

Apprenticeships In the Project Profession

Background

- The UK's project profession is crucial to economic growth yet faces critical skills shortages. Labour market data often underestimates this demand, leading to incomplete workforce planning.
- By addressing the skills shortage, the UK can develop a more sustainable and competent project workforce for the future set to deliver the Government's future ambitions.
- Whilst the profession is key to the economy, employers struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills. More than half of businesses reported challenges in finding the right project management skills in 2024, compared to one in three in 2019. Research indicates that skills related to the profession, such as creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving and resilience, will become increasingly important to developing sectors as we approach 2035.
- Existing and future skills shortages are a significant barrier to the design of effective projects, as skilled project professionals are essential throughout the project lifecycle - particularly from the inception phase – to ensure projects are viable, effectively designed, and aligned with strategic objectives.
- The level 7 apprenticeship is important to the project profession. Whilst it won't get people into the profession, it is an important and popular route to upskilling existing project professionals, providing further expertise on important private and public projects across the country.

Apprenticeships

- Employer-led apprenticeship schemes are common, with 70% of project professionals surveyed saying that their companies ran apprenticeship schemes for project professionals in 2024. This pathway provides learners with hands-on experience of project management.
- However, there are several challenges facing businesses who fund apprenticeships in the project profession:
 - Training providers can struggle with the complexities of the Apprenticeship Levy which can reduce the number of opportunities.
 - Individuals can struggle to secure a placement – various LSIPs reported issues with low uptake of apprenticeships and low provision.
 - There are variations in mentorship quality and inconsistency of learning experiences.
 - Low wages can make them inaccessible to some.
- The Growth and Skills Levy grants employers with more flexibility to provide shorter apprenticeships and more accessible training and development. While reducing the overall costs of apprenticeships could help businesses offer more opportunities, shortening the length of learning experiences and reducing the qualifications could hinder apprentices from gaining the experience needed for career progression.
- Whilst apprenticeships carry value on their own, the employability chances of individuals are increased through having professional qualifications. Additionally, these add value to the organisations and project delivery as there is consistent terminology and understanding in relation to projects that reflect good practice.

Recommendations

1. Ensure the Growth and Skills Levy prioritises high-quality apprenticeships focused on competence development:

Project-based education and training opportunities backed by the new Growth and Skills Levy must be rooted in APM's Competence Framework to enable project professionals to apply this knowledge to future project work, achieving higher capability across the UK. The role that professional bodies, like APM, and professional education can play in addressing skills gaps should also be recognised, particularly in relation to addressing the immediate and long-term needs of the sectors they represent.

2. Ringfencing of skills funding:

Actions such as the ringfencing of funding for support training and apprenticeships in project management should be considered through routes such as the Growth and Skills Levy to ensure that the country has the skills and jobs needed to deliver successful national and local projects.

About APM

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for the project profession, with over 45,000 individual members and over 470 corporate partners. We aim for a world in which all projects succeed because, when they do, society benefits.

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