Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Template and Guide

Version 1.1, May 2008

This Template and Guide is for the development of a Steering Committee Terms of Reference. The Guide is intended to be read in conjunction with the Template and should be removed from the front of the final document.

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What is a Steering Committee Terms of Reference?

*Steering Committee Terms of Reference* is the document that establishes the agreed roles and functions for the Project Steering Committee, both collectively and individually. It is owned, maintained and utilised by the Steering Committee[[1]](#footnote-1) to ensure the project is governed responsibly. A Project Steering Committee can be defined as the key body within the project governance structure that is responsible for the business issues associated with the project.

The *Project Management Fact Sheet: Steering Committee Nuts and Bolts* can provide further information regarding the operations of the Project Steering Committee.

Why would you develop a Steering Committee terms of Reference?

A *Terms of Reference is* developed to provide:

* A clear description of the roles and functions of the Steering Committee to be agreed at their first meeting.
* An agreed charter by which the Steering Committee can oversight its performance.
* A formalised agreement between the Steering Committee and the Project Sponsor on what roles and functions the Steering Committee has agreed to accept.

When would you develop a Steering Committee Terms of Reference?

Approval to proceed to develop a *Steering Committee Terms of Reference* is usually assumed from the approval of the governance model for the project by the Project Sponsor*.*

What you need before you start?

* Endorsed document establishing the scope of the Project which could be a *Project Proposal, Project Business Case or* *Project* *Business Plan*.
* Agreement to proceed with the development of the *Steering Committee Terms of Reference* from the Project Sponsor.
* Knowledge and understanding of the roles and functions of a *Project Steering Committee* and where they fit within the Project governance structure, as outlined in the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines.*
* Any other project approval processes that are required in your organisation.

Also advisable:

* Knowledge and understanding of the Project’s governance requirements.
* Corporate governance structures for the Department/Business Unit.
* Departmental Project Management Guidelines.

What you will have when you are finished:

A complete *Steering Committee Terms of Reference* document that is ready for acceptance by the Project Sponsor and Steering Committee

**Integration Process:**

Excerpts from any endorsed documents (for example a *Project Business Plan* or *Project Stakeholder Management Plan*) should be utilised to populate the Steering Committee Terms of Reference. This information, along with any gaps, then provides a basis for further discussion, clarification and confirmation of the Terms of Reference by the Project Sponsor and Steering Committee.

It should be noted that development of the *Steering Committee Terms of Reference* is **not a static** **process**, and that it must be re-examined during the different phases of the life of the project, particularly where a great deal of change is involved. For example, the Initiation Phase of a Project may require a slightly different emphasis in the *Steering Committee Terms of Reference* to the Outcome Realisation phase and may require change in the Steering Committee composition. This iterative development should involve the Project Steering Committee and Project Sponsor. The key is to obtain clear sign-off where changes are required during the life of the project. Sign off should be documented in the Steering Committee meeting minutes.

Maintaining document control:

Agreed changes to the *Steering Committee Terms of Reference*, are tracked in the document version control process. This is an essential record of the changes, development and subsequent revision(s) of the document. When applied document version control provides for the unique identification of each version of a document, whether in electronic or hard copy format. The version number changes as the document is revised allowing released versions of a document to be readily discernable from draft versions. Formal sign off dates should be included.

Refer to the *Project Management Fact Sheet: Document Control* at [www.egovernment.tas.gov.au](http://www.egovernment.tas.gov.au) for more information.

How to use this template:

The template contains sections which are either optional or can be developed at a number of levels of detail depending upon individual need.

All documents developed based on this template should include an appropriate acknowledgement.

A number of **different text styles** have been used within the template, as follows:

* Text in blue italics is intended to provide a guide as to the kind of information that can be included in a section and to what types of projects it might be applicable. It should be deleted from the final document.
* Text in normal font is intended as examples.
* Text enclosed in <angle brackets> is intended to be replaced by whatever it is describing.
* This document has been formatted for duplex printing. If you intend to print single sided, you may need to delete some page breaks.

Checklist

**Have you remembered to remove**:

* The versioning statement from the front cover of your document?
* This guide and checklist from the front of your document?
* All blue italic instructional text and <prescriptive text enclosed in angle brackets> within the template

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| --- |
| <Project Title>  Steering Committee Terms of Reference |
| *The version number starts at one and increases by one for each release. It shows the release number and a revision letter if in draft. The original draft is 0.A and subsequent drafts are 0.B, 0.C etc. The first accepted and issued document is 1.0. Subsequent changes in draft form are 1.0A, 1.0B etc.. The accepted and issued second version is 1.1 or 2.0, depending on the magnitude of the change.*  Refer to the Project Management Fact Sheet: Document Control, for more information at [www.egovernment.tas.gov.au](http://www.egovernment.tas.gov.au) |
| Version No: <n.n> <dd-mm-yyyy>  Copy: Uncontrolled |

# Background/Context

*Briefly describe the context within which the Steering Committee will operate.*

# Function of the <Project Title> Steering Committee

*List the main functions that the Steering Committee will perform. The following example has been extracted from the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines, Appendix 2: Steering Not Rowing: A Charter for Project Steering Committees and their Members:*

The Function of the <Project Title> Steering Committee is to take responsibility for the business issues associated with the <Project Title> project. The Steering Committee is responsible for approving budgetary strategy, defining and realising benefits, and monitoring risks, quality and timeliness.

# Role of the <Project Title> Steering Committee

*List the roles that will be undertaken by the Steering Committee. The following example has been extracted from the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines, Appendix 2: Steering Not Rowing: A Charter for Project Steering Committees and their Members:*

The Role of the <Project Title> Steering Committee is to:

* take on responsibility for the project's feasibility, business plan and achievement of outcomes
* ensure the project's scope aligns with the requirements of the stakeholder groups
* provide those directly involved in the project with guidance on project business issues
* ensure effort and expenditure are appropriate to stakeholder expectations
* address any issue that has major implications for the project
* keep the project scope under control as emergent issues force changes to be considered
* reconcile differences in opinion and approach, and resolve disputes arising from them
* report on project progress to those responsible at a high level, such as Cabinet
* take on responsibility for any whole-of-government issues associated with the project

# Role of individual Steering Committee members

*List the roles that will be undertaken by the individual Steering Committee members. The following example has been extracted from the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines, Appendix 2: Steering Not Rowing: A Charter for Project Steering Committees and their Members:*

The role of the individual member of the <Project Title> Steering Committee includes:

* understand the strategic implications and outcomes of initiatives being pursued through project outputs
* appreciate the significance of the project for some or all major stakeholders and perhaps represent their interests
* be genuinely interested in the initiative and the outcomes being pursued in the project
* be an advocate for the project's outcomes
* have a broad understanding of project management issues and the approach being adopted
* be committed to, and actively involved in pursuing the project's outcomes

In practice, this means they:

* ensure the requirements of stakeholders are met by the project's outputs
* help balance conflicting priorities and resources
* provide guidance to the Project Team and users of the project's outputs
* consider ideas and issues raised
* review the progress of the project
* check adherence of project activities to standards of best practice, both within the organisation and in a wider context

# General

## Membership

*List the membership of the Steering Committee, including their Position Title and Agency/Organisation. The Project Business Case or Plan should help identify the composition and representation required For example:*

The <Project Title> Steering Committee shall be comprised of:

* <General members names>
* <Project Manager>
* <Project Team members> (if applicable)
* <Special representatives, consultants or advisors> (if required)
* <Observers> (if applicable)

## Convenor/Chair

*Name the person responsible for convening the scheduled meetings. It may also be prudent to nominate an Acting Chair in case of the Chair’s absence or inability to attend or perform their duties.*

*It may also be relevant to state whether anyone else, and under what circumstance an unscheduled meeting may be called.*

The Chair, <name and title of person> shall convene the <Project Title> Steering Committee meetings.

If the designated Chair is not available, then <name and title of person> (referred to as the Acting Chair) will be responsible for convening and conducting that meeting. The Acting Chair is responsible for informing the Chair as to the salient points/decisions raised or agreed to at that meeting.

## Agenda Items

*Information on the distribution timeframes of the Steering Committee’s agenda should be included here. How to have agenda items listed, and other matters relating to timeframes, formatting or other special requirements specific to agenda items, should be outlined in this section.*

*If there is any proviso relating to approval or not of agenda items, this should be stated.*

All <Project Title> Steering Committee agenda items must be forwarded to the <Project Manager/Executive Officer> by C.O.B. <number of days> working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The <Project Title> Steering Committee agenda, with attached meeting papers will be distributed at least <number of days> working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The Chair has the right to refuse to list an item on the formal agenda, but members may raise an item under ‘Other Business’ if necessary and as time permits.

## Minutes & Meeting Papers

*Information on the distribution timeframes of the project’s minutes and meeting papers should be stated. The provision for and process of handling out-of-session decisions should also be included.*

*Business rules relating to endorsement/amendments of the minutes should be outlined and these rules should also state clearly who will be responsible for maintaining a complete set of records for archiving purposes (as covered under the Archives Act 1983).*

The format of the <Project Title> Steering Committee minutes shall be as Minutes (see Attachment <number>).

The minutes of each <Project Title> Steering Committee meeting will be prepared by the <Project Manager/Executive Officer>.

Full copies of the Minutes, including attachments, shall be provided to all <Project Title> Steering Committee members no later than <number of days> working days following each meeting.

By agreement of the Committee, out-of-session decisions <will be; will not be> deemed acceptable. Where agreed, all out-of-session decisions shall be recorded in the minutes of the next scheduled <Project Title> Steering Committee meeting.

The Minutes of each <Project Title> Steering Committee meeting will be monitored and maintained by the <Project Manager/Lead Agency> as a complete record as required under provisions of the Archives Act 1983.

## Frequency of Meetings

*Setting a timetable or schedule at the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee allows members to set aside meeting times well ahead. The meetings should be often enough that progress could be reported against a number of milestones since the last meeting. Ideally, the timing for the meetings should be linked to key milestone dates (including the end of a phase) and not to a pattern; for example, the last Friday in the month. In reality, this is not always possible and depends upon the nature of the project. As the project progresses a meeting may occasionally be re-scheduled to better align with a key milestone.*

The <Project Title> Steering Committee shall meet <timeframe, e.g. monthly> on the <date>, or as per Meeting Schedule (see Attachment <number>).

*Further information may be necessary if the Steering Committee agree to consider out-of-session decisions.*

## Proxies to Meetings

*Determining the permissions, voting rights, and ability of a proxy to actively participate in meetings at the outset prevents misunderstandings later in the Steering Committee’s proceedings. If the Steering Committee agrees not to accept proxies, then this fact should also be documented.*

Members of the <Project Title> Steering Committee <shall; shall not> nominate a proxy to attend a meeting if the member is unable to attend.

The Chair will be informed of the substitution at least <number of days> working days prior to the scheduled nominated meeting.

The nominated proxy <shall; shall not> have voting rights at the attended meeting. The nominated proxy <shall; shall not> provide relevant comments/feedback, of the <Project Title> Steering Committee member they are representing, to the attended meeting.

## Quorum Requirements

*The requirements for a quorum that can make and ratify decisions by the Steering Committee should be stated. This allows the Steering Committee to be clear on whether there is official sanction of decisions.*

A minimum of <number> of <Project Title> Steering Committee members is required for the meeting to be recognised as an authorised meeting for the recommendations or resolutions to be valid.

The quorum must contain at least <number> member(s) from the <stakeholder group> and <number> member(s) from the <Lead Agency>.

## Review Timetable

This section is optional and may be used if there is a requirement to assess the effectiveness of the Project Steering Committee.

## Dispute Resolution

This section is optional and may be used to outline the process for dispute resolution.

1. For a definition of common terms, refer to the *Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines* , *Appendix 1: Project Management Glossary* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)