

## **Current Issues of Project Management Office at PT Solusi Telecom**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research is conducted to discover which PMO model is suitable for Solusi Telecom, an Indonesian based telecommunication operator. The study identifies that desirable PMO should be able to: integrate corporate portfolio, standardize project management methodology, rollout project management tools, improve communication, grant complete oversight, and empower PMO leadership. Analysis on the suitable PMO model is conducted by using PMO Maturity Cube theoretical framework as a basis, which shows the suitable PMO model for Solusi Telecom is corporate scope and the combination of three roles: operational, strategic, and tactical with varying maturity level for each role. By applying this model, it is expected that the project performance is increased, which may increase revenue generation capability and improve employee productivity.

Keywords: organization, project management office, PMO, project management, telecommunication, qualitative research

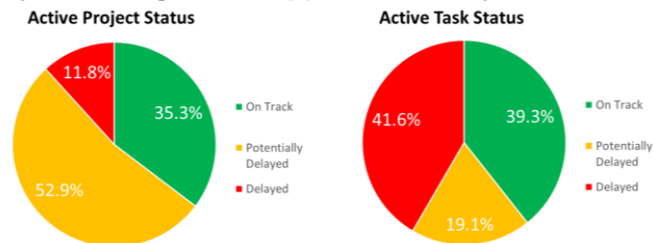
### **INTRODUCTION**

Solusi Telecom (real name is disguised) is an Indonesia-based wireless network operator headquartered in Central Jakarta, it is a part of Indonesian Parahyangan conglomerate (real name is disguised). Solusi Telecom provides wireless voice (via VoLTE) and data services (4G LTE) in Indonesia. As of January 2020, Solusi Telecom have 24 million active subscribers, making it the fifth-largest wireless carrier in Indonesia. Solusi Telecom organization divided into three main pillars: Commercial which is led by Commercial Director, Technology which is led by Technology Director, and finally EVP which is led by Executive Vice President.

As a telecommunication company, Solusi Telecom launched many projects to help the company achieve its strategic objectives, example projects in Solusi Telecom are: network expansion, product development, process automation, etc. To provide return to its shareholders, project plays crucial role for Solusi Telecom: increase revenue generation capability, support business expansion, reduce cost, and improve productivity/efficiency.

Data from that are gathered from Zoho Project Management Application in Figure 1 shows that as of March 2020, 35.3% of project/program are on track, 52.9% are potentially delayed, and 11.8% are currently delayed. Additionally, task data from Zoho shows that 39.3 % of ongoing tasks in Solusi Telecom are on track, 19.1% of ongoing tasks are potentially delayed, and 41.6% of ongoing tasks are delayed. These shows that, most programs/projects under the EVP Group that are maintained under Zoho (including product development, marketing communication, customer experience, digital business, and customer success) are in the risk of schedule delay.

**Figure 1. Zoho Project Management Application Project & Task Status Summary**



Additionally, another issue are also identified based on the author's observation: lack of project transparency/oversight to the management (especially those whose project are not closely monitored by PMO team), slow/inefficient communication media (lacking in use of integrated project management application by all stakeholders), and unstandardized project management approach for every projects which is subjective to the project owner.

The current supportive PMO only serve the EVP group, providing on-demand project management expertise assistance to the project owner only on several large, cross-functional project that is appointed by the Executive Vice President. Improvement is shown on the project that the current PMO handles, especially on the project transparency and the standardized approach. However, since the PMO authority is limited only on several projects, it cannot reach its full potential in transforming the whole organization's project management approach.

The transformation of the current PMO model into centralized-controlling may provide solution to solve the issues mentioned earlier throughout all organization, not only on specific projects. Collaborating with upper management, PMO will be able to set the standards to manage project and enforce each Project Owner to use transparent method with the help of Project Management Application. Ultimately, the transformation of PMO can improve company profitability by increase in revenue (project time delivery) and reduce in cost (transparent project management practice, instant project escalation, easier root cause detection, efficient resource coordination, and automated report creation). From the issue formulation the research question that is need to be answered by this journal is "What Project Management Office model is suitable to improve the project management in practices in Solusi Telecom?"

## RESEARCH METHOD

### A. Conceptual Framework: PMO Maturity Cube Literature

Pinto, Cota, and Levin (2010) states two classifications to identify several models of PMO: scope of influence and the roles of PMO. Each role of PMO will then have its own maturity level for each of the function it performs.

The first classification is the scope of influence, which is about the reach of PMO actions within the organization. There are three scopes in this classification (mutually exclusive):

- Project-program PMO which scopes are just covering one/several of the organization's project/programs
- Departmental PMO which covers the entire department/division/business unit
- Corporate PMO which covers the whole organization.

The second classification is the roles of PMO, it is how PMO operates against its customers. There are three roles in this classification (not mutually exclusive):

- Strategic PMO role supports company's portfolio management, it have 10 functions with total of 31 maturity points.

- Tactical PMO role provide common project management methodology to be used throughout the organization, it has 9 functions with total of 29 maturity points.
- Operational PMO role directly manage strategic projects, it has 8 functions with total of 23 maturity points.

## **B. Method of Data Collection and Analysis: Qualitative Study**

The research is conducted using qualitative method to understand the current project management situation and issue that is relevant for project management office to address. The qualitative method will also explore on the performance of the existing PMO and the future expectation of the PMO itself, the results will then be converted into proposed PMO model that will be discussed on result & discussion. Qualitative method is chosen over quantitative method because the research fulfils below criteria (Creswell, 2014):

- The needs to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory since the issue might be unique for each company, the researcher will need to explore the specific situation and find tailored solution for the company
- The concept is “immature” due to a lack of theory and previous research: there are very few researches exploring about telecommunication operators PMO challenges, especially in Indonesia
- The nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measures: since the scope of the PMO is limited to certain group/department, the respondent candidate pool is also limited. Additionally, in Solusi Telecom, not many people are literate on project management theory, let alone understand the function and goals of a PMO.

The primary data collection will be using both interview and observation, while the secondary data collection will include company documents and audio-visual materials. The interview is selected over focus group to allow researcher gain more control over the line of questioning and gain in-depth understanding on the issue on each respondent's specific historical experience and unique point of view. Respondent are divided into four categories: Project Owner, PMO, Project Member, and Executive with total respondents of 10 people. The observation is selected as a complementary to gain first-hand experience in the setting and identify unusual aspects that may uncomfortable for interview participants to discuss. The observation will be done with the researcher as a complete participant to reduce the bias of the actor. The setting of the observation was done on January 2020 to March 2020. The secondary data that will be used in this research including Solusi Telecom annual report, historical project data from Zoho Project Management Application, and project-related document (i.e: project charter, weekly update dashboard, etc).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **A. Findings**

The qualitative study found six root causes of the main issue category that needs to be addressed: portfolio management, project management methodology, project management tools, communication, monitoring & oversight, and leadership in PMO. In the portfolio management category, it is highlighted that unclear project priority and the difference between priorities among project stakeholders can cause quite a large issue that delay project delivery in Solusi Telecom. Several respondents suggest that, PMO may be able to become the solution to this issue, helping the management straighten the project priority amongst all project stakeholders n Solusi Telecom.

In the project management methodology category, it is highlighted that currently there are no standard developed for managing projects in Solusi Telecom, which may cause unstandardized approach of stakeholders when managing/working in a project as said by the executive respondent, this is issue is temporarily solved on certain cross-functional projects that are handled by PMO, as said by one of the respondent, however the project that are not handled by PMO may face this issue. A project owner respondent even recommends that developing standard should be the priority for PMO team, this argument is also supported by one PMO respondent which believes PMO should be the one to develop the standard.

In the project management tools category, it is highlighted that collaborative project management tools/applications if implemented successfully may be able to overcome the challenge of coordinating many stakeholders while simultaneously standardized the project management approach as said by several respondents. However, another respondent explains the current situation that the existing collaborative project management application, Zoho, is not fully used by all stakeholders, with the assumption of their lack of willingness to adapt on new technology. The executive respondent believes that with enough education and top down KPIs, the tools can be used throughout the company, however, it must gain the executive board and CEO approval to do so.

In the communication category, it is highlighted that cross-functional coordination is one of the large issues faced by Solusi Telecom as an organization knowing the company consists of more than 2,000 employees and many divisions that cause SILO. As explained by one of the project owner respondents, it is one of the factors that causes project delay. All project owner handles this issue by tightening the communication cross-functionally, however, this took a lot of their time as said by all of the project owner respondents who are part of the PMO's customers. PMO also acknowledge this issue and make cross-functional coordination one of their main KPIs. However, since the number of PMO is very limited, it cannot handle all projects.

In the monitoring & oversight category, it is highlighted that the project visibility issue is caused by Solusi Telecom's organization size and SILO structure, which is similar issue as the cross-functional coordination like in communication. Additionally, one of the project member respondents also mentioned that lack of proper project monitoring further worsens this issue. PMO in Solusi Telecom are currently also providing monitoring expertise to project owner by help stitching the moving parts as mentioned by one of the PMO respondents. However, another respondent mention that this ability to provide overarching view can be further enhanced by elevating PMO function into corporate level.

In the leadership in PMO category, it is highlighted that every PMO's activity will be heavily dependent on the mandate and empowerment that is given from the top management, without it, the PMO cannot really influence the company, as stated by five of the respondents, who suggest that a PMO model that covers the whole organization might be able to solve the current project inefficiencies that are faced by Solusi Telecom, to achieve it, however, PMO organization model needs to report directly under the CEO.

## **B. Benchmarking with Other Relevant Literature**

This section will compare the findings of qualitative study with other relevant secondary literature including: Proposed PMO Case Study of PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia (Haryono, 2018), Project Management Maturity Analysis Case of Group PM at PT. XYZ (Wahyuni, 2012), and Implementation of Project Monitoring & Controlling to Improve Time Performance of Project Management Case of BTS Blank Spot Project (Ferryzal, 2018). The summary of the benchmarking can be found in below table 1.



**Table 1. Comparison Between Findings and Secondary Literature**

No	Company	Industry	Project Management Issues Faced	Solution
1	Telkom	Telecommunication operator (state-owned)	a) Unused project management system/tool b) Resource incompetency c) Weather condition	Tactical (proposing tools and standard to be applied)
2	PT. XYZ	Telecommunication operator	a) Unstandardized business process b) Unclear responsibility matrix c) Non turnkey policy d) Poor job handover e) Lack of efficient network inventory management f) Inconsistency of asset data throughout different databases g) Long bureaucracy h) Unintegrated system i) Unclear contract	Operational (PIC to specifically handle inventory, moving process to project team)  Tactical (dept to handle inventory, develop flowchart SOX, propose standard & tools to be applied)
3	Kominfo	Telecommunication regulator	a) Communication issues such as communication gap/misconception b) Lack of proper business process (not following industry standards) c) Lack of proper schedule management; WBS is incomplete and not detailed d) Lack of proper procurement management e) Incomplete stakeholder analysis f) Unintegrated and inconsistent project tracking g) Inefficient, manual project reporting & documentation system	Tactical (create standardized process, building models based on PMBOK5 standard, adopt new tools, develop resource competencies, and changing policy)  Operational (build dedicated field monitoring team)
4	Solusi Telekom	Telecommunication operator	a) Unclear portfolio management approach b) Lack of standardized project management methodology/approach c) Unused project management system/tool	See result and discussion section D

			d) Communication issues such as communication gap/misconception e) Lack of strong monitoring & oversight f) Lack of empowerment of PMO	
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The secondary literature review finds several common project management issues that are faced within telecommunication industry in Indonesia, the issues including resource incompetency (both in technical and project management aspects), unstandardized project management approach, lack of proper business process, unintegrated project tracking/monitoring, and unmaximized use of project management system/tools.

Most of the issues regarding project management and PMO in Solusi Telecom is similar with the secondary literature review: lack of standardized project management methodology/approach, unused project management system/tool, communication issues, and lack of strong monitoring & oversight. However, the other secondary literature review does not mention about the portfolio management issues (especially in project prioritization) and lack of empowerment of PMO. The lack of empowerment is clearly not mention in other study because all of them does not have existing PMO organization in place, most of them have project office that main responsibility is for project execution. The portfolio management issue is not mentioned in the other study with the assumption that prioritization in the other study's organization is clearly defined by the management.

The solution offered by the secondary literature author mostly revolves around providing tactical function (based on PMO Maturity Cube), in example: applying new standards, increase project management tool usage, and develop resource competencies. Additionally, there are also operational oriented solution that is suggested to be implemented such as building new departments that is in charge of field monitoring.

The similarity of many issues in the secondary literature with the findings in this study provide validation on what is being faced by Indonesian telecommunication company in general. However, the solution in the secondary literature which mainly revolves in providing tactical functions, may not be sufficient & need different implementation concept and prioritization, since there are cases in Solution Telecom where methodology enforced by the top management is not being followed, especially when there is high turnover in the top management as per findings in the study. The top-down application of methodology may apply to company with strong top management leadership, which is not the case in the Solution Telecom. Operational recommendations in the secondary literature may not be applicable since it is largely specialized for the internal situation of the company. It is concluded that the secondary literature study provide validation on the issues, but the solution proposal will be adjusted based on the needs and internal conditions of Solution Telecom since providing tactical functions is not enough to move the needle.

### C. Existing PMO Model

Based on the qualitative study that is conducted, and author's observation, the existing PMO practices that is applied in Solusi Telecom is departmental PMO with moderate operational role maturity, and low maturity on strategic and tactical role.

The existing PMO scope can be defined as departmental PMO because it is covering only EVP Group and there are other Commercial and Technology Group that are not covered by the existing PMO. However, since the member of PMO is limited, even in the

EVP Group PMO cannot covers the management of programs and projects throughout all department, it mainly focused on several departments that have cross-functional programs/projects such as Product & Innovation and Marketing Communication.

Solusi Telecom roles in operational area can be defined as moderate because based on the maturity assessment, because it currently achieved 11 out of 23 points in operational role maturity. Solusi Telecom role in strategic can be defined as low because it currently achieved only 3 out of 31 points in strategic role maturity. Solusi Telecom role in tactical can be defined as low because it currently achieved only 1 out of 29 points in tactical role maturity.

#### **D. Proposed PMO Model**

The proposed PMO scope will be corporate PMO with the combination of three roles: strategic, tactical, and operational, however, the maturity for each role will be different.

The corporate PMO scope can provide the following benefits for Solusi Telecom such as: clearly defined/aligned priorities within all projects in Solusi Telecom (departmental PMO can have issue aligning priorities with another department which may have different priorities), increased overall project visibility throughout the organization (departmental PMO may only gain access to visibility among its own department, while the other departments may not willingly to provide transparency), and address interdependencies issues (departmental PMO cannot observe the interdependencies in programs/projects from another department).

The proposed PMO roles will be the combination of the three roles, however, the target maturity level for each one will be different. Recommendations and solutions from the secondary literature study regarding how several tactical functions can address the project management issues will be adopted to undertake issues found in this study, such as applying project management methodology, implementing project management tools/information systems, and developing employee skills in project management. The PMO maturity level for each role will be targeted under a specific time period: within the next 1 year and 2 year to provide realistic goal within a time constraint. Target maturity level by the end of the first year is: strategic (13 out of 31), tactical (10 out of 29), and operational (12 out of 23), while target maturity level by the end of second year is: strategic (20 out of 31), tactical (17 out of 29), and operational (17 out of 23). Details can be seen on Table 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 2. Proposed Strategic Role Maturity for Each Functions**

No	Functions	Current maturity	Maturity after 1 year	Maturity after 2 year
S1	How does the PMO provide advice to the senior management?	Level 1	Level 3	Level 3
S2	How does the PMO coordinate and integrate the entire organization /department's portfolio?	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2
S3	How does the PMO develop and maintain a strategic framework of projects and programs (scoreboard)?	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
S4	How does the PMO promote project management awareness?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 2

S5	How does the PMO monitor and control its own performance?	Level 0	Level 2	Level 2
S6	How does PMO participate in the strategic planning process?	Level 0	Level 2	Level 3
S7	How does the PMO manage one or more organization portfolios?	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
S8	How does the PMO identify, select and prioritize new projects and programs?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 0
S9	How does the PMO manage the benefits of the projects and programs?	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2
S10	How does the PMO map the relationships and the environment of projects and programs in and out of the organization	Level 0	Level 0	Level 0

**Table 3. Proposed Tactical Role Maturity for Each Functions**

No	Functions	Current maturity	Maturity after 1 year	Maturity after 2 year
T1	How does the PMO develop and implement project management methodology?	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2
T2	How does the PMO develop skills in project management?	Level 0	Level 1	Level 3
T3	How does the PMO implement and manage project information systems?	Level 0	Level 2	Level 3
T4	How does the PMO manage interfaces with customers?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 0
T5	How does the PMO provide a set of tools for project management?	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
T6	How does the PMO allocate and share resources between projects?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 0
T7	How does the PMO implement and manage the lessons learned database?	Level 0	Level 2	Level 2
T8	How does the PMO implement and manage the risk database?	Level 0	Level 2	Level 2
T9	How does the PMO select, manage, and evaluate project managers?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 2

**Table 4. Proposed Operational Role Maturity for Each Functions**

No	Functions	Current maturity	Maturity after 1 year	Maturity after 2 year
O1	How does the PMO provide specialized services for the project manager?	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
O2	How does the PMO provide information to senior management of the status of projects that are under way?	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
O3	How does the PMO monitor and control project / program performance?	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2



O4	How does the PMO provide mentoring for project managers?	Level 1	Level 1	Level 2
O5	How does the PMO manage and collect project files and documentation?	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
O6	How does the PMO manage one or more programs or projects?	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3
O7	How does the PMO conduct project audits?	Level 0	Level 0	Level 2
O8	How does the PMO conduct post-reviews of project management (lessons learned)?	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2

## CONCLUSIONS

### A. Conclusions

When trying to answer the research question “What Project Management Office model is suitable to improve the project management in practices in Solusi Telecom?”, the author found five categories that need to be addressed: portfolio management, project management methodology, project management tools, communication, monitoring & oversight, and PMO leadership. The proposed PMO Model to address the issue, is PMO with corporate scope and the combination of three roles: strategic, tactical, and operational. The enhancement of the model, however, have a different priority and importance that are adjusted based on issues currently faced by Solusi Telecom

The first priority would be to expand into corporate PMO with operational role, it is prioritized because operational role on the corporate level can directly impact the bottom line, which may improve communication, standardize project management approach and increase transparency in the project level throughout the company, not only in a specific group/division/department. The scope expansion to corporate also give more highlight to PMO’s existence since the leader is now part of the board members, so PMO can be given more empowerment when trying to deliver results.

Second priority would be to strengthen the strategic and tactical. The strategic role may help to provide the management with better oversight which may improve decision making, it also clarifies the portfolio management process including selection and prioritization of programs/projects, even though providing strategic function is important, however, strategic PMO does not directly affect the project performance, and it is also a highly volatile department knowing the top management position is often changed. The tactical role may help to educate resources in Solusi Telecom about project management and providing tools/standards to adopt that may boost efficiency in managing project, however, without capturing the attention of the bottom line via operational PMO, there is a huge risk that the tools/standard will not be used by the working level.

### B. Recommendations

To achieve the proposed PMO Model and desired maturity level, the transformation of the PMO must contain elements as follow (sorted by priority):

**Empowerment from the Management:** the most important thing would be to ensure clear mandate and empowerment from the management, knowing that the expansion of the PMO will covers the whole organization. Without the support of the management, PMO may have difficulty in performing non-operational role such as applying portfolio management framework and enforcing the use of standards and project management tools. This recommendation address: leadership in PMO issue.

**Ensuring corporate presence of operational PMO:** the corporate reach of operational PMO not only enables PMO to directly impact project performance by providing its

expertise in project management, but also enabling the other function (strategic and tactical) to be able to embed their framework/rules/standard without much resistance from the working level. Especially knowing the culture in Solusi Telecom where the working level may not follow their superior's order, as said by one of the respondents. This recommendation address: communication, monitoring & oversight, portfolio management, project management methodology, and project management tools issues. **Develop and apply portfolio management framework:** applying proper portfolio management framework enable PMO to integrate existing project/programs on corporate level, clearly defining the prioritization of programs/projects, while also identifying any interdependencies and duplications in any of the projects. Additionally, these functions may also standardize the process of portfolio management including definition (identification, categorization, evaluation, selection), development (prioritize, balance, and commitment) and implementation (monitoring, review, and change management) of the portfolio. This recommendation address: portfolio management and monitoring & oversight issues.

**Develop corporate dashboard:** after the integration of the portfolio, corporate-level dashboard can be created to enable the monitoring of every programs/projects ongoing in the company. This dashboard grants complete visibility and transparency over existing and completed programs/project performance including time, cost, quality, and other KPIs. Dashboard should also be able to be cascaded from top executive level view into working level view. While can be created manually, it is advised to create digitized and automated corporate dashboard, integrated with project management information systems. This recommendation address: portfolio management and monitoring & oversight issues.

**Project management methodology:** applying the best practices of project management methodology will standardize the practices that are used by business units, increasing the efficiency of resources utilization and finally improve project performance. However, implementing these standards is not an easy task since the working levels are used to work not systematically, and may provide resistance to adopting new framework. This is the reason why operational PMO on corporate priority puts highly on top, since they can be also the agent of change to apply this methodology and closely monitor its uses in the project management environment of each business units. This recommendation address: project management methodology issues

**Project management tools:** applying and continuously improving project management tools, especially project management information system, can directly address many of issues, including standardizing project management practice (because the tools created by those who understands project management methodology), improve communication (project management information system may help improve accountability and coordination with its advanced notification and daily reporting system), and finally improve monitoring & oversight with its capability to generate automatic projects/programs report. However, implementing these tools is not an easy task since the working levels are used to work manually, and they may provide resistance to adopting new tools since learning might consume time and effort. This is the reason why operational PMO on corporate priority puts highly on top, since they can be also the agent of change to apply these tools and closely monitor its uses in the project management environment of each business units. This recommendation address: project management tools, communication, monitoring & oversight, and project management methodology issues

**Project management awareness program:** increasing project management awareness may help support the other initiatives, especially the tactical ones like the application of project management methodology and tools. This initiative will also be

further supported with the presence of operational PMO in corporate level, whereby they can be the agent who spreads project management awareness companywide. This recommendation address: project management methodology and project management tools issues.

**Project management formal training:** creating the training curriculum and conducting project management training may improve the project management skills of employees in Solusi Telecom. This knowledge will also support the implementation of the project management methodology and tools. However, even if training is given, without close monitoring and enforcement of the best practices' uses, the training will go waste. This is why the operational PMO in corporate level can take part to ensure the material given in the training is applicated in the daily uses. This recommendation address: project management methodology and project management tools issues.

**Develop and add project audit role to the operational team:** based on the project management methodology that is created, audit role on a project then can be performed to ensure the uses and data integrity of methodology, framework, and tracking system are used properly. Since the operational PMO may not handle all programs/projects, several program/projects that is handled directly by the business units can be audited routinely by operational PMO. This recommendation address: project management methodology, project management tools, portfolio management, and monitoring & oversight issues.

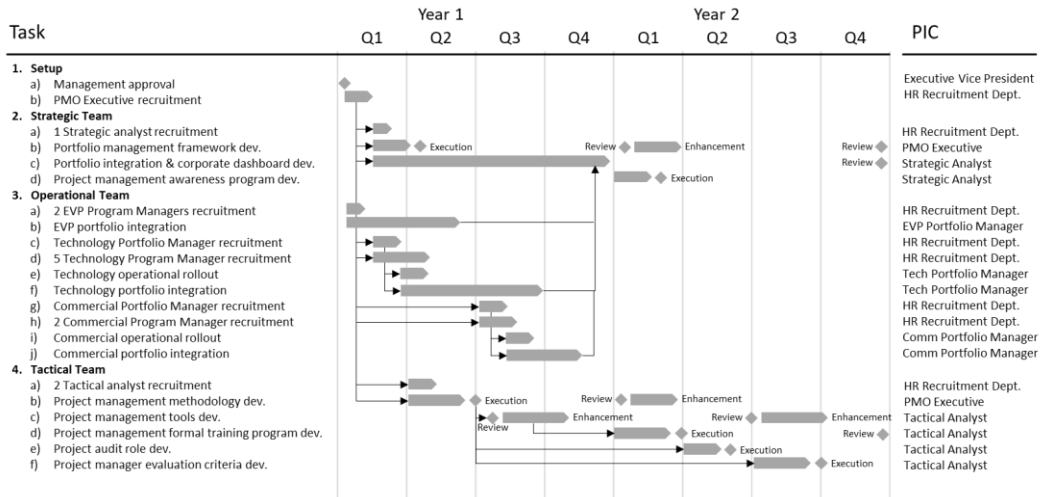
**Develop project manager evaluation criteria:** based on the project management methodology that is created, PMO can take part to improve the recruitment process of new talents that specialized in project management. The criteria ensure new project managers, especially those who is recruited directly to the business units, have the basics to learn how project management works in Solusi Telecom. This recommendation address: project management methodology issue.

### **C. Implementation Plan**

To be able to transform from existing departmental PMO with operational role into corporate PMO with strategic, tactical, and operational role, a 2-year implementation plan was developed based on recommendations in the previous section.

The workflow is divided into 4 task groups with total of 23 tasks. The first-year focus will be on building the PMO foundation by creating the most important framework: portfolio management and project management methodology while also rolling out the operational PMO on all groups including EVP, Technology, and Commercial. The second-year focus will be to developing the employee competency while simultaneously further enrich the PMO framework. Major initiatives conducted in the second year including adding stakeholder environment analysis, initiating project management awareness program, adding project audit role into the operational team, creating project management training program, and project manager evaluation criteria. Details can be seen in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. PMO Model Transformation Implementation Timeline**



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