

ALLEX

# Project Online 2026 Sunset Survival Guide

What PMOs in Manufacturing, Aerospace & Complex Multi-Project Environments Must Know Before  
September 30, 2026

**Don't just migrate, modernize.**

Preserve your portfolio visibility, resource control, and custom workflows while gaining the scalability your operations demand.

# Executive Summary

Microsoft Project Online (the cloud-based service many organizations rely on for centralized portfolios, cross-project resource management, and enterprise scheduling) will retire on September 30, 2026. After that date, your Project Web App (PWA) sites, projects, portfolios, resource data, baselines, custom fields, calendars, and workflows will become permanently inaccessible. Microsoft will not provide data recovery.

## KEY FACTS

- ▶ Desktop Microsoft Project (2024 edition) remains fully supported and available for purchase/use.
- ▶ Project for the Web has been merged into the new unified Microsoft Planner (Planner Premium adds features via Power Platform).
- ▶ Project Server Subscription Edition continues as an on-premises/self-hosted option.

PMOs in manufacturing, aerospace, and other complex multi-project environments are actively discussing this shift. Common concerns include keeping portfolio-level integration, maintaining robust resource management across concurrent projects, preserving custom calendars and workflows, and avoiding tools that feel “too basic” for enterprise needs.

## This guide covers

- The confirmed retirement timeline and real implications for your data and operations
- Why Planner and many lightweight alternatives fall short for complex environments
- The 5 most common hidden risks reported by PMOs in similar situations
- A practical 90-day migration playbook focused on preserving what matters most
- How to turn this deadline into a strategic opportunity

*September 30, 2026 is a hard deadline. Treating it only as a tool replacement risks losing the control you've built. Use this guide to migrate thoughtfully and modernize.*

# The Facts

HARD CUTOFF · SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

## Project Online (cloud/PWA) becomes completely inaccessible.

Any projects, portfolios, or data stored only in the online environment will be lost if not exported before then.

### STAYS AVAILABLE

#### What you can still rely on

- Desktop Project client continues to work and is still supported.
- Project Server Subscription Edition is still available (on-premises, requires self-hosting SharePoint + SQL).

### BEING RETIRED

#### Just the cloud service, not Project itself

This is not the end of Microsoft Project overall. It is specifically the cloud service (Project Online) that is being retired. Many PMOs have noted confusion in news and search results that mix these up.

# What PMOs Are Actually Saying Right Now

Industry conversations show teams hunting for solutions that maintain:

- Portfolio and enterprise project portfolio (EPP) integration
- Robust resource management across concurrent projects
- Custom calendars and workflows without heavy reconfiguration

## Consistent themes

- Teams want to retain the enterprise capabilities built in Project Online: portfolio integration, cross-project resource management, and custom calendars/workflows.
- Planner (even with Premium features) is often described as missing the depth needed for rigorous, large-scale multi-project work.

## Why this matters for your industries

Aerospace, manufacturing, and regulated multi-project operations require rigorous scheduling, resource leveling across shared pools, baselines, and traceability. Lightweight tools often work well for simpler task management but fall short when scale, dependencies, and compliance are non-negotiable.

## Common feedback

- “Project for the Web feels too basic, missing those enterprise features we need.”
- Planner Premium + Power Platform patches help for some scenarios but often lack the depth for rigorous scheduling, baselines, constraints, and cross-project visibility.
- On-premises Project Server offers near-identical experience for those wanting minimal change, but hosting and maintenance can be unattractive.
- Other tools (Smartsheet, Asana, Monday.com, etc.) are praised for ease in lighter use cases but frequently criticized for cost creep, weak admin interfaces, incomplete backups, or insufficient handling of enterprise-scale hierarchies, dependencies, and resource leveling.

One PMO lead summed it up: many have tried the first 20 alternatives and found Asana great for tasks but “nowhere near MS Project Online” for full portfolio and resource needs.

# Project Online vs. Planner vs. Alex.ai

REQUIREMENT	MS PROJECT ONLINE	MS PLANNER / PLANNER PREMIUM	ALEX.AI
<b>PORTFOLIO &amp; VISIBILITY</b>			
<b>Multi-project portfolio visibility</b>	<b>Strong</b> Cross-project dashboards and PWA portfolio views.	<b>Limited</b> Portfolio dashboards exist at Plan 3/5 but fields are view-only, status must be set manually, and Project Online projects cannot be connected.	<b>Enterprise-grade</b> Real-time portfolio overview across all concurrent projects with early bottleneck detection.
<b>What-if / scenario planning</b>	<b>Yes</b> Portfolio analysis and scenario comparisons.	<b>High-level only</b> Plan 5 offers portfolio scenario comparison against strategic drivers; no granular schedule-level what-if simulation.	<b>Advanced</b> AI-supported simulations and bottleneck impact analysis across the portfolio.
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>			
<b>Cross-project resource management</b>	<b>Strong</b> Enterprise resource pools and leveling across projects.	<b>Not available natively</b> People view shows workload per plan only; native cross-project resource pool tracking is not yet delivered even at Plan 5.	<b>Dynamic</b> Real-time capacity planning with workload visibility across all projects simultaneously.
<b>SCHEDULING &amp; CONTROL</b>			
<b>Advanced scheduling &amp; critical path</b>	<b>Strong</b> Full Gantt, dependencies, constraints, baselines.	<b>Tiered</b> Dependencies, timeline, and critical path from Plan 1+; baselines require Plan 3+. Cross-project critical path not available.	<b>Full</b> Gantt, dependency management, and CCPM-based critical chain support.
<b>Custom calendars &amp; workflows</b>	<b>Enterprise-grade</b> Highly configurable enterprise working-time calendars and workflows.	<b>Plan-level only</b> Per-plan custom work week calendars available; custom fields from Plan 1; Power Automate workflows at Plan 3. No enterprise-wide resource calendars.	<b>Configurable</b> Configurable to operational and industrial needs.
<b>Compliance &amp; audit traceability</b>	<b>Good</b> With proper configuration.	<b>Basic</b> Task history available at Plan 1+; inherits Microsoft 365 enterprise compliance and data residency standards.	<b>Built-in</b> Designed for regulated environments with transparent resource and schedule traceability.
<b>AI &amp; AUTOMATION</b>			

**AI-assisted planning & automation**

**Minimal**  
Largely manual scheduling.

**Preview / add-on**  
Copilot in Planner and Project Manager Agent exist but are in preview and require a separate Microsoft 365 Copilot license on top of any Planner plan.

**Core feature**  
Automated re-planning, early warning indicators, and AI-driven resource allocation built in.

**MIGRATION & FIT**

**Methodology support**

**Primarily Waterfall**  
Primarily Waterfall.

**Waterfall + Agile**  
Sprints and backlogs at Plan 1+; Gantt/ Waterfall scheduling at premium tiers.

**Multi-methodology**  
Agile, Waterfall, CCPM, and Lean in one platform.

**MS Project (.MPP) import**

**Native**  
Native.

**Via Power App only**  
Not available in the standard Planner interface; requires the Planner Power App.

**Supported**  
Direct import to ease migration from Project Online.

**Future-proof**

**End of life**  
Sept 30, 2026.

**Stated successor**  
Microsoft's stated successor - actively developed but significant enterprise gaps remain vs. Project Online.

**Purpose-built**  
Cloud-native, built for industrial multi-project scale.

# 5 Hidden Risks When Migrating from Project Online

Directly from PMO conversations:

1

## Loss of Portfolio & Resource Visibility

Fragmented views across projects lead to overallocation and delayed decisions.

2

## Broken Custom Elements

Calendars, workflows, and custom fields that don't migrate cleanly, forcing rework.

3

## Compliance & Schedule Rigor Gaps

Difficulty maintaining baselines, constraints, and audit-ready traceability.

4

## Adoption Friction & Shadow Tools

Teams reverting to Excel or disconnected systems when the new tool feels too basic or too complex.

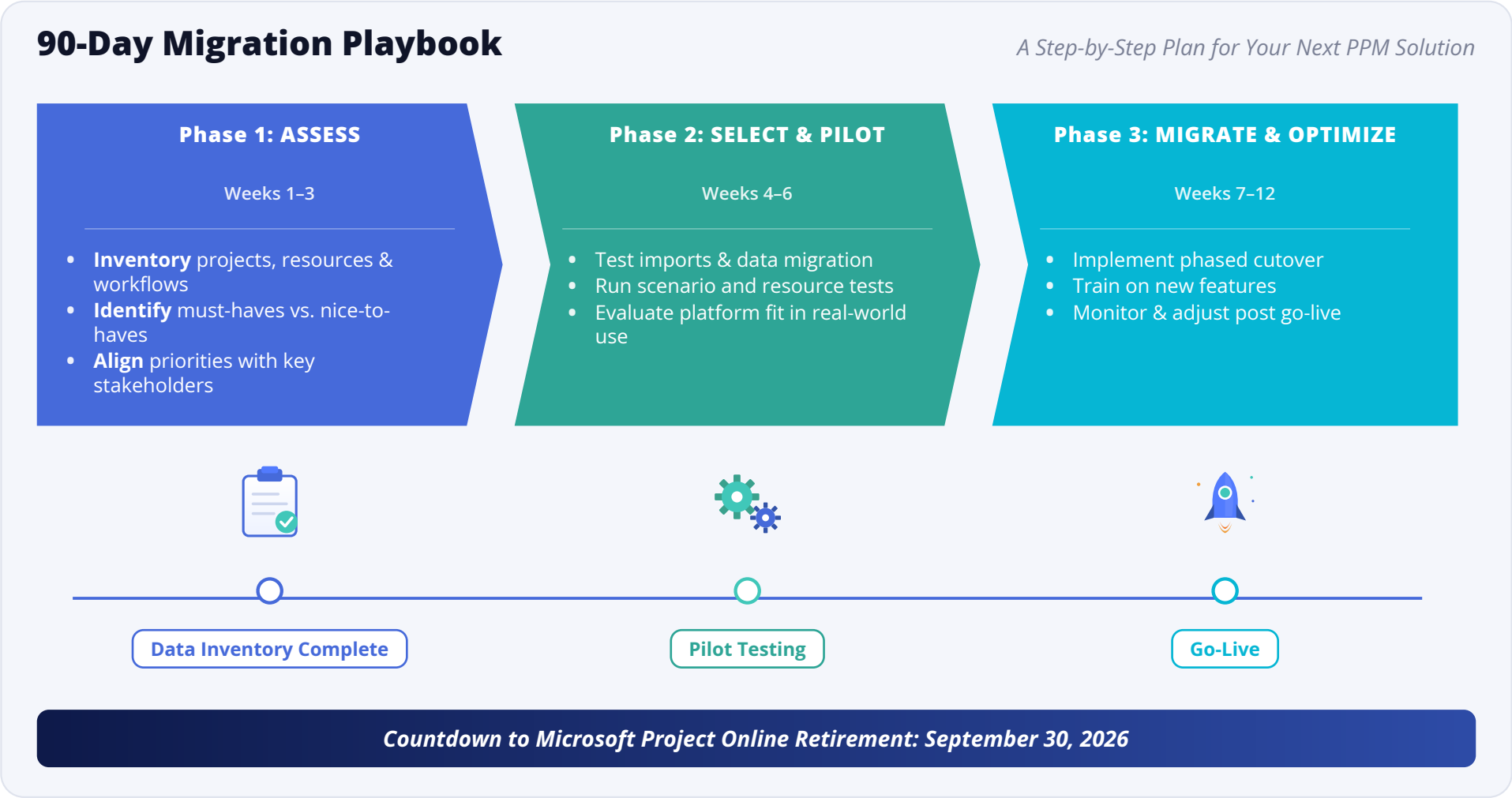
5

## Cost & Future-Proofing Regret

Choosing a stop-gap (or expensive "light" tool with rising fees) that requires another migration later.

# Practical 90-Day Migration Playbook

The September 30, 2026 retirement of Project Online gives you a clear window to plan and execute a thoughtful migration. This 90-day playbook is designed specifically for complex multi-project environments in manufacturing, aerospace, and similar industries.



# Phase Details

## PHASE 1 · WEEKS 1-3

### Assess

*Take stock of your current environment.*

- Inventory all active and historical projects, portfolios, resource pools, custom fields, calendars, and workflows.
- Map your must-have features (e.g., cross-project resource leveling, portfolio oversight) against nice-to-haves.
- Engage key stakeholders early: operations, resource managers, finance, and compliance teams.

**Prevents surprises later and ensures the new platform addresses your real operational needs.**

## PHASE 2 · WEEKS 4-6

### Select & Pilot

*Narrow your options with real testing.*

- Export sample data from Project Online (including .MPP files) and test how well it imports into shortlisted tools.
- Prioritize platforms with strong import capabilities and native support for cross-project resources, portfolios, and what-if scenario modeling.
- Run practical scenarios: resource leveling across shared pools, dependency impact analysis, and calendar/workflow recreation.

**Validate the tool can handle the scale and rigor your programs demand, not just basic task management.**

## PHASE 3 · WEEKS 7-12

### Migrate & Optimize

*Execute the transition with minimal downtime.*

- Implement a phased cutover, running the old and new systems in parallel where possible.
- Focus training on new capabilities, such as improved visibility, real-time insights, or AI-supported features that reduce manual effort.
- Monitor resource capacity, portfolio health, and project performance closely in the first weeks after go-live. Adjust as needed.

### Pro Tips from PMOs in the Field

- Map calendars, dependency rules, and reporting needs first, don't just migrate tasks.
- Choose solutions designed for multi-project harmony rather than forcing one tool to do everything.
- Look for platforms that reduce bottlenecks, improve predictability, and deliver value without adding unnecessary complexity or bloat.

# The Opportunity

Done strategically, this transition lets you preserve the portfolio visibility, resource control, and workflow rigor you rely on today while gaining modern scalability suited to complex, multi-project industrial operations.

Many organizations in manufacturing and aerospace are using this moment to move to platforms specifically built for multi-project harmony, shared resources, and early bottleneck detection without adding unnecessary bloat.

## Why Consider Alex.ai as Your Modern Target Platform

Alex.ai is purpose-built for exactly the environments hit hardest by the Project Online retirement: manufacturing, aerospace, and other high-complexity multi-project settings with shared resources and strict operational demands. Unlike lightweight tools that feel too basic or patched-together solutions that require heavy customization, Alex.ai delivers the four capabilities below.

### Harmonized planning

Projects, resources, and tasks in one platform, giving you a sweeping overview of who does what, where, and when.

### Real-time portfolio visibility

Capacity planning across multiple concurrent projects, with early detection of bottlenecks and impact analysis on shared resources.

### Dependable predictability

Transparent resource and portfolio views, AI-supported insights for dynamic adjustments, and reduced reliance on fragmented reporting.

### Smooth migration path

Strong support for importing from Microsoft Project environments, while preserving the control and rigor you need without legacy bloat.

Many organizations in your space are using this forced migration as the moment to move to a cloud-native platform designed from the ground up for industrial-scale multi-project management. Alex.ai helps you modernize while minimizing disruption: faster resource optimization, clearer portfolio decisions, and accelerated delivery, all while maintaining compliance and traceability.

# Every week you wait is a week less to do this right.

## NEXT STEP

Book your free 30-minute comparison call now. We'll scope your environment, answer your questions, and give you a clear timeline. No commitment needed.

**Speak to our Solutions Team →**

**ALLEX**

| AI-Supported Project, Portfolio & Resource Management for Real Industrial Complexity.