Innovation Portfolio Management and Stage-Gate Governance for Executives

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Technical depth: Conceptual · **Practical mode:** Case study

Introduction

Innovation budgets are frequently spread across too many projects, weighted towards safe incremental work and reviewed in meetings that rarely stop anything. Leadership then lacks a clear view of whether the portfolio will deliver the growth the strategy requires. This Core Concept course equips executives to govern innovation as an investment portfolio: setting strategic balance, making disciplined Stage-Gate decisions and reallocating resources as evidence changes. Through cross-sector cases, participants develop an Innovation Portfolio Governance Charter defining balance targets, gate criteria, decision rights and review cadence.

Course Objectives

- Evaluate the balance and strategic alignment of an innovation portfolio across horizons and risk levels
- Set portfolio allocation targets using the Three Horizons Model and the Innovation Ambition Matrix
- Direct Stage-Gate and Agile-Stage-Gate processes with gate criteria that support clear go, kill, hold or recycle decisions
- Judge project value and uncertainty using expected commercial value, real options and risk-reward views
- Establish portfolio governance, decision rights and review cadence aligned to ISO 56001
- Approve an Innovation Portfolio Governance Charter for their own organisation

Target Audience

- Executives accountable for innovation, strategy and growth investment decisions
- Members of investment, innovation or portfolio steering committees
- Senior leaders directing research, product and service development functions
- Business unit leaders balancing core performance with new growth
- Senior finance leaders who allocate and review innovation funding
- Strategy and transformation office leaders overseeing enterprise portfolios

Course Outline

Day 1: Innovation Portfolio Context and Current Position

- Portfolio Management Versus Project Management: Executive Responsibilities
- Three Horizons Model for Growth Planning
- Innovation Ambition Matrix and the Core, Adjacent and Transformational Split
- Current Portfolio Health Review: Project Count, Spend and Horizon Mix
- Strategic Buckets for Top-Down Resource Allocation

Day 2: Stage-Gate and Portfolio Governance Frameworks

- Cooper's Stage-Gate Model: Stages, Gates and Gatekeepers
- Agile-Stage-Gate Hybrid for High-Uncertainty Projects
- ISO 56001 Leadership and Operation Requirements Applied to the Portfolio
- Management of Portfolios MoP Principles and Practices
- Lean Portfolio Management and Metered Funding

Day 3: Portfolio Decisions and Valuation

- Gate Criteria Design: Must-Meet Knockouts and Should-Meet Scoring
- Expected Commercial Value and Productivity Index Ranking
- Real Options Thinking for Staged Investment
- Risk-Reward Bubble Diagram Interpretation
- Go, Kill, Hold and Recycle Decision Protocol for Gate Meetings

Day 4: Portfolio Risks, Bias and Optimisation

- Sunk-Cost, Optimism and Escalation-of-Commitment Bias in Gate Decisions
- Zombie Project Identification and Portfolio Pruning
- Resource Capacity Constraints and Pipeline Gridlock Analysis
- Portfolio Performance Indicators Using ISO 56008 Guidance
- Portfolio Rebalancing Scenarios and Reallocation Triggers

Day 5: Executive Case Work and the Governance Charter

- Consumer Goods Pipeline Case Study: Pruning an Overloaded Portfolio
- Energy Company Case Study: Balancing Core and Transformational Bets
- Executive Portfolio Dashboard Specification
- Innovation Portfolio Governance Charter Drafting
- Executive Panel Review and Charter Defence

Skills You Will Gain

- Portfolio Governance
- Strategic Resource Allocation
- Innovation Investment Judgement
- Gate Decision-Making
- Uncertainty Assessment
- Portfolio Rebalancing
- Executive Oversight of Innovation

Why Attend This Course

- Return with an Innovation Portfolio Governance Charter ready for adoption by an investment or steering committee
- Stop funding projects that no longer justify investment and redirect resources to stronger opportunities
- Ask the questions at gate meetings that expose weak evidence and optimistic forecasts
- Compare portfolio governance practice with executives from other sectors and countries

Conclusion

A well-governed innovation portfolio turns strategy into a deliberate set of bets that leadership can see, steer and rebalance. This course moves from portfolio context and allocation models, through Stage-Gate and portfolio governance frameworks, to valuation, gate decisions and the biases that keep weak projects alive. The final day applies that material to cross-sector cases and produces an Innovation Portfolio Governance Charter that participants take to their steering committee as the basis for disciplined innovation investment.