

Process Management

Process Management (PMt) and Manager (PMr)

Process Management (**PMt**) is an approach to planning and managing single events or a series of events organized into projects or programs. The principles of PMt and how they relate to frameworks such as Result-Based Management (RBM) are summarized in the Table below. PMt is the *point of entry and practical grounding* of the social analysis and all-purpose techniques described in the previous section.

The PMt approach can be turned into a collaborative planning and management technique described below called Process Manager (**PMr**). How this is done depends on the kind of planning being undertaken. Three likely scenarios can be distinguished, with the help of the Social Analysis technique *Order and Chaos*.

Scenario 1: Plan First, Implement After

RBM

The first scenario involves situations that are sufficiently predictable for you to be able to plan most project activities (including M&E assessments) in advance with considerable detail, producing plans that are result-based and reliable in most respects. Many project and management tools such as Result-Based Management (RBM) operate assuming this high level of information and certainty regarding the chances of achieving particular goals. Under these conditions, use PMr and SAS² techniques to do four things in sequence:

- (a) Assess the initial situation using collaborative SAS² techniques (combined with other assessment methods);
- (b) Use PMr to make detailed activity plans based on your findings (when confident that you can predict the linkages between your project activities and the expected results);
- (c) Include plans to use SAS² (and other methods) to monitor the ongoing results of your project implementation against your baseline information (your initial set of observations or

findings);

- (d) Evaluate the final results of your project against your initial objectives using SAS² techniques (and other methods).

Many organizations require projects to follow the RBM approach. SAS² and PMr can support this RBM approach and achieve greater efficiency and accountability in the process, by providing tools for collaborative thinking and planning. However, this plan-first and implement-after approach (using SAS² and PMr or not) has its limitations. It works well only in situations of relative order characterized by high levels of certainty and predictable linkages between causes and effects (or between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact). This linear approach to planning and management, with its sharp distinctions between research, planning, action, and evaluation, has nonetheless its limitations.

If you choose this approach, consult the PMr instructions below, and then the instructions on how to incorporate SAS² techniques in Process Manager (*Guidelines for SAS² Events and Process Design*). Note that you can also use this approach to plan a full research project, by selecting in advance the appropriate SAS² techniques to be applied throughout your research process.

Scenario 2: Continuous Planning

The second scenario consists of situations that are not fully predictable but still lend themselves to planning in a continuous mode — by making plans along the way or adjusting plans in light of unforeseen events and new information. These are complex situations of relative chaos characterized by the **unexpected and the unknown** where the results of prior activities, the performance of key factors, and stakeholder interventions cannot be assumed or fully predicted.

SAS² & PMr

For this kind of situation, use several SAS² techniques and PMr to support a series of events in a project where some actions and analyses may be planned in advance and other plans must be made along the way (in response to ongoing project results, stakeholder

interventions, and key factor performance). This approach allows you to make full use of SAS² in complex situations where you have incomplete knowledge of the key factors and their future behavior. To help you assess whether or not this continuous planning (or Process Management) approach fits your needs, see *Order and Chaos*. If you adopt this approach, consult the instructions below.

Note that when using this approach you may choose to progressively compile and reflect on the results of your actions and inquiry activities to produce an applied research document such as a report, a thesis or a scholarly publication.

Scenario 3: Single Event

The third scenario involves situations that are so uncertain that you can only plan relatively immediate events, as opposed to making broader project plans in advance. PMr or other planning tools are not really needed in this scenario. Rather, you can simply use one or several SAS² inquiry techniques when you need to for a single or one-off event. If you adopt this approach, go directly to *Guidelines for SAS² Events and Process Design*.

RESULT-BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM)

RBM uses a linear *conception* → *implementation* model or the **plan-and-execute** approach of the engineer. The model involves making assumptions and calculating **risks** as they relate to the conditions and methods that will help to achieve project or program goals. This closed-system approach allows projects to have a clear beginning and a clear ending. It works when there is relative order, low levels of **uncertainty**, and high levels of **predictable links** between causes and effects (or between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact).

In RBM most of the **decisions** and **planning** occur when the project **cycle begins** and are done with **considerable detail**.

RBM uses **pre-established and expert-led methods**, supported by **comprehensive** planning and **strict accounting** of the resources used. Formal assessments are done at **fixed moments** in the project cycle. They include upstream diagnoses, midstream reports on the work in progress, and downstream accounts and evaluations of the final results.

RBM assessments focus on the need for **reliable** data, measurable indicators, and ways to verify results applied at the global **project level**.

RBM starts by defining the **objectives and expected end-results**, and then decides what actions are needed to achieve them.

RBM is based on a **logical ladder of general and specific objectives shared** by all parties and **stable** over time.

RBM tends to highlight the interests of the **beneficiaries** and to apply measures of accountability and **ownership** of results to those who lead the project.

PROCESS MANAGEMENT (PMt)

PMt incorporates the *action* → *reaction* model or **testing-and-monitoring** approach of the medical profession. Interventions are done ‘in the middle’ of complex situations that have no clear beginning or ending. This adaptive approach is suited to open systems characterized by **the unexpected and the unknown**. The approach works in situations of relative chaos where the results of prior activities, the performance of key factors, and stakeholder interventions cannot be assumed or fully predicted.

In PMt decisions are taken and plans for next steps are made at the right interval, in light of ongoing results, key factor performance, and stakeholder interventions. Plans are made at the **optimum level**, with gaps and details that are left unspecified until the conditions for further planning are met.

PMt incorporates **collaborative inquiry** into ongoing activities, using methods that are either **planned** in advance or **improvised** to meet unexpected needs. Assessments are done for accounting purposes but also to **guide social action** in circumstances that evolve over time.

PMt promotes the use of **multiple and flexible inquiry tools** to assess different parts of a project at the optimal level of detail (simple, intermediate, or advanced). The optimal or good-enough application of **inquiry** tools takes into account what is feasible in each case (given limitations in time and resources) and what level of evidence and agreement is actually needed for the assessment to achieve its purpose.

PMt identifies ongoing and projected **activities** informed by experience, goals, and the desired results explicitly or implicitly embedded in them.

PMt tracks complex **multistakeholder** situations where general and specific objectives interact and evolve, subject to **negotiations**, compromises, and change over time.

PMt accommodates a **plurality of stakeholder interests and contributions** to project results.