

Tool 6 – Levels of Involvement

TOOL: **Levels of Involvement** is a means of defining the authority and responsibility of the parties involved in a project.

WHEN: Use the **Levels of Involvement** whenever there is a need to define the roles and responsibility on a project. This can be at the beginning of a project when the contract is being formulated. It brings the future road blocks, the approval hurdles, up front and out in the open.

HOW: **Levels of Involvement** is defined relative to a project. Follow a 5-step procedure. (1) Start by Creating a Project Work Plan; (2) Analyze each task and determine who has responsibility for completing it; (3) identify Major Events or Milestones; (4) determine who has responsibility for reporting the Milestone being reached; (5) record the Level of Involvement for tasks and Milestones in the Project Work Plan.

1. Create a Project Work Plan. The Work Plan must include **Tasks, Milestones, and Deliverables**. The format of the Work Plan must allow space (a column) to indicate Responsibility. The terms of a Project Work Plan are:

Task - a task is an activity. It is defined as a work effort which consumes a measurable and manageable amount of time and resources. "Develop Work Plan" is an activity.

Milestone - An event is an instantaneous point in time. No measurable or manageable effort is expended in an event. An activity could have two events associated with it. "Developing Work Plan Started" is an event; so is "Work Plan Completed." Significant events are major events and are called milestones. A significant event, or **Milestone**, might be: "Work Plan Approved."

Deliverables - Deliverables are often documents. Another term could be "Products." Deliverables usually occur at the end of an activity and are associated with an event. "Work Plan" is a deliverable. **Milestones** are where key Deliverables occur.

2. Analyze each task or activity in the work plan and **determine who** (by organization or by individual) **has responsibility for completing it**. Beware of tasks that have "shared responsibility." Break it down into smaller tasks so that someone is responsible for each part. Give that organization the **Responsible** role. Anyone else involved in getting to the completion of that task has a **Support** role. The terms of Levels of Involvement for Tasks are:

Responsible (Task) - The only Level of Involvement for a task (activity) is "Responsible, and only one entity has that Level of Involvement."

Support (Task) - Any involvement is a task, other than "Responsible," is labeled "Support."

3. Re-examine the events in Project Work Plan to identify Major Events or **Milestones**. These are critical points in the project where: 1) management is required, or the involvement of organizations outside the project are required, or 2) a critical deliverable or product has been produced.

4. Analyze each milestone or major event in the work plan and determine the Level of Involvement for each one. The terms of Levels of Involvement for **Milestones** are:

Transmitting (Milestone) - The essentially administrative types of involvement with a major event such as: Deliver, Issue, Accept or Receive, are called "Transmitting".

Information Only (Milestone) - When "no decision, action or response is needed" from an involved entity, and where the intent is only to make the party aware of some point in the project's progress, the appropriate Level of Involvement is "Information Only."

Cognizance (Milestone) - When the involved organization has "a need to know the event has taken place" because it affects their area of responsibility, the appropriate Level of Involvement is "Cognizance."

Concurrence (Milestone) - When the involved organization "needs to give its consent to a decision made," the appropriate Level of Involvement is "Concurrence." The responsible entity who took the action can proceed assuming consent. Halting the project requires direct intervening action by the "Concurring" entity, within a reasonable period of time. This is essentially a veto power.

Review and Approval (Milestone) - When the involved entity has: approval powers before the project can continue; redirect powers; or the "must take action" role; the appropriate Level of Involvement is "Review and Approval."

5. Record the Level of Involvement for each **Milestone** in the Project Work Plan in the column provided along-side the responsible organization.

- TIPS:**
- 1. Levels of Involvement** is helpful when there are multiple stakeholders and the role and responsibilities are not pre-defined – perhaps these groups have not worked together before. Levels of Involvement can be the tool to bring that needed clarity.
 - 2.** This tool was created in 1972 by Tom Adams on a **Ford Foundation Grant Project** during the development of a law enforcement information system involving several agencies. During an evaluation years later it was noted the 'tool' was not being fully utilized. When questioned the agencies replied: "*We don't have those communication problems anymore understanding Levels of Involvement.*"

This "tool" is from **Tom Adams' Problem Solvers Toolbox** which he compiled over his years of working as an Information Systems Analyst. These Problem Solving Tool Abstracts are ***NOT*** copyrighted; please share them. They are based upon the concepts of other problem solvers.
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