THE SPONSOR

Initiation

ACI Redesign Methodology

INITIATION · DIAGNOSTICS · SOLUTIONS · IMPLEMENTATION · SUSTAINABILITY

The sponsor

The project sponsor role is held by the person or people with authority to make changes in their organisation. This means they have the ability to allocate resources to make the change and are accountable to the organisation for the change success. The sponsor determines the scale of the project.

Initiation

The purpose of this phase is to develop a clear understanding of what your project is, what you want to achieve and how you plan to get there.

Key points

1. Determine sponsorship

Sometimes the sponsor initiates a change project in order to solve a problem in the organisation or service, but in other cases they are nominated to the project by someone else, usually an executive. Regardless of how it is determined, the sponsor needs to demonstrate ownership of the project (for example, through chairing steering committees, making decisions to maintain momentum and expressing personal commitment to the change).

2. Sponsor responsibilities

At the start of the project and throughout the change, sponsors establish and communicate the case for change, participate in goal setting, allocate resources and play an active role in managing stakeholders (e.g. chairing steering committees and managing escalated project risks and issues). During implementation it is likely there will be more sponsors at all levels of the organisation who need to reinforce required behaviours and monitor and act on progress.

3. Establish strong relationships

Project managers need to establish strong working relationships with sponsors. This may be daunting if the sponsor is in a much more senior role, but it is vital to establish mutual trust and credibility and working together to achieve success. Clear expectations on both sides need to be set from the start and agreed between you and your sponsor.

4. Sponsor meetings

Be prepared to have regular meetings (e.g. weekly or fortnightly) with your sponsor. Set an agenda including a progress update, time to identify strategies for managing risks and agree and record next steps required by you and your sponsor to keep the project moving. Only request (or contract) your sponsor to do actions specifically required by their role and influence and make it as easy as possible for them (for instance draft emails for them).

Considerations and tips

Working well with a sponsor is essential for project success. Make sure you keep the relationship on track and manage any issues as they arise.

Engage multiple sponsors

If the change is happening across a number of services or departments, there will be more than one sponsor. For the change to be successful, all sponsors must agree that it is a priority for them and there should be wins for all departments involved.

Don't assume

Don't assume that sponsors understand their role in your project and what is required of them. Similarly, don't assume that the sponsors have all of the answers and will be able to solve all of the issues. Trust and clear and open communication is required.

Sponsor risks

Due to the nature of their roles, sponsors are often busy people and this can affect their input during the project. If sponsors don't follow through on their actions or if they are not available, you will need to address this as a priority. If the sponsor changes during the project, it is important to re-contract a sponsor to progress.

Stay on Track

You only have permission to work within the scope of the project you have been given, and change as much as the sponsor has asked. If you believe the scope of the change needs to be broader, you must first get agreement from the sponsor.

The sponsors

Engage different levels of sponsorship to reinforce the change

stakeholders · reinforcing sponsors · authorising sponsor · reinforcing sponsors · stakeholders
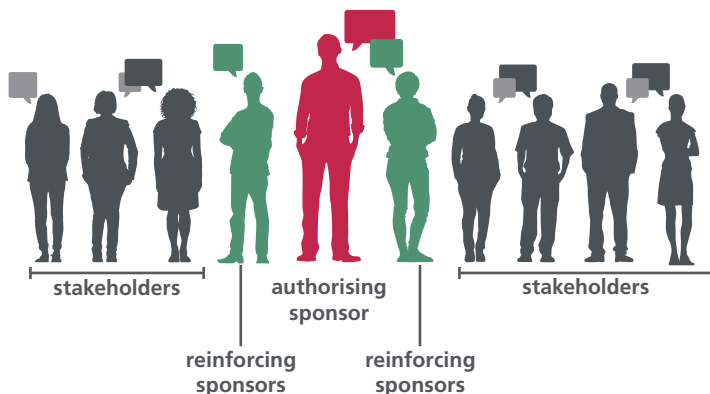
Sponsor contracting

Agree and contract actions to keep the project moving.

Sponsorship Contract

Sponsors   Change agent

Further information

My Health Learning Log in Form – Redesign Initiation (202464923): Introduction to Project Initiation
AIM Generate Sponsorship (213401372)

Implementation Management Associates, Sponsorship resources – www.imaworldwide.com/resources-sponsorship

Next Steps

Once the sponsor has been established, the next step is to identify the other stakeholders in your project. Who will the project impact upon and how will your sponsor's message reach them?

ACI_0022 [12/18]