How to Assign Responsibilities with a RACI Matrix



Use the matrix to clarify work

A RACI becomes useful when it resolves a specific ownership or decision gap.

Define the purpose

A responsibility assignment matrix links work or decisions with roles. RACI uses Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed to describe how people participate.

Service-desk case

A company is launching a new internal service desk. Scope, configuration, operating acceptance and launch decisions need clear owners across the sponsor, project, technical and operating roles.

Start with decisions

Choose the work that needs clarity. The matrix supplements actual authority and collaboration; it cannot create rights that the organisation has not delegated.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Name a deliverable whose acceptance owner is unclear.

Understand R / Responsible

The responsible role performs or coordinates the work needed for the row.

Define the activity

Use a specific output or decision so the role understands what it must do. Several responsible contributors may be needed, but coordination should remain clear.

Service-desk case

The technical lead is responsible for configuring and demonstrating the service-desk module. The row needs its scope and completion evidence understood.

Confirm capacity

A letter does not establish availability, skill or agreement. Ask the role holder to confirm what they will deliver and what inputs they need.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

State the work and completion evidence for one R assignment.

Understand A / Accountable

The accountable role owns the result or decision under the agreed arrangement.

Use a clear convention

This workbook uses one accountable role for each row to make the final ownership clear. Confirm that the person has the actual authority needed for that responsibility.

Service-desk case

The operating lead is accountable for accepting operating readiness. They need evidence that support, workflow and handover conditions are met.

Separate ownership from doing

The accountable role can also do work, but the two meanings remain distinct. A combined A/R may be sensible for a defined row.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Identify who can own the final result for one row.

Understand C and I

Consultation and information have different interaction needs.

Consulted

A consulted role provides relevant input before or during the work or decision. Make the question and timing clear so the input can influence the result.

Informed

An informed role needs to know the outcome or progress through an appropriate channel. Being informed does not by itself establish an approval requirement.

Service-desk case

Operations is consulted on configuration exceptions and informed about an approved technical change. If operating acceptance is required, represent that decision explicitly.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write what one C role must contribute and what one I role needs to receive.

Choose useful rows

A vague row can hide several different decisions and owners.

Define the work

Use meaningful deliverables, activities or decisions at a consistent level. If a row contains different approval rights, split it into clearer rows.

Service-desk case

Separate approve pilot scope, configure module, accept operating readiness and authorise launch. "Manage the service desk" is too broad to resolve those ownership questions.

Keep it usable

Include enough detail to support coordination without assigning a matrix row to every trivial action. Link detailed work definitions where needed.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Rewrite one broad row as two specific decisions.

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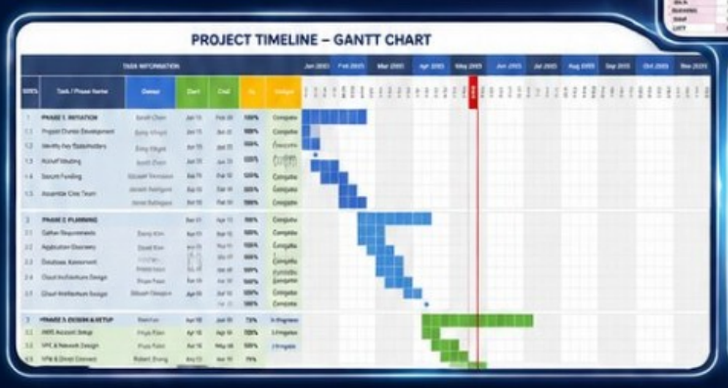
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Choose the role columns

Use stable roles that can be confirmed and mapped to people.

Identify participants

Include roles that do work, own decisions, provide material input or need the result. Avoid assuming the organisation chart already defines these relationships.

Service-desk case

The compact example uses Sponsor, PM, Technical Lead and Operations Lead. Specialists can be added where their contribution materially changes the work.

Check the boundary

External suppliers may need their own responsibilities reflected through the contract and interface agreement. An internal matrix alone does not amend a supplier commitment.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Map a role column to the actual person and authority.

Assign the accountable owner first

A row needs a clear route for the result before participation expands.

Use the work's purpose

Ask who is accountable for this particular outcome and who has the relevant decision right. Resolve disputes with governance before the work reaches its approval point.

Service-desk case

The sponsor owns the pilot-scope decision in this example. Operations owns operating acceptance. These assignments are explicit, not inferred from who attends the most meetings.

Check for gaps

An empty A can leave an important result unowned. Multiple competing A entries can signal a row that needs clarification or a defined joint-governance arrangement.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Find a row with unclear final ownership and resolve the decision right.

Assign R, then the necessary C and I

Add participation because it serves the work.

Build the row

Identify who performs the work, which input is genuinely needed and who must know the result. Keep consultation focused on an understandable question.

Service-desk case

PM prepares the scope proposal as R. Sponsor is A. Technical and operations leads provide feasibility and operating input as C before the decision.

Control delay

A long C list can turn a simple decision into an unmanaged approval chain. Agree response timing and the route for missing or conflicting input.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Justify every consultation entry in one row.

Check horizontal and vertical patterns

The matrix can reveal more than missing letters.

Read across a row

Check that work has responsible participation and a clear accountable route, with necessary consultation and information. Confirm the row is understandable.

Read down a column

Look for overload, conflicting expectations or a role excluded from decisions that materially affect it. Check actual capacity as well as counts.

Service-desk case

If Operations is accountable for acceptance but never consulted on workflow design, late surprises are likely. Adjust the timing and interaction, not merely the colour of the cell.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Inspect one row and one role column for a coordination problem.

A worked service-desk matrix

Use the example only after confirming your own authority arrangements.

Scope and build

Sponsor owns pilot scope; PM prepares it. The technical lead owns and performs configuration, with PM and Operations consulted.

Acceptance and launch

Operations owns operating acceptance, supported by technical evidence. In this example the sponsor authorises launch from the PM's coordinated readiness recommendation.

Read the cells

A/R means the same role owns the result and performs the work. Blank cells mean no defined participation in that row, not a ban on helpful collaboration.

Decision	Sponsor	PM	Tech	Ops
Pilot scope	A	R	C	C
Configure	I	C	A/R	C
Accept ops	I	C	R	A
Launch	A	R	C	C

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Explain the approval route for each example row.

Review with the people named

An assignment becomes reliable through agreement and working interfaces.

Run a short walk-through

Ask each role to explain the row, expected input, deliverable and decision. Resolve differences before using the matrix as the control reference.

Service-desk case

Operations says it cannot accept readiness without a support rota. The team adds that evidence to the work definition and agrees who prepares it.

Capture the agreement

Record version, date, owner and relevant references. Communicate significant changes to the people affected rather than treating the matrix as private PM documentation.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Ask one role holder to describe what they believe their assignment means.

Turn the matrix into a handoff

A letter needs timing, information and acceptance evidence.

Define the interface

Agree what is provided, by whom, when, in what form and how the receiving role confirms it is usable.

Service-desk case

The technical lead provides test results and known limitations before the operating acceptance review. Operations checks the evidence against the agreed readiness conditions.

Use the decision route

If the evidence is incomplete, identify the action and owner. Escalate through the agreed authority when the row cannot reach a valid decision.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Write a handoff agreement for one R-to-A relationship.

Resolve ambiguous or excessive assignments

Treat a confusing matrix as evidence of an unresolved management question.

Common gaps

No R suggests missing delivery ownership. No A suggests unclear final ownership. Many C entries can conceal an undefined decision process. An overloaded role may lack capacity.

Service-desk case

Two departments both claim the launch decision. Clarify whether the row should be split into operating acceptance and investment authorisation, with the actual governance defining each.

Use the source

Consult the organisation's authority and operating rules. Changing a letter without resolving the underlying decision right leaves the conflict in place.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Identify the management question behind one problematic row.

Update the matrix when work changes

Ownership needs review when scope, people or organisational boundaries shift.

Use change triggers

Review new deliverables, changed suppliers, team moves, operating transitions and altered authority. Keep linked work definitions and decision routes aligned.

Service-desk case

A shared-service provider takes over first-line support. The team revisits acceptance and handover roles rather than carrying forward an obsolete Operations assignment.

Preserve clarity

Record the effective version and communicate the changed responsibilities. Check that the new role holders accept the work and have the required capacity.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Name a recent change that should trigger a responsibility review.

Work an acceptance conflict

Apply the matrix and evidence to a real coordination problem.

Scenario

Configuration is complete. The technical lead wants to launch, Operations has not accepted support readiness, and the sponsor asks for a recommendation today.

Reason through it

Use the defined operating acceptance and launch rows. Identify missing evidence, feasible options and the authority for each decision. PM coordinates the recommendation rather than assuming acceptance.

Check the outcome

The result should be a clear authorised decision and follow-up owners. A technically finished module is only one input to the wider readiness assessment.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

State who must decide what before launch can be authorised.



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Your RACI desk check

Use the matrix to make responsibilities understandable and workable.

Check the structure

Are rows specific and columns meaningful? Does each row have the required delivery ownership and a clear accountable route under your agreed convention?

Check the people

Have role holders confirmed authority, capacity, inputs and expected results? Are consultation and information channels useful and timely?

Check the use

Does the matrix support actual handoffs, decisions and updates? Resolve the cause of ambiguity rather than maintaining a grid nobody follows.

TAKE IT TO YOUR PROJECT

Review one important deliverable from its work owner to its final acceptance.