Organizational Alignment Checklist

Overview
When a reduction in force change occurs, it is important that everyone develop a clear understanding of what is happening and what is expected of them. Managers at all levels can complete the Organization Alignment Checklist to help confirm that they have received the information and taken the actions they need to help build alignment during the transition. Each team can use the checklist to guide, self-monitor, and track their actions to ensure alignment.

This checklist is based on the following assumptions:

- Change occurs more effectively when all of the affected parties understand the change.

- Change is challenging. Communication gaps and misunderstandings about expectations make it even more challenging. Missing information and gaps in understanding need to be identified and addressed.

- Each manager and/or supervisor can help ensure alignment in their area if they:
  - Understand the implications for their area;
  - Understand any “new” objectives established from above and ensure that their department’s or team’s objectives are aligned with those from the division and/or institution;
  - Understand any changes in roles, structure, or decision-making that were established from institutional and division leaders and make appropriate changes in their own area;
  - Prepare to support and lead the change (e.g., anticipate reactions, identify obstacles);
  - Seek additional input or clarification from the people at higher levels within the organization;
  - Communicate and discuss the implications of the change, modifications to objectives, roles, structure, etc., with the people who report to them;
  - Clarify expectations for their direct reports; and
  - Provide on going communications and follow-up on progress

- A reduction in force often necessitates changes in objectives, roles, structure, and expectations. Some of these changes need to be established at the top, others should be established at lower levels of the institution based on an understanding of the big picture.

On the following pages, you will find a checklist that can be used by managers to ensure organizational alignment during a change. If necessary, you can edit the entries in the checklist to make them conform to your division or department’s specific change effort.
Organizational Alignment Checklist

Some of the steps in this checklist confirm that your team has received the information it needs. Others are activities that your team should perform to ensure alignment. Finally, some steps confirm that your team members have shared information and decisions with the people that report to them. You don’t need to perform these steps in the order presented, but all of them are important for ensuring our success.

Clarify the Nature of the Post-Budget Reduction Change(s)

☐ Our team has received, discussed, and understands the nature of the change(s).
  ☐ We understand the reason(s) for the change(s).
  ☐ We understand the implications of the change(s) on our group.
  ☐ We have explained the change and the reason for the change(s) to the people who report to us.
  ☐ We have encouraged people to ask questions and share their feelings about the change(s).

Establish Objectives

☐ Our team has received, discussed, and understands the objectives from institutional or senior leaders.
  ☐ We have established team objectives that are consistent with the new direction.
    ☐ New objectives have been added, if necessary.
    ☐ Prior objectives that are inconsistent with the new direction have been modified or dropped, if necessary.
    ☐ Mechanisms for measuring, analyzing, and monitoring progress have been established.
  ☐ We have communicated our team’s objectives and the overall division/department objectives to the people that report to us.

Establish/Clarify Structure, Decision Making

☐ Our team has received, discussed, and understands any changes in structure, decision-making that were established from institutional or senior leaders.
  ☐ We have assessed our situation and made appropriate changes for our area.
    ☐ Cross-functional or cross-team issues have been addressed (e.g., decision-making authority, reporting relationships).
    ☐ New job accountabilities (including new job descriptions when necessary) have been established, as necessary.
  ☐ We have communicated any changes in structure, etc., to the people that report to us.
Prepare to Support/Lead Change(s)

- Managers/Leaders on our team are prepared to support/lead the change(s).
  - We have anticipated the reactions of our direct reports and others.
  - We have identified potential obstacles to successful implementation of the change(s).
  - We can describe the desired state for change(s).
  - We can answer questions about the change(s).
  - We have established a plan for supporting the change(s) in our area.

Clarify Expectations for Leaders

- Our team has received, discussed, and understands our role as leaders after the change(s).
  - We are aware of what leaders are expected to do to be successful (behavioral requirements).

- Each member of our team understands what is expected of him/her.
  - Any changes in expectations are clear and explicit.

- We have identified any professional development needs for our team.
  - We have established a plan for addressing any gaps.

- We have communicated the role of leaders to any leaders that report to us.

Clarify Expectations for Staff

- Our team has received, discussed, and understands any new agreements about what is expected of our staff.

- We have identified what we expect people to do to be successful (behavioral requirements).
  - We’ve identified what has changed.
  - We’ve identified what has remained the same.

- We have identified knowledge, skill, and competency requirements for our people.
  - We have identified developmental needs for our area.
  - We have established a plan for addressing any gaps.

- Each member of our team has clarified the expectations of his/her direct reports.
  - Individual expectations are consistent with the new direction.
  - Any changes in expectations are clear and explicit.
Establish Communication Plans

☐ We have received any existing communication guidelines or materials.

☐ We have a roll-out strategy and timeline for our communications about the change.
   ☐ Our team knows what to communicate and when to communicate it.

☐ We have decided exactly what we will communicate to our people.

Follow-Up

☐ We have an agreed-upon schedule and process for monitoring progress and maintaining alignment over the next several months.

☐ We have communicated any needs, ideas, or information gaps to the people to whom we report.

☐ We have assessed our progress and made modifications, as necessary.

   ☐ Days
   ☐ Weeks
   ☐ Months
   ☐ On going