



This graphic outlines the concept of Shared Project Boards* and their merits and challenges

* Shared Project Boards are also occasionally also referred to as Shared Project Steering Committees/Groups

THE CONCEPT

In many circumstances, operating a dedicated Project Steering Committee for all projects within a portfolio is simply impractical and inefficient. Whilst large, high-risk, complex initiatives require dedicated governance with an appropriate and proactive Project Sponsor, supported by a suitably configured Project Steering Committee, organisations with a significant number of medium- and low-risk projects may find the concept of **Shared Project Boards (SPB)** worth considering.

SPBs govern two or more (typically medium- and low-risk) projects within same project governance body. The aim is to scale back governance to improve efficiency and reduce overhead without compromising decision-making quality. SPBs are particularly effective in situations where:

- A single Project Sponsor is accountable for multiple medium- and low-risk projects.
- There are rolling programs or annual funding programs comprising multiple similar medium- and low-risk projects.

For the Organisation:

- Enhanced efficiency and streamlined decision-making processes.
- Ensures all projects contribute to broader business objectives.
- Common risk management perspectives for multiple projects.
- Reduced Portfolio Committee workload.

For the Project Sponsor:

- Reduced governance overhead - allows sponsors to focus more on material matters and stakeholder engagement.
- Facilitates better-informed decisions and provides opportunities for enhanced coordination of dependencies across projects.

For SPB members:

- Provides a more comprehensive understanding of the project landscape.
- Increases a member's influence within the organisation.
- Reduces the number of meetings and associated administration.

For the Respective Projects:

- Projects under an SPB are more likely to receive consistent guidance and oversight.
- Efficient problem and conflict resolution - addresses issues at a broader level.
- Risk mitigation - brings diverse perspectives to the management of risks.
- Optimises resource allocation across the in-scope projects.

BENEFITS

Shared Project Boards



INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Everyone involved needs to clearly understand their role and what is expected of them. Group/member inductions critical.
- **Leadership and Commitment:** Strong leadership is essential to drive the governance processes and to ensure optimal governance outcomes for each project.
- **Focus on Material Matters:** Focus on decisions, exceptions, escalated matters, key risks etc. rather than information sharing. This needs to be supported by appropriate reporting.
 - **Targeted Membership:** Keep committee membership tight and utilise guest invitation arrangements to augment discussion of particular projects/matters as appropriate.
 - **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, including pre and post-meeting engagement.
 - **Manage Risk of Overlooked Projects:** Ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to avoid projects (or specific project matters) being unintentionally or intentionally overlooked.

In some situations, the Chair of an SPB may not be the Project Sponsor for all SPB in-scope projects – resultant challenges:

- **Decision-making Challenges:** When the chair of the SPB does not have 'skin in the game' for the projects being discussed, sub-optimal decisions may result.
- **Diluted Accountability:** Accountability can become unclear when the Chair is not deeply invested in the success of specific projects, potentially leading to misaligned priorities.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** A Chair without direct ties to projects might inadvertently favour decisions that benefit their own business area or project interests.

Strategies to address these challenges:

- **Decision Processes:** Grant Project Sponsors veto rights or the ability to escalate decisions that might otherwise negatively impact their projects.
- **Accountability Measures:** Define specific accountability measures for both the Chair and Project Sponsors. Ensure that there are checks and balances in place to maintain focus on project and organisational goals.

IMPORTANT NOTE