PUBLICATION

EXAM-TM50J-PRE

PRE-TEST — SL 5J: ADVANCED PROGRAM MANAGER

Maven Smart System (MSS) — USAREUR-AF

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE AND AFRICA
(USAREUR-AF)
Wiesbaden, Germany

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PRE-TEST — SL 5J: ADVANCED PROGRAM MANAGER

MAVEN SMART SYSTEM (MSS) — USAREUR-AF

Field	Detail
Course	SL 5J: Advanced Program Manager
Form	Pre-Test
Level	SL 5J (Advanced Specialist)
Audience	Senior program managers; prerequisite: SL 4J + full-lifecycle MSS project delivery
Time Allowed	30 minutes
Passing Score	N/A — diagnostic only

INSTRUCTIONS

This diagnostic assessment establishes your baseline knowledge before training. Your score does not affect course eligibility. Answer honestly — results help the instructor tailor instruction to gaps.

SECTION 1 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the letter of the best answer. (2 points each)

1. In Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), a "Program Increment (PI) Planning" event is used to:

A. Conduct a formal audit of the previous program increment's financial performance B. Finalize the program's long-range budget allocation for the next fiscal year C. Align multiple Agile teams around a shared set of objectives, identify cross-team dependencies, and plan work for the upcoming program increment D. Review and approve all new feature requests from program stakeholders

2. "Velocity" as a delivery metric measures:

A. The elapsed time from feature request to feature delivery B. The amount of work (story points or units) a team completes per iteration C. The rate at which technical debt is being introduced into the codebase D. The ratio of completed features to planned features in a program increment

3. "Cycle time" as a delivery metric measures:

A. The elapsed time from when work begins on an item to when it is delivered B. The amount of work completed per iteration C. The time between successive releases of a software product D. The time required to complete a full test cycle

4. "Technical debt" in a software program context refers to:

A. The financial cost of software licenses and cloud infrastructure B. The difference between planned and actual development hours C. The backlog of feature requests that have not yet been prioritized D. The accumulated cost of shortcuts, deferred refactoring, and suboptimal design decisions that must eventually be addressed

5. In vendor management for a government data program, "independent technical review" of a contractor deliverable means:

A. A peer review by another contractor on the same task order B. An automated testing suite run by the contractor before delivery C. A review conducted by the contracting officer's technical representative (COTR) without engineering expertise D. A review by a government technical staff member (or government-hired independent reviewer) who was not involved in building the deliverable

6. "PI (Program Increment) Planning artifacts" produced during a SAFe PI Planning event include:

A. A signed MOU between all team leads and the program manager B. Team iteration plans, cross-team dependencies, program-level risks, and committed PI objectives C. A financial obligation plan for the program increment period D. Updated user stories for the next 12 months of work

7. "Throughput" as a delivery metric measures:

A. The number of work items completed in a given time period B. The amount of work in progress at any given time C. The rate at which requirements are being added to the backlog D. The total scope of work remaining in the program

8. "Build vs. buy vs. configure" decision criteria for a data capability include:

A. Cost alone — always choose the lowest total cost option B. Strategic alignment, total cost of ownership, time to capability, maintainability, vendor lock-in risk, and organizational competency to sustain the chosen approach C. The contracting vehicle already in place for the program D. Whether the capability has been built before in a comparable Army program

9. A "data culture" in an organization is characterized by:

A. All personnel completing a data literacy training course B. A fully staffed data office with dedicated analysts C. Leaders who use data to inform decisions, trust data systems, and hold teams accountable for data quality and timely reporting D. All key metrics tracked in a centralized dashboard

10. In a data program context, "knowledge management for junior PM development" means:

A. Conducting quarterly training events for junior PMs on PM tools B. Assigning junior PMs to shadow senior PMs during GO briefings C. Documenting program knowledge in ways that allow junior PMs to learn from experienced PMs' decisions, failures, and lessons — preserving institutional knowledge across PCS cycles D. Reviewing junior PM performance against a competency model

11. Using "personnel metrics" (velocity, story points, lines of code) to evaluate individual engineer performance is problematic because:

A. Individual performance metrics derived from team-level delivery measures incentivize gaming, reduce collaboration, and undermine team cohesion without validating actual contribution quality B. These metrics are too complex for non-technical managers to understand C. Army personnel performance is governed exclusively by the NCOER and OER system D. Engineering metrics are not reliable enough to use for personnel decisions

12. "Portfolio health assessment" for a theater-level MSS program requires:

A. Evaluating each program across multiple dimensions: schedule, cost, technical performance, risk posture, and team health — and surfacing honest status to senior leaders B. Reviewing only the schedule performance of each sub-program C. Confirming each program has a passing score on its most recent data quality audit D. Ensuring each program has a SL 5J qualified PM assigned

13. A Palantir task order deliverable acceptance should include:

A. The contracting officer's review of the financial terms only B. Automated testing suite results provided by the contractor C. A GO sign-off on the deliverable after a 30-day review period D. An independent technical review that validates the deliverable meets the acceptance criteria in the statement of work — contractor self-certification is insufficient

14. "Data product retirement risk" in a program portfolio context means:

A. The risk that a data product becomes obsolete due to changes in source data systems B. The risk that a data product's data quality degrades below acceptable standards C. The risk that organizational dependency on a data product makes it difficult or costly to decommission — creating a long-term support burden even after the product no longer serves its original purpose D. The risk that the program team does not have the skills to maintain the data product

15. An honest assessment to senior leaders about program health requires:

A. Framing all negative findings as "challenges being addressed" to maintain stakeholder confidence B. Accurately reporting the program's true status including risks, schedule variance, and resource constraints — even when the news is unfavorable — to enable informed senior leader decision-making C. Providing only information the senior leader has specifically requested D. Coordinating with the contracting officer before sharing contractor performance assessments with senior leaders

SECTION 2 — SHORT ANSWER

Answer in 2–5 sentences. (6 points each)

SA-1. Explain the difference between "velocity," "cycle time," and "throughput" as PM delivery metrics. For each, describe what it tells you about a team's performance and what it does NOT tell you.

SA-2. A program manager discovers that a contractor has delivered a Workshop application that meets all items in the acceptance test checklist, but a government technical reviewer identifies significant unaddressed technical debt in the pipeline design that will create maintenance problems. Describe how the PM should handle this situation.

SA-3. Your theater-level MSS portfolio has 12 programs. Three are RED on schedule, two are RED on cost, and one has a team health issue affecting delivery. Describe how you would build a portfolio health dashboard and how you would present this status to a GO.

SA-4. Describe the strategic risks of building a "configure" (using the Palantir MSS platform as delivered) approach versus a "build" (custom code) approach for a new operational data capability. In what circumstances would you recommend each?

SA-5. Explain why using velocity or story-point completion rates as a primary metric for evaluating individual engineer performance is a misuse of these metrics, and describe what a more appropriate PM performance framework for engineers would include.

SCORING SUMMARY

Section	Questions	Points Each	Total Points
Multiple Choice	15	2	30
Short Answer	5	6	30
Total	—	—	**60**

Passing: N/A — Pre-test is diagnostic only.

ANSWER KEY — INSTRUCTOR USE ONLY

Do not distribute to students.

Multiple Choice: 1. C — PI Planning aligns teams, identifies dependencies, and plans the upcoming increment. 2. B — Velocity = work completed per iteration (story points or units). 3. A — Cycle time = elapsed time from work start to delivery. 4. D — Technical debt = accumulated cost of deferred refactoring and shortcuts. 5. D — Independent technical review = government or independent reviewer not involved in building the deliverable. 6. B — PI Planning artifacts: team iteration plans, dependencies, program risks, and committed PI objectives. 7. A — Throughput = number of work items completed in a time period. 8. B — Build/buy/configure criteria: strategic alignment, TCO, time-to-capability, maintainability, lock-in risk, competency. 9. C — Data culture = leaders who use data, trust it, and hold teams accountable for its quality. 10. C — KM for PM development = documenting decisions and lessons for junior PM learning across PCS cycles. 11. A — Individual velocity metrics incentivize gaming, reduce collaboration, and undermine team cohesion. 12. A — Portfolio health = multi-dimensional assessment across schedule, cost, performance, risk, and team health. 13. D — Independent technical review (not

contractor self-certification) validates deliverable acceptance criteria. 14. C — Data product retirement risk = dependency makes decommissioning costly even after the product's purpose is served. 15. B — Honest assessment means accurately reporting true status even when unfavorable.

Short Answer Guidance:

SA-1. Full credit: velocity = work completed per sprint (story points) — tells you team output capacity; does not tell you whether the right work is being done or whether quality is maintained; cycle time = time from work start to delivery — tells you responsiveness and flow efficiency; does not tell you the volume of work delivered; throughput = count of items completed per period — tells you delivery rate; does not tell you item complexity or quality. Must provide what each measures AND what it does not tell you for full credit.

SA-2. Full credit: the PM should document the technical reviewer's findings in writing; technical debt that creates future maintenance risk can be grounds for requiring remediation even if checklist items pass — if the acceptance criteria did not explicitly address technical debt, the PM should flag this as a gap in the acceptance criteria for future task orders; options: negotiate with the contractor for remediation as a separate deliverable, or accept with a formal risk log entry and a plan to address debt in a future sprint; contractor self-certification is never sufficient for technical quality. Partial credit (3 pts) for correct action without addressing acceptance criteria gap.

SA-3. Full credit: portfolio health dashboard — each program tracked across schedule, cost, technical performance, risk, team health with RAG per dimension and a worst-of composite; sort by composite health ascending (RED first); include trend arrows for each dimension; GO briefing — lead with BLUF: "3 of 12 programs are RED on schedule. Corrective actions are [X]. Resource decisions required: [Y]." Brief status truthfully — do not sugarcoat RED programs as "challenges being addressed" without stating the true risk and recovery plan. Must include dashboard design AND GO briefing approach.

SA-4. Full credit: configure (use platform as built) — advantages: faster delivery, lower build cost, vendor-maintained; risks: vendor lock-in, limited customization, capability roadmap driven by vendor not mission; recommend when: the mission need closely matches standard platform capabilities and speed-to-capability is the priority; build (custom code) — advantages: full control, no vendor dependency for core capability; risks: high build and maintenance cost, expertise dependency, version control burden; recommend when: mission requirements are unique, custom integration is needed, or operational security requires government-owned code. Both approaches with recommendation criteria required for full credit.

SA-5. Full credit: velocity and story points are team-level metrics measuring relative complexity — they are not comparable across individuals, can be gamed by inflating estimates, and measure throughput not quality or mission contribution; a more appropriate framework includes: quality of delivered work (defect rate, peer review outcomes); mission impact of completed features; technical mentorship of junior team members; adherence to standards (code review participation, documentation); honest self-assessment in retrospectives. Must identify the gaming problem AND provide an alternative framework.

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