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IPMA

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE

for Project Management



version 5.0

IPMA GLOBAL STANDARD

publication

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INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE

for Project Management

version 5.0

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For Project Management

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Foreword by IPMA President

Project management has always been about turning ambition into reality. Today, however, the context in which we lead projects is changing at unprecedented speed with volatile and uncertain environments. Organizations are navigating technological disruption (foremost digital), growing complexity, distributed ways of working, increasing regulatory expectations, and an urgent need to create sustainable value. Projects, programs, and portfolios are no longer simply mechanisms for delivering defined outputs; they are among the principal means through which organizations implement strategy, enable transformation, realize benefits, and contribute to lasting societal impact.

It is in this environment that IPMA presents the fifth edition of the **IPMA Individual Competence Baseline®**. The **IPMA ICB5** builds on our longstanding commitment to competence-based professional development while responding to the realities facing today's and tomorrow's project professionals. It moves beyond the traditional view of the project manager as a coordinator of scope, time, cost, and quality. Instead, it recognizes the project professional as an adaptive leader who works within complex systems, connects strategy with execution, engages people, exercises sound judgment, and creates sustainable value.

At the heart of the IPMA ICB is a clear understanding of competence: the demonstrated application of knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve intended results in a specific context. This emphasis on demonstrated performance is fundamental. Competence is not defined only by what an individual knows, but by the ability to apply that knowledge responsibly and effectively in real situations. Experience, reflection, self-learning, and continuous development therefore remain essential throughout every stage of a professional career.

The familiar **Eye of Competence** continues to provide the foundation of the standard. Its three interconnected areas - **Perspective, People, and Practice** - offer a balanced view of professional competence and are used differently at different stages of a project professional's career. Perspective enables individuals to understand the context, purpose, governance, culture, and strategic environment of their work. People address the personal, interpersonal, and leadership capabilities required to engage others and build effective

collaboration. Practice brings together the professional methods, tools, and techniques needed to design, deliver, adapt, and create value through projects, programs, and portfolios.

This edition also strengthens areas that have become indispensable to responsible professional practice. **Sustainability stewardship** is positioned as a competence element, requiring project professionals to consider environmental, social, economic, ethical, and governance impacts throughout the project, program and portfolio life cycles and beyond. **Digital enablement** is recognized as a cross-cutting capability that influences planning, collaboration, decision-making, automation, analytics, and value delivery. Together with an increased emphasis on leadership, adaptability, organizational transformation, and stakeholder trust, these developments reflect the expanding responsibilities of our profession.

The **IPMA ICB5 is not a prescriptive methodology** and does not define a single way to manage a project, program, or portfolio. Its strength lies in providing a globally applicable and context-sensitive baseline of competences. It can be used across industries, cultures, organizational settings, and delivery approaches. It supports assessment and certification, education and training, self-development, organizational capability building, research, and the creation of new professional products and services.

The IPMA ICB5 also forms part of the wider IPMA Standards Framework, alongside the Project Excellence Baseline, the Organizational Competence Baseline, and the Research Excellence Baseline. Each provides a distinct perspective, yet their greatest value is achieved when they are applied together: competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and advancing professional knowledge all reinforce one another in the creation of sustainable value.

This standard is the result of extensive international collaboration. Practitioners, researchers, educators, assessors, certification bodies, Member Associations, and volunteers from across the IPMA community have contributed their knowledge, experience, and commitment. On behalf of IPMA, I extend my sincere gratitude to our 70+ Member Associations and to the many experts they nominated, supported, and encouraged throughout the development of this standard. Their willingness to share knowledge, challenge assumptions, and contribute perspectives from different countries, cultures, sectors, and professional communities ensured that the ICB5 is truly international in its outlook and relevant to the global profession.

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My special appreciation goes to **Tim Jaques, Project Lead**, for his exemplary leadership, perseverance, and commitment throughout this demanding undertaking. I also thank the members of his **editorial team and Peter Pürckhauer**, whose expertise, constructive dialogue, and extraordinary dedication transformed an ambitious vision into a coherent and forward-looking standard. Their work demonstrates what can be achieved when professionals from across the IPMA community unite around a shared purpose.

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, Tim, the core and extended teams, Mary, and everyone who contributed to this journey: **this standard is a testament to your collective effort and to the strength of the IPMA community. You have our heartfelt thanks.**

I invite every reader to approach the IPMA ICB5 not simply as a publication, but as a guide for reflection, development, and action. May it help individuals strengthen their competence, organizations create environments in which professionals can succeed, and our global community deliver projects that achieve meaningful results and lasting positive impact.



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

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 represents the framework and demonstrates how the standards operate as an integrated system to support sustainable value creation.

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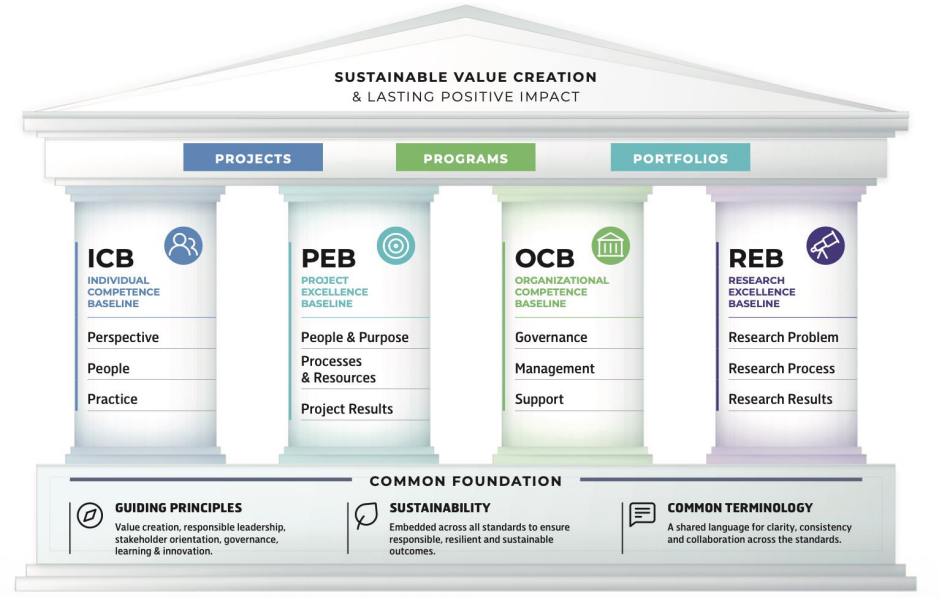


Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards

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 Project Excellence Baseline (PEB)** defines the characteristics of project and program excellence and provides a framework for assessing, recognizing, and continuously improving project performance
- **IPMA Organizational Competence Baseline (OCB)** defines the organizational capabilities required to consistently enable projects, programs, and portfolios to deliver intended results and contribute to strategic objectives
- **IPMA Research Excellence Baseline (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**.

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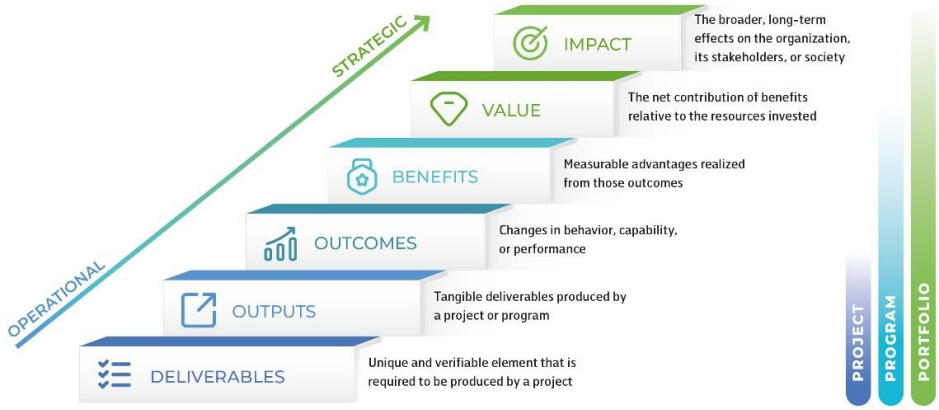


Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier

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 or the consistent delivery of intended outcomes. 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.

Collectively, the guiding principles promote:

- Turning strategy into results
- Stakeholder orientation, collaboration, and ethical behavior
- Effective governance, accountability and transparency
- 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 outcomes, benefits, capabilities, and value delivered to organizations, stakeholders, society, and the environment

Sustainability also requires **sustainable leaders**. Sustainability stewardship 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 Reference Guide on Sustainable Project Management.

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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

1. Introduction

The IPMA Individual Competence Baseline Version 5.0 (IPMA ICB®) is the global standard for individual competence in project, program, and portfolio management. The IPMA ICB supports the development of individual competence through the presentation of a complete inventory of competence elements across projects, programs, and portfolios.

The objective of the IPMA ICB is to strengthen individual competence and to provide an integrated inventory of competences that, when demonstrated, represent mastery across delivery domains. Projects these days are implementing new products/services/capabilities and are increasingly shaping innovation, infrastructure, organizational transformation, and societal impact. Competent project managers are therefore more effective and succeed in translating strategy into sustainable results.

Expectations for measurable outcomes, regulatory compliance, sustainability, and stakeholder trust continue to rise. The IPMA ICB is intended to support individuals and organizations operating in high-complexity environments by clarifying assessable competences.

The IPMA ICB defines the competences an individual should demonstrate when leading work packages, projects, programs, and portfolios of varying complexity to deliver value.

The IPMA ICB is not a process guide or prescriptive methodology. It does not define execution steps. It should be applied alongside project management methodologies and organizational frameworks.

To everyone who uses the IPMA ICB, we wish you a successful journey!

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2. Purpose and Target Audience

2.1. Purpose of Individual Competence Baseline

The IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (IPMA ICB®) defines the competences required for individuals working in project, program, and portfolio environments. Its goal is to provide a practical baseline that is applicable widely, globally and across industries and that can be used for:

- Assessing and certifying project, program and portfolio professionals
- Designing training and development programs
- Guiding competence growth for individuals, teams, and organizations
- Supporting research, product development, and award evaluation
- Creating a common understanding and consistent language for the global IPMA community

2.2. Definition of Competence

Individual competence is the demonstrated application of knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve intended results in a specific context.

Knowledge is an organized collection of structured information and conceptual understanding that an individual acquires through learning and practicing. For example, knowing the steps of a project management methodology.

Skills are capabilities that enable an individual to perform particular tasks. For example, creating a project plan.

Abilities are the capacity to carry out an action, perform a task, or solve a problem in a given context. For example, being able to successfully manage a project schedule might be considered an ability.

In the context of this document, the term **individual** refers to a person capable of recognizing and assessing their own competence.