



Project Management for Development Organizations

Doing the Right Projects,
Doing the Projects Right

Matrix Based Structures

Matrix based project organizations allow program units to focus on their specific technical competencies and allow projects to be staffed with specialists from throughout the organization. For instance, nutrition specialists may report to one program unit, but would be allocated out to work on various projects. A health specialist might report to the health unit, but be temporarily assigned to a project in another project that needs health expertise. It is common for people to report to one person in the programmatic unit, while working for one or two project managers from other projects in different programmatic units.

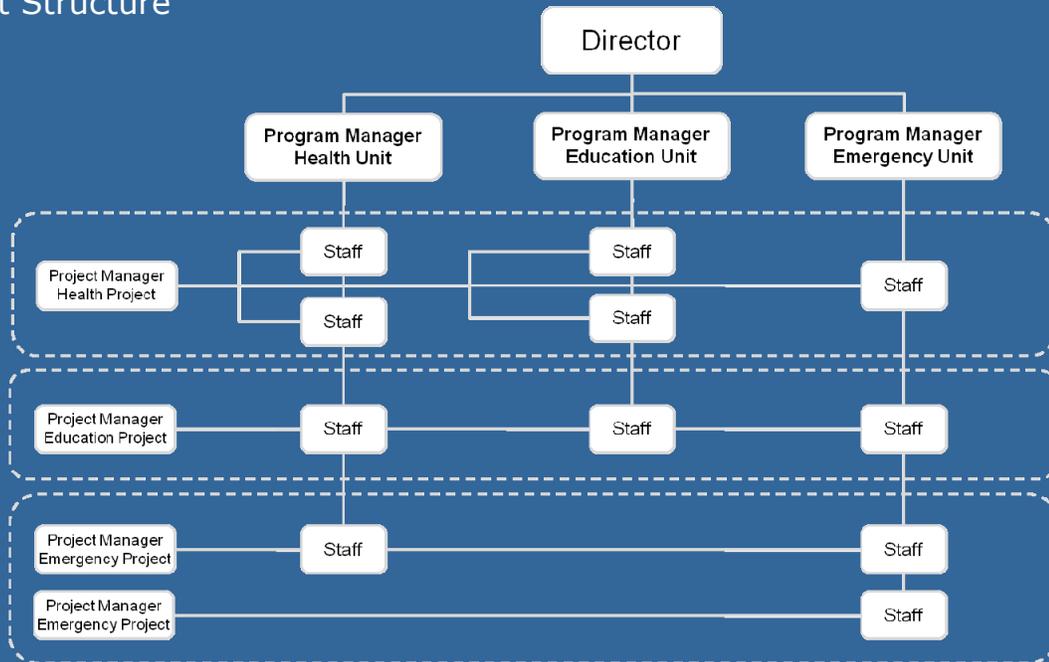
Advantages

The main advantage of the matrix based organization is the efficient allocation of all resources, especially scarce specialty skills that cannot be fully utilized by only one project. For instance, monitoring and evaluation specialists may not be utilized full-time on a project, but can be fully leveraged by working on multiple projects.

The matrix based organization is also the most flexible when dealing with the changing programmatic needs and priorities. Additional advan-

tages of matrix management are: it allows team members to share information more readily across the unit boundaries, allows for specialization that can increase depth of knowledge and allow professional development and career progression to be managed. It is easier for a program unit manager to loan an employee to another manager without making the change permanent. It is therefore easier to accomplish work objectives in an environment when task loads are shifting rapidly between programmatic units.

Matrix Project Structure



Disadvantages

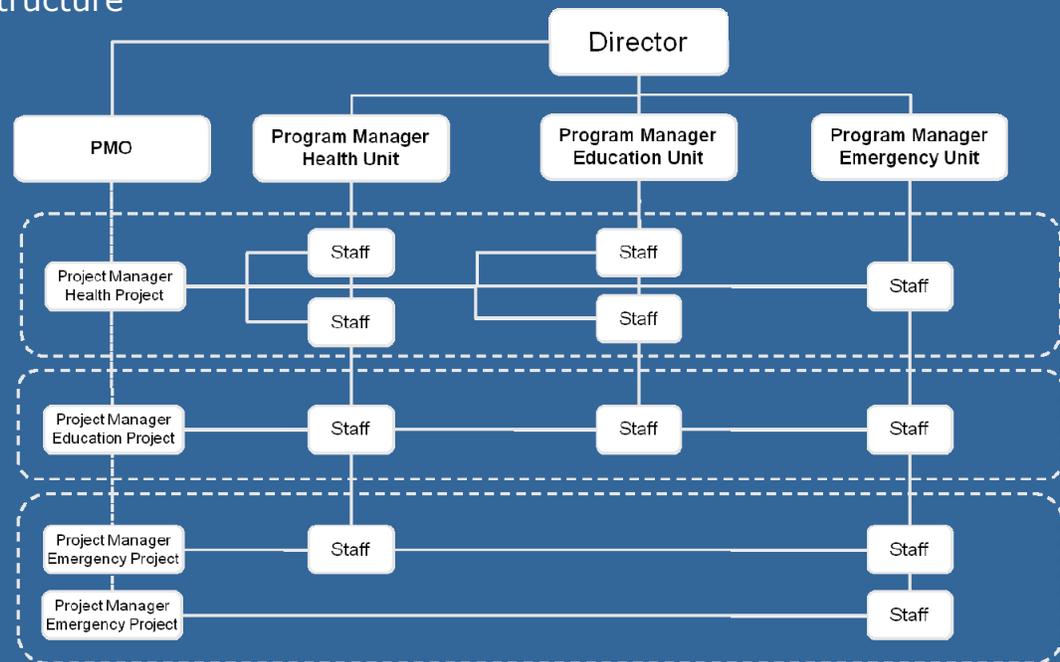
The main disadvantage is that the reporting relationships are complex. Some people might report to programmatic unit managers for whom little work is done, while actually working for one or more project managers. It becomes more important for staff members to develop strong time management skills to ensure that they fulfill the work expectations of multiple managers. This organization also requires communication and cooperation between multiple programmatic unit managers and project managers since that all be competing for time from the same resources.

The Project Management Office

Matrix management can put some difficulty on project managers because they must work closely with other managers and workers in order

to complete the project. The programmatic manager may have different goals, objectives, and priorities than the project manager, and these would have to be addressed in order to get the job done. An approach to help solve this situation is a variation of the Matrix organization which includes a coordinating role that either supervises or provides support to the project managers. In some organizations this is known as the Project Management Office (PMO), dedicated to provide expertise, best practices, training, methodologies and guidance to project managers.

Matrix Project Structure



The PMO unit also defines and maintains the standards of project management processes within the organization. The PMO strives to standardize and introduce economies of scale in the implementation of projects. The PMO is the source of documentation, guidance and metrics on the practice of project management and implementation. The PMO can also help in the prioritization of human resources assigned to projects.

These series of articles focuses on concepts and practices related to development projects. It is our hope that the ideas and methodologies presented here prove useful to anyone who is engaged in managing projects in the broader development community, and helps bring sustainable benefits to the communities and beneficiaries who need it the most.

The Millennium Development Goals aim by 2015 to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people.

PM4DEV is committed to provide resources and develop knowledge and expertise to support development organizations in their efforts to achieve this ambitious goal.



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www.pm4dev.com
info@pm4dev.com