

IPMA LEVEL A – PROJECT DIRECTOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR – PORTFOLIO DIRECTOR OR AGILE ORGANISATIONAL LEADER

At IPMA Level A, you can choose between four different certification tracks, depending on whether you lead projects, programs, portfolios, or agile assignment at a strategic level. The requirements and eligibility criteria are identical for all tracks. IPMA certification is an open system, allowing you to decide how to acquire your knowledge—there are no requirements for specific literature, methods, or project models. The certification is also industry-independent and applies to all types of projects.

Experience Requirement – Project Director

At least 5 years (55 months) of experience leading very complex projects (≥ 32), of which at least 3 years must be at a strategic level. *

Experience may be counted from the past 12 years.

Experience Requirement – Program Director

At least 5 years (55 months) of experience leading very complex programs (≥ 32) at a strategic level*

OR

At least 4 years of experience as a program manager leading very complex programs (≥ 32) **AND** at least 3 years of experience as a project manager leading very complex projects (≥ 32) at a strategic level.

Experience may be counted from the past 12 years.

Experience Requirement – Portfolio Director

At least 5 years (55 months) of experience leading very complex portfolios (≥ 32) at a strategic level*

OR

At least 4 years of experience as a portfolio manager leading very complex portfolios (≥ 32) **AND** at least 3 years of experience as a project or program manager leading very complex projects or programs (≥ 32) at a strategic level*.

Experience may be counted from the past 12 years.

Experience Requirement – Agile Organisational Leader

At least 5 years (55 months) of experience leading very complex agile assignments (≥ 32), of which at least 3 years must be as the responsible leader of agile assignments at a strategic level*.

Experience may be counted from the past 12 years.

**Strategic level means that the value delivered by the project, program, or portfolio contributes substantially to the organizations' overall objectives.*

Complexity

The complexity of an assignment is evaluated using ten parameters grouped under three headings. Each of the parameters is judged and given a score (integers) from 1 (not complex) to 4 (very complex). Complexity should be judged based on your perspective as project manager. Only conditions handled by the management are relevant. The complexity of a project is then calculated as the sum of scores of the ten parameters. If the total score is 32 or higher, the assignment is classified as very complex.

Assesment of Competence

IPMA has developed the ICB, *Individual Competence Baseline*, to describe the competences a person may have in order to lead or participate in projects, programs or portfolios. Candidates use the standard when conducting their self-assessment, and assessors use it to evaluate whether the candidate meets the certification requirements.

The assessors are experienced project managers who are certified at least at the same level they are assessing, and they possess both broad knowledge and extensive experience in project management. For agile leaders, a similar model is used — *IPMA Reference Guide ICB4 in an Agile World* — which is adapted to agile ways of working.

Definition of project – program – portfolio

A project is a unique, temporary, multidisciplinary and organized endeavor to realize agreed deliverables within predefined requirements constraints. Project management typically involves personnel from project management associates up to senior project managers.

A program is set up to achieve a strategic goal. A program is a temporary organization of interrelated program components managed in a coordinated way to enable the implementation of change and the realization of benefits. Program management typically involves senior project managers or project directors.

A portfolio is a set of projects and/or programs, which are not necessarily related, brought together to provide optimum use of the organizations' resources and to achieve strategic goals while minimizing portfolio risk. Important issues on a portfolio level are reported to the senior management of the organization by the portfolio manager, together with options to resolve the issues.

Certification process IPMA level A

The certification process is carried out digitally and remotely. Once your registration is complete, all relevant information will be emailed to you prior to the start.

Introduction

This mandatory first step involves a detailed review of the entire certification process, as well as the opportunity to ask questions. The introduction takes place digitally and lasts approximately two hours.

Application – submitted approximately four weeks after the introduction

You have about 4 weeks to complete your application before it must be submitted. In this step, you document your competencies and experience based on IPMA's competence areas in an Excel workbook. Before submitting your application, you review it together with your discussion partner—an opportunity for valuable self-reflection. The application is the most time-consuming part of the certification process, so it is important to start early to ensure you can submit a complete and well-prepared application. It typically takes between 40 and 80 hours to complete.

The application must be submitted by the specified deadline and will then be assessed by two assessors. If your application meets the certification requirements for the level you are applying for, you will proceed in the certification process. If, however, the assessors determine that the application does not meet the requirements, you may be offered the opportunity to continue the process at a lower level. Please note that an incomplete application may be rejected, and you will not have the opportunity to make any additions or corrections after submission.

Reports – submitted approximately seven weeks after the application

In this step of the certification process, you will demonstrate your ability to address leadership challenges by submitting two reports based on your experience in very complex assignments. Both reports follow the same structure and must include 6 concrete examples per report illustrating how you have led projects, programs, or

portfolios through various leadership challenges. You are expected to reflect on and describe how you have successfully managed these challenges.

Each report shall not exceed 25 pages. If either report is not approved on your first attempt, you may retake it within one year for an additional fee.

Interview – three weeks after the report

In the final step, you will be interviewed by your two assessors, who will review your performance throughout the certification process. They will ask additional questions to deepen their understanding of your competences. You may also be given tasks based on a fictional case. In this part, you are expected to provide suggestions and reflect on possible solutions, leadership issues, and project management methods.

During the interview, you are also expected to give a 10-minute presentation of your report. The interview lasts approximately 2.5 hours and concludes with immediate feedback and a recommendation for approval or non-approval. You will also receive written feedback with suggestions for further development. If the outcome is not approved, you have the right to a retake within one year for an additional fee.

Certificate – one week after the interview

The final decision is made by the certification manager. If you are approved, you will receive an internationally recognized certificate in both Swedish and English, sent to you by email. To further enhance your professional profile, you can also download a digital badge to use in your email signature, on your CV, or LinkedIn.

Your certificate is valid for five years and can be renewed through recertification. This provides an opportunity to maintain and further develop your project management expertise, keeping your skills up to date and competitive.

Appeal

Anyone who is dissatisfied with a certification decision may submit a written appeal within 30 working days from the decision date. The appeal should be sent to the Certification Office and will be reviewed by an independent Appeals Board. If the decision is still not accepted, the matter can be escalated to IPMA info@ipma.world

Contact information

For more information or to discuss certification levels, please contact us at certifiering@projektforum.se or +46 8 22 14 13.