



PMO trends 2026: Challenges, opportunities, and the path forward

With insights for utilities and other regulated sectors

▮ Avg. Reading Time: 5 minutes



Executive summary

This white paper examines the challenges PMOs face in 2026 and explores key trends shaping their future. It offers practical insights for PMO leaders to align with organisational needs and drive strategic value.

While the trends outlined in this paper apply across industries, they are particularly relevant to utilities and other highly regulated sectors, where PMOs must balance compliance and reporting, long-term transition programs, and resource constraints.

About Sensei

Sensei is a leading provider of project and portfolio management (PPM) solutions on the Microsoft platform. We help organisations streamline project delivery, improve collaboration, and maximise strategic impact through smarter work management, automation, and the latest AI technology, including Microsoft Copilot. Our solutions drive efficiency, reduce risk, and provide real-time insights, ensuring businesses achieve their goals with confidence. Learn more at sensei.cloud



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Foreword

In 2026, the Project Management Office (PMO) finds itself at a crossroads. Organisations are expecting PMOs to drive strategic impact and business value like never before. Yet many PMOs struggle to meet these expectations – in fact, about 50% of PMOs close within 3 years, often due to misalignment with organisational needs. This white paper examines the challenges PMOs face today and the key trends shaping PMOs in 2026. These pressures are intensified in regulated environments such as utilities, where PMOs operate under heightened scrutiny and long-term delivery obligations. The goal is to offer a research-driven, yet practical and engaging guide for PMO leaders looking to stay ahead of the curve.

01

Challenges Facing PMOs in 2026



Despite their important role, PMOs grapple with several persistent challenges that threaten their effectiveness and even existence. Some of the most common challenges include:

Stakeholder alignment & adoption

PMOs must juggle the differing goals of multiple stakeholders. Satisfying everyone is difficult, and resistance to new processes or tools is common. Internal politics and organisational culture often hinder adoption of PMO initiatives, slowing down progress.

Lack of executive support

In many organisations, executives have a limited view of the PMO's value – seeing it only as an administrative function (reports, templates, etc.) rather than a strategic partner. Without strong executive sponsorship and a clear vision, the PMO lacks influence and resources.

Inconsistent processes

It's not unusual for different departments or teams to follow different project methodologies. Lack of a common approach to managing projects leads to fragmentation. This misalignment makes it hard for the PMO to aggregate information or enforce standards, undermining efficiency and outcomes.

Shifting priorities & agile demands

Today's utilities landscape changes rapidly. PMOs often struggle when priorities shift but governance processes remain rigid. Many utilities PMOs are not equipped for agility. Without a focus on strategic outcomes, there is little guidance on how to re-prioritise projects as circumstances change. This can leave the organisation unprepared during crises or market shifts.

Technology silos

PMOs often deal with disconnected legacy systems, multiple operational tools, and spreadsheets. Without an integrated project management solution, data is scattered, and manual work increases. Limited support and budget make it difficult to invest in modern tools, adopt new technologies such as AI, and connect information and teams. This challenge is heightened in utilities, where legacy operational systems and regulatory controls increase integration complexity.

Resource constraints

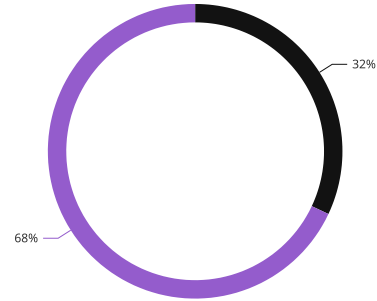
Many utilities PMOs face challenges in securing the right resources for their projects. For example, water and energy utilities often encounter skills shortages and fixed budget cycles. These constraints make it difficult to allocate specialist talent, plan for longer-term programs, and respond quickly to changing priorities. As a result, utilities PMOs must prioritise carefully and optimise capacity to ensure critical projects are delivered on time and within budget.

68%

From Overhead to Strategic Partner

These challenges contribute to the alarming statistics cited earlier. For example, not only do half of PMOs shut down within a few years, but 68% of stakeholders perceive their PMO as bureaucratic, and only a minority of organisations fully recognise the PMO's value. In short, many PMOs risk being seen as a costly overhead unless they evolve.

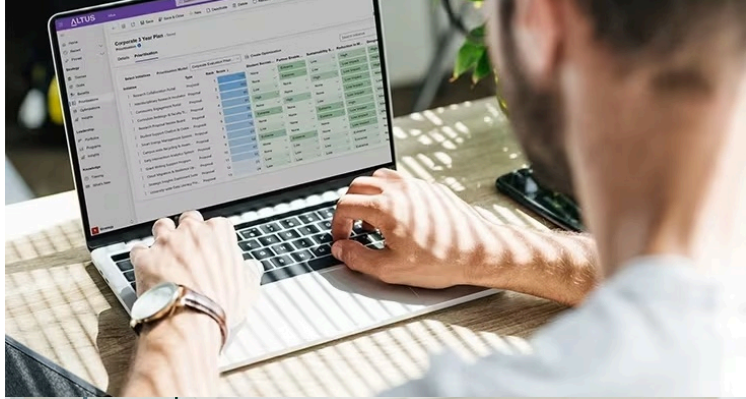
However, there is a path forward. Forward-thinking PMOs are addressing these pain points by transforming their approach – embracing new practices and tools to become more strategic, adaptive, and data-driven. In the next sections, we delve into the key trends that are shaping the successful “PMO of the future” and how different PPM solutions align with these trends to help PMOs overcome the above challenges.



02

Key trends shaping PMOs in 2026

To close the gap between what PMOs currently deliver and what organisations increasingly expect, particularly in complex and regulated environments, PMO leaders are rethinking how they operate. This section outlines the key PMO trends shaping 2026, from elevating the PMO's strategic contribution to harnessing technologies such as AI and explaining how they respond to the challenges discussed earlier. Each trend is accompanied by practical, real-world insights.



PMO as a strategic business partner (alignment & value focus)

Completing projects on time and on budget is no longer enough; today's PMO is expected to connect project execution with strategic objectives and deliver measurable business value. This trend involves evolving from a support function into a Strategic PMO that guides portfolio decisions and ensures every project aligns to the organisation's goals.

Key aspects of this strategic shift include establishing a clear line of sight from initiatives to high-level business objectives, prioritising projects based on strategic value, and tracking benefits (not just outputs) to demonstrate ROI. In practice, this might mean implementing Strategic Portfolio Management processes – for example, scoring and selecting projects based on their strategic impact, not just delivery feasibility. It also means the PMO works closely with executives to communicate how projects contribute to strategy, earning the PMO a seat at the leadership table.



Cross-industry insight: *Aligning projects and portfolios with corporate strategy is a major challenge and priority for companies today. The focus has shifted to continuous value delivery for the organisation and its customers. Modern PPM tools are now incorporating features to link projects to strategic goals and track benefits achievement, reflecting this need.*

Utilities sector insight: Utilities organisations face unique pressures in aligning projects to strategic objectives. Regulatory requirements, long-term transition and infrastructure commitments, and public accountability mean that utilities PMOs must demonstrate not only efficiency, but also defensibility and transparency in their portfolio decisions. Strategic alignment in this context often involves balancing reliability, compliance, and sustainability goals, while ensuring that every investment delivers measurable value for both the organisation and the communities it serves.

Sensei's perspective: Sensei has long advocated for the “strategic evolution” of the PMO from an “inward-facing reporting PMO” to an outward-facing strategic partner. In fact, the Altus platform was built with this philosophy in mind. Altus aligns work to strategy, helping organisations ensure that every project and program supports key strategic goals. For example, Altus provides tools to define strategic objectives and then map portfolios and initiatives against them, so that you can optimise your portfolios of work to meet your strategic objectives.

It also has built-in capabilities for benefits tracking and value realisation, which means the PMO can quantify and report the actual business outcomes of projects – a critical factor in demonstrating value to executives.





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Altus is setting a new standard with comprehensive tracking, it reveals completed and unfinished tasks. The system eliminates hiding unfinished work, ensuring transparency in project management.

Matthew Carrocci, Senior Group Manager - Corporate Project Management Office, Asahi Holdings Australia

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Read the full case study

A leading ANZ beverage company, Asahi Beverages transformed its PMO to be more strategic by implementing Altus.

Over a three-year journey, Asahi standardised its project management processes and aligned both professional and informal project managers across the enterprise, using Altus as a single PPM tool. This provided uniform visibility into all projects and their contributions to business goals. The results were significant – improvements in efficiency, transparency, and governance, helping the PMO support Asahi's ongoing transformation and future business objectives.

Altus effectively gave Asahi's PMO the framework to track how projects were delivering value and where improvements were needed, elevating the PMO's role to that of a strategic business partner.

In summary, making the PMO more strategically-focused addresses several challenges: it clarifies the PMO's purpose to executives (building support), unifies stakeholders around common goals, and shifts conversations from project outputs to business outcomes. A PMO that can speak the language of strategic value is far less likely to be seen as bureaucratic overhead – it becomes a driver of competitive advantage.

Hybrid & adaptive delivery (Agile, Waterfall and beyond)

Modern PMOs are also reinventing how projects are managed by embracing hybrid and adaptive delivery approaches. Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all methodology – in 2026, most organisations employ a mix of traditional Waterfall projects, Agile initiatives, and operational work. The emerging best practice is for PMOs to support “both Agile and traditional projects side by side”, tailoring governance to each, rather than forcing a single rigid methodology. This hybrid approach acknowledges that not every team can be 100% Agile and not every project suits a Waterfall model – you need the right approach for the right context.

In addition to hybrid methodologies, PMOs must become adaptive in the face of constant change. Strategic plans can shift due to market conditions or internal pivots, so the PMO needs the agility to realign portfolios quickly. An “Adaptive PMO” continuously rebalances the project portfolio and reprioritises work as needed. This entails shorter planning cycles (e.g. quarterly reviews of project priorities) and a culture that can accommodate change without significant disruption.



Industry insight: *Leading organisations see enterprise agility as a must-have. Scaling Agile principles beyond IT into the wider enterprise (HR, Marketing, Operations, etc.) helps create a more responsive and collaborative culture. Companies adopting hybrid project management and adaptive portfolio practices report faster delivery times, better risk management, and higher stakeholder satisfaction. In fact, embracing hybrid models is considered essential for competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment.*



Utilities sector insight: Utilities PMOs face a unique balancing act. While agility is increasingly important for responding to regulatory or market changes, outage events, or new sustainability initiatives, utilities must also maintain strict auditability and traceability. Hybrid delivery models in utilities require robust governance frameworks that support rapid adaptation without compromising compliance or transparency. Successful utilities PMOs ensure that every change in project priorities or delivery approach can be clearly tracked and justified, meeting both operational needs and regulatory expectations.

Sensei's perspective: Sensei recognises that one process does not fit all work. Altus is designed to be methodology-agnostic and flexible. It supports hybrid project management by integrating with various execution tools and frameworks. Teams can manage some work using Agile tools (like Azure DevOps or Planner) and others in Microsoft Project or Excel – and Altus will unify the data into one portfolio view. *“Altus provides seamless schedule unification by integrating with your existing task and project management tools...allowing your people to work in the way they want while still gaining organisation-wide visibility into all work underway.”*

This means a PMO can oversee a mixed portfolio (projects, epics, operational tasks) in one place, respecting each team's preferred way of working but still enforcing overall standards and visibility.



“

Before adopting Altus with Sensei, it was difficult for project managers to not only control their initiatives, but also report up through the organisation. As we were using a variety of tools, including spreadsheets, we would spend a lot of time on reporting, sometimes in response to the different needs of different audiences.

Monica Geraghty, Manager PMO, Life Without Barriers

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Furthermore, Altus' flexibility helps PMOs adapt to change. Because all project data and status updates feed into a single source of truth, leadership can instantly see the impact of shifting priorities and make informed decisions. The platform supports scenario planning and quick re-prioritisation of the project backlog when strategy changes. **Case studies** show this in action:

- *Life Without Barriers (LWB)*, a large non-profit organisation, successfully navigated a changing work landscape by using Altus to accommodate all kinds of project contributors. LWB's PMO provided *"everyone from 'informal' project managers to seasoned professionals with a standardised platform"* for their initiatives. This meant that whether an effort was a small departmental task or a major enterprise project, it lived in Altus, and all stakeholders had a clear view of progress. The result was more complete and accurate information about work underway across operations, and a consistent flow of insights from project teams up to executives. In practice, LWB could mix agile and traditional efforts, and still have unified reporting – a hallmark of a hybrid-capable PMO.

[Read the case study](#)

- *Melbourne Airport* took advantage of an unexpected disruption (the COVID-19 pause in travel) to ramp up a digital transformation of its PMO technology. They replaced multiple disconnected tools with one integrated solution (Sensei's preferred platform, Altus) that spanned both enterprise projects and capital works programs. This one-stop solution allowed Melbourne Airport's PMO to be highly adaptive when aviation industry priorities shifted. With all project and portfolio data in one place, the PMO could rapidly adjust plans. In fact, with 100% adoption of Altus, the PMO gained a single source of truth to oversee all portfolios and projects, leading to *"greater visibility, control and value measurement."* Even as the mix of projects evolved (from growth initiatives to cost-saving projects, for example), the PMO retained full visibility and could guide the organisation's response effectively.

[Read the case study](#)

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS





Takeaway: Embracing hybrid and adaptive delivery directly tackles the challenges of inconsistent processes and shifting priorities. By meeting teams where they are (agile or waterfall) and connecting those efforts, the PMO reduces resistance to adoption – stakeholders can keep their familiar tools while the PMO gets the oversight it needs. And by building adaptability into portfolio management, the PMO ensures it can handle change at the speed of business, keeping it relevant and valuable even as conditions evolve.

Data-driven decision making & insights

In the era of AI and digital transformation, data is the PMO's lifeblood. Leading PMOs are heavily investing in capabilities to turn project data into actionable insights and automated workflows. This trend recognises that with the complexity of modern project portfolios, gut feeling is not enough – executives and PMO leaders need real-time, reliable metrics and lessons learned to make decisions.

What “data-driven PMO” means in practice:

It means having dashboards and reports that show portfolio status at a glance (and in depth), tracking KPIs like schedule performance, cost performance, resource utilisation, risk levels, and benefits realised. It also means establishing a single source of truth for project data – consolidating all project information (timelines, financials, risks, issues, etc.) in one system. Data silos and manual reporting via spreadsheets are being replaced by integrated PPM platforms that automatically collect and update data. Additionally, PMOs are focusing on data quality and governance, understanding that as AI and automation rise, the quality of decisions and the ability to augment work practices is only as good as the underlying data.

A data-driven approach helps PMOs address questions like:

- ✓ Which projects are at risk and why?
- ✓ Where are the resource bottlenecks?
- ✓ Are we investing in the right projects?
- ✓ What value are we getting from our project spend?

With strong data and analytics, a PMO can confidently answer these knowing they are guiding leadership with evidence-based recommendations.



Cross-industry insight: PMOs that harness data effectively can spot trends and predict issues faster. For example, analysing historical project data can reveal patterns that lead to overruns or delays, enabling proactive (and AI driven) intervention.

Organisations are increasingly leveraging business intelligence tools and analytics in portfolio management, integrating them into PPM processes. The payoff is better decision-making and increased stakeholder trust in the PMO's recommendations. In fact, the push for data-driven portfolios is so strong that having up-to-date, integrated data across all projects is considered a prerequisite for successful strategy execution.

Utilities sector insight: For utilities organisations, data-driven decision making is essential for balancing regulatory compliance, infrastructure management, and long-term planning. Utilities PMOs must consolidate data from capital works, maintenance, and compliance projects to provide a single source of truth for both operational and regulatory reporting. High-quality, integrated data enables utilities to more accurately forecast resource needs, track project outcomes, and demonstrate value to regulators and stakeholders. As AI and analytics become more embedded, utilities PMOs are better equipped to anticipate risks, optimise investments, and ensure transparency across all portfolios.

Sensei's perspective: At Sensei, data-driven PPM is a core principle. The Altus platform provides robust reporting and analytics out-of-the-box, powered by Microsoft's Power BI and the Microsoft Dataverse. By consolidating all project and work data into Dataverse (your secure M365 data storage), Altus ensures data sovereignty and a single source of truth. PMOs can then slice and dice this information any way they need. Altus comes with role-based dashboards and real-time views of all work underway, configurable to meet different stakeholders' needs. Executives might see a high-level portfolio health dashboard, while project managers see detailed status and risk reports. Altus is also AI enabled with Microsoft Copilot, future-proofing the PMO.





One of the greatest advantages Altus offers is transparency. With everyone managing projects on one platform, the data is instantly updated and visible. There's no waiting for weekly spreadsheets – a PMO leader can, at any moment, see which projects are off track or how the portfolio is performing against strategic targets. And importantly, because data is consistent and standardised (thanks to common processes enforced by the tool), it is trustworthy and fit for AI enablement. This elevates decision-making; as Sensei puts it, Altus “elevates decision making with trustworthy insights” for all levels of the organisation.

Case in point: As mentioned, by consolidating project information into Altus, *Melbourne Airport's PMO* achieved a single source of truth. This had an immediate impact on data-driven management: the PMO could produce comprehensive reports on all portfolios and projects, something that was nearly impossible when data was scattered across legacy tools. The newfound visibility and control allowed the PMO to demonstrate value (e.g., by showing improved time-to-deliver or better resource allocation) and make informed recommendations to the executive team. Essentially, the PMO moved from wrangling data to analysing and leveraging it.

Another example is *Life Without Barriers (LWB)*: With consistent data flowing from project teams to executives via Altus, LWB's leadership gained precise insights for decision-making. The PMO could identify trends like workload imbalances or project interdependencies quickly. According to LWB's PMO Manager, having a single, widely-used system meant they finally had *"a clear and precise flow of invaluable insights from project teams through to executive level."*

This reflects how data unification empowers better decisions at all levels – team leads can see what's happening in related projects, executives can see the big picture and AI can be deployed to automate triggers and recommendations with confidence.

In summary, data-driven PMOs address the challenge of demonstrating value and controlling outcomes. They replace guesswork with facts, enabling proactive management. By investing in integrated tools and dashboards, a PMO builds credibility – it becomes the go-to source for business intelligence on how the organisation's strategic initiatives are progressing.



[Read Melbourne Airport Story](#)

[Read LWB Story](#)



Unified PPM platforms & tool integration

Hand-in-hand with data focus is the trend of moving to unified PPM platforms. PMOs in 2026 are retiring piecemeal tools in favor of a single, integrated project portfolio management system that can handle end-to-end needs – from project intake, through execution, to reporting and closure. The rationale is simple: If all project information and workflows live in one ecosystem, you eliminate the inefficiencies and errors that come with duplicate data entry and system hopping and are set-up to take advantage of AI enablement.



Integration trumps all. Modern PPM platforms don't exist in isolation; they are designed to integrate with the broader enterprise IT landscape. This includes connecting with financial systems (for budget tracking), HR systems (for resource availability), collaboration tools like Teams or Slack, and specialised apps (like DevOps, CRM, etc.) as well as chosen AI platforms. The trend is towards an ecosystem approach: the PPM tool acts as the hub that pulls relevant information from, and pushes updates to, other systems, so everyone – from project managers to finance analysts – stays in sync.



Why is this so crucial now?

Because many organisations discovered that when they had multiple disjointed tools, project data was fragmented and hard to control. Decisions suffered and PMOs wasted time reconciling information. By integrating tools, organisations improve productivity (less manual data wrangling) and get a comprehensive view of projects and portfolios. Moreover, team members can work in their tool of choice (for example, developers in Jira, project managers in a PPM app) without the data getting lost – integration brings it all together.



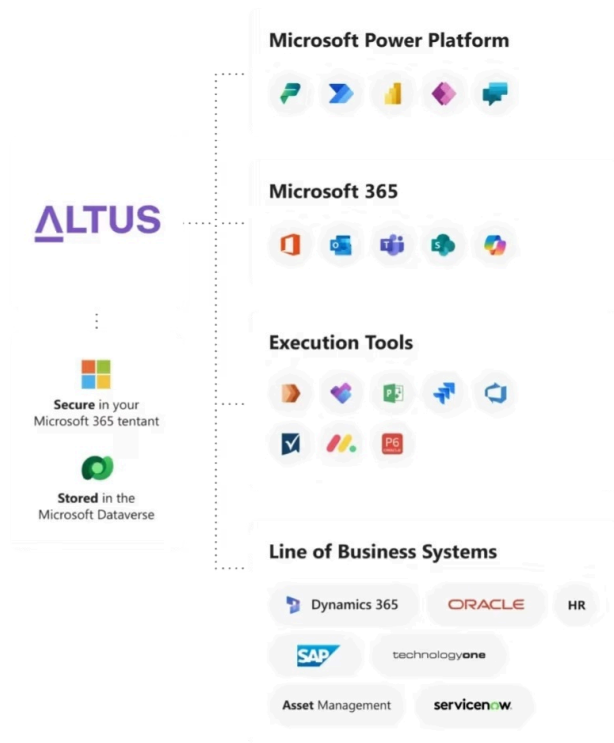
Cross-industry insight: A top trend identified for 2026 is the integration of PPM tools with enterprise systems. Companies are realising that a siloed approach to project management tools leads to “absolute mess” and poor visibility. By contrast, integrating as much as possible into one platform (or tightly connected platforms) yields better tracking, less duplication, and more reliable data for decision-making. This integration also drives efficiency and reduces errors – teams spend less time entering data in multiple places and more time delivering value. A consolidated ecosystem also powers effective AI enablement, with the selected tools accessing full sets of information to power automated processes and provide accurate insights.

Utilities sector insight: Utilities organisations manage a unique mix of capital works, operational and transformation projects, and compliance initiatives, often in parallel. For utilities PMOs, a unified PPM platform is essential to maintain visibility and control across these diverse portfolios. Integration enables utilities to track long-term infrastructure upgrades, transformation programs, day-to-day operations, and regulatory reporting requirements on a single platform. This holistic view supports better decision-making, ensures compliance, and helps utilities respond quickly to both planned and unexpected events.

Sensei's perspective: Sensei's preferred PPM platform, Altus, is a prime example of this unified approach. Altus is built on the Microsoft Power Platform. It natively connects with Microsoft 365 apps (Teams, Outlook, Excel, etc.) and the Power BI / Power Automate suite and has native integrations with MS Project Desktop, Planner and Planner Premium, providing organisation-wide schedule unification, regardless of the originating tool. It's also capable of integrating with external systems through its open architecture. Altus is designed so that clients can consolidate all project portfolio activities in one solution but still leverage their existing enterprise tools.

For instance, Altus can integrate with a finance system to import actuals or export budget forecasts, ensuring project financials are always up to date without manual effort. It can sync with Azure DevOps or Jira to pull in work items from Agile teams, so the PMO has visibility on progress without forcing those teams to switch tools. On top of that, because Altus is cloud-based and constantly updated, clients automatically get new features and improvements (much like Microsoft 365's continuous updates), meaning the platform keeps evolving with industry best practices.

A concrete feature that highlights Altus' integration strength is "Altus schedule unification." As mentioned earlier, Altus allows different scheduling tools to feed into one plan. So, a portfolio could include traditional Gantt-chart projects from Microsoft Project desktop, lightweight tasks from Planner, and user stories from DevOps – all integrated. This not only supports hybrid methodologies (Trend #2 above), but also ensures no work falls through the cracks. Everyone sees the full picture and schedules can be accessed from the Altus platform across the organisation.





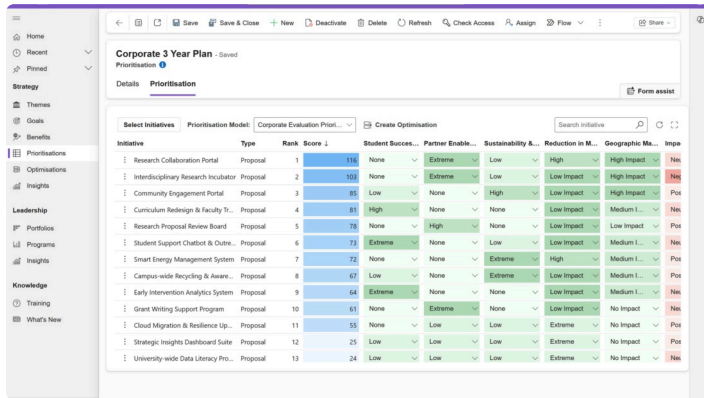
ALTUS

A modern PPM solution

Altus in action: Several Sensei clients benefit from this unified platform approach.

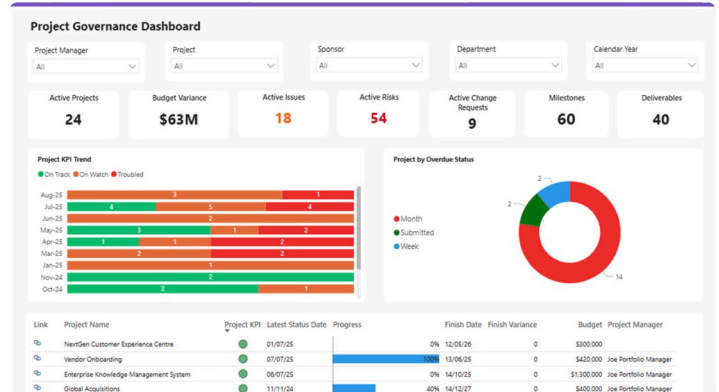
Melbourne Airport

Melbourne Airport moved to Altus specifically to replace “multiple disconnected legacy tools” with a one-stop solution. By integrating project data and tying Altus into their Office 365 ecosystem, they drastically reduced manual reporting overhead. The integration with the airport’s finance system meant that as project managers updated their forecasts in Altus, the finance team could trust that data – they weren’t chasing spreadsheets anymore. The PMO could also easily collaborate with other departments via Teams integration, sharing project dashboards that were always up to date. The end result was a PMO that operates much more efficiently and provides a higher level of service to the organisation. *Instead of being seen as an administrative burden, the PMO (with Altus) became an information powerhouse.*



Asahi Beverages

Asahi Beverages leveraged Altus’s seamless integration with Microsoft’s 365 platform during its rollout. Altus being a Power Platform solution meant Asahi’s IT treated it as an extension to their existing tech stack, not a foreign system – easing usage and adoption. Data from Asahi’s projects across different business units all flowed into Altus, giving a holistic view that was not possible before. By uniting professional and “citizen” project managers on one tool, Asahi addressed the complexity in its operations and achieved standardised governance at scale. This unity is a direct outcome of having a single integrated PPM platform that fits into the enterprise architecture.



Align work to strategy and people to purpose to achieve your strategic goals with Altus, a best practice portfolio and project management solution built on Microsoft 365.

[Let's talk](#)

[Learn more](#)

For PMOs, moving to an integrated platform like Altus solves the “technology silos” challenge head-on. It reduces the time spent on low-value tasks (copy-pasting data, reconciling reports) and increases the time spent on analysis and strategic work. It also improves data accuracy (one system of record) and team collaboration (everyone accessing information from the same place). In 2026 and beyond, a unified PPM platform isn’t just nice-to-have – it’s becoming the foundation for any PMO that wants to operate efficiently and transparently.

Resource management & capacity planning in a hybrid world

Another critical focus area for PMOs in 2026 is resource management – ensuring the right people are on the right projects at the right time.

This has always been a PMO concern, but it's intensified with the rise of hybrid work environments, distributed teams, and heightened competition for skilled talent. The trend is toward more sophisticated resource planning and capacity management practices within the PMO.

Key elements of this trend include: Capacity planning – forecasting future resource needs against upcoming demand; Resource optimisation – dynamically reallocating or smoothing resources to avoid overload or underutilisation; and Talent flexibility – leveraging contractors or cross-functional teams as needed. PMOs are implementing regular resource planning cycles, using tools to visualise resource allocation (e.g., heat maps showing who is overbooked or free), and scenario modelling (what-if analyses to see the impact of taking on a new project given current capacity).

The hybrid work reality (with people working remotely, or teams spread across locations) adds another layer – PMOs need systems to track availability and performance without everyone in one location. This often means relying on digital tools and clear processes to manage resources.



Cross-industry insight: *Efficient resource management is linked to project success and faster delivery. By introducing capacity planning, organisations can detect resource gaps early and avoid committing to more projects than their teams can handle or can recruit resources in the right timeframes to meet upcoming demand. There's also a financial and personal angle: optimising resource usage can reduce the need for expensive contractors by leveling workloads and more importantly, team satisfaction increases, with the right resources allocated to the right work at the correct capacity – preventing burnout and correctly using limited, in-demand or specialist team members. Modern PPM solutions increasingly provide features like resource forecasting, skills management, and even AI-driven recommendations for resource allocation (more on AI in the next section). The goal is to make sure human capital is utilised in the most value-adding way with an associated increase in work satisfaction.*



Utilities sector insight: Resource management is especially complex for utilities organisations. Water and energy utilities often operate with fixed budget cycles, skills shortages, and a need for specialist talent to maintain critical infrastructure. These constraints make it challenging to allocate resources efficiently across capital works, operational projects, transformation programs, and compliance initiatives. A unified approach to resource planning helps utilities PMOs balance the demands of long-term transformation and infrastructure requirements with day-to-day operations, ensuring that priority projects are staffed appropriately while meeting regulatory and reliability obligations.

Sensei's perspective: Sensei understands that people are the magic ingredient in project success, so Altus places a big emphasis on resource management capabilities. In Altus, a PMO can get a complete picture of resource allocation across all projects – who is working on what, and when their capacity is free or maxed out. The platform offers interactive resource heatmaps and dashboards to highlight overallocation or underallocation at a glance. It also supports forward planning, allowing resource managers to plan allocations months in advance, providing team members with more certainty about upcoming work, and adjust as new work comes in. Resource requests are also managed end-to-end in Altus. Project Managers can request resources directly in Altus and Resource Managers can action these requests and allocate and approve resourcing with full visibility of current and future resource allocations.

Crucially, Altus includes features for demand management integrated with resource planning. For example, when new project ideas enter the pipeline, the PMO or Resource Manager can assess if resources are available in the coming quarter before approving them. Altus can model different scenarios (like, “What if we delay Project X by one month – does that free enough capacity to start Project Y?”) similar to the what-if analyses recommended by PPM experts. By doing this in one system, the PMO can balance workloads and avoid burnout or hiring sprees.

Another aspect Altus covers is time tracking and approvals. Team members can complete timesheets directly in Altus, and managers can approve them there. This provides actual effort data that feeds back into planning and budget management – allocating costs against projects and helping refine how much effort future tasks will likely need, and where efficiencies can be found.



Real-world example – Sensei clients: Many Sensei clients have improved resource management through Altus:

- *The Department of Customer Service, a large NSW government agency, faced the challenge of coordinating thousands of staff across dozens of areas. After adopting Altus, they gained visibility into resource allocation across their large project portfolio, helping them prioritise projects and assign staff more effectively. While specific details are proprietary, the case study notes that an integrated PPM solution was key in uniting previously siloed teams and demand streams. Essentially, by centralising project and resource data, the department could better match capacity to incoming demand and ensure critical projects had the people they needed to deliver on key government programs of work.*

[Read the case study](#)





"There has been a strong uptake of Altus across the Department, with approximately 2,800 users and counting. The platform's user-friendliness and intuitiveness is one of the main reasons behind its rapid adoption."

Colin Munro, Project Manager, NSW Department of Customer Service

[See case study](#)

For PMOs, excelling in resource management solves multiple pain points: it addresses stakeholder frustration when “my project doesn’t get resources” by bringing fairness and transparency; it alleviates team burnout by preventing over-allocation; manages correct allocation of specialist resources; and it ties directly to strategic alignment by ensuring the most important projects have the right talent when needed. In 2026, PMOs that master capacity planning will have a definite edge in delivering value because they can confidently take on new projects knowing the workforce is prepared.



Operationalising Artificial Intelligence (AI) in PPM



By 2026, AI adoption is shifting from experimentation to embedded decision and operations support. Sectors such as utilities are using AI for scenario modelling, regulatory reporting support, and infrastructure management and optimisation, while maintaining strong human oversight.

There are several promising AI use cases in the PMO/PPM context:



Predictive analytics

AI can analyse historical project data and current trends to forecast outcomes. For example, it might predict that a project is likely to slip its deadline based on early indicators (task completion rates, team velocity, etc.), allowing the PMO to intervene proactively. Predictive models can also estimate project costs or resource needs with greater accuracy by learning from past projects.



Resource optimisation

AI algorithms can suggest the optimal assignment of resources to projects, considering skills, availability, and past performance. This goes beyond simple resource leveling, looking for patterns that maximise efficiency (for instance, which combinations of team members have historically been most productive on certain types of projects).



Natural language processing (NLP) & chatbots

Imagine a project team member could ask a chatbot, "What's the status of Project X?" and get an instant answer from the PPM system, or a PMO analyst could quickly query, "List high-risk projects in the Retail portfolio." These conveniences are increasingly possible with AI that understands queries and fetches insights.



Risk identification and mitigation

Rather than relying solely on manual risk registers, AI can scan project data to flag potential risks (such as scope creep signs, or unusually high workload on a key individual). Some advanced tools provide recommendations for risk mitigation based on what has worked on similar projects in the past.



Automation of routine tasks

AI-powered assistants or bots can take over time-consuming PMO tasks like updating schedules, sending out reminders, or generating status reports. This not only saves time but can also improve consistency (less human error).



Intelligent insights & recommendations

Perhaps the most transformative aspect is AI's ability to uncover non-obvious insights. For example, AI might identify that projects using a certain vendor tend to run 20% late, flagging a strategic risk to address. Or it might recommend prioritising Project A over Project B because it foresees a higher ROI based on various data points.



Cross-industry insight: Experts note that AI is here to stay in project management, and its adoption is accelerating. PMOs using AI report significant time savings and better foresight into project outcomes. A survey of trends indicates that more and more PPM solutions are integrating AI features directly into their platforms. This means PMOs don't have to develop their own AI from scratch, they can leverage what's built into modern tools. However, a balanced view is also emerging: organisations are advised to start small with AI, allow teams to experiment, and gradually incorporate AI into processes. This "play time" with AI helps in change management – teams learn and trust the AI by seeing it in action on lower-risk tasks first.

Utilities sector insight: Utilities PMOs are leveraging AI to support regulatory submissions, optimise constrained resources, and model complex trade-offs across reliability, cost, and sustainability objectives. Critically, AI is positioned as augmented intelligence, supporting human decision-makers with transparent, explainable recommendations.

Sensei's perspective: Sensei is at the forefront of bringing practical AI capabilities to PPM. Altus leverages Microsoft's cutting-edge AI via Microsoft 365 Copilot and the Power Platform's AI features to embed intelligence into the PPM process. Concretely, Altus with Microsoft Copilot can *"harness the power of AI to streamline work, reporting, project set-up and risk management."*

In other words, many of the AI use cases described above are becoming a reality in Altus:



AI assistant for reporting

Copilot can draft project status reports or create project charters based on the data already in Altus, saving project managers considerable time. The PMO can then review and finalise these, rather than starting from scratch each week or month.

Predictive schedule and budget insights

By analysing historical project data (which Altus accumulates in Dataverse), AI can warn if a new project's schedule looks aggressive or if budget burn rates indicate a likely overrun. These insights might appear as alerts in Altus dashboards, helping PMO analysts focus on trouble spots early.

Risk suggestions

When a project's data in Altus shows certain patterns (like many tasks slipping, or team underperformance), AI can suggest that the PM consider specific risks. It might even auto-populate a risk with a recommended mitigation plan drawn from past successful projects.

Intelligent workflows

Through Power Automate, Altus can incorporate AI decisions in workflows. For example, an AI model could prioritise incoming project requests by analysing their strategic keywords or past similar proposals' success, then auto-route high-value proposals for immediate review.



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Are you ready to future-proof your PMO? Now is the time to take the next step. We invite you to reach out to Sensei for a conversation about your PMO's goals and challenges. Our team can help assess your current state and map out a tailored journey towards a high-performing, value driving PMO. We can also arrange a personalised walk through of the Altus platform, so you can see firsthand how it empowers PMOs with best-practice solutions – from strategic portfolio management to AI-driven project insights.

[Let's talk](#)





It's worth noting that Sensei's approach to AI is very much augmented intelligence – AI tools assist and enhance the PMO and project managers, but human oversight remains crucial. Sensei often advises clients to pilot AI features on a small scale, like using Copilot to draft one project status report and comparing it with the human-written version, to build confidence and calibrate the outputs.

Future outlook: As AI technology matures, we can expect even more advanced capabilities in Altus and other platforms. Imagine an AI that can dynamically re-prioritise the portfolio in real-time as conditions change, or an AI that can match people to projects not just on availability but also on growth opportunities and career development (a kind of AI-driven resource mentoring). While these are on the horizon, even today's AI features are delivering real benefits.

For PMOs, embracing AI addresses multiple traditional headaches: it automates grunt work, freeing PMO staff to focus on strategy, delivery and stakeholder engagement; it improves forecast accuracy and risk control by catching issues people might miss; and it provides a competitive edge in delivering projects faster and more reliably. The PMO that effectively uses AI becomes more proactive and efficient – moving from being reactive (reporting what happened) to predictive (suggesting what will happen and how to optimise outcomes).

Of course, adopting AI also requires the PMO to ensure data quality (garbage in, garbage out) and to manage change (training the team to work with AI tools). But the trend is unmistakable: AI-augmented PMOs are set to outperform those that ignore these tools. Sensei's Altus ensures that as you step into this new world, you have AI capabilities at your fingertips, integrated with the familiar Microsoft environment your teams already use.

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Conclusion: The way forward – transforming your PMO for 2026 and beyond

Conclusion

The project management landscape in 2026 presents both formidable challenges and exciting opportunities for PMOs. To recap, PMOs must overcome issues of stakeholder alignment, prove their strategic value, adapt to new ways of working, break down data silos, and do more with their resources. Fortunately, the trends we've discussed – from becoming a strategy-first PMO, embracing hybrid delivery, leveraging data and integrated platforms, to harnessing AI – provide a roadmap for success. These trends are not just predictions; they are practical shifts that forward-thinking PMOs are implementing *today* to deliver greater impact tomorrow. For water and energy utilities, these shifts are particularly important given long-term capital and transformation programs, increasing regulatory scrutiny and ongoing pressure to deliver reliable services with constrained resources.

The common thread across all these trends is transformation. A traditional PMO that remains static (focused only on reporting and enforcing compliance) risks fading into irrelevance. In contrast, a PMO that transforms itself into an agile, tech-savvy, business-focused unit becomes an invaluable asset to the organisation. It's no coincidence that many of the trends involve technology solutions – the right tools are catalysts for change, enabling new processes and insights that simply weren't possible with manual methods or old software.

This is where Sensei can be your trusted partner. With deep expertise in PPM and a proven track record in helping PMOs succeed, Sensei offers both the guidance and the technology needed for this transformation. Whether you need to realign your PMO strategy, train your team in new practices, or implement a cutting-edge platform like Altus to underpin your processes, Sensei has the know-how to support you. Our clients' successes – from Asahi to Melbourne Airport and hundreds of others – show that with the right approach and tools, PMOs can indeed become innovation and value-delivery engines.





Author's bio

Ryan Darby is a PPM AI Solution Specialist at Sensei, specialising in the integration of Artificial Intelligence within Project Portfolio Management (PPM) to drive more efficient and strategic project delivery. With a strong focus on enhancing traditional PMO practices through emerging technologies, Ryan explores how AI can automate repetitive tasks, optimise reporting, and support better decision-making. He actively contributes to industry discussions, including recent panels with PMI Queensland, and regularly shares insights on the future of project management in an AI-driven world.

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Get in touch

We would love to hear from you to see how we can help.

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 1300 SENSEI

 letschat@sensei.cloud

 www.sensei.cloud

 LinkedIn

Sensei