



The CompTIA Project+
Glossary of Standard Project Management
Terms

Introduction

The following glossary has been developed to help you succeed as a project manager by establishing standard definitions for commonly-used terms you will encounter in your career as a project manager. This glossary is divided into two sections:

- Section I is a listing of basic project management terms. You will be expected to know these terms for the CompTIA Project+ exam.
- Section II provides definitions for terms you will likely need as your project management experience broadens.

This glossary was developed by CompTIA, using a variety of industry references and a number of project management subject-matter experts.

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CompTIA Project+ certification is a global credential that validates the knowledge required to effectively manage projects throughout the entire project life cycle. Based on best practices of project management, as identified by major organizations, the exam incorporates project management concepts including important soft skills such as conflict resolution, negotiation, communication, team building/leadership, and setting and mapping expectations. For more information on CompTIA Project+, please visit www.comptia.org/project+.

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Section I: Basic Terminology

TERM	DEFINITION
A	
Acceptance	See formal acceptance.
Acceptance criteria	Requirements and conditions that must be met before the project deliverables are formally accepted.
Acceptance test	A group of end-users work with the final product to test it for unidentified issues that may appear during routine use. Also known as User Acceptance Testing (UAT).
Actual duration	The number of hours or days expended to complete a project activity.
Actual effort	The actual number of person hours or days expended to complete an activity.
Activity	A specified piece of work that needs to be completed. An activity typically has an expected duration, cost and requires certain resources. Also known as task.
Activity list	A list of the defined activities that need to be completed for a project.
Activity sequencing	Identifying activity dependency relationships (how activities affect each other) and determining the best order to perform the activities to complete the project.
Actual cost (AC)	The actual cost expended to complete a project activity or work package.
Assignment	The activities team members are responsible to complete.
Assumptions	Factors that are believed to be true and affect project planning. Assumptions may impact risk and should always be documented and validated.
B	
Bar chart	A schedule that shows project activities with associated start and completion dates. Also known as a Gantt chart.
Baseline	Represents the original approved plan for schedules, costs, etc. and is used to monitor and control ongoing project performance.
Best practices	A generally accepted set of standards for performing work.
Budget	The amount of money allocated for a project.
Budget at completion (BAC)	The budget estimate determined in the planning phase for a work package or entire project to be completed.

TERM	DEFINITION
Budgeted cost of work performed (BCWP)	The total budgeted cost of all work completed on a project to date. Also known as earned value (EV).
Business requirements	The conditions that the product must meet to support the high-level processes and needs of the business.
Business value	The positive impact for the business that will be achieved with completion of the project (e.g. generate revenue, customer satisfaction, etc.).
C	
Change control board	A group of stakeholders responsible for reviewing and accepting or rejecting changes to the project.
Change control process	A process that ensures changes to the project are identified, evaluated, approved, documented and managed.
Change management plan	A plan that documents the process for managing changes to the project.
Change request	A document that is submitted to request a change to any part of the project management plan after the plan was approved.
Communications	Relaying information so that all concerned parties have an equal understanding.
Communications management plan	A plan that documents who will receive information about the project, what information they will receive, when they will receive it and how the information will be communicated. It also identifies the person who is responsible for providing the information.
Communications planning	The planning process to determine the communication requirements. Identifying who will need what information, when they will need it and how the information should be formatted and disseminated.
Configuration management	The process to ensure the project meets the desired outcome.
Consensus	A decision that a group agrees to support. It is usually achieved by discussing the relevant issues and options.
Constraint	A financial, schedule, risk or resource-based limitation on a project.
Contingency reserve	Allocation of resources to address possible adverse events.
Contract	A legal, mutually-binding document between buyer and seller covering the terms and conditions by which the work must be completed.
Contract administration	Managing the relationship with the seller and overseeing that all elements of the contract are met.
Contract closeout	The process of determining whether the work as outlined in the contract was completed accurately and settling the terms of the contract.

TERM	DEFINITION
Corrective action	Actions taken to bring expected performance in line with the project plan.
Cost-benefit analysis	A benefit measurement method that weighs expected project costs against expected project benefits.
Cost control	Managing and controlling changes to the cost baseline.
Cost estimating	Estimating the cost of resources that will be required to complete each project activity.
Cost of quality	The costs incurred to ensure the quality of the project.
Cost variance (CV)	The difference between the budgeted cost and actual cost. $CV = EV - AC$
Critical path	The longest path through all project activities (as represented in a network diagram) that determines the duration of the project. The activities on the critical path usually have zero float.
Critical path method (CPM)	A technique used to determine the duration of a project by looking at the sequence of activities and their flexibility in scheduling.
Customer	The recipient of service or product that the project created. Also known as client in some organizations.
D	
Decomposition	Breaking the project deliverables into smaller, more manageable components.
Dedicated project time	The amount of time that a resource is available to the project taking into account the resource's non-project activities.
Deliverable	Outcome or product that is produced to complete a work package or project.
Dependency	The relationship between project activities.
Duration	The length of time needed to complete an activity.
E	
Early finish date	The earliest date that an activity may be completed in the activity sequence.
Early start date	The earliest date that an activity can be started in the activity sequence.
Earned value (EV)	A measurement used to determine a project's progress and represents the value of the work completed to date. Also known as budgeted cost of work performed (BCWP).
Effort	The number or person hours or person days needed to complete an activity.
Effort estimate	Calculation of the number of person hours or days needed to complete an activity.
End user	The person or group who will use the product produced by the project.

TERM	DEFINITION
Estimate at completion (EAC)	The estimated total cost of the completed project at a particular time, using current project performance and work that still needs to be completed. $EAC = AC + ETC$
Estimate to complete (ETC)	The estimated amount of the work that still needs to be completed.
Expert judgment	Using subject matter experts to assist in decision making.
External dependency	A relationship between a project activity and a factor outside the scope of the project that influences the completion of that activity.
F	
Finish-to-finish dependency	When the completion of an activity is dependent on the completion of the preceding activity.
Finish-to-start dependency	When the start of an activity is dependent on the completion of the previous activity.
Fixed cost	A cost that remains constant regardless of a change in production.
Fixed resources	An amount of a resource (human, equipment, material) that cannot be changed.
Float	The amount of time that the early start of an activity can be delayed without affecting the completion date of the project. Also known as slack time.
Flowchart	A diagram showing the steps in a process or system from beginning to end.
Forecast	A prediction of future project status.
Formal acceptance	When the authorized stakeholder provides sign-off, indicating the product has been received and is acceptable.
Functional manager	The person responsible for the activities of a specific functional department.
Functional organization	An organizational structure that groups staff hierarchically by area of specialty.
Functional requirements	Conditions that the product must meet to support how the end users will interact with the product.
G	
Gantt chart	A schedule that shows project activities with associated start and completion dates. Also known as bar chart.
Governance	The overall structure of the roles, responsibilities and relationships between the project decision makers and the organization's long-term operational decision makers.
H	

TERM	DEFINITION
High-level requirements	See product description.
Historical information	Records of past projects that are used to assist in planning future projects.
I	
Information distribution	Enacting the communications plan and providing stakeholders with needed information in a timely manner.
Initiation	Formal definition and authorization of a new project or continuation of an ongoing project.
Inputs	Information that is required for a process to begin.
Inspection	A quality control method to examine and measure work results against baseline specifications and requirements.
Integrated change control	Coordinating and managing change across the entire project scope, schedule and budget.
Integration management plan	A plan that documents how elements of the project will be integrated and outlines how changes will be managed across the project.
Integration planning	The planning process to establish how all elements of the project will be coordinated and how changes will be managed throughout the project.
Issue	An identified element or event that may have a negative impact on the project and needs to be avoided or resolved.
Issue log	A document that outlines each project issue, along with the person responsible for resolving it, status and expected resolution date.
K	
Kickoff meeting	A meeting held at the end of major planning activities for all stakeholders to provide an overview of the project and outline expectations, ensure a common understanding of the project and to build consensus and excitement about the project.
L	
Lag	A mandatory delay between activities.
Late finish date	The latest date an activity can be completed without delaying the completion of the entire project.
Late start date	The latest date an activity can begin without affecting the completion of the entire project.
Lessons learned	The learning that takes place during the project and is documented to provide information on what went well and which aspects could have been improved. Lessons learned serve as references for future projects.

TERM	DEFINITION
M	
Matrix organization	An organization where project team members answer to both a functional manager and a project manager.
Milestone	The completion of a significant event or major deliverable used to measure project progress.
N	
Negative variance	The negative number that results from comparing planned project results with actual project results. A negative variance in the project schedule indicates the project is behind schedule. A negative variance in the budget indicates the project is over budget.
Network diagram	A method of determining the sequence of activities, including dependencies for a project. Types include the activity-on-node (AON), arrow diagramming method (ADM) and precedence diagramming method (PDM).
O	
Operations and maintenance	The turnover of a project to the operational staff of an organization for ongoing support and maintenance.
Opportunity	A chance to increase project benefits.
Opportunity cost	The opportunity given up by choosing to do one project over another one.
Order of magnitude estimate	A high-level estimate usually made during the initiation phase that assigns a cost estimate range to the project based on a completed similar project. This estimate typically falls between - 25% and +75% of the actual budget.
Output	The outcome or end result of a process.
P	
Performance reporting	Reporting to the stakeholders to provide information about the project's status, progress, accomplishments and future project performance predictions.
Phase	A distinct stage of the project or lifecycle. There are typically four phases in a project management lifecycle: Initiation and scope definition; planning; execution, control and coordination; and closure, acceptance and support.
Positive variance	The positive number that results from comparing planned project results with actual project results. A positive variance in the project schedule indicates the project is ahead of schedule. A positive variance in the budget schedule indicates the project is under budget.

TERM	DEFINITION
Predecessor	An activity that is on the same network diagram path and occurs before another activity.
Probability impact matrix	A method of determining the severity of risk by looking at the probability of occurrence and impact on project objectives.
Procurement planning	The process of determining which goods and services should be purchased or performed outside of the organization and outlines the details of what, how and when the goods should be acquired.
Product description	An explanation of the major characteristics of the product including an explanation of why the product meets the business needs. Also known as high-level requirements.
Product life cycle	The required phases to develop the product. For example, creation of a software product may follow a software development lifecycle that consists of requirements-gathering, design, development, testing and roll-out phases.
Product verification	Ensuring the stakeholders find the key deliverables to be satisfactorily completed.
Program	A group of related projects that are managed together.
Program evaluation and review techniques (PERT)	A weighted average time estimate of project duration using optimistic (O), pessimistic (P) and most likely (ML) estimates of project duration. Also known as three-point estimating. $PERT = O + (4)ML + P$
Project	A temporary endeavor with defined start and end dates that creates a unique product or service.
Project champion	An individual, who believes in, understands and supports the project.
Project charter	A document that is created in the initiation phase that provides direction about the project's objectives and management and authorizes the project to begin. Also known as a project initiation document.
Project initiation document	See project charter.
Project life cycle	The management phases of a project which includes: initiation and scope definition; planning; execution, control and coordination; closure, acceptance and support.
Project management	The process of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling and closing out a project by applying skills, knowledge, tools and techniques to fulfill requirements.
Project management plan	An overall project plan that contains all of the project management-related documents created during the phases of initiation and scope definition and planning.

TERM	DEFINITION
Project manager	The person responsible for providing leadership to the team and managing the project and its associated work to ensure that expected results are obtained.
Project performance indicators	Measures to determine whether the project is on track.
Project scope	The work required to produce the product of the project.
Project team members	The people who perform the work associated with the project.
Projectized organization	An organizational structure that is focused on projects. The project manager has authority over the resources assigned to the project.
Proof of concept	A project that attempts to prove whether an activity or an idea can be accomplished.
Q	
Qualitative risk analysis	Uses a subjective approach to determine the likelihood that risks will occur and the impact that risks will have on the project. This information enables the risk to be prioritized.
Quality	The degree to which the product of the project meets requirements.
Quality assurance	The evaluation of overall project performance on a regular basis to ensure quality management processes are followed.
Quality audit	Review and evaluation of the project performance to ensure quality management processes are followed.
Quality control	The process of measuring specific results to determine compliance with quality standards and taking corrective action if necessary.
Quality management plan	A plan that documents the quality activities and outlines the processes, procedures, responsibilities and resources required for maintaining project quality.
Quality planning	The planning process to identify quality standards for the project and determine how these standards will be met.
Quantitative risk analysis	Uses a mathematical approach to analyze the probability that risks will occur and the impact that risks have on the project. This information enables the risks to be prioritized. Techniques used for computing quantitative risk analysis include sensitivity analysis, decision tree analysis and Monte Carlo.
R	
Remote team	Individuals in different locations working on the same project and collaborating electronically or by telephone.

TERM	DEFINITION
Request for proposal (RFP)	A document provided to a prospective vendor requesting a proposal for work and or products to be provided. Also known as Invitation for Bid (IFB).
Requirements	A set of measurable customer wants and desires. See functional requirements, business requirements and technical requirements.
Resource	Anything needed to complete the project. May be people, equipment, facilities or money.
Resource leveling	Scheduling resource usage to be the same for each time period (e.g. monthly).
Resource planning	The process of defining the type and amount of resources needed to complete the project.
Return on investment (ROI)	Determining whether the project outcomes will benefit the organization based on the resources used to complete the project.
Rework	An action to correct a deficiency that was identified by a quality activity.
Risk	A potential event, occurrence or result that can have positive or negative consequences.
Risk assessment	Identifying risks to the project and determining the affect the risks will have on the project.
Risk identification	Identifying potential risks and their associated characteristics along with the positive or negative impact they may have on the project.
Risk management plan	A plan that documents the process for identifying and quantifying project risks and outlines how risks will be addressed or controlled.
Risk mitigation	A risk response that decreases the identified risk to an acceptable level.
Risk monitoring and control	Uses the risk management plan to identify risks, respond to risks and monitor the effectiveness of the risk response.
Risk planning	The planning process to determine how to manage uncertainty within the project. It includes identifying potential risks, their impact and an appropriate response.
Risk register	A formal document that outlines identified project risks.
Risk response	The procedures that are implemented if an identified risk occurs.
Risk trigger	An event that tells a risk is about to occur or has occurred.
Root cause	The main reason a particular situation occurs.
S	
Schedule	The timeline for the project including start and end dates for project activities.

TERM	DEFINITION
Schedule control	Managing and controlling changes to the schedule.
Schedule development	The process of determining activity start and finish dates and finalizing the activity sequence and durations to create the schedule baseline.
Schedule management plan	A plan that documents the process to manage project schedules and any changes made to the schedules.
Schedule variance (SV)	The difference between scheduled activity completion and actual activity completion. SV = EV – PV; SV = Planned Date – Actual Date
Scope	See scope of work.
Scope change control	Controlling changes to the project scope.
Scope change request	A form submitted to request a change to the project scope.
Scope creep	The addition of new features or requirements while the project is in process.
Scope document	A document that contains the project requirements and overall project direction. It should contain the goals, deliverables, budget, success criteria and important milestones.
Scope management plan	A plan that documents the process to manage project scope and any changes to project scope.
Scope of work	The amount of work involved to complete the project. Includes identifying the problem to be addressed by the project including the goals and objectives, measures of success and risks, and obstacles and assumptions that may affect the project outcome. Also known as project scope.
Scope planning	The planning process to develop the scope statement and determine the work of the project.
Scope statement	Documents the project objectives, business justification and goals. It outlines the deliverables that are to be included in the project along with the functional, business and technical requirements.
Sponsor	An executive in the organization who can assign resources and can make final decisions on the project.
Staff acquisition	The process of getting people assigned to and working on the project.
Staffing management plan	A plan that documents when and how people will be added to or released from the project team and outlines the responsibilities of each team member.
Stakeholder	An individual or organization that affects or is affected by the project.
Start-to-finish dependency	The completion of an activity is dependent on the start of the previous activity.
Start-to-start dependency	The beginning of an activity is dependent on the start of the previous activity.

TERM	DEFINITION
Statement of work (SOW)	A document that outlines the details and requirements of the product or service being procured.
Successor	An activity that is on the same network diagram path and occurs after another activity.
T	
Task	See activity.
Technical requirements	The product characteristics that are required for the product to perform the functional requirements.
Time and material contract	A contract based on a unit rate such as an hourly wage plus reimbursement for materials or other expenses incurred.
Triple constraint	The link between the project constraints of time, cost and quality.
V	
Variance	The difference between actual and planned values.
Variance analysis	The process of comparing planned project results against actual project results, determining the impact of the variance and implementing corrective actions if needed.
Virtual team	Individuals in different reporting structures, departments, locations or organizations working together on the same project.
W	
War room	A room where team members can work on project activities with a minimum of external interference, which helps create a project identity in matrix organizations.
Workaround	A response to deal with an unforeseen risk. A workaround is not planned in advance of the risk occurrence.
Work breakdown structure (WBS)	A deliverable-oriented hierarchy that depicts the entire project work.
WBS dictionary	A document describing each work package in the WBS.
Work effort	The number of hours that it would take a person to complete an activity if they worked only on that activity.
Work package	The lowest level of the WBS. Includes activities required to fulfill a project deliverable or other project work.
Work plan	See schedule.

Section II: Advanced Terminology

TERM	DEFINITION
A	
Activity definition	Identification of the activities that must be performed to complete the product deliverables.
Activity duration estimating	Estimating the number of work periods, in days or hours, needed to complete the project's activities.
Activity-on-Arrow (AOA)	A method of diagramming the sequence of activities in a project using arrows to represent activities and small circles (nodes) connecting the activities to represent relationships. Dummy activities may be included to show activities that are dependent on one another. This method has only finish-to-start relationships. Also known as Arrow Diagramming Method (ADM).
Activity-on-Node (AON)	A method of diagramming the sequence of activities in a project where rectangles (nodes) represent the activities and arrows represent the relationship between the activities. This method uses four types of dependency relationships: finish to start, start to start, finish to finish and start to finish. Also known as precedence diagramming method (PDM).
Administrative closure	The gathering and disseminating of information needed to formalize the completion or termination of a project or phase. Consists of obtaining formal acceptance and completing the related activities to formally end the project work.
Analogous estimating	An estimating technique that uses historical project information to estimate the project duration of a similar project. Also known as top-down estimating.
Arrow diagramming method (ADM)	See Activity-on-Arrow (AOA).
B	
Backward pass	Calculation of the late start and the late finish dates for uncompleted activities by working backwards through the network diagram from the project's end date. Part of critical path method (CPM).
Bottom-up estimating	An estimating technique where every activity is individually estimated and then added together to determine the total project estimate.
Budgeted cost of work scheduled (BCWS)	The total budgeted cost expected to be spent for specific work. Also called planned value (PV).

TERM	DEFINITION
C	
Control chart	Diagram of process results over time and against specified limits to determine whether processes are acceptable or need adjustment.
Cost budgeting	Assigning specific cost estimates to specific activities and creating the cost baseline.
Cost performance index (CPI)	A performance tracking method that compares budgeted cost to the actual cost. CPI = EV / AC
Cost plus fixed fee contract (CPFC)	A cost-reimbursable contract where the buyer pays for costs defined in the contract plus an additional defined amount (fixed fee).
Cost plus incentive fee contract (CPIF)	A cost-reimbursable contract where the buyer pays for costs defined in the contract plus an additional amount if the seller meets performance criteria as outlined in the contract.
Cost plus percentage of cost contract (CPPC)	A cost-reimbursable contract where the buyer pays for the costs defined in the contract plus an additional percentage of the costs if the seller meets performance criteria as outlined in the contract.
Cost reimbursable contract	A contract that provides for payment to the seller for actual costs incurred.
Crashing	Adding resources to activities on the critical path to reduce project duration.
D	
Definitive estimate	An estimating technique usually made during the planning phase that assigns a cost estimate range to each work package in the WBS. This estimate typically falls between -5% and +10% of the actual budget. Also known as bottom-up estimating.
Discretionary dependency	A preferred order of sequencing project activities.
Dummy	An arrow in an AOA diagram that does not represent any actual work but is used to show the relationship between two activities.
Duration compression	Shortening the project completion time without changing the scope of the project.
E	
Earned value analysis	The measurement of actual project status versus expected project status as of the measurement date.
F	
Fast tracking	A method of schedule compression where activities that would typically be performed sequentially are performed

TERM	DEFINITION
	in parallel to decrease schedule duration.
Feasibility study	A study undertaken to determine whether a project is viable.
Fishbone diagram	A graphical diagram that shows how causes or potential causes relate to create potential problems. Also known as Ishikawa diagram.
Fixed price contract (FPC)	A contract where work is performed or a product is provided for a predetermined price.
Fixed price incentive (FPI) fee contract	A fixed price contract (see above) that contains incentives for meeting or exceeding predetermined specifications.
Forward pass	Calculation of the early start and early finish times for project activities by working forward through the network diagram. Part of the Critical Path Method (CPM).
Free float	The amount of time that an activity can be delayed without affecting the early start of the next activity.
H	
Human resource management plan	A plan that documents the project team members along with their roles, responsibilities and reporting structure and defines team development.
Human resource planning	The process of planning and hiring the project team, outlining roles, responsibilities and reporting structure and defining team development.
I	
Invitation for bid (IFB)	See request for proposal (RFP).
Ishikawa diagram	See fishbone diagram.
Iterating	Updating project plans to reflect changes that occur during the planning phase and throughout the project.
M	
Management reserve	An amount of money set aside by senior management to cover future unforeseen costs. It is typically a percentage of the total project cost.
Mandatory dependency	An activity that is dependent upon another activity. For example, a telephone pole must be put up before telephone wire can be strung.
Monte Carlo technique	A technique that uses computer simulations to assess potential risks.
O	
Organizational planning	Consists of defining team member responsibilities, roles, and reporting structure, and preparing the staffing management plan.

TERM	DEFINITION
P	
Parametric estimating	A mathematical model of estimating costs (e.g., cost per square foot).
Pareto chart	A graph that is used to rank the importance of a problem by the frequency with which it occurs.
Planned value (PV)	The budgeted cost of work during a specified time period. Also known as budgeted cost of work scheduled (BCWS).
Precedence diagramming method (PDM)	See activity-on-node (AON).
Procurement management plan	A plan that documents what goods and services needed for the project will be acquired outside of the organization and outlines the process for acquiring the goods and services.
Progressive elaboration	The steps associated with developing and refining a product as needed during the course of the project.
Project management office (PMO)	A group established by an organization to maintain standards, processes and procedures for managing projects throughout the organization.
Project selection	Determining which proposed projects should move forward.
R	
Request for quote (RFQ)	A document that solicits quotes or bids from prospective sellers.
Residual risk	Risk that is still present after risk responses have been planned.
Responsibility assignment matrix (RAM)	Ensures that all activities in the work breakdown structure (WBS) are assigned to a team member and that each member understands the roles and responsibilities that have been assigned to him or her.
Risk acceptance	A risk response that chooses to accept the consequences of the identified risk or the inability to identify another response strategy.
Risk avoidance	A risk response that eliminates the identified risk or protects the project from the risk.
Risk response owner	The person owning responsibility for monitoring a given risk and implementing the risk response plan if necessary.
Risk response planning	The process of reviewing items on the prioritized risk list from the qualitative and quantitative risk analysis to determine which, if any, action should be taken if the risk occurs. Risk response strategies include risk avoidance, risk mitigation, risk transference and risk acceptance.

TERM	DEFINITION
Risk transference	A risk response that shifts the liability of the identified risk to a third party.
S	
Schedule compression	Methods to expedite the completion time of an activity or project (e.g. fast tracking and crashing).
Schedule performance index (SPI)	Ratio of work completed to work planned. SPI = EV – PV
Scope definition	The process of breaking down deliverables into smaller components in order to provide better control.
Scope verification	Formal acceptance by the stakeholders that deliverables and work results are completed to their satisfaction.
Slack time	See float time and free float.
Solicitation	Obtaining bids and proposals from vendors.
Solicitation planning	The process of identifying product requirements and potential sources.
Source selection	Choosing a vendor for a needed product, service or resource.
T	
Team development	Creating an encouraging environment for stakeholders to contribute, and developing the project team into a functional group that enhances project outcomes.
Threat	A negative risk that may or may not occur (as opposed to an opportunity, which is a positive risk).
Time estimate	Calculation of the time required to complete an activity or the project. It may be obtained by analogous estimating, expert judgment or by using an equation to calculate the duration of the activity.
To-complete performance index (TCPI)	The performance that must be achieved during the remaining project to meet stated goals.
Top-down estimating	See analogous estimating.
W	
Work authorization system	A formal process to ensure work is done in the right sequence and at the right time.