

## **Further Education and Skills**

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for the project profession, with over 45,000 individual members and over 470 corporate partners. We aim for a world in which all projects succeed because, when they do, society benefits.

We're submitting evidence to highlight the challenges that the project profession faces in recruiting workers with the right skills. The solutions to which require a system-wide approach. APM's response to this consultation outlines the project profession's skills needs across the UK.

### **Introduction**

The UK's project profession is crucial to economic growth yet faces critical skills shortages. This document highlights recruitment challenges, training barriers, and workforce competence gaps, highlighting the rising demand for skilled project professionals.

Labour market data often underestimates this demand, leading to incomplete workforce planning. The paper examines the numerous career routes professionals can take and explores how to gain a more comprehensive outlook of the profession, through improved data collection, enhanced apprenticeships, and increased awareness and alignment of skills strategies.

By addressing these issues, the UK can develop a more sustainable and competent project workforce for the future set to deliver the Government's future ambitions.

### **Understanding the growth that project skills deliver**

Project-related skills are increasingly recognised as vital for economic growth. They are essential to delivering projects across all sectors. The number of full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) employed in the field grew to an estimated 2.32 million in 2024, which represents an 8% increase from 2019<sup>1</sup>. The profession generated £186.8bn in GVA annually, accounting for 9.2% of the UK's total GVA. Since 2019, the annual GVA has increased by £30.3bn representing a 19% growth rate<sup>2</sup>.

Project competence is crucial to achieving the UK Government's Industrial Strategy ambitions across net zero, regional growth, and economic security. The Golden Thread 2024 study collated data on project professionals and found the UK had 2.32m FTEs in 2024, up from 2.13m in 2019<sup>3</sup>. High numbers of project professionals are found in the following growth-driving sectors:

- Professional and business services: the largest sector for project management, accounting for a quarter of GVA (£47.98bn) and approximately one-third of FTEs (709,301)<sup>4</sup>.
- IT and technology: the sector has nearly doubled since 2019, with GVA rising to £14.3bn and FTEs reaching 164,657<sup>5</sup>.
- Financial Services: 128,183 project professionals contribute £13.12bn GVA<sup>6</sup>.
- Pharmacy and Life Sciences: 16,925 professionals contribute £1.58bn GVA<sup>7</sup>.

Despite the focus on the eight growth-driving sectors, the project profession develops growth across all industries – with over 18 sectors evidenced to drive significant GVA<sup>8</sup> (see Table

<sup>1</sup> PWC (2024) [The Golden Thread: A Study of the Contribution of the Project Profession to the UK's Economy](https://doi.org/10.61175/BNIP1316). Association for Project Management.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> PWC (2024) [The Golden Thread: A Study of the Contribution of the Project Profession to the UK's Economy](https://doi.org/10.61175/BNIP1316). Association for Project Management.

1). However, a 2023 survey found that 63% of C-suite professionals were not aware of the extent of project expertise across sectors<sup>9</sup>. Professionals working within these sectors will support the government to realise its ambitions:

- **Construction:** This well-established sector represents £33.1bn GVA and 299,798 FTEs<sup>10</sup>. Current conversations surrounding Construction tend to focus on the skills needed for hands-on site involvement, which are essential. However, project expertise is essential to ensuring that Construction projects are well planned, designed, safe and achieve value for money.
- **Public and Private Healthcare:** Projects that will make or break the NHS depend on the 261,708 professionals across these sectors, respectively contributing £8.47bn and £6.86bn GVA to the economy<sup>11</sup>.
- **Energy and Utilities Sector:** the 14,810 project experts in this sectors contribute £1.44bn of GVA, representing a 152% increase since 2019. Their expertise is of vital importance to the UK's Clean Energy Industry.

Across the UK, businesses are more optimistic about projects than they were in 2019: a 2024 survey of 567 UK businesses found that 51% predicted growth in project-related activity and 45% expected increased average project budgets<sup>12</sup>. There's a reason for this optimism: investment in project skills is strongly associated with enhanced profitability, and capitalising in project management optimisation (such as standardisation of processes) and appointing trained project experts have positive effects on organisations<sup>13</sup>. The benefits of the project profession are not just limited to large businesses: a study of SMEs in Australia found that conducting core business activities with project skills significantly influenced the financial performance of SMEs<sup>14</sup>.

## Competence

Whilst the profession is key to the economy, employers struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills. More than half of businesses reported challenges in finding the right project management skills in 2024, compared to one in three in 2019<sup>15</sup>. Research indicates that skills related to the profession, such as creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving and resilience, will become increasingly important to developing sectors as we approach 2035<sup>16</sup>. Existing and future skills shortages are a significant barrier to the design of effective projects, as skilled project professionals are essential throughout the project lifecycle - particularly from the inception phase – to ensure projects are viable, effectively designed, and aligned with strategic objectives.

Understanding what competence looks like in the profession is key to determining measures to amplify it across the UK. Project management requires the application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve specific project objectives for change, according to agreed criteria and parameters. Project management differentiates from just management. It focuses on a final deliverable with a set timeframe, following an ongoing process, engaging stakeholders and managing change. Experts need a broad skill set, including technical expertise, people management and business acumen. Finally, professionals must approach their decision-making in projects based on their prioritisations of time, cost and quality.

The project profession is made up of many specialists at different stages of their careers, who have entered the field via diverse routes, with or without qualifications - many are project managers without the job title. The level of competence a professional has can be

<sup>9</sup> Censuswide (2023) APM-commissioned survey of 456 UK business leaders by Censuswide, Dec 2023

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Lappe, M. and Spang, K. (2014) [Investments in project management are profitable: A case study-based analysis of the relationship between the costs and benefits of Project Management](#), International Journal of Project Management.

<sup>14</sup> Pollack, J. and Adler, D. (2016) [Skills that improve profitability: The relationship between project management, it skills, and small to medium enterprise profitability](#), International Journal of Project Management.

<sup>15</sup> PWC (2024) [The Golden Thread: A Study of the Contribution of the Project Profession to the UK's Economy](#). Association for Project Management.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, R. et al. (2022). [The Skills Imperative 2035: Occupational Outlook – Longrun employment prospects for the UK](#). Headline Report. Slough: NFER.

defined by their skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours, and can be measured using APM's Competence Framework, which outlines 29 competencies, based on outcomes that project professionals need to achieve<sup>17</sup>. The framework includes a series of criteria covering knowledge and the application of a six-point rating system for assessing levels of performance, including setting up for success; preparing for change; people and behaviours and planning and managing deployment<sup>18</sup>. APM plays a key role in upholding competence in the profession, and individuals can demonstrate the highest level of competence in the profession by undertaking the Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) standard.

Working ethically in the project profession requires individuals to work within the boundaries of their competence. The significance of project competence increases in correspondence with the complexity of a project, especially when considering risk, there is substantial evidence that effective project management can save lives. The direst example of the critical importance of employing a competent project professional was observed within the Grenfell Tower Disaster inquiry. The Grenfell Tower refurbishment was the first project where one worker had taken on the role of project manager<sup>19</sup>. Another individual employed as project manager for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment had no previous experience managing the refurbishment of a high-rise residential building<sup>20</sup>. The inquiry report demonstrated fundamental failures, all of which contributed to the fatal disaster:

- Not establishing the scope of the work to be undertaken before finalising the budget available or being clear on the focus of the project.
- Lack of project management capabilities, including no clear responsibilities, failure of information management and no change control.
- Appointing sub-contractors and project teams that did not have the relevant competence.

As the above case illustrates, the level of competence a project professional possesses must be proportionate to the project they undertake.

## Challenges in labour market data and skills planning

Whilst many tend to associate the project profession with just project managers, there are many different types of roles in the field - APM's Salary Survey listed over 31 occupation types<sup>21</sup>. These distinct roles vary from the Standard Occupation Codes (SOC), which are used in government datasets to give a general overview of skills demand, shortages and mismatches across different sectors. The SOC datasets influence future Government plans to address skills shortages, such as the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs), and Skills England's plans.

### *Variations in the recorded populations of project professionals*

The Annual Population Survey recorded 520,000 project professionals across the UK between January and December 2021<sup>22</sup>. The survey applied the SOC2010 occupation classification system, where figures specifically pertained to professionals whose primary roles were distinctly defined by these classifications, which entails many professionals were missed due to the survey's restrictive classification system. The survey counted 146,300 IT project and programme managers, 266,400 Business and financial project management professionals and 107,500 Construction project managers and related professionals<sup>23</sup>, which demonstrated significant variance with the respective statistics from the Golden Thread.

Contrasting the overall figures from the Golden Thread's 2019 and 2024 with the Annual Population Survey indicates approximately 1.60 m – 1.79 m project professionals were

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<sup>17</sup> APM (2022) [APM Competence Framework](#)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Grenfell Tower Inquiry (2024) [Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report \(Volume 4\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> APM (2023) [APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023](#). (survey of 2,806 project professionals from across the UK)

<sup>22</sup> ONS Crown Copyright. 2021. [Annual population survey – regional – employment by occupation \(SOC2010\) from January – December 2021](#).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

unaccounted for in the Annual Population Survey<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, the classification systems used in the Annual Population Survey, like those used in the England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland Censuses, provide a general overview of the occupation types but do not provide a deeper comprehension of the roles people work in.

Delving into the project management sector of Construction emphasises the knowledge gaps that exist regarding the project workforce: the Golden Thread indicated there were 258,888 project professionals employed in 2019 and 299,798 employed in the Construction sector in the UK in 2024, whilst the Annual Population Survey recorded 107,500 Construction project managers and related professionals in 2021<sup>25,26</sup>, indicating a range of 151,388 – 192,298 professionals were unaccounted due to disparities between definitions of project professionals. A proportion of these professionals will be members of professional bodies, such as APM, CIOB and RICS – however, effectively determining the levels of competence of the remaining professionals is a problem that is present across many sectors. Overall, there is not a clear picture of the true reality of the competence gap in project management. In the case of this sector, this is essential to building safety and the delivery of the 10-year infrastructure strategy.

APM takes its role as leading the profession seriously and to help address this issue, APM is leading on the competence framework for project professionals in the built environment, which is aligned to the APM Competence Framework. APM takes the additional competencies in relation to building safety seriously and is also working closely with the Building Safety Regulator on competence across the built environment. However, to move the dial on competence in this sector, as well as others, conversations need to be joined up across industry and government.

### *The Employer Skills Survey*

The 2022 Employer Skills Survey is used to advise understanding of skills approaches: informing how apprenticeship and training policies are formed; developing an understanding of how employers invest in training; supporting local and regional skills strategies; informing the industrial strategy and economic growth plans; and supporting initiatives like Skills England and the Growth and Skills Levy.

The Employer Skills Survey illustrated the increasing demands for project professionals in the UK and covered three occupational groups (IT project professionals, Business and Financial Project Management professionals and Construction project managers and related professionals), with data for these groups collected inconsistently. Survey data collected on the demand for IT Project Professionals was limited to 2 years. The most consistently collected data indicated that the number of vacancies for the occupation of Business and Financial Project Management professionals nearly doubled between 2011 and 2022 in the UK (from 1,726 vacancies to 3,349)<sup>27</sup>; whilst the Construction project managers and related professionals' occupation saw an increase from 1,323 in 2013, to 1,824 vacancies in 2022 in the UK<sup>28</sup>.

'Hard-to-fill vacancies' were defined by the 2022 Employer Skills Survey as vacancies where employers reported difficulty filling roles, due to low applicant numbers with skills required, lack of interest in the role, competition from other employers and poor terms and conditions for the post. The proportion of vacancies for the Business and Financial Project Management professionals' occupational group classified as hard-to-fill grew from 35% in 2011, to 45% in 2022<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, the number of vacancies for the Construction project

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<sup>24</sup> PWC (2024) [The Golden Thread: A Study of the Contribution of the Project Profession to the UK's Economy](#). Association for Project Management.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> ONS Crown Copyright. 2021. [Annual population survey – regional – employment by occupation \(SOC2010\) from January – December 2021](#). Accessed via Nomis

<sup>27</sup> Employer Skills Survey. (2022). [Vacancy measures by occupational group](#).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

managers and related professionals' occupations classified as hard-to-fill, rose from 14% in 2013 to 62% in 2022<sup>30</sup>.

The Employer Skills Survey defined 'skills-shortage vacancies' (SSVs) as a subgroup of hard-to-fill vacancies, where employers struggled to fill these roles due to a lack of skills. It found that the number of Business and Financial Project Management professionals' skills-shortage vacancies increased from 27% in 2011 to 42% in 2022<sup>31</sup>, whilst the proportion of Construction project managers and related professionals' skills-shortage vacancies increased from 10% in 2011 to 57% in 2022<sup>32</sup>. Both occupations' SSVs were higher than the national average of 36% in 2022<sup>33</sup>.

Overall, for the Business and Financial Project Management professionals' occupation, skills-shortages represented 93% of the hard-to-fill vacancies in 2022, indicating a 16% increase since 2011 (77%)<sup>34</sup>. In the Construction project managers and related professionals' occupation, skills-shortages represented nearly 92% of the hard-to-fill vacancies in 2022, indicating a 21% increase since 2013 (71%). These statistics demonstrate that not only were there more vacancies in project management for both occupations in 2022, but that these vacancies were harder to fill than before, and skills shortages were the dominant reason behind these vacancies<sup>35</sup>.

Whilst the 2024 Employers Skills Survey statistics are yet to be published, trends from research surrounding project management indicate that project SSVs will continue to be an issue. Whilst the Employer Skills Survey evidenced a need for project skills, it did not create a complete picture of the scale of skills shortages in project management, in part because it did not provide information on how employers evaluated candidates' skills, the types of roles applied for, or the scale of competence measured (i.e. did the candidate lack the required project experience or qualifications, was the candidate assessed by the APM Competence Framework?). Moreover, as the report highlighted, the true number of skills-shortage vacancies was likely higher, as hard-to-fill vacancies could be due to an absence of applicants with the required skills<sup>36</sup>.

### *Local Skills Improvement Plans*

To resolve skills gaps, Designated Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs), such as chambers of commerce and industry groups, developed devolved local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) across the UK, which were informed by data from the Employer Skills Surveys, local governments and businesses.

The plans evidenced a need for project skills across all regions in the UK between 2022 and 2023. A recurring theme throughout the LSIPs was a lack of skills around project delivery, project-related themes and issues with some variations:

- The LSIP for Cumbria listed project management as a 'critical' skill<sup>37</sup>.
- The LSIP for the West of England reported that PM skills were needed specifically for aerospace and advanced engineering<sup>38</sup>.
- East Midland's plan discussed project-related themes and needs, without delving into the profession<sup>39</sup>.
- Within Lancashire's plan, 15% of survey respondents across seven sectors cited project management as the chief 'other skills shortage' impacting work at the time<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. (2023) [Local Skills Improvement Plan 2023](#).

<sup>38</sup> Business West Chamber of Commerce (2022) [West of England Plus Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

<sup>39</sup> East Midlands Chamber (2023) [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#).

<sup>40</sup> North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce (2022). [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#).

The plans evidence that project management is in demand across many sectors and regions, but there are some issues with this approach which are worth considering. Firstly, the devolved nature entails that there is a lack of consistency in the ways in which this data is both presented and interpreted; the quality of findings and recommendations; and in follow up-reports and approaches. This inconsistency further confuses comprehension of the scale of the skills gap and leads to unequal skills planning across the country.

In addition, the nature of LSIPs is that they are responding to employer demand but may fail to capture the need for long-term skills, and they risk overlooking smaller businesses which may not have a strong voice in shaping their priorities. This approach entails LSIP priorities focus on addressing immediate skills gaps, which may not correlate with national priorities or industrial strategy objectives. Whilst this approach rightly targets specific regions to understand what skills they are lacking, there is a need for a system-wide consistent planning process for skills, to determine future long-term skills needs.

Overall, the above approaches to understanding the skills need grant a general overview of the types of occupations which are experiencing shortages, but it is essential to future of the project workforce to widen understanding of project-related occupations, to gain a more detailed insight into the specific types of project occupations that there currently are, the types that are experiencing skills shortages, the sectors they work in, how employers evaluate candidates' competence, and whether experiences, qualifications or competence assessments such as APM's framework are used.

### ***Current routes into the profession***

Ensuring there are sufficient experts in the field to effectively execute increasingly technical and complex projects requires developing an understanding of the diverse routes into the profession.

Professionals can enter the career by gaining knowledge through qualifications, including apprenticeships; degree apprenticeships; a BSc or MSc; and professional qualification accredited courses. Individuals can take four separate routes to become accredited by the Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) standard, which is recognised as the highest standard of expertise in project management.

Professionals can also enter the profession through experience in projects, without certifications or qualifications, by working on projects in a particular sector, (for example a role in engineering) which leads to the development of niche topic expertise and subsequently, the ability to utilise this knowledge when managing a project. There are also notably many 'accidental' project professionals, who are workers without traditional project management roles, who lead or manage projects.

Professionals without prior qualifications are not necessarily less skilled at delivering projects, as demonstrated by the design of the ChPP standard, which is based on significant relevant experience and competence in projects, programmes or portfolios, and is accessible for individuals with or without project management qualifications. It is essential to recognise the value of professional bodies like APM in providing professional education and assessments of competence.

Several common routes which project professionals take to enter the profession, each with their own merits are outlined below.

#### ***Apprenticeships***

Employer-led apprenticeships schemes are common - 70% of project professionals surveyed said their companies ran apprenticeship schemes for project professionals in

2024<sup>41</sup>. This pathway provides learners with hands-on experience of project management. There are several apprenticeship routes including:

- England: Level 4 Trailblazer standard. Associate Project Manager Apprenticeship, gaining 12-15 months of experience.
- England: Level 6 Trailblazer standard. Project Manager Integrated Degree Apprenticeship, gaining up to four years.
- Scotland: Level 8 Project Management Technical Apprenticeship<sup>42</sup>.
- Scotland: Level 10 Business Management SCQF (Project Management pathway)<sup>43</sup>.

The number of project management apprenticeships starts for each of the above routes and two former routes totalled approximately 22,097 between the years 2011 – March 2024<sup>44</sup>.

However, several challenges come with these pathways.

- Training providers can struggle with the complexities of the Apprenticeship Levy which can reduce the number of opportunities.
- Individuals can struggle to secure a placement – various LSIPs reported issues with low uptake of apprenticeships and low provision.
- There are variations in mentorship quality and inconsistency of learning experiences.
- Low wages can make them inaccessible to some.

APM's PMQ course is a formal requirement of Scotland's Level 8 Technical Apprenticeship and was a formal requirement within the Level 4 standard prior to April 2024. The PMQ was removed from the Level 4 standard by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfAte), as part of a wider decision to extract professional qualifications from apprenticeships. The justification for removing these qualifications was to reduce the overall costs of providing apprenticeships. However, Level 4 apprentices have previously expressed concerns about not having the PMQ embedded into their learning outcomes, moreover, apprentices need to have the time to put their knowledge into hands-on practice.

The proposed Growth and Skills Levy, (replacing the Apprenticeship Levy) is set to roll out in April 2025 to grant employers with more flexibility to provide shorter apprenticeships and more accessible training and development opportunities. While reducing the overall costs of apprenticeships could help organisations offer more opportunities, shortening the length of learning experiences and reducing the qualifications could hinder apprentices from gaining the experience needed for career progression. Whilst apprenticeships carry value on their own, the employability chances of individuals are increased through having professional qualifications. Additionally, these add value to the organisations and project delivery as there is consistent terminology and understanding in relation to projects that reflect good practice.

### *Professional qualifications*

Professional qualifications are beneficial in equipping individuals with a prerequisite that is recognised across the industry. APM's qualification offerings are designed for each stage of a professional's career, including but not limited to the Project Fundamentals Qualification (SCQF Level 6); the APM Management Qualification (SCQF Level 7), recognised by 95% of survey respondents as adding value to their career<sup>45</sup> and the APM Project Professional Qualification (PPQ).

As outlined above, APM also offers four pathway routes for achieving the Chartered Project Professional (ChPP) status, which demonstrates an individual has achieved the highest level of competence.

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<sup>41</sup> Censuwide and APM (2024) Survey of 1000 Project Managers in companies with 10 - over 1000 employees (18+) from 31.10.2024 – 22.11.2024

<sup>42</sup> Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory [Technical Apprenticeship in Project Management](#)

<sup>43</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2019) [Graduate Apprenticeships Framework Document for Business Management at SCQF Level 10](#)

<sup>44</sup> Please note data is combined from three sources: APM, IfATE and SDA. Figures are approximate, relating to apprenticeship starts only, not considering completion or withdrawal rates. For more information on this data please contact APM.

<sup>45</sup> APM (2024) Update on Level 4 Associate Project Manager standard. <https://www.apm.org.uk/news/update-on-level-4-associate-project-manager-standard/>

## *University Degrees*

The UK is one of the most attractive providers of project management degrees in the world, with four UK-based universities ranked in the top ten places to study the discipline<sup>46</sup>. There are independent project professional degrees that individuals can take at universities across the UK, but typically they fall under an umbrella department, focused on a wider sector. Anecdotal evidence suggests most students are most concerned about employability post-degree and lack awareness of career pathways post-graduation.

## *Career Transitions*

Many experts join the profession at a later stage in their careers having first gained experience in their specialist area (for example, a role in engineering, construction or business), which leads a professional to develop niche topic expertise, which they subsequently apply to managing a project in this area.

## *Visas*

International students completing degrees have two years post-degree to get the experience they need to get a Skilled Worker Visa, where they need to earn £38,700, if they don't pass this earning threshold they must leave. This makes the profession less accessible to lesser experienced non-UK project managers, and anecdotal evidence suggests project professionals may pursue alternative job opportunities to earn enough for a visa.

As global demand for project managers is mounting, UK employers are already progressively in competition with other countries to secure project competence, through offering competitive salaries and employment packages. Facilitating the visa route and making it easier for both International Students and workers from abroad to access the profession will encourage talent to the UK.

## *Schools and Colleges*

51% of 18–24-year-olds surveyed in 2022 said increased visibility of project management in schools, colleges and universities was the best way to encourage talent into the profession<sup>47</sup>. The current early ways in which younger generations can develop awareness of the project profession and gain expertise are as follows:

- Primary School children can learn about project-related skills, such as teamwork, planning and leadership as early as primary school through school group projects, enterprise challenges and STEM clubs.
- Whilst there are currently no GCSEs in project management, students can gain relevant skills in courses such as the Business Studies GCSE and Young Enterprise Programmes.
- Further Education (16+) opportunities include T-levels, which provide project-based learning; BTEC Nationals (Level 3) in Business or IT; A-Level Business Studies which covers elements of project planning, risk, and resource management; the apprenticeships pathway highlighted above; and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) (Level 3).

Working to attract younger people into projects, through embedding project skills into educational learning outcomes and in connecting project skills to future career opportunities will enable us to attract people to the profession from a younger age.

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<sup>46</sup> Edurank (2024). [Best Universities for Project Management in the World](#).

<sup>47</sup> APM (2023) [APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023](#). (survey of 2,806 project professionals from across the UK)



## **Recommendations on enhancing routes into the profession and embedding competence**

The following recommendations are developed to assist the Government and the Skills England body in addressing the project skills need in the UK.

### **1. Recognise the project profession and enhance workforce data collection**

- Update Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) codes

It is essential to understand the importance of the profession, and the benefits of competent project professionals. Existing labour market classifications, such as the SOC codes, fail to capture the full range of project management roles and competence abilities. This hinders strategic workforce planning across the country and must be addressed through updated classification methodologies and a whole-system approach.

- Implement consistent workforce data collection across sectors

To improve data collection and engage employers in the profession, we recommend improving data collection on project competence, by introducing standardised reporting on project management across sectors and embedding these processes across all regions.

### **2. Enhance project management apprenticeships**

- Ensure the Growth and Skills Levy prioritises high-quality apprenticeships focused on competence development

Project-based education and training opportunities backed by the new Growth and Skills Levy must be rooted in APM's Competence Framework to enable project professionals to apply this knowledge to future project work, achieving higher capability across the UK. The role that professional bodies, like APM, and professional education can play in addressing skills gaps should also be recognised, particularly in relation to addressing the immediate and long-term needs of the sectors they represent.

### **3. Developing and retaining existing talent**

- Increase awareness and access to the profession

Emerging project professionals need help in understanding the routes into the profession – 50% of professionals surveyed said that having clearer career paths was the best way to encourage talent into the profession<sup>48</sup>. APM's network of project experts can work with Skills England and local Governments and stakeholders to develop action plans to facilitate these routes, with a system-wide approach towards colleges, schools, graduate employability and visa policies.

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<sup>48</sup> APM (2023) [APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023](#). (survey of 2,806 project professionals from across the UK)

**Table 1**

<b>Project professional populations by sector and economic contribution across the UK in 2024</b>		
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Full-time equivalents (FTEs)</b>	<b>Gross added value (GVA)</b>
Professional and Business services	709,301	£47.98bn
Construction	299,798	£33.19bn
Hospitality and Leisure	198,697	£19.66bn
IT and Technology	164,657	£14.39bn
Public Healthcare	150,407	£8.47bn
Financial Services	128,183	£13.12bn
Private Healthcare	111,301	£6.86bn
Manufacturing	93,842	£8.44bn
Transport and Logistics	75,769	£4.73bn
Central Government (without public healthcare)	75,563	£6.14bn
Local Government	71,429	£6.18bn
Charity/social enterprise	70,817	£4.3bn
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	43,459	£3.06bn
Aerospace and Defence	27,285	£2.27bn
Higher Education	25,056	£1.47bn
Telecommunications	23,729	£1.73bn
Pharmacy and Life Sciences	16,925	£1.58bn
Energy and Utilities	14,810	£1.44bn
Other public sector workers	11,618	
Other sectors	5457	
Project management consultants	3574	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,321,677</b>	<b>£186.8bn</b>