

# Challenges of Design and Implementation of Program Governance

—Cases from Government Bodies in UAE

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## Abstract

The topic of governance in the government sector became an important and a widely discussed point of interest in the literature of project, program, and portfolio management in the past decade. It is eventually becoming the central focus in the policymakers' point of view as they seek to ensure success in the selection, design, and implementation of government programs and their multi-projects. Due to the various complexities and risks underlying the project and program management context, program governance establishes a critical strategic planning element, especially in developing countries. This paper has assessed the challenges of the design and implementation of program governance in government bodies in the UAE. Interviews are carried out on senior members of sample organizations. Data collected is in binary form to specifically tailored questions. The results show critical shortcomings in stakeholders communication management and stakeholders' engagement, program quality governance, program change governance, and program governance design. Recommendations were provided including addressing stakeholder communication issues, quality, change, and design of governance programs.

## Keywords

Program Management, Program Design, Program Implementation, Governance, Portfolio Management

## 1. Introduction

Program Governance is considered a challenge to implement in many organizations. As government entities continue to take on larger projects, it is essential to implement program governance to succeed. According to The Project Manage-

ment Institute (PMI)'s definition of project governance, it is a process, framework, and functions that lead to project activities to complete a product or service that meets the organization's objectives (Alie, 2015). What makes program governance challenging to implement is that it is not a one size fits all, and organizations need to adjust the framework based on its objectives. Poor implementation of program governance could lead to various consequences such as delays, overruns, and even project failure.

The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) is an example of the effects of inefficient management. The management issues led to an additional expenditure of 1.6 billion dollars, a 60% increase in the initial budget (Morgan & Gbedemah, 2010). This case illustrates the importance of placing proper guidelines to implement program governance correctly. Government sectors have an extensive range of stakeholders such as independent entities, end-users, sponsors, and contractors. They fall into various program elements such as scope, schedule, stakeholders, and decision-making processes. There are several challenges that entities face while designing and implementing governance in their programs. This paper assesses the design and implementation of program governance within various government entities in the UAE.

#### **As an overview of the contents:**

The paper introduces the key definitions of program governance in Section 2 along with a review of existing literature about the importance of governance models and the challenges of design and implementation of program governance. In Section 3, the paper describes the methodological approach used, and it presents and discusses the results in Section 4. The recommendations in Section 5 lists and describes the best practices to mitigate the analyzed challenges. Last but not least, Section 6 highlights the overall conclusions of the article.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Program Management**

Program management have always been considered a magnified or expanded version of project management, or sometimes as going the opposite of a direction. Certainly, the PMI reinforces this view by providing definitions for program management. According to the fourth edition of PMBOK guide, program management is defined as the coordinated management of a program that is centralized in order to achieve the strategic objectives and benefits of the program. The program on the other hand is defined as a group of projects that are related and managed together to attain benefits and control that is unavailable from managing each project individually (Project Management Institute, 2017). Also, a program can incorporate elements that are related to the work out of the discrete projects' scope in a program. These definitions set the program manager in the position of controlling project managers and making sure they don't squabble over the shared resources.

## 2.2. Importance of Governance Models

Strong governance operating models are critical in assisting the board and management in meeting governance objectives. Such a model, when established robustly through taking full stock of the capacities of the organization, along with the resource constraints, enables the management to optimize the program delivery mechanism (Alie, 2015). Lack of such a model at the government level will invariably lead to inconsistencies and multiple obstacles in achieving a governance program's governmental objectives.

Program governance is vital in ensuring the alignment of visions, capabilities, and resources to the program's goals. The program governance domain provides adherence to the reporting standards required for alignment with the organization's goals and it also plays a vital role in funding the program from sponsors by laying out clear stipulations of how the program financiers will supervise the program and the level of autonomy to be accorded to the program (Project Management Institute, 2017). Program governance provides for stakeholder engagement through effective communication; it also provides a framework for oversight and continuous checks on the program's health.

## 2.3. Questions to Ask When Assessing Program Governance

The first component of program governance is governance models. A program manager needs to consider the amount of rigor they need to incorporate into an organization (Alie, 2015). If a governance model is held strictly, it will bore the stakeholders, while the converse will lead to a lack of stakeholder engagement. The second component is accountability and responsibilities. One of the program manager's most significant tasks is defining responsibilities and accountability because unclear definitions will affect the effectiveness of meetings, risk assessment, communication, and change control process (Alie, 2015). Another component of program governance is stakeholder engagement. Identifying the stakeholders is the foundation of a governance plan; leaving some stakeholders out can negatively affect programs. According to Project Management Institute (2017), one of the most important components of program governance is stakeholder communication and reporting. This step comes after identifying all the stakeholders and defining their respective interests and expectations.

The other important question is risk and issue management. It is typical of projects to be riddled with issues; this reinforces the essence of proper preparation to avert failure because projects affect programs. Another component of program governance is assurance (Alie, 2015). Program assurance is the effective management of risks and issues and the definition of metrics to foster program delivery. Some of these metrics include sticking to the business case, the effectiveness of change control, risk analysis process, monitoring deviations, quality assessment, and tracking the accuracy of schedule. One of the most important components to assess is project management control (Project Management Institute, 2017). The monitoring process has a purview over all the projects' facets,

such as scope, time, budget, and resources. Monitoring is a continuous process that happens at many stages of the project.

#### 2.4. Challenges of Governance in Government Entities

Regarding the specific challenges that the governments face in the design and implementation of program governance, one of them revolves around the principle that asset preservation and risk-taking must be in the right balance (DeLoitte, 2013). Many factors must be considered when designing the governance structure when trying to reinstate organizational culture at the top; this is because the governance must be aligned and suited to the culture. Otherwise, the contradictions and the inherent clashes would jeopardize any chance of success.

Consider for instance Europe, which has achieved evidence-based policymaking; this has placed a lot of pressure on many governments to formulate transparent and convincing policies for their constituents (OECD, 2009). Such transparency may be a significant issue in many regions due to the overall governance structure in those places where changes to governance and status quo are considered irrelevant. Fostering integrity has been a primary challenge faced in Europe after the 2008 crisis, where accountability drives were rife with unclear territory and confusion. Regarding governmental set-ups, hierarchies and the proverbial “red tape” present a significant challenge when implementing programs. For the need of conformance with the government rules and regulations, the approvals and authorizations may suffer significant “action lags” that lessen the relevance and effectiveness of the steps taken.

Another feature posing a significant challenge for governments is how to control and to what extent to allow the lobbying by private interests on government decisions. The practice has been quite a concern in Europe. Although the approach can provide valuable data, it is essential to note that it can also be the source of unfair advantages for the powerful vested interests, especially when the process is rife with corruption. Thus, although having deeper access to resources in many dimensions, the government can be hampered in agility when there must be a program change. The challenge arises from the required detailed procedures and the bureaucratic processes that must occur when undertaking even the slightest changes (Brookings, 2020), which comparatively does not hold back the big multinationals.

#### 2.5. Challenges of Design in Program Governance

The process of program governance is inherently riddled with pitfalls that must be avoided. One of the challenges that emerge in the process is design. The first reason why design is such a concern is that the program’s goals must align with those of the sponsoring organization. The other issue in the design of a program governance framework is the delegation of duties. Programs typically comprise many components; the challenge arises in finding the best candidates for each part of the program (Mashiloane and Jokonya, 2018).

**Below is a list of the common challenges of design in program gover-**

nance:

**Challenge 1: Alignment to Organization's Business Strategy;** Program goals must align with the goals of the sponsoring organization, Portfolio of projects related to some common objective.

**Challenge 2: Delegation of Duties;** Finding the best candidates for each part of the program.

**Challenge 3: Resource Allocation;** Making sure that project managers don't squabble over resources and that they are best allocated.

**Challenge 4: Benefits Management;** Planning how to quantify benefits of programs.

**Challenge 5: Consideration of Organizational Culture.**

## 2.6. Challenges of Implementation in Program Governance

The other main challenge in program governance is the implementation phase in which it consists of other sub-challenges such as decision-making; one of the most crucial elements of this is the quality of information that the overseers use (Mashiloane and Jokonya, 2018). It is impossible to avoid risks in a program; for this reason, risk management is one of the most significant concerns during design because the team must lay out mitigation plans for the program and the projects in the program. Another challenge in program design and implementation is communication; communication problems arise because of failing to assign reporting duties to specific people (Project Management Institute, 2017). Programs will typically comprise a multitude of stakeholders who must be managed; it is for this reason that stakeholder management is one of the challenges in designing and implementing program governance (Mashiloane and Jokonya, 2018). The program governance framework must clearly develop a clear plan to manage these stakeholders since it is a continuous process that requires maintenance.

Below is a list of the common challenges of implementation in program governance:

**Challenge 1: Stakeholder Management;** Loss of focus on stakeholders and their expectation.

**Challenge 2: Risk Management and Decision Making;** Program Risk Management, Project Risk Management, Mitigation plans.

**Challenge 3: Program Managers Work Overload;** Number of stakeholders and projects in the program can be a lot for the program manager during governance Implementation.

**Challenge 4: Interdependencies between a number of projects.**

## 3. Methodology

The methodological approach of this research was to present qualitative data about the challenges of program governance by collecting both secondary and primary data. The secondary data was retrieved from different sources such as online journal publications, and the primary data was gathered based on a col-

lection of interviews conducted across different government bodies in the UAE. Those interviews were the most suitable approach to assess the challenges that program governance can face in both the design and the implementation phases.

#### **Interviews**

- 1) *Ministry of Finance*
- 2) *CSR UAE*
- 3) *MBR Space Center*
- 4) *Sharjah Academy for Astronomy, Space sciences & Technology (SAASST)*

#### **Secondary Data**

- 1) *Online Journal Publications*
- 2) *PMI Online Library*

### **Case Studies**

#### ***Case Study 1: Ministry of Finance***

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) of the United Arab Emirates has recently transitioned its accounting to the accrual basis instead of the previous cash-based methods. This choice has been made to update the MoF's practices to match international standards put forward by the IPSAS. Data collection involved an interview with Ruddi Barooah, an experienced Program Manager in the Ministry of Finance.

The decision to switch to the accrual system of accounting depended on several factors. According to [Kieso, Weygandt, and Kimmel \(2018\)](#), it upgraded to an international standard over cash accounting because of its advantages in numerous contexts. Having reviewed IPSAS guidelines, the MoF has decided that the switch would be beneficial to the degree that would warrant adopting a new framework. In particular, per [Accrual Accounting \(n.d.\)](#), the Ministry has found seven distinct benefits: performance, rationalization, analysis, resources, cash flow, cost, and accuracy. It expected the new approach to increase clarity to its planning while improving overall performance through special assessments and associated corrections. With the initiative settled, the appropriate legislation passed, and the MoF started the organizational change process.

According to the interview, there were four objectives in the change: converting the accounting system from cash to accrual for all federal entities, training users in the new process, implementation of changes in the ERP system, and the implementation of the fixed assets process. It is necessary to adjust the frameworks and software employed at all federal agencies under the current ERP system. Training in the new methods is also essential for their workers. [Accrual Accounting \(n.d.\)](#) states that this process would begin in 2017 and launch fully by the end of 2020. The interview did not mention any delays; however, it has already launched the first phase of government entities transition to accrual accounting in June 2020, and the closure phase has not started yet. One can conclude that the initiative is close to realization.

The MoF has implemented a comprehensive program governance model for the change that features multiple levels of oversight. Consultants and coordina-

tors would meet weekly, sponsors and key stakeholders would meet bi-weekly, and senior management of the MoF would receive monthly reports. The project's steps, starting with its conceptualization and continuing throughout the duration, have been documented and presented to management for review and confirmation or rejection. Two committees that meet twice a month and a Change Control Board oversee the project and decide on strategy and project pipelines. MoF implemented all of the necessary program governance practices presented in the questionnaire while considering all of the suggested common factors. As a result, the project proceeded smoothly and stayed on track for timely completion without compromising substantial matters.

The process encountered three significant challenges, though it addressed them adequately and prevented them from damaging its progress. The main issues analyzed from the interview of the MoF was stakeholder communication, stakeholder engagement, and project interdependencies. The first issue was stakeholder communication since it was challenging to reconcile their requirements of over 205 federal entities involved in the change. The project team had to communicate extensively with the different stakeholders, coordinate activities and information, and follow up with updates to find solutions that suited all stakeholders.

The second issue, close to the first, was stakeholder participation and engagement, as it was necessary to convince the different agencies of the benefits of accrual accounting. This process became particularly challenging due to COVID-19 and the associated difficulty of meeting face-to-face, but the team managed to arrange online sessions. The third and final challenge was managing project interdependencies, as multiple other ongoing projects relied on the ERP that the accounting change was adjusting. The risks had to be monitored, and changes to segments currently in use needed differing until they become available again.

#### ***Case Study 2: CSR UAE***

Corporate Social Responsibility, commonly known as CSR, involves a corporate's duty to society. A federal authority in the UAE that created the framework and the governance system for corporate social responsibilities manages and leads the business sector's contributions to national priority initiatives and projects (Bin Kherbash, 2020). *CSR UAE Fund (2020)* aims to direct and recruit funds for government priority projects endorsed by ministries through a project funding program. The program was initially formed in 2018 by the UAE Ministerial Cabinet. In 2019, HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid launched the smart platform of the CSR UAE. The interview was with Fatma Bin Kherbash, an experienced program manager who is currently a Program Manager in the Department of Strategic Projects and Partnerships, CSR.

CSR project governance practices include processes of review and approval before the establishment of projects on the platform. The focus of the program's governance is the pre-approval process for the entity to ensure that the project and program has a positive cost-benefit analysis, is aligned with the sustainable development goals, and with government priorities using the right endorsement

depending on the type of project and requirements (Bin Kherbash, 2020). According to Bin Kherbash (2020), a governance structure exists in which the board of trustees has several committees, one of which looks after the project approval. After submitting a project with all its relevant documents, the team then reviews it internally, followed by the committee with subject matter experts' assistance.

The program governance plan in CSR is in alignment with the government priorities and sustainable development goals. However, the entity did not assess the vision and goals because it was newly founded in 2018. The projects are scored based on the availability of the required documents. The project and program's success criteria are considered based on whether or not the cost-benefit analysis was relevant and correct (Bin Kherbash, 2020). Also, when a project's documents are incomplete, or the cost-benefit analysis is not entirely clear or pertinent, it is eliminated due to program risk and issue governance regulations.

### ***Case Study 3: MBR Space Center***

Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre, home of the UAE National Space Program, was founded in 2006. MBR space center operates and establishes satellites that observe earth while offering clients around the globe data analysis services. The Centre recently launched its Khalifa SAT from a space center in Japan, developed by a highly qualified Emirati engineers' team (*About MBR Space Center, 2020*). The Centre is developing many projects in the future after the success of reaching Mars. The mission aims to gather information about the Mars atmosphere and scientific data.

MBR Space Centre's strategic plans have been developed to align with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum's vision. The center's main objectives are to create and develop a team of highly qualified Emirati engineers in the space science sector and implement sustainable training for future leaders of the space industry in the UAE (*About MBR Space Center, 2020*). Its other goals are to bolster scientific exploration's cultural importance and develop scientific and technical tools that will complement the scientific field's facilities and infrastructure. The final goal is to create applications that are innovative and smart to help decision-makers.

The interview was with Dr. Hamad Al Marzooqi, a project manager in Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre. More specifically, he is the Emirates Lunar Mission's project manager, which is the nation's mission beyond earth orbit. Its main aim is to study the atmosphere and the scientific data of Mars. The Lunar mission program has program governance implemented through different aspects, including quality, management, financial and legal. It is implemented and done through governing finances, budget allocation and control, quality governance through processes and procedures, project management governance through schedule control, risk management, technical changes management, and resources control and management. Also, hierarchy governance is implemented through well-defined rules and a responsibility matrix, which assigns who is responsible for what.



Regarding information security, governance is implemented through a set of rules, components, and procedures. All the governance processes are controlled and monitored through an auditing system (AlMarzooqi, 2020). MBR Space Centre focuses on some central aspects of governance which include but not limited to the following:

**1) Enforcing rules and regulations;** Reconciling business requirements along with the Dubai Government rules and regulations.

**2) Accountability;** The board oversees senior management's ownership as well as individual accountability for regulatory compliance and the risk management.

**3) Quality control;** The management makes sure that all the projects and initiatives of the program are within the scope, and this is considered a crucial control activity.

**4) Preserving rights and responsibilities;** Clear definitions of rights and responsibilities, well understanding of the entity's goals and responsibilities, and the limits of the entity along with their positions.

**5) Achieving program goals and objectives;** Understanding of governance activities that are held at different levels in the entity to support the efforts of the program and enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

**6) Minimizing cross dependencies between processes;** Enabling coordination to minimize changes in schedule, and prevention of effort duplication so that the program performance is well optimized. A performance-based approach is applied to manage the interdependency of the coordination challenge.

**7) Allowing for smooth implementation:** Implementing IT governance smoothly to ensure that policies and procedures are adhered to using a set of steps that includes an outline, road map for long term strategy, aims for short term objectives, recognition of risks and opportunities, evaluation of governance policies, and finally enhancement of transparency.

The program governance practices cover the program governance plan through the existing organization structure and the documents created in the project's initial stages. The vision and goals of program governance are defined at the very beginning of each project. According to the program approval endorsement and definition, the program's feasibility is studied, and a report is made to make it easier to define the stakeholders. In the initial stages of the project, the documentation done earlier is assessed to check if it aligns with the program's success criteria (AlMarzooqi, 2020). According to the interviewee, the program risk and issue governance is performed through risk assessment which the project management office does.

***Case Study 4: Sharjah Academy for Astronomy, Space sciences & Technology (SAASST)***

Sharjah Academy for Astronomy, Space sciences & Technology (SAASST) is an organization under the University of Sharjah. SAASST was established in 2015 as a national development project to contribute to the space sector developments

in the UAE as a scientific, educational, and cultural Center.

The center was established in 2015 by His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Sharjah Center of Astronomy and Space Sciences, President of the University of Sharjah, and Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. Since its founding, the organization has become a leading research center in space sciences in the UAE and the Gulf area in general. Currently, the center has seven research laboratories/centers that consists of:

- 1) Meteorite Center
- 2) Radio Astronomy Laboratory
- 3) High-Energy Astrophysics Laboratory
- 4) CubeSat Laboratory
- 5) Space Weather and Ionospheric Laboratory
- 6) Optical Observatory
- 7) Sharjah Lunar Impact Observatory

Dr. Ilias Fernini, the Vice Director-General for Research & Scientific Projects at SAASST, handles all the mentioned labs and centers' management. The program governance framework outlines each department's structure and the roles and responsibilities of each department's members, and finally, it organizes the communication of the information from each department. That is because some departments like the research centers depend heavily on the Labs outcomes. For this reason, there must be an effective and efficient way to communicate. The main important focus is creating the certainty of effective communication between departments.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The results of the interviews were summarized and presented in **Table 1** and **Table 2** to create a clear analysis. The variables tested and the parameters of the interviews were prepared according to The Standard for Program Management version 4 published in 2017 to better assess the program governance in the selected government bodies.

##### *Results and Discussion: Case 1*

Stakeholder communication is a substantial problem for most program governance enterprises, and addressing it may be considered a large part of the discipline's purpose. As the **Project Management Institute (2015)** notes, this problem is pervasive in the federal government because it is highly fragmented, resolving management failures by empowering individual positions or agencies. This tendency was demonstrated in the MoF case, as it has had to manage over 200 different agencies whose goals and practices were not necessarily aligned. There are no particular ways to handle this problem because it emanates from long-standing governance problems that need to be addressed separately. As such, the MoF response, which took on the issue directly and manually managed each stakeholder, was appropriate. With that said, reform is still necessary to streamline such large-scale projects and ensure that they proceed smoothly while satisfying stakeholder needs.

**Table 1.** Program governance practices coverage.

Variable	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Program Governance Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Governance and Vision and Goals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Approval Endorsement, and Definition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Success Criteria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Monitoring, Reporting, and Controlling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Risk and Issue Governance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Quality Governance	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program Change Governance	Yes	No	No	Yes
Program Governance Reviews	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program Periodic Health Checks	Yes	NA	No	Yes
Program Component Initiation and Transition	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Program Closure	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

**Table 2.** Common factors considered when optimizing and tailoring program governance.

Variable	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Legislative Environment	Yes	No	Yes	No
Decision-Making Hierarchy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partially
Optimized Governance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Alignment with Portfolio and Organizational Governance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program Delivery	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Contracting	Yes	No	Yes	No
Risk of Failure	Yes	Yes	No	Partially
Strategic Importance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Program Management Office (PMO)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Program Funding Structure	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Stakeholder participation and engagement are also significant problems, as it can be challenging to attract their interest in a project. In this case, various federal agencies were told that they needed to transition to a new accounting system without necessarily understanding why they would need this. It was necessary to communicate the benefits and explain why the particular stakeholders in question should become involved in the process. The MoF's approach was not necessarily optimal, as it did not consider the individual needs of stakeholders but instead provided the same briefings to all of them. Given the number of stakeholders and the restrictions introduced by COVID-19, one can assume that, in this case, the actions taken were adequate to the purpose. To add, there are more effective ways for achieving stakeholder communication that MoF can consider

especially in the COVID-19 times, such as defining a newsletter that is sent out to all stakeholders to help in achieving a full understanding of the transition and updates. Another possible solution is summary reports that is also sent to stakeholders to highlight the best performing entities in transition practices including data and statistics to assure that the transition program is working well and is under control, no matter how many entities are involved.

The third challenge, project interdependencies, is particularly relevant to government enterprises. They are large and usually have numerous projects taking place at once. *Developing an effective governance operating model* (Baret, 2013) claims that supporting these interdependencies is the function of the organizational governance's structure. If it is not adequate to the task, projects will interfere with each other, leading to setbacks and other problems. In the MoF's case, such issues did not emerge from the interview, and the accrual accounting project continued without significant impediments. It seems that there was little to no interference between initiatives due to the team's efforts. Overall, the project's governance appears to have been adequate to its purposes, with most areas covered and challenges addressed.

#### ***Results and Discussion: Case 2***

For the second case, the interviewee was comfortable talking about the part played by the various committees at the top and how the pre-approval process is covered. It is relevant to the project funding program, aiming to direct funds towards the prioritized projects according to ministries' direction. She mentioned that the governance plan is checked for alignment with the government priorities and the SDGs. Another aspect of the fund is that it has not yet built up a long history of assessment as it is new. Risk and issue governance are considered by checking for and eliminating inefficient projects.

According to the interviewee, there is a structured review and approval system in place. Emphasis is placed depending on the manager at the pre-approval process, and a cost-benefit analysis is also carried out. A critical area not covered in the set-up is regarding the Program Quality governance and the Program change governance because the former is controlled and regulated by the decree that must be followed. Therefore, that change in governance is outside the domain here and done at the Board level, to which the project manager is not in charge to do so. This is the case in the other instances, too; for example, the project managers are not actively involved in board-level decisions.

The manager does not cover the legislative area as it is not her domain; she also mentioned that the board of trustees actively participates in the program. No project has been approved yet, as this is an entirely new initiative. The manager said that the various committees look after project approval, where the committee takes assistance from area specialists. The governance structure could not be shared more than this by the interviewee owing to confidentiality issues (Bin Kherbash, 2020). So, the interviewee was able to point out the specifics regarding how various program governance areas are covered.

### ***Results and Discussion: Case 3***

In the third case, the interviewee was comfortable discussing project governance and provided the answers comfortably, which shows that he has a good understanding of the subject. The focus on governance has been explained in a balanced and detailed manner. Regarding the governance aspect, the interviewee did not want to disclose the board-level set-up as he said it is confidential. As the Project Manager explained, there is a process that is followed for pre-approval, execution, and closing—according to the guidelines set out by the government. Program feasibility report is prepared, and monitoring is done through the project management office.

Regarding the auditing part, its efficiency needs to be established further in reporting, qualifications, and experience, so it becomes a robust internal control. Communication is good, with regular review meetings carried out. The interviewee believes that the organizational level lack of capacity to tailor much of the legislative agenda outside their domain, and there need to be more information regarding risk governance and management.

### ***Results and Discussion: Case 4***

Dr. Ilias Fernini, an expert in the area, was cooperative with the information, since he is managing many departments. Program governance is concerned with how entities control and direct their projects. A crucial aim of program governance is to ensure efficient, effective, and transparent decision-making. It is a scientific organization, so the management of the outcomes differ from other programs.

The outcomes are measured in the number of publications. The manager sets a goal of the specific number of research projects to be achieved during the academic year. He also develops a time frame with all the projects and the designated deadline. The organization has a well-defined structure that defines each department and each member's responsibilities in each department.

## **5. Recommendations**

It is recommended that organizations invest in program governance as it would help in setting a better management system for programs and projects. This paper has analyzed various government bodies and discovered that they face challenges that could be addressed through new and robust governance practices, improving sustainability, and achieving transparency of governance frameworks. Therefore, it is crucial to consider these governance recommendations to mitigate the challenges.

There are various challenges that have been identified from the analysis; the following are some recommendations for the shortcomings:

**1) Develop program management mind-set for performance so that the benefits are not lost;** A program manager must enable a mindset for dealing with diverse projects and functions all at once and use this challenge to optimize benefits out of it.

**2) Design a new program only if it generates benefits that projects do not generate by their own;** Programs must not be initiated frequently, however they must be designed specifically to generate benefits for the organization that can only be optimized using different projects and initiatives all together, and cannot be optimized using one project only.

**3) Implement and sustain full understanding of the importance of program management across the organization;** A program manager must ensure that all teams are focusing on benefits of programs and collaborating across all the departments of the organization to achieve a shared goal and a strategic vision.

**4) Take organizational culture into consideration to quantify benefits;** A strong organizational culture is based on a set of beliefs that are shared between employees and is supported by structure and strategy of the organization.

**5) Create a link between program benefits and project deliverables;** Organizations must link portfolios, program, and projects to their business strategy so that the best value is gained from the strategy implementation.

**6) Develop and Implement a roadmap to comply with cabinet decisions on the governance system and the updated leading practices;** A roadmap helps in improvement of sustainability, transparency and robustness of the governance frameworks.

**7) Provide a management tool to stakeholders for escalating their concerns;** There are many tools and techniques in project and program management to help in stakeholder involvement and engagement. This type of communication can help the organization in listening to all stakeholders' concerns.

**8) Continuous assessments of governance operating models, policies, procedures, and charters;** Governance models should be planned, enhanced, rationalized, resourced, evaluated, and monitored. They are subject to adjustment and change and this process can be done during the implementation or after.

**9) Prepare templates on governance for the annual reporting;** There are many ready templates that are designed for entities to report on their compliance that can be edited and prepared for the annual reporting.

**10) Assess the independent performance of the board and committees;** Assessment of board performance should be done based on individuals and the board performance as a whole, which can be assessed using a 360-degree feedback. This way allows the discussion and communication to be open and honest to help in understanding what could work better. The aim of the assessment is to ensure that the board is on track and is cooperating towards the goals of the entity.

**11) Conduct independent assessment of risk management, internal audit, and compliance function;** The main benefit of conducting risk assessments is the increase of the likelihood of the internal audit function, in which it will perform a better impact on the audit engagements. This process helps in building

stronger relationships among management and stakeholders.

**12) Conduct management training programs for board members and senior management;** Management training courses and programs must be done regularly to enhance the abilities, knowledge, and skills of board members. Benefits of training courses include improving communication skills, self-evaluation and personalized feedback, better and deeper understanding of roles and responsibilities, understanding change management, and improving decision making skills.

It was established that the lack of roadmaps was a challenge. The problem with government agencies is interface with the government which is inherently bureaucratic and political. It would be prudent to streamline this process by developing a communication channel with the cabinet. It would also be advisable to streamline the reporting since most government representatives may not be experts. While it would be a tall order for the agencies to be completely independent, it doesn't harm to assess this possibility. Moreover, board members would need training on program governance so that they can play an informed role in the agencies they lead.

## 6. Conclusion

Relationship building, presence, consistency, decision-making, mentoring, and effective questioning are all essential leadership traits in program management. In nature, programs are continuous, and therefore the project manager ought to be focused on the program objectives to improve the programs execution and capabilities of the program's personnel. In order to achieve best governance practices, program managers must always be updated about how well project managers are handling stakeholders and meeting their needs.

Program governance plays a considerable role in the success of a program and its projects. Any new program requires a significant investment in resources. It can be challenging to quantify the benefits of establishing a program governance framework. But it is vital to mention that it brings significant benefits to the projects, such as demystifying accountability which will ensure each team member knows their responsibilities and what they are answerable for. Moreover, the governance helps outline the roles and relationships among all the stakeholders playing a part in the program. Also, it helps to manage and resolve any accruing issues effectively and efficiently. And finally, communication between the teams and their members is transparent and clear.

This paper has assessed the scenario of implementing program governance in government entities in the UAE; the literature review looked at the definition of program governance and its challenges of design and implementation, that consisted of sub-challenges related to alignment, benefits, organizational culture, and stakeholders as listed above.

These challenges have been discovered in the UAE program governance arena, as evidenced by discussions in the interviews and the literature review. Other

shortcomings revealed were in stakeholder communication and engagement, program quality governance, program change governance, and program governance design. Government entities, in general, must restructure their approach to program governance to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in the services they offer and the projects they execute.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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