

PMO AS A DRIVER OF IMPACT AT INESC TEC

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INTRODUCTION: INESC TEC faces a question regarding strategic focus: growth versus stabilization. In either scenario, the key is to ensure that every activity delivers an impact that effectively contributes to the strategic objectives set for 2030.

VISION: As a project-oriented institute, INESC TEC's desired impact is guaranteed through benefits management and alignment with its Strategic Plan. The ongoing implementation of a PMO@INESC TEC presents an opportunity to consider it not only for operational support but also as a strategic engine for value creation and measurement.

RATIONALE:

- **Growth without value management can lead to dispersion.** Expanding into multiple domains can fragment resources and compromise excellence if there are no mechanisms to ensure strategic coherence (Serra & Kunc, 2015). A cost–benefit analysis that determines the ‘net value’ of projects (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2012), linking performance metrics to organisational success (Korhonen et al., 2023), counters dispersion and ensures that growth translates into the intended strategic impact.

- **Maximising value requires measuring benefits.** Consolidating processes and talent is not enough; it is necessary to go beyond the delivery of outputs, evaluating outcomes and organisational and societal benefits that effectively contribute to strategy implementation (PMI, 2016a), which should naturally be reviewed periodically. The definition, optimisation and alignment of benefits, to ensure that they reflect what truly adds value to INESC TEC, requires shared responsibility between executive leadership (Administration), functional leaders (Centres, TEC4s and Services) and scientific leaders (PIs), as each group brings a different perspective on value and strategy (PMI, 2016b).

- **PMO as a catalyst for sustainable value.** One of the major enablers of benefits management is precisely an organisational culture oriented towards value, supported by leadership and by structures such as PMOs or VMOs (Value Management Offices) (Zwikael & Huemann, 2023). Serra & Kunc (2015) empirically demonstrate that Benefits Realisation Management (BRM) practices increase the likelihood of successful strategy execution and sustainable value delivery. In this role, the PMO provides a strategic contribution to value governance, also leveraging its role as a mediator of knowledge and learning between projects (Chadwick, 2025), fostering a culture of benefits that sustains organisational maturity and ensures that stabilisation or growth result in real strategic impact and sustainable value (Silva & Rosamilha, 2025)

CHALLENGE: The dilemma of growth versus stabilisation cannot be properly resolved by choosing only one path. Growth without measurement risks dispersion and outputs with limited impact. Stabilisation without measurement may crystallise processes and compromise strategic ambition. The solution might be to ensure that each step of growth is anchored in measurable strategic value and that stabilisation signifies sustained maturity.

Therefore,

- Institutionalise a benefits management system with indicators linking each project to the goals of the Strategic Plan.
- Evolve the role of the PMO to include continuous assessment of organisational value and the strategic contribution of projects.
- Promote an organisational culture oriented towards value, involving Administration, Centres, TEC4s and Services in the definition, monitoring and optimisation of benefits.
- Above all, change the internal language: talk less about ‘projects delivered’ and more about value created and sustained impact.

The challenge can be posed as whether our projects are truly creating value for INESC TEC and society. If the answer is yes, then the PMO can be more than a support function; it can be a catalyst for strategic impact and a collective foresight mechanism.

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