

## Programme and Project Management Centres of Excellence

### Briefing Note (October 2003)

#### Background

The programme and project management Centres of Excellence (COE) initiative in OGC has its origins in work undertaken by both the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury in support of the Government's delivery and reform agenda. Some of the thinking is a culmination of many years of developing best practice in programme and project management. The Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Services Reform (OPSR) and the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in particular, are focussed on the civil service reforms defined by Sir Andrew Turnbull. These emphasise a need for the public sector to deliver the services on the Government's agenda and the role that good programme and project management must play in improving the success rate of delivery.

In 2002 OPSR, working closely with OGC, ran a project to research improvement of programme and project delivery in the civil service. The scope of the project covered programmes that supported Public Service Agreements and the mechanisms for delivering policy initiatives. One recommendation of the project was that delivery performance would be improved through better support of a department's programme and project portfolio through the establishment of a programme and project management Centre of Excellence. The final report of the project can be found at <http://www.pm.gov.uk/files/pdf/ippd.pdf>.

While the COE concept was being developed, OGC was reviewing the continuing poor performance record of IT-enabled projects in government and made a series of recommendations to Cabinet at the end of 2002. Primary among them was that all departments should have a Centre of Excellence in place to support these projects. Cabinet ministers agreed to the recommendations, which included a target to have COEs in place in all central government departments by June 2003. These Cabinet actions can be found under the OGC **Centres of Excellence** pages on <http://www.ogc.gov.uk/>

#### Progress

At the beginning of 2003, OGC took on the role to ensure the implementation of the Cabinet actions, providing support to departments in the establishment of their COEs. This programme of work, called Embedding Centres of Excellence (ECO) Programme continues to support the reform agenda while working with Departments to meet the Government's improvement goals. The first aim of OGC's work programme was to help Departments meet the June deadline, monitor their progress and report to the Prime Minister. This has been completed and a network of COEs across departments is in place.

The June target has been met, and the next steps for the ECOE Programme are to support departments in planning to embrace the full scope of the COE, in line with the IPPD report. This is a significant challenge for departments, and COEs must plan for step change improvement. A timetable for meeting minimum standards to incrementally broaden the scope of the COEs is being discussed with departments.

#### Programme Components

The ECOE Programme includes the following initiatives:

- **COE Information Pack**

OGC has produced an Information Pack describing the purpose, roles, functions and requirements of a COE and including relevant background information such as the NAO/OGC common causes of failure, assessment tools and ministerial responsibilities. The pack has been updated to reflect the new challenges for 2004 and is aimed at those involved in setting up and embedding a Centre of Excellence. It will also be of interest to anyone who is involved in improving programme and project management. The new version of the pack can be found on the COE web page at:

<http://www.ogc.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1000329>

- **Embedding COEs to achieve delivery improvement**

The June target has established COEs in central departments. OGC's role now is to help departments develop their COEs to make a difference in their programme and project success levels. Departments must produce improvement plans by March 2004. The ECOE team includes individual department liaison managers who will work with the COEs to examine how they need to develop beyond the June 2003 minimum requirements and advise on the production of improvement plans.

- **The COE Community**

One critical success factor for the overall ECOE Programme is exchange of knowledge and experience between COEs and with OGC. OGC has formed a community of COE people and those involved with programme and project management across Government that meets regularly to enable and encourage an environment of mutual learning. The community network also provides a valuable communications channel between the centre and departments for the sharing of information about delivery-related initiatives.

- **The ECOE Community Events**

As part of our ongoing commitment to support departments in establishing their COEs, the ECOE Team is running quarterly one-day events. These events are aimed at giving Government organisations the opportunity to network with their colleagues, enabling the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practice. The 10th July event saw the amalgamation of two communities of interest within Central Government. The Centres of Excellence community, which has been tasked with establishing and embedding Centres of Excellence within their Departments, and the Implementers Network, a community interested in sharing best practice, experience and knowledge of programme and project management.

- **Accreditation of Consultants**

In the early stages of building COEs, OGC worked with the APM Group to accredit consultants specifically to provide help in managing and developing COEs. Now that COEs are established and are working to embed best practice, OGC will extend consultancy accreditation to include best practice relevant to programme and project delivery. We have a target to have 200 best practice accredited consultants in place by the end of March 2004.

- **ECOE News**

This is an electronic newsletter posted on the [OGC website](#), intended to bring the latest information that those involved with programme and project management or the embedding of Centres of Excellence will find valuable. ECOE News is also the successor of the SIT-UPS, a newsletter aimed at the Implementers Network, produced by the SPRITE Programme for those interested embedding the recommendations of the "[Successful IT](#)" Report. Back issues of SIT-UPS can be found at the following address: <http://www.ogc.gov.uk/index.asp?docid=429>

## **For Further Information**

For further information on the initiatives, products and services mentioned above, see the Centres of Excellence web pages on the [OGC Website](#), or contact the ECOE Team at [ECOE@ogc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ECOE@ogc.gsi.gov.uk) or call us on 020 7271 1444.

**OGC**  
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