

# International Centre for Complex Project Management (ICCPM)

## Terms of Reference for Research Support

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### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (TOR) is to clearly articulate each party's obligation to the other for the successful conduct of the ICCPM Research Support Program.

### 2. Introduction

The International Centre for Complex Project Management (ICCPM), working with its corporate, government, academic, professional and institutional partners and the global community, aims to provide leadership in the advancement of knowledge and practice in the management and leadership of complex projects, to enable better delivery of complex projects with real social, environmental and economic benefits.

### 3. Our interest in Research

Modern projects are becoming more complex. This is not simply a matter of size, cost and duration, or of the difficulty in integrating advances in technology. More and more, projects spanning the breadth of human endeavour must negotiate diverse and emerging issues in dynamic and changing economic, social and environmental contexts.

The implementation and deployment of such projects demand approaches and skills that are beyond those of traditional project management.

Within an overarching objective to “advance Complex Project Management and Leadership knowledge and practice”, ICCPM has identified the following strategic research objectives:

- Examine the nature of complexity in the context of modern project management
- Review and integrate existing and emerging complex project management and leadership knowledge and practice
- Generate new complex project management and leadership knowledge and practice

### 4. Our role in Research

As the international peak body for complex project management, ICCPM plays an important role in facilitating the exchange of information between researchers and practitioners to support improved project performance, focus research effort and support the development of a skilled future workforce that meets future industry requirements.

ICCPM aims, through its Research Agenda, to inform the direction of individual and institutional research into complex project management and leadership. Further, through the Research Support Program, ICCPM aims to support its Members who are conducting research in one of the priority

areas by providing a platform for Masters and Doctoral candidates, academic institutions, and companies undertaking research in line with the Research Agenda, to connect with practitioners

## 5. The Research Agenda

The ICCPM Research Agenda is intended to provide guidance to institutions and individuals to where research efforts should be applied in order to deliver maximum benefits to ICCPM partners and the global project management community.

The ICCPM Research Agenda is an evolving document that will be reviewed regularly. It will be maintained by ICCPM and informed by ICCPM's Partners, the International Roundtable Program, Focus Groups, Academic workshops and written submissions received by ICCPM.

The current Research Agenda has been built up based on the 2011 Task Force Report: *Complex Project Management – Global Perspectives and the Strategic Agenda to 2025*. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the current ICCPM Research Agenda.

Comment and suggestions for the ICCPM Research Agenda are welcome and should be directed to [admin@iccpm.com](mailto:admin@iccpm.com)

## 6. The Research Support Program

The ICCPM Research Support Program seeks to foster local and international co-operation, closing the gap in understanding between complex project leadership and traditional project management and the pragmatic incremental steps between that must be explored in order to improve project delivery success.

This is an opt in program that aims to connect researchers and practitioners in support of research that progresses knowledge in the area of complex project delivery. No financial support is provided under this program and acceptance does not imply support from ICCPM for the findings of the research.

Researchers wishing to participate in the program must understand and agree to the conditions outlined in Sections 8 and 9.

Practitioners interested in participating should evaluate the request of each individual researcher.

## 7. Priority areas for Research Support

Participation in the Research Support Program will be limited to the field of projects, programs, and portfolios and priority will be given specifically in the following areas of enquiry:

- a. Complexity theory (insights /implications for Projects Portfolio Management, Program Management, and Project Management)
- b. Systems Thinking (Soft Systems rather than Hard Systems)
- c. Social Network Theory
- d. Social processes including how people and teams function
- e. Governance in volatile and uncertain environments
- f. Systemic Risk (uncertainty and opportunity)
- g. Emergence in a project delivery context
- h. Decision making in uncertainty and ambiguity
- i. Leadership in complex projects
- j. The human side of projects (mental health, cross-cultural difference, neuro-science, change management, etc.)

- k. Stakeholder engagement in a VUCA environment
- l. Commercial management (contracting and procurement mechanisms etc. in a VUCA environment)

## 8. Terms, Conditions and Exclusions

The following terms and conditions shall apply to this Research Support Program:

- a. ICCPM shall only support the research of ICCPM Individual Members. This Membership can be through an ICCPM Corporate Partnership, Academic Partnership or Organisation Membership. Individual Membership can also be purchased separately.
- b. It is not a requirement that practitioners wishing to respond to researcher surveys and other requests are ICCPM Members.
- c. ICCPM shall only support the research of students completing an approved research project as part of a post graduate degree, researchers at an academic institution, or qualified PhD researchers who are continuing their research activities within a company.
- d. Researchers must provide all details requested in the ICCPM Research Support Program application form to be eligible for consideration.
- e. Notwithstanding the Membership requirement, ICCPM reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to decline to support research topics that do not meet the Research Agenda focus.
- f. Only research that will further the body of knowledge in complex project management and leadership will be considered. Any work that could be considered market research or business development will not be supported.
- g. ICCPM shall not provide any monetary support or research grants under this program.
- h. The researcher is responsible for any ethics approval, validating the demand for the research and the research methodology.
- i. Participation in the program does not imply support from ICCPM for the findings of the research.
- j. ICCPM shall not provide access to contact details of its Members, Academic Partners or Corporate Partner or any other stakeholders to researchers.
- k. Participation of ICCPM stakeholder community is voluntary and on an opt-in basis.
- l. ICCPM shall not distribute individual research requests or survey questionnaire to its database on behalf of researchers. All promotion of research shall be done via the ICCPM website and collectively at ICCPM scheduled dates through existing channels.
- m. ICCPM shall not approach any ICCPM Corporate or Academic Partner on an individual researcher's behalf (individual or institutional) with requests to participate in any research.
- n. Any ICCPM promotion of research will point prospective participants / interested parties to the relevant ICCPM web-page which will contain all of the relevant information to make an informed decision regarding participation and instructions on how to participate in the research.
- o. ICCPM encourages but does not guarantee the participation from its stakeholders.
- p. ICCPM employees will not participate in any interviews or complete any research survey questionnaires.
- q. ICCPM accepts no responsibility or liability in any way whatsoever for any part of the research process, success or outcomes.

- r. ICCPM shall not provide or support exclusivity to any party on any research topic.
- s. The researcher shall not at any time present themselves as representing or acting on behalf of ICCPM.
- t. The researcher shall acknowledge the support of ICCPM in the research forward and make the research findings available to ICCPM once completed.
- u. Once published, ICCPM shall make copies of the research available on its website.
- a. Support for the research notwithstanding, all articles submitted for publication in the CONNECT e-magazine and all proposals for podcasts and webinars will go through the existing review process.

## 9. Research Support Program Commitments

### 8.1. ICCPM Commitment:

*ICCPM will commit to support research projects as follows:*

- a. ICCPM will provide a research support web-page as a platform which will promote the researchers work. This will include:
  - Researcher bio;
  - Academic Institution or Company conducting the research;
  - Description of the research project including motivation and relevance to the ICCPM Research Agenda;
  - Link to the researcher's online survey and/or contact details for interested participants to engage directly with the researcher;
- b. ICCPM will promote the research through various existing marketing communication channels at pre-existing scheduled dates which may include:
  - Posts on ICCPM social media accounts;
  - Monthly newsletters;
  - Quarterly CONNECT e-magazine;
  - Events web-page (if applicable).
- c. Once published, ICCPM will make copies of the research available through the resources section of the website and promote the availability of the research findings via the existing communication channels listed above.
- d. ICCPM invites researchers to write and publish articles based on their research in the ICCPM quarterly CONNECT e-magazine. Such articles must be educational /informative in their own right but may also serve to promote the work of the researcher and entice participation in the research activities. All articles will be subject to the existing ICCPM review process.
- e. ICCPM invites researchers to record podcast interviews and host webinars as part of promoting their research and/or reporting the findings of their research. All proposals will be subject to the existing ICCPM review process.

### 8.2. Researcher Commitment:

*To be considered for the Research Support Program, the researcher will commit to collaborate with ICCPM on this research support program and commit to the following:*

- a. Provide ICCPM with the following information via the online application form:
  - i. Name;
  - ii. Contact details;
  - iii. Bio and photo;
  - iv. ICCPM Membership number;
  - v. Details of the organisation supporting your research;
  - vi. Project title and description;
  - vii. Confirmation that the research program, methodology and any necessary approvals (such as ethics) have been approved by the host organisation;
  - viii. Relevance to the ICCPM Research Agenda;
  - ix. Description of the request and instructions for participants.
- b. Agree to ICCPM promoting their research via the communication channels outlined in Section 8.1
- c. Conduct their research with any ICCPM stakeholder participants in a professional and ethical manner at all times.
- d. Agree not to make the contact details or any information provided as part of the research project available to a third party outside the research project.
- e. Agree not to exploit any connection for personal or commercial gain.
- f. Agree to participate in any reasonable request to conduct a podcast interview or webinar about their research at a mutually agreed time if requested to do so by ICCPM.
- g. Agree to provide ICCPM with a copy of the final thesis when published, or a summary of the research results, to be made available to the ICCPM community via the ICCPM research page.
- h. Agree as a minimum, to write an article on their research for CONNECT e-magazine.

# Appendix 1: The Research Agenda

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The ongoing research agenda is derived from feedback from international stakeholder engagement.

The ‘human factor’ is paramount - complex projects are the output of people, companies and government working together – and communication and leadership are central to their success. Complex projects must incorporate mechanisms to embrace change over time in terms of staffing, leadership, scope and technical requirements but until people internalise the need for change, external exhortations will remain ineffective. CPL is as much about changing culture as it is infrastructure. The aim of complex project leadership in general, and the Research Support Program in particular, is to bring understanding of project complexity at a level that human beings can work with effectively.

## 1. Project Complexity and Project Leaders

### Research Recommendations

- 1.1 Research the contextual nature of ‘complexity’ as it applies to modern complex project management.
- 1.2 Research the ‘factors’ that contribute to the management and successful delivery of modern complex project management, including performance over the project lifecycle.
- 1.3 Research to what extent the application of rigid disciplinary functions increases the likelihood of complex project failure.
- 1.4 Research behavioural leadership characteristics that can be commonly observed in successful complex projects, contrasted against unsuccessful complex projects.
- 1.5 Research what existing/innate personal qualities are required for further investment as a complex project leader.
- 1.6 Research what defines a successful complex project above that of the traditional project management triangle (Cost, Schedule, and Time).
- 1.7 Research the functional role of talent management in building organisational sustainability, performance and leadership.
- 1.8 Research the identification of characteristics that define the boundary between complicated and complex

## 2. Executive Behaviours and Decision Making in Complex Projects

### Research Recommendations

- 2.1 Research into what extent organisational standardisation reduces agility, resilience and diversity within complex projects, and into what level standardisation is to be implemented.
- 2.2 Research how a combination of methodologies and tools (e.g. forecasting sunk costs and auditing for triple loop learning) can be applied to improve understanding of complex projects over its lifecycle.
- 2.3 Research what organisational and governance frameworks result in successful change management in complex projects
- 2.4 Research if extant organisational and governance frameworks can cope with the dynamics of

- complex environments, and to what extent aspects of future frameworks should be adjusted?
- 2.5 Research the need for CPM financial education and its effect on complex project outcomes i.e. accountancy (short term) vs economic investment (long term).
  - 2.6 Research for a deeper understanding of social systems and their behavioural influences on leadership and complex projects.
  - 2.7 Research the process of enterprise level alignment of perceived Critical Success Factors (CSF) with defined project CSF.
  - 2.8 Research how investment in complex projects should be approached, leading to different funding and appropriation models.
  - 2.9 Research the effect of enterprise level executive decision making on strategic alignment of portfolios, programs and projects.
  - 2.10 Research to what extent (investment and performance) scenario/simulations testing and innovation improves the delivery of complex projects.

### **3. Systemic Risk Management- how is risk perceived- an alternative perspective**

#### **Research Recommendations**

- 3.1 Research the question of how individuals, project set-ups and cooperation models can foster this ability is one which requires further research: The project team may be seen as a social system of which resilience is an important property. However an 'out of control action plan' must also allow for the team and individual members to change their behaviour or actions from the initial plan in the light of experience to meet changed circumstances.
- 3.2 Research the factors which define the point at which complication declines while complexity blossoms though when riding or the new language become 'second nature'. Neuroscience suggests that complexity becomes 'hard-wired' into the brain through constant use and repetition.
- 3.3 Research the comparative statistical divergence between organisational honesty (reality) and contractual relationships (intent) in tendering using risk management framework.
- 3.4 Research improvements to formulate relational contracting frameworks to better account for and manage risk and liability in a collaborative emergent environment.

### **4. Commercial Management- striving for a win/win/ commercial outcome**

#### **Research Recommendations**

- 4.1 Research factors that influence successful complex project implementation across the lifecycle spectrum
- 4.2 Research the comparative divergence between organisational honesty and contractual relationships from commercial perspective.
- 4.3 Research a better way to formulate relational contracting frameworks to better account and manage risk and liability in a collaborative environment.

## 5. Stakeholder Engagement- the key to unlocking the secrets of emergent project complexity

### Research Recommendations

- 5.1 Research how changing environmental stakeholder expectations affect the definition of project success.
- 5.2 Research the comparative divergence between organisational honesty and contractual relationships.
- 5.3 Research the potential for relationships between consumers and strategic suppliers to create additional value/benefits within complex projects.

## 6. Knowledge Management- the catalyst for success

### Research Recommendations

- 6.1 Research historical data and evidence that the 'professionalisation' of project managers and sub disciplines increase the success levels of complex projects.
- 6.2 Research failed complex projects to identify technical (linear) and non-technical (non-linear) drivers.
- 6.3 Research how socio-cultural knowledge can be transferred to models, methods and instruments to create an entirely new skill set for complex project managers.
- 6.4 Research structures and frameworks to enable? Integrated learning between PM practise and academic learning.
- 6.5 Research the transferability of cross-sector better practices to complex project management in a fully integrated way.
- 6.6 Research knowledge management and the transferability from information systems to human tacit knowledge for better implementation to organisational learning and change.
- 6.7 Research the interface within complex projects where tangible PM approaches cease to be affective, and where the 'art' of CPM becomes relevant.

## 7. Socio-Cultural Complexity- looking at organisational and individual culture affects complex project delivery success

### Research Recommendations

- 7.1 Research the tangibility of the transfer of learning and how organisational culture may undermine its implementation.
- 7.2 Research the effect a complex project leader has on political negotiations and project outcomes across;
  - Government
  - Industry
  - Collaborative teams
- 7.3 Research validity of individual leadership dimensions such as;
  - Cognitive flexibility
  - Emotional intelligence, and
  - Systems thinking



7.4 Research cultural limitations or constraints inhibiting the successful delivery of complex projects.