



Project Harmony: Orchestrating a Sustainable Portfolio Roadmap

By Tamara Pomerantz

In the complex world of healthcare and project management, projects often operate in isolation as disparate efforts. The consequences are project collisions, resource conflicts, higher costs, and delayed delivery. The remedy lies in effective portfolio management with a well-designed roadmap.

Let's explore how healthcare organizations can establish an effective Portfolio Roadmap.

Warming up

Before an organization can establish and manage an effective portfolio roadmap, several foundational pre-requisites must be in place:

- ❑ **Organizational Harmony:** A clear understanding of the purpose and authority of portfolio management within the organization.
- ❑ **Governance:** Organizational project selection decision-making and oversight; and clarity between what is operational work and what is a project. (For insights on establishing effective Governance, see our articles "[What's in Your Operational Governance](#)" and "[Right Thing - Right Time - Right Way](#)".)
- ❑ **Adaptability:** Flexibility to respond and adapt to changing organizational direction and environments.
- ❑ **Strategic Alignment:** Ensuring projects measurably align with the overall organizational strategy and needs. (For more information, see our article "[Do you have Line of Sight to Strategy](#)".)
- ❑ **Executive Support:** Strong advocacy and backing from executives who champion and follow the portfolio management process, voice, and value.
- ❑ **Monitoring Mechanisms:** Implementation of robust mechanisms to monitor, support, and communicate portfolio progress and adjustments.

These elements ensure the right foundation exists to support and sustain an effective project portfolio for your organization.



The Conducting Role

To be most effective, an office or team should serve as conductor and custodian of project portfolio coherence. These managers of the portfolio should engage with decision-makers (governance) responsible for initiative and project selection, providing information for informed and transparent decision-making. This office or team must have their finger on the pulse of existing commitments, organizational resource capacity, and strategic and fiscal planning. The PMO often serves as this conductor. (See "[Shaping an effective PMO](#)" for information on developing a conducting portfolio management team.)



Information provided to aid decision-makers should include:

- **Resource Estimates:** Highlighting resource requirements and work effort with capacity and capability monitoring and management.
- **Conflict Avoidance:** Identifying conflicts of design or intent with other active or planned projects.
- **Duplication Checks:** Scrutinizing potential duplication of work with other ongoing projects.
- **Change Fatigue Monitoring:** Gauging the organization's ability to absorb and adapt to change.

By providing such insights, the organization can ensure the right projects are chosen to seamlessly integrate into the portfolio roadmap.

Composing the Portfolio

As part of the project selection process, managers of the portfolio must be able to confirm projects integrate into the existing project portfolio and roadmap, monitoring their alignment with strategy and operational value, as well as resource capacity and capability. Constant vigilance is critical to avoid collisions and uncover synergies as projects are added or changed. This requires an adept information system or tool to manage the intricacies of all the projects within the portfolio.



Effective agility requires the collection and analysis of key details. Such details include scope, priority and ranking, strategy alignment, key dates, dependencies, resource requirements, impacted audiences and areas, required technology and devices, and key application functions for each project.

Documenting this information in a master list ensures there is understanding of the planned work and clarity around interdependencies, interconnections, and integration, not just within the walls of a project but between and across all projects within the portfolio.

The resulting master list can be used to develop and maintain visual roadmap views, providing a holistic inspection of all commitments over time with the ability to properly insert, or slot, projects to occur at the right time.

With the right data and visual tools, the organization is more adaptive and able to spot collisions between projects, identify critical path components, and seek ways to improve collaboration and synergies between projects – decreasing delays while exponentially increasing value achievement and organizational benefits.

Organizational benefits include better control of costs, decreased wasted time and effort, improved organizational capacity to do more, greater transparency and awareness of organizational efforts and priorities.

The Performance of the Roadmap

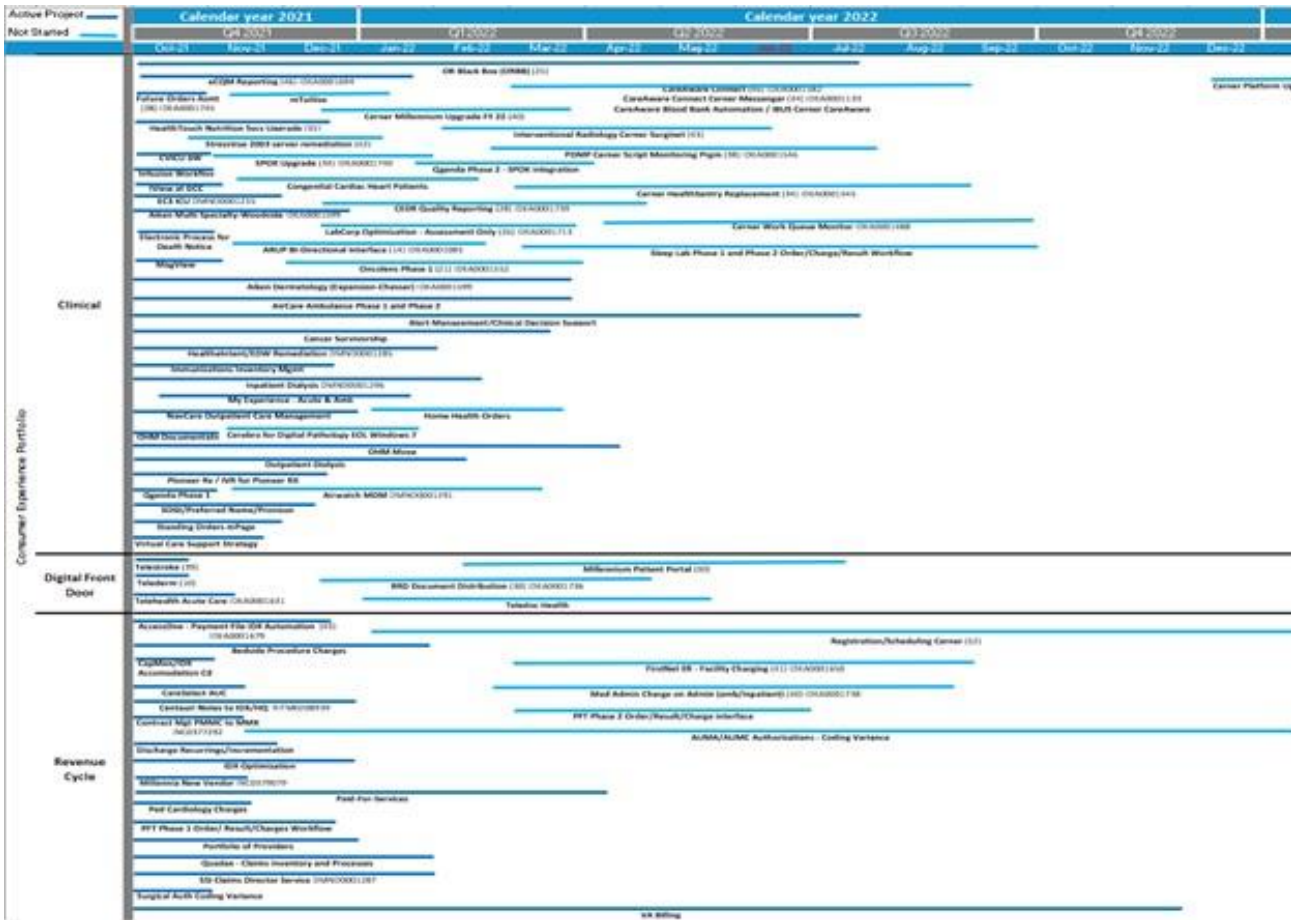
The Portfolio Roadmap emerges as the visual tool that outlines all active and committed work within a Portfolio, delivering:

- **Coordination and Communication:** Improving coordination within and across portfolio components.
- **Resource Focus:** Identifying initiatives and projects competing for resource focus.
- **Pathway Awareness:** Recognizing required pathways and coordination for overall portfolio success.

A well-maintained roadmap offers increased transparency, understanding of work synergy, conflict identification, and the opportunity for resource input. It sets expectations, builds coordination understanding, and ultimately enhances the organizational capacity for successful project selection and delivery.



Consider the following portfolio roadmap:



This example illustrates how easily organizations can overwhelm their plates with many simultaneous projects stacked on top of each other; failing to provide cross project coordination and resource management. The results are consistent delays requiring projects to be pushed out, conflicts and change management challenges, and generally failing to meet stakeholder expectations and requirements. Additionally, without a visual to correct perception and help convey the inevitable reality of project delays and extensions, organizations may incorrectly assume future project bandwidth.

Through visual understanding, organizations can better plan and balance their roadmaps, as well as improve stakeholder awareness and understanding of the volume of activity and change occurring throughout the organization. The roadmap becomes a tool for ensuring the path to drive and deliver strategic and operational goals.



Priority vs Rank

As stated, an organization's project selection approval process should involve working with portfolio management to determine project slotting on the roadmap. This is a task requiring evaluation beyond organizational priority. While priority answers if a project is the right thing to do, ranking determines when it's the right time, factoring in competing priorities, resource limitations (\$, people, technology, environments, etc.), and the Law of Diminishing Returns (the point where adding more resources leads to more collision and conflict).

Example ranking criteria factors include externally set deadlines or requirements, predecessors or dependencies, resource requirements and availability, technology or functionality interdependencies with other projects, and organizational priorities based on strategic drivers and problems.

Understanding the distinction between organizational priority and rank is crucial. Ranking criteria helps establish project sequencing based on resources and interdependencies across all projects. Whereas priority is often a rating of importance for an individual project. Therefore, the ranking of a project may be higher or different from the priority of the project.

Read our article "[Right Thing - Right Time - Right Way](#)" for more information on selecting projects that provide the right value at the right time.

4 Steps to Composing your Portfolio Roadmap

Crafting an effective portfolio roadmap involves these four key steps:

1. **Complete Pre-requisites:** Ensure all foundational elements are in place, as well as a defined portfolio scope and a master list of active and planned or committed projects, a process for outlining resource capabilities and capacity, and clear definitions for the different types of work and requests received.
2. **Conduct Meetings or Workshops:** Gather and review information for projects that have already been committed, identify resource overlaps, evaluate critical paths, then rank projects based on dependencies, collision avoidance, and opportunities for synergies. For an example of how to apply evaluation criteria, see our [Portfolio Recalibration Tool](#).
3. **Slot Projects:** Layout the projects on the roadmap based on ranking, capturing risks and assumptions as projects are placed.
4. **Communicate, Maintain, and Manage:** Establish ownership, then develop, and deliver a roadmap communication strategy, providing updates and expectation re-setting when adjustments are required within the portfolio.



Advisory Principles to Ensure Long Term Harmonized Success

The following principles can help you drive compliance and keep your portfolio roadmap well managed.

- **Communicate.** It is your greatest management weapon!
- **Understand your comfort zone regarding risk.** Ask the following questions: Is risk avoidance essential or is there room for risk tolerance? How likely is the risk really and what is the most likely worst-case scenario if the risk becomes reality? Does the cost of experiencing the risk outweigh the cost of the disruption from avoidance?
- **Apply prudent project approvals.** Do not try and detail the roadmap more than 2 -3 years in advance. Requirements and external factors change, organizational strategic objectives and the impediments preventing the achievement of these objectives change. Detailed planning too far out limits the ability to adjust course as needed and may create unnecessary commitments or set unrealistic expectations.
- **Focus on approving the right things for the right time.** Don't fall for the "low hanging fruit" or "quick win" trap that creates work and ties up resources for only limited benefits. Assess and confirm expected value along with any predecessors or prerequisites before approving projects.
- **Align budgeting practices.** Ensure budget decisions are in tune with and follow governance decision-making criteria processes and portfolio roadmaps.

Orchestrated Harmony

Organizations that establish and manage a successful portfolio roadmap with effective governance are more likely to achieve their strategic goals.

Creating an effective portfolio roadmap is an investment in organizational success. By establishing portfolio roadmaps, organizations can orchestrate and harmonize their projects for smoother operations; ensuring timely delivery, optimal resource utilization, and overarching success.

This practical guidance, coupled with advisory principles for long-term success, equips healthcare organizations with the tools needed to orchestrate their projects seamlessly.



How MAKE Solutions Can Help

MAKE specializes in providing operational excellence workshops and guidance to assist organizations in developing and managing optimized project portfolios and roadmaps.

We can help you assess your current projects, recalibrate your portfolios, document your roadmap, and implement practices that contribute to sustained success.



Whether you seek a comprehensive assessment, strategic recalibration, or the establishment of a robust portfolio management office and governance, MAKE is dedicated to guiding you through each step, ensuring operational efficiency and excellence for your organization.

For more information, visit our website at makesolutionsinc.com

Learn more about [MAKE's consulting services](#), or contact Tamara Pomerantz, VP Client Operations, Tamara.Pomerantz@makesolutionsinc.com

For further operational excellence insights, review the other articles on our website under [Assets-Insights](#) and access our [Resource Center](#) for organizational discovery and assessment tools.