



This guide delves into the essential criteria for selecting the membership of Project Steering Committees (PSC)

**CONTEXT** - PSCs (sometimes called Project Boards) are established to support the Project Sponsor, being the single point of accountability for a project, in their decision-making function to achieve optimal governance outcomes. As such, PSC members play a pivotal role in project decision-making.

## MEMBERSHIP SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. Skin in the Game (Vested Interest)



Different stakeholders have varying levels of interest in a project. Engagement level in the PSC will depend on the extent to which the initiative affects them or the degree to which they can influence it. Stakeholders should have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Strong vested interest in the project's outcomes and benefits.
- Authority to make decisions that impact the project's outputs and outcomes.
- Key role in the delivery of the project and provision of necessary resources.
- User of the project outputs.
- Involvement in funding the project.

### 3. Additional Considerations



- **Decision-Making Authority** - Members should have the authority to make decisions and commit resources on behalf of their departments or functions.
- **Commitment and Availability** - Members must be committed to the project's success and available to attend regular meetings and make timely decisions.
- **Lifecycle Changes to PSC Membership** - As a project progresses through its lifecycle, PSC membership may need to change to reflect the varying importance of different stakeholders at different stages.
- **Independent and Objective Perspectives and Advice** - PSCs may benefit from independent advisers, either as full members or as expert guests, to provide business knowledge not otherwise available and offer constructive challenge and coaching.

### 2. Role-Based vs. Capability-Based Selection



Vested interest naturally leads toward a role-based selection model. Role-based selection should be the primary criterion as it enables:

- **Accountability** - Members are meaningfully involved in decisions impacting their areas of responsibility.
- **Holistic Representation** - Ensures relevant functions are represented.
- **Organisational Alignment** - Aligns project governance with organisational objectives and hierarchy.

That said, capability/expertise-based selection also plays a key role in optimising PSC membership. It ensures the PSC has the requisite expertise to address complex project issues, enabling:

- **Specialised Knowledge** - Ensures the PSC has the knowledge and experience to address technical and strategic challenges.
- **Effective Problem-Solving** - Leverages specialist skills for more effective decision-making.
- **Innovation** - Brings in diverse perspectives that can drive innovative/ingenious solutions.

### 4. Selection Model



To form a fit-for-purpose PSC, integrate the following selection criteria:

1. **Define Core Roles** - Identify essential roles that must be represented, such as the Project Sponsor, user, and supplier representatives.
2. **Assess Capabilities** - Evaluate the specific skills and expertise needed for the project.
3. **Select Hybrid Members** - Where possible, select individuals who have a vested interest and possess the necessary expertise.
4. **Supplement with Experts** - If core role-based members lack certain capabilities, supplement the committee with additional expertise.

Ultimately, as the role accountable for project success, the Project Sponsor is responsible for establishment of the PSC and selection of its members, typically informed by a PMO (or similar function).

## TYPICAL MEMBERSHIP



While guidelines can be provided, it is not realistic to be prescriptive regarding the size of PSC membership. Research indicates that the ideal meeting size is somewhere between 4 and 8 participants. Larger meetings tend to turn into information-sharing sessions and allow for far less meaningful participation by individual members. Against this must be weighed the disadvantages of excluding stakeholders who can be key contributors to decision-making.

**Example:** A PSC membership of six would allow for the following:

- Project Sponsor - Accountable for project success.
- One User Representative - Represents the end-users of the project's outputs.
- One Supplier Representative - Represents internal and/or external suppliers or vendors to the project.
- Up to Three Additional Members - Possibilities include additional supplier and/or user representatives, a business representative, a representative from a funding party (not otherwise represented), additional technical experts, an independent adviser, etc.

PSC membership can be augmented with invited guests on a standing or ad hoc basis. Guests do not take part in decision-making but provide important insights and expertise that assist the PSC to make optimal decisions. While ensuring that the right inputs are received, it is important to keep PSC numbers (both members and guests) to a workable minimum.

**Note:** The Project Manager does not sit on the PSC as a member but reports to it and typically attends every meeting as a standing guest.