Government Project Delivery

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August 2026, Version 3

GPD-PN 01/26

Appointing senior responsible owners in government

Dear Accounting Officers, Chief Project Delivery Officers and Heads of Profession

Issue

This policy note sets out the framework for appointing senior responsible owners (SROs) across government. It clarifies the three categories of SRO, the appointing authorities for each, and the requirements that apply.

These arrangements apply from 1 April 2026.

Action

Departments and arm's length bodies in scope of the Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery shall:

- apply the requirements this policy note describes to all new SRO appointments
- make sure local arrangements, including templates and approval routes, reflect the correct requirements for each SRO role type
- use the updated distinction between SRO types when planning talent, governance and assurance

Context

Recent government reforms have introduced a clearer tiering of government programmes and projects. This affects how SRO arrangements are structured.

The role of the SRO itself has not changed and is defined in the Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery. What has changed is how accountability, appointment and accreditation requirements are structured around that role.

SRO arrangements vary depending on whether the programme or project is:

- part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio, including Mega Projects
- a Departmental Major Project, defined through HM Treasury's updated 'Treasury approvals process for projects and programmes'
- any other programme or project (outside departmental major thresholds), including Other Major Projects

Scope and status

This policy note forms part of a wider set of reforms. It summarises and brings together the key policies, requirements and guidance for appointing SROs, many of which are set out in other documents. It should be read together with the following documents, which contain the core requirements for the appointment and management of the role:

- Government Functional Standard GovS 002: Project Delivery
- Managing Public Money
- Departmental evidence and response to select committees: guidance (known as the Osmotherly Rules)
- Treasury approvals process for projects and programmes
- The Teal Book: Project delivery in government
- The role of the senior responsible owner

Timing

These arrangements take place from 1 April 2026.

SRO types and their arrangements

Government Major Project Portfolio SROs

If a programme or project is on the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP), the following arrangements apply to the SRO. This includes Mega Projects, which follow the same framework with a small number of distinctions.

View a template GMPP senior responsible owner appointment letter

Accountability

- GMPP SROs shall be personally accountable to Parliament for delivery decisions and actions
- GMPP SROs shall be accountable to their Accounting Officer and relevant Ministers
- GMPP SRO accountability shall be formalised through a published appointment letter using the template GMPP senior responsible owner appointment letter

Appointment

- GMPP SROs shall be jointly appointed by the:
    - Accounting Officer
    - Government Head of Project Delivery (or as delegated to the Government Head of Profession for Project Delivery)
- The centre of the function and profession may participate in job specification, sifting and interviews
- It is the responsibility of the department to ensure that appointment letters are completed, agreed with the Head of Function or Profession for Project Delivery and for publishing these letters in good time to their GOV.UK SRO appointment letters page

Accreditation and training

- GMPP SROs shall be a graduate of or be enrolled on the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA)
- GMPP SROs who are members of the Project Delivery Profession should hold senior practitioner or master practitioner accreditation

Pivotal role allowances

- Allowances may be agreed between Accounting Officers and the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) for GMPP SROs, subject to eligibility. For more information, email projectdeliverytalent@nista.gov.uk

Evaluation

- GMPP SROs shall ensure that their projects or programmes have a robust, proportionate and suitably resourced evaluation in place that is aligned to the delivery context of their specific programme or project
- GMPP SROs shall ensure that all planned, live and completed evaluations are registered on the Government Evaluation Registry

Departmental Major Project SROs

If a programme or project needs approval through HM Treasury's 'Treasury approvals process for projects and programmes' but is not on the Government Major Projects Portfolio, the following arrangements apply to the SRO.

View a template Departmental Major Project senior responsible owner appointment letter

Accountability

- DMP SROs shall be personally accountable to Parliament for delivery decisions and actions, in line with the policy position agreed by Ministers. The requirements, advice and guidance set out in Departmental evidence and response to select committees: guidance (the Osmotherly Rules) that apply to GMPP SROs should be read as applying equally to DMP SROs, unless and until superseded by updated guidance or this policy note.

- Departmental Major Project SROs should be accountable to the departmental Accounting Officer and relevant Ministers

- Departmental Major Project SRO accountability should be formalised through a published appointment letter

Appointment

- Departmental Major Project SROs should be appointed by the Accounting Officer (department-only appointment)

- Accounting Officers may wish to seek the advice of their departmental Chief Project Delivery Officer and/or their departmental Head of Profession when making these appointments

- It is the responsibility of the department to ensure that appointment letters are completed and in place as soon as a DMP SRO is identified

Accreditation and training

- Departmental Major Project SROs are eligible (and expected, subject to prioritisation) to apply for MPLA

- Accreditation for Departmental Major Project SROs is delegated to departments, with Government Project Delivery retaining central oversight for senior and master practitioners

Evaluation

- DMP SROs shall ensure that their projects or programmes have a robust, proportionate and suitably resourced evaluation in place that is aligned to the delivery context of their specific programme or project

- DMP SROs shall ensure that all planned, live and completed evaluations are registered on the Government Evaluation Registry

Other programme and project SROs

If a programme or project does not need approval from HM Treasury, the following arrangements apply to the SRO.

The template Departmental Major Project senior responsible owner appointment letter can be tailored as needed for these appointments.

Accountability

- SROs of other programmes and projects should be accountable within the department, typically at director general or portfolio level
- All requirements for good governance, escalation and oversight still apply

Appointment

- SROs of other programmes and projects should be appointed by the department, normally by or on behalf of the Accounting Officer
- Accountability for SROs of other programmes and projects may be formalised through an appointment letter

Accreditation and training

- Accreditation decisions for SROs of other programmes and project are delegated to departments, with Government Project Delivery retaining central oversight for senior and master practitioners

Evaluation

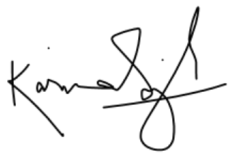
- OMP SROs should ensure that their projects or programmes have a robust, proportionate and suitably resourced evaluation in place that is aligned to the delivery context of their specific programme or project
- OMP SROs shall ensure that all planned, live and completed evaluations are registered on the Government Evaluation Registry

Support and further information

For advice on this policy or any other reforms being implemented, contact your NISTA Project Delivery Advisor. Further information on the SRO role is available in the role of the senior responsible owner guide.

View Government Project Delivery policy notes and guidance on projectdelivery.gov.uk.

I trust that you will disseminate this information to your project delivery teams and stakeholders, including your counterparts in arm's length bodies, and ensure that this policy is embedded within your organisation's practices.



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