CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISH A DECISIONMAKING STRUCTURE
Chapter 1: Establish a Decisionmaking Structure

What

A decisionmaking structure for your IT project that:

• provides leadership and accountability,
• defines the business of the agency,
• analyzes technical environments, policies and solutions, and
• effectively manages projects.

Why

To ensure that there is a well-defined decisionmaking structure with clear responsibilities and authority, that the structure is officially sanctioned and that it involves users to address business problems.

Who

Agency leadership (Chief, Sheriff and upper management), users (patrol officers, investigators, dispatchers, records clerks, crime analysts, community policing experts, etc.), a dedicated Project Manager and technical staff.

When

Immediately — before your project gets underway.

Projects, like police organizations, require structure and disciplined rules if they are to be successful. The decisionmaking structure defines the project’s “chain of command,” documenting the roles and responsibilities of the various people responsible for project actions.

This chapter provides strategies and best practices for getting the right people involved and developing a formal structure for governing a project from planning to implementation. The decisionmaking body will provide oversight and is integral to carrying out all of the work identified in this Guide.

Technology project success depends on user involvement, strong project management and a sound structure for project planning and decisionmaking. Without these essential elements, even the most well-intended and state-of-the-art technology is likely to fail, as it would be designed without strong leadership, effective management, proper planning and the support, input and commitment of the end users.

IT projects require significant buy-in at all levels. The Chief or Sheriff must support the initiative from a financial, personnel and business perspective. Users must be willing to use the technology once it is in place. Technologists must understand the technical environment and successfully support the automated systems.
Thus, planning for technology is not simply a technical issue to be resolved by the agency’s technical staff. Planning, purchasing, implementing and using IT successfully is a complicated process that can be impacted by political, organizational, legal, technical, cultural and personality issues. Furthermore, the decision to implement IT must be based upon a particular business need within an organization, rather than the mere availability of technology driving the decision to automate.

**Step 1**

**Identify an Executive Sponsor**

You must first identify an Executive Sponsor, one who will accept the ultimate accountability for the project and who has the authority to sanction the project and make it a priority. This individual will serve as the champion, spokesperson and leader for the technology initiative.

Additionally, the Executive Sponsor will serve as the project’s ultimate decisionmaking authority, committing resources (both human and financial), approving budgets and seeking funding to support the project.

Obviously, this individual must hold a significant rank within the organization, or at least be vested with appropriate decisionmaking authority. We have found that the most successful projects are led by an Executive Sponsor who is a Chief or Sheriff. In larger agencies, or if a project affects a single unit within the agency, sometimes the Deputy Chief or Sheriff who presides over the unit is the Executive Sponsor.

**Step 2**

**Identify Stakeholders**

It is critical at the earliest stage in your IT project to identify those people who will be affected by it. Make sure to consider not only those folks who will be using the system, but also those who indirectly play a role in achieving the success of the system. As an initial step, the Project Management Institute advises that it is critical to:

- identify the stakeholders,
- determine their needs and expectations, and then,
- manage and influence those expectations to ensure a successful project.

Obvious key stakeholders will include the Project Manager, system users, your law enforcement agency, and the Chief/Sheriff or Executive Sponsor. But also consider the variety of internal and external project stakeholders:
• **City Council or County Commission.** and any other policymakers and purse-string holders.

• **The public.** The public is increasingly interested in law enforcement information and requesting crime maps and statistics for their communities. Law enforcement agencies will also need to solicit public input for their community policing and other programs. In addition, some policing agencies answer to a police commission and/or an independent public board. (The Los Angeles Police Department, for example, answers to a Board of Police Commissioners, comprised of five civilians appointed by the mayor whose role is to “serve as the citizens’ voice in police affairs ... ”)

• **The media.**

• **Other government and public safety agencies.** Integration and information sharing with other authorized justice agencies should be considered, such as with the fire department, prosecuting attorney and the courts. Agencies outside of public safety, such as housing, public works, parks and traffic engineering, are critical to community policing and problem solving.

• **Others** as dictated by your unique needs.

### Step 3

**Create a Project Decisionmaking Structure**

One thing is for certain: Successful IT planning and implementation cannot be achieved without a well-defined decisionmaking structure. There are many ways to set up a decisionmaking structure to govern IT initiatives.

In this section, two decisionmaking structure models are offered that specifically reflect the differences between large-scale IT initiatives (undertaken by large, regional or multijurisdictional policing agencies) and narrowly focused projects of smaller scope (in small- to medium-sized agencies). We suggest that you review both models, as one or a combination of both may suffice for your initiative, given the size of your agency and the scope of your project.

**Follow Structure #1 if:**

— Your agency is large (typically, an agency is considered “large” if it employs over 100 sworn officers).

— Your project is large (involving multiple technologies, or a technology that affects multiple units or the entire department).

— Your project is a regional effort (involving multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions).
**Follow Structure #2 if:**

- Your agency is small- to medium-sized (fewer than 100 sworn officers).
- Your project is narrowly focused (for a large agency, perhaps it is a project within a specific unit).
- Financial limitations restrict the amount of human resources that can be allocated to project planning.

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**MAKE A NOTE OF IT!**

Representatives of the Decisionmaking Structure will:

| ✓ | Articulate a united vision and determine the scope and focus of your IT project. |
| ✓ | Identify legal, policy, administrative, funding, technical and political obstacles to achieving automation and integration. |
| ✓ | Define and sanction project objectives, tasks and timetables. |
| ✓ | Garner support from other relevant decisionmakers (City/County Council). |
| ✓ | Monitor planning, implementation and management of IT. |
| ✓ | Define the operational requirements for an automated solution. |
| ✓ | Oversee systems acquisition. |
| ✓ | Resolve obstacles to implementation. |
| ✓ | Review system performance. |
| ✓ | Make recommendations concerning systems improvements, enhancements and next steps. |

See page 32.
Structure #1
Suggested for Large Agencies/Multijurisdictional Efforts

Although there are many ways to configure a project decisionmaking structure, the following illustrates a common and basic structure comprised of a **Steering Committee** to which two additional groups report: a **User Committee** and a **Technical Committee**. **Ad hoc working groups** may be convened for specific short-term tasks.

**EXECUTIVE SPONSOR**
Chief/Sheriff
Ultimate decisionmaking authority
Provides leadership and accountability

**1.1 STEERING COMMITTEE**
Deputy Chief(s)/Sheriff(s), i.e., Records, Identification, Dispatch, Jail
Provides leadership, creates vision, removes obstacles

**1.2 PROJECT MANAGER**
The person responsible for all project-related tasks and deliverables
Directs User and Technical Committees
Informs Steering Committee

**1.3 USER COMMITTEE**
Subject matter/business process experts
Patrol Officers, Dispatchers, Records Clerks
Identifies systems operational requirements

**1.4 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**
IT support staff
within the agency and from parent IT organization
Analyzes technical environment
Identifies technical solutions

**1.5 AD HOC WORKING GROUP**
Focused on a particular project, e.g.,
computer-aided dispatch (CAD)

**1.5 AD HOC WORKING GROUP**
Focused on a particular project, e.g.,
records management system (RMS)

**1.5 AD HOC WORKING GROUP**
Focused on a particular project, e.g.,
researching mobile computing devices

**1.5 AD HOC WORKING GROUP**
Focused on a particular project, e.g.,
transferring data from CAD to RMS

Sample Project Decisionmaking Structure #1
1.1 The Steering Committee

**Who** Captains, Lieutenants, high-ranking nonsworn employees (i.e., dispatch supervisor, records supervisor, IT manager).

**Role** Adopt a shared vision; commit to and guide the project; dedicate staff resources; keep abreast of project progress, risks, challenges, successes; provide update reports to Executive Sponsor; remove project barriers; deal with policy and personnel obstacles; and render decisions on issues that impact project scope, time and cost.

Members of the Steering Committee are generally high-level managers and/or supervisors within the agency. These individuals can assign and commit staff within their department, division or unit to participate in the project as needed. This group will ensure that a structured project management process is adopted and followed for the IT project. The Steering Committee will provide constant guidance and oversight to the project, its progress and deliverables, and will make most decisions related to the project. They will keep the Executive Sponsor informed of project progress and advise the Sponsor of specific action the Sponsor may need to take to remove project barriers or to garner resources. Additionally, Steering Committee members are often individuals from the agency who are involved in broader agency strategic planning initiatives and will make sure that the IT project is properly aligned with the agency’s budget, as well as overall business objectives, such as community oriented policing.

For regional efforts, the Steering Committee should be comprised of the Chiefs/Sheriffs of each of the agencies involved in the initiative. Appointing alternate representatives for the Chiefs/Sheriffs is not recommended, unless they are given full decisionmaking authority for their agency.

1.2 The Project Manager

**Who** Ideally, an individual who has project management skills, experience and/or training, dedicated in a full-time manner to the success of the initiative.

**Role** To provide overall project direction, manage the project’s schedule, serve as a single point of contact with vendors, direct/lead team members toward project objectives, review and approve project deliverables, handle low-level problem resolution, serve as liaison to the Steering Committee.

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It’s essential to have a unified department approach with all senior management around the table.

— Timothy Bray
Illinois State Police

For regional efforts, the Steering Committee should be comprised of the Chiefs/Sheriffs of each of the agencies involved in the initiative. Appointing alternate representatives for the Chiefs/Sheriffs is not recommended, unless they are given full decisionmaking authority for their agency.

Note: A detailed discussion of how to hire, assign and/or train a Project Manager can be found in Chapter 2.
The Project Manager must be selected with careful consideration and may need to be empowered to forego his or her normal duties and assignments, sometimes for periods of up to 2 years or more, depending on the project. The Project Manager is responsible for virtually all aspects of the initiative and is formally accountable to both the Steering Committee and the Executive Sponsor. (Informally, the Project Manager is accountable to the User and Technical Committees.) In the event that outside assistance is used (such as contract consultants), the Project Manager will also be responsible for coordinating activities in terms of adopting any recommended project methodology and/or deliverables and facilitating resources (i.e., ensuring that a group of individuals are available for a meeting). The Project Manager assumes the greatest degree of project responsibility and accountability within this framework.

To complete the decisionmaking structure, two other components are essential: User and Technical Committees. While the Steering Committee sets policy, makes key decisions and commits agency resources, its members are not generally involved in the daily operational information flow within and between the agencies, nor do they (or should they) know the technical solutions to these issues. The User Committee is essential for understanding, analyzing and defining the business of the law enforcement agency, while the Technical Committee assesses current technical environments and formulates the technical solutions that enable automation and information sharing.

1.3 The User Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Subject matter and business process experts for the functions to be addressed (i.e., patrol officer, detective, dispatcher, records clerk, crime analyst, property manager).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>To assist and support in creating a project charter (Chapter 3) and ultimately the project plan (Part III). To analyze existing workflows, define business processes (Chapter 4), look for efficiencies and establish the requirements of any new system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The User Committee will include the “front-line” personnel and key users of the technology. Think of it this way: If a particular group of individuals, patrol officers, for example, will use the technology, they MUST be represented on the User Committee. Obviously not every patrol officer needs to be included, but key representative(s) who are in the field and know the day-to-day business of a patrol officer should have a seat on the Committee. Individuals serving on this Committee can include patrol, detectives, dispatch, records clerk, crime analysts and managers. Determining who should be on the Committee will be governed by the specific business processes being addressed (see example next page).
This group will be charged with analyzing current business processes and practices, identifying ways to improve workflow and efficiency, and defining how the system will support their business needs to make their work more efficient and effective and solve particular problems. The User Committee will evaluate software and technical solutions to their business requirements.

Committees should follow the **rule of 12**: the maximum number of individuals who should participate on a committee for effective decisionmaking.

### Example

Ancity’s Chief has decided to replace or enhance the department’s CAD/RMS. In assigning individuals to the “User Committee,” the Chief appointed the following individuals for the following purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispatcher</td>
<td>Uses the system on a daily basis to properly dispatch units and capture critical call information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrol Officer</td>
<td>Enters incident reports on a mobile computer that directly accesses and feeds the new records system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective</td>
<td>Uses the system to build cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records Clerk</td>
<td>Enters, validates and maintains information entered in the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Analyst</td>
<td>Uses data stored in the system to provide valuable information on crime trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Supervisor and Manager</td>
<td>Uses information captured in the new system for management of statistics and staff allocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City GIS Representative</td>
<td>Explores the integration of CAD and RMS with the Geographic Information System (GIS).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Establish a Decisionmaking Structure

1.4 The Technical Committee

**Who**  Dedicated technical staff from the agency, as well as City/County/State IT staff if support is provided to the agency by the parent organization or central data processing shop of the local jurisdiction.

**Role**  To understand the vision proposed by the Steering Committee and the User Committee’s workflow and business needs. To analyze the agency’s existing technical environment. To research and propose solutions to the agency’s business needs and problems.

The Technical Committee will take its cues directly from the User Committee. Once the User Committee has defined what it needs from a business perspective, the Technical Committee will analyze those needs with a focus on the agency’s current technical environment and potential industry solutions. The Technical Committee may be heavily involved in either “building” the solution in-house or evaluating solutions proposed by vendors. This Committee will also have to make important recommendations about training, assigning and hiring staff to implement, support and maintain the new system.

1.5 Ad Hoc Working Groups

Throughout the course of the project, it may be necessary to convene ad hoc working groups to focus on particular issues. These groups may be formed to look at specific tasks and business processes that require more in-depth research or analysis, or to carry out research on and development of a variety of project-specific plans, models, policies and directions. Ad hoc working groups are assembled on a temporary basis to address a specific issue or task.

**EXAMPLE**

XYZ police department is planning for a new CAD/RMS. The following ad hoc working groups were formed:

- ✔ Crime Analysis
- ✔ Data Transfer from CAD to RMS
- ✔ Mobile Access to CAD and RMS Data
- ✔ Management Statistics
- ✔ Automated Field Reporting

The decisionmaking structure should not be disbanded. It will be dynamic, perhaps changing scope, focus and membership over time, as priorities, project phases and projects change. A decisionmaking structure remains intact to continually assess the technology initiative and plan for its next phases and future enhancements.
Structure #2
Suggested for Smaller Agencies/Narrowly Focused Projects

Obviously, if your agency is a small one, or if the project is relatively narrow in scope, your decisionmaking structure may, for example, consist of one committee in which the Chief, users and technical experts all participate. The important concept to note is that representatives from the leadership, business and technical specialties should participate on the committee.

The following structure illustrates how small- to medium-sized agencies generally arrange their project’s decisionmaking structure. This approach is more common in projects with limited staff size and responsibility. In this instance, the Steering, User and Technical Committees are merged together in one Steering Committee. The chain of command in this example is more direct, as there are fewer individuals involved in the project. Also, agency personnel with specific expertise can be called upon to advise and assist the Committee with research and other tasks on an as-needed basis.

**EXECUTIVE SPONSOR**
Chief/Sheriff
Ultimate decisionmaking authority
Provides leadership and accountability

**STEERING COMMITTEE**
Deputy Chief(s)/Sheriff(s), i.e., Records, Identification, Dispatch, Jail
End users, IT staff
Provides leadership, creates vision, removes obstacles

**PROJECT MANAGER**
The person responsible for all project-related tasks and deliverables

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Sample Project Decisionmaking Structure #2
Chapter 1: Establish a Decisionmaking Structure

As we said in the beginning of this section, decisionmaking structures can be configured in a variety of ways. The key point is that Executive Sponsors, upper management, users and technologists play an important role in any structure. This is the decisionmaking structure established to govern the City of Reno and Washoe County’s Public Safety and Justice Project.

In this decisionmaking structure, the Steering Committee is comprised of the executive sponsors (Chiefs, Sheriff and Assistant City Manager). The project management team, comprised of the Deputy Chief of the Reno Police Department and the Project Manager, oversee the daily project activities. A consulting firm has been hired to work on this project, and reports directly to the project management team. The committee structure is organized so that there is a “team” for each major IT project underway. Each team has a designated leader, and each team is comprised of both the user representatives and technology support staff.
Step 4
Involve Other Subject Matter Experts in Committee Deliberations

Make sure not to plan your project in a vacuum! Carefully assess other information systems (new and old) and technology projects taking place around your initiative and gather information on them. As discussed in the “Seven Facts” section of this Guide, any IT project you undertake should be managed in relationship to the broader IT vision your agency has adopted. In other words, receiving a grant to purchase and implement a new CAD system means that you must plan and purchase the system while considering its integration with new and/or existing records management, geographic information, automated vehicle location systems and other law enforcement technologies.

But your agency should also look beyond in-house technology to identify potential information sharing with other justice agencies that will provide efficiencies and leverage the benefits of automation. For example, when implementing a new RMS, a law enforcement agency should look at the potential of electronically sending incident information to the prosecuting attorney’s office and the court. Automating the warrant process and sharing the data with the court is another way law enforcement agencies benefit from electronic capture, storage and sharing of information.

To appropriately do this, representatives of other agencies and/or internal or external projects that can impact the primary project should be asked to provide input and coordinate efforts. For example, if the current project focuses on a new CAD/RMS, other individuals asked to provide input and consultation to Committees or Working Groups could include a representative from the court automation team, a representative from the City who is working on a new citywide GIS, and the architect designing a new communications center. This may also be an appropriate time to consider input from a member of the public (if the public is identified as a key stakeholder).
Step 5
Make the Most of Committees: Conduct Effective Meetings

Nothing is more frustrating for overworked law enforcement personnel than participating in meetings that fail to yield tangible results or make marked progress and that are held just for the sake of it. For the most part, folks who participate in the decisionmaking structure have full-time jobs in addition to this project. When those groups are called upon to meet and work, it is essential to make the most of their valuable and limited time. Make sure each Committee agrees to follow structured meeting procedures by:

✔ Electing or appointing a Committee **Chair** who will commit to leading the Committee and respond to task requests.

✔ Establishing consistent **meeting times and dates** (e.g., every other Wednesday at 2 p.m.).

✔ Preparing and distributing an **agenda** for each meeting. The agenda should be complete with time allocations for the full meeting, as well as breakdowns for each topic. The Project Manager and Committee Chair are responsible for making sure the meeting sticks to the agenda and the times allotted. Agendas should be:
  - Focused — stick to a subject and have specific objectives or goals;
  - Not have too many topics — cramming an agenda with too many major issues is overwhelming;
  - Complete with background information (if available) on each topic; and
  - Distributed a few days before the meeting so members have time to review the topics and prepare.

✔ Determine **voting procedures** for each meeting. For most projects handled within a single agency, a simple majority vote is generally acceptable.
In large-scale or regional efforts, equality in voting should be established. Each agency participating in the effort will have one vote, and decisions must be unanimous.

✓ A note taker should be present at all meetings. Meeting minutes should be prepared and distributed for every Committee meeting. This prevents returning to previously resolved issues or covering the same topics time and time again.

✓ Adopt a problem escalation and resolution process so the rules are clearly established at the outset of the project. Here’s an example:

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EXAMPLE

The following problem escalation and resolution process will be followed for problems (e.g., resource availability or scheduling) that may arise during the course of the project:

Step 1  A Committee member will report problem to Project Manager.

Step 2  Project Manager will research the issue, identify resolution options and make a recommendation to the Steering Committee.

Step 3  Based on the nature of the issue, the Project Manager will seek resolution approval from the Steering Committee.

Step 4  The Project Manager will keep track of problems and their formal resolution.

Step 5  Following an approval or denial by the Steering Committee, the Project Manager will notify the original requestor of the action taken. There is no appeal process.
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See Appendix 3 for recommended reading and World Wide Web sites regarding best practices for conducting effective meetings.
Step 6
Make Determinations about Staffing
In-house or Outsourcing Project Staff Support

After reviewing this chapter and understanding more about your own project, you may be concerned about staffing for this effort. Perhaps you are concerned about the availability and/or skill levels of existing staff. Perhaps there are personalities within the organization that have a difficult time working together or that could use a mediator or skilled facilitator to guide and referee discussions. Perhaps you just need objective, neutral and outside input during each phase of your project.

In determining whether you should handle this project in-house or outsource it, you should ask yourself, at a minimum, these questions:

- Who will guide/steer this project through its entire lifecycle?
- Who will establish action items and make task assignments?
- Who will be responsible for documenting project deliverables?
- Who will set meeting agendas and conduct follow-up?
- Who has expertise in project management best practices and planning?
- Who has expertise regarding the technology and current law enforcement IT applications and their potential uses?
- Do we know enough about technology projects to ensure success?
- Do we have the time necessary to do this properly?
- Do we want to do this?

At this point, it may be time to consider outsourcing some staff functions if you find there are not sufficient or skilled resources in-house to do so. This involves some honest assessments about existing staff, their capabilities and current commitments. Project leaders often base their decision to outsource on the following criteria:

- **Skill levels** of current staff. An objective and honest assessment must be made regarding the skill levels of current staff to handle the initiative, specifically in the areas of project management and the specific technology you are trying to implement.

- **Project complexity.** Aside from the obvious large-scale or multijurisdictional efforts, remember that even projects that appear relatively simple can require expert knowledge and skills (consider the complexity of some interfaces: the scope may be small, but the coordination and skill requirements can be immense). If a
project involves a high degree of complexity or will have a major impact on agency operations, a detailed assessment of staff skill levels and availability will be required.

- **Budget allocations.** Is there sufficient funding in the budget to allow outsourcing of staff activities? Is there sufficient funding to compensate for overtime costs associated with using in-house staff? As a general rule, consulting services will cost approximately 10–15% of the project’s budget. An important concept to consider is the likelihood that outsourcing will actually reduce project costs by preventing costly project mistakes and by capitalizing on a consultant’s ability to negotiate prices with vendors.

Many agencies turn to professional consultants or firms to assist with their projects. The role of a good consultant includes one, or a combination, of the following:

- **Expertise.** The consultant provides knowledge or skills the agency does not have in-house (e.g., an in-depth knowledge of the planning process or operational technology such as CAD/RMS/Mobile systems).

- **Additional staffing.** The consultant often performs tasks that an agency knows *how to do*, but just doesn’t have *time to do* (e.g., organizing meetings, drafting documents, conducting interviews, etc.).

- **Partnership.** The consultant often participates as a Project Team member, contributing knowledge and guidance while empowering agency staff with the ability to accomplish various tasks (e.g., providing guidance in the key elements of building a business case, conducting strategic planning or facilitating meetings). The outcome of such a partnership can be a more a structured initiative, with agency personnel in command of their project.

Although outsourcing may enhance your chances of success, it will not relieve you from the burden of project accountability. Therefore, it is critical that you appoint an agency staff member to serve as the Project Manager, and you must insist upon using the guidelines presented in this book (or some other accepted and structured methodology) to properly plan and implement your technology initiative.

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**What is the biggest mistake that companies make with regard to IT outsourcing?**

“Companies believe they no longer have to manage IT because it is outsourced.”

— Peter Pijawka
President, Aligne
If you choose to outsource, at the very least make sure to:

- Detail the expected scope of work and other expectations for the consultant.
- Determine a realistic budget for the services.
- Request proposals for scope, timeline and cost of work from the consultant.
- Develop a clear contract with the consultant that includes the above items.
- Get at least three references.
- Request the consultant identify a strategy for his or her exit from the project when concluded.

**Remember:** Consulting costs allowable under grants are usually subject to rate caps. Be sure to check these limits prior to outsourcing.