

**OPM3<sup>®</sup> CASE STUDY :**

*OPM3<sup>®</sup> ProductSuite in Action: Savannah River Site*

**OPM3<sup>®</sup>**

Organizational Project Management Maturity Model

From strategic planning and capital budgeting to organizational change, **project managers undoubtedly drive internal initiatives, helping organizations to achieve business results and strategic alignment.** However, to truly excel at project management no matter the focus, leaders must assess their maturity and continuously improve project management processes to increase their competitiveness.

Toward that goal, PMI's *Organizational Project Management Maturity Model (OPM3®)* standard offers the knowledge foundation, while *OPM3 ProductSuite* provides the comprehensive software tools and training programs to create PMI Certified *OPM3* Assessors and Consultants to lead the charge.

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#### Background:

The *OPM3* standard was published by PMI in late 2003. The creation of *OPM3* ProductSuite's software tools, training and certification program—aided by a strategic partnership with Oslo, Norway-based Det Norske Veritas Certification (DNV)—followed roughly two years later. To support that effort, an official certification program was launched in June 2006.

Prior to this unveiling, however, both organizations wanted to test *OPM3* in the field. The Washington Savannah River Co. (WSRC), a wholly owned subsidiary of Washington Group International, served as one of the first pilot project volunteers. Headquartered in Boise, Idaho, USA, with more than \$3 billion (US) in annual revenue, Washington Group has approximately 24,000 people at work around the world on projects in power, environmental management, defense, oil and gas processing, mining, industrial facilities, transportation and water resources.

Washington Group and its partners operate the 310-square-mile Savannah River Site in South Carolina, USA, approximately 25 miles southeast of Augusta, Georgia, USA, for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The site is home to the Defense Waste Processing Facility, the largest high-level radioactive-liquid stabilization plant in the world. More than 8,000 site employees engage in environmental remediation, surplus material and facility disposition, waste management and ongoing support of the U.S. nuclear defense mission.

Although the nuclear weapon aspect of the site's work remains, it has been reduced substantially since the end of the Cold War. Approximately 75 percent of the site's annual \$1.4 billion (US) budget currently is devoted to environmental management projects, most of them involving cleanup and remediation efforts related to previous weapons production work. And the staff level is down markedly from its peak of about 25,000 in the early 1990s.

A team of four volunteers—among the first 22 people trained under PMI Certified *OPM3* Assessor certification program—conducted the first *OPM3* ProductSuite assessment for WSRC from 27–31 March 2006. Tony Gray, DNV's project manager for product development for *OPM3* ProductSuite, acted as observer of the four assessors.

The primary objectives of the assessment were to:

1. Conduct an assessment of organizational project management maturity using *OPM3* ProductSuite methodology and tools in an industry application.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the *OPM3* ProductSuite assessment methodology and tools in an industry application.

#### Challenges:

WSRC, in the course of its day-to-day work, faces technical, scope management, cost and schedule challenges. The company's management approach revolves largely around increased emphasis on implementing project management principles and practices throughout the entire scope of the work at the Savannah River Site. The project management culture within WSRC was highly developed, but the company did have some concerns about whether it was doing all it could to achieve best practices in traditional project areas. Additionally, WSRC was eager to determine whether it was appropriately applying project management to general operational tasks, and cleanup and remediation efforts that traditionally are not treated as projects. The site's project management office director/program integrator reported that budgets were constrained while the amount of work and associated costs were increasing—another reason that he was eager to make sure WSRC was properly applying project management principles to improve efficiency and meet strategic goals.

#### Solutions:

The assessment team employed *OPM3* methodologies to provide an analysis of the Savannah River Site's organizational project management maturity, which simply means how well an organization applies project, program and portfolio knowledge, skills, tools and techniques, and best practices to achieve its goals. There were constraints that limited the robustness of the assessment and influenced the scope of the assessment: time allowed to conduct the assessment, the number of assessors available to conduct the assessment, and the developmental version of the *OPM3* ProductSuite available at the time of the assessment. The assessment scope included the four process improvement groups (standardize, measure, control and continuously improve) and two of the three domains covered by the *OPM3* assessment process—

project management and program management—but did not include the third domain: portfolio management. WSRC agreed not to have its portfolio management capabilities assessed, since the Energy Department manages portfolio issues rather than WSRC. However, excluding the portfolio domain did not interfere with scoring in the project and program domains themselves or the scoring of organizational enablers, demonstrating the scoping flexibility of *OPM3*.

To analyze how well the Savannah River Site employed the hundreds of best practices in the *OPM3* standard, team members interviewed more than 20 site staff members and looked for evidence that they were—or were not—achieving the outcomes expected from the best practices in their project work. The assessment team also looked at documents such as project execution plans and schedules through the Savannah River Site intranet to ensure interviewee answers corresponded with actual work products.

At the conclusion of a *OPM3* ProductSuite assessment, a certified consultant would produce an improvement plan. An improvement plan provides an organization a unique plan of action to achieve desired results. Although, at the time of WSRC's assessment, the improvement tool was still in development and was not piloted, ongoing work between WSRC and PMI volunteers continued. The assessment results are being evaluated using the Improvement tool. Results will be considered in WSRC's process improvement planning, which is already underway.

#### Results:

The overall relative maturity achieved by WSRC at the Savannah River Site in the traditional project arena was very high. The maturity level of the site's organizational enablers—which includes benchmarking, executive sponsorship, knowledge management, resource allocation, strategic alignment, project management training and metrics, and many others—ranked at 97 percent. Likewise, the project management domain in general had a 97 percent maturity level. Program management was slightly lower, at 94 percent maturity. Portfolio management was not included in the assessment.

According to the assessment, WSRC is a highly mature organization. Due to this fact, the assessment focused on finding “exceptions” to WSRC's well-developed project management capabilities. Going forward, the assessors suggested that WSRC should develop a process to improve the maturity of the organization (in contrast with a process to improve the performance of the organization) using program management best practices.

The assessors also suggested that WSRC should integrate efforts to standardize, measure, control and improve projects as it creates a tailored process management approach to audits, controls and process improvement.

WSRC was pleased to have validation that it was indeed handling projects well overall and effectively adapting project management principles to operational endeavors. Moreover, the organization appreciated the identification of individual areas of project and program management that it might improve. For example, some best practices were not fully implemented in project team development, program team development, program initiation, program plan development, risk management planning, risk identification and project management training. Also, WSRC was impressed by the extensive knowledge and capability of the team and grateful for the time volunteered by the assessment team members and their companies.

#### *OPM3* ProductSuite Pilot Project Key Outcomes:

- Illustrated to PMI and DNV that the *OPM3* assessment process could help expose opportunities for improvement, even at very mature organizations.
- Identified areas in which *OPM3* ProductSuite software tools (online and offline), training and certification could be improved in future versions.
- Validated WSRC's efforts to expand project management practices in traditionally non-project-themed areas of work.
- Provided WSRC with knowledge of specific areas in which project and program management could be improved as part of an internal project improvement process.

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For more examples of *OPM3* in action, visit us online at <http://opm3online.pmi.org>