



Project Business Professional
Examination Syllabus

2026 Edition

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Overview

The Project Business Professional (PBP) examination assesses a candidate’s understanding of project business management – the discipline of managing projects that cross corporate boundaries and are performed under contract. The examination covers four topics, each comprising five sub-topics.

This syllabus defines the body of knowledge that candidates are expected to master. It is aligned with the Project Business Compendium published by the Project Business Foundation and the PBP Preparation Seminar delivered by ACE-certified trainers.

Each topic and sub-topic is accompanied by a brief characterisation that describes its scope and relevance to the practice of project business management.

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Topic 1

Project Management for Project Business

Project business follows a distinct lifecycle that spans from initial project selection through business development, contract conclusion, project execution, and close-out. Project managers must navigate critical decision points and documentation requirements that go beyond traditional project management.

1.1 The project business process: from project selection to contract close-out

The project business process covers the full journey from a buyer's initial idea through competitive bidding, contract signature, project delivery, and final close-out. Understanding this end-to-end flow is essential for managing the transition from competing to completing.

1.2 Decision points: make-or-buy, offer/no-offer, vendor selection, and acceptance

At each stage of the process, both buyers and sellers face decisions with significant commercial consequences. These include whether to outsource, whether to bid, which vendor to select, and when to formally accept deliverables.

1.3 Business development: hit rates, winning offers, and vendor/offer selection methods

For contractors, winning new business is an investment-intensive process where the ratio of bids won to bids submitted directly affects profitability. Crafting compelling offers and understanding how buyers evaluate them is a core competency in project business.

1.4 Project documentation and communications: contracts, charters, management plans, and mission statements

Cross-corporate projects depend on clear, structured documentation to align parties with different interests and organizational cultures. Key documents include the project contract, charter, management plans, mission statement, and communications supported by Contract Lifecycle Management systems.

1.5 The "Mission Success First" paradigm

This paradigm calls on all parties to prioritize the shared success of the project over narrow organizational self-interest. It is the cultural foundation for turning separate contract parties into genuine project partners.

Topic 2

Commercial Management in Project Business

Projects performed under contract are profit centers for contractors and investments for customers, making commercial awareness a critical skill for project managers. This topic addresses the business mindset, financial dynamics, and organizational structures that drive commercial success or failure.

2.1 Business acumen and business spirit for project managers

Business acumen is the ability to understand and act on the commercial context of a project, including financial literacy, risk identification, and executive mentality. Business spirit is the willingness and pride to assume commercial responsibility rather than limiting oneself to technical delivery.

2.2 The customer-contractor interface: structures for outsourced work

Project business creates interfaces between organisations that can take many forms – from outsourcing an entire project to embedding contractor staff in mixed teams. The chosen structure directly shapes communication flows, risk allocation, and the complexity of managing the work.

2.3 Tapping into assets, managing conflicts, and addressing business relationship risks

Organizations enter project business to access each other's assets – skills, equipment, reputation, or market access. However, differing business interests are the most frequent source of conflict, and small disagreements can escalate into crises that threaten the entire project.

2.4 Portfolios, PMOs, and the Project Business Management Office (PBMO)

Managing a portfolio of cross-corporate projects requires governance structures that go beyond traditional resource balancing. The PBMO extends the role of a conventional PMO to address the commercial, legal, and inter-organisational challenges specific to project business.

2.5 Other forms of project business: freebie projects and not-for-profit project business

Not all project business follows the standard model of immediate payment for delivery. Freebie projects defer benefit generation to future business, while not-for-profit projects pursue social or humanitarian goals – yet both still operate under contract and demand professional rigor.

Topic 3

Contract and Legal Fundamentals

Contracts are the legal backbone of project business, defining obligations, allocating risks, and providing recourse when things go wrong. Project managers need sufficient legal literacy to navigate contract types, legal systems, and incentivization mechanisms without replacing professional legal counsel.

3.1 Legal foundations: applicable law, privity, capacity, and contract validity

Every project contract exists within a legal framework that determines which law applies, who is bound by the agreement, and what makes it valid. Understanding concepts such as privity of contracts and legal capacity protects parties from unenforceable or disputed agreements.

3.2 Contract types across civil law and common law systems

Civil law and common law traditions classify and regulate contracts differently, which matters greatly in international project business. Project managers must understand these distinctions to work effectively across jurisdictions.

3.3 Statements of work, requests for offers, and agile contracting

The way work is specified and offers are solicited shapes the entire project relationship. Agile contracting – often using framework agreements with individual purchase orders – attempts to reconcile short-term iterative delivery with the need for contractual clarity.

3.4 Product liability, legal warranty, and completeness of contracts

Contracts must address what happens after delivery, including the contractor's liability for defective deliverables and statutory warranty obligations. The degree to which a contract is complete – or leaves gaps – directly affects the parties' exposure to risk.

3.5 Contract incentivization: Rolling Award Fee contracts, target cost contracts, and additional clauses

Beyond fixed-price and cost-reimbursable models, project business offers incentivization tools designed to align contractor performance with customer objectives. These include Rolling Award Fee mechanisms, target cost arrangements, and performance-linked contract clauses.

Topic 4

Organizational and Interpersonal Dimensions

Project business brings together people from different organizations, cultures, and legal systems who must function as one team. Success depends as much on leadership, trust, and ethical conduct as it does on technical and commercial competence.

4.1 Players and roles: buyers, sellers, and the project supply network

Project business involves a defined set of players – buyers, sellers, customers, contractors, and subcontractors – organized in project supply networks that can span multiple tiers and hundreds of organizations. Clarity about who plays which role is foundational to effective collaboration.

4.2 Connective and servant leadership across corporate boundaries

Leading cross-corporate projects requires a connective leadership style where influence extends beyond one's own organization into the leadership domains of partner companies. Servant leadership adds the expectation that leaders serve the project and its community, not just their own hierarchy.

4.3 Loyalty conflicts, claim management, and relationship risks

Team members in cross-corporate projects frequently face loyalty conflicts between their home organization and the project's needs. Poorly managed claims and counter-claims can erode trust and shift the culture from cooperation to confrontation.

4.4 Integrity, corruption, and the rule of law

Corruption undermines project business by distorting decisions, enabling blackmail, and eroding the ethical standards on which partnerships depend. The strength of rule of law in the applicable jurisdiction is a critical factor in protecting parties and enabling fair outcomes.

4.5 Developing a code of conduct for cross-corporate projects

A shared code of conduct establishes common behavioral standards across organizations with different cultures and ethical frameworks. It serves as a practical tool for building team cohesion and preventing misconduct in environments where no single corporate culture dominates.