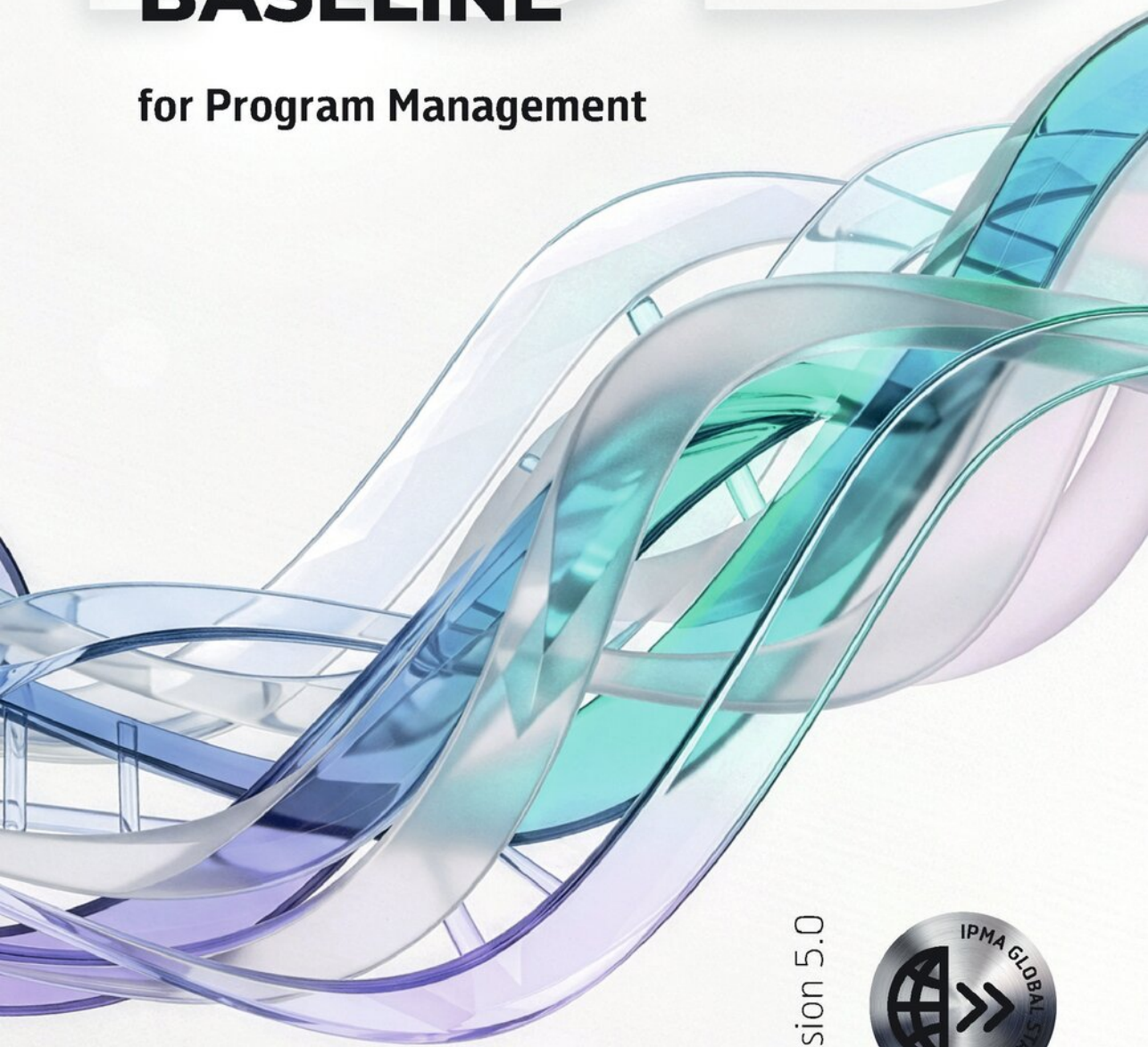
publication

IPMA

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE

for Program Management



version 5.0

IPMA GLOBAL STANDARD

publication

IPMA

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE

for Program Management

version 5.0

Title:
INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCE BASELINE
For Program Management

5th Edition

Editor: Tim Jaques (USA)
Editorial team (in alphabetical order):
Christian Rudischer (Austria)
Frank Berge (Germany)
Guillermo Montero (Spain)
Ivana Beric (Serbia)
Juan Carlos Narro (Mexico)
Kyle Loff (South Africa)
Lenka Podéšťová (Czech Republic)
Łukasz Sienkiewicz (Poland)

Alexey Polkovnikov (UK)
Carlos Godfrey (Columbia)
Christian Kaeser (Switzerland)
Danilo Condecido (Singapore)
Frederic D'Arrentières (France)
Giovanni Pisano (Italy)
Hari Prasad Josyula (United States of America)
Inese Slūka (Latvia)
Jorge Karica (Panama)
Konstantin Dirbanis (Greece)
Maria Pürckhauer (Germany)
Peter Pürckhauer (Germany)
Rinse van der Schoot (The Netherlands)

Review Team (in alphabetical order):
Allan Krüger-Jensen (Denmark)
Antonio Calabrese (Italy)
Beate Nicholls (Germany)
Carlo de Rooij (Germany)
Constanta Bodea (Romania)
Daniel Baumann (Switzerland)
Frank Dahlhaus (Germany)
Gabriel Gassmann (Switzerland)
Gernot Haitzmann (Austria)

Giovanni Salamone (Italy)
Günther Lauer (Austria)
Hossein Radmehr (Iran)
Irina Bolognesi (Italy)
Jiri Kratky (Czech Republic)
Johann Siegl (Austria)
Kai Koskinen (Finland)
Laurens de Bever (Switzerland)
Lixiong OU (China)
Marco Caduff (Switzerland)
Maria Vestgöte (Sweden)
Markku Aarni (Finland)
Masashi Furubayashi (Japan)
Olli Ilmarinen (Finland)
Patrick van Delft (The Netherlands)
Peter Pürckhauer (Germany)
Petr Všetečka (Slovakia)
Roberto Zavani (Italy)
Sama Bose Thoma (Switzerland)
Selina Pichler (Switzerland)
Suzana Čufer (Switzerland)
Thorsten Seidl (Germany)
Walter Hüskes (Germany)
Wil Hendrickx (The Netherlands)

Technical editor: Rebeka D. Vlahov (Croatia)
Designer: Iza Maciejak ImagineLab (imaginelab.pl)
Publisher: Van Haren Publishing BV, The Netherlands, www.vanharen.net
Layout and DTP: vizual media

ISBN Hard copy: 9789401815253
ISBN eBook: 9789401815260
ISBN ePub: 9789401815277

Edition: First edition, first impression, October 2026
Copyright: © IPMA 2026

Trademarks
IPMA ICB®, IPMA OCB®, IPMA Delta® and IPMA Project Excellence Baseline® are registered trademarks of the International Project Management Association (IPMA®).

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by print, photo print, microfilm or any other means without written permission from the Publisher.

Although this publication has been composed with the utmost care, neither the Authors, Editor, nor Publisher can accept any liability for damage caused by possible errors and/or incompleteness in this publication.

IPMA Legal address: c/o KELLER Rechtsanwälte AG, Fraumünsterstrasse 17, 8001 Zürich, Switzerland

Contents

Foreword by IPMA President		**8**
IPMA Standards Framework		**11**
Purpose of the Framework		11
Relationship between the Standards		13
Common Foundation		14
Continuous Development of the Framework		16
1.	**Introduction**	**17**
2.	**Purpose and Target Audience**	**18**
2.1.	Purpose of Individual Competence Baseline	18
2.2.	Definition of Competence	18
2.3.	Audiences and how they can use IPMA ICB	20
2.4.	Individual Competence Development	22
3.	**The Individual Competence Baseline**	**25**
3.1.	Framework of the IPMA ICB	25
3.2.	Overview of ICB5 Program Management Competences	28
	Perspective Competences	29
	People Competences	30
	Practice Competences	31
4.	**The Inventory of Program Competences**	**33**
4.1.	Perspective	35
4.1.1.	Strategy	36
4.1.2.	Governance, Structures and Processes	41
4.1.3.	Compliance, Standards and Regulations	48
4.1.4.	Power and Interest	54
4.1.5.	Culture and Values	58
4.1.6.	Sustainability Stewardship	63
4.2.	People	68
4.2.1.	Self-Reflection and Self-Management	69
4.2.2.	Personal Integrity and Reliability	74
4.2.3.	Personal Communication	79
4.2.4.	Relationships and Engagement	84
4.2.5.	Leadership	89
4.2.6.	Teamwork	95
4.2.7.	Conflict and Crisis	99

© 2026 International Project Management Association

4.2.8. Resourcefulness 105
4.2.9. Negotiation 110
4.2.10. Results Orientation 117
4.3. Practice 122
4.3.1. Program Design 123
4.3.2. Objectives and Benefits 131
4.3.3. Scope 138
4.3.4. Time 143
4.3.5. Organization and Information 148
4.3.6. Quality 154
4.3.7. Finance 158
4.3.8. Resources 163
4.3.9. Procurement and Contract Management 167
4.3.10. Plan, Control, Adapt and Balance 173
4.3.11. Risks and Opportunities 181
4.3.12. Stakeholders 186
4.3.13. Organizational Change and Transformation 193
4.3.14. Digital Enablement 198
Annex A Comparison ICB4 vs ICB5 203

Table of Figures

Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards 12
Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier 14
Figure 3: The Eye of Competence 25
Figure 4: IPMA ICB Competence Areas 26
Figure 5: IPMA Competence Periodic Table 29

© 2026 International Project Management Association

Foreword by IPMA President

Project management has always been about turning ambition into reality. Today, however, the context in which we lead projects is changing at unprecedented speed with volatile and uncertain environments. Organizations are navigating technological disruption (foremost digital), growing complexity, distributed ways of working, increasing regulatory expectations, and an urgent need to create sustainable value. Projects, programs, and portfolios are no longer simply mechanisms for delivering defined outputs; they are among the principal means through which organizations implement strategy, enable transformation, realize benefits, and contribute to lasting societal impact.

It is in this environment that IPMA presents the fifth edition of the **IPMA Individual Competence Baseline®**. The **IPMA ICB5** builds on our longstanding commitment to competence-based professional development while responding to the realities facing today's and tomorrow's project professionals. It moves beyond the traditional view of the project manager as a coordinator of scope, time, cost, and quality. Instead, it recognizes the project professional as an adaptive leader who works within complex systems, connects strategy with execution, engages people, exercises sound judgment, and creates sustainable value.

At the heart of the IPMA ICB is a clear understanding of competence: the demonstrated application of knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve intended results in a specific context. This emphasis on demonstrated performance is fundamental. Competence is not defined only by what an individual knows, but by the ability to apply that knowledge responsibly and effectively in real situations. Experience, reflection, self-learning, and continuous development therefore remain essential throughout every stage of a professional career.

The familiar **Eye of Competence** continues to provide the foundation of the standard. Its three interconnected areas – Perspective, People, and Practice – offer a balanced view of professional competence and are used differently at different stages of a project professional's career. Perspective enables individuals to understand the context, purpose, governance, culture, and strategic environment of their work. People addresses the personal, interpersonal, and leadership capabilities required to engage others and build effective

collaboration. Practice brings together the professional methods, tools, and techniques needed to design, deliver, adapt, and create value through projects, programs, and portfolios.

This edition also strengthens areas that have become indispensable to responsible professional practice. **Sustainability stewardship** is positioned as a competence element, requiring project professionals to consider environmental, social, economic, ethical, and governance impacts throughout the project, program and portfolio lifecycles and beyond. **Digital enablement** is recognized as a cross-cutting capability that influences planning, collaboration, decision-making, automation, analytics, and value delivery. Together with an increased emphasis on leadership, adaptability, organizational transformation, and stakeholder trust, these developments reflect the expanding responsibilities of our profession.

The **IPMA ICB5 is not a prescriptive methodology** and does not define a single way to manage a project, program, or portfolio. Its strength lies in providing a globally applicable and context-sensitive baseline of competences. It can be used across industries, cultures, organizational settings, and delivery approaches. It supports assessment and certification, education and training, self-development, organizational capability building, research, and the creation of new professional products and services.

The IPMA ICB5 also forms part of the wider **IPMA Standards Framework**, alongside the Project Excellence Baseline, the Organizational Competence Baseline, and the Research Excellence Baseline. Each provides a distinct perspective, yet their greatest value is achieved when they are applied together: competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and advancing professional knowledge all reinforce one another in the creation of sustainable value.

This standard is the result of extensive international collaboration. Practitioners, researchers, educators, assessors, certification bodies, Member Associations, and volunteers from across the IPMA community have contributed their knowledge, experience, and commitment. On behalf of IPMA, I extend my sincere gratitude to our 70+ Member Associations and to the many experts they nominated, supported, and encouraged throughout the development of this standard. Their willingness to share knowledge, challenge assumptions, and contribute perspectives from different countries, cultures, sectors, and professional communities ensured that the ICB5 is truly international in its outlook and relevant to the global profession.

© 2026 International Project Management Association

My special appreciation goes to **Tim Jaques, Project Lead**, for his exemplary leadership, perseverance, and commitment throughout this demanding undertaking. I also thank the members of his **editorial team** and **Peter Pürckhauer**, whose expertise, constructive dialogue, and extraordinary dedication transformed an ambitious vision into a coherent and forward-looking standard. Their work demonstrates what can be achieved when professionals from across the IPMA community unite around a shared purpose.

I offer my deep appreciation to **Mary Koutintcheva, Vice President for Standards and Qualification and sponsor of the project**, for her vision, confidence, and constant support. To our Member Associations, Tim, the core and extended teams, Mary, and everyone who contributed to this journey: **this standard is a testament to your collective effort and to the strength of the IPMA community. You have our heartfelt thanks.**

I invite every reader to approach the IPMA ICB5 not simply as a publication, but as a guide for reflection, development, and action. May it help individuals strengthen their competence, organizations create environments in which professionals can succeed, and our global community deliver projects that achieve meaningful results and lasting positive impact.

Prof. Dr. Mladen Vukomanović
President, International Project Management Association (IPMA)

IPMA Standards Framework

Purpose of the Framework

Professional project management continues to evolve in response to changing organizational needs, growing complexity, technological advancement, and evolving societal expectations. Organizations increasingly rely on projects, programs, and portfolios to implement strategy, enable transformation, realize benefits, and create sustainable value. At the same time, expectations of project professionals and organizations have expanded beyond successful project delivery to include responsible leadership, organizational excellence, evidence-informed practice, and lasting positive impact.

These developments demonstrate that no single perspective can fully describe the project management profession. Sustainable success is achieved through the interaction of individual competence, project excellence, organizational capability, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge through research.

For this reason, IPMA has developed the **IPMA Standards Framework** as an integrated system comprising four complementary baseline standards. Their relationship is illustrated through **the House of IPMA Standards** (Figure 1), which visually represents the framework and demonstrates how the standards operate as an integrated system to support sustainable value creation.

© 2026 International Project Management Association

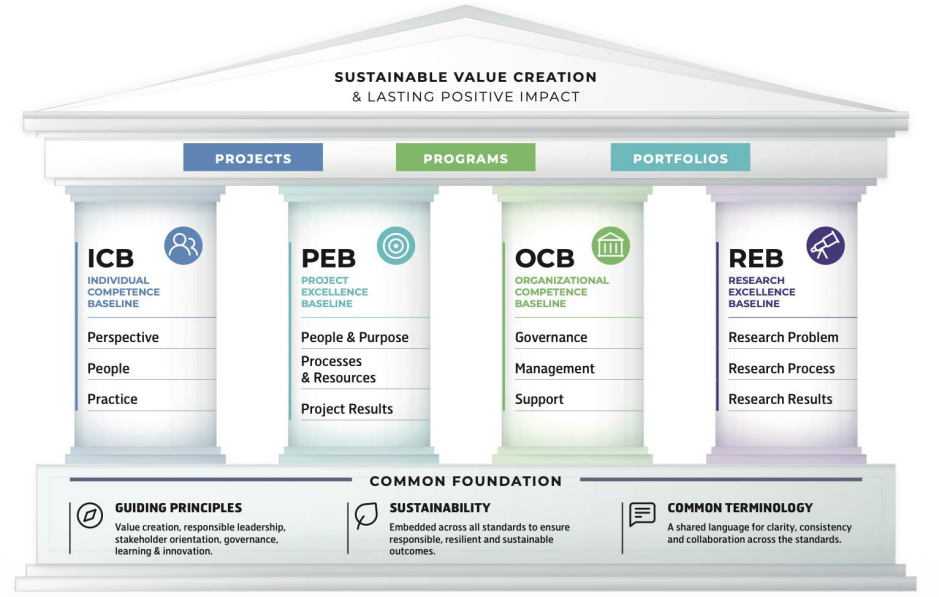


Figure 1: The House of IPMA Standards

The four baseline standards share a common foundation of guiding principles, harmonized terminology, sustainability, ethical behavior, stakeholder orientation, effective governance, and continuous learning. This common foundation ensures consistency across the framework while allowing each baseline to address a distinct perspective of professional project management.

The **IPMA Standards Framework** comprises four complementary baseline standards:

- **IPMA ICB** defines the competences required by individuals to successfully lead and contribute to projects, programs, and portfolios
- **IPMA PEB** defines the characteristics of project and program excellence and provides a framework for assessing, recognizing, and continuously improving project performance
- **IPMA OCB** defines the organizational capabilities required to consistently enable projects, programs, and portfolios to deliver intended results and contribute to strategic objectives

- **IPMA REB** defines the criteria and approach for evaluating research excellence and provides a framework for assessing research quality, impact, and contribution to the advancement of the profession

Together, these complementary baseline standards provide an integrated framework for developing competent individuals, achieving project excellence, strengthening organizational capability, and advancing professional knowledge through research. They support organizations and professionals in delivering projects, programs, and portfolios that achieve intended results, contribute to strategic objectives, create sustainable value, and generate lasting positive impact.

Although each standard serves a distinct purpose and may be applied independently, their greatest value is realized when they are applied together.

Relationship between the Standards

The **IPMA Standards Framework** recognizes that sustainable value is created through the combined contribution of competent individuals, excellent projects and programs, capable organizations, and the continuous advancement of professional knowledge.

Projects, programs, and portfolios are the primary mechanisms through which organizations implement strategy, enable transformation, and achieve intended results. This is realized through a progression in which **deliverables** become **outputs**, outputs enable **outcomes**, outcomes generate **benefits**, benefits create organizational **value**, and value delivers lasting organizational and societal **impact** (Figure 2).

© 2026 International Project Management Association

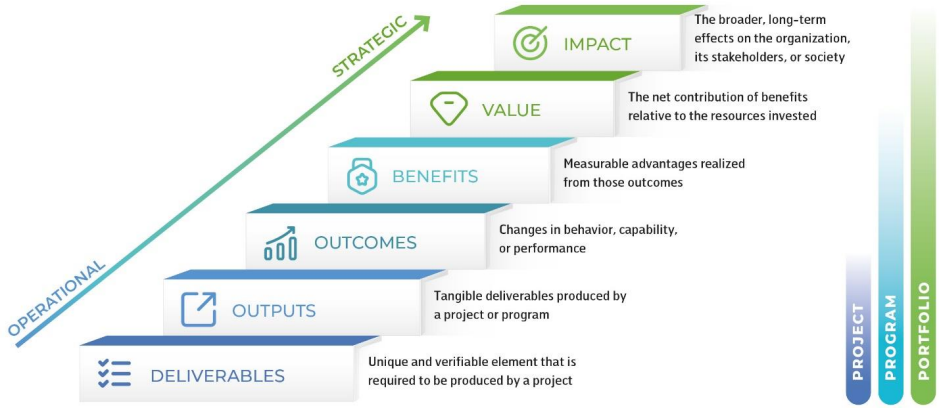


Figure 2: The IPMA Results Amplifier

Achieving all these results is a continuous and interconnected process. Competent individuals lead and contribute to successful projects and programs within organizations that provide the governance, leadership, culture, and support required for the consistent delivery of intended outcomes. Experience gained from practice strengthens organizational capability, while research continuously advances professional practice, education, and the future evolution of the framework.

These interactions create a continuous improvement cycle in which professional practice, organizational capability, and research reinforce one another, enabling organizations to continuously enhance the results created through projects, programs, and portfolios.

Common Foundation

Although each standard has a distinct purpose and intended users, they share a common conceptual foundation that establishes the principles, concepts, and terminology supporting the consistent interpretation and application of all baseline standards.

Guiding Principles

The IPMA Standards Framework is supported by a common set of guiding principles that underpin all baseline standards.

Collectively, the guiding principles promote:

- Turning strategy into results
- Stakeholder orientation, collaboration, and ethical behavior
- Effective governance, accountability, and transparency
- Sustainability and responsible leadership
- Continuous learning, research, innovation, adaptability, and improvement

These principles should be applied according to the organization's context, objectives, governance environment, and the complexity of its projects, programs, and portfolios.

Sustainability Principle

Sustainability is a fundamental consideration across the IPMA Standards Framework. Sustainable project management integrates environmental, social, governance (ESG) and economic considerations into governance, leadership, decision-making, project delivery, and organizational development.

The framework recognizes two complementary perspectives:

- **Sustainability of the project** focuses on ensuring that projects are governed and delivered responsibly, ethically, and with appropriate consideration of resources and ESG factors throughout the project lifecycle
- **Sustainability by the project** focuses on the lasting impact created through the project's outcomes, benefits, capabilities, and value delivered to organizations, stakeholders, society, and the environment

Sustainability also requires **sustainable leaders**. Sustainability stewardship integrates sustainability into organizational strategy, governance, culture, and project delivery. It promotes innovation, stakeholder engagement, and responsible decision-making in support of sustainable development.

Further guidance is provided in the IPMA Reference Guide on Sustainable Project Management.

Common Terminology

Consistency across the IPMA Standards Framework is supported through the **IPMA Common Glossary**, which provides harmonized definitions of the terminology used throughout the standards. The glossary establishes a common language for practitioners, organizations, educators, researchers, assessors, certification bodies, and other stakeholders, enabling consistent interpretation

© 2026 International Project Management Association

and application of the standards across industries, sectors, cultures, and professional contexts.

Continuous Development of the Framework

The IPMA Standards Framework provides a stable international baseline for professional project management while recognizing that organizations, projects, and professional practice continue to evolve.

The standards focus on enduring competences, excellence characteristics, organizational capabilities, and guiding principles that remain relevant across industries, organizational contexts, cultures, and delivery approaches, while allowing the framework to evolve in response to significant developments in practice, research, technology, and society.

The framework is continuously informed by collaboration among practitioners, organizations, researchers, educators, Member Associations, certification bodies, and other stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures that future editions continue to reflect internationally recognized good practice while responding to the evolving needs of the profession.

Future editions may incorporate developments arising from research, professional practice, organizational experience, and emerging technologies. Complementary publications, including Practice Guides, Reference Guides, implementation guidance, assessment guidance, and other supporting materials, provide practical guidance while remaining fully aligned with the baseline standards.

Mary Koutintcheva
Vice President for Standards and Qualification

1. Introduction

The IPMA Individual Competence Baseline Version 5.0 (IPMA ICB®) is the global standard for individual competence in project, program, and portfolio management. The IPMA ICB supports the development of individual competence through the presentation of a complete inventory of competence elements across projects, programs, and portfolios.

The objective of the IPMA ICB is to strengthen individual competence and to provide an integrated inventory of competences that, when demonstrated, represent mastery across delivery domains. Projects these days are implementing new products/services/capabilities and are increasingly shaping innovation, infrastructure, organizational transformation, and societal impact. Competent project managers are therefore more effective and succeed in translating strategy into sustainable outcomes.

Expectations for measurable outcomes, regulatory compliance, sustainability, and stakeholder trust continue to rise. The IPMA ICB is intended to support individuals and organizations operating in high-complexity environments by clarifying assessable competences.

The IPMA ICB defines the competences an individual should demonstrate when leading work packages, projects, programs, and portfolios of varying complexity to deliver value.

The IPMA ICB is not a process guide or prescriptive methodology. It does not define execution steps. It should be applied alongside global process-oriented standards and organizational frameworks.

To everyone who uses the IPMA ICB, we wish you a successful journey!

© 2026 International Project Management Association