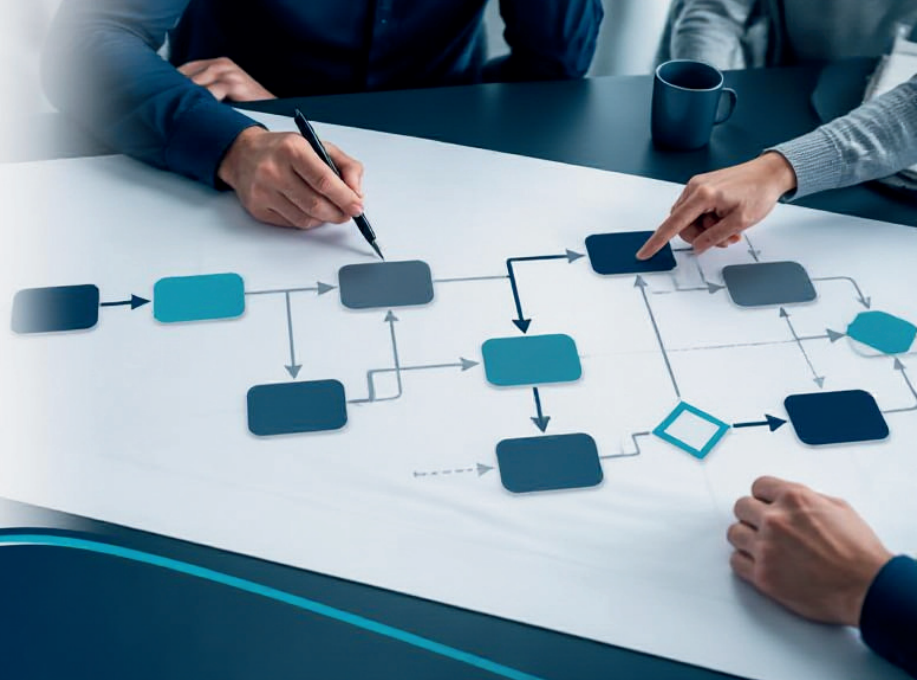


PROCESS MAPPING

A STEP-BY-STEP MANUAL

A practical guide for
quality improvement teams



Process Mapping: A Step-by-Step Manual

Introduction

Process mapping helps you visualize problems and understand your system. It is an effective way to include all staff, supports finding solutions, provides insight into a process, and helps identify bottlenecks, repetition, and delays.

Use this manual to guide a quality-improvement team through a process mapping session, from understanding the current system to prioritizing problem areas. By the end, you will have a validated current-state process map suitable as the baseline for a QI project charter. You will be ready for root cause analysis and liberating structures as you continue to develop change ideas and conduct PDSA cycles.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this manual, you should be able to:

1. Identify the purpose of mapping in quality improvement.
2. Participate in or lead a process mapping session.
3. Interpret the information from a process map to identify quality-improvement opportunities.
4. Understand current state vs future state mapping.

Four-Step Overview

Follow these four main steps in order:

1. Understanding your system.
 2. Identifying areas for improvement.
 3. Validate the process map.
 4. Prioritize problem areas.
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Step 1 — Understanding Your System

Begin by documenting the process as it is actually operating. Work through the following actions before looking for solutions or deciding which problems to address first. All team members should be involved.

1. **Define the start and end points.** State where the process begins and where it ends, then map what happens between those points.
2. **Document what is actually happening.** Record the process as it operates in practice, using the 80/20 rule when documenting what usually happens.
3. **Map work arounds.** Include the work arounds used in the process rather than recording only the expected route.
4. **Identify what triggers the next step.** For each transition, note what causes the next step to begin.

Step 1 Checklist

- ☐ The start and end points are defined.
 - ☐ What is actually happening is documented using the 80/20 rule.
 - ☐ Work arounds are included in the map.
 - ☐ The trigger for each next step is identified.
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Step 2 — Identifying Areas for Improvement

Review the process map with the team and use the following questions to identify areas for improvement. Record the points where the current process creates difficulty, loss, or delay.

1. **When do things go wrong?**
2. **Where are the challenges for staff?**
3. **What do patients complain about?**
4. **Where are resources being lost?**
5. **Are there areas that do not make sense?**
6. **Are there wastes in the system?**

Step 2 Checklist

- ☐ The team has reviewed when things go wrong.
 - ☐ Challenges for staff have been identified.
 - ☐ Patient complaints have been considered.
 - ☐ Areas where resources are being lost have been recorded.
 - ☐ Areas that do not make sense have been noted.
 - ☐ Wastes in the system have been identified.
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Step 3 — Validate the Process Map

Bring the team back together to review the process map. Use the team's knowledge of the process to check that the map represents what is actually happening.

1. **Bring the team back together.** Share the process map with the team and invite them to review the mapped steps and transitions.
2. **Ensure that the map is correct.** Check the map against the team's understanding and correct any part that does not accurately represent the process.

Step 3 Checklist

- ☐ The team has been brought back together.
 - ☐ The team has reviewed the process map.
 - ☐ The map has been checked for accuracy.
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Step 4 — Prioritize Problem Areas

Use the validated process map to decide which problem areas should receive attention first. Focus the discussion on the points that matter most to the process and its flow.

1. **Identify the biggest "pain" points.** Review the map and identify the areas that create the greatest difficulty or concern.
2. **Decide where you are going to start.** Select the problem area that the team will address first.
3. **Consider flow.** Look at how the process moves from one step to the next and consider where the flow is affected.

Step 4 Checklist

- ☐ The biggest "pain" points have been identified.
 - ☐ The team has decided where to start.
 - ☐ The flow of the process has been considered.
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Next Phase: Liberating Structures, Change Ideas & PDSA's

After the process map has been validated and the problem areas have been prioritized, move to the next phase: Dive deeper into the problem through root cause analysis with liberating structures to continue to develop change ideas and conduct a PDSA cycle.

Use the understanding of the system, the identified areas for improvement, and the prioritized problem areas to guide the development of change ideas.