
CAPM® Certification
Premium Study Guide

Domain 1

Project Management Fundamentals

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Domain 1: Project Management Fundamentals

This domain represents approximately 19% of the CAPM exam. It covers the core concepts of project management, including the project lifecycle, stakeholder engagement, roles and responsibilities, and foundational problem-solving techniques.

1.1 What Is a Project?

A **project** is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result. Projects have a defined beginning and end, distinguishing them from ongoing operations.

Key Characteristics of a Project:

- **Temporary:** Every project has a start date and an end date. The project ends when its objectives are achieved, when it is cancelled, or when it is no longer needed.
- **Unique deliverable:** Projects produce something that has not been produced before in exactly the same way — a new product, an improved service, or a specific result.
- **Progressive elaboration:** Projects are developed in steps. Details become clearer as the project moves forward.
- **Resources:** Projects require people, money, materials, and time to accomplish their goals.

Projects vs. Operations:

Characteristic	Projects	Operations
Duration	Temporary	Ongoing
Output	Unique product/service	Repetitive output
Goal	Achieve objectives, then close	Sustain the business
Team	Assembled for the project	Permanent staff

1.2 The Project Lifecycle

The **project lifecycle** is the series of phases that a project passes through from its initiation to its closure. Phases can be sequential, overlapping, or iterative depending on the project approach.

Phase Types:

- **Sequential phases:** One phase must complete before the next begins. Common in predictive (waterfall) projects.
- **Overlapping phases:** A new phase starts before the previous one finishes, compressing the schedule (fast-tracking).
- **Iterative phases:** Work is repeated in cycles (sprints/iterations), common in agile approaches.

Phase Gates (Stage Gates):

At the end of each phase, a **phase gate** (also called a stage gate or kill point) review is conducted. The project sponsor or steering committee evaluates performance and decides whether to continue, modify, or terminate the project.

1.3 Project Management Process Groups

The five process groups describe the work performed throughout a project. These are not phases — they can occur multiple times within a single phase.

Process Group	Key Purpose
Initiating	Authorizes the project. Key outputs: Project Charter, Stakeholder Register.
Planning	Defines scope, schedule, cost, quality, resources, communications, risk, procurement, and stakeholder engagement.
Executing	Carries out the project management plan. Produces deliverables.
Monitoring & Controlling	Tracks, reviews, and regulates progress. Manages changes. Runs throughout the project.
Closing	Formally completes the project or phase. Archives documents, releases resources, obtains acceptance.

1.4 Stakeholder Engagement

A **stakeholder** is any individual, group, or organization that may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of the project.

Stakeholder Identification:

Stakeholders are identified early in the project during the Initiating process group. The **Stakeholder Register** documents their names, roles, interests, influence levels, and engagement strategies.

Stakeholder Engagement Levels:

Level	Description
Unaware	Not aware of the project or its impacts.
Resistant	Aware but opposed to the project.
Neutral	Aware but neither supportive nor resistant.
Supportive	Aware and supportive of the project.
Leading	Actively engaged and promoting the project.

1.5 Project Roles and Responsibilities

Project Sponsor

Authorizes the project and provides resources. Has authority over the project manager. Champions the project at the executive level.

Project Manager (PM)

Responsible for planning, executing, and closing the project. Manages the team, budget, schedule, and stakeholders. Balances leadership and management.

Project Team

Executes the project work. Closest to the deliverables. Self-organizing in agile environments.

Business Analyst (BA)

Gathers and documents requirements. Bridges the gap between stakeholders and the project team.

Functional Manager

Manages resources in a functional department. Shares authority with the PM in matrix organizations.

Leadership vs. Management:

Leadership	Management
Motivating and inspiring people	Aligning, directing, and getting things done
Focused on vision and change	Focused on processes and consistency
Influences through relationships	Influences through authority and structure

1.6 Emotional Intelligence (EQ) in Project Management

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own emotions, and to recognize and influence the emotions of others. High EQ is essential for effective project management because projects are driven by people.

- **Self-awareness:** Understanding your own emotional state and how it affects your behavior.
- **Self-regulation:** Controlling impulses and managing disruptive emotions.
- **Empathy:** Understanding the emotional perspective of others.
- **Social skills:** Building relationships, managing conflict, and communicating effectively.

1.7 Common Problem-Solving Tools and Techniques

Focus Groups

Bring together selected stakeholders to discuss a specific problem or requirement. Useful for gathering qualitative insights.

Brainstorming

Generate as many ideas as possible without judgment. Used for risk identification, solution generation, and requirements gathering.

Stand-up Meetings

Short daily meetings (typically 15 minutes) where team members share what they did yesterday, what they will do today, and any blockers. Common in agile (Daily Scrum).

Workshops

Structured sessions for requirements gathering, planning, or problem-solving. Bring together stakeholders and subject matter experts.

Interviews

One-on-one or small group conversations to gather detailed requirements or feedback from stakeholders.

1.8 Key Concepts Tested on the CAPM Exam

The following concepts appear frequently in Domain 1 exam questions. Study these carefully.

Project Charter

The document that formally authorizes a project. Created during the Initiating process group. Signed by the project sponsor. Contains the project's high-level scope, objectives, milestones, budget, and the project manager's authority.

Organizational Process Assets (OPAs)

Plans, processes, policies, procedures, and knowledge bases from previous projects. Examples: templates, lessons learned, historical data.

Enterprise Environmental Factors (EEFs)

Conditions not under the project team's control that influence the project. Examples: organizational culture, market conditions, regulatory requirements.

Lessons Learned

Knowledge gained during a project that is documented and archived to improve future projects. Captured throughout the project and formally documented at closing.

Project Closure

The formal process of completing the project. Includes obtaining stakeholder acceptance, archiving documents, releasing resources, and documenting lessons learned.

Phase Gate Review

A checkpoint at the end of each project phase where the sponsor or steering committee evaluates progress and decides whether to continue, modify, or cancel the project.

Exam Tips for Domain 1

- ✓ The project charter is created in the Initiating process group, not Planning.
- ✓ The project sponsor has authority over the project manager.
- ✓ Projects are temporary; operations are ongoing.
- ✓ Stakeholders should be identified as early as possible — ideally during project initiation.
- ✓ Lessons learned are captured throughout the project, not just at the end.
- ✓ EQ (emotional intelligence) questions often ask about the best way to handle team conflict or stakeholder resistance.
- ✓ A phase gate review happens at the END of a phase, not the beginning.