



Property and Construction Directorate

# Project sponsor support



Supporting departments in their procurement and management of major construction, refurbishment and estate management projects



Office of Government Commerce



# Project sponsor support

Understanding the needs, culture and business of the client is paramount

## What is a project sponsor?

A project sponsor provides the interface between project ownership and delivery, forming the single client focal point responsible to the project owner for day-to-day management of the client's interests in the project – that is, the client's representative.

The project sponsor has a dual management function:

- the client side – managing the department's input, co-ordinating the department's functional and administrative requirements, resolving any conflicting objectives in the department and acting as the department's sole point of contact for the project
- project delivery – through the project manager (who supplies project management expertise) assessing, procuring, managing, monitoring and controlling the external resources needed to implement the project.

The project sponsor needs to be competent in activities such as preparation of the business case, investment appraisal and project briefs, procurement and contract strategies, development of specifications (including value for money and whole life costing issues), consultant and contractor procurement/management (including contract terms and conditions), EC Directives, tenderer and tender evaluation and partnering, Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations, health and safety regulations and post project reviews.

## Why is the role important?

The success of any project largely depends on the leadership and motivation given by project sponsors. In both the public and private sectors there are many examples of major projects that have failed to deliver the client's requirements. Experience has shown that where the interface between ownership and delivery is poorly managed, it is difficult to manage the project's critical success criteria – for example, to identify risks that could lead to time and cost overruns in time for corrective action to be taken. There must be clear and agreed reporting lines to facilitate prompt decision taking; the project sponsor's role as the interface between the business and the project team is critically important.

Many departments find that the demands of the role stretch their internal capability, especially where major projects are a rare occurrence. It can be difficult to structure the project organisation appropriately, which is exacerbated if project sponsors are appointed with no previous experience. Where project sponsors lack appropriate expertise and experience, the project is at risk.

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## The project sponsor's principal task is to manage the client's interests and to represent those to the industry side

### What does the project sponsor have to do?

The project sponsor must have a good understanding of the property and construction industry and the way it works, combined with clear understanding of the business drivers for the project. Responsibilities include:

- managing the department's interests by co-ordinating the user input, preparing the project brief, leading on change control and risk management, management of the project budget and providing feedback to the users
- obtaining necessary approvals, including producing option appraisals and business cases and representing the department on Gateway reviews
- procuring professional services for project delivery through the appointment of consultants and contractors and fostering teamwork
- ensuring effective project delivery by determining the procurement strategy, producing the Project Execution Plan and Risk Management Plan and managing the project in accordance with plans, establishing formal reporting procedures on progress and providing the focal point for all client contact with consultants and contractors
- ensuring effective feedback from the project on completion of the project as to how far the project met the department's interests and objectives and identifying the lessons of good and bad practice that need to be learned for the future.

### How OGC can help

OGC's Property and Construction Directorate (P&CD) has many years' experience of managing major projects and can provide **a pool of expert project sponsors** to support internal departmental staff. Our sponsors are familiar with the demands of Achieving Excellence and lessons learned from the Gateway review process, and are well placed to ensure maximum added value to any project. The service is especially suitable for smaller organisations and occasional clients who are not regularly involved in major projects. But it is also designed to respond to the need seen by many departments for a central pool of project sponsors that they can draw upon while they develop their own project sponsorship and management expertise.

P&CD can also provide **experienced project advisers** to support a department's own project sponsors with advice and mentoring about the structuring and management of a project.

Additionally, P&CD has **a large team of property and construction procurement professionals** who are available to advise departments about their procurements, providing professional advice and support on their construction and property procurement and management activities at any stage of, or throughout, a procurement. The team can also provide experienced professionals to supplement departments' own resource for the Gateway Review teams which departments are now responsible for forming.

The benefits to departments of bringing in independent expertise include:

- customer focus, because the external resource has the appropriate experience
- relevant skills and knowledge transfer, because the external resource is employed on a basis that is specifically tailored to gaps in the department's project sponsorship knowledge
- expertise and experience that is up to date with the industry's systems and practices.

The service can be tailored to meet your specific requirements, including training for internal staff.

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## Further information

For more information about the role of the project sponsor, see OGC's Procurement Guidance No 1 and the supplementary guide, available online at [www.ogc.gov.uk](http://www.ogc.gov.uk) or contact Michael Burt on 020 7271 2661; e-mail [michael.burt@ogc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:michael.burt@ogc.gsi.gov.uk)

## About OGC

OGC – the UK Office of Government Commerce – is an office of HM Treasury.

## OGC Service Desk

OGC customers can contact the central OGC Service Desk about all aspects of OGC business. The Service Desk will also channel queries to the appropriate second-line support. We look forward to hearing from you.

You can contact the Service Desk 8am–6pm Monday–Friday  
Telephone: 0845 000 4999  
e-mail: [ServiceDesk@ogc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ServiceDesk@ogc.gsi.gov.uk)  
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## Press enquiries

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## About Property and Construction Directorate

P&CD is regionally based, structured into key operating divisions under the Executive Directorship of Vivien Bodnar.

- Performance Improvement Division (Director: Arnold Butler)
- Procurement Advice (Director: Michael Corcoran)
- Property Disposals and Residual Estate Management (Director: Michael Burt)

P&CD's business purpose is to provide world class support to central civil government departments, their agencies and NDPBs in the whole-life procurement of construction, property and managed workspace. A key part of P&CD's vision is the transfer of knowledge and skills to departments through training and support for Continuous Professional Development.

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