

CASE STUDY

Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality  
Organization (SASO) / EMpower

# › HOW SASO TRANSFORMED PROJECT DELIVERY WITH PRINCE2 P3M3

# BACKGROUND

The Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) was established pursuant to Royal Decree (dated 03/03/1392H - 1972 in the Gregorian calendar) as a public authority with legal personality and an independent budget.

Its board of directors is the competent authority responsible for managing its affairs and issuing the necessary resolutions to fulfill its mandate.

SASO is responsible for issuing Saudi standards, technical regulations and quality and conformity assessment procedures in alignment with relevant international standards and the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, in accordance with Islamic Sharia and in the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

SASO develops, adopts and approves standards for goods, products, services and measuring and calibration instruments. It oversees compliance with applicable technical regulations to ensure environmental protection, consumer safety and the safeguarding of the Kingdom's markets from non-compliant and counterfeit products.

After more than five decades of supporting economic growth, its vision is to be a global quality infrastructure (QI) leader, enhancing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's competitiveness and improving the quality of life.

“SASO applies the King Abdulaziz Quality Award (KAQA) Excellence Model as its institutional excellence framework, which is comparable to the EFQM framework. It is also worth noting that SASO launched its new strategy in early 2025, further enhancing strategic alignment and reinforcing its ongoing excellence and performance maturity.”

**Wael AlTheyab**  
SASO spokesman

# CHALLENGES

Within its responsibility to develop and regulate standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, SASO runs strategic projects, some of which relate to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 – a “blueprint” to “diversify the economy, empowering citizens, creating a vibrant environment for both local and international investors and establishing Saudi Arabia as a global leader”.

Programmes also form part of SASO's engagement with Vision 2030 through linking connected projects and monitoring mandated initiatives. Meanwhile, each industry sector SASO engages with is managed as a separate portfolio.

Within SASO, managing projects, programmes and portfolios has presented certain challenges, including:

**Monitoring and  
prioritizing projects**

**Strategic linking  
of projects**

**Different governance  
methods based  
on project type**

**Duplication of projects  
and benefits**

**Managing  
stakeholders**

**Project control  
and information**

**Linking spending  
to project  
performance**

**Realizing  
benefits**

# OBJECTIVES

SASO decided to launch a project, programme and portfolio management (PRINCE2 P3M3) maturity assessment to evaluate current management capabilities, identify gaps and create a structured plan for ongoing improvement. The main objectives were:

## › Strengthening strategic alignment

The assessment would ensure that all projects and programmes aligned with SASO's vision, strategic objectives and priorities. Its aim was to verify that initiatives contributed directly to strategic outcomes, rather than operating in isolation. Improved alignment would enable better value realization and ensure resources supported SASO's long-term goals.

## › Enhancing governance and performance monitoring

A key objective was to strengthen governance and oversight across projects, programmes and portfolios. This would include clarifying roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority and improving transparency, accountability and escalation processes. The assessment also aimed to enhance monitoring through standardized reporting, consistent performance indicators and management dashboards to support timely executive decisions.

## › Developing a maturity improvement roadmap

In addition to assessing current maturity, the assessment would translate findings into actionable improvement initiatives. It would identify capability gaps in governance, processes, competencies, tools and benefits management and develop a phased improvement roadmap. The roadmap would outline prioritized actions, clear ownership and realistic timelines to enhance project, programme and portfolio management according to best practices.

## › Defining clear and consistent project criteria

The assessment would help to establish standardized criteria and guidelines for project selection, initiation and management. These criteria would ensure consistency across departments by defining requirements for strategic relevance, expected benefits, risk, feasibility and resource availability. Clear criteria would reduce ambiguity and promote disciplined, repeatable project management.

## › Improving project and portfolio prioritization

The assessment would strengthen portfolio-level decision-making by enabling more informed prioritization of initiatives. It would improve allocation of financial and human resources based on strategic value, impact and risk, rather than urgency or individual requests. Better prioritization would support a balanced, optimized portfolio that maximized value and maintained delivery capacity.

# SOLUTION

SASO engaged the leading Saudi consulting company – and PeopleCert Accredited Consulting Partner – EMpower, led by managing partner, Wafaa Alfrihidi, to conduct a PRINCE2 P3M3 maturity assessment and develop an improvement roadmap.

The assessment was conducted twice: the first time, a diagnostic assessment to identify maturity gaps and devise an improvement plan and, the second time, a certification assessment one year later to reassess the organization's maturity and achieve certification at the assessed maturity level.

Wafaa Alfrihidi said: "PRINCE2 P3M3 was selected as the assessment model to undertake with SASO because it reflects best practice and allowed the authority to benchmark itself against other organizations while giving them deep insights into their current maturity level across project, programme and portfolio management."

EMpower assessed SASO's project, programme and portfolio management against the seven perspectives within the PRINCE2 P3M3 model:

**Organizational  
governance**

**Management  
control**

**Benefits  
management**

**Risk  
management**

**Stakeholder  
management**

**Finance  
management**

**Resource  
management**

As a result of the first PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment, the improvement roadmap devised by EMpower focused on:

› **Organizational Governance:**

1. Project categorization: this covered projects under Vision 2030 along with high priority strategic projects within SASO.
2. Developing a unified governance model for each type of project.
3. Developing a supply chain for each project as a process – from ideation to project closure.

› **Management Control:**

1. Developing a new unit in the PMO and restructuring the PMO functions for all services to the organization. This unit would be responsible for output quality, risk analysis, performance data and launching an awareness campaign and workshops for project managers, while controlling and monitoring performance of projects and implementing high priority initiatives.
2. Developing and enhancing management methods through developing a unified methodology.
3. Ensuring that project managers complied with management methods through greater awareness and workshops.
4. Enhancing the system for providing information to project managers: a new enterprise project management office (EPMO) platform available to project managers and stakeholders enables project updates and provides other necessary information in one location.
5. Embedding lessons learned after each project phase: an online library allows each project manager to upload information and review lessons learned.

› **Finance Management:**

1. Integrating procurement and financial systems.
2. Integrating the EPMO platform with SASO's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system: to align spending with project performance.

› **Stakeholder Management:**

1. Improving stakeholder management and communications plans: the improved communications plan includes two meetings per month with stakeholders, weekly meetings with project owners and daily meetings with project managers.

## RESULTS AND METRICS

Following the second PRINCE2 P3M3 assessment, SASO achieved level 4 maturity certification in project and programme management and level 3 in portfolio management – an increase of one maturity level in each case.

This marked clear progress from the first assessment and demonstrated stronger governance, greater consistency and a more value-driven approach to managing organizational initiatives.

“We have institutionalized a culture where transparency and accountability are the standard. Our PMO's evolution has taught us that project management is not about managing tasks but managing decisions. This shift in methodology allows SASO to move beyond simple execution toward true benefit realization that meets our strategy.”

**Mohammad Almayouf**

Director of Project Management Office at SASO



## A. LEVEL 4 MATURITY IN PROJECT AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Achieving Level 4 maturity indicates that project and programme management practices at SASO are well established, measured and continuously improved. At this level:

- › **Processes are regularly reviewed and optimized** to improve efficiency and effectiveness, rather than followed as static procedures. Lessons learned and performance insights are actively applied to refine delivery practices.
- › **Roles and responsibilities are routinely assessed and refined to ensure** clarity, accountability, and alignment with changing organizational needs and strategic priorities.
- › **The PMO serves as a Centre of Excellence**, providing strategic guidance, standardized methodologies, tools, training and best practices across projects and programmes, extending beyond administrative support.
- › **A centralized system for project and programme data** supports consistent reporting, greater visibility, and evidence-based decision-making at operational and executive levels.
- › **Risks and issues are managed proactively**, with early warning mechanisms to address cross-project dependencies, systemic risks and emerging challenges before they affect delivery or strategic outcomes.

Level 4 maturity shows that SASO now manages projects **systematically and predictably**, with a strong focus on performance improvement and organizational learning.

The EPMO estimated a **50% improvement in project and programme management maturity**, specifically reflected in enhanced financial governance, increased cost tracking accuracy, and improved delivery discipline.

This includes improved visibility over project financials (planned vs. actual spending), better alignment with approved payment schedules, and stronger oversight of budget allocation during both project initiation and execution phases. Additionally, governance enhancements enabled earlier identification of risks and deviations, contributing to more consistent delivery against approved baselines.

## B. LEVEL 3 MATURITY IN PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Achieving Level 3 maturity indicates that portfolio management practices at SASO are well established, measured and continuously improved. At this level:

- › **Formal roles and responsibilities for portfolio oversight and governance** are clearly defined, supporting structured decision-making and accountability.
- › **Initial portfolio prioritization criteria are established**, allowing SASO to evaluate and compare initiatives based on strategic alignment, value, risk and resource availability.
- › Portfolio decisions now focus on **balancing demand with organizational capacity**, rather than approving initiatives in isolation.
- › While portfolio practices continue to evolve, Level 3 provides a solid foundation for more advanced value optimization and benefits-driven portfolio management.

The EPMO estimated a **25–30% increase in portfolio management maturity** following the implementation of the improvement roadmap. This advancement is evident in stronger portfolio governance, more structured planning processes and enhanced performance monitoring. Additionally, there is improved strategic alignment of projects with organizational objectives and clearer identification and management of interdependencies among initiatives.

## C. OVERALL IMPACT

Achieving Level 4 in project and programme management and Level 3 in portfolio management demonstrates SASO's growing capability to deliver initiatives in a controlled, transparent and strategically aligned manner. This progress highlights a clear maturity journey, positioning SASO to further enhance value realization and strategic execution in future maturity cycles.

## Become the next success case!

Connect with us to share your journey and challenges. Together, we can craft a solution that propels your organization forward. Your story could inspire our next success case study.

[peoplecert.org](https://peoplecert.org)

الهيئة السعودية للمعايير الاستراتيجية والجودة  
Strategy and Quality Org.



PeopleCert is the global leader in the certification industry, with a product portfolio of global best practice frameworks and certifications including ITIL® and DevOps Institute for IT & Digital Transformation, and PRINCE2® for Project, Programme & Portfolio Management, as well as language qualifications through LanguageCert. Our certifications are delivered across the globe, empowering people and organizations to achieve what they are capable of, improving organizational efficiency and realizing their life ambitions through learning.