



Steering Committee Purpose and Role

For Sponsors, PMs and Committee Members

What Is the Purpose of a Steering Committee?

Steering Committees can convey substantial benefits to a project. Fundamentally, a Steering Committee can ask good questions, generate good ideas and provide a useful distance and perspective for the project team.

The most effective Steering Committees are generally those that provide guidance on key project decisions. Key project decisions could include business issues that impact the project as well as key project issues that will affect the overall schedule or budget. This includes the following:

- Approving the budgetary strategy,
- Defining and realizing outcomes,
- Monitoring risks, quality and timelines,
- Monitoring project activities against project plans
- Making policy and resourcing decisions,
- Assessing requests for changes to the scope of the project,
- Considering the big picture,
- And linking what the project is doing and planning to developments, problems and opportunities in the broader enterprise.

A Steering Committee also provides intangible benefits like the following:

- **Sets the tone for cooperation** and makes sure agencies cooperate in completing the shared vision and goals.
- **Gives “authority” to matrix organizations** and ensure the means and mechanisms are in place to get things done.
- **Monitors the progress of the project against its goals**, and keep these project goals and the overall project plan under review.

The Steering Committee is accountable for the project’s expenditure and the overall work of the project. It checks and approves the project charter for accuracy and compliance with the business case, monitors progress against the project management plan, reviews and verifies changes made to the business case, and reviews and approves changes made to project resource plan, schedules, scope, goals, cost estimates, etc.

- **Represents stakeholders** that do not directly sit on the steering committee.



The steering committee also encourages and strengthens links between the project and other relevant communities, resolves conflicts between stakeholder groups and obtains support/agreement from stakeholders, and takes responsibility for communicating status and needs to stakeholders.

- **Ensures equality in decision-making.**

The steering committee must make sure the project meets the needs of as many participants as possible. This means it must fairly weigh all requests and act impartially to do the most good with the resources it has available.

- **Acts as the ultimate decision maker** in handling political, legal, organizational, technical, cost, management, cultural and personnel issues.

The Steering Committee sometimes must serve as a forum for making final, and sometimes difficult, decisions. **This is the main purpose of the steering committee.** The committee may be called upon to make strategic decisions such as prioritizing project deliverables, approving interim deliverables, reviewing and approving the project development strategy, and reviewing and suggesting solutions for the issues critical to project success.