Who Should be on Your Project Team: The Importance of Project Roles and Responsibilities

One significant factor contributing to the success of projects is having the right people engaged in the process. Who are the right stakeholders to involve in your project?

Stakeholders are individuals or organizations (customers, sponsors, vendors, public) that are actively involved in the project <u>or</u> who may be positively or negatively impacted during the implementation of the project or as a result of the project.

Defining stakeholders before your project begins helps you identify who should be working on the project, who should be providing resources, who needs communication during the project, who could provide subject matter expertise, etc. Once you determine who will help you implement the project, well-defined roles of each member of the project team sets clear expectations and understanding of responsibilities.

Every project is different. The stakeholders that should be engaged vary as well. Following is a checklist and questions to help you determine the people or groups to involve in your project.
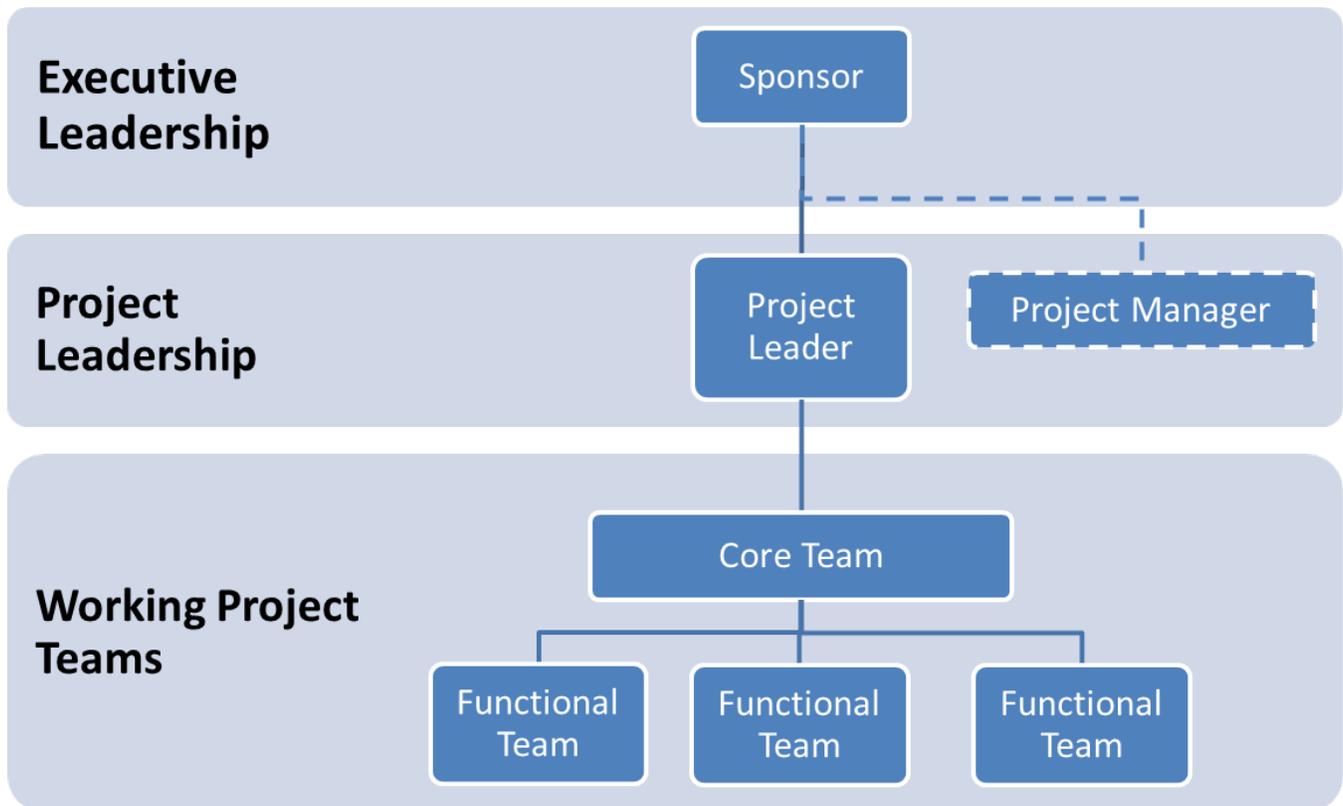
Checklist for Identifying Your Stakeholders and Potential Team Members

1. **Sponsor(s)**	✓ What is asking for this project or the resulting deliverable? ✓ Who can provide the resources and approval to move forward with the project?
2. **Subject Matter Experts**	✓ What functional areas will be involved in the implementation of the project? ✓ Who has the technical or in-depth knowledge of a specific area pertaining to the project? ✓ Who brings the functional expertise to the project? ✓ Who could provide advice during the project planning and implementation?
3. **Functional Managers**	✓ Who manages the resources that would be participating in the project?
4. **Customers**	✓ What area(s) have identified a need for the product or service the project will deliver? ✓ Who will benefit from the completion of the project? ✓ Who could provide input on what your project should deliver?
5. **Vendors**	✓ What expertise is needed to plan and implement the project? ✓ Do you have that expertise in the organization? Or do you need outside resources? ✓ Who will provide products or services to facilitate the implementation of the project?
6. **Potential Leadership**	✓ Who could provide leadership for the project? ✓ Who has experience in leading projects or teams of people across functional lines?

From the list you develop, you can begin to put together your project organization with roles and responsibilities. In addition, you have the beginning of your stakeholder analysis for your project communications plan.

Following is a roles and responsibilities table that outlines the key roles on projects. These roles may vary by project type, impact, and resources required, but in general the roles will be very similar to those outlined. On smaller projects, roles may be combined or not necessary. They include the following:

- Project Sponsor
- Project Steering or Advisory Team
- Project Leader
- Project Manager
- Project Core Team
- Functional or Sub Team
- Team Leader (for the functional or sub team)
- Team Members (for the functional or sub team)

Project Roles & Responsibilities

Title	Role
Project Sponsor	The person who commissions others to deliver the project and champions the cause throughout the project. Will normally be a senior leader with a relevant area of responsibility that will be affected by the outcome of the project. Will help define the project in conjunction with the project leader or manager.

Responsibilities
1. Has ultimate authority and responsibility for the project
2. Provides funding for the project (initial funding, additional funds)
3. Approves changes to scope, as required
4. Removes obstacles that prevent the project from moving forward
5. Approves Project Charter and subsequent documentation
6. Receives regular updates from the project leader and/or manager.
7. Provides updates to executive management
8. Resolves issues escalated by the project manager and/or core team

Title	Role
Project Steering Team or Advisory Team	This group, normally includes top level management is responsible for overseeing the progress of the project, providing input, and reacting to any strategic problems. This team is optional, but is usually required in large projects that cross-functional boundaries.

Responsibilities
1. Helps champion the project and raise awareness at senior level.
2. Provides input on strategies, implementation plan, project scope and milestones.
3. Resolves strategic and policy issues.
4. Drives and manages change through the organization.
5. Prioritize project goals with other ongoing projects.
6. Communicates with other key organizational members.

Title	Role
Project Leader	The project leader provides the functional subject matter expertise and functional ownership and accountability for project results. This role may often be combined with the project manager role for functionally focused projects.

Responsibilities
1. Develops the Project Charter and any other documentation in collaboration with the project team and resource managers for approval by the sponsor(s).
2. Ensures all given objectives and responsibilities of the team are properly documented and approved.
3. Leads core team meetings.
4. Ensures that the project tasks are outlined and tracked.
5. Ensures development of and monitors the project communications plan.

Title	Role
Project Manager	The project manager is responsible for the planning, organizing, managing, controlling, reporting, and communicating on all phases of a project. The project manager provides the processes, tools, and templates to facilitate the planning and implementation of projects and applies project management, general management, and team management skills to meet project goals and deliverables.

Responsibilities

1. Facilitates the development of the Project Charter and any other documentation in collaboration with the project team and resource managers.
2. Ensures all given objectives and responsibilities of the team are properly documented and approved on the roles matrix.
3. Facilitates the identification of project resource requirements and works with resource managers and the project leader to construct project teams.
4. Facilitates regular core team meetings to review issues, project risks, and monitor project progress.
5. Creates regular status reports and distributes to project team(s).
6. Supports communication to management including reports such as milestone reports, project cost analysis reports, etc.
7. Works with core team and project directors to remove obstacles to project progress.
8. Documents issues and tracks and monitors issues through resolution.
9. Monitors vendor contract compliance.
10. Manages assigned staff, vendors, contractors, and other resources.
11. Motivates and coaches team leads and team members.
12. Leads Lessons Learned session.

Title	Role
Project (Core) Team	The project core team is the team responsible for planning and executing the project. The team members are responsible for executing tasks and producing deliverables as outlined in the project plan. This team usually includes the project leader, project manager, the team leaders of any functional sub teams, and any critical subject matter experts. For smaller projects, this may be the only project team.

Responsibilities

1. Provides day-to-day leadership for the planning, implementation, and closing of a project.
2. Resolves issues and escalates when required.
3. Manages individual sub teams.
4. Meets regularly to review issues and monitor project progress.
5. Provides status updates on open action items.
6. Reviews and makes recommendations on vendor change orders.
7. Manages project issues and risks.
8. Approves investigation of proposed project change requests.
9. Reviews and approves/rejects project change requests.
10. Keeps respective departments and functional areas aware of the status of the project.
11. Serves as conduit from respective departments and functional areas for input into the project.

Title	Role
Team Leader Functional or Sub Team	Responsible for ensuring that agreed-upon project tasks and assignments of the sub team are completed on time, on budget, and within quality standards. The team leader should be knowledgeable of the principles and practices of project management and understand the business unit's strategic and operational issues.

Responsibilities

1. Serves on the Core Team.
2. Manages the sub team and pursues the team's given objectives (i.e. project tasks).
3. Coordinates team activities related to project schedule.
4. Provides regular status updates to the Project Manager/Leader, estimated time to completion, cause of variances, etc., as defined by the project.
5. Performs assigned activities once the schedule is approved.
6. Schedules and conducts routine team meetings with the functional or sub team and provides them status updates and project documentation, when necessary.
7. Contributes to overall project objectives and specific team deliverables.
8. Ensures tasks for team are completed on time.

Title	Role
Teams Members Functional or Sub Team	The members of the functional or sub team execute tasks and provide deliverables as outlined in the project plan and as directed by the team leader.

Responsibilities

1. Contributes to project schedule development in collaboration with the project manager/leader and team leader.
2. Responsible for contributing to overall project objectives and specific team deliverables.
3. Performs assigned activities once the schedule is approved.
4. Identify risks and opportunities throughout the project.
5. Communicates project risks and escalates issues to team leader.
6. Attends and actively participates in team meetings.
7. Maintains appropriate records of work in progress which includes any necessary documentation.

Title	Role
Project Resources	Project resources are identified subject matter experts who can be called upon to provide expertise during the project when needed.

Responsibilities

1. Provide subject matter expertise when needed on the project.
2. Participate as needed in team meetings.
3. Deliver on project tasks as assigned.

For more information and GRU project management templates, please visit the Enterprise Project Management Office at http://www.gru.edu/ie/epmo.