

SPONSOR ROLE GUIDANCE



INTRODUCTION

The *APM Competence Framework 3rd edition* comprises 29 competences covering project, programme and portfolio management and PMO. A series of role profiles has been developed to help users to navigate the framework and understand which competences are required in each role. The sponsor plays a critical leadership role in any change initiative and is accountable for ensuring that work is governed effectively and delivers its benefits. The competences required of an effective sponsor focus on strategy and leadership across all areas of the *APM Competence Framework*. This guidance is designed to assist in highlighting areas of consideration for those in a sponsor role and should be used in conjunction with the wider *APM Competence Framework*.

OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE

The sponsor is the person accountable to the investors and stakeholders for the delivery of the outcomes and benefits of a change initiative. They provide support, advice, guidance and direction and provide the key link between an initiative and its stakeholders.

In larger organisations, an executive may combine the sponsorship of a number of projects with business-as-usual activities. They may choose to delegate day-to-day activities to a delegated sponsor while retaining the role of executive sponsor. Although these activities can be delegated, the accountability for a change initiative remains with the executive sponsor. There should be clarity between the executive and delegated sponsor providing the boundaries and levels of authority for each role. On large projects there can be teams of delegated sponsors working together to ensure successful outcomes for a change initiative.

TYPICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Extract from *APM Body of Knowledge 7th edition*

Sponsors are business leaders who play a key role in promoting, advocating and shaping project-work. The sponsor oversees the project and programme management functions and remains accountable for ensuring the realisation of the specified benefits over time. It is a crucial role and sponsors need the status and authority within the business to enable them to assert appropriate influence over the deployment of the project or programme. They also need to secure for themselves a clear and official briefing from the investing organisation.

The sponsor's involvement is continuous throughout the life cycle, although the extent of their engagement will tend to fluctuate, with peaks at the initial and final stages of the project. At the start, the sponsor leads to identify needs, set requirements, establish the business case and secure funding. In the closing stages, the sponsor takes responsibility for ensuring the work is properly closed out, handing over outputs to operations and ensuring benefits are realised as planned. The sponsor's role in the life cycle therefore precedes and supersedes that of the project or programme manager. It is the role that is the interface between the business and the project or programme.

The sponsor plays a central role in governance, accountable for the continuing validity of the business case. As part of governance, the sponsor leads decision-making processes, particularly in relation to the purpose of the project, the appointment of project and programme managers and the availability of top-level contingency provision and is the first point of escalation for the project or programme manager regarding issues or change requests.

In addition to the governance accountabilities, effective sponsors also establish supportive working relationships with the relevant project professional and the wider team and it is through this working relationship that the sponsor can add great value, for example, in supporting stakeholder engagement or motivating the team through difficult times.

A successful sponsor is:

- *A leader and decision-maker who is able to work across corporate and functional boundaries within the organisation.*
- *A credible influencer of stakeholders with the delegated authority to act on behalf of the investing organisation.*
- *An enthusiastic advocate of the work and the change it brings about.*
- *Prepared to commit sufficient time and support to undertake the role.*
- *Sufficiently aware of the practices underpinning project-based working to be able to make informed decisions as to whether the work is being managed effectively, responsibly and sustainably, whether the business case is being realised and to challenge project professionals appropriately.*

Competence guidance

	Competence	Competence definition
1	Life cycles	The ability to structure and organise change initiatives.
	The sponsor should understand the impact that different life cycles have on the delivery of the outcomes and benefits of a change initiative. They should be able to appraise the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches against the initiative's vision.	
2	Governance arrangements	The ability to establish and maintain governance structures that define control of deployment for delivery of change initiatives, and that align with organisational practice.
	The sponsor plays an integral role in governance and is accountable for the ongoing validity of the business case. The sponsor establishes the governance, ensuring it is appropriate for a change initiative and aligned to corporate governance. The sponsor leads decision-making processes, ensuring balanced decisions are made. They establish the vision, purpose and outcomes of a change initiative, and appoint the project and programme managers to deliver an initiative. The sponsor is the first point of escalation for the managers of a change initiative for strategic issues or change requests.	
3	Sustainability	The ability to balance the environmental, social, economic and administrative considerations that will impact a change initiative.
	The sponsor needs to have the ability to balance the environmental, social, economic and administrative impact of a change initiative and embed appropriate behaviours in the culture of the team.	
4	Financial management	The ability to enable financial resource for delivery and to plan and control the finances of change initiatives, as part of the organisation's overall financial management, to ensure optimisation of the business case.
	The sponsor needs to ensure that appropriate funding is available and secure. The sponsor agrees the control limits for the reporting and approval of budget variances and the arrangements for the release of funds at appropriate stages in the life cycle.	

<p>5</p>	<p>Business case</p>	<p>The ability to prepare, gain approval of, refine and update business cases that justify the initiation, investment and/or continuation of change initiatives in terms of benefits, costs and risks.</p>
<p>The sponsor owns the change initiative's business case, championing its outcomes, benefits, costs and risks. The sponsor sets the scope and success criteria in consultation with other key stakeholders and aligns change initiatives with the strategic vision and objectives of the organisation. Should the business case no longer be valid, the sponsor is accountable for stopping a change initiative.</p>		
<p>6</p>	<p>Portfolio shaping</p>	<p>The ability to set up portfolios to ensure efficient delivery of strategic objectives.</p>
<p>For projects and programmes that form part of a portfolio, project and programme sponsors provide input to the portfolio manager and portfolio sponsor. The sponsor works with the portfolio manager to shape the portfolio, ensuring visibility of project and programme plans and their part in delivering the portfolio.</p>		
<p>7</p>	<p>Procurement</p>	<p>The ability to secure the provision of resources, choosing strategies for obtaining best value from supply chains.</p>
<p>The sponsor should understand different procurement strategies and their impact on the outcomes of a change initiative and in assuring the investment. They will help select the most suitable procurement strategy and ensure that relevant governance and assurance is applied to procurement activities.</p>		
<p>8</p>	<p>Reviews</p>	<p>The ability to manage progression through the life cycle of a change initiative.</p>
<p>The sponsor is accountable for commissioning and leading timely reviews; constructively challenging outcomes and ensuring that recommendations are acted upon. The sponsor should appraise the status of a change initiative, ensuring reporting accuracy and challenging forecasts.</p>		
<p>9</p>	<p>Assurance</p>	<p>The ability to provide confidence to the governance board that a change initiative is on track to deliver the objectives and intended value.</p>
<p>The sponsor is accountable for approving the integrated assurance plan for a change initiative. This plan could include external activities, such as assurance commissioned by regulators or external boards.</p>		

10	Capability development	The ability to assess organisational maturity in relation to a change initiative and the wider organisation.
The sponsor has a key role in articulating the capability needed for a change initiative and working with the organisation to ensure this capability is available.		
11	Transition management	The ability to manage the integration of the outputs of a change initiative into business-as-usual, ensuring that outputs enable the intended value.
The sponsor formally approves the outputs of a change initiative and agrees the transition into business-as-usual. They promote the alignment of the project and programme with functional and operational teams, remaining engaged with stakeholders throughout the transition, promoting the benefits of the change. The sponsor ensures contingency plans exist if the transition does not go as expected.		
12	Benefits management	The ability to identify and agree the benefits and determine how they will be measured, monitored and managed throughout a change initiative until they are realised.
The sponsor owns and directs the benefits realisation strategy and plans, ensuring that objectives are met and that a change initiative realises its benefits for the organisation and stakeholders. The sponsor needs to understand how the outputs feed into the benefits and be able to explain and champion the benefits of the change to relevant stakeholders.		
13	Stakeholder engagement and communication management	The ability to work with people, both internally and externally, to build support to achieve intended outcomes.
The sponsor determines how stakeholders are engaged, building strong relationships with those impacted by the outcomes of a change initiative. They promote its vision and benefits, evaluate feedback and, where necessary, be a conduit between stakeholders. The sponsor should explore opportunities to collaborate with individuals, groups and/or organisations to support successful delivery.		
14	Conflict resolution	The ability to identify, address and resolve differences between individuals and/or interest groups.
Conflicts may arise during a change initiative. Sponsors, along with managers of change initiatives need to identify, address or manage differences between individuals and/or interest groups. The sponsor is a source of advice for a change initiative manager and also a point of escalation for conflicts that a change initiative manager is unable to resolve.		

15	Leadership	The ability to empower and inspire others to deliver successful change initiatives by providing vision, direction, feedback and support, so people can do their best work.
The sponsor is in a key leadership role and needs to be able to make decisions taking account of strategic direction and acting in the long-term interests of the organisation. The sponsor needs to work across the organisation to empower and inspire others to deliver successful change initiatives by providing a clear vision, setting and maintaining direction, providing focus, feedback, and support so people can do their best work.		
16	Team management	The ability to select, develop and manage individuals to create and sustain teams.
The sponsor should establish supportive working relationships with the manager of a change initiative and the wider team, providing motivation through difficult times and celebrating success.		
17	Diversity and inclusion	The ability to build and maintain an inclusive environment that embraces a diverse culture.
The sponsor needs to have the ability to build and maintain an inclusive environment that embraces a diverse culture, supporting the delivery of a change initiative.		
18	Ethics, compliance, and professionalism	The ability to embody, promote and maintain a trusted profession and to navigate the cultural, legal and regulatory environment.
The sponsor should be a trusted, credible professional setting the tone of the culture and ethics for a change initiative.		
19	Requirements management	The ability to prepare and maintain definitions of the requirements of change initiatives.
The sponsor is accountable for the scope of a change initiative. The sponsor needs to ensure the scope, expressed as requirements, is set to deliver the intended outcomes and benefits. This alignment needs to be continuously monitored.		
20	Solutions development	The ability to determine the optimal solution to satisfy agreed requirements.
The sponsor needs to appraise different options and be assured that chosen solutions can deliver the required value and benefits.		

<p>21</p>	<p>Quality management</p>	<p>The ability to ensure that outputs are delivered in accordance with requirements.</p>
<p>The sponsor should be engaged and active in defining and agreeing formal acceptance criteria. The sponsor should be able to interpret and evaluate the quality management information to help inform decision making. They should be aware of any issues in the quality of outputs that will impact the outcomes and benefits.</p>		
<p>22</p>	<p>Integrated planning</p>	<p>The ability to take forward the definition of outputs into detailed planning incorporating multiple areas into the integrated project management plan.</p>
<p>The sponsor should be aware of how a change initiative integrates with other initiatives in the organisation. The sponsor is a key link between a change initiative and business-as-usual and should keep abreast of any organisational or strategic changes.</p>		
<p>23</p>	<p>Schedule management</p>	<p>The ability to undertake time-based planning with an emphasis on activities and resource.</p>
<p>The sponsor needs to satisfy themselves that there is a high degree of confidence that the schedule can be delivered, or where there are areas of uncertainty or risk, that contingency is in place.</p>		
<p>24</p>	<p>Resource management</p>	<p>The ability to acquire and deploy internal and external resources.</p>
<p>The sponsor needs to support the manager of a change initiative in accessing the resources they need. This requires a strategic understanding of the resource available and how they are being utilised. The sponsor should be able to challenge the manager on resource plans and satisfy themselves that the right resource is available to deliver the required outcomes and benefits.</p>		
<p>25</p>	<p>Resource capacity planning</p>	<p>The ability to plan resource needs in line with the strategic direction of the organisation to ensure that resource utilisation is maintained at an appropriate level for optimal efficiency.</p>
<p>The sponsor has an enterprise-wide role in ensuring critical resources are available for a change initiative when needed. This may involve influencing other stakeholders and being involved in prioritisation conversations, particularly if there are key resources across the organisation that are needed by a number of change initiatives or business-as-usual activities.</p>		

26	Budgeting and cost control	The ability to develop and agree budgets for change initiatives and understanding where costs fall over time.
The sponsor should be able to interpret the budget and cost information provided to them to inform decision making. They need to challenge the information, taking account of any impact on the delivery of outcomes and benefits. The sponsor agrees the control limits for the reporting and the approval of budget variances, including the release of contingencies if needed.		
27	Contract management	The ability to monitor and manage supplier performance.
The sponsor should understand different contract strategies and the impact these will have on the outcomes of a change initiative. They should ensure appropriate governance is in place for internal and external suppliers and ensure their role in contract termination decisions is clear.		
28	Risk and issue management	The ability to identify and monitor risks (threats and opportunities); to plan and implement responses to those risks, and respond to issues that affect a change initiative.
The sponsor needs to identify and monitor strategic and external risks, overseeing any responses. They should provide direction and leadership on risk responses, taking ownership of risks that they are best placed to influence. The sponsor should also ensure that the risk appetite of a change initiative is aligned to that of the organisation. The sponsor is the first escalation point for any strategic issues.		
29	Change control	The ability to manage variations and change requests in a controlled way.
The sponsor should be engaged in the change control process at an appropriate level. They should have the ability to agree changes, having understood the impact and implications to the delivery of a change initiative, its benefits, stakeholders and investment.		