Clarifying Responsibilities with MOCHA

MOCHA is a tool for establishing clear roles on projects. In most settings, projects involve contributions from multiple people. This is especially true in the progressive and education equity sectors where we strive to collaborate, build coalitions, and seek perspective from communities most impacted by the issues we work on.

Multiple people working together can generate greater participation, more equitable outcomes, and broader impact. And if we’re being honest, it can also lead to confusion. The MOCHA model clarifies who’s responsible for what and reduces the chance of hidden labor by spelling out each person’s contributions.

MOCHA stands for:

* Manager: Supports and holds owner accountable through delegation. Serves as a resource, shares feedback, asks probing questions, reviews progress, and intervenes if the work is off-track. This person may or may not be the owner’s supervisor.
* Owner: Has overall responsibility for driving the project forward and coordinating steps to accomplish the goal. Ensures all the work gets done (directly or with helpers) and involves others (consults) in a meaningful way. There should only be one owner.
* Consulted: Provides input and perspective. May share resources or referrals.
* Helper: Implements aspects of the work and actively contributes to project success. The helper may own a significant area of work with its own MOCHA (we call this a cascading MOCHA).
* Approver: Signs off on the final product or key decisions. May be the owner or manager, though it can also be a person or group with a clear decision-making role on the project.

Imagine that your organization is about to host its annual fundraising dinner. Here’s what the MOCHA looks like:

* You’re the owner, which means that you are responsible for making sure the dinner goes smoothly and you hit your fundraising goal for the event.
* The manager in the MOCHA is a colleague with experience planning large events. They provide guidance and approve the overall plan.
* Your helpers are the marketing assistant, events coordinator, and development manager. The development manager owns the fundraising pitch portion of the event. Your events coordinator handles program logistics including confirmations with speakers, performers, and audio/visual. The marketing assistant is responsible for tracking RSVPs, recruiting attendees, and sending reminders. When there are concerns about low RSVPs two weeks out, they’re empowered to problem-solve by making phone calls to shore up “maybes.” Each helper has their own cascading MOCHA for their stream of work.
* Your consulteds include your manager, the communications director, and the program director.
* Your ED is the final approver on the budget and you are the final approver on the program.
* **OCHA for Fundraiser**

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| **Manager/Mentor** | **Owner/Organizer** | **Consulted** | **Helper(s)** | **Approver** |
| María | You! | Rini (event plan and your workload as needed)  Kevin (major donor list, work plan for Joelle)  Ariana (program, work plan for Thuy and Kara) | Joelle (outreach and registration)  Thuy (fundraising)  Kara (program logistics) | Mana (budget)  You (program) |

**Using MOCHA to Advance Equity and Inclusion**

In many organizations, someone is driving the work by default—or team members get asked for input without full acknowledgement for their insights, time, and talent. Who’s seen as “in charge,” who becomes an invisible “helper,” and who’s actually driving the work often mirrors race and gender disparities in the workplace. Used properly, MOCHA can interrupt this pattern, make everyone’s contributions more visible, and complement your organization’s equity and inclusion work.

When used on teams with an active commitment to equity and inclusion, MOCHA can help ensure people who play important roles in projects receive recognition and credit for the work they do. Every person in a MOCHA has authority, agency, and ownership over something within their sphere of work, even if they aren’t the driver (owner).

That said, MOCHA is not a magical antidote to pre-existing issues with hierarchy or power. Managers, owners, and approvers should be especially intentional to check for bias as you plan projects and consider who you’ll consult or ask for help. When paired with Fair Process decision-making and effective management (that is, equitable, sustainable, and results-driven), MOCHA can make the implicit explicit in ways that build participation and more fully acknowledge each persons’ contribution.

At TMC, we use MOCHA to affirm ownership, encourage collaboration, and make roles transparent, which helps us be specific with our praise and acknowledgment. We know some organizations don’t use the word manager, and that’s okay. Others dislike the words “owner” and “helper.” In a world where ownership is often synonymous with property and help is devalued or uncompensated along lines of race, class, gender, and ability, flex the acronym if you need to! Call the manager the mentor, and the owner an organizer. We always love a good remix.

Regardless of how you change up the words, the purpose stays the same. MOCHA helps structure efficient, inclusive collaborations. It makes project experiences smoother so people can spend more energy on the missions that matter.

For more on MOCHA roles and implementation, see Frequently Asked Questions About MOCHA.