

Full-Spectrum Accountabilities

(PRUB-Accountability)

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1. Accountability

Accountability: Noun - the state of being accountable, liable, or answerable.

Accountable: Adjective – subject to the obligation to report, explain, or justify something; responsible; answerable

To be successful, any project, programme or portfolio (3Ps) of work needs to be well governed from start to finish – ie throughout the ‘full spectrum’. This means that ‘someone’ needs to be responsible for each and every element of the 3Ps and to make sure that each element: is well governed; builds successfully on previous work; and that it contributes effectively to subsequent work or to end-uses and outcomes. This, in essence, is Full Spectrum Accountability (or ‘PRUB-Accountability – see below).

In practice, many people are needed to make accountability work, whether they are customer engagement specialists, strategists/planners, business case developers, decision makers, contract specifiers or project managers. Because the work of all these people needs to be integrated, they need a simple, common language and thinking structure for ‘accountability’.

This paper introduces the ‘PRUB-accountability matrix’: a succinct framework for understanding and pragmatically managing Full-Spectrum Accountabilities.

2. Two types of accountability

There are two types of accountability:

1. Effectiveness accountability
2. Efficiency accountability

The following table summarises the characteristics of effectiveness and efficiency.

Effectiveness	Efficiency
Effectiveness confirms if the <i>right things have been done</i>	Efficiency identifies if <i>things are being done ‘right’</i>
Effectiveness relates to <i>consequences of actions</i> , i.e. <i>what</i> things were achieved	Efficiency relates to the <i>actions themselves i.e. how</i> things are being achieved
Effectiveness is determined at a one-off point-in-time at the end of one or more actions i.e. what things <i>were</i> achieved	Efficiency is determined continuously during one or more actions <i>i.e. how things are being</i> achieved
<i>Desired</i> effectiveness can be identified before actions are taken but <i>actual</i> effectiveness is confirmed only after the actions <i>have been taken</i>	<i>Desired</i> efficiency can be identified before actions are taken but <i>actual</i> efficiency is confirmed only while actions <i>are underway</i>

Table 1. Effectiveness and efficiency

Being accountable for effectiveness is therefore significantly different from being accountable for efficiency.

3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a measure of success created by an action.

Effectiveness is not a measure of the action itself but rather of the 'things created by the action'. Effectiveness confirms if the *right things were achieved* rather than identifying if *things are being done 'right'* (which is efficiency). So effectiveness is a measure of things, not a measure of actions. For example, numerous actions might be undertaken to improve the quality of the water in the Avon River. The amount of improvement in the quality of the water is a measure of the effectiveness of the actions.

Certainly the effectiveness of a thing created by an action informs whether or not the action was the right action, but it's not the action itself that is at the heart of effectiveness.

Effectiveness is a measure of the *consequences of actions* and not a measure of the actions themselves (efficiency).

Actual effectiveness is fully confirmed *at the end of the action* when 'things' have been created.

Desired effectiveness can be identified *before any action takes place*.

It may be possible to monitor an action to *predict* if effectiveness will be achieved at the end of an action, but the effectiveness itself is the end-point of the action, not the process of the action. It may also be possible to have a series of milestones at which the *desired* effectiveness of each step in a multi-step process can be confirmed (or not) as the *actual* effectiveness of the milestone. But the overall effectiveness can be confirmed only at the end of the process when there is 100% confidence that the desired outcomes has been achieved (or not).

Because the full confirmation of effectiveness doesn't occur until the end of an action, this means that indicators associated with effectiveness tend to be 'lag indicators' in that they provide information that can be acted on only late in any process or action.

4. Efficiency

Efficiency is a measure of how well an action is being done.

Efficiency is a measure of processes, not of 'things'. Efficiency determines if *things are being done 'right'* rather than if the right things were created (which is effectiveness). So efficiency is a measure of actions and processes, not a measure of things. If we consider the earlier example of actions to improve the quality of water in the Avon River, then measures of the actions themselves are measures of efficiency. The speed and timeliness of the actions are measures of efficiency. The rate of expenditure on the actions relative to what they are achieving is another measure of efficiency.

Efficiency can be continuously monitored and improved during an action or process as distinct from effectiveness which can only be fully determined at the end of an action or process.

Desired efficiency can be identified *at the start* of a process but *actual* efficiency can only be confirming *during* a process.

Actual efficiency confirms if processes and actions *are* being done 'right' whereas actual effectiveness confirms if the right things *were* created. So effectiveness and efficiency management operate on different time-scales: efficiency management is continuous whereas effectiveness management is more intermittent. Actual efficiency can *be measured and acted on continuously* during a process or action whereas actual effectiveness can only *be confirmed at milestones or at the end of an action but can be predicted (with varying degrees of accuracy) and potentially acted on during an action or process.*

Because efficiency is determined during an action or process, this means that indicators associated with efficiency tend to be 'lead indicators' in that they provide information that can be acted on immediately and continually during any process or action.

5. Actions required for effectiveness and efficiency

Accountability for both effectiveness and efficiency involves taking ownership of each type of accountability for each of the following steps:

1. *Identify and Link*: Identify/define the desired effectiveness and efficiency and how they are interlinked (What does effectiveness look like in a given situation? What does efficiency look like in this situation? How does efficiency affect effectiveness?)
 - 1.1. Considering the earlier example relating to Avon River water quality, a timely (efficient) action will generate improved water quality (effectiveness) sooner. A low-cost action which generates improved water quality will be 'cost-effective'.
2. *Value and Prioritise*: Decide what is most important to monitor and manage (Which effectiveness and which efficiency are most important? What indicators are relevant? What targets are appropriate?)
 - 2.1. For example, are the levels of nitrate in the Avon River water more/less important than the levels of faecal coliforms and if so how will they be measured and what are the acceptable (target) levels?
3. *Specify*: Document all aspects of efficiency and accountability and how they will be managed and achieved (How will the prioritised efficiency and effectiveness be monitored and managed?)
 - 3.1. What are the target values of water quality? Who will measure them? What test methods will they use? How often will the measure them? What actions will be taken based on the measurement results? and so on.
4. *Implement, Performance-Manage and Confirm*: Monitor, manage and confirm effectiveness and efficiency (Monitor, report and take actions to optimise effectiveness and efficiency)
 - 4.1. Take the actions to improve Avon River water quality; monitor how efficiently they are being done; monitor the subsequent water quality; take actions to improve the water quality improvement projects where appropriate and so on.

So full accountability includes deciding who is responsible for each of the steps of identifying; valuing/prioritising; specifying; and implementing/performance-managing/confirming both effectiveness and efficiency (see section 8 below).

6. Structuring accountability thinking

It is all too easy for effectiveness and efficiency accountabilities to remain vague, unattributed and unmanaged, especially in a complex environment with many actions and stakeholders with diverse agendas. Yet it is especially in such complex, multi-stakeholder environments that all stakeholders must understand and be able to collaboratively implement accountabilities. So they need a common 'accountability framework and language' that will guide them collectively from start-to-finish as shown in section 9 below.

The following discussion demonstrates how PRUB-thinking provides a robust framework for accountability management (see Validating Strategies – Linking Projects and Results to Uses and Benefits <https://www.routledge.com/products/9781472427816>).

As shown in Figure 1, PRUB represents the sequence:

Projects create Results that are Used to create Benefits.

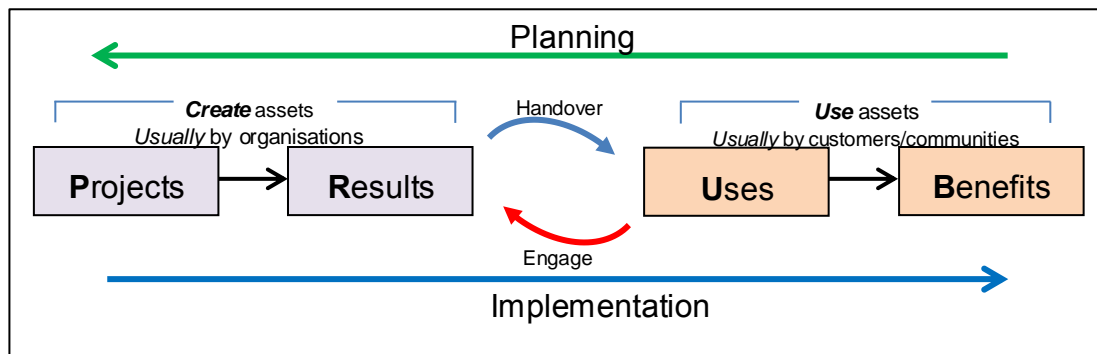


Figure 1. Projects create Results (outputs) that get Used to create Benefits (outcomes)

PRUB represents the near-universal sequence that organisations and individuals:

'create assets and enable their uses to create outcomes or benefits'.

7. Accountability according to PRUB

Projects and Uses are actions/processes so they relate to efficiency. Projects can be efficient (or not). Uses can be efficient (or not).

Results and Benefits are consequences of actions (things) so they relate to effectiveness. A Result can be an effective Result because it is the consequence of the right, efficient Project. The *determination of that effectiveness* is a measure of the Result, not a measure of the Project.

A Benefit can be an effective Benefit because it is the consequence of the right, efficient Use. The *determination of that effectiveness* is a measure of the Benefit, not a measure of the Use.

So PRUB-thinking identifies 4 types of accountability:

1. Accountability for Project-Efficiency
2. Accountability for Result-Effectiveness
3. Accountability for Use-Efficiency
4. Accountability for Benefit-Effectiveness

This is shown in Figure 2:

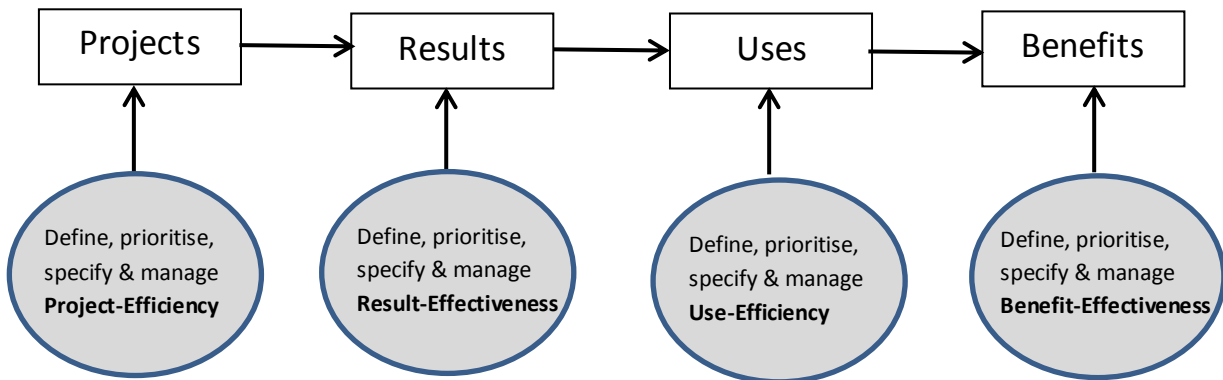


Figure 2: The location of efficiency and effectiveness in PRUB-thinking

Crucially, Project-Efficiency and Result-Effectiveness can be *managed* because they are under the control of a supplier.

In contrast, Use-Efficiency and Benefit-Effectiveness can only be *influenced* because almost every Use is voluntary.

Therefore to achieve Efficient Uses and Effective Benefits, the Results must be totally and unequivocally Effective in order to enable and motivate their Uses.

So 'Outcomes-Accountability' is unequivocally dependent on accountability for Projects, Results and Uses.

As noted above, each of these 4 types of accountability needs to be:

1. Identified
2. Valued and prioritised
3. Specified
4. Implemented, performance managed and confirmed

Each of the four types of accountability and their four associated actions need to be *owned* by someone, giving a total of 16 'accountabilities' that need to be understood, owned and managed.

For example, someone needs to be accountable for *identifying* what is meant by Result-Effectiveness within a given action plan. Someone needs to be accountable for *specifying* Benefit-Effectiveness and someone needs to be accountable for *performance-managing* Use-Effectiveness and so on.

Let's explore what this means for just four elements of the river water quality example:

1. *Identify* Benefits-effectiveness: Someone needs to determine what 'good Avon River water quality' means. Does it include a full spectrum of factors (nitrates; coliforms; bacteria; turbidity; suspended solids; salinity; chemical composition; temperature) or just one or more of these parameters
2. *Identify* Uses-efficiency: How will the various uses of the water happen? Will it be used for swimming? Wading? Fishing? by fish and their food sources? by birds?
3. *Value and prioritise* desired Uses efficiency: Which Uses will be most efficient: human Uses? fish-Uses? bird Uses? other?
4. *Specify* desired Projects-Efficiency; Results-Effectiveness; Uses-Efficiency; and Benefits-Effectiveness: Agree on what will be monitored, who will monitor it and what actions will be taken in response to the monitoring data?

8. Ownership of accountabilities - theory

Who is accountable?

Let's explore a simple scenario in which a government agency (purchaser = P) wishes to purchase services from a supplier (supplier = S) and those services are to service the public (end-users) who the government department represents through the democratic process.

This scenario can be generalised to most purchaser/supplier arrangements.

The purchaser has a responsibility to purchase the right services at a good price. The purchaser also needs to make sure that the services will be easy and efficient to Use and will generate the Benefits that the taxpayers and others have elected the purchaser to create on their behalf.

So the purchaser needs to be confident that all accountabilities are... accounted for.

They need to be confident that the right Results will be created (Project-Effectiveness), that they will be easy and efficient to Use (Use-Efficiency) and that these Uses will create the right Benefits (Benefit-Effectiveness).

The purchaser also needs to make sure that these accountabilities will be effectively managed even if the purchaser cannot actually control that management. For example, the purchaser may identify, prioritise and specify a particular level of Project-Efficiency but only the supplier can manage Project-Efficiency.

So the *default* responsibility for the various types of accountability and accountability-actions are as show in table 2.

Accountabilities for Effectiveness and Efficiency (E&E)	Project-Efficiency (running Projects 'right')	Result-Effectiveness (the right Result)	Use-Efficiency (Uses happening 'right')	Benefit-Effectiveness (the right Benefits)
Identify & Link <i>desired</i> E&E	P	P	P	P
Value & Prioritise <i>desired</i> E&E	P	P	P	P
Specify <i>desired</i> E&E	S+P	S+P	P	P
Implement, Performance Manage & Confirm <i>actual</i> E&E	S	S	P	P

Table 2: Default accountabilities in the PRUB-Accountability matrix

Table 2 shows that the majority of what have been called 'outcomes accountabilities', by default, initially sit with purchasers and not with suppliers.

Certainly purchasers can sub-contract some aspects of these accountabilities to suppliers but ultimately the purchasers must necessarily ensure that they purchase, and are accountable for, the *right* Results, *efficient* Uses and the *right* Benefits.

For example, a purchaser could contract a supplier to engage with end-users to:

1. understand what the users believe are the right Benefits (Identifying Benefits-Effectiveness)
2. define the most efficient Uses to generate those Benefits (Identifying Uses-Efficiency)
3. identify the optimal Results to enable those Uses (Identifying Results-Effectiveness)

So the supplier might carry out this engagement and present the purchaser with robust information on Benefits-Effectiveness, Uses-Efficiency and Results-Effectiveness. However, *it will be incumbent on the purchaser to make sure that this information is reliable enough to act on it.*

What does 'reliable enough to act on' mean?

It means that the information is robustly supported by *cause-and-effect Evidence* as described in detail in *Validating Strategies* section 2.8 and related sections, specifically:

1. That the Links from Projects to Results to Uses and Benefits are *logical*
2. That there is compelling cause-and-effect Evidence that a Project *will* produce the desired Results; that the Results *will* be Used; and that the Uses *will* create the desired Results
3. That the consolidated worth of all the Benefits is greater than the costs of all the Projects *plus* the costs of all the Uses (global worth) – and that each and every stakeholder is gaining enough value from the strategy to motivate them to play their part (motivational worth)

While a supplier might carry out the task of identifying these three accountabilities and may do so in a very robust and credible manner, the *purchaser remains accountable for accepting and basing decisions on that information.*

Of particular importance is the different nature of accountability for Projects/Results and Uses/Benefits.

Because Projects/Results are generally within the domain of one or more suppliers, they can usually be 'managed'. This applies both to Projects that produce Results that enable Uses but also to internal Projects that produce 'Adoptable Orphan Results' (see *Validating Strategies section 2.15*) that get Adopted into further internal Projects which in turn create Results that get Used.

In contrast, because Uses/Benefits are outside the domain of any organisation, they can generally only be 'influenced'. Most Uses are voluntary so they cannot be 'managed'.

This means that the desired Uses and Benefits will only happen (voluntarily) if the *right* Results are readily available. This in turn means that accountability for Uses and Benefits is inherently different from accountability for Projects and Results because Uses/Benefits-accountabilities are dependent on effective accountability for Results and Projects to produce the *right* Results. So even though the desire might be to focus on 'outcomes-based accountability', such accountability is necessarily and unequivocally dependent on Projects-efficiency, Results-effectiveness and Uses-efficiency.

9. Ownership of accountabilities – worked example

Let's explore accountability relating to the Avon River water quality programme in which:

1. The purchaser is local territorial authority 'LTA-A' which is responsible, on behalf of its voters, for developing, implementing and policing strategies on water quality management in rivers and catchments.
2. The suppliers are a number of organisations who take actions to improve water quality:
These could be:
 - a. land owners planting riparian strips or reducing their fertiliser use to minimise nutrient run-off
 - b. earthmoving companies who re-align a river, perhaps re-introducing a more natural meandering route for a river that had previously been straightened by drainage engineers, or who may make localised river-beaches for swimming, or who engineer modified flows so as to improve fish habitats
 - c. a second territorial authority 'TLA-B' who is responsible for road transport and implementing better controls on road run-off into rivers
 - d. environmental groups who may act in both a supplier role (planting riparian strips on public land) and as users (walking alongside and boating in the river)

- e. science and technology companies who specialise in monitoring environmental parameters and recommending scientifically valid management solutions. They may work directly for the purchaser or indirectly for the purchaser by working directly for the earth moving company
 - f. and others
3. End-users could be: the environment itself (fish; invertebrates; birds; insects; plants); swimmers; fishermen; boaties; walkers; members of environmental groups; school children; pets and others.

Even in this relatively straightforward example of improving the quality of water in a single river there are many stakeholders, many actions that need to be taken, many end-users and many desired and often competing Benefits. It's complicated, even complex, with a lot of diverse information needing to be found; shared; understood; and acted on.

All the stakeholders (except the fish...) need to understand and play their part to achieve the desired Benefits.

It is therefore essential to have a simple, transparent and effective system for agreeing:

1. what needs to be achieved (effectiveness)
2. how it needs to be done (efficiency)
3. who will be responsible (accountability) for each of the four steps in managing effectiveness and efficiency: identification; valuing and prioritising; specifying; implementing and performance managing?

Table 3 shows how accountabilities *might hypothetically but reasonably* be managed for the Avon River water quality project using a PRUB-Accountability matrix.

Accountabilities for Effectiveness and Efficiency (E&E)	Project-Efficiency (running Projects 'right')	Result-Effectiveness (the right Result)	Use-Efficiency (Uses happening 'right')	Benefit-Effectiveness (the right Benefits)
Identify & Link desired E&E	P: Determined by TLAA through discussions with suppliers, TLAB & through scientific research	P: Determined by TLAA in discussions with all the suppliers and TLAB	P: Determined by the TLAA via subcontracts to recreational & environmental groups	P: Determined by TLAA via subcontracts to environmental groups
Value & Prioritise desired E&E	P: Done by TLAA through discussions with suppliers & taxpayers	P: Achieved by TLAA through discussions with taxpayers & recreational & environmental groups	P: Done by TLAA through discussions with recreational & environmental groups	P: Determined by TLAA through discussions with recreational & environmental groups
Specify desired E&E	S+P: Done collaboratively by TLAA & suppliers	S+P: Achieved collaboratively by TLAA & suppliers	P: TLAA copy-pastes above information into contracts	P: TLAA copy-pastes above information into contracts
Implement, Performance Manage & Confirm actual E&E	S: Done primarily by suppliers who may have sub-contracts with each other	S: Achieved primarily by suppliers who may have sub-contracts with each other	P: Monitored by TLAA who may negotiate modified specifications & contracts with suppliers	P: Monitored by TLAA who may negotiate modified specifications & contracts with suppliers

Table 3: Possible accountabilities for the Avon River water quality improvement programme as defined by the PRUB-Accountability matrix.

So a purchaser may sub-contract accountabilities and accountability-actions to suppliers who in turn my sub-contract their accountabilities and actions to other suppliers. But at the end of the day, the purchaser is ultimately accountable for accepting:

1. the right Results from suppliers' Projects
2. the efficiency of their Uses, and
3. the effectiveness of their Benefits.

Therefore most aspects of accountability, especially 'outcomes accountability', are by default the primary responsibility of purchasers, not of suppliers.

10. Accountabilities in practice

Figure 3 shows the steps that need to be taken (linearly and iteratively) to obtain and manage robust strategic information and accountabilities from an initial identification of end-users' needs through to defining, implementing and performance-managing solutions. (P = purchasers; S = Suppliers)

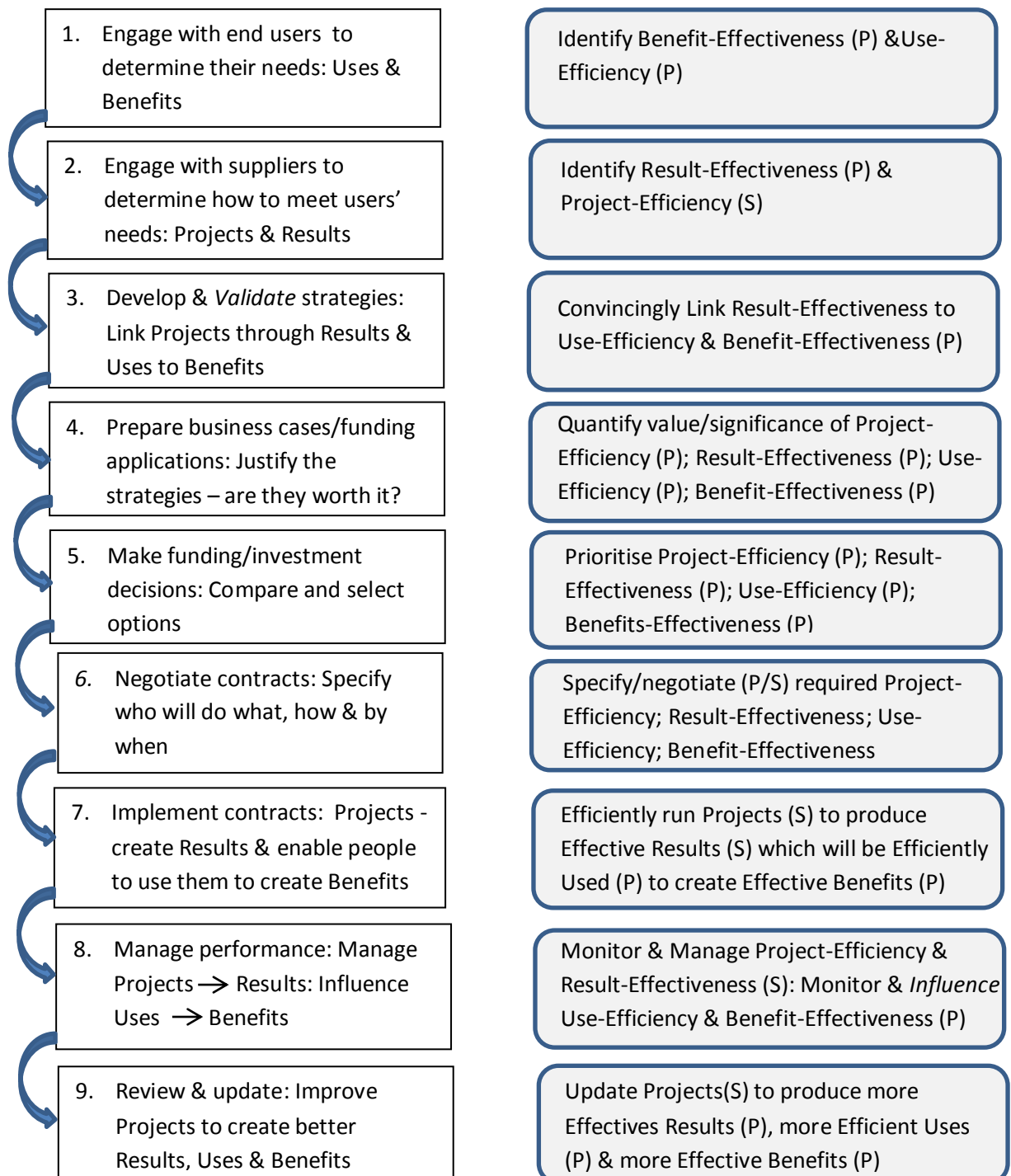


Figure 3. *Default* effectiveness and efficiency accountabilities as they relate to developing and implementing strategies and contracts. These accountabilities may be subcontracted to other parties.

Figure 3 identifies the timing as to when various accountabilities and accountability-actions need to be considered.

These accountabilities and actions can be considered linearly, as shown above, and this aligns directly with what is known as the waterfall approach to project and programme management.

These accountabilities and actions can also be carried out iteratively, so that for example, steps 1 and 2 (engaging with end-users and suppliers) may be repeated a number of times before a particular sequence of Projects-Results-Uses-Benefits is agreed on.

This iterative approach aligns with Agile methodologies (Agile). For example, the purpose of Agile's method of rapid prototyping is to identify the minimal viable product and subsequently to build on that to create a more robust and viable product. This means that Agile needs to find out what Projects will produce the right Results that people will Use to create their desired Benefits. But instead of conducting focus groups or sending out questionnaires to determine end-users' needs, Agile determines users' needs by repeatedly asking end-users to Use and provide feedback on possible Results (prototypes). This feedback is then used to improve and repeat the prototyping Projects to produce better prototype Results that increasingly enable end-users Uses to create Benefits. Eventually a prototype will emerge from Agile that confirms the *effectiveness of the final prototype (Result)* to enable the desired Uses and Benefits.

11. Conclusions

Unless negotiated otherwise:

1. Purchasers are *primarily* accountable for Result-effectiveness and Benefit-effectiveness
2. Purchasers are *primarily* accountable for Use-efficiency
3. Suppliers are *primarily* accountable for Project-efficiency

This is in stark contrast with how accountabilities are often attributed – in which suppliers far too regularly get landed with the whole lot, sometimes even retrospectively towards the end of a programme of work. In reality, purchasers are responsible for most accountabilities and their associated actions. In many instances purchasers may negotiate with suppliers and others for a different sharing of accountabilities but at the end of the day, the purchaser is ultimately accountable for making sure that:

1. The *right* Benefits are created (Benefits-Effectiveness)
2. The Uses are efficient (Uses-Efficiency)
3. And therefore that the *right* Results are created (Results-Effectiveness)

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