FULL TEAM PROJECT CONSULTANT

IF YOU’RE LOOKING TO USE YOUR BUSINESS SKILLS AND ENTHUSIASM ON BEHALF OF A WORTHY CAUSE, WHY NOT VOLUNTEER WITH ACT, STANFORD GSB’S ALUMNI CONSULTING TEAM? TWICE EACH YEAR, ACT OFFERS BAY AREA ALUMS PRO-BONO OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSULT FOR 10 HOURS A MONTH WITH LOCAL NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. YOU CAN CHOOSE TO JOIN A “FULL TEAM” WORKING WITH 6-8 ALUMS FOR 6 MONTHS OR A “FASTRACK TEAM” WITH 3 OR FEWER ALUMS ON A MORE MODESTLY SCOPE ENGAGEMENT WITH A 3 MONTH TIME FRAME. EITHER WAY, YOU’LL ENJOY THE CAMARADERIE OF AN ALUMNI TEAM AND SATISFACTION OF HELPING A NON PROFIT IN A MATERIAL WAY.

This document focuses on “Full Team” projects. It takes you through the typical stages of a project, what you’ll do as a Project Consultant and the support ACT provides to make your experience a success.

1. THE FULL TEAM IS FORMED

Every six months, Stanford GSB’s ACT office emails Bay Area alums with an announcement of the projects it has screened for the upcoming project cycle. To volunteer, you apply online by filling out a form listing your skills and experience and ranking the project teams you’d like to join. If you choose a “Full Team” project, you will also indicate whether you would like to be a Project Leader responsible for guiding the project and serving as the liaison with the client or to be a team member, or Project Consultant. If you are interested in being a Project Leader, please see the companion document, Full Team Project Leader, for a description of that role.

If you have volunteered to be a Project Consultant and you are matched with the project (generally volunteers are placed on one of their top two choices), you’ll be contacted by the ACT office and by the Project Leader. In these conversations, you will want to confirm that the project will be a good experience for you. To that end, you may wish to ensure that it will accomplish any particular objectives you have in volunteering, make sure the team’s meeting schedule is compatible with yours and understand the leadership style of the Project Leader (e.g., will they limit their role
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Objectives:
1. To understand the client’s perceived needs and goals.
2. To meet with all key stakeholders to determine who is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the ACT team’s recommendations.
3. To work with Project Leader(s) and client to establish project goals, scope, and timeline.

Key Challenges:
1. To balance the client’s desires against ACT consultants’ interests, skills, and availability.
2. To set realistic expectations for the client and the ACT team.

End Result:
A final work plan, agreed to and signed by the client and Project Leader(s).

PROJECT EXECUTION

Objective:
To complete the steps of the work plan and deliver a quality product to the client.

Key Challenge:
To stay engaged and energized all the way through to completion.

End Result:
Data, analysis, mid-course review, final report, and presentation.

2. THE PROJECT IS SCOPED
At the same time the team is forming, Project Leaders will also be conducting a “Sounding Board” phase with the client following guidelines provided by ACT. The aim is to ensure that the project can produce useful recommendations within a 6 month timeframe. Project Leaders may involve the Project Consultants in the “Sounding Board”, or not, as they see fit.

3. EXECUTE THE PROJECT
The preliminaries are over. Finally the project begins.

Kick-off and team meetings
At your first team meeting, you will begin by reviewing the work plan, raising questions, and discussing what information you need to collect and how you will get it. Depending on the project, teams may collect data, develop surveys, analyze financial information, and interview internal and external stakeholders. Teams often organize into sub-groups, which then focus on certain areas or tasks in the work plan.

Early on in the project, your team will meet with client staff to hear their perspectives on their organization and the consulting project. Through the course of the project, your Project Leader will serve as the main liaison with the client, although individual team members may work closely with individual client staff members.

Mid-project management
As you and your teammates proceed with the work of the project, there are several ways you can contribute to a successful outcome:

- Give early warning whenever you cannot attend meetings or meet a deadline
- Be a good teammate by helping to keep meetings moving, taking responsibility for your share of taking notes and picking up work from other team members who have time conflicts
- Talk to your Project Leader if you feel out of the loop or if you sense that “scope creep” needs to be controlled
- Be flexible if the client’s situation changes and adjustments are needed

Mid-course review
Once your team has completed its research, you’ll analyze your findings and present them to the client’s staff and board representatives for their feedback. Sometimes the team will find it needs to pursue more research; at other times this meeting
may result in a change in the project’s scope or direction. At this time, your team will discuss how to best focus your efforts in the second half of the project.

**Final report**
To conclude the project, the ACT team creates an initial draft of its report (with findings, conclusions, and recommendations) and reviews it with the primary client contact for refinement and comment.

Finally, the team presents its conclusions and recommendations to the client management and board of directors.

4. **WRAP-UP THE PROJECT**

**Evaluate the project**
ACT will ask you – and your client – to complete a survey when you finish. Your responses are critical in helping improve ACT.

**Celebrate your team’s accomplishments**
Join your teammates at a celebration dinner courtesy of ACT. This is a great opportunity to recap your experience and share lessons learned.

**Attend a 12-month follow-up meeting with the client**
You will be invited to attend a meeting a year after your final presentation at which the client will present to the team where it stands with implementing the recommendations.

Serving as an ACT Project Consultant is a powerful way to contribute your professional experience and leadership talent to the community. For more information, please contact Susan Austin, ACT’s Director, at 650/736-1956 or info@stanfordact.org.