

Effective project management is vital for any organization to succeed. It ensures that projects are completed on time and within budget, meeting the set objectives. It also allows for optimal allocation of resources and efficient workflow, minimizing waste and boosting productivity. Furthermore, project management provides a structured approach to planning, organizing, and managing resources to successfully complete specific goals and objectives, enhancing overall performance and capability in delivering quality services or products. Effective project management includes goal setting, organization, leadership, communication, collaboration, and continual improvement. This resource can provide school mental health leaders with a structure and process to manage and improve their work over time.

## Goal Setting

**Goal setting is the cornerstone of project management.** When goal setting is done as a team, it can build a sense of shared ownership with all team members committed to the same priorities. **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound)** goals are an effective way to achieve results. SMART goals might be based on GPRA indicators (e.g., a goal to recruit school mental health services providers) or SMART goals might be connected to other aspects of the project mission (e.g., hold a biweekly meeting where 90% or more of staff participate).

[SMART Goals Template](#)



## Organization

**Clear project organization helps facilitate team engagement and progress towards goals.** Effective project organization includes three key components: Group norms (e.g., meeting schedule, percent of remote work time), holding effective team meetings, and clear roles and responsibilities. Effective teams also make decisions transparently. Decision-making processes and organizational strategies are clearly documented, and each decision is clearly noted on relevant project forms.

[Overview of effective team decision making](#)



## Leadership

Effective leaders **communicate a vision to team members and collaborate to refine that vision.** Leadership also involves promoting an environment conducive to innovation and thinking creatively to advance goals or address problems. Leaders are transparent about decision making and are honest with team members. They persevere through challenges by bringing the team back to their shared vision and goals, and using data to make decisions about next steps. Team members will trust a leader who is transparent about agreements and keeps those agreements time and again.



## Communication

**Effective Communication is the #1 way to facilitate goal completion.** Effective project management involves communicating clearly and directly, and leaning into conflict rather than avoiding conflict when helpful to advance goals. When communicating with team members, it can be helpful to paraphrase a question or response back to the individual to check for understanding. During tense or emotional exchanges, reflections can allow one person to convey an emotional tone of the message to clarify how the other person might be feeling. For example, a reflection might include the stem, “You seem to be feeling a bit frustrated right now.” Reflections can be a segue into conveying empathy, and demonstrating an understanding for how someone else might be feeling.



## Collaboration

The use of collaboration on projects can help build a team mentality rather than an environment of competition. **To promote an environment of collaboration, communication is two-way where all can contribute ideas back-and-forth.** A vision, goals, and priorities are developed in a joint or shared manner. The team is emphasized over individuals. Successes are celebrated and solutions to problems are shared among a group. In projects that prioritize collaboration there is attention to the process and the content of the project. Attending to the process includes discussing how decisions are made and attending to the quality of working relationships. Attending to the content involves setting and documenting goals, obtaining and using performance feedback, and identifying and monitoring deliverables.



## Continual Improvement

A continual improvement process is exemplified in the four-stage **Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)** process. The PDSA process is improvement oriented, operating with the assumption that teams collaborate to determine goals, implement plans to address those goals, and progress monitor their progress toward goals using data. The PDSA process can help teams persevere through challenges when they arise.

[More on the PDSA Process](#)



  
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