THE PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

Managing AI Projects

Plan the work.
Test the result.
Deliver the value.

A concise introduction to managing AI projects and projects that include AI capabilities.

A Strategen AI practical companion to PMBOK®

> Start here. Explore the complete 126-page guide when you need the detail.

THE MANAGEMENT TASK

Familiar disciplines. A clearer AI delivery task.

Purpose, scope, time, cost, people and quality still hold the project together. AI changes what the team must establish, test and manage within those disciplines.

Start with a business problem and a useful outcome. Then make the assumptions about information, system behaviour, users, suppliers and ongoing operation explicit enough to plan and test. A convincing demonstration is only one piece of evidence.

This approach applies when you build, buy, configure, integrate, adopt or materially change an AI capability. It also applies to a limited AI component within a larger project. The subject is delivering or changing that capability; using an AI tool to administer a conventional project is a separate activity.

Capability	Adoption	Value
Can it perform the intended task under the conditions that matter?	Can people use it effectively within their actual work?	Does the improvement justify the whole effort and continuing cost?

Keep these three questions connected, but measure them separately. Technical performance does not establish adoption or realised business value.

Full guide: framework and tailoring, pp. 6–21.

THE WORKFLOW AT A GLANCE

Keep the whole project in view.

Six connected management decisions provide a route through the work. Revisit them as evidence, circumstances and commitments change.

01

Authorise worthwhile work

What problem are we solving, and what commitment is justified?

02

Define scope and evidence

What is included, and how will we know the result is acceptable?

03

Plan the whole effort

Are time, people, dependencies and funding sufficient?

04

Deliver and control change

What are we learning, completing and changing?

05

Release and hand over

Is the capability ready for use and operational ownership?

06

Close and realise value

What has been achieved, and who owns the next decisions?

These are practical organising questions, not official PMBOK phases or mandatory gates. Principles guide behaviour; performance domains describe areas of management attention. Process groups and techniques support activities that can recur throughout the chosen project life cycle.

Select a predictive, adaptive or hybrid approach to suit the work. Organisational delegations determine authority. Stakeholders, communication, risk, procurement and assurance connect across the project.

Full guide: framework relationships and delivery approaches, pp. 6–19.

01 / AUTHORISE

Fund a worthwhile change.

Establish the problem, current performance, people affected and intended improvement before committing to an AI solution.

Make the investment question concrete

Compare credible alternatives, including a simpler response without AI. Separate feasibility, adoption and value. A prototype may show that something is possible while leaving data access, integration, review effort or service costs unresolved.

Bound the next commitment

Where uncertainty matters, fund a defined experiment or stage with a clear question, time limit, budget and decision. Use existing authorisation arrangements. Continuing, narrowing, deferring, changing approach or stopping can all be sound decisions.

Name the people who can decide

Identify the sponsor, project manager, business acceptance authority, future service owner and benefits owner. Smaller teams may combine roles, but responsibility, decision authority and available capacity still need to be clear.

> THE SPONSOR'S QUESTION
>
> **What are we funding now, what remains uncertain, and what evidence will justify the next commitment?**

Record the answer in the business case and charter, with intended users, scope, exclusions, funding and the next meaningful decision.

Full guide: authorise and govern, pp. 22–34; charter and business case, pp. 96–99.

02 / SCOPE AND QUALITY

Define the result. Agree the evidence.

Describe the users, tasks, decisions, information sources, operating conditions, permitted actions and exclusions.

Translate broad aspirations into requirements that can be checked in the intended workflow. For an assistant, ‘helpful answers’ might become ‘responses supported by approved sources, respecting access boundaries, with referral when evidence is insufficient’.

Evaluate representative tasks, difficult cases and consequential failures. Record the configuration and conditions tested. Consider useful outputs, permissions, task completion, failure handling and the effort required to check the result. Where variation matters, plan repeated trials.

Evaluation

What does the evidence show, including limitations and failures?

Acceptance

Does the deliverable meet the agreed requirements?

Permission to use

Is the intended use authorised under the organisation’s arrangements?

Plan the responsible people and evidence for each decision. These decisions may be recorded together in a small project, with each authority clear, but a demonstration alone does not settle them. Acceptance criteria reflect the intended use; there is no universal pass score.

Full guide: scope, quality and worked acceptance example, pp. 35–45.

03 / TIME, PEOPLE AND COST

Plan the work around the evidence.

Include content and data readiness, access, configuration or development, integration, evaluation, rework, adoption and transition.

Sequence dependencies and reserve specialist and reviewer capacity. An evaluation milestone is credible only when the people, test material and configuration will be ready. Distinguish effort from elapsed duration; waiting for access or a decision still affects the schedule.

Use estimate ranges and bounded learning where uncertainty remains. Tie milestones to evidence and decisions, then refine the plan as assumptions are resolved. Train or retrain a model only where the project requires it.



Count the whole effort

Include usage charges, human review, correction, support and maintenance. Separate project expenditure from continuing operating costs. Human review needs time, competence, information and authority; include that work in both the plan and the value case.

Keep the authorised baseline, current forecast and spending authority distinct. A worsening forecast requires a response even when the original target remains unchanged.

Full guide: schedules, resources and commercial control, pp. 46–60.

04 / DELIVERY AND CHANGE

Learn deliberately. Keep delivery controlled.

Use feedback to improve the capability while keeping purpose, scope and decision limits clear.

Make progress understandable

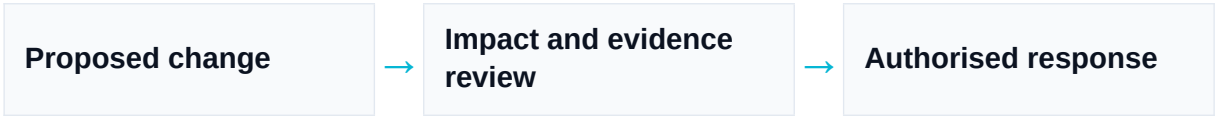
Report completed learning separately from accepted deliverables, permission to use and observed business outcomes. A successful experiment can reduce uncertainty without producing a service ready for release.

Test the way people will work

Engage affected people early. Include checking, accessibility, support, training and fallback in workflow trials. Make changes to roles and responsibilities explicit, and confirm that reviewers can manage the expected workload.

Revisit evidence when the capability changes

Models, prompts, source collections, permissions, tools, suppliers and intended use can all change the basis of earlier acceptance. Review the impact on requirements, schedule, cost and prior evidence through ordinary change control. Plan proportionate re-evaluation.



The status report should show completed work, current forecasts, unresolved issues and the next decision needed. Communicate the consequence for delivery, not simply the number of experiments run.

Full guide: delivery, adoption and change, pp. 61–72; working records, pp. 104–107.

SUPPLIERS AND SPECIALIST INPUT

Connect the advice to the delivery plan.

Buying an AI product still leaves local requirements, evaluation, integration, adoption and operational ownership to organise.

Source for the intended use

Seek relevant supplier evidence and evaluation access. Clarify usage pricing, release changes, data arrangements, service commitments, portability and exit. Put supplier dependencies and obligations into the plan and contract with appropriate specialist support.

Make assurance an actionable input

Engage privacy, cybersecurity, legal, accessibility and AI assurance specialists where the proposed use and organisational arrangements require them. Agree what the project must provide, what advice or decision it needs, who owns it and when it is required.

TURN FINDINGS INTO WORK

A finding should lead to an owner and an action, condition or decision. Its effect may change scope, sequencing, cost, acceptance or release.

The project manager coordinates these interfaces while specialist and business authorities retain their decisions. Use existing risk, issue and decision records. Include relevant social, environmental and economic consequences proportionately when comparing options and planning operation.

Full guide: risk and assurance, pp. 73–80; sourcing and sustainability, pp. 81–86.

05–06 / HANDOVER AND VALUE

Finish the project. Own what continues.

A release needs evidence, authorised use and an operating owner. Project closure needs a clear transfer of continuing responsibilities.

Confirm acceptance evidence, limitations, support arrangements and readiness of people and operations. Assign ownership for source and configuration updates, supplier changes, usage costs, monitoring, recovery and fallback. Rehearse the response to failure; stopping a service may not reverse actions already taken.

Close the temporary project against agreed criteria. Transfer open obligations and future decisions to named owners with the authority and resources to act. A bounded pilot may close with a decision to stop or change approach.

Delivered capability	Changed work	Measured benefit
What has been accepted and made ready for its intended use?	Are people adopting it, and what checking or support remains?	What improvement is evident against a comparable baseline?

Measure quality, adoption and additional effort alongside the intended business outcome. Include checking, correction, support and maintenance. Capacity released is not automatically cash saved, and benefits may require measurement after the project closes.

Full guide: transition, closure and benefits, pp. 87–94; handover and benefits records, pp. 108–111.

A FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

One pilot. A complete management task.

A medium-sized organisation wants staff to find and verify approved internal guidance more easily.

12	40	$120k
working weeks	nominated staff	AUD funding envelope

The knowledge-assistant pilot uses one approved internal source collection. Public advice, autonomous decisions and organisation-wide rollout are excluded. The AUD 108,000 cost baseline includes contingency; AUD 12,000 of management reserve sits outside it.

The team tests whether responses represent approved sources, access boundaries work and unsupported questions receive an appropriate response. It also examines whether users can complete their tasks with acceptable checking effort.

01–07 WEEKS	**Prepare and configure** Scope, content, access, configuration and evaluation preparation.
08–09 WEEKS	**Validate with eight participants** Controlled evaluation before a decision on supervised use.
10–11 WEEKS	**Run the supervised pilot** Forty staff, subject to evidence and required decisions.
12 WEEK	**Hand over and decide** Stop, change approach, continue bounded use or propose expansion.

This is a fictional plan, not a report of achieved results. Expansion requires separate authorisation. A completed experiment can support a sound decision without establishing readiness for wider use.

Full guide: case, pp. 20–21; acceptance, pp. 41–43; schedule, pp. 50–51; baseline, pp. 100–101.

PROPORTIONATE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Use the structure the project needs.

Match management effort to uncertainty, complexity, consequences, autonomy and reversibility.

Purchased or embedded AI

Plan local configuration, evaluation, integration and adoption. Identify the settings, permissions, supplier changes and continuing costs that affect use.

A limited AI component

Use the wider project's existing controls. For a predictive feature, compare its contribution with the current method and consider the consequences of error.

AI permitted to take actions

Define permitted transactions, authority limits, confirmations, stop arrangements and recovery. Test these boundaries before accepting the capability.

Eight useful working records

Keep useful records in your existing system. Combine roles and documents where appropriate, while retaining clear accountability. The full guide supplies blank and completed examples.

Charter	96–97	**Decision and change record**	104–105
Business case	98–99	**Status report**	106–107
Delivery baseline	100–101	**Release and handover**	108–109
RAID tracker	102–103	**Benefits record**	110–111

RAID: risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies. Numbers refer to pages in the full guide.

Full guide: tailoring, pp. 16–19; reusable templates, pp. 95–111.

CONTINUE WITH THE FULL GUIDE

The idea is clear. The detail is ready.

The complete 126-page guide expands this overview into a practical reference for managing the whole project.

- 11 chapters covering the complete management workflow
- 32 diagrams and a connected fictional pilot
- Worked schedules, costs and decision examples
- Eight reusable templates with completed examples
- Troubleshooting guidance, glossary and references

Open the full 126-page guide →

Included in the reader pack. Extract the pack and keep both PDFs together to use this link.

FIND THE DETAIL YOU NEED

Authorise and govern	pp. 22–34
Scope and quality	pp. 35–45
Time, resources and costs	pp. 46–60
Transition and value	pp. 87–94
Reusable templates	pp. 95–111

Abridged from Managing AI Projects, Strategen AI, version 1.0, 21 November 2026. Full-guide references: pp. 123–126. Framework source: PMI's PMBOK® Guide.

PMI framework source: pmi.org/standards/pmbok

An independent companion, not a PMI publication. PMBOK is a registered mark of Project Management Institute, Inc. No PMI endorsement is implied.