PRINCE2®

CityRailLink

CASE STUDY

City Rail Link

› **USING PRINCE2 P3M3 TO ASSESS PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT MATURITY**

PM SOLUTIONS

PeopleCert

INTRODUCTION

PM SOLUTIONS AUSTRALIA

PM Solutions Australia is a digital solutions company specializing in three strategic areas, one of which involves offering consulting services using PeopleCert best practice products. As an Accredited Consulting Partner (ACP), PM Solutions is authorized to conduct PRINCE2 P3M3 assessments using the PeopleCert portfolio, programme and project maturity models. PM Solutions provides consulting services to New South Wales, Queensland and the Commonwealth Government, and also has clients in New Zealand.

> We have consistently demonstrated our commitment to global best practices through our accreditation, providing our customers with the confidence in our credibility and authority to assess their business and practices areas against portfolio, programme, and project management global best practices.
>
> **From the PM Solutions website**

PRINCE2 P3M3

PRINCE2 P3M3 stands for the Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Maturity Model. The model is a tool for assessing and benchmarking an organization's current performance. This assessment can then be used to develop plans for improvement based on which areas are strong and which are weak.

A PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment can deliver the following benefits:

› improved outcomes and return on investment on projects and programmes
› enhanced product or service delivery quality, which increases stakeholder satisfaction
› structures for managing continual improvement, including the integration of processes across the organization
› increased focus on the maturity of the organization's capabilities, driving commitment to change
› recognition of previous investments, justifying business cases for change.

[1] https://www.pmsolutions.com.au/best-practice/peoplecert-axelos-products/

CITY RAIL LINK

City Rail Link (CRL) is a construction programme that, at the time of writing, is underway in Auckland, New Zealand. The project is set to deliver 3.45 km of twin tunnels underneath Auckland, as well as two brand-new central stations - better connecting the city's rail network and allowing it to at least double in capacity.

> The City Rail Link is a game-changer for Auckland. It's NZ's largest transport infrastructure project ever.
>
> **From the CRL website[2]**

The construction is being managed by City Rail Link Limited (CRLL), which split the construction work into a number of smaller, discrete contracts. In project management terms, each contract is a project within the larger programme of work.

Because of the scale and importance of the CRL programme, the CRLL team wanted to understand the maturity of their organization and processes, which they assumed would lead to further work to improve the maturity of their processes. The maturity assessment would be performed by external consultants, who would bring objectivity and an independent perspective.

CRLL compiled a list of potential ACPs from the PeopleCert site and offered PM Solutions the chance to bid for the assessment project, primarily because of the strength of their case studies, testimonials and experience with heavy rail transformations.

WINNING THE PROJECT

PM Solutions' flexible approach and heavy rail industry experience ensured that they were awarded the contract to conduct the PRINCE2 P3M3 maturity assessment and an additional deep-dive assurance review. PM Solutions demonstrated that they understood the unique nature of the CRL programme, which needed a tailored maturity assessment solution.

PM Solutions' approach to any PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment is flexible and tailored. Every organization is different and has different needs; what is valuable for one might not be valuable for another. Assessors need to work to understand each unique organization and adapt to their needs.

As part of the tendering process, PM Solutions asked CRLL questions to better understand their needs. Through this process, PM Solutions achieved a broad understanding of the environment, then offered a maturity assessment plan tailored specifically to CRLL which was supported by the PRINCE2 P3M3 global best practice for maturity assessments.

> "We were able to say, as part of the tender, exactly which areas we should assess, even down to which perspectives we would consider, and which ones would not be useful to them. They had a very clear understanding of what the approach would be, what was going to be assessed, and what the expected outcomes were."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

[2] www.cityraillink.co.nz/

THE ASSESSMENT

SETTING UP

The PM Solutions team needed to expand their understanding of CRLL's environment and the scope of the upcoming assessment. The assessment team worked closely with CRLL's Director of Programme Performance and Controls, who provided access to CRLL's secure portal, where the organization's documentation was stored. The PM Solutions team spent two weeks reviewing the documentation and worked with the CRLL team to tailor the assessment plan to deliver the most benefit.

> "We wanted to get a feel for the organization and the challenges that it had to overcome to get to where it was. It was such an important programme for the residents of greater Auckland and its visitors … so we had to get it right."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

TIMING

At the time, CRLL was managing four key infrastructure and enablement projects and overseeing several other inflight initiatives (mostly managing utilities, demolition and property acquisition activities). The PM Solutions team assessed CRLL on its programme and project capabilities because of the type of work it was focused on at the time; the company had no need for a portfolio assessment.

The initial maturity assessment took place while the CRL programme was still at the beginning of its lifecycle. The CRLL team had done considerable foundational work and were awaiting the appointment of a preferred Alliance Partner, allowing for progress towards delivering the main bodies of work.

> "I thought it was an excellent time to do the assessment because it was relatively early. CRLL knew where it was heading, but it was aware that there was a long journey ahead and the team wanted us to help them with that journey."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

TAILORING

Tailoring is a crucial part of any PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment. Every organization is unique; what is valuable to one organization will not necessarily be valuable to another. Through initial conversations with the CRLL Programme Performance and Controls office, the PM Solutions team had developed a strong sense of how the assessment should be tailored.

The team made an early decision to consider all seven perspectives in the assessment because they were all relevant to the CRL programme.

> "In this case, there was clear agreement on the perspectives. They were of great value to the organization and it truly hit the mark in what CRL was looking for."
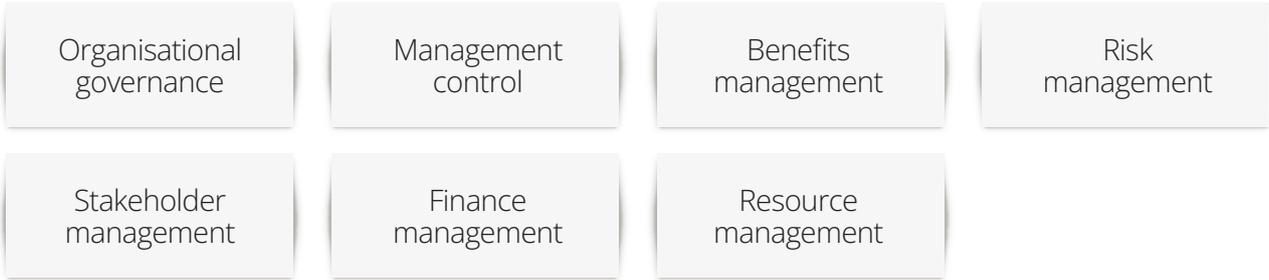>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

However, some threads were irrelevant to the assessment. After discussions with CRLL's PMO, the team decided to exclude two: asset management and commercial sell. A few other threads were close to being excluded but, after more thought, the team decided to include them.

> "It was extremely important to engage with the organization to ensure that the right perspectives and threads were selected. Otherwise, we find from experience that the report does not assess the key value areas of the organization."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

PRINCE2 P3M3 PERSPECTIVES:

Organisational governance	Management control	Benefits management	Risk management
Stakeholder management	Finance management	Resource management	

PRINCE2 P3M3 THREADS:

Assurance	Asset management (optional)	Behaviours	Commercial sell (optional)
Commercial buy (optional)	Information and knowledge management	Infrastructure and tools	Planning
Organization	Techniques	Process	Model integration

INTERVIEWS

The next step was to go on site to meet with people who could bring clarity and add nuance to PM Solutions' understanding.

CRLL staff were interviewed to discuss the organization's strengths and weaknesses. They also discussed their target state, which was crucial, as it allowed the PM Solutions team to build that vision into their recommendations at the end of the assessment. Further interviews took place in a private meeting room, where the team explained to every interviewee that everything they said was in confidence and their direct comments were non-attributable to the final report.

The final report, which PM Solutions wrote and presented to the CRLL Senior Leadership Team at the end of the process, was completely anonymised. No person interviewed was mentioned by name and the report did not include direct quotes from any interviewees.

An open forum is necessary for an effective assessment. It was important that interviewees knew that the assessors were only there to assess the organization's programme and project maturity. PM Solutions was not interested in judging what was done well or badly, nor deciding who was at fault in any situation. This built trust between the PM Solutions team and the interviewees, which helped PM Solutions obtain accurate and useful information.

"The people of City Rail Link are extremely passionate about making a difference for the people of Auckland and providing a world-leading underground rail network. They wanted to be heard so that their experiences could be useful across the business."

Mark Porter, CEO of PM Solutions

DRAFT SCORES

As part of the process of conducting interviews, the team assigned a score that logged the maturity of the organization in respect of the seven PRINCE2 P3M3 perspectives and the respective threads. Each evening, these scores would be added to the assessment spreadsheet, creating an overall score for the selected models. When the interviews were over, the team discussed the draft results with the CRLL Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Programme Performance and Controls, to solicit additional information and perspective that might clarify specific areas.

> "The P3M3 assessment gave City Rail Link a clear, evidence-based view of where they were strong and where targeted uplift would deliver the greatest value—providing leadership with confidence, focus, and a practical roadmap for maturity improvement."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

THE FINAL REPORT

Following the conclusion of the interviews, a draft report of the results was compiled in two weeks, then sent to the CRLL Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Programme Performance and Controls for final review and feedback. The team typically ask for fact checking and a general reaction to the scores; if there were any immediate questions regarding the rationale behind the scoring, it's important to answer them as soon as possible.

The team then acted on the feedback, clarifying the report where appropriate. If any particular fact was wrong or misrepresented, it was fixed at this stage. The team also incorporated improvements in language that were needed to make the report fit for purpose and for a specific audience, which in this case was the executive management team.

The final report was released in good time, and the CRLL Senior Leadership Team had a chance to read it before the PM Solutions team conducted a detailed walkthrough with all project leaders and the Senior Leadership Team.

During the walkthrough, the PM Solutions team presented the report and were able to answer questions and provide rationales and evidence for their findings and the associated maturity scores.

> "By applying a tailored P3M3 approach early in the programme lifecycle, City Rail Link was able to strengthen governance, align its people and controls, and accelerate its journey toward a managed level of maturity with clarity and momentum."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

RECOMMENDATIONS

The final step of a PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment is the creation of a Maturity Improvement Road Map which helps organizations to improve their maturity in the identified areas and in a managed and prioritized manner. CRLL was supplied a detailed Maturity Improvement Road Map that would allow the organization to improve its programme and project management maturity by one level in six months and achieve a 'Managed' level of maturity within 24 months.

After the team delivered and walked through the CRLL programme and project Maturity Improvement Road Map, the assessment was formally closed. The team handed over the reports and rescinded their access to CRLL's secure portal.

> "We explain why CRLL scored a certain amount in each area and then explain what the company will need to do to reach the next level of maturity in, say, a six-month period. Targeting that next maturity level can be daunting, but CRLL was undaunted. The company had the passion, the drive, and the people needed to take it to the next level of maturity."
>
> **Mark Porter,** CEO of PM Solutions

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Porter is an accredited PRINCE2 P3M3 Maturity Model Assessor with an endless enthusiasm for driving global best practice and assurance for portfolio, programmes and projects. Mark's passion for improving portfolio, programme and project management has been cultivated through a long and successful career as a senior executive consultant across some of Australia's and New Zealand's highest profile projects and programmes, for the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Mark has held executive board and advisory positions for IP Australia and the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary Trust, in addition to being an executive board member to a successful start-up incubator, founder and CEO of a leading Asia-Pacific digital solutions company and director of an assurance best practice accreditation company.

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