

# PMO Learning & Development Case Study



ICR The Institute of  
Cancer Research



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## Overview

### Customer

The Institute of Cancer Research

### Products and Services

APM Accredited PMO  
Practitioner Course

Mentoring & Professional  
Development

Pro-bono support at PMDoS

FuturePMO

### Organisation Size

Large

### Country

United Kingdom

### Industry

Not-for-profit

### Contact

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## Wellingtone Supports the Institute of Cancer Research on the Journey to PMO Maturity

The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) is one of the world's most influential cancer research organisations.

Scientists and clinicians at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) are working every day to make a real impact on cancer patients' lives. Through its unique partnership with The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust and 'bench-to-bedside' approach, the ICR is able to create and deliver results in a way that other institutions cannot. Together, the two organisations are rated in the top four centres for cancer research and treatment globally.

The ICR's overarching strategy comprises three key areas: research to overcome the challenges posed by cancer's complexity; teaching and learning to educate and train the next generation of cancer researchers and clinicians; and an operational strategy to grow income and create a world class environment. In 2018, ICR began a journey towards portfolio management maturity with the introduction of a new Portfolio Management Office (PMO), to facilitate the crucial link between strategic vision and project delivery. Heading up the change pathway was Michelle Durkin, ICR's Head of PMO – who turned to Wellingtone for specialist guidance in approaching and designing the PMO's strategic objectives.

“The PMO Practitioner Course offers practical, applicable insights into where to start and what to do. It was a unique offering and perfect for our development needs.”

**Michelle Durkin – ICR Head of PMO**

## Understanding and Meeting the Challenges of Implementing a PMO

On embarking on the setting up of a PMO at the beginning of 2018, Michelle quickly identified the need to facilitate a more robust approach to portfolio and project management. **“Part of our operational strategy was to improve our central project planning to inform senior decision making,”** she recalls. **“At that point, we didn't have the big picture of everything that was happening at any one time. Plus, whilst our people are fantastic and highly dedicated, many of them lacked specific project management skills. We needed to standardise our approach, achieve visibility over the projects portfolio and establish the right reporting to inform our executive teams. To meet that remit, I conducted a requirements assessment before producing a business case to establish the PMO in April 2018, staffed by myself, two Project Managers and a Business Analyst. I knew where we needed to go, but getting to grips with the sequence of what needed to be done - the relationships and the dependencies - was a challenge.”**

## The PMO Practitioner's Training Course: Practical, Accredited Learning in a Positive Mentoring Environment

Recognising the need for professional support, Michelle embarked on a search for help. She discovered Wellingtone's APM accredited PMO Practitioner Training Course, a two-day course designed to cover the complexities of the PMO world and shine a light on the mechanics of successful PMOs.



## PMO Learning and Development with Wellington

- PMO specific training via the PMO Practitioner Training Course, Accredited by APM.
- Advanced mentoring and professional development for PMO Practitioners at all levels.
- Pro bono assistance for charities and not for profit PMOs, via the Project Management Day of Service.
- Networking and learning opportunities at FuturePMO, the 1 day PMO conference.

The course delivered just the right combination of practical guidance and mentoring support, according to Michelle. "The syllabus covered a step-by-step approach to setting up a PMO – from strategic planning right through to maturity. It offered tools and templates to help me design the PMO and implement the right approach. For example, the Value Matrix has been extremely useful in assessing the value of each of our services. I use that again and again and it helps us to ensure that we're focusing on the right projects and services for our stakeholders and beneficiaries. The course also reassured me that I was not alone on this journey. It was a safe environment where delegates could share their challenges and seek solutions. The facilitators were fantastic. They went above and beyond their remit, providing us with a constant flow of knowledge and ideas. It felt more like a bespoke consultancy than an off-the-shelf training syllabus."

### Expert Assistance to Validate the PMO Strategy and Roadmap

Keen to apply her updated knowledge, Michelle was quick to return to ICR and implement the ideas she had acquired. Having created a strategy for the PMO, she then attended Wellington's PM Day of Service – a pro bono service for charities, for which Wellington is the exclusive UK delivery partner. "I took our strategy for year one and asked our allocated PMO Consultant to validate that approach. His feedback was hugely valuable - I took away some important key lessons. One of those was around identifying quick wins to show how the PMO is adding value. Another was the importance of the reporting heartbeat and how to get that right. That's a challenge for us, since as a charity we can't justify expenditure on expensive automated tools, so we do all our reporting manually. We operate in a highly regulated environment and we're accountable for how we spend the funds we raise. It's vital to ensure that we're giving our executive teams – from the Trustees to the Project Board – the right information so that they can make informed portfolio decisions. We walked away from the Day of Service with a clarified strategy, equipped to focus on what's important. At the end of 2018, we utilised the PMO Charter that the Practitioner Course had introduced to review our PMO roadmap for the year ahead. It's important to build your capabilities and competencies steadily. Wellington's resources have helped us to ensure that we get the foundations in place and plan the right developments at the right time."

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**Michelle Durkin – ICR Head of PMO**

### Sharing Professional Learning with the Wider PMO Community

Michelle's approach has been so successful that she was invited to speak at Wellington's annual conference, FuturePMO, in the autumn of 2018. "I shared our achievements so far: we've got methodologies and templates set up, and we're now looking at incorporating Agile and Lean to give our Project Managers a blend of tools for different projects. We've introduced Business Partnering, whereby our PMO staff align with specific departments and teams to give depth of knowledge and bespoke support. For the first time ever, we're implementing portfolio analysis and prioritisation. That's one of our biggest wins. It ensures that we're putting the funds into the right projects with the right cost benefits. We've had positive feedback from our executive teams who appreciate the extended visibility they now have. And our staff are excited that their skills are developing thanks to the tools and support we're providing."

Now entering year two of ICR's PMO journey, Michelle is clear that Wellington has played a key role in the charity's progress. "They have such a breadth of PMO experience. I would encourage any PMO – large or small – to have that initial chat with them. They have so many different areas of expertise to offer. The potential benefits of engaging with them are huge."

The ICR's mission is to make the discoveries that defeat cancer. For more information visit <http://www.icr.ac.uk>