

The Team Charter

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Before beginning any type of teaming process, it is important to draft a Team Charter. The sponsor begins the process and then works with the team leader to develop more of the details. A detailed Team Charter provides the initial direction that a team needs to be successful in tackling the task that it has been assigned. Too often teams spend a considerable amount of their valuable resources trying to figure out what they are supposed to do. A well-developed Team Charter helps to move the team to the performing stage since it answers a number of issues that usually arise in the norming and storming phase of a team startup cycle.¹ A detailed Team Charter focuses valuable organizational resources on the task that needs to be accomplished.

The Team Charter is the official document from the team sponsor that empowers the team to act. It describes the mission of the team and how it is to be accomplished. The Team Charter is one of the most under-used and under-valued tools available to sponsors, team leaders, and facilitators for helping a team to succeed. The Team Charter is often overlooked because it is time-consuming to develop. To write a clear, concise, and inclusive Team Charter requires great forethought and effort. Too often the sponsor is in such a rush to start the teaming process that he or she skips the basic step of creating a Team Charter that clearly defines the goals and objectives to be achieved. A sponsor must take the time to create a Team Charter so that the team will clearly understand the why, what, who, when, and where of the process to undertake.

When a team is started without a formal Team Charter, many meetings are often wasted trying to understand the reason for the meeting, the objective to accomplish, and the timeline necessary to accomplish it. The team spends a considerable amount of time and energy trying to second guess what the sponsor really wanted when he or she formed the team. This lack of information causes a loss of valuable time and talent on the part of the team that could be avoided by designing a clear mission statement prior to the team's formation.

The Team Charter is an official work contract. This document delineates the strategic goals, boundaries, measures of success, constraints/limits, and available resources. The Team Charter provides a framework for ongoing discussions between the team and its sponsor with regard to direction and progress.

The Team Charter is an iterative process until a baseline acceptance is established. It must be reviewed on a regular basis by the sponsor, the team leader, facilitator, and team members to ensure that it is reflective of what the team is doing or will do in the future.

¹Tuckman B. Developmental sequence in small groups. [*Psychological Bulletin*](#). 1965; 63:(6): 384–399.

Team Charter Template

The authors have developed a [Team Charter Template](#) that is useful in working with a sponsor to guide the work of a proposed team. This template can be modified to fit specific needs. However, each section is necessary for providing the direction needed by a team in order to be successful from the beginning.

Figure 1 provides more detail about each section of the template and gives details about important information to include, guiding the reader through the process of writing a successful Team Charter. After a few iterations of this charter, a sponsor has a written document that describes in detail what the team is to accomplish, as shown in Figure 3.3. This document becomes the official work contract for the team leader and the facilitator to begin the teaming process.

Figure 2 describes the value of each of the nineteen sections of the Team Charter and includes an example of a typical statement that may be written for that section. Some sections include tips for implementation.

The Team Charter benefits the team by providing:

- Contract
- Clarity
- Focus
- Alignment
- Permission
- Protection
- Boundaries
- Metrics

These elements of a team project are the foundation upon which the team builds to attain successful outcomes.

The Charter does not tell the team how to solve the problem or what a solution should look like. The Charter sets the process in motion by establishing key milestones and desired outcomes, but it does not suggest a solution path. The team must use the tools available to them to learn to solve the problem that they have been commissioned to study. The Charter starts the team in the right direction.

Figure 1: Team Charter Detail by Section

Section 1. Charter: (Project or Task Force)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Establishes the nature of the work.
<i>Importance:</i>	Differentiates the team work in the following way: Project: a well-defined system or process change; scope and implementation needs are known up front; project timeline is predictable; outcome is known. Task Force: less prescribed, focusing on a problem or improvement opportunity.

	The charter is a vehicle by which the team can reach consensus on the AIM, define the boundaries of the process, and identify the means by which the effort will measure its success.
<i>Example:</i>	Project: Implementation of a scheduling system. Task Force: Waits and Delay, Improvement Team.
Section 2. Team Name	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies the team.
<i>Importance:</i>	Enables the team to distinguish the effort from others. Tip: Keep it simple, unique, and easily stated.
<i>Example:</i>	WIC Waiting Room Time Reduction Team
Section 3. Version (Number/Date)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Tracks and clarifies versions of the charter, identifies current charter.
<i>Importance:</i>	Charters if used well will be iterative. Establish the last time the document was edited. Tip: Using only the last edited date is the easiest method.
<i>Example:</i>	December 12, 20XX or Version #5, December 12, 20XX.
Section 4. Subject	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies the area of focus.
<i>Why it is important:</i>	Clarifies the intent of the project.
<i>Example:</i>	WIC Intake Department.
Section 5. Problem/Opportunity Statement	
<i>What it does:</i>	States why this effort was initiated and what will be affected by the outcome.
<i>Importance:</i>	Orients team and others to the true need for the effort. The source and analysis of the data that identified the problem or opportunity should be included and used as a baseline.
<i>Example:</i>	WIC applicants are complaining about too much time taken to process the in-person application and a lack of privacy while giving information to the clerk.
Section 6. Team Sponsor	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies the senior leader that supports and/or initiated this effort.
<i>Importance:</i>	Establishes senior leadership overall operational accountability. The Sponsor will be expected to break down barriers and support the team.
<i>Example:</i>	Mary James, Health Officer
Section 7. Team Leader	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies one individual who will guide the team to achieve successful outcomes and who will communicate to senior leaders.
<i>Why it is important:</i>	Establishes who will conduct team meetings, provide focus and direction, and ensure productive use of team members' time. This person is not necessarily the same individual who will be in charge of the process but should be a person who will be affected by over the outcome.
<i>Example:</i>	Joe Smith, WIC Department Manager
Section 8. Team Members and Area of Expertise	
<i>What it does:</i>	Defines who will be on the team and why.
<i>Importance:</i>	Assures that all of the people necessary to effect change will be involved. Tip: People who might be unnecessary on the core team could be key

	stakeholders and must be consulted regarding changes. These individuals should be identified in the Charter. Referring to the high-level process utilized to define the scope verifies that the team has representation from each major process step.
<i>Example:</i>	Team Member: Bill Bates – WIC Intake supervisor
Section 9. Performance Improvement AIM (Mission)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Describes what the team intends to do, providing the team with a focus and a way to measure progress. The AIM should be derived from a known problem (data) and need for corrective action.
<i>Importance:</i>	Clarifies where the team is going and enables them to know when they get there. A well-stated AIM affords a team the opportunity to improve many aspects of the system or process related to the AIM. TIP: Most successful improvement efforts have a succinct AIM with a measurable stretch goal. The measure should be monitored over time and tracked in the form of a statistical process control chart.
<i>Example:</i>	AIM: To reduce the waiting time by 50%.
Section 10. Scope (Boundaries)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Specifies the boundaries of the process in timeframes and/or process steps.
<i>Importance:</i>	Sets the stage; provides focus; identifies limits. Tip: Mapping out a 7-9 step high-level process flow for the defined scope will help to facilitate understanding about what is needed in order to be successful, including validating team membership.
Section 11. Customers (primary and other) and Customer Needs Addressed	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies the primary (and other) customers of the product or service provided and specifies the ways in which stated needs were met.
<i>Importance:</i>	Identifies customers early which helps to determine if they need to be represented on the actual team. The identification of their needs and how well they are being met must be continually assessed during the improvement process.
<i>Example:</i>	Applicant for WIC benefits.
Section 12. Objectives	
<i>What it does:</i>	Lists the specific and measurable objectives for the effort, helping to define the opportunities to improve.
<i>Importance:</i>	Enables the team to reach consensus on what will be addressed during the course of the effort. Tip: Grouping similar objectives and giving them a descriptive title is helpful; for example, <i>Eliminating Waste</i> . Grouping objectives into change concepts facilitates creative thinking with improvement teams.
<i>Example:</i>	Eliminating Waste - <i>Eliminate unnecessary waiting time and reduce duplicative data entry</i>
Section 13. Success Metrics (Measures)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Defines how success of the improvement effort or project is measured.
<i>Importance:</i>	Helps the team and sponsor to understand when and if an implemented improvement is meeting the desired goal. Tips: Being specific and agreeing to definitions and data sources are important. It is ideal to have a balanced set of measures: satisfaction/costs/ outcome. Identifying one overarching measure that can be an asset for the entire effort,

	measuring it over time, and using a control chart are effective strategies. Keeping it simple by using sampling is beneficial, as well.
<i>Example:</i>	Overall applicant cycle time to receive service and complete an application will be reduced by 50%.
Section 14. Considerations (Assumptions/Constraints/Obstacles/Risks)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Describes both positive and negative factors to be discussed and understood prior to the beginning of the work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumptions: statements of requirements that must be accepted • Constraints: an element that might restrict or regulate project actions or outcomes • Obstacles: factors that might impede progress • Risks: a course that might pose a hazard or cause loss
<i>Importance:</i>	Clarifies expectations; requires people to reflect on the effort in a thoughtful way; can redefine the work; may facilitate the removal of known obstructions in advance; gives credibility to teams for considering possible issues.
<i>Example:</i>	Assumption: The WIC intake area can be rearranged to create private booths. Constraints: Information Technology solutions will not be entertained at this time; a system upgrade is planned in 2 years. Obstacles: Departmental practices related to scheduling applicants differ widely. Risks: Changes may not conform to legal requirements.
Section 15. Available Resources	
<i>What it does:</i>	Articulates who and what is available to support the team, possibly including a facilitator, trainers, or funds.
<i>Importance:</i>	Provides both the team and senior leadership with an opportunity to negotiate what the team needs to be successful.
<i>Example:</i>	Facilitator: Cathy Lee. On-campus team workshops. Up to \$5,000 is available for teaching assistant.
Section 16. Additional Resources Required	
<i>What it does:</i>	Articulates what else will be needed to make this project successful (e.g., a subject matter expert (SME)).
<i>Importance:</i>	Provides both the team and senior leadership with an opportunity to negotiate what the team needs to be successful.
<i>Example:</i>	SME: Ginger Mercy, SME for Value Stream Analysis. Up to \$5,000 is available for additional support personnel.
Section 17. Key Milestones	
	Date:
<i>What it does:</i>	Marks significant expectations and/or deliverables that the team can expect.
<i>Importance:</i>	Holds the team accountable. Maps progress.
<i>Example:</i>	Current State Assessment due March 8. Recommendations to be presented to senior leadership in 6 weeks.
Section 18. Communication Plan (Who, How, and When)	
<i>What it does:</i>	Clarifies the communication plan.
<i>Importance:</i>	Identifies everyone who is expecting to receive communication on this team effort.
<i>Example:</i>	The entire team will give a report to the stakeholders six weeks from the start of the project (~ Nov15). The Team Leader will update the Sponsor weekly as an

	agenda item at the regular staff meeting.
Section 19. Key Stakeholders and Area of Concern as it relates to the Charter	
<i>What it does:</i>	Identifies individuals and/or departments that may be impacted by the outcome. These individuals should be sought out as a resource and communicated with on a regular basis.
<i>Importance:</i>	It recognizes their importance and increases the team's awareness.
<i>Example:</i>	John Smith - Information Systems

Figure 2: Team Charter Example

1. TEAM CHARTER for the Strategic Organization Team		
2. Team Name: SCCA - Strategic Organization Team	3. Version: 2.0	4. Subject: Formal Communication Guidelines. Recommendations for improved communication channels among SCCA leadership related to meeting critical program goals.
5. Problem / Opportunity Statement: The Director of SCCA is committed to providing a more effective communication environment among her direct reports. She has taken action to reorganize the physical workplace to encourage smoother transfer of information and provide a more conducive atmosphere for sharing of critical program and operational data.		
6. Team Sponsor: Shirley Davis-Boyce	7. Team Leader: Grace Duffy	
8. Team Members:	Area of Expertise:	
Mike K	MBB	
Lisa V	Seeking BB; Project Management; Process Improvement; Software Development; Systems Engineering	
Tim W	Statistics; Tools	
Chris G	Tools; Quality	
Jim D	Software Development; Testing	
Diane F	Project Management; Interpersonal relations; Requirements elicitation	
Sara P	SCCA Employee	
Leo L	Community Assistance Business Manager	
Dave F	MBB	
9. Process Improvement Aim (Mission):		
Recommend a set of formal communication guidelines that support Direct Reports to the manager of CA to manage common information of key process areas to meet program outcomes.		
10. Scope (Boundaries):		
Strategic focus; Remaining within the scope of process and organizational focus; Software definition focus is outside the scope. Communication around SCCA Direct Reports		
11. Customers (primary and other):	Customer Needs Addressed:	

Direct Reports of SCCA Director	Process Definition and Organizational Enhancement
SCCA Director	Process Definition and Organizational Enhancement
12. Objectives:	
Formal Communication Guidelines	
Establish monitoring and measurement tools to maintain improvements	
13. Success Metrics (Measures):	
Surveys of percent satisfied with level of communication.	
Percent improvement of key process area reporting requirements	
14. Considerations (Assumptions/Constraints/Obstacles/Risks):	
No SCCA Leadership involvement on the Strategic Organization team.	
Remote/distributed team will be a challenge.	
Volunteer team is composed of full-time employees with limited time to dedicate to the project during the workdays.	
15. Available Resources: Volunteers, SCCA Project Leader	16. Additional Resources Required: SCCA Leadership/Management Involvement with the Strategic Organization team
17. Key Milestones:	
Define	Date: May 2010
Measure	June 2010
Analyze	July 2010
Design	September 2010
Verify	December 2010
18. Communication Plan (Who, How, and When): Developed as a separate document	
19. Key Stakeholders:	Area of Concern (as it relates to the Charter):
Team Sponsor – TBD during Measure phase	Problem Statement/Objective; Time for direct involvement of SCCA staff and leadership

Today, resources are scarce. Everyone involved in the public health community must use the tools available for a maximum return on their resources. The Team Charter can save an enormous amount of time and reduce confusion since it defines clear goals, expressed duties, and desired outcomes. To omit this step in planning for a successful team process is to reduce the overall effectiveness of the team and the ultimate goals of the sponsor.