**Tavistock College Leadership Development Programme**

**Managing Your Project**

A project can be defined as “**a short term activity with a specific outcome**”.

Experience shows that such projects benefit from using systematic approaches that focus on very simple question: “Who will do what and when?” This is underpinned by the purpose of the project which identifies what the key benefits (or deliverables) will be, and for whom.

**Project management** is essentially the controlled delivery of a project. A typical project has **three project phases:**

* **Mobilisation** – the variables that need to be considered before getting started (see the table, below)
* **Delivery** – is made up of project stages and continually addresses the two fundamental questions; “how is the project progressing?” and “What changes and issues need to be managed whilst the project is progressing?” Dividing the project into stages makes addressing and reporting on these fundamental questions more manageable.
* **Closure** – includes an evaluation of the project (whether or not the intended benefits were realised) and recording of any lessons learned.

(*You may find that Kotter’s “Eight Steps of Change” can be mapped into the three phases*).

Many projects adopt the idea of having a project sponsor and/or a project board. I schools the project board is usually the Senior Leadership Team, and sometimes includes the governor with responsibility for this area of work. A project board should receive regular updates of project progress (for example at the end of each project stage) and only need to step in to manage the project if the tolerance limits for each of the variables below are exceeded. This means that Senior Leaders can reduce the time burden of managing school improvement without losing appropriate levels of control.

For your project you are asked to identify a sponsor: this role of significantly different to a “project sponsor”. Your leadership development sponsor is sponsoring your development as a leader and will verify the accuracy of the evidence you share at the end of the course. They may also be called upon to provide further testimony about how you have demonstrated your competency as a developing leader.

When planning a project there are six project variables that need to be taken into consideration before writing the project action plan and assigning roles and responsibilities. These variables should be monitored throughout the life of the project so that corrective action can be taken if a variable begins to exceed its stated level of tolerance.

**To help you mobilise your project a series of prompt questions for each of the six project variables are provided on the pro forma.**

**Mobilising Your Project**

Complete the pro forma

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| **Benefits*** **Why are we doing this project?**
* **What is the purpose of investing staff time and resources in this/**
* **What are the expected benefits or returns in terms of impact or outcome?**
* **Who are the intended beneficiaries? (pupils. staff, parents, governors, community)**
* **Is one benefit more heavily weighted than others? If yes, then ensure this benefit is protected in the risk register.**

*Your project should be aligned to the school improvement plan. The project should therefore be desired by the school. it should be viable and achievable.* *Each benefit should be listed along with details of how and when it will be measured. To help you identify and plan the evaluation of impact you may find the TDA “Impact Evaluation Model” very helpful.*  |
| **Scope of the project*** **What is, and what is not, within the scope of the project?**
* **How much “project creep” can be tolerated before this should be reported to the project sponsor or project board?**

*You should only identify a project that is already aligned to your school improvement plan***.** **Timescales*** **What is the start date?**
* **When should each stage of the project be completed?**
* **What is the final deadline for completion?**
* **How much slippage can be tolerated before this should be reported to the project sponsor, line manager or project board?**
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| **Quality*** **What is the evidence base for the planned intervention or initiative/**
* **How do you know these interventions, initiatives will result in the desired impact or realise the intended benefits?**
* **How will you ensure that the interventions can be implemented effectively across your team?**
* **How much slippage in the quality can be tolerated before this should be reported to the project sponsor, line manager or project board?**

*The Sutton Trust – EEF Toolkit could be an invaluable resource in helping you to identify impact and cost effectiveness of different interventions?* [*http://educationendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/*](http://educationendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/) |
| **Risks*** **What are the risks associated with this project?**
* **What can we do to control or mitigate against these risks?**
* **How much risk are we prepared to accept?**
* **When and how quickly should risks be reported to the project sponsor, line manager or project board?**

*Risks are defined as “an uncertain event, or set of events that should they occur will have an effect on the achievement of objectives” (The Stationery Office 2009:77). A risk register is usually created so that risks can be identified and managed from the very start of the project. The risks are analysed in terms of their “likelihood” (low, medium, high) and their potential “impact” (low, medium, high). Were the level of risk is deemed to be unacceptable, then countermeasures and contingencies are identified to reduce the level of risk.*  |
| **Costs*** **What is the budget for this project?**
* **Who is responsible for controlling costs? Who is accountable?**
* **How much overspend can be tolerated before it should be reported to the project sponsor, line manager or project board?**

*Many projects do not have an associated budget but you should not overlook the notional costs involved in terms of staff time, especially in getting the project off the ground.*  |