

Benefits of a Project Manager

Purpose:

This resource reviews the benefits of including a project manager on the direct assessment CBE implementation team. Start-up costs are one of the major concerns that colleges express about direct assessment CBE programs, and hiring a new project manager or assigning an existing employee to this role may increase costs significantly in early years. It also may be difficult to find the staff with the skill sets needed to fill these roles (i.e., deep knowledge of college processes, expertise in project management, interest in a time-limited grant-funded position). The talking points below may help some colleges to make a stronger case for including a project manager.

The Benefits of a Project Manager

Why include a project manager on your direct assessment CBE team?

- Designing and implementing a direct assessment CBE program is a time-intensive and complex project. Colleges report hundreds of hours of staff time spent in the initial years completing their direct assessment CBE development milestones.
- Direct assessment CBE design and implementation decisions (e.g., financial aid, faculty model, and IT) are interconnected, and colleges often need to make progress in several areas simultaneously rather than sequentially, making coordination of the process important.
- Program development requires systematically engaging a broad range of stakeholders inside and outside of the college to drive change.
- Assigning a project manager before the start of direct assessment CBE program development can help to ensure that decisions across departments are coordinated, individuals are involved when necessary, and decisions are carefully documented.
- A project manager can also help to alleviate many of the pain points that colleges encounter as they navigate bureaucratic challenges.

What qualities should project managers have?

- The project manager will be a member of the core implementation team, so must quickly establish credibility and build trust in their expertise.
- Project managers are typically passionate about assisting with organizational tasks and have experience keeping complex, multi-pronged projects on track.
- Project managers can align across different approval processes, assign responsibilities to team members, and track progress.
- It will expedite many decisions and tasks if your project manager has experience in higher education, especially if they understand multiple areas of college operations.