The Bridgespan Group
Collaborating to accelerate social impact

Getting Started with RAPID Decision Making

Clarifying roles—who should be involved, and what role they should play—is a critical part of effective decision making. While it's not the silver bullet solution for every decision-making challenge, the RAPID®[1] framework can help your team create a shared language for decision roles and bring transparency to your decision processes.

This Conversation Starter offers a four-step process for nonprofit leaders who are beginning to use the RAPID framework with their teams.

- **Step 1:** Schedule a time for your team to engage in the discussion outlined on the following pages. Most teams of 4-5 individuals will set aside an hour.

- **Step 2:** Ask each team member to read Bridgespan's articles "The RAPID Decision-Making Tool for Nonprofits" and "Five Ways Nonprofits Can Make Decision Making More Inclusive—and More Effective." The latter piece provides some broad context on effective decision making that may be helpful as the team begins to use the RAPID tool. As they read, each team member should consider these questions:

  - What is one decision that our team engages on regularly that would benefit from mapping out decision roles?

  - What are our pain points around this decision?

  - How could increased role clarity help address those pain points?

- **Step 3**: Meet as a team to share your reflections on these questions and to workshop a sample decision together using the materials that follow.

- **Step 4:** Take the outputs of your discussion and experiment with using RAPID the next time your team tackles this decision!

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1 RAPID is a registered trademark of Bain & Company.

Quick Reference: RAPID decision roles

RAPID decision roles

	What is the role?	**Who should play it?**

Recommend	• Make the proposal (80% of the work happens here!)
	  - Assess the relevant facts and analysis
	  - Obtain input from relevant parties
		• Someone with broad access to relevant information and credibility with those in other roles
		• Someone able to dedicate time to the process

Agree	• Provide input that must be considered in making the recommendation (within bounds of individual expertise)	• Only individuals and functions with expertise (e.g., finance and legal) critical to the decision
Perform	• Accountable for executing the decision, once it is made	• Individuals who often should also have an Input role
Input	• Consulted on the recommendation • Provide valuable expertise, experience, information • No obligation for decision maker to act on advice	• Individuals who collectively comprise a diversity of perspectives of those impacted by the decision
Decide	• Make the final decision—"Commit the organization to action"	• Someone who understands the trade-offs associated with the decision and sits close to where the decision will be implemented • Ideally filled by an individual. If a group holds the Decide role, clear governance rules are needed in advance

Source: The Bridgespan Group, adapted from Bain & Company

Team Discussion: Reset roles for a repeated decision

Ready to try using RAPID to map your decision-making roles? Follow the prompts below to engage in a guided team discussion.

1 Go around your team and share the decisions you reflected on in your preparation for this discussion and respond to the following prompts:

What is one decision that our team engages on regularly that would benefit from mapping out decision roles?

What are our pain points around this decision?

How could increased role clarity help address those pain points?

2 Select a decision to workshop

3 Map out how the key roles in RAPID have been played historically, and how your team thinks they should be ideally played in the future

	Input	Agree	Recommend	Decide	Perform
Who plays these roles currently?					
Who ideally should play these roles in the future?					

4   Discuss the following to inform your next steps:

Who do we need to update on our conversation today?
Hint: People with roles in the decision not in your meeting today might need to be brought up to speed on RAPID and discussions so far

What other next steps do we need to take to reset roles for this decision?

Are there other upcoming decisions where we want to try using RAPID to clarify roles?

Illustrative Example

Imagine a nonprofit organization with an annual budget of $4,000,000 and several dozen staff across a few departments (programs, development and communications, finance and operations). The leadership team feels ready to apply RAPID to some of their common decisions and starts with an important category of decisions they make regularly: *hiring*.

Within the broad topic of "hiring," the team decides to start with one specific decision:

Decision the team workshops:

For positions below the director level (that are already in our budget), which candidate(s), if any, from our interview pool will we make an offer to?

They then map out current and ideal decision roles:

	Input	Agree	Recommend	Decide	Perform
Who plays these roles currently?	Interview committee (typically HR, hiring manager, and 1-2 department representatives)	n/a	Unclear	Inconsistent—a mix of executive director and department directors	HR
Who ideally should play these roles in the future?	Interview committee (same composition)	n/a	Hiring manager	Department director	HR

During discussion, several pain points emerge:

• It's unclear who is making the hiring recommendation (is it the hiring committee? one member of the committee?).

• Decision power seems to bounce between the executive director and the department director—because of this, offers can be delayed.

Going forward, the team decides to address these pain points by doing the following:

• The "D" will sit with the director of the relevant department, as these leaders are ultimately accountable for the success of new hires and are well-positioned to weigh trade-offs between candidates.

• Department directors will designate a hiring manager from the interview committee to serve in the "Recommend" role.

• The hiring manager will guide the interview process and ultimately put forth a recommendation on the top candidate.

• In some cases, the "Recommend" role may rest with the same person as the "Decide" role, as might be the case for a small finance department where the director of finance serves as both hiring manager and final decider.

• In both the current and future scenario, an interview committee plays a valuable input role and HR carries out the work of extending an offer to selected candidates after a decision is made.

• The executive director does not have a role by default, but might be assigned to serve on interview committees for specific hires below the director level. This gives the executive director more time to focus on critical hires on the leadership team when the need arises (and those hires have a slightly different RAPID, where the executive director holds the "D").