Pefok's PMO

Africa's Premier Project Management Institution

The PMO Playbook

A practical field guide to building, running, and scaling a high-performing Project Management Office in African organizations.

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1. Why PMOs Fail — and How to Beat the 70% Statistic

Research across African markets shows that up to 70% of PMOs are dissolved or restructured within 24 months of launch. The reasons are consistent: unclear mandate, lack of executive sponsorship, over-reliance on reporting instead of value delivery, and process without discipline. The winning PMOs treat the office as a business — with a P&L;, customer promise, and continuous improvement backlog.

Practical actions

• Anchor the PMO to a measurable strategic objective, not a compliance mandate.

• Secure a named executive sponsor with veto power at portfolio level.

• Publish a public service catalog: what the PMO does, and what it does not do.

• Report on outcomes (benefits realized, waste eliminated), not activity.

• Institutionalize a quarterly PMO retrospective with the leadership team.

2. The Three PMO Archetypes

Choose the archetype that matches organizational maturity. A directive PMO in a low-maturity organization creates resentment. A supportive PMO in a chaotic environment fails to move the needle. Diagnose before prescribing.

Practical actions

• Supportive — templates, coaching, community; low authority.

• Controlling — standards enforcement, gated reviews; medium authority.

• Directive — assigned PMs, portfolio ownership; high authority.

3. Governance Design

A three-tier governance stack works in most African enterprises: an executive steering committee (monthly, strategic), a portfolio board (bi-weekly, tactical), and a PMO council (weekly, operational). Each tier has a distinct decision-rights charter, published and signed.

Practical actions

• SteerCo: go/no-go, funding release, executive escalations.

• Portfolio Board: prioritization, resourcing, cross-project dependencies.

• PMO Council: standards, tooling, lessons learned, capability building.

4. The Pefok Delivery Model™

Our five-phase delivery framework — Discover, Diagnose, Design, Deploy, Drive — is designed for African operational realities: intermittent connectivity, thin project management talent pools, and complex regulatory landscapes. Each phase has explicit entry criteria, artifacts, and exit gates.

Practical actions

• Discover — stakeholder mapping, current-state assessment, quick wins.

• Diagnose — maturity assessment, root cause analysis, benefits mapping.

• Design — target operating model, governance, tooling, capability plan.

• Deploy — pilot, iterate, roll out with change management embedded.

• Drive — continuous improvement, benefits tracking, PMO 2.0.

5. Portfolio Prioritization

Every organization has more ideas than capacity. A rigorous scoring model — combining strategic fit, financial return, risk, and resource intensity — separates signal from noise. The hardest work is not scoring; it is killing zombie projects that have political sponsors but no benefits case.

Practical actions

• Score on 4 dimensions: Strategic Fit, NPV, Risk, Resource Load.

• Weight dimensions with executive team (workshop, not memo).

• Publish the ranked list monthly; force the bottom quartile to justify continuation.

• Institute a quarterly zombie review; celebrate cancellations.

6. Resource Capacity Planning

In African organizations, project delivery is constrained more by talent than by capital. Effective capacity planning tracks named individuals against committed allocations, updated weekly, with a visible bench and a 6-week forward view. Over-allocation above 85% is a red flag, not a badge of honor.

Practical actions

• Track allocation by named person, not FTE fractions.

• Cap sustainable allocation at 85%; keep 15% for learning and slack.

• Publish the bench weekly to leadership.

• Match capability heat maps to portfolio roadmap gaps.

7. Benefits Realization

Delivering the deliverable is not the same as delivering the benefit. A benefits realization plan — with named benefit owners, measurement points, and post-project tracking — is what separates a project management function from a value delivery function. Track benefits for 12 months after go-live, not until go-live.

Practical actions

• Assign a benefits owner distinct from the project manager.

• Define leading and lagging indicators before design starts.

• Track quarterly for 12 months post-go-live.

• Publish realized vs planned benefits to SteerCo.

8. PMO Maturity Journey

Maturity is not a marketing badge — it is a diagnostic. The five levels — Ad-hoc, Repeatable, Defined, Managed, Optimizing — each require different investments. Most African PMOs sit between Repeatable and Defined; the jump to Managed is where organizations start compounding value.

Practical actions

• Assess maturity annually against a published rubric.

• Publish the score and the improvement plan to the whole organization.

• Budget explicitly for the next-level investment.

• Celebrate incremental gains, not just leaps.

9. Change Management

Prosci research suggests up to 60% of project value depends on adoption. In many African deployments, change management is bolted on in the last sprint — with predictable results. Embed a change lead from Diagnose, not Deploy.

Practical actions

• Identify sponsors, change agents, and resisters before design freeze.

• Run pilots with the most sceptical audience, not the friendliest.

• Measure adoption weekly post-go-live for at least 90 days.

• Fund change management at 10–15% of total project budget.

10. Tooling

Tools do not create discipline; discipline creates value from tools. Start with the minimum — a portfolio tracker, a schedule tool, a collaboration space, a document repository. Add sophistication only when the team is executing consistently at the current tier.

Practical actions

• Tier 1: MS Project + SharePoint + Teams — most SMEs and public sector.

• Tier 2: Jira + Confluence + Power BI — digital-heavy portfolios.

• Tier 3: Enterprise PPM (Planview, Clarity) — 100+ project portfolios.

• Never buy a tool to fix a process problem.

11. Reporting Cadence

Reports serve decisions. If a report does not trigger a decision, kill it. Our recommended cadence: weekly status (1-pager, project level), monthly portfolio review (dashboard, 6 pages max), quarterly business review (strategic, 20-minute standing agenda).

Practical actions

- Weekly: 1-pager per project, RAG, top 3 issues, top 3 decisions needed.
- Monthly: portfolio dashboard — health, spend, benefits, top risks.
- Quarterly: strategic review — pipeline, capacity, capability, retro.

12. The First 100 Days

The first 100 days of a new PMO set the ceiling on what it can achieve. Deliver two visible wins before day 60, publish the service catalog before day 90, and secure the first named benefit before day 120. Momentum compounds; so does inertia.

Practical actions

- Days 1–30: listening tour, current-state assessment, quick wins identified.
- Days 31–60: two visible wins delivered; sponsor alignment ratified.
- Days 61–90: service catalog published; governance operational.
- Days 91–100: first quarterly review delivered; year-1 roadmap signed.

About Pefok's PMO

Founded in 2019 in Buea, Cameroon, Pefok's PMO is Africa's premier project management institution — combining consulting, PMO implementation, professional training, advisory, and digital transformation. Seven years in, we have trained over 500 professionals, delivered 100+ projects across 20+ industries, and built a reputation for turning ambitious African organizations into disciplined delivery machines.

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