Minute QI – A Goldilocks Approach to Effective Project Scoping

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To ensure your QI project scope is neither too small nor too large, you need to balance the project's ambition with its feasibility. Here are strategies to find the right scope:

1. Align with Organizational Priorities
   - Too Small: If your project focuses on a minor issue that doesn't affect broader goals, it might be too limited. Ensure your project aligns with organizational priorities like patient safety, quality of care, or efficiency.
   - Too Large: On the other hand, if your project aims to address a massive systemic issue (e.g., "improve overall patient outcomes"), it could be too overwhelming. Narrow it down to a specific aspect that contributes to the larger goal (e.g., "reduce medication errors in post-surgical patients").

2. Set Realistic Goals
   - Too Small: If your project goal can be achieved with minimal effort, it may not provide meaningful impact. Look for areas where improvement will yield significant benefits, without being trivial.
   - Too Large: If your goals are too ambitious, your team may struggle to achieve them. Break large projects into smaller, manageable phases. For example, instead of "eliminate all hospital-acquired infections," start with reducing central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs).

3. Assess Resource Availability
   - Too Small: If the project requires very few resources and can be done in a short time, you might want to explore a broader issue. Consider whether expanding the scope would be more impactful without stretching resources.
   - Too Large: If the project requires excessive time, staff, or budget, it's likely too big. Reassess the scope to fit the available resources. Focus on the most critical areas that can be realistically addressed within your team's capacity.

4. Evaluate Data Availability
   - Too Small: If you're working with very limited data and the issue doesn't generate enough information for analysis, the scope might be too narrow. Aim for a project where data collection and analysis can provide meaningful insights.

- Too Large: If your project scope involves too many data points or complex metrics, it can become difficult to manage and analyze. Focus on key performance indicators that directly address the problem.

5. Time Frame Considerations
   - Too Small: If the project can be completed very quickly, it might not be challenging enough to drive real change. Ensure the project takes enough time to implement and test meaningful interventions.
   - Too Large: If the project stretches over an extended period without clear results, it's likely too big. Break down larger projects into smaller steps with short-term milestones to keep progress on track.

6. Engage Stakeholders
   - Too Small: If stakeholders, such as staff or patients, aren't significantly impacted by the project, it may be too small to matter. Ensure that the issue affects multiple stakeholders in meaningful ways.
   - Too Large: If the project involves too many stakeholders, leading to conflicting interests or overcomplication, you may need to narrow it. Focus on a specific group (e.g., targeting only emergency department processes rather than hospital-wide issues).

7. Test Through PDSA Cycles
   - Too Small: A project scope that can be tested and solved with a single cycle of Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) might not be ambitious enough. Consider adding more depth or breadth to the project.
   - Too Large: If it takes many cycles to achieve small incremental progress, the scope is likely too large. Aim for a scope that shows meaningful improvement within 1–3 cycles of testing.

8. Consult with Experts
   - Too Small: If feedback suggests the project won't make a noticeable difference or is too isolated, broaden the scope.
   - Too Large: If expert feedback indicates the project is too complex or beyond your team's expertise, narrow the focus to make it more manageable.

Summary
- Just right: Align with broader goals, set realistic and impactful aims, and ensure resources and time are sufficient to see meaningful results. By focusing on something that's achievable but still significant, your QI project will have the right scope for success.