

Turn Your Frog into a Handsome PRINCE2™ Project



The comprehensive PRINCE2™ project management methodology is the ideal framework within which to develop NHS projects.

The PRINCE2™ project management methodology is owned and mandated by the UK Government and several leading companies still consider it to be the methodology of choice. The reason is simple: PRINCE2™ works, or, to be more specific, it can be tailored to fit any number of projects. Any project – no matter how big or small - benefits from project management. A project exists to deliver products (physical or intellectual), to meet objectives and provide benefits to the organisation. These three goals cannot be achieved unless proper control is exerted over the project. Once controls are in place, senior managers benefit hugely from management by exception and are able to devote their time to other priorities. Why can't this be achieved through careful planning and common sense? It can, but expectations tend to vary considerably when planning is done on different levels and presented in different formats (or just on a Gantt chart). Monitoring and control would also vary in style and effectiveness without any kind of structure. PRINCE2™ provides a common language and an understanding of what to expect during the project, when to expect it and which format to expect. PRINCE2™ sets out a practical framework within which to run projects. It begins by asking whether the project is viable and worth doing before comprehensive planning is undertaken. In PRINCE2™, the business benefits of the outcome are the driving force behind the project. This focus means that projects do not simply keep charging on when they may no longer be viable. Good implementation of PRINCE2™ reduces time spent fire-fighting and makes resources available for use in other areas. A comprehensive manual accompanies PRINCE2™ – so why do we need PRINCE2™ training? The manual is a terrific resource tool, once you understand the links between the elements. It provides a framework to plan and control projects and to coordinate individual input. Without PRINCE2™, you'd just have a collection of talented individuals, not a team. Live projects should tailor the method so that it's appropriate to the specific project and its environment. Tailoring can be better understood with good training. Does this mean that all your staff members need to become PRINCE2™ practitioners? Definitely not. There are many levels of training available which would suit different levels of project responsibility. There is a need, however, to ensure that there is an understanding of what the method involves and of the responsibilities of the various project roles. This starts at the top, i.e. the decision-makers or senior managers commissioning projects need to understand the framework and responsibilities or else they will, unknowingly, undermine the project manager trying to implement PRINCE2™ and put the project at risk.

What levels of training are required and for whom?

Once you have decided what level of training is suitable for the people involved in projects within the organisation, the next step is to decide who should undertake the training. Many training organisations offer PRINCE2™ training, but they do vary in terms of what they offer – some will match the needs of one organisation while others will match the needs of another. There are many well-established criteria that will help you choose a suitable training organisation. However, you must consider two very important criteria before you make your decision. The first criterion is that the organisation should be an accredited training organisation as shown on the APM Group website. This means that their systems and materials have all been reviewed by APM Group, the organisation responsible for PRINCE2™ standards and examinations. The second criterion is that the training organisation should offer a trainer who has project experience in the relevant area. This could be a problem for the NHS as very few PRINCE2™ trainers have worked in the NHS, either clinically or managerially.

What benefits can your organisation expect to gain by adopting PRINCE2™?

Benefits for senior managers include:

- Clear terms of reference;
- Defined structures and roles;
- Manageable states;
- Management by exception;
- Improved communication;
- Project meetings at key points only;
- Users and suppliers at quality reviews;
- Projects under control.

WHAT	WHO	WHY
Board briefing	Senior management/project decision-makers.	Gives a brief insight into the PRINCE2™ framework, the benefits of using it and the roles and responsibilities involved.
Overview	Project team members/ those giving input or interfacing with projects.	Understanding of how the method works, what the main communication channels are and who is responsible for what.
Practical PRINCE2™ or project support course	Project support or those who provide administrative help or planning support. Project managers or team managers who want a practical understanding of how to implement PRINCE2™.	Gives more detail about the method from a practical perspective. Practice producing project documents is gained.
Practical PRINCE2 or project support course	Project support or those who provide administrative help or planning support. Project managers or team managers who want a practical understanding of how to implement PRINCE2™.	Gives more detail about the method from a practical perspective. Practice producing project documents is gained.
PRINCE2™ foundation	Project managers/project support/project assurance or project board members who want a more in-depth understanding.	Provides a thorough grounding and a qualification confirming knowledge of the method is awarded.
PRINCE2™ practitioner	Project manager/project assurance or those who want to move into a project management career.	Builds on foundation level knowledge and focuses on how to apply the method to actual projects.

Finally, ask yourself, what happens next? How are you going to use the new skills that your employees will acquire? What support will be needed for directors and managers to make your next project a success? Once you've answered all these questions, you'll be ready to adopt a new methodology that will redefine project management in your organisation. Opt for the prince instead of the frog and success is virtually guaranteed.

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