

WHAT is the Project Card Game?

The **G:P Project Card Game** © is a tool to assess the at-risk status of your project. The card game helps you along in this assessment, gives it structure and at the end, it suggests a to-do list for you as project manager.



When you first play the game, you will typically arrange for a guided session with Goossens:Projecten to make sure that all participants get properly introduced to the approach and are fully clear on how to play.



WHO is the Project Card Game for?

Project managers are the primary audience for the Project Card Game. But the game is designed for playing in a group, and the added value of using this tool will come from the discussions you will have while playing the project card game in a team. The project manager is in charge of involving stakeholders to play along – e.g. the people you report to, the sponsor of the project, core members of your team, auditors of your project, third parties that are (seriously) impacted, and end users.

What stakeholder group(s) to involve will depend on the key issue(s) that you are struggling with, and the scenario that you are going to use when playing this game. There is more on scenarios on the other side of this folder.

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WHY should you play the Project Card Game?

If you feel that there is room for improvement, if you have project problems to fix, if you need to get back on track, or if you are pro-active and wish to arrive at and maintain a healthy situation in your project – then this game is for you.

If you think everything in your project is running smoothly, then there is not much need for you to play this game. It may still be fun to do, and at the very least the project card game will show if key stakeholders are aligned with you in their perceptions of the project.

WHEN should you play the Project Card Game?

You can be *triggered by some ad-hoc situation* that keeps you awake at night: a gut feeling of issues and risks that you're only partly able to pin-point; some meeting where it became clear that you as project manager and other stakeholders are having quite different points of view on some aspect(s) of your project; there are some lingering problems in your project that just won't go away; your progress and/or budget are off track; there are various clear signals of risk; you feel like the odds are stacked against you...

Or you can choose to play the project card game systematically at *specific junctions in the project life cycle*:

- feasibility study
- planning or resourcing phase
- project kick-off
- phase transition / stage gate
- decision to renew baseline and/or budget
- decision to refactor or redesign

What RESULTS will the Project Card Game bring you?

- Playing the project card game will bring you these benefits:
- Alignment with stakeholders through shared understanding of key aspects of the project.
 - Structured analysis of key control areas in terms of your competences to manage them.
 - Structured analysis of vulnerabilities in terms of friction risks between key control areas.
 - Prioritized list of things to work on; you could think of that as a list of suggested interventions.

The *alignment* between all players in the card game is reached by only allowing “grounded assertions”. This means that the players must discuss until they all agree on an assessment

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(e.g., “our level of control on Deliverables is 60%”) that has been arrived at based on the following:

- there is basic data to support the claim, and all agree that this data is valid and is not refuted by other data also available (e.g., “we have an incomplete design”)
- there is a reasoning that leads from the basic data to the assessment, and all agree that this reasoning is credible and therefore a sound enough basis to agree on the assessment (e.g. “incomplete design forces assumptions and therefore we are not enough in control for Deliverables”)

STRUCTURE of the Project Card Game

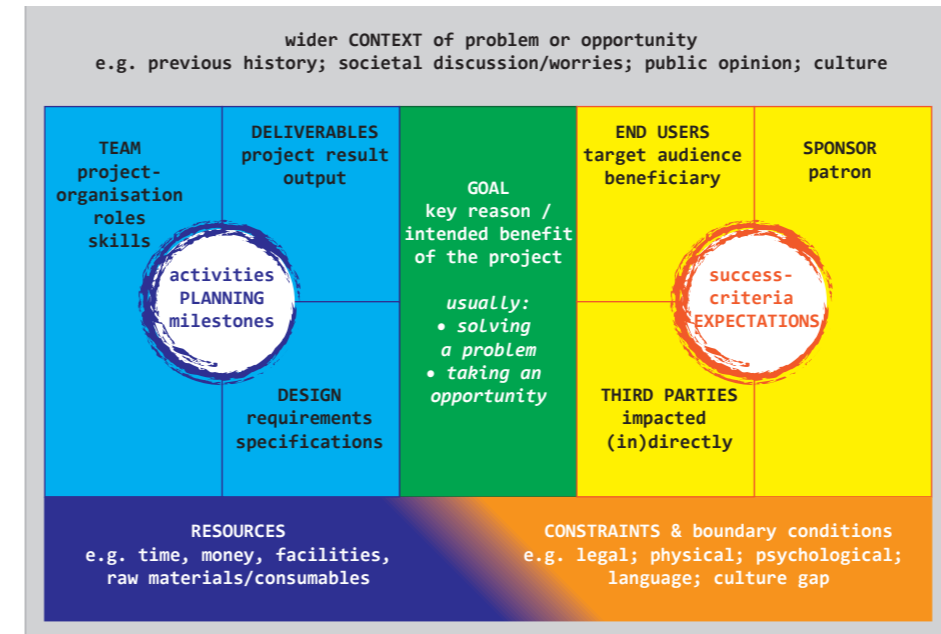
The project card game is structured on two diagrams mapping the “project world”:

- The **G:P Project Canvas**©
- The **G:P Vulnerabilities Matrix**©

The third element is the IPMA ICB® v4 competencies list.

* ICB is a registered trademark of IPMA in Switzerland and other countries.

The **Project Canvas** is a layout of tiles that represent the key control areas of a project, like Goal, Deliverables, Sponsor, Resources etc. These areas are color-coded. The Context is grey (and it is all around the other tiles), the Goal is green (and it is centre stage), the hard skills side is blue, the soft



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skills side is yellow, the enablers (Resources) are purple, and the inhibitors (Constraints) are orange. The blue and yellow areas both have a ‘central tile’ – it is “planning” for the blue / hard skills, and “expectations” for the yellow / soft skills.

The ICB competencies have been linked to the key control areas from the Project Canvas, showing which important competencies the project manager needs in each area, e.g., for the area of Deliverables you need competencies in: ‘results orientation;’, ‘scope’, ‘quality’, ‘planning & control’, ‘change & transformation’, and ‘requirement & objectives & benefits’ (card C8).

If you are already familiar with the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline, you will have an idea of what is ‘inside’ each of those high-level competency indicators. If you are not, the game contains some cards (O5 - O10) to help you understand what knowledge and skills are implicated in each competency.

The **Vulnerabilities Matrix** is a cross-reference matrix from each key control area to all the other key control areas. The 12 key control areas are named and numbered in the left-most column, those numbers are then repeated as column headers along the top of the matrix. The cells at each intersection refer to a Risk card number, where you will find details of each source of risk. For example, the risk associated with frictions between Design (8) and Deliverables (9) can be found on card R29.

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
context 1	R1	R1	R2	R2	R3	R3	R4	R4	R5	R5	R6
goal 2		R6	R7	R7	R8	R8	R9	R9	R10	R10	R11
end users 3			R11	R12	R12	R13	R13	R14	R14	R15	R15
sponsor 4				R16	R16	R17	R17	R18	R18	R19	R19
third party 5					R20	R20	R21	R21	R22	R22	R23
expectations 6						R23	R24	R24	R25	R25	R26
team 7							R26	R27	R27	R28	R28
design 8								R29	R29	R30	R30
deliverables 9									R31	R31	R32
planning 10										R32	R33
resources 11											R33
constraints 12											

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HOW to play the Project Card Game

Familiarize yourself first with the main components of the card deck by reading the paragraph “Structure of the Project Card Game” overleaf.

Then let us start with the contents of the card deck, so you know what the game looks like:

- There are 2 Instruction cards, numbered I1-I2, that give an overview of how to play the game. This serves as a quick reminder of you have played the game before.
- There are 10 Orientation cards, that picture the project canvas, the vulnerabilities matrix, the ICB competencies and one card showing how to arrive at “grounded assertions”.
- There are 12 Control cards, that cover the key control areas as shown on the Project Canvas.
- There are 33 Risk cards, that cover all sources of risk as shown in the Vulnerabilities Matrix.

The game rolls along in 3 phases: preparation, action, wrap-up.

PREPARATION PHASE

During the preparation phase, you will choose the scenario and the participants, and plan the session.

Choose the scenario

When you are in the middle of running a project you will likely have some concerns about only one or a few aspects, implying that you should do an assessment of specific control areas or vulnerabilities. In terms of scenario, it means you will do a focused assessment. Your options are:

1. **Focused Control assessment** – review of only some selected key control areas.
2. **Focused Vulnerabilities assessment** – review of only some selected vulnerabilities.

When you are preparing for a project, or auditing it, or when a total reshuffle is needed, you may want to assess the key control areas and/or vulnerabilities in full. Your options are:

3. **Full Control assessment** – review of all key control areas.
4. **Full vulnerabilities assessment** – review of all possible vulnerabilities.

These basic scenarios can be combined.

Choosing your approach is important, because it has an impact on the time needed play the game; especially doing a full vulnerabilities assessment might take many hours.

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If you have a specific problem situation in your project, then choose the *focused* scenario option.

If you are at a junction and want to prepare for a next phase, then choose the *full* scenario option.

When you are going for a focused scenario, the next step is to identify the key control area(s) that you are most worried about. You may want to align with your key stakeholder(s) about what these key control areas are if you are inviting them to join in the assessment game.

Here are some suggestions for which part of the Project Canvas specifically to focus on for your assessment:

DEPENDING ON YOUR ROLE IN THE PROJECT

- sponsor → look at “grey”, “green”, “purple” and “orange” key control areas
- project manager → all key control areas can be applicable
- team lead → look at “blue” and “green” key control areas
- auditor → all key control areas can be applicable
- end user → look at “yellow” and “green” key control areas
- team member → look at “blue” key control areas
- third parties → look at “yellow” and “green” key control areas

DEPENDING ON THE CURRENT / NEXT PROJECT PHASE

- feasibility → look at “grey”, “green”, “purple” and “orange” key control areas
- planning → look at “blue” and “purple” key control areas
- resourcing → look at “blue” key control areas, specifically “Team”
- in progress → all key control areas can be applicable
- phase transition → all key control areas can be applicable

DEPENDING ON AN INTERVENTION IN THE PROJECT

- changed scope → look at “green”, “blue” and “purple” key control areas
- new baseline → look at “blue” and “green” key control areas
- change/rebuild team → look at “yellow” key control area
- change architecture/refactoring → look at “blue” key control area, specifically “Design” and “Deliverables”

Choose the participants

Depending on the scenario(s) you have chosen for the assessment game, it should be easy to identify the stakeholders that are relevant to the key control areas that you wish to focus on.

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Plan the session

Invite all participants to the project card game session. Plan for a location where all stakeholders can feel at ease – choose for neutral ground as there are bound to be conflicts of interest, power differences, and for sure you will be discussing some topics that will lay bare differences in viewpoint that may be quite far apart.

ACTION PHASE

Prepare the deck

Take out the deck of cards and put the Orientation cards O1 to O4 face-up on the table in front of you. Keep the cards O5 – O10 within reach for reference. Next put the Control cards C1-C12 and the Risks cards R1-R33 in two stacks before you.

If your scenario is to assess one or more key control areas, then take the relevant Control cards and put them on a separate stack. For example, if you have decided to do an assessment for “Third Parties” and “Deliverables” then take cards C5 and C8.

If your scenario is to assess vulnerabilities, then use the Vulnerabilities Matrix to find the relevant Risks cards. For a focused scenario, you either want an assessment for the vulnerabilities at the intersection of two key control areas (e.g. “Third Parties” and “Design”) which will bring up exactly one Risks card (R21). Or you want do an assessment for risks from one specific key control area to all the other key control areas (e.g. from “Sponsor”) which will bring up multiple Risks cards (R2, R7, R11, R16, R17, R18, R19).

With the Control cards and/or Risks cards now selected, you are ready to start the actual assessment.

Iterate through the assessment cards

For each of the selected **Control** cards, discuss to what extent you have the six key competencies for that control area. Use reference cards O4 - O10 for more detail on competencies needed for each of the key control areas. Give yourself a score from 0% to 100%, where 0% is “we totally lack all competency for this key control area” and 100% is “we have all the required knowledge and skills and experience to handle this key control area”. Your ‘rating’ must be a grounded assertion (see card O1), meaning you must provide the data to support your claim and a reasoning that links the data to the claim. The team doing the assessment must agree on the score – continue your discussion until you are aligned.

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For each of the selected **Risks** cards, discuss to what extent you are handling the source of risk adequately or are still vulnerable to it. Give yourself a score from 0% to 100%, where 0% is “we are completely vulnerable to this risk” and 100% means “we are handling this risk adequately to the point where it is not applicable to us anymore”. Again, your ‘rating’ must be a grounded assertion (see card O1), meaning you just provide the data to support your claim and a reasoning that links the data to the claim. The team doing the assessment must agree on the score – continue your discussion until you are aligned. Discussion of each card should result in a score on the 0%-100% scale that all participants are aligned on.

Write down all scores on a flip chart visible to everyone.

WRAP-UP PHASE

Sort the outcomes

When all assessments are done, you will have a list of scores for each key control area and/or vulnerability that you had in scope based on the scenario(s) you have chosen. Now it will be easy to sort them in order of importance: put the lowest percentage score on top, and the highest percentage score on the bottom. This is your sorted to-do list.

Agree on actions / interventions

The last piece of discussion to have with your team of stakeholders is to brainstorm on the actions (interventions in the project) that should be taken for each item. Start from the top one in the list (where you have the biggest issue) and go through the list. Depending on available budget and time for interventions, you might want to drop some of them. Only do so if all stakeholders agree on that.

Communicate the repair plan

Finally, you must communicate the ‘repair plan’ to the rest of the team and the other stakeholders who were not present in the card game session. Then act on it to return your project to a healthy state!

Enjoy the G:P Project Cards Game!

Contact ralph@goossensbv.com to book your guided session, and get support for healthy projects.



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