BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

Building good business requirements and a scope of work can sometimes be the most intimidating thing about the process of bringing on external support. But, if you have used the matrix and figured out the big buckets of your change framework so that the needs are clear, its really just a matter of putting your needs down on paper and asking people to show you how they can help.

Background on Impetus for Change

This is your time to tell the origin story of this change effort. We've spoken several times about the important of context in organizational change management… it is why there is a bigger push for leading change with internal teams. So, it only makes sense that the more context you can provide to the contractor(s) who are looking to help you out, the more specific and relevant their proposals can be for you.

Use this section to include any strategic initiatives, leadership questions, or other elements that sparked this change effort and would be helpful to the contractor. If possible, include citations and links to any public information (published strategic objectives, annual reports, etc.) that might help the contractor gain even more insight into your organization.

Key Elements for Scope of Work

Every procurement office will likely have a different format with different elements you will need to include in the scope of work. As you are building the business requirements (the document you and the procurement office will use to develop the scope of work), there are a few key things you want to outline.

- **Location of work**

  While geographic location might also be good information, I am specifically talking here about the location of the work within the organizational structure. Where is the change team located in the org structure? Who does the internal change lead report to for the purposes of the change effort? This little piece of information provides all sorts of hints as to the importance of the initiative to the organization overall, the level of leadership engagement that is needed, and the level of employees likely involved in this effort. If an initiative is within a department or team, a contractor may be able to offer more junior consultants to keep the price low. If the team is reporting to the C-suite (or equivalent), the contractor will want to make sure there is a consultant with enough seniority and experience to meet that position.

- **Overarching change objectives**

  This also helps with context for the contractor, but should be located close to the performance objectives of the contract because the performance objectives are all in service to having the organization successfully accomplish and sustain the change objectives.

- **Performance objectives**

  This will ultimately become the meat of the scope of work. This is what you are hiring the contractor for. This is how you will fill the holes in your capability matrix. You want this section to be thorough, but you also want it to be broad enough to deal with the ambiguity. Change processes change and adapt to meet needs. If you get so specific in your performance objectives, you will have to change the contract every time there is a need for the change team to adapt.

  Instead of listing out specific training courses you think you will need developed, list curriculum design and/or delivery as a higher-level performance objective. All performance objectives are in service to the overall change objectives. See some examples of broad performance objectives in the next sections.

- **Personnel requirements**

  The last thing you want is to think you are asking for 1 or 2 people and for all of your proposals to come back offering huge teams of 8 or 10. Outlining what you anticipate the need being and defining a few key personnel positions does a few things.

  First, if you state you anticipate a need of a certain number of full-time equivalent personnel (FTE), you will be sure to get proposals that align with that need. Second, if you list some key personnel with specific skill sets (that fill the gaps in your capability matrix), you are giving the contractor the information they need to find exactly the right fit for your team. Finally, key personnel, in some contracts, are treated differently that personnel not labeled as "key". Key personnel typically require a higher level of approval for replacing that person on the team. If you have ever been victim of a bait-and-switch where you think someone on the sales team understands you perfectly and you hire that firm to meet your needs, only to find out you'll never hear from that person again, you'll understand how key personnel requirements can protect you. Positions identified as key personnel typically also require a resume for that position as part of the proposal.

Examples of Performance Objectives

- **Objective 1 –Project Management Office (PMO)**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide the tools and resources necessary to centrally manage all workforce initiatives. The Contractor shall centralize efforts from across change workstreams including: recruitment and retention, workforce development and career management, performance management, awards and recognition, leadership development and succession management, and workforce planning. The Contractor shall look for program alignment, enhancements and improvements.

  Wherever possible, workstreams should build upon one another. The Contractor shall update PMO materials during the life of the task order to ensure that they are accurate and compliant. Examples of solutions include: master project plan, communications plan and strategy, multi-media content and executive dashboard(s).

- **Objective 2 – Change Management Initiatives**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide a standardized yet adaptable change management methodology. The Contractor shall be able to plan, develop, implement and align change management initiatives from across the organization. Examples of solutions include: stakeholder analysis, future state vision, change agent network development/support, change awareness and impact assessment, and job impact analysis.

- **Objective 3 – Program Development and Implementation Support**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide end-to-end solution for programs. The programs could vary in shape and size based on need. The Contractor should be prepared to conceptualize, define, measure, implement and support the program. Examples of solutions include: organizational culture assessment/report card/recommendations, competency modeling, development of a Human Capital Strategic Plan, support of a Virtual Summit, cultural/mission consolidation and integration of organizations, and creation of a workforce upskilling journey.

- **Objective 4 – Curriculum, Content and Learning Opportunity Development**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall develop and/or assemble a curriculum and course materials. All components of the course shall be developed for either: instructor-led training or on-line virtual presentation via interactive, live webinar. The contractor shall apply best practices in adult learning. These include providing context, using problem-solving/experiential learning activities, sharing information from personal or real-life experience, and demonstrating the value and benefits of learning course topics. The Contractor shall provide qualified instructors for each session and shall be responsible for all aspects of course preparation and instruction and must possess up-to-date knowledge on the course topics. When possible, the Contractor shall provide class participants with all necessary handouts, surveys, pamphlets, exercises, assignments, and other training materials prior to class commencement to effectively maximize limited classroom time. Examples of solutions include: workforce re-skilling strategy, instructor-led and web-based training content, best practices in on-line virtual presentations.

- **Objective 5 – Stakeholder and Leadership Engagement**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide information tailored to the needs and desires of multiple stakeholder groups at all level. The Contract should be prepared to customize information across multiple vehicles and formats to ensure information reaching the desired audience in the most effective format and medium. Examples of solutions include: executive-level presentations, weekly leadership dashboards and intranet content.

- **Objective 6 – Executive Coaching**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide periodic one-on-one executive coaching services that offer personalized, focused feedback to assist current and future leaders to reach their professional potential. Executive coaching sessions shall lead executives and senior managers in strategizing how they can maximize strengths and develop areas of growth. The contractor will conduct an initial assessment interview with each named individual and their perspective immediate Supervisor. The Contractor will provide to the organization a plan and supporting materials for delivering the coaching services for each individual, including the name and resume of the coach assigned, the key coaching objectives, and the estimated time-frame. Examples of solutions include: core issue identification, identification and recommendation for remove for barriers to success, suggestions for leveraging strengths and leadership assessments (for example DISC®, Myers-Briggs®, or TKI Conflict Assessment®).

- **Objective 7 – Implementation Coaching**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide coaching and subject matter expertise to the change team and organizational leadership. The Contractor shall work with the change team and other subject matter experts from the organization and assist in organizational assessments, development, and implementation of all aspects of the change program. The Contractor shall provide professional coaching services to leaders and relevant front-line supervisors working through adoption and sustainment of the change program. Examples of solutions include: conducting fact-finding interviews and consultations with workforce, working with change team to design, test, and implement initiatives that adheres to the strategic framework and the objectives of the change program, providing individual leadership and management coaching to leaders with particularly difficult situations, and identifying gaps in communication, expectations-setting, transparency, performance management, and adaptability among workforce.

- **Objective 8 – Business Process Analysis**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall plan, coordinate and conduct independent analysis in various areas, to include recommending alternatives and options. The Contractor will engage employees in knowledge and information sharing with a focus on improving business processes while ensuring a consistent, quality experience for stakeholders. The outcome shall create lasting performance improvement and process transparency. Examples of solutions include: business owner facilitated session, as-is process state, recommended process improvements and desired to-be state.

- **Objective 9 – Strategic planning support**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall assess business need, gather and analyze data, create strategies, conduct a gap analysis, and create strategy execution plan. The Contractor should have strong problem-solving skills and have the ability to implement embedded solutions. Examples of solutions include: workforce analysis report, gap analysis and resolution recommendations.

- **Objective 10 – Meeting facilitation, support and follow-up**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall provide interactive guidance for Senior level meetings and/or executive conferences throughout the organization. The Contractor shall assist in defining and refining agendas, leading and focusing group discussions, fostering effective communication among the participants, serving as a neutral party to resolve disagreements and divergent views, providing draft reports or summaries of the discussions, conclusions, and action items, and submitting final reports for internal distribution. The contractor shall work with meeting hosts in advance of the meeting to assist in development of meeting objectives and agendas, providing expert facilitation during the meetings, and production of a summary report of the findings of the meetings. Examples of solutions include: meeting presentation and supporting materials, follow-up reports and notes/action items.

- **Objective 11 –Administrative Support**

  To meet this performance objective the Contractor shall support the change team's administrative needs including scheduling, travel, special projects, and meeting preparation. Examples of solutions include: task management and tracking, communications, and meeting support.

Tips to Consider

- **Tip 1: Be a good client**

  Being a good client starts with the proposal process. In the RFP, the most important thing is to set clear expectations. This will be followed up by your initial kick off meeting once the contract is awarded, where you will be able to reiterate those clear expectations and set the precedent for an open feedback loop that goes both ways.

  Contractors don't expect everyone they work with to be subject matter experts (that may be why you hired them, after all). However, it is always nice to work with a peer who knows the broad strokes – someone who knows enough to ask good questions, know what they don't know, and understands the processes to get to the desired result. If you worked through the capability matrix, you should have this level of expertise on the team.

  Speaking of team, you job as change agent is to build a change team – some team members will come from inside the organization and other team members will come from outside the organization. The more you can treat this as a hybrid team where all team members add value, the better off you will be and the happier your consultants will be. While there may be some elements contractors can't be a part of because it is proprietary for organizational employees only, you want to take special care so that your contractors feel like equal members of the change team. Its just human nature – if you feel like you are "other" when you come to work, you are less likely to give your all. You have built a powerful change team, all coming together for a common purpose. It serves nobody to take an us versus them mentality on the team.

  Consultants are better than anyone else at dealing with ambiguity since every time they move to a new client and project, they are having to flex their ambiguity muscle. However, nothing is more demotivating for a consultant to spend hours working on a deliverable that never sees the light of day because the direction has changed or those responsible for rolling the deliverable out into the organization isn't on the ball. Stuff happens. But, whenever possible, adjust before too much energy is spent on a deliverable and make sure to get value out of each deliverable produced by actually rolling it out to the workforce.

  If you bring your team together, treat everyone like the valuable team member they are, and invite open communication and collaboration, you will be the ideal client everyone wants to work with. What does this get you? The team (consultants and employees) will produce their best work, they will learn from each other, they will stay on the team longer, any vacancies will be easier to fill, and the change will be a success.

- **Tip 2: Say what you mean in the request for proposal (RFP)**

  If you want the equivalent of 3 full time employees with a certain skill mix, say so in the personnel requirements section. If you have a need for highly specialized skills but only anticipate the need for a half-time employee (20 hours a week), say so. All the contractor has to develop a proposal that meets your needs is what you write. Use plain language. Don't bury important aspects of your needs in paragraphs of legalese. The clearer and more concise you are with your needs, the better the proposals will be.

- **Tip 3: Be creative (within the confines of the law/procurement policies)**

  If you have gone through the capability matrix and still just have no clear idea on what your needs are. Perhaps you have identified a few different approaches to the change implementation and you aren't sure which direction to take. Maybe you have a very specific need that you're afraid will be missed without taking specific measures to call out that need.

  All of these things can be accommodated in every procurement process I've ever seen, with some creativity. Just make sure you work with your procurement professionals within the organization to ensure all laws and procurement policies are followed.

  As an example, if you need some clarity, you can write a proposal-like document that goes out to interested contractors. Instead of requesting proposals, you are simply asking for information. This information can be answers to specific questions or you can outline your predicament and ask for suggestions on how to move forward. This type of request has even been used to improve the engineering of certain machines.

  Another example is how proposals are received. It doesn't always have to be a written proposal only. In one RFP process, I was ordering furniture and there was a need for up to 3 feet of cabling to be housed within the cubicle walls. Every provider had to both submit a written proposal and provide a mockup to prove the cubicle walls could accommodate the huge amount of cable. They had to pass the mockup process successfully for their written proposal to move onto the technical review process.

  Another example is in a procurement where training was a high priority requirement. Part of the proposal process was to design and develop a training on a simple topic to show the ability to perform the requirement as desired.

  There is no end to the creativity you can implement to ensure that the team members you get through the contracting process meet your needs completely. Just be aware that you will need to weigh the tradeoffs of bringing someone on board quickly versus getting the perfect fit with creativity. There are times where creativity is needed and other times where expedience is more important.

- **Tip 4: Outline exactly how you want proposals delivered**

  I'm not sure why, but this took me years to figure out. I have been a technical reviewer on hundreds, if not thousands of proposals – from hundreds of millions of dollars to just a few thousand. No matter what size proposal you are developing, outline exactly how you want the proposals delivered. And, I mean exactly. If you want a section on philosophical approach, technical approach, and resumes of key personnel, say so. Tell the contractor in what order you want the sections, the page limits for each section, things that must be included, things that absolutely should not be included. Tell them whether you want graphs, or links to their "about me" page on their website… Whatever you want to see, let them know. If it's a multi-million-dollar proposal that requires lots of information, define how you want it organized, what different files should be labelled, etc.

  Use this definition of how you want things delivered to inform the rating system and vice versa (more on that below). Comparing apples to apples across multiple proposals is SO MUCH easier if everyone formatted their proposals the same way. I cannot understate this fact. Trust me.

- **Tip 5: Do not use a default rating system**

  A lot of procurement folks will default to price being an important rating factor along with, perhaps, past performance or other quality measures. Since you are going through the effort of defining exactly how you want to see the proposals delivered (seriously, you must do this), take the little extra effort to develop your own rating criteria based on what is important for your needs.

  The first criteria should be if they followed your guidelines for structuring the proposal. Any contractor that didn't follow the explicit rules for submission should be deemed nonresponsive and put in the no pile.

  After that, you would have outlined the section you want to see. For services contracts, it typically includes some type of understanding of the requirement, philosophical approach, technical approach, and resumes for key personnel. What are you looking for from each of those sections?

  Are they able to reframe your requirements so you are sure they understand the requirements they are looking to fill? Is their philosophical approach in line with your organizational culture? Is their technical approach a stock framework or clearly customized based on your requirements? Do the key personnel you have resumes for address all of the requirements you outlined?

  Creating a scoring matrix based on your specific requirements and submit that to your procurement person along with your business requirements. They'll appreciate it and you'll be sure to score based on what is most important to you.

- **Tip 6: Get initial approval for funding, then work concurrently**

  Most organizations have a process for getting funding for this type of external requirement. Depending on the organization, it can be quick or infuriatingly slow. It is important to at least get a head nod regarding funding (from someone with authority to do so) before requesting proposals – you don't want to have contractors putting in the effort to develop a proposal for something you don't have funding for (see tip #1). However, once you have initial approval, start the procurement process. In almost all cases, the procurement process is longer than the funding process. Additionally, there are several places in the procurement process where you can hit the brakes if needed. But, just like any good project manager will tell you, leverage those concurrent work processes to shorten the overall time to contract. Ultimately, you want to get everyone on board so your change team can achieve their goals.