Establishing engaging governance

Governance is the overarching formal activity which delivers direction of a project or activity, ensuring that it progresses within an agreed scope, framework and timescales. In practice, this may take the form of a project board or steering group which meets regularly to provide direction, to receive reports and to agree next steps. The nature and scale of the project will determine how formally constituted this governance needs to be. The guiding rule should be that any governance structure should be proportionate to the activity undertaken.

Within an engagement driven project, the project board has oversight not only of delivery of the project objectives but also the process of engagement leading to it. It should also be seen as an additional means of encouraging and building engagement with those involved.

A project board will have, as members, individuals whose roles within or knowledge of a project would dictate their participation, for example, the project sponsor and process owner. It is also likely to involve representatives of process players and users. This reinforces the principle which recognises that the perspectives and contributions of all stakeholders within a process have value and need to be heard.

Hints and tips

- Establish governance practices and processes which are proportionate and relevant to the nature of the project and that directly support the engagement.
- Ensure the governing body is the right size and involves the right people to effectively support the engagement.
- Adopt a pattern of meetings which effectively supports the progress of the engagement – meetings immediately before and after major engagement events are helpful to prepare or to reflect on the results.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to deliver the engagement.
- Set expectations of the frequency and content of reports – focus as much as possible on understanding the output of the engagement.
- Set expectations of transparency and sharing of information and ensure these are met.
- Make sure decisions are made with reference to the results of the engagement – ‘follow the story through’.
- Ensure decisions are made at the right time to both respond to and influence the ongoing engagement.