

AMPLIFY YOUR STORY: Building Teams for Decision Making & Change

Purpose: None of us can do it all alone. We need the right voices at the table when we make program decisions, and we can accomplish more—in more systemic ways—when we are able to leverage the perspectives and networks of a team. This emPower Tool has some of our favorite suggestions for building a team that can help you make programmatic decisions and systemic changes to your programs. Also see *the Using Data for Decision Making and Improvements* emPower Tool. **Thank you to the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) for contents in this Tool!**

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When do we need teams?

Teams can be especially helpful:

- When making complex decisions
- When working to reduce power differentials in decision making
- When making and/or testing programmatic changes
- When making data-driven decisions
- When making far-reaching decisions that will impact a wide swath of staff
- To honor institutional knowledge and experiences
- When you need buy-in from various stakeholders

Why do we need teams?

Using teams to inform your decisions helps you to:

- Consider the unintended consequences of changes
- Accomplish more: more people to support the work!
- Find and fix issues more quickly, before they grow
- Test strategies on a wider audience to get feedback
- Include more diverse experiences and forms of expertise in decision making



What should be our charter?

Establish clarity about the team's purpose and the team member's roles and responsibilities:

- **Vision:**
What is the overarching vision for the team? Does this align with the program/org vision?
- **Goals and Objectives:**
What are the main purposes of the teams? What are the goals and the milestones, and what is the timeline?
- **Scope and Boundaries:**
What are the boundaries of the team? What *is* and *is not* in scope?
- **Roles and Responsibilities (see more pg 2):**
- Think through what you will need to be successful. Who has a particular expertise? Who can help with infrastructure? Who has systems building skills?

How do we get started?

Consider when planning a team:

- **WHO:** Determine who should be at the table for these decisions think about equity and inclusion, and historically excluded voices
- **ROLES:** Decide what roles you need filled, and what roles each member of the team will play (see more pg 2)
- **HOW:** Decide how you will ensure a variety of viewpoints are represented
- **RESOURCES:** What are your team resources, inc. knowledge and skills
- **SUPPORT:** Consider staffing coverage, schedule changes, meeting space and compensation for participation.
- **INFO:** Does the team need more or different information to guide the work? What information needs to be individualized for team members so they can contribute effectively?
- **DATA:** How will the team access and use relevant data to inform decisions?

Working with Teams: Strategies for Success

Consistent Meeting Times and Format

Choosing a **consistent time** makes it easier to schedule, and therefore to attend regularly

How **regularly** do you need to meet as a team?

Should you meet virtually or in person (if possible)?

Can you **change a meeting** that is already scheduled so you do not have to add another?

What **supports** are needed so all team members can attend?

Clear and Defined Processes and Protocols

Communication Protocol: Have a clear plan for how members will communicate with each other, and how they will interact with stakeholders (in both directions). Also have processes and plans for communicating progress.

Feedback Strategies: Have a protocol for gathering feedback from families, community members, direct staff, etc.

Decision-Making Structure: Consider who should have a vote, who needs to be included in final decisions, and who will have the final authority to make decisions, if the team is unable to decide.

Other Strategies

Keep Groups Small: Large groups can fall into confirmation bias.

Encourage Dissent: Having challenges to groupthink can lead to better decisions.

Share Collective Responsibility: Set up the team to share ownership, not just think of it as the responsibility of the leader

Provide a Space to Speak Up: Set up the team to promote participation from all voices; watch power dynamics

Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Adapted from "Who Decides? Mapping Power and Decision Making in Nonprofits" - Jon Huggett 2008

RAPID is an acronym for the roles or activities that participants may take on in a decision-making process. Participants may have more than one role assigned to them.

R	Recommend. A <i>Recommender</i> initiates the decision-making process. A <i>Recommender</i> is the go-to person who participates in the process from start to finish, ensures that others understand what they need to do, and keeps things moving until a decision has been made.
A	Agree. This participant must <i>Agree</i> to or approve a decision. This person contributes as an <i>Input</i> , but with vote and veto power (such as a person from finance, who needs to approve financial decisions).
P	Perform. Once a decision has been made, <i>Performers</i> carry out the work.
I	Input. An <i>Input</i> participant must be consulted before a decision can be made. An <i>Input</i> participant has no vote or veto power. Including someone as <i>Input</i> says that an organization values their opinion.
D	Decide. A <i>Decider</i> has final authority and is the only stakeholder who can commit the organization to action, such as financial or legal agreements. The <i>Decider</i> can be one person, or a panel, such as a board of directors. If a committee head is a <i>Decider</i> , it is better to be explicit about the potential power dynamics.

The acronym RAPID captures a key benefit of the tool—the ability to make decisions more swiftly—but does not mean that decision-making processes should be rushed.