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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of Steering Committee Function

Project governance is one of the critical success factors, and a Steering Committee plays a critical role in the governance of projects. This guide provides how the Steering Committee (SC) function should be setup for IT projects in government. This guide should be used in reference with the Project Governance Structure and Reporting Support Guide and Project Initiation Support Guide.

1.2 A Steering Committee, to function well, should address the following areas early in the project lifecycle:

1. **Roles** – the roles of the Steering Committee members, and the roles of the project team.

2. **Membership** – who should be on the committee

3. **Processes** – how the Steering Committee will function (meetings, decision making, issues resolution)

4. **Project Management** – knowledge of project management principles in general, and the IT Project Management Guide used. This especially includes the Steering Committee’s role in the Stage-gating process at the end of each project stages, where project health should be formally reviewed to assess readiness to progress from one stage to the next stage. At each stage gate the Steering Committee should review the project risks and the findings of project assurance activities to make an informed Go/No-go decision. The Steering Committee also has a role of approving project scope, deliverables, and financials among others.

5. **Knowledge of the Project** – background and current status of the project that the Steering Committee will steer.

1.3 A Well-functioning Steering Committee should be the responsibility of an Accounting Officer. The following characteristics should guide the Accounting Officer to set up and evaluate SC performance in relation with section 1.2 above:

   1) Governance properly established
   2) Roles and Responsibilities well defined
   3) Accountabilities clearly understood by Steering Committee members
4) Not supporting the Project Manager who sometimes has to implement unpopular decisions
5) Not empowered to make necessary decisions
6) Not prioritizing SC assignments or work
7) Passive – information sharing only among SC members and Project Implementation Team
8) Risks owned & managed by proper persons (Risk Owners)
9) Both good and bad news openly discussed
10) Micromanagement
11) SC members not involved enough
12) Failure to realize business benefits
13) Not passing along key information to stakeholders

2 Role of Steering Committee

2.1 The responsibilities of the Steering Committee with respect to the National IT Project Management Methodology are list below among others:

1) To be familiar with the National IT Project Management Methodology and Support guides in order to support assigned project (s)
2) Own and oversee the overall implementation of assigned project (s) on behalf of the Accounting Officer
3) Evaluate significant changes in strategic direction that may affect business case.
4) Approve project Scope change (timelines, Budget and quality) of the project in consultation with the Accounting Officer
5) Create an environment that nurtures sustainable momentum for the project
6) Project monitoring and providing overall strategic direction for the project
7) Remove all roadblocks beyond the Project Manager’s ability
8) Approve the Project Implementation Team(PIT) for the implementation of the project
9) Promote project success and performs a Go/No Go decisions in a timely manner
10) Provide timely decisions and approvals at stage gates throughout the project life cycle
11) Periodically review project progress and interim results to ensure alignment with the overall strategic vision
12) Have regular meetings to review the progress of the project
13) Receive and approve regular reports and technical papers from PIT
14) Support the Project Manager in his/her project(s) delivery processes and deliverables.
15) Review Project deliverables to ensure that the project is being delivered as required.
16) Convene/support the Stage Gate Sign-offs at the end of each project stage (Stage gates checklists defined in the National IT Project Management Methodology will provide additional support to the Steering Committee in assessing project readiness to proceed to the next stage)
17) Sign off all project deliverables

3 Membership of Steering Committee
3.1 It is important that the Steering Committee be composed of members who:
1) Can make decisions on behalf of the Accounting Officer
2) Can handle escalated issues
3) Can meet regularly to review status, provide steering, and resolve issues
4) Can represent their Accounting Officers (for projects spanning multiple MDAs) on the project
5) Represent functional entities (departments) to whom the outcome of the project will be handled over to and who will manage the Operations going forward.

3.2 A Steering Committee could include representation from the functional groups if appropriate (for example, on very large projects) that approve the Go/No-Go decisions: e.g. finance, IT, legal, procurement, etc. depending on the categorization of the project (small, medium or large).

Typical membership should consist of:
1) Project sponsor- member of Top Management Team and should be the chair of the committee
2) Co-Project Sponsor – For a JSC; one representative of participating MDA(s)
3) Other appointed members from Top Management Team
4) Technical Lead (Project Owner – who will take ownership of the project outcome)
5) Project Manager – should be the secretary to the committee
6) Contract manager (if appropriate) – in attendance

For further guidance regarding membership for projects spanning multiple MDAs refer to the Project Governance Structure and Reporting support Guide.
4 Steering Committee Orientation

4.1 The Steering Committee should conduct an orientation meeting to acquaint themselves with the task ahead of them, preferably before the project planning stage starts. Preferably the Accounting Officer should facilitator the kick off meeting; and also issue members with appointment letters.

4.2 In the kick off meeting, the Committee should discuss:

1) Roles and Responsibilities:
   a. Who is on the Steering Committee and why – what everyone’s role is and what they are accountable for.
   b. Understand if the Steering Committee has the right level of participation and the right coverage to make the decisions and steering the project needs

2) Project Background and Understanding:
   a. Understanding of the project background, status and critical issues

3) How the committee will work together:
   a. Agree on a set of ground rules for meeting and business processes (e.g. frequency of meetings, decision making processes, issues resolution, etc.) or as part of the Project Communication Plan
   b. How will the Steering Committee help the project to succeed?

4) Project Management Basics:
   a. Briefing on the National IT Project Management Methodology and how it will apply to the project
   b. Project Planning
   c. The Project Management Methodology Assurance process and how it will be applied to the project

5 Project Sponsor

5.1 Will be the Top Management representative on the SC and will Chair all SC businesses.

5.2 Will suffice to perform the role of a Steering Committee for small projects. Authority to approve the scope, schedule, and budget as well as changes to these. He/she should champion the project and be responsible for the outcome of the project.

5.3 The project sponsor will be responsible and ultimately accountable for:
1) The success of the project
2) Project reviews
3) Normally but not always delegates responsibility for defining and accepting functional / quality requirements and managing business resources to project manager or technical lead
4) Normally but not always delegates responsibility for the implementation of organizational and process changes to a specially appointed project manager
5) Empowers any other member of the SC to chair Steering Committee meeting. Should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and are unambiguous
6) Monitors the progress of the project on the basis of information from the project manager and has the authority to stop a project (for small projects). Stays aware of the issues and their state of resolution, and assists in resolving issues where necessary or appropriate. Evaluates significant changes in strategic direction that may affect business case.

6 Project Management Processes Important to the Steering Committee

6.1 Project Planning

6.1.1 The project manager will develop and maintain a Project Management Plan that will be the basis for communications with and decision-making by the Sponsor / Steering Committee regarding the project’s approach and progress.

6.1.2 The Project Management Plan will address the following processes and how they are to be implemented in the Project:

1) Project Governance
2) Integrated Change Control
3) Scope Management
4) Schedule Management
5) Cost Management
6) Quality Management
7) Staffing Management
8) Project Communications Management
9) Risk Management
10) Procurement Management
11) Issue Management
12) Benefits Realization Management
13) Stakeholder Management Strategy
6.2 Change Management Plan (CMP)

6.2.1 The project manager will use the Change Management Plan to document and obtain Sponsor/Steering Committee approval on the agreed application of the Project Management Methodology assurance activities to the project. The CMP will also be used to document any compliance impacts for the project, guides to be applied and any variations from them, as well as scaling decisions for smaller sized projects, such as the merging of stages.

6.3 Stage Gating

6.3.1 The project sponsor and project manager must ensure that project health is formally reviewed to assess readiness to progress to the next stage of the project lifecycle.

6.3.2 At each stage gate the Steering Committee should review the project risks and the findings of project assurance activities to make an informed Go/No-go decision. A checklist is provided (refer to National IT Project Management Methodology section 3.1.46 – 3.1.47) to assist the Project Manager and Steering Committee in preparing for the stage-gate review exercise. By becoming familiar with the content of the checklist at the outset of each stage, all parties can improve their preparedness for the stage-gate review itself.

6.4 Project Reviews

6.4.1 The Sponsor/Steering Committee should support the execution of project reviews during the project. There are a range of implementation options for these reviews depending on the project categorization. These options include: self-assessment; peer review, workshop/event, or formal reviews / walk through

6.4.2 Post Implementation Review (PIR)

The Steering Committee should be interested also in a post implementation reviews to ascertain how the project was delivered and finally report back to the Accounting Officer. Objectives of this review will be to

1) Identify whether the project has delivered the expected deliverables or will deliver benefits in the business case
2) Identify opportunities to harvest further benefits
3) Captures lessons learned throughout the project lifecycle from the Steering perspective.
6.4.3. In all cases, the Sponsor and Steering Committee have essential roles in these processes, so these should be worked out jointly between the PM(s), Sponsor and Steering Committee.

7 Steering Committee approaches

7.1 The Sponsor and Steering Committee should work out early how the committee is going to function, specifically in areas of how to manage meetings, how escalations should be managed, how decisions should be made, conflict resolution, steering and communication. The matrix below provides a planning guide for these aspects.

Table 1: Steering Committee Planning Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When will the meetings be?</td>
<td>Monthly, weekly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What day?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schedule several in advance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will facilitate the meetings?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will take and publish the minutes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will keep and manage the action item list?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who will develop and publish the agenda in advance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decision Making**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will be the process for making decisions?</th>
<th>Voting?</th>
<th>Consensus?</th>
<th>Circulation?</th>
<th>Who are the decision makers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who can make decisions?</td>
<td>Which members of Steering Committee?</td>
<td>Other stakeholders?</td>
<td>Project Manager?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of decisions will need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Escalation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will issues be escalated for resolution from the Project Team to the Steering Committee?</td>
<td>Only at SC meetings? Weekly by PM? Daily by PM?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What issues can the PM resolve, and what issues will the Steering Committee need to be involved with?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conflict Resolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the event of conflicts or disagreements, how will these be resolved?</td>
<td>Decision of Sponsor? Consensus of SC? Individual decisions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Steering and Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What guidance will be provided to the Project Team?</td>
<td>Strategic business requirements only? Technical?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What information will the Steering Committee need in order to provide proper steering?</td>
<td>Weekly status reports? Face to face briefings? What content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the Steering Committee and Sponsor communicate with their stakeholders?</td>
<td>Regular meetings with key stakeholders? Email? Send copies of SC minutes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What information will need to be communicated to internal and or external stakeholders?</td>
<td>Decisions of SC? Regular status of project? Schedule?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What communication models / Tools will be used and under what circumstances</td>
<td>Formal briefs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Stage Gating – process details

8.1 Participants

Several stakeholders need to be involved in the Stage Gate Sign-off meetings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>√ Prepares all required documents, √ Arranges logistics for Stage Gate meeting √ Concurs with Go/No-Go decision √ Follow up all actionable items raised in the meeting √ Arranges for facilitation and takes minutes at the meeting; and distributes them to all members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Facilitates the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee Members</td>
<td>√ Agrees to decision making process for Go/No Go decision √ Reviews necessary materials prior to the meeting √ Participates in Go/No Go decision making √ Supports resulting decision √ Carries out any needed actions that arise from the meeting √ Resolves any assigned issues arising from the meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 Prior to the meeting:

8.2.1 The process below should be followed in preparations for a stage gate evaluation:

1. The stage gate pass criteria should be agreed by the Steering Committee beforehand (i.e., at a meeting prior to the Stage Gate Sign-off meeting). This allows the team to agree on the criteria required for the project to move forward, or be shut down

2. The PM would have prepared and compiled the input materials beforehand, and summarized them as appropriate. (e.g. completed the end of stage Checklist)

3. The PM should review the material with the Sponsor prior to the Steering Committee meeting to make sure there are no big issues, ambiguities or surprises that need to be addressed prior to the meeting.

4. The PM arranges for the meeting
5. After the PM and Sponsor have reviewed the materials, the materials should be sent to the meeting participants in a timeframe such that they have ample time to review prior to the Stage Gate Sign-off meeting.

6. The attendees should then take the time to review the materials prior to the meeting to that excessive time isn’t taken during the meeting to bring everybody up to speed as to the status of the project.

8.3 During the meeting:

8.3.1 The Stage Gate Sign-off meeting should be attended by all Steering Committee members and any other ex-official who could facilitate with vital information to help made decisions.

8.3.2 The Stage Gate Checklist should be filled out with follow-up actions noted; and the Sponsor and PM should sign the stage gate checklist in accordance with the Go/No-Go decision reached by the Steering Committee.

8.4 After the meeting:

8.4.1 Once the meeting is completed the PM should:

1) Store the signed Stage Gate Checklist in the project archive.
2) Ensure actions are followed up on and reviewed with the steering team as appropriate.
3) Communicate the decision to stakeholders as per project communication plan (working through Sponsor and/or Steering Committee as may be appropriate)

9 Related Support Guides
The following support guides should be referenced when using this guide:

1) Project Governance Structure and Reporting Support guide
2) Project Initiation Support Guide
3) Project Manager Selection Support Guide
4) Project Change Management Guide
5) Project Reporting Support Guide
6) Transition to Support Guide