

Initiative Contracts: Guidance for templates



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Why initiative “contracts” are a standard practice in project management

- Developing and delivering an initiative – especially complex ones involving multiple actors – requires project management
- The basic principles of effective project management are decades old and proven in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors
- Most simply, project management involves the planning, organizing, managing, and delivery of a specific initiative or project. (If a new activity becomes a standard practice or established, ongoing program, then management of it evolves.)
- Project management cannot be left to luck, gut, or chance: complex initiatives involve too many moving parts and interdependencies to be managed informally across multiple players
- Instead, project management requires clear definition of scope, success, accountabilities, stakeholders, key activities and milestones, performance measures & targets, and risks, and then rigorous, fact-based management of the initiative
- Project management involves the use of standard tools and techniques to ensure consistency (i.e. “apples to apples”), clarity (i.e. “easy to understand”), transparency (i.e. “clear steps, status, and impact”), and efficiency (i.e. “same approach, multiple times, saves time”)
- A “contract” or “charter” is one such common tool to ensure a team has designed an initiative and defined the key accountabilities and milestones to help manage its progress*
- This document provides initiative owners and team members a simple “how to” guide for Initiative Contracts we will develop for each strategic workforce development initiative that is part of the Governor’s Office portfolio of strategic initiatives**
- If any one has questions regarding project management, in general, or how to use these templates, specifically, please contact Samantha Dickey or Drew Erdmann

* To see other examples of such tools, consider the A3 template from The Missouri Way or google “project management charter”

** Based upon requests from Cabinet members, the COO provided in November 2018 similar guidance to all departments as they developed strategic “placemat” initiatives. At that time, the template and guidance were offered for departments to use or adapt or develop more tailored approaches to define and manage their department-level strategic change initiatives.



Initiative contract template: core elements

INITIATIVE CONTRACT TEMPLATE

Description and Definition of Success

1 Initiative title

What is the scope and what defines success for the initiative?

Accountabilities

Who is the initiative owner (or owners)?

Who will work with the initiative leader to design and deliver the initiative?

Name	Organization	Role (R-A-C-I)*

* R= Responsible for doing the work; A= Accountable for work; C = Consulted before finalizing; I = Informed

Stakeholders

Who are the key stakeholders involved with this initiative?

	Name (Organization)	Role
State of Missouri		
Outside org.		

Key Activities and Milestones

What are the major activities and milestones to deliver the initiative?

Activity	Milestone	Due date
1)		
2)		
6)		
7)		
8)		

Measures and targets

How are we measuring the impact and success of this initiative?

Priority measure(s)*	Current status	Target

* Measures should follow SMART principle: Specific-Measurable-Actionable-Relevant-Timebound

Potential risks or other factors to manage

4)



1 Guidance for developing the scope and success of an Initiative

Scope clearly defines what is included in and what is not part of the Initiative

Success defines the desired end state (i.e., what impact the Initiative will deliver when the Initiative is complete)

Description and Definition of Success

Initiative title

What is the scope and what defines success for the initiative?

Scope and success

- Establish the goals and impact expected for the Initiative
- Define clearly and succinctly the scope of the Initiative (e.g., what is included and what is not included in the Initiative)
- Articulate clearly what success looks like for the Initiative

The Excel format is easily adaptable if a team needs to provide more detail for while defining scope and success, but these summaries should be concise



2 Guidance for determining accountabilities of an Initiative

***Accountabilities** define the “owner” for coordinating and delivering the Initiative, and the other team members whose involvement in the planning and delivery is essential to success; defining roles in advance is essential to managing any complex project, and also helps prevent misunderstandings or failures of coordination*

Accountabilities

Who is the initiative owner (or owners)?

Who will work with the initiative leader to design and deliver the initiative?

Name	Organization	Role (R-A-C-I)*

* R= Responsible for doing the work; A= Accountable for work; C = Consulted before finalizing; I = Informed

Accountabilities

- Provide the names and roles of individuals who are involved in Initiative development and delivery
 - Responsible = responsible for “doing the work” to deliver the initiative
 - Accountable = the working team leader who – along with the Initiative owner – is responsible for the managing the Initiative, monitoring progress, removing roadblocks, etc. [Note: they can be the same individual]
 - Consulted = person whose perspective should be sought before finalizing an Initiative
 - Informed = person who needs to be “kept in the loop”
- Note: the specific accountabilities may evolve as the Initiative matures (e.g., some person may be accountable for the development of the Initiative while another person picks up delivery)



3 Guidance for determining key stakeholders of an Initiative

Key stakeholders are the people (or organizations) that have an interest in the success of the Initiative, but are not directly involved in the Initiative's day-to-day execution

Stakeholders

Who are the key stakeholders involved with this initiative?

	Name (Organization)	Role
State of Missouri		
Outside org.		

Key stakeholders

- Include those individuals and/or organizations that have a clear interest in the success of the Initiative, but are not accountable for its execution
- Provide a description of how they have a role or an interest in the Initiative
- This information should shape the Initiative's stakeholder engagement plan (e.g., who to engage, when, and via what channel)

The Excel format is easily adaptable if a team needs to add more stakeholders



4 Guidance for developing measures and targets of an Initiative

Measures and targets

How are we measuring the impact and success of this initiative?

Priority measure(s)*	Current status	Target

* Measures should follow SMART principle: Specific-Measurable-Actionable-Relevant-Timebound

Targets set clear and transparent expectations for performance

Measures are the quantitative and/or qualitative information that will be used to evaluate performance outcomes

Measures

- Enable senior leadership to evaluate the Initiative's progress
- Provide clearly understandable and measurable quantitative and/or qualitative information that can show progress during the review period (e.g., don't use annual measures for a monthly review cycle)
- Include the current state of the measure (or "unknown")

Targets

- Provide clearly understandable quantitative and/or qualitative values
- Include ambitious, yet achievable targets

For additional guidance, see resources at <https://oa.mo.gov/budget-planning/budget-planning-and-performance-measure-resources>



5 Guidance for developing the key activities and milestones of an Initiative

Key activities are the priority actions to complete the Initiative

Key Activities and Milestones		
What are the major activities and milestones to deliver the initiative?		
Activity	Milestone	Due date
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		
6)		
7)		
8)		

Key milestones are the critical indicators on the path to implementing the Initiative, and should follow a detailed work plan

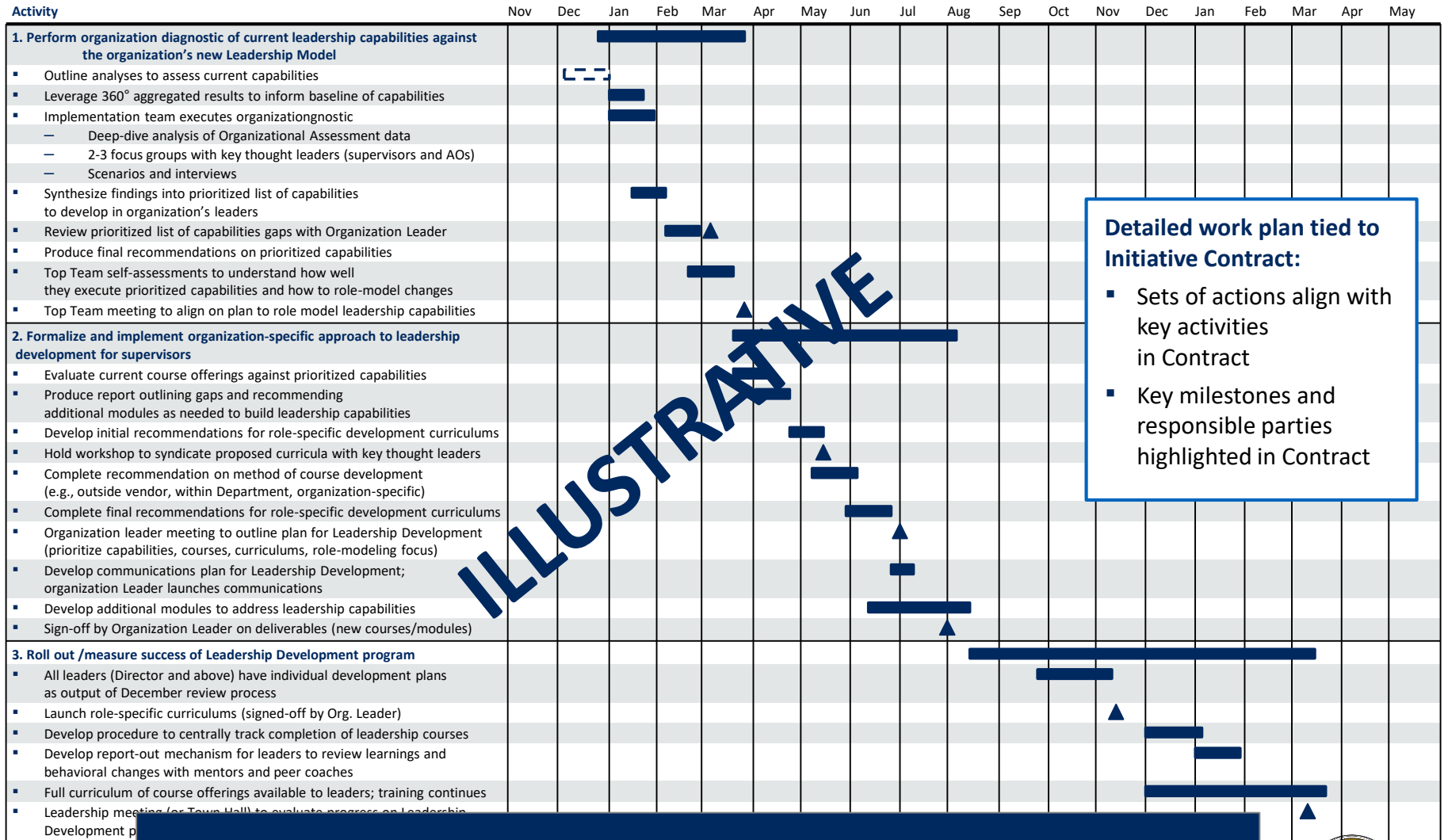
Key activities and milestones

- Include the high-level priority activities needed to develop and delivery the Initiative (as defined in the scope)
- List a specific due dates, and sequence the key activities and milestones in chronological order, to enable fact-based monitoring of progress (e.g., “is Initiative on track? Is it hitting its milestones?”)
- Define the milestones that can be critical decision points to achieving success of the Initiative

The Excel format is easily adaptable if a team needs to add more milestones



5 Detailed work plans are typically needed to help initiative development and delivery stay on track



Detailed work plan tied to Initiative Contract:

- Sets of actions align with key activities in Contract
- Key milestones and responsible parties highlighted in Contract

Different approaches are viable, but a simple Gantt chart is most common



6 Guidance for determining potential risks or other factors to manage

Potential risks are the factors that could derail or delay the progress of the Initiative

Potential risks or other factors to manage

1)
2)
3)
4)

Potential risks or other factors to manage

- List both major internal and external factors that could derail the Initiative
- Include only risks and uncertainties that could cause the Initiative to fail or be significantly delayed
- Define potential mitigation steps

The Excel format is easily adaptable if a team needs to add more risks

