Project Management Expert (PME). He is member of several professional organizations including the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) and the Project Management Institute (PMI). He is an alumnus of University of Texas, University of California-Berkeley, and Delft University of Technology/ITC.

Javed is driven by passion, integrity, high performance teamwork, and servant leadership to deliver successful project/program outcomes, and provides expertise to his clients and quantifiable value to his organization. He serves as a Principal Consultant with Development Group International in Dallas, TX and can be reached at JavedA@DevelopmentGroupIntl.com.