SDI ScienceDocs Inc.
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Change Governance Framework Template

A practical structure for leadership ownership, decision-making, oversight, and implementation control

Purpose of This Template

Use this template to define how a major change initiative will be governed. It helps clarify leadership sponsorship, decision rights, meeting cadence, risk escalation, implementation ownership, and communication checkpoints. This tool is useful for AI adoption, commercialization efforts, operational redesign, grant-funded growth, optimization engineering projects, and broader organizational transitions.

1. Governance Snapshot

Start by defining the change and the governance need. Good governance should be lean enough to avoid bureaucracy, but structured enough to keep decisions, risks, accountability, and communication from becoming informal or unclear.

Planning Item	Notes
Name of change initiative	
Primary objective	
Why governance is needed	
Type of change: AI / commercialization / operations / funding / other	
Expected start and end dates	
Executive sponsor	
Implementation lead / project manager	
Most important success measure	

2. Governance Principles

Use this section to establish the operating principles that will guide the change. These principles should help the team make consistent decisions when priorities, risks, or external conditions shift.

Governance Principle	How This Will Be Applied
Clear ownership	
Timely decision-making	
Transparent communication	
Evidence-based implementation	
Risk-aware execution	
Adaptability as conditions change	

3. Leadership and Governance Roles

Define the people or groups responsible for guiding, approving, managing, and implementing the change. In smaller organizations, one person may hold more than one role. The important point is to make ownership explicit.

Role / Group	Primary Responsibility	Name(s)	Decision Authority	Backup / Support
Executive sponsor	Sets direction, removes			

Role / Group	Primary Responsibility	Name(s)	Decision Authority	Backup / Support
	barriers, reinforces priority			
Change owner	Owns overall change plan and progress			
Implementation lead	Coordinates workstreams, timeline, and follow-through			
Technical / AI / engineering lead	Guides technical feasibility, data, and implementation requirements			
Operations / workflow owner	Ensures practical fit with day-to-day work			
Compliance / risk owner	Monitors regulatory, privacy, grant, security, and funding risks			
Communications lead	Coordinates stakeholder messaging and feedback loops			

4. Governance Bodies and Meeting Cadence

Not every initiative needs multiple committees. Use only the governance bodies that match the scale and risk of the change. A startup may only need a sponsor check-in and a weekly implementation meeting, while a larger organization may need a formal steering group.

Governance Body / Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency	Outputs / Decisions
Executive sponsor check-in	Review priorities, barriers, major decisions			
Steering committee	Provide oversight, approve key changes, manage strategic risk			
Implementation working group	Coordinate tasks, dependencies, and issue resolution			
Technical / data review	Review feasibility, data quality, integration, security, or AI risks			
Stakeholder feedback review	Review adoption signals, concerns, and communication needs			

5. Decision Rights Matrix

Use this matrix to define who recommends, approves, executes, and must be informed for major decisions. Clear decision rights help prevent delays, duplicate approvals, and uncertainty during implementation.

Decision Area	Recommend	Approve	Execute	Consult	Inform
Change scope or major priority shifts					
Budget or resource changes					
Technology / AI tool selection					
Workflow or process redesign					
Compliance, privacy, or data governance decisions					
External partner / customer / funder communication					

Decision Area	Recommend	Approve	Execute	Consult	Inform
Go-live / launch decision					

6. RACI Workstream Planner

RACI stands for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. Use this planner to clarify ownership across core workstreams. This is especially helpful when a change effort crosses leadership, operations, technical teams, outside consultants, funders, and partners.

Workstream	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes
Change strategy and roadmap					
Stakeholder communication					
Workflow mapping and redesign					
AI / technology implementation					
Training and documentation					
Risk, compliance, and funding alignment					
Performance metrics and adoption tracking					

7. Risk Escalation Framework

Governance should make risk visible early. Use this section to define when an issue can be handled by the implementation team and when it must be escalated to leadership, legal/compliance reviewers, funders, investors, or outside advisors.

Risk / Issue Type	Example Trigger	Initial Owner	Escalate To	Escalation Timeframe
Strategic risk	Change no longer supports core objective or market need			
Operational risk	Workflow disruption, missed handoffs, or process failure			
Technical / AI risk	Model, data, security, integration, or reliability concern			
Compliance / funding risk	Grant, regulatory, privacy, IP, or reporting concern			
Stakeholder risk	Low adoption, resistance, confusion, or loss of trust			
Budget / schedule risk	Major cost increase or timeline slippage			

8. Issue and Decision Log

Use this log during implementation meetings to track open issues and decisions. This creates a practical record of what was decided, why it was decided, and who owns the next step.

Date	Issue / Decision	Context / Rationale	Decision / Next Step	Owner	Due Date	Status

Date	Issue / Decision	Context / Rationale	Decision / Next Step	Owner	Due Date	Status

9. Governance Milestone Roadmap

Map the major governance checkpoints across the change initiative. This helps leadership see when decisions, readiness reviews, communication checkpoints, risk reviews, training, and adoption measurement should occur.

Phase	Governance Checkpoint	Key Questions	Owner	Target Date
Initiation	Sponsor alignment and change charter	Is the purpose clear? Is leadership aligned?		
Planning	Readiness and stakeholder review	Are people, data, workflows, risks, and resources ready?		
Design	Process / technology / operating model approval	Does the design solve the right problem?		
Implementation	Progress, risk, and adoption review	Are barriers being resolved quickly?		
Launch / Go-live	Launch readiness decision	Are training, communication, and support in place?		
Post-launch	Performance and continuous improvement review	What is working, what needs adjustment, and what comes next?		

10. Governance Health Check

Score each item from 1 to 5. A low score suggests that governance should be strengthened before the change initiative moves further into implementation.

Governance Question	Score 1-5	Notes / Evidence
Leadership sponsorship is visible, active, and consistent.		
Decision authority is clearly defined for major change decisions.		
The implementation lead has enough authority and support to act.		
Meeting cadence and reporting expectations are clear.		
Risks and issues have a defined escalation pathway.		
Stakeholder communication is connected to governance decisions.		
Milestones, owners, and success measures are being tracked.		
The governance structure is practical rather than overly bureaucratic.		

11. Immediate Governance Action Plan

Use this final section to convert the governance framework into next steps. Focus first on the actions that will make ownership, decisions, communication, and risk escalation clearer.

Priority Action	Owner	Due Date	Expected Outcome	Status
Confirm executive sponsor and change owner				
Define governance meeting rhythm				

Priority Action	Owner	Due Date	Expected Outcome	Status
Finalize decision rights matrix				
Create issue and decision log				
Define escalation pathway for high-risk issues				
Schedule first governance review				

ScienceDocs Support

ScienceDocs helps startups, research teams, and innovation-focused organizations create governance structures for change initiatives involving commercialization, AI adoption, grant-funded growth, operational redesign, and optimization engineering. We can help clarify leadership ownership, build practical governance tools, facilitate alignment discussions, and connect change governance to funding strategy, technical implementation, and measurable outcomes.

Ready to get started? Contact ScienceDocs to discuss change governance support for your organization.