

Developing and Leading Projects Glossary

Different project management authors and schools of thought use different words for the same concepts, and vice versa. This glossary will help you understand how I am using certain words today. What is most important are the concepts themselves.

Benchmarks: When the project is finished, how will you know it was successful? Finishing on time is good, but did the project actually accomplish specific, predetermined outcomes? Can more children read English? Are more library users attending weekend family events? Did the new branch building attract new businesses? See *goals*.

Chain of command: Who has the legitimate authority to supervise another person or aspect of the project, which includes evaluating progress, making decisions, and changing work orders? If that person is not in the building, who is the next person in line? Chains of command are written with “straight” lines, not dotted lines, in the organizational chart.

Checkpoints: How do all of the members of a project team, not just the leader, know that the project is progressing on time, on budget, and at the level of quality agreed upon? Checkpoints are specific points in time where team members check in and present evidence on their progress.

Civility: Civility is workplace manners and goodwill. If people don’t choose to say good morning, please, and thank-you, they should find another job. Unless libraries evaluate workplace performance on civility as well as technical and professional skills, there will still be people who use emotional intimidation, including bullying and pouting, to get the work done. Instead let’s have contracts rule people, not negative personalities.

Constraints: (See *curbs* and *parameters*.) What are the agreed upon or external limitations within which project members must work? They can include deadlines, budget caps, local zoning laws, union and vendor contracts, as well as what the project team agrees about the way a certain project will be accomplished and the level of quality. It also refers to *civility* and how people treat each other: no grumps or prima donnas!

Curbs: See *constraints*.

Default: What will happen if a *checkpoint* or agreement is not met? “If I can’t reach you by Monday, I will go ahead with the contract as planned.” “If Bill or Maria get stuck at the conference, Lee and Pat will decide on the colors for the brochure.” “If the department goes over budget, they will lose a part-time employee in the next fiscal year.”

Expectations: The expectation is that a project will meet its *goals* within the *constraints*. Does everyone on the project team have this information? Do they agree that this is the contract? How is the contract enforced by the managers and leaders?

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Fuzzy Logic: Instead of relying on a simple “yes or no” answer, fuzzy logic creates a range of values. So, do you think the level of quality on this cataloging project should be “4” or a “9”? And is the importance of this meeting a “2” or a “6”? Groups can quickly develop a shorthand method to communicate the relative importance of quality, time, and resources used to establish *project ratios* and *expectations*.

Goals: In *strategic planning* and *project management*, a *goal* is **what** you accomplish – an outcome or result – of the work you do day-to-day. In this workshop, we are using the words *benchmarks*, *goals*, and *outcomes* interchangeably. See *benchmarks*, *tactics*, *mission*, and *vision*.

Governance: Who makes decisions, what decisions do they make, and how do they make decisions?

Mission: In *strategic planning* and *project management*, *mission* and *vision* are **where** are we going, and **why?** I use *mission* to refer to the principles that fuel the library’s progress and **why** we are doing what we are doing.

Outcomes: See *goals* and *benchmarks*.

Parameters: See *constraints*.

Project management: All the things we do to make a project successful.

Project ratios: The variable relationships among the ideas of good, cheap, and fast. If you want it fast and good, it won’t be cheap, etc.

Project triangle: The three project bottom lines: good, cheap, and fast, or quality, resources, and deadlines, if you prefer.

Strategic planning: A process for creating long-term goals and focusing the resources of the library on achieving those goals. It implies change and alignment.

Tactics: In *strategic planning* and *project management*, *tactics* are **how** we accomplish the strategic plan: the job we do every day.

Timeline: The agreed upon calendar or schedule for the project.

Vision: In *strategic planning* and *project management*, *mission*, and *vision* are **where** are we going, and **why?** I use *vision* to refer to **where** the library is going. Currently, I believe that to stay successful and relevant, the vision is the better future for people, communities, and institutions they serve (not just the library user).