



Australian Institute of
Project Management

CERTIFIED PRACTISING PROJECT SPONSOR

AIPM PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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This standard is based on the following standard developed by Global Alliance for the Project Professions (GAPPS, 2017): *A Guiding Framework for Project Sponsors*, Global Alliance for the Project Professions, Sydney.

Proposals for Amendment

Proposals for amendments or additions to this document should be sent to: Head of Professional Advancement, regpm@aipm.com.au

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Introduction

This Competency Standard provides the basis for the development and assessment of the Certified Practising Project Sponsor (CPPS).

These Standards have been developed as generic standards with the objective of applicability across a wide range of industries and enterprises. They may be used by industries and enterprises as they stand, or they may be used as a basis from which each industry or enterprise may contextualise these project management standards.

These Standards are described in terms of the units of project sponsorship management. Within each unit, the Standards detail the elements of competency and associated performance criteria, range indicators, knowledge and skills, and evidence guides.

The Units are:

- Unit 1 – Take accountability for the project
- Unit 2 – Support the project manager
- Unit 3 – Support the project

The Standard is based on the *Framework for Project Sponsors* from the Global Alliance for the Project Professions (GAPPS), 2017.

Relationship of the units to Project Management

The discipline of Project Management is covered by these Standards. Each unit is a separate function of project sponsorship, but an experienced Project Sponsor should be able to demonstrate competence in each of the units.

Work Performed at Project Sponsor Level

The sponsor is an individual who typically has a permanent position within the organisation. The role of project sponsor is generally considered an additional, part-time role.

The organisation's governance practices should make it clear who the sponsor is, how the sponsor is selected, their accountabilities, and responsibilities as well as the relationship between the sponsor and the project manager and between the project and the business.

These practices should ensure that the sponsor has authority, credibility, and/or position necessary to perform the role.

The sponsor may be appointed from, and at, any management level within the organisation that is applicable for the type of project being sponsored. Sponsorship includes the degree of support and governance required to be provided to both the project manager and the project.

Sponsor Role	Activities
Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring alignment of organisational strategies with project goals • Providing budget, resource and other support necessary to delivering the project • Being the spokesperson to gather support and promote benefits of the project
Accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the success of the project • Formally authorising initiation and scope of the project • Serving as the escalation path and casting vote
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirements and project scope • Any change in scope, time, resource or budget • Go/No Go decision • Customer acceptance of deployment to production
Consulted on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any change to the implementation strategy and plan • The communication and training plan • Cross-functional alignment of change management • Prioritisation reviews
Informed on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project status updates • Budget updates • Business impact analysis and end user feedback • PIR review and lessons learnt report

A project sponsor would commonly demonstrate the following attributes:

Decision Maker

The project sponsor needs to hold a position of authority in the organisation at a high enough level to allow decisions to be made on the project. A sponsor is needed in the event of problems and will make the decisions necessary to move the project forward again. Apart from having a position in the company which allows sponsors to make decisions they also need to have the willingness to do so. An ideal project sponsor will have the authority and will make the decisions necessary to successfully deliver the project.

Understands the Project

A project sponsor is expected to be able to deal with a number of projects simultaneously, as well as their regular work; therefore, extra effort is required to ensure they are aware of the details of the project. They need to ensure they have all of the information which they will need to make informed decisions.

Influences Others

Being a senior figure within the company the sponsor will assist when it comes to influencing others. This is probably most important in the case of needing to influence the key stakeholders in the project.

Chooses the Right Team

The project sponsor is integral in terms of the team which is put together to do the project work. The sponsor is also the person that helps to work with the team to remain on track. A lack of adequate focus on the resources can be a serious risk to making the project a success.

Good Communicator

The project sponsor needs to be visible and communicate their ideas to the team. The scope of work could change dramatically over time and without good communication between the sponsor and the project manager the risk to non-delivery increases. The sponsor needs regular updates however they need to ask for more information or clarity if needed. The sponsor needs to establish a solid working relationship with the project manager and understand all of the project stakeholder's role and responsibilities.

Sponsor Candidate Profile

The following guidance is offered for both candidates and assessors to determine whether they are operating at the level required to achieve certification. The criteria below are NOT entry criteria, nor should they be treated as a checklist. They are merely guidance. It is expected that a candidate for CPPS would have the following profile:

Guidelines for candidates:

- 10+ years of experience in practice.
- A record of accomplishment in sponsoring projects which deliver benefits aligned to organisational strategy.
- Sponsored projects that have organisational strategic impacts.
- A proven record of mentoring, coaching or guiding project managers of projects they are sponsoring.
- Able to reference at least two projects they have sponsored over the past five years.

The above criteria provide general guidance for candidates and assessors to determine the applicability of this competency standard.

Assessment Requirements for Certified Practising Project Sponsor

Assessment for the Certified Practising Project Sponsor will be conducted using the following methods:

- Review a portfolio of evidence.¹
- Completion of at least one assessment interview in which the assessor can confirm underpinning knowledge and application of practice.
- The candidate is asked to reflect and describe situations from recent and current sponsoring of projects.
- Third-party reference checks where requested by CPPS Assessor.

The assessment is finalised through the provision of a structured Assessor Report.

¹ If there is a situation where a small portion of workplace documentation cannot be provided, the evidence may be gathered through interview and third-party reports.

Certified Practising Project Sponsor

Unit 1: Take Accountability for the Project

Description: This Unit defines the Elements required to take accountability for the project. It includes the Performance Criteria required to demonstrate competency in establishing both what the project will accomplish and how it will do so. Accountability means that the sponsor is ultimately answerable for how the **project** is managed, for the success or failure of the outcome of the project and the realisation of benefits.

Elements	Performance Criteria
1.1 Ensure the project is justified	<p>1.1.1 Alignment of the project with the defined direction and strategic objectives of the organisation is maintained.</p> <p>1.1.2 The project is justified and realistic.</p>
1.2 Sustain effective governance	<p>1.2.1 Authority levels, approval processes, decision making protocols, and reporting mechanisms are defined, communicated and implemented.</p> <p>1.2.2 Project governance complies with applicable requirements.</p> <p>1.2.3 Socially responsible practice is actively supported.</p> <p>1.2.4 Sponsorship role is clearly defined and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>1.2.5 Lessons learned process is supported.</p> <p>1.2.6 Ownership of the outcome of the project is transferred.</p>
1.3 Orchestrate plans for benefits realisation	<p>1.3.1 The path to benefits realisation is clearly defined, feasible and communicated.</p> <p>1.3.2 Ownership of benefits realisation is identified, understood, and accepted by all stakeholders.</p>

Range Indicators

Alignment includes resolution of competing or conflicting interest within the organisation. Lack of alignment would suggest cancellation, postponement, or a need for significant change in the project. This could include re-prioritising the project.

The **defined direction and strategic objectives** of the organisation would normally be detailed in a strategic plan or similar document. That direction must be

communicated through portfolio management decisions, program management decisions, or any other forms of communication.

The **organisation** may be a department, a business unit, a corporation, a government agency, a joint venture, not for profit or any other legal form. It may be a single entity, or it may include multiple entities. When there are multiple entities, they may be loosely linked by collaborative agreements or tightly bound through legally enforceable contracts; there may be a clear leader or a partnership of equals. The organisation includes any entity that is actively involved in funding the project.

Maintained includes both in initial development and on-going alignment throughout the project lifecycle.

Justified requires showing or proving that the project is right or reasonable and explains the rationale for the project. The justification will generally be based on a feasibility study or other analysis that pre-dates the start of the project. It may be formally documented in a detailed business case, or more casually in some other document. The sponsor may develop the justification if involved at the start or may review and evaluate the existing justification. The sponsor must ensure that a justification process has been followed.

Realistic about the probability of the project success. It includes the need to balance risk and opportunity in line with an organisation's risk appetite. Special attention from the sponsor may be needed to identify and respond to unusual risks, to major changes in scope, or to project constraints to ensure that the justification remains credible.

Authority levels are needed for both financial and non-financial decisions. They may be based on absolute values or may have tolerances. Authority levels may be defined by existing policies and procedures or may be developed to meet the needs of the project and the requirements of the sponsoring organisation.

Reporting mechanisms must satisfy needs of the organisation, the project, and other relevant stakeholders.

Project governance would normally cover roles and responsibilities, delegated authority, reporting relationships, decision making, financial management, ethics policies and practices, review and audit processes, and alignment with the governance practices of the organisation

Applicable requirements will include those of the organisation(s) and may include but is not limited to those of audit, government, legal, and international financial reporting.

Socially responsible practice includes behaviours that are ethical, equitable, and sustainable, and may vary based on organisational norms, culture, country, personal beliefs, or other factors. Aspects of sustainability include nature, society, economy and well-being.

Relevant stakeholders include individuals and organisations whose interests may be

affected by the project, or whose actions may influence some aspect of the project. Stakeholders may include project proponents, sponsors, clients, customers, collaborators, contributors, champions, constituent project managers, project team members, project support staff, subcontractors, suppliers, media representatives, and the general public. Stakeholders may be internal to or external from the sponsoring organisation. The relevance of a stakeholder may be affected by the impact on the stakeholder, or by the stakeholder's impact on the project, and by cultural or ethical considerations. Different stakeholders are relevant in different situations.

Lessons Learned include insights and may apply to a single phase, to the entire project, or to future projects, and may include organisational issues.

Support for lessons learned includes making sure that lessons and insights are captured and shared across the organisation.

Outcomes of the project means the outputs of the project or deliverables.

Transferred can be from one role to another. For example, when the sponsor transfers ownership from sponsor role to functional role.

Path may mean roadmap, plan or other document describing the actions and responsibilities in relation to benefits realisation. Plans for benefits realisation may be added to or modified over the course of the project. They would normally include consultation with users/clients, validation and change implementation. They may be documented in a Benefits Realisation Plan, a Business Case, or other document. The key objective of the plan is to make sure that someone is responsible after the project is complete. Plans may include organisational change management. Benefits may include improved financial or operational results such as cost savings, increased revenue, market share, or the creation of intellectual property. They may also include dis-benefits (a disadvantage or negative impact). Benefits may not be realised during the project life. Benefits should generally be measurable.

Benefits realisation may require support or deliverables from other projects or actions of the organisation. Some projects will have a documented Benefits Realisation Plan. Some will have the information in the Business Case or other document. Ownership of benefits realisation means the person or persons responsible for ensuring that benefits accrue as planned.

Feasible may mean capable of being done, effected or accomplished.

Communicated may include a range of communication methods and recipients of the communication. The future owner(s) of the benefits should be engaged in the communication.

Accepted means that the individual or organisation has agreed to be accountable. It includes informed consent. It may require organisational change management and stakeholder engagement.

Underpinning Knowledge and Skills

General knowledge and understanding of:

- Organisational strategy
- How to align a project to strategy
- Project governance and authority levels
- Decision-making models
- Socially responsible practices
- Benefits management and realisation
- Lessons learned and continuous improvement

Demonstrates the following skills:

- Review of a business case to determine the justification
- Communicating with stakeholders at a senior level
- Taking accountability for project decisions and outcomes
- Managing benefits achievement

Evidence Guide

The following documentation or components of the documentation produced by, managed by, or led by, the individual can provide supporting evidence:

- Demonstration of how a project is aligned to the organisation's strategy
- Business case or proposal that justifies why a project is required
- Review of estimates that demonstrates a project budget, schedule and approach is realistic
- Governance plan showing accountabilities, authorities and decision makers
- Documentation that shows consideration of socially responsible practice
- Lessons learned report
- Project plan or governance plan showing roles and responsibilities for the project sponsor
- Demonstration of how ownership of project outcomes has occurred
- Benefits management plans showing how benefits are identified, tracked and realised
- Review of a business case to determine the justification

Certified Practising Project Sponsor

Unit 2: Support the Project Manager

Definition: This unit defines the Elements required to support the project manager. It includes the Performance Criteria required to demonstrate competency in how to support and coach/mentor the project manager in undertaking their duties. Governance defines the project manager role. It can vary significantly by sector. Unlike the Sponsor, who is part of the permanent organisation, the Project Manager may be internal or external to the organisation.

Elements	Performance Criteria
2.1 Be available to the project manager	<p>2.1.1 Commitments to the project manager are planned and kept. Coaching/mentoring of the project manager is undertaken.</p> <p>2.1.2 Relevant information is shared with the project manager in a timely manner.</p> <p>2.1.3 Project manager’s requests are addressed in a timely manner.</p>
2.2 Assist the project manager with conflict management	<p>2.2.1 Potential conflicts are anticipated and managed.</p> <p>2.2.2 Conflicts beyond the capacity of the project manager are dealt with in a timely manner by the sponsor.</p> <p>2.2.3 Project manager’s role in dealing with conflict is reinforced.</p>
2.3 Provide feedback on the performance of the project manager	<p>2.3.1 Performance of the project manager is assessed.</p> <p>2.3.2 Actions are taken to ensure that the project manager applies good practice, has a development plan and undertakes performance improvement initiatives.</p>

Range Indicators

Commitments may include agreements on how they will work together, escalated matters, planned actions, methods and modes of communication and interaction.

Planned may take the form of formal or informal agreements between the Sponsor and Project Manager, some of which may be in the communication plan. The plan may be revised through the life of the project.

Timely manner means within agreed timeframes and may mean ensuring minimal delays occur in the transfer of information.

Requests may include requests for decisions from the project manager, especially with regard to resources, removal of blockages or obstacles, and support for the management of issues and new risks and opportunities.

Addressed includes acceptance as is, acceptance with modification or rejections. Response includes getting decisions from the organisation.

Conflicts and differences may be technical, managerial, interpersonal, legal, or commercial. Conflicts may be engendered by unusual, unanticipated events. They may involve strong emotions or simple differences of opinion. Conflicts may involve team members or other stakeholders.

Capacity may be a function of authority level, intellectual ability, experience, interpersonal differences, personality clashes etc.

Dealt with may include escalating conflicts beyond sponsor's authority.

Reinforced may include collaborating with PM, also ensuring stakeholders understand the sponsor is 'behind the PM', agreeing with and supporting the PM and using coaching and mentoring tools and techniques.

Assessed against performance agreements or defined role. The sponsor may be involved in defining performance expectations of the project manager.

Actions may include agreeing performance expectations, regular reviews of performance, encouragement to continue in the face of adversity, development of corrective actions, recommendation for removal from project or recommending the use of a mentor or coach.

Good practice may include team wellness, proper use of overtime, resource balancing, basic planning, support for socially responsible behaviour.

Underpinning Knowledge and Skills

General knowledge and understanding of:

- Coaching and mentoring models
- Issues management in projects
- Escalation protocols
- Conflict management
- Performance management of staff
- Developing others

Demonstrates the following skills:

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- Verbal and written communications techniques
- Formal and informal communications techniques
- Decision-making
- Guiding the project manager through specific conflicts
- Developing project managers

Evidence Guide

The following documentation or components of the documentation produced by, managed by or led by the individual, can provide supporting evidence:

- Project status reports showing how information is distributed to stakeholders.
- Examples of communicating relevant information to project managers.
- Examples of coaching, mentoring and support provided to project managers.
- Examples of how difficult situations are communicated with stakeholders.
- Examples of how conflicts and issues escalated by the project manager are dealt with.
- Examples of how requests by project managers are addressed.
- Performance reviews of project managers.
- Diary entries for coaching/mentoring sessions.
- Notes on coaching mentoring sessions.
- Implementation of development plans for project managers.

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Unit 3: Support the Project

Definition: This Unit defines the Elements required to provide support to the project. It includes the Performance Criteria required to demonstrate competency in how to support the project with resourcing, decision making, identifying all stakeholders, cultivating stakeholder commitment and project reviews. The difference between Sponsor and Project Manager re resourcing is that the project manager’s engagement is hands on and in depth whilst the sponsor is at the higher-level including managing organisation realities, competing needs and political aspects. The sponsor may need to look beyond the organisation for potential resource constraints that may hinder the project.

Elements	Performance Criteria
<p>3.1 Resource availability is sustained</p>	<p>3.1.1 Project and organisation resource needs are addressed.</p> <p>3.1.2 Funding approval is secured.</p> <p>3.1.3 Project context is monitored and evaluated for circumstances that may affect resource readiness.</p> <p>3.1.4 Action is taken to resolve resource issues and additional resources are secured when required.</p>
<p>3.2 Cultivate stakeholder commitment</p>	<p>3.2.1 Personal commitment to the sponsor role is demonstrated.</p> <p>3.2.2 Approaches to sustaining stakeholder commitment are defined and supported.</p> <p>3.2.3 Visibility of the project is promoted to relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>3.2.4 Stakeholder interests and expectations are monitored.</p> <p>3.2.5 Differences in stakeholder interests and expectations are reconciled.</p> <p>3.2.6 Project achievements are recognised.</p>

<p>3.3 Ensure readiness for project reviews</p>	<p>3.3.1 Project reviews are planned and occur in a timely manner.</p> <p>3.3.2 Actions are taken to ensure personal readiness for project reviews.</p> <p>3.3.3 Constructive feedback on project team’s preparation is provided prior to external reviews.</p>
<p>3.4 Provide decisions in a timely manner</p>	<p>3.4.1 Decisions are made as scheduled.</p> <p>3.4.2 Decisions that are escalated to the sponsor are resolved in a timely manner.</p> <p>3.4.3 Actions are taken to overcome impact on the project due to others delaying decisions.</p>

Range Indicators

Resource may include staffing, material, funding, cash flow, machinery, time, equipment, supplies.

Addressed may include establishing resource requirements, constraints to availability, conflicts between project and the organisation regarding demand for resources are resolved. It may include compromises for the overall organisational good.

Funding may include the original allocation, funding for unexpected events, management (contingency) reserve or additional funds due to baseline changes.

Secured may include presenting the case to higher authorities, negotiation, obtaining commitments, following organisation financial approval processes, seeking alternative sources of funding.

The **project context** includes both internal and external events that impact the project. It includes markets, technology, stakeholders, society, culture, the environment, and government regulation.

Readiness means being available, fully prepared to undertake project work and may include anticipating possible problems and opportunities, resources being committed elsewhere, impact of competing projects.

Action is only taken when beyond the project manager’s authority to resolve. Actions are taken by the sponsor to make sure the resources are available. It may involve leveraging,

network and lobbying when there are problems. Particular attention must be paid to key or scarce resources.

Commitment requires active involvement throughout the life cycle. This active involvement may include support, decision making, conducting activities, providing resources.

Approaches may be developed by the sponsor and/or the project manager. Approach would normally include how visible the sponsor will be. Approaches may include building relationships, alliances and coalitions, sharing of information and resources, shaping stakeholder interests, and ensuring team wellness. Approaches will generally be documented in a stakeholder analysis and engagement plan that includes communication modes/methods, message, outputs and frequency. Some stakeholder relationships may be assigned to the sponsor.

Stakeholder includes individuals and organisations whose interest may be affected by the project, or whose actions may influence some aspect of the project. Stakeholders may include project proponents, sponsors, clients, customers, collaborators, contributors, champions, constituent project managers, project team members, support staff, subcontractors, suppliers, media representatives, and the general public. Stakeholders may be internal to or external from the project.

Visibility may include recognition and reward of team and individual achievements and building relationships with key stakeholders.

Interests may include needs, wants, or requirements that may be stated or implied. Interests may be related to the benefits and impacts of the project or to how the work of the project is conducted.

Expectations are beliefs about the future. They may be stated or implied. They may or may not be based on facts. Expectations may be related to the benefits and impacts of the project or to how the work of the project is conducted.

Monitored includes communicating evolving and emerging changes in interests and expectations to the project manager, supporting the management of communication interfaces. This may include testing to see if the message has been received and understood and is likely to generate the desired actions.

Reconciled may include being directly involved or simply supporting the process to resolve the differences.

Recognised by the sponsor, the organisation, client, or other. Recognition should be visible; may be possible even with failed projects. If no achievements merit recognition, the sponsor should document the basis for this conclusion.

Project reviews could be scheduled or ad hoc; formal or informal; interim or final;

lessons learned; audit agencies; gate view; internal or external audits; peer review; client or customer; business case evaluations.

Actions may include reading reports and agendas, communication with and addressing potential concerns of key stakeholders including potential opponents.

Constructive feedback may include providing the project team with thoughtful and informed comments and suggestions, critiques, reviews, evaluation of level of detail, completeness checks. It also may include feedback on actual reviews to help prepare for the next one, identification of likely responses from others and schedule of preparation activities. Problems should be anticipated.

External may include a third party independent of the project as defined in the governance framework.

Decisions are made in line with decision-making protocols. These decisions may be ad hoc or built into the schedule as pre-planned activities or mandated as part of the governance framework. Decision making processes and authorities are defined in the project or governance protocols. Decisions may be made by the sponsor or by a third party.

Timely manner in this context implies within the time period agreed between the stakeholders.

Actions could include recognising early that a decision may be delayed and influencing to overcome that delay; recommending advocating and supporting alternative approaches to minimise the negative impact on the project; making a decision to delay the project as a result of not receiving a decision from others.

Underpinning Knowledge and Skills

General knowledge and understanding of:

- Project resource planning and allocation
- Project budget process
- Approaches to gain project funding in an organisation
- Issues management
- Stakeholder engagement techniques
- The role of the sponsor in supporting the project
- Project review and audit approaches
- Decision-making models
- Project change control approach (change in scope, time or budget)

Demonstrates the following skills:

- Verification of resource forecasts to determine suitability and accuracy
- Project budget analysis
- Assessing stakeholder interests, needs and expectations

- Negotiation skills
- Justifying project budgets and expenditure
- Promotion of the project to stakeholders
- Gaining stakeholder commitment
- Using constructive feedback to improve the project
- Assessing the impact of decisions on the project
- Making timely decisions
- Managing upwards

Evidence Guide

The following documentation or components of the documentation produced by, managed by or led by the individual, can provide supporting evidence:

- Project Organisational Structures.
- Human Resource Management Plan.
- Responsibility Assignment Matrix.
- Emails on people management/resource allocation and responsibilities.
- Copy of change request sign offs for project scope variations.
- Diary evidence of regular Project Steering Committee meetings.
- Minutes of meetings referring to human resource management issues.
- Examples of dealing with difficult stakeholders and how outcomes were negotiated.
- Examples of promoting the project benefits and outcomes to stakeholders.
- Project reviews, health checks and audits.
- Commentary on how the project manager and stakeholders were readied for project reviews.
- Examples of decision making at various points in the project.
- Demonstration of how escalated issues were resolved in a timely manner.
- Assessment of the impacts of project decisions.
- Examples of where decisions have been delayed and the action taken by the sponsor to expedite these decisions.
- Stakeholder analyses showing interests and expectations.
- Examples showing achievement of project outcomes being recognised and celebrated.
- Project budget analysis.