

*Let's talk about public projects*¹

Governmental Project Implementation System²

Stanisław Gasik, PhD

Introduction

In previous articles in the series "Let's Talk About Public Projects," we introduced various institutions, functions, and processes involved in project management within public administration, shaped by governments. These can be grouped into the following areas and territories:

- **Governance Territory** (at the government level): Activities that establish and oversee public project implementation's main rules and structures.
- **Delivery Territory**: Processes of project implementation.
- **Support Area**: Processes that assist project implementation, carried out by entities external to the contractors.
- **Development Area**: Responsible for optimizing the entire system.

For public projects to be executed effectively and efficiently, all processes must form a well-functioning system, collectively referred to as the **Governmental Project Implementation System** (GPIS, Gasik, 2023a).

This article provides a general overview of GPIS.

Public Projects Context

State governance refers to the rules for making and enforcing decisions within a state (e.g., Pierre & Peters, 2020). A component of this is **public sector governance**, defined as "the system of rules, processes, and practices by which public institutions and organizations are managed and controlled" (CloG, 2025). Within this framework, **public project governance** pertains to governance processes and structures for public projects (Gasik, 2023b).

The Governmental Project Implementation System is a tool for implementing public project governance.

¹ Editor's note: This article is the latest in a series related to the management of public programs and projects, those organized, financed and managed by governments and public officials. The author, Dr. Stanisław Gasik, is the author of the book "[Projects, Government, and Public Policy](#)", recently published by CRC Press / Taylor and Francis Group. That book and these articles are based on Dr. Gasik's research into governmental project management around the world over the last decade. Stanisław is well-known and respected by PMWJ editors; we welcome and support his efforts to share knowledge that can help governments worldwide achieve their most important initiatives.

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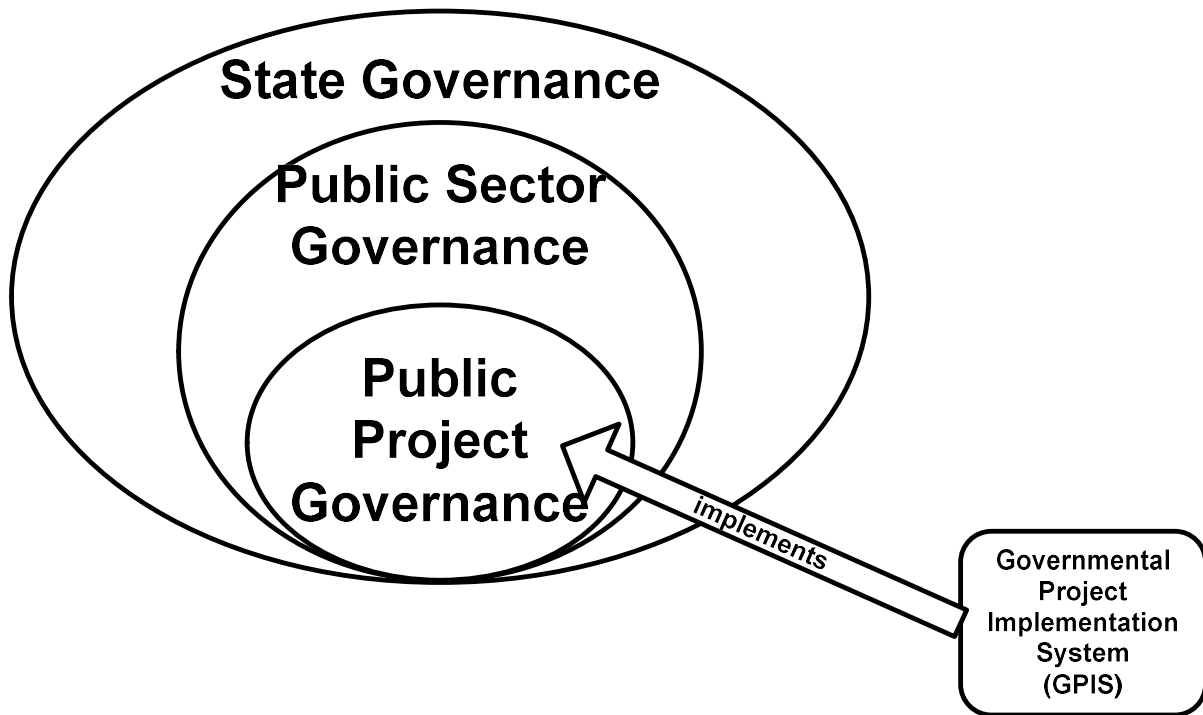


Figure 1. Hierarchy of governance and GPIS

Public policy represents the intended course of action by public administration, usually established at the governmental level. Examples include policies aimed at improving education or fostering peaceful international cooperation. Public policies operate within a hierarchy, with the highest-level policies often referred to as **strategies**. Public policies are implemented through **policy programs** (e.g., Dunn, 2015; Bryson, 2018), consisting of projects and continuous ongoing processes (Gasik, 2023c; 2023d).

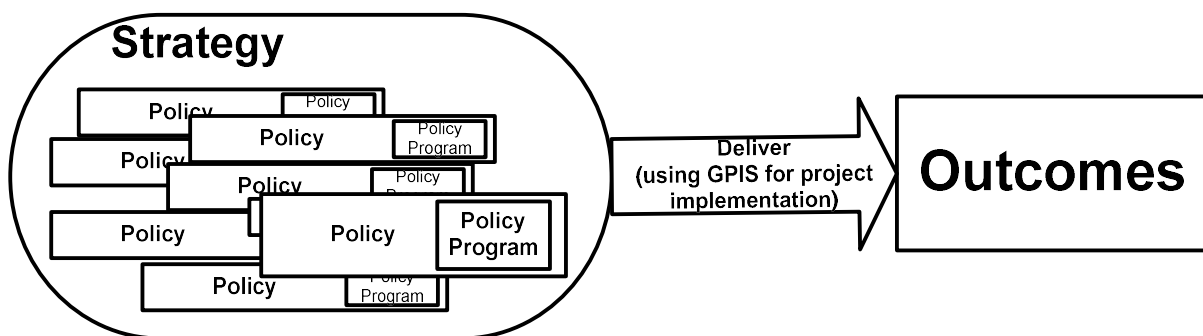


Figure 1. Strategies, policies, and outcomes

Strategies, policies, and policy programs are shaped by political actors, including the public, political parties, and major government institutions. As such, they fall within the realm of **political science** rather than project management. However, it is good practice to consider GPIS capabilities when designing policies and programs.

Governance Territory

The government is responsible for shaping public project governance³. Public policies define the intent of government actions. The intermediary step between defining public policies and implementing projects is the establishment of policy programs. The governance territory's purpose is to define and enforce mechanisms for the effective and efficient implementation of a component of policy programs covering public projects while considering state capabilities (Gasik, 2023b).

Regulations governing project management may be enacted as laws by the government's legislative branch or as regulations issued by the executive branch. The governance of projects defines the fundamental rules for implementing public projects. Public projects adhere to general procurement procedures. Public institutions may adopt specific project implementation standards.

A governmental entity responsible for overseeing public project implementation may be a separate agency, typically referred to as the **Governmental Project Management Office (G-PMO)**, Gasik, 2023e). **Audit Offices**, operating under the legislative branch, verify compliance of public projects with established policies, laws, regulations, and best management practices (Gasik, 2023f).

Governance structures influence the implementation of the entire GPIS, including the Delivery Territory, Support Area, and Development Area.

Delivery Territory

The primary function of GPIS is project implementation. Public organizations are responsible for this task. In the public sector, project governance follows a hierarchical structure (e.g., Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014; Volden & Andersen, 2018). Depending on governance arrangements, including levels of autonomy granted by the government, they define and implement their project governance structures.

Public organizations do not operate autonomously. Their project portfolios typically include two categories of projects:

1. **Policy Projects:** Assigned as part of public policy implementation.
2. **Internal Projects:** Supporting the organization's operations (e.g., staff training, infrastructure development).

Entities outside GPIS define policy project sub-portfolios. This component of an organization's project portfolio is developed through a bottom-up approach, aggregating possibly separate projects dictated by public policies. Internal project sub-portfolios, in contrast, are shaped top-down by public organizations but within limits and authorizations set outside GPIS. Public institutions may also consider unsolicited project proposals from external entities, typically private companies (Gasik, 2024a). Because typically they cannot change public policies, they are treated as components of the public policy sub-portfolio.

³ Please note the difference between **project governance** covering all project-related activities in an organization (including management of projects, project programs, project portfolios; training of project managers, setting up PMO, etc.) and **governance of projects** (concerning project management from initiation to implementation of its products and monitoring of effects) (Müller, 2009).

Public projects generate outputs and implementation outcomes. While project **outputs** can be assessed within GPIS, evaluating the **effects** of public policy projects requires comparison with policy objectives – and this requires actions performed outside of GPIS (e.g., McConnell, 2010).

In shaping the Delivery Territory in an organization, its Board is supported by the **Local Project Management Office (L-PMO)**, Gasik, 2023a). It shapes and controls project management there. L-PMOs may assume various roles, including:

- Directly managing projects.
- Providing project managers.
- Developing project management professionals within other organizational units.
- Offering specialized project services such as cost management, communication strategies, and scheduling.
- Supporting project portfolio management in alignment with policy and internal project categories.

The management of projects includes activities from all areas of project management (PMI, 2017). Some of them, due to their particular importance for public projects, have been distinguished in the GPIS model.

Project Assurance involves activities carried out by entities independent of the project management team, typically from outside the organization implementing the project. Its purpose is to provide objective insights into the project's status and the likelihood of delivering the expected outcomes and benefits (Gasik, 2024b).

The L-PMO is responsible for ensuring the availability of personnel who can manage projects (Gasik, 2024c). This includes, among other tasks, recruiting, assessing, and developing project managers. The L-PMO is also responsible for maintaining information about available suppliers of products and services for projects and selecting them for individual projects in accordance with applicable procurement regulations.

The L-PMO defines and develops project management methodologies within the organization. It is also responsible for the operation of IT systems that support project management in compliance with the organization's applicable methodology.

Knowledge Management is a process that incorporates lessons learned from the organization's projects as well as external sources of knowledge (Gasik, 2011). Based on this knowledge, project management processes, systems, and methodologies are refined. One aspect of knowledge management is enhancing project managers' understanding of their responsibilities. Another component involves providing stakeholders with information on project progress.

In public projects, stakeholders play a crucial role, particularly the communities and society for whom the projects are implemented, as well as those who may be affected by them (Gasik, 2023g). Public stakeholders should be engaged during the initiation phase of projects intended for them. Additionally, these stakeholders should be kept informed about project progress, a responsibility that falls under the Knowledge Management function.

Support Area

Public projects, like those in other sectors, face various challenges during initiation and execution. While project management teams handle many obstacles, certain issues—such as political or legal challenges—require external assistance. The support mechanisms within public administration can address these problems (Gasik, 2024d). Support can be:

- **Problem-Oriented:** Assistance sought when unforeseen issues arise.
- **Process-Oriented:** Assigning experienced personnel to projects to anticipate and prevent problems proactively.

Development Area

GPIS should evolve based on new knowledge and experience gained. Some countries establish specialized institutions for its continuous improvement, while others assign this responsibility to their G-PMO (Gasik, 2024e).

GPIS improvement occurs in two modes:

- **Individual Mode:** Enhancing project management within separate public sector organizations.
- **System Mode:** Improving governance, processes, and methodologies at the government-wide level.

Project management maturity models can guide GPIS development. Individual organizations may use models like CMMI, GPM3, or P3M3. For system-wide improvement, the Governmental Project Management Maturity Model (GPM3®) is applicable (Gasik, 2023a).

From the GPIS perspective, all its key components—Delivery Territory, Governance Territory, Support Area, and Development Area—should be continuously refined.

Summary

The Governmental Project Implementation System is one of the essential components of implementing public policies.

The combined activities and structures supporting public projects form the Governmental Project Implementation System, depicted in Figure 3. The GPIS model is based on best practices observed in various public administrations worldwide.

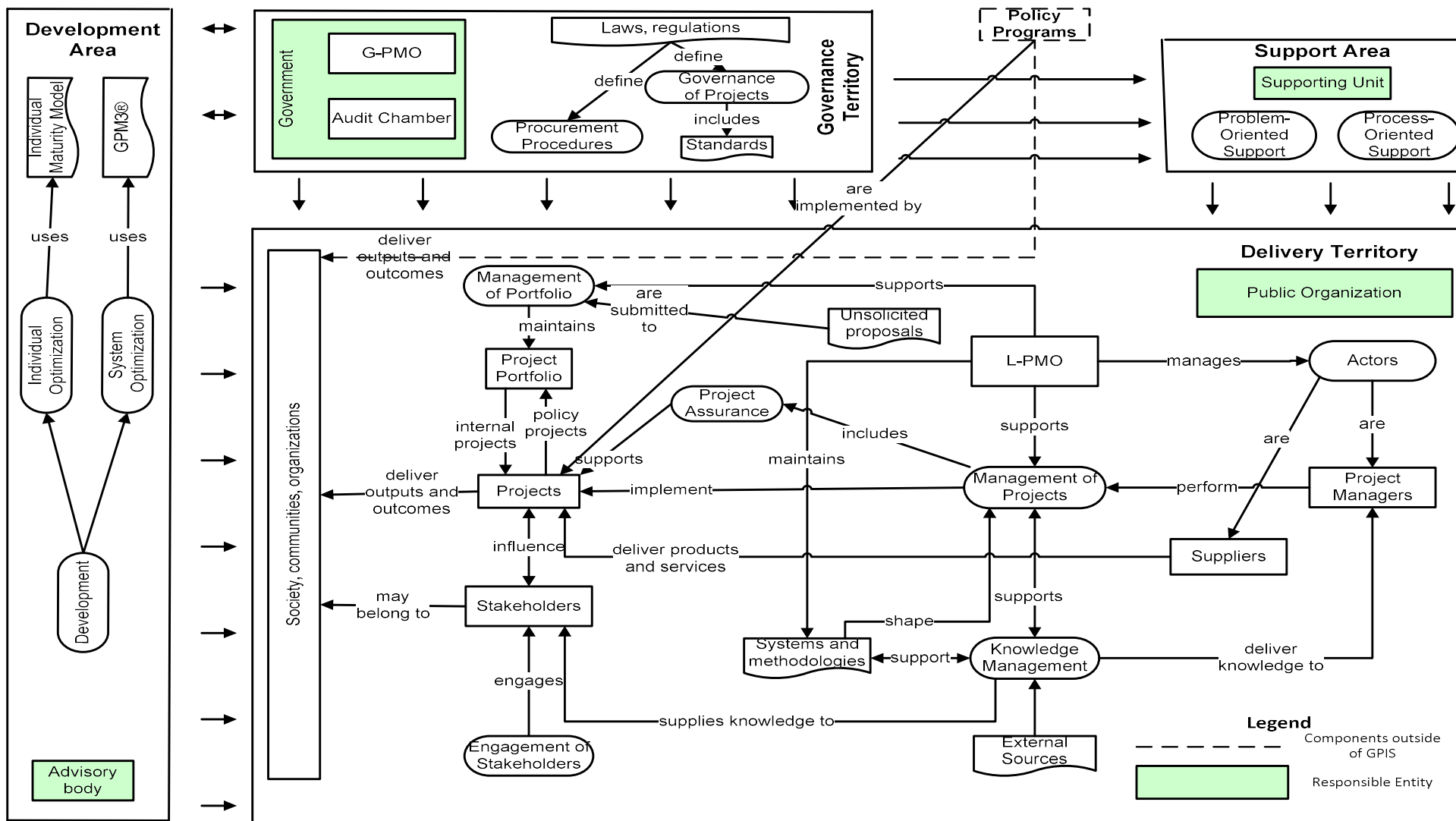


Figure 1. A model of Governmental Project Implementation System (based on Gasik, 2023a)

GPIS is an executive structure for implementing public policies. The government establishes public project governance as part of broader state governance. Public institutions execute projects in compliance with these governance rules, with varying levels of autonomy. If project teams encounter challenges beyond their capacity, they can seek support from specialized government entities. Additionally, dedicated bodies analyze and improve GPIS as a whole.

Governments can use this model to enhance GPIS in public administrations facing difficulties with best practice adoption. However, adaptations must consider the unique systemic, political, legal, social, and economic conditions of each country. Where no GPIS exists, this model can guide its development.

The approach presented by project management associations, such as PMI or IPMA, can be used to implement the project part of public policies and programs. However, many public programs blend projects with ongoing operational processes.

Public administration, project management experts, and researchers should collaborate to develop a comprehensive model covering all types of public policy programs—whether project-based, operational, or mixed.

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