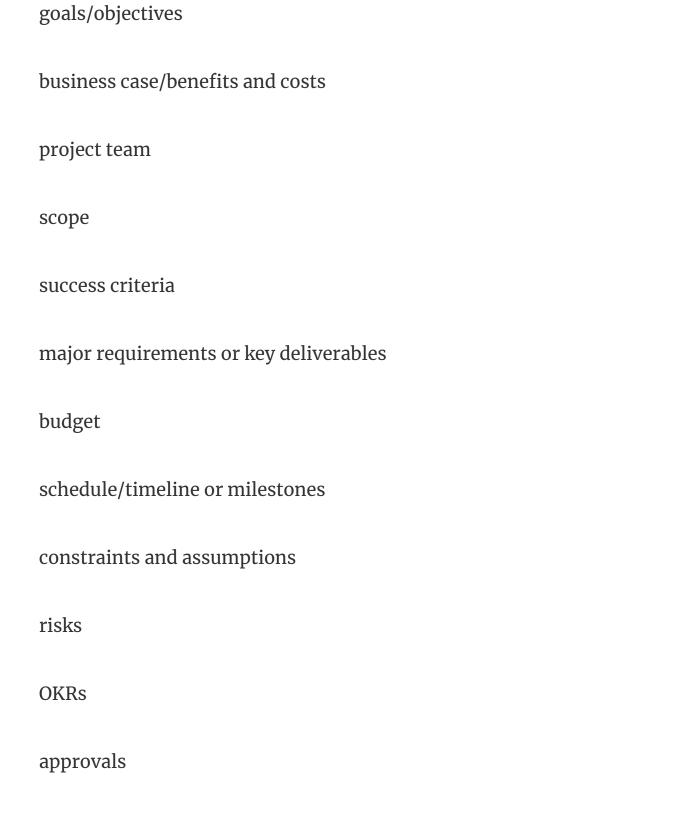# Project charters: Elements and formats

A **project charter** clearly defines the project and outlines the necessary details for the project to reach its goals. A well-documented project charter can be a project manager's secret weapon to success. In this reading, we will go over the function, key elements, and significance of a project charter and learn how to create one.

The charter is the formal way that the project's goals, values, benefits, and details are captured. You can think of the charter as the compass for your project since you will use it throughout the life cycle of the project. Many stakeholders will look to your project charter to ensure that you are indeed aligned with strategic goals and set up for achieving the desired end goal. Since the project charter carries so much importance, it is important to incorporate the right amount of detail while omitting miscellaneous elements.

As with any of your project documents, it is a good idea to collaborate with your team and stakeholders early and often. Developing the project charter in collaboration with both groups can help you make sure that your project charter addresses your key stakeholders' most important concerns and keeps your team aligned. Be sure to use the business case—the reason for initiating the project—as the guiding direction to your project charter. Project charters can vary from organization to organization and from project to project. It is key for a project manager to identify the best type of charter for the project in order to capture the relevant information and set your project up for success. Project charters will vary but usually include some combination of the following key information:

   introduction/project summary

goals/objectives

business case/benefits and costs

project team

scope

success criteria

major requirements or key deliverables

budget

schedule/timeline or milestones

constraints and assumptions

risks

OKRs

approvals

You will likely use many different project charter formats throughout your project management career. One example is a condensed, simplified document, like the one you'll learn about in the upcoming video and the one linked in the activities. A short and simple project charter can be used on smaller projects that are not very complex.

Team	Goals/Problem statement	Key success metrics		Target	Achieved
Project sponsor (Name) **PM** (Name) **Core project team** (Name) (Name) (Name) (Name) (Name) (Name)	The issue(s) we're trying to resolve!	Ex: Cost savings		$X	$X
		Ex: Quality improvement		X%	X%
		Ex: Time savings		X%	X%
		Ex: Capability improvement		X%	X%
	Business case What are the benefits of this project?	Accessibility considerations			

Risks	Key deliverables	OKRs
Risk 1	KD 1	OKR 1
Risk 2	KD 2	OKR 2
Risk 3	KD 3	OKR 3
Risk 4	KD 4	OKR 4

Timeline

- Project definition
- Confirm target metrics
- Design solution
- Implementation
- Sustain

For more complex projects, you may link to additional analysis or documents. You can house these items in the appendix.

Your organization may have a unique template for you to use, or you may have the flexibility to leverage one you come across in your career. As your project progresses, you may also encounter revisions to your project charter—and that is okay. Remember, it is a living document; let it grow with your project, and **review and revisit it often** to ensure you are aligned.

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