

Project Charter Instructions

The Project Charter is a contract between the sponsor and the project team describing:

- the business objectives of the project;
- the resources the sponsor promises to provide for the project;
- what the project team will deliver to the sponsor by the end of the project;
- the project team members and key project stakeholders;
- the project roles and responsibilities;
- the high-level project risks.

In some organizations, the sponsor writes the charter, but on the Berkeley campus, it is typically written by the project manager and approved by the project sponsor. The project formally begins when the sponsor signs off on the charter to commit specific resources (e.g., funding, staff, equipment) to the project.

The process of creating a charter helps the project manager and the rest of the project team to gather the most important initial project information and to establish boundaries for the scope. The project charter also provides a quick summary of the project for staff joining the team during the middle of the project. If changes occur during the course of the project, the changes should be documented using the change management form and attached to the charter as addendums.

The sections of the Project Charter template and the information required in those sections are described below.

A. General Information

Project Title – Enter the proper name used to identify this project.

Brief Project Description – Enter a two to three sentence description of the project.

Prepared By – Enter the name of the person making this request.

Date – Enter the date this form is created or updated.

Version – Enter the version number or “final”.

B. Project Objective

Describe the business objective that the project seeks to address; explain how the project will add value to the organization and what strategic priorities are being addressed.

C. Assumptions

List the assumptions that the sponsor, project manager, and key stakeholders have made when deciding to initiate the project. Assumptions are made in the absence of fact and may pertain to resource availability, system availability, existing conditions, etc. Assumptions are statements that are accepted as true without proof.

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It is not necessary to list every possible assumption. Instead focus on the assumptions that will have the most impact on the success of the project. For example: “funding will not be withdrawn from the project” or “resources will be made available for the project.”

D. Project Scope

The scope defines the boundaries in terms of where the project begins and ends. The scope describes what will be delivered; where, when, and how. It describes the services, functions, systems, solutions, or tangible products for which the sponsor will take delivery.

E. Project Milestones

Identify and describe the major project milestones. A milestone is a scheduled event signifying the completion of a major deliverable or a set of related deliverables. Typically, the project will be divided into five to ten major milestones. Each milestone should have a deliverable associated with it and a completion date. Include acceptance criteria in the description of a deliverable. Acceptance criteria will be necessary in the Project Acceptance Report. For example, a deliverable could be “a report assessing the current as-is state followed by a recommendation including estimated costs”.

The status of the milestones listed here will be the basis of the Project Status Report.

F. Impact Statement

List the areas that this project may impact. Include other units whose processes may be impacted by the project or its deliverables. Include existing systems and any opportunities to collaborate with existing systems to deliver a more effective solution.

G. Roles and Responsibilities

Identify the major project roles and responsibilities. For each of the roles identified, list the individuals working on the project and their contact information. Include the project team members and key stakeholders.

H. Resources

Describe the resources that have been approved for the project including funding, personnel, and equipment. Note any constraints that have been placed upon the use of these resources. For example, resource = Web App Programmer, constraint = limit of 15 hours per week.

I. Project Risks

Describe the high-level risks that have been identified based upon discussions with the sponsor, key stakeholders, and project team members. A risk is an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a negative effect on a project’s objectives. For each high-level risk, describe the mitigation plan or how the project team plans to eliminate or reduce the probability and impact of the risk.

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J. Success Measurements

Describe how you will measure the success of this project. Give both the metric and the target. For example, overall cost savings of \$50K, or reduce processing time by 25 percent. To measure the targets, there must be a baseline set at the beginning of the project. In the first example, the total costs must be known at the beginning of the project so that a comparison can be made and the total savings can be calculated. The same is true for the second example where the total processing time at the beginning of the project must be identified so that a comparison can be made at the conclusion of the project and the difference measured.

K. Signatures

Have the members of the project team and key stakeholders, including the sponsor and customer, review the draft of the charter to make sure that it is complete and accurate. Incorporate the requested revisions then get signatures of the customer or whomever will be signing off on the deliverable, the sponsor, and the project manager. The signing of the charter signifies the formal beginning of the project.