

Your Guide to Recruiting a Programme Director



Contents

Introduction	3
What makes a good Programme Director?	4
Key Competencies	7
Salary Benchmark	9
Example Job Description	10
Executive Search Process	13



Introduction

Programme Directors are at the helm of any major project and have a huge influence on their success or failure. Finding the right Programme Director can be tricky. Their impact on a major programme is so significant; you need to make sure that your process is robust.

In this report, we break down the key considerations when searching for and interviewing Programme Directors. We establish the differences between contractor/supplier and client-side Programme Directors, as well as the differences in experience required for PD roles depending on whether the programme is in the development or delivery phase.

At Newsom Consulting we have over 26 years' experience finding programme leaders for some of the biggest infrastructure programmes in the UK. Some examples include:

- Heathrow Airport Expansion
- TransPennine Route Upgrade
- Crossrail
- Southern Renewals Enterprise
- York Potash
- International metro programmes
- Nuclear new build and decommissioning programmes
- Multi-billion-pound defence programmes
- Many water AMPs
- 2012 Olympics infrastructure



What makes a good Programme Director?

Firstly, consider the type of programme you are recruiting for. The candidates you are searching for will depend on project phase, company type, industry experience, commercial model and size.

Project Phase

Your ideal Programme Director will have experience in the stage your programme is in. Whether that be the development, procurement, construction delivery, commissioning or handover phase, the right Programme Director for your search will have specific, relevant experience. The difference between the development and the delivery phase is the most distinct.

For a programme in an early phase, you need to look for someone who has experience working with a lot of uncertainty. The planning and design phase of a project is an unpredictable stage in the project lifecycle. Therefore, you need to find someone with experience managing a team through this uncertainty as they develop and plan the procurement and delivery strategy. With experience in this phase, they will know how to develop successful business cases, gain planning approval and develop an effective operating model for the programme.

If the programme is entering into the construction delivery phase, the Programme Director will need to be accomplished in leading the operational delivery and production of the programme. They are someone who can drive daily delivery and motivate large groups of people through the potential hiccups that come with delivery – e.g. unexpected asset conditions, underperformance of the supply chain and key suppliers going bust etc.



Company type

If you are recruiting for a client organisation, you will want to find someone with experience managing contractors, design consultancies and other key suppliers. Client-side Programme Directors will liaise with leaders from suppliers and stakeholders, determining what needs to be delivered and allocating risk.

Alternatively, if you are a contractor, focus on finding someone with strong relationship management skills. They will need to be capable of managing the relationship between their company, their client, and subcontractors. A good Programme Director can settle differences of opinion and have difficult conversations, keeping all parties satisfied while ensuring that they are commercially protecting their organisation.

What makes a good Programme Director?

Industry Experience

It's important to consider whether similar programmes have recently been completed in your geographical area. If there hasn't, then you need to work out what your next best alternative is.

When Crossrail was built, the UK hadn't done a major tunnelling project since HS1. This meant that a lot of senior Programme Leaders with tunnelling experience were not in the UK – many of them had followed tunnelling work overseas to places such as Australia or the Far East. Therefore, recruiters had to look for UK nationals who they could encourage to come back to the UK.

As well as looking overseas, you can identify projects that are akin to the programme you're recruiting for but in a different allied sector.

When Hinkley Point C started, the UK hadn't built a nuclear power station since Sizewell B in the early 1980s. Recruiters had to ask themselves, what is the next best thing?

For this type of search, you could look at major transport infrastructure project, as at least half of Hinkley Point C is civil engineering work. You could search for other types of power generation projects or, alternatively, for projects that are in the nuclear environment that aren't new build programmes – e.g. nuclear decommissioning.



What makes a good Programme Director?

Commercial Model

Consider what the commercial model is for the programme. Is it a target cost contract between the client and main contractor? Or is it a collaborative enterprise, alliance or joint venture?

The type of Programme Director you want will depend on the commercial model of the programme.

Programme Director's with alliancing experience will be familiar with driving different behaviours and different ways of working within a collaborative model. If you are seeking a Programme Director for a collaborative enterprise or alliance, previous experience of leading an integrated multi-party programme team may be essential.

Size

The size of the programme will also significantly impact your search for a Programme Director. Will there be lots of small repeatable works delivered across a very wide geographical area on this programme, or is this a multi-billion-pound major project on one site?

Also consider the size of the company. If the Programme Director is leading a major client-side project, the successful candidate will have experience delivering projects of a similar scale. You may wish to consider candidates who are stepping up to the role, in this case, you might consider someone who has led a smaller programme. Although, there will be a limit to how much smaller the programme can be.



Personality

While Programme Directors lead major projects, they can't be involved in every aspect of the programme. They must be good leaders, able to inspire and motivate a large team with many layers of management.

This role requires a significant amount of relationship management, potentially with suppliers, clients, JV partners, regulators, government and other stakeholders.

Particularly as collaborative contract models are being adopted more frequently, successful Programme Directors need to be able to manage people employed by multiple organisations.

We offer Personality Profiling with our qualified assessor. We can provide feedback specific on agreed key competencies for the role and suggest areas for further exploration at interview.

Key Competencies

When we interview potential candidates, we assess them according to competency-based questions. These will differ for every role we recruit but these are the common key competencies we use when interviewing Programme Directors.

Results Orientation

- Taking accountability for meeting key business priorities
- Setting and working towards ambitious goals and quality standards
- Removing obstacles that threaten success

Building Relationships and Collaboration

- Building long-term relationships with customers, colleagues, and stakeholders
- Understanding the needs, concerns, and pressures of others
- Breaking business silos and encouraging cross-functional working
- Proactive in providing support to others
- Sharing knowledge, ideas, and feedback with colleagues

Leading Others

- Encouraging input from team
- Empowering people to perform independently
- Setting stretching goals, agreeing responsibility and holding others accountable
- Aligning goals with individuals' aspirations – motivating teams and driving high performance
- Balancing engagement and authority – tackling difficult issues proactively

Establishing and Developing Strategy

- Developing and implementing insightful strategies to drive efficiency and growth
- Translating organisational objectives and strategies into meaningful operational plans
- Taking a long-term view of problems and opportunities
- Standing back and looking at the broader impact of actions – taking a holistic view

Commercial Awareness

- Analysing competitor activity and considering market trends
- Maximising revenue and margin
- Identifying opportunities for reducing costs
- Identifying opportunities for growth
- Developing a competitive advantage

Safety and Compliance

- Demonstrating and promoting behaviours that ensure safety objectives are met
- Acting as a role model and proactive in tackling non-compliance across the business
- Identifying opportunities for improving safety performance and processes
- Implementing robust practices within own team, and across the business, to ensure strict compliance with all protocols relating to safety and information security
- Creating and setting the global standard and organisational strategy for safety.

Key Competencies

Here are a few example competency questions we have used when recruiting for Programme Directors:

Can you describe a situation where you successfully developed and established a strategy for a multi-stakeholder programme?

Large programmes often encounter resistance to change. Can you provide an example of a situation where you successfully managed resistance and implemented necessary changes within an alliance?

Give an example of a large-scale programme you've led. How did you ensure the programme stayed on track within budget, and met quality standards?

How do you encourage a culture of innovation and efficiency within the programme to ensure the adoption of modern technologies and practices?

How do you ensure effective communication among diverse teams, partners, and stakeholders in a programme.

Describe your approach to fostering effective collaboration. How do you effectively leverage the value of all employees and stakeholders to positively influence the success of your programmes?

What is your strategy for building relationships with internal and external stakeholders? How do you effectively maintain these relationships, in light of relationship tensions and challenges?

Give me an example of when you've had to respond to a major safety risk or incident. What was your approach?



Programme Director Salary Benchmark



Type of Company	Basic Salary		
	Low	Average	High
Public Sector Client	£120,000	£216,000	£620,000
Private Sector Client	£118,000	£253,000	£500,000
Private Sector Project Partner	£114,000	£228,000	£700,000
Private Sector Contractor	£103,000	£157,000	£260,000

This benchmark data is the basic salary only for Programme Directors working in Infrastructure in the UK and overseas. Overseas salaries have been converted to GBP using the current exchange rate for ease of comparison.

We analysed the data across four key areas:

- Public sector client organisations.
- Private sector client organisations.
- Private sector main contractors.
- Private sector project delivery partners.

Direct comparison between the salary of a client Programme Director and a contractor Programme Director is difficult. Contractor Programme Directors are typically managing smaller contract values and have less integration responsibility than their client-side counterparts.

The Programme Directors in our benchmark manage a range of contracts; their responsibilities and salary vary according to the type and value of the project they are leading. Generally, the more complex and higher value the programme, the higher the compensation. Some hardship locations offer a premium salary to attract suitably qualified candidates.

The information we are providing only details basic salary; it does not include car allowance, annual bonus or Long-Term Incentive Plan. Private sector employers will typically offer a car allowance, annual bonus of 30-50% and, in some cases, an LTIP.

Example Job Description

Company Overview

[Company Name] is a leading civil engineering firm dedicated to delivering innovative solutions and exceptional results in infrastructure development. With [number of years] years of experience in the industry, we have established ourselves as pioneers in designing, planning, and managing civil engineering projects of varying scales and complexities.

We are currently spearheading a major infrastructure programme aimed at [brief description of the program]. This groundbreaking initiative encompasses [size] of projects spanning [geographic scope] and addressing critical infrastructure needs such as [specific objectives].

Through collaborative partnerships with clients, stakeholders, and communities, we are dedicated to delivering transformative solutions that will positively impact [region/country]. Our team's expertise in managing large-scale programs ensures efficient project delivery while maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety.



The Role

The Programme Director will maintain accountability for a cluster of major projects. This includes the building of the project teams, capability, leadership of safety, cost, time, quality, and performance. You will be responsible for planning, leading and managing the project to ensure an integrated, sustainable, and effective solution is developed whilst ensuring compliance to the sustainability requirements. Relationship management is central to this role, as well as being a team player. You will maintain strong relationships with the end users and project sponsors as well as supporting the contractors by clearing obstacles for an effective delivery of the contract.

The role will form part of the Programme leadership team, ensuring we set up the major projects for successful delivery. The leadership team will ensure we have created the right systems, processes and governance.

Example Job Description

Principle Accountabilities

- Develop and implement the programme strategy, vision, and goals in consultation with the programme board and other stakeholders.
- Plan, lead, and manage the project team to ensure an integrated, sustainable, and effective solution is delivered which meets the requirements defined within the brief and benefits defined in the business case.
- Establish and maintain the programme governance framework, policies, and procedures.
- To build the project community capability required for now and the future. Ensure teams are aligned, have the confidence to make decisions, can lead their teams, and role model the company values.
- As part of the leadership team, support the end-to-end delivery process ensuring we set up a sustainable delivery model for the future, which builds on Industry best practice and delivers against the planning consent.
- End-to-end execution planning and management, ensuring clear goals, roles, deliverables are well defined to ensure efficient delivery and value for money of the expenditure.

- Ensure the integration of design, development, construction delivery, commissioning and process requirements is achieved using the subject matter experts in the team.
- Responsible for the Safety and Wellbeing of everyone involved or touched by the project.
- Develop and manage the programme budget, resources, and schedule, ensuring efficient and effective allocation and utilisation of funds, staff, and equipment.
- Identify, assess, and manage programme risks, issues, and dependencies, implementing mitigation and contingency plans as required.
- Establish a strong working relationship with key stakeholders and ensure that all user requirements are captured, and approvals are in place to meet schedule dates, as well as understanding regulatory requirements.
- Manages interfaces and dependencies with other workstreams to solve complex problems in a major projects environment that is continually evolving. Understand the business implications of different options for the scheme while driving value engineering.
- Lead the relationship with the supply chain, ensuring focus on performance and appropriate behaviours. Owns the delivery management plan that delivers year on year improvement of the supply chain and project delivery.

Example Job Description

Qualifications and Experience

- Degree qualification in an appropriate discipline, or equivalent academic achievement
- Professional qualifications (membership of an appropriate institution) or evidence demonstrating continued personal development.
- Core expertise in project management and have strong experience and capability in many of the following disciplines: development, design, construction, business management, off site management.
- Experience of leading and managing significant programmes and projects of £500m+ in value, and delivering to time, budget, and quality.
- Knowledge of projects including major earthworks, decontamination of land, utilities diversions, major structure works (amend as appropriate) is desirable.
- Experience of managing the front-end design phase of projects in a regulated infrastructure environment is desirable.
- Proven track record of planning and implementation of complex projects, within a live operational environment, with multiple stakeholder interfaces.
- Experience of commercial and contractual environment.
- Experience of major infrastructure planning application processes, such as a DCO, Hybrid Bill or TWA Order is an advantage.



Executive Search Process

This is an overview of our executive search process. We would follow this method to find a successful Programme Director:

1. Research

We begin with a consultation to define the criteria, search strategy and compensation. The search is tailored to client requirements and sourced through our own in-house research. When we're confident we have sufficiently researched the market, we provide a longlist of potential candidates.

2. Approaches

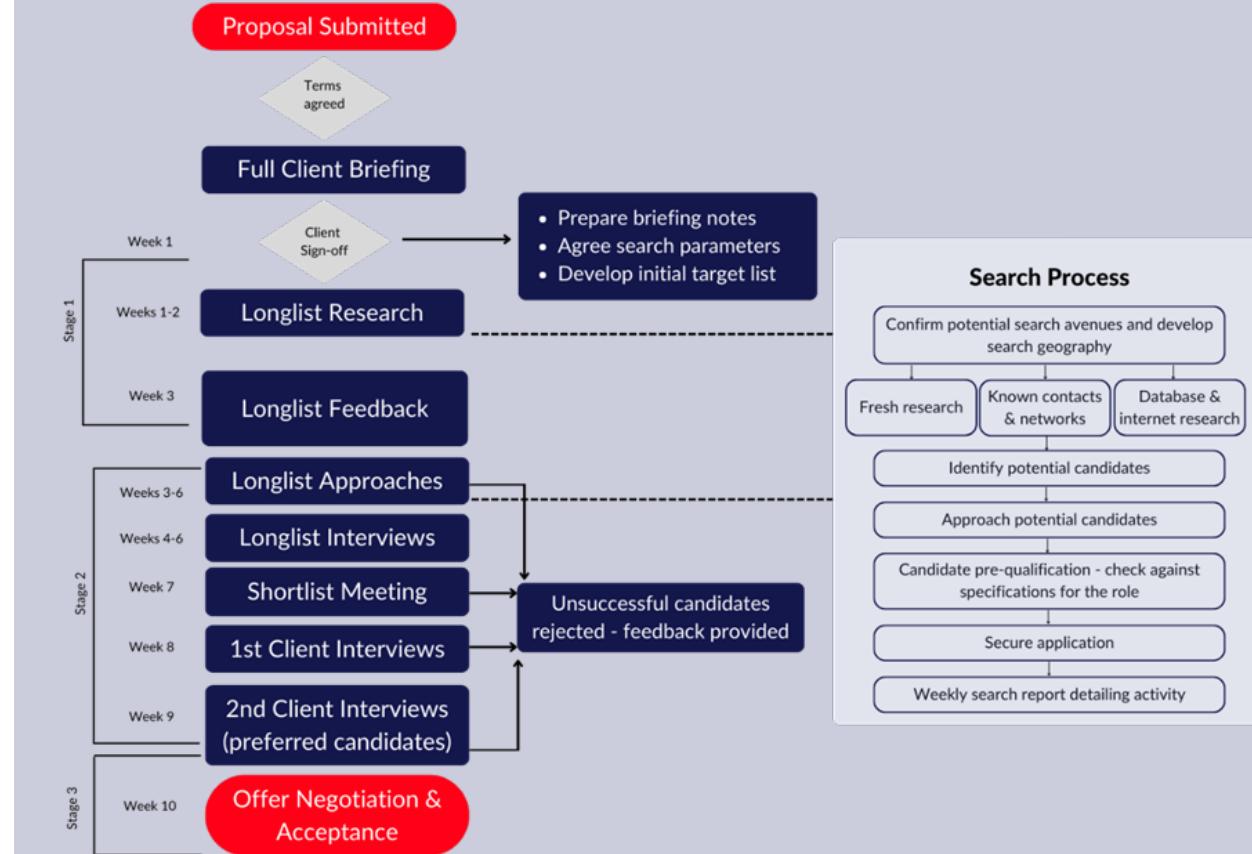
To find our shortlist of candidates, we approach potential candidates and advertise the role. We share a briefing document with candidates, outlining the role, the business and an overview of the remuneration package to ensure maximum interest from approached candidates.

3. Assessment

We conduct competency-based interviews with selected candidates. Personality Profiling and Ability Tests can be provided by us at this stage.

4. Shortlist to Offer

The outcome of this assignment will be a shortlist report which includes a full assignment summary with a statistical breakdown of the candidates, market feedback, candidate CVs, and typically a two-page Candidate Report per candidate including competency ratings.



Get in Touch

Newsom Consulting is an executive search firm that focuses on critical infrastructure and the built environment including, Rail, Aviation & Maritime, Highways, Utilities, Energy, Defence and Buildings sectors. Since we were founded in 2010, our team has successfully placed over 600 experienced industry executives – from executive leadership to senior management and leading technical experts.

Our clients include many of the leading infrastructure asset owners and major projects, contractors, public sector bodies, manufacturers, consultancies, and technology suppliers.

We are dedicated to fostering diversity within the industry and continually strive to enhance diversity in the senior teams of our clients. In the past two years, 33% of our placements have been either gender or ethnically diverse, and we remain committed to increasing the diversity of the industries we operate in.



For additional ideas on how to secure your next senior leaders get in touch. We look forward to talking with you soon.



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