Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) Role Definition Document   *Updated 25 March 2025*

This document sets out for the role of a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for programmes within the Change and Programme Management Board's (CPMBs) portfolio. This document adapted from the UK Government's Infrastructure and Projects Authority SRO definition for suitability at the University of Cambridge.

The SRO is appointed by the sponsoring body (the CPMB) to have singular accountability for the successful delivery of a programme and its benefits in line with the University's strategic intent. The SRO defines all benefits and is accountable for creating the conditions sufficient for their realisation in the wider university, in conjunction with the programme sponsor and sponsoring body. The CPMB also appoints the programme sponsor and programme board chair, who work with the SRO to advocate for the programme and support the SRO in their role.

This document recognises that the SRO is tasked with accountability while not having authority over all means of delivery and benefits realisation within business areas or the broader University. While the role therefore relies heavily on consultation and influencing, there will remain areas where support of the SRO by the sponsor and sponsoring body is required for successful delivery and benefits realisation.

Programme leadership roles for key programme management practices are outlined below:

Programme delivery leadership role	Management practices
Sponsoring Body	Overseeing and authorising
Sponsor	Advocating, consulting and influencing
Senior Responsible Owner	**Directing**
Programme Board Chair	Organising, challenging, guiding
Programme Manager	Initiating, managing and closing programme
Change Manager	Planning, consulting, influencing, analysing
Project Manager	Initiating, managing and closing a project
Service Owner	Sustaining, managing

The SRO is accountable to the sponsoring body. A diagram of the governing structure is provided **Error! Reference source not found.**, along with each body's relationship to the SRO role where appropriate.
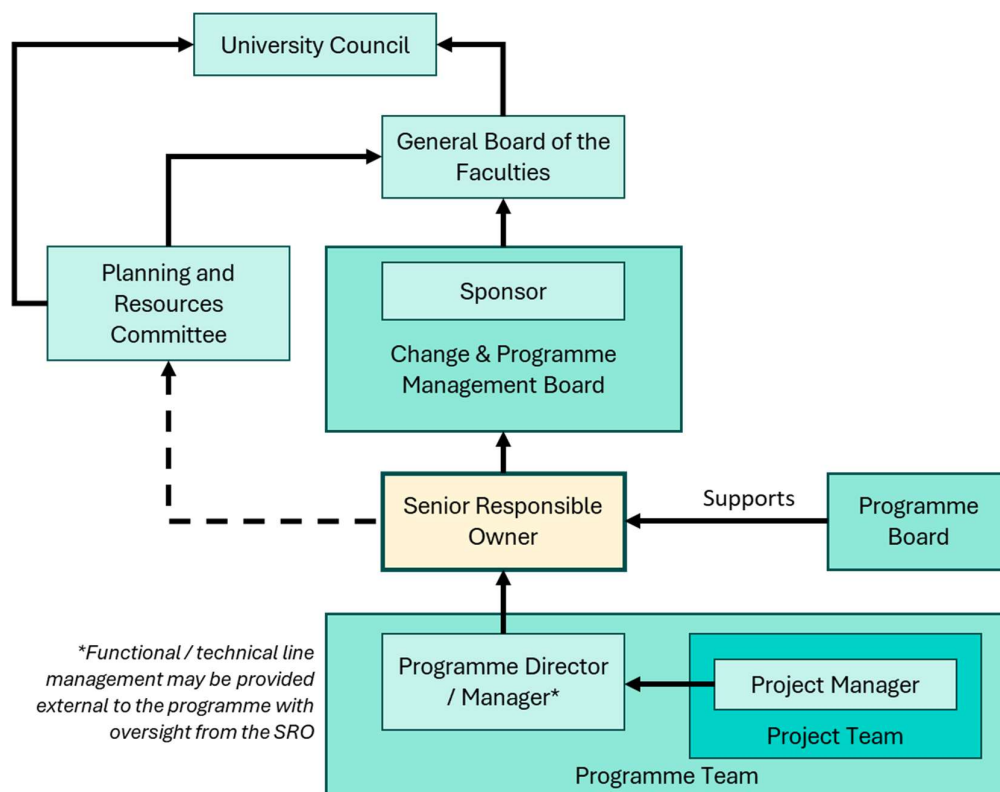
For clarity, each programme within the portfolio has only one sponsoring body, which is also the one governing body – the CPMB.

The SRO's responsibilities include:

- Defining the programme's vision, benefits, and objectives in line with the strategic intent of the University
- Ensuring the delivered solution meets the needs of the business and stakeholders as defined by the sponsor
- Ensuring that the programme represents value for money and has continuing strategic fit and relevance
- Ensuring the programme remains justifiable and deliverable including ensuring that assurance reviews and approvals are undertaken at the right time
- Ensuring that the programme and sponsor are engaging with key stakeholders according to the strategy set out by the change manager in consultation with the sponsor
- Making decisions (informed by the programme board) regarding the future of the programme while considering changes to the overall needs of the university, technological context and prevailing risk
- Providing the team with leadership and direction
- Taking corrective and preventative actions if needed
- Keeping CPMB informed of progress, risks and issues and referring to them any decisions or escalations that are above the delegated authority of the SRO
- Ensuring ongoing programme and service viability

The SRO is accountable for:

- Securing approval of the programme's business case and necessary programme funding
- Providing the conditions for realising the programme's intended objectives, outcomes and benefits
- Defining what programme success looks like and ensuring the programme has what it needs to deliver value to the University
- Ensuring successful management of risks and issues
- Managing senior relationships
- Ensuring appropriate governance and assurance

In their relationship with the **CPMB**, the SRO receives:

- Top-level endorsement for the programme and its rationale and objectives
- Direction, monitoring of progress, support and addressing escalated risks and issues
- Decisions, or referring decisions, that are above the SRO's delegated authority
- Senior-level influence across the University as needed (primarily through the sponsor)

In addition to delivering the programme for the sponsoring body, the SRO also works with other programmes to support the University's totality of change. Sometimes this may mean slowing down the delivery of one programme to support delivery of another. While this may appear to be in tension with the SRO's personal accountability for delivery of their programme, it is entirely consistent with their responsibility to respond to changes in the operating context. If conflicting priorities between programmes cannot be resolved between the SROs concerned, however, they may ultimately need to be referred to the sponsoring body for a decision.

In their relationship with the **programme manager**, the SRO receives:

- Solution design, business case and programme plans
- Programme delivery approach, accountabilities, work scope and targets for the team
- Monitoring, forecasting and reporting overall progress against the plan
- Identification, management and resolution of risks and issues and controlling change
- Delivery of the required outputs and outcomes
- Monitoring and managing supplier performance
- Engagement and communication with stakeholders (in collaboration with the change manager)
- Appropriate programme resource and budget management
- Escalation to the SRO to resolve issues beyond authority of the programme manager

The SRO supports the programme manager by providing direction and responsive decisions and effectively working with the sponsoring body and other senior stakeholders as necessary.