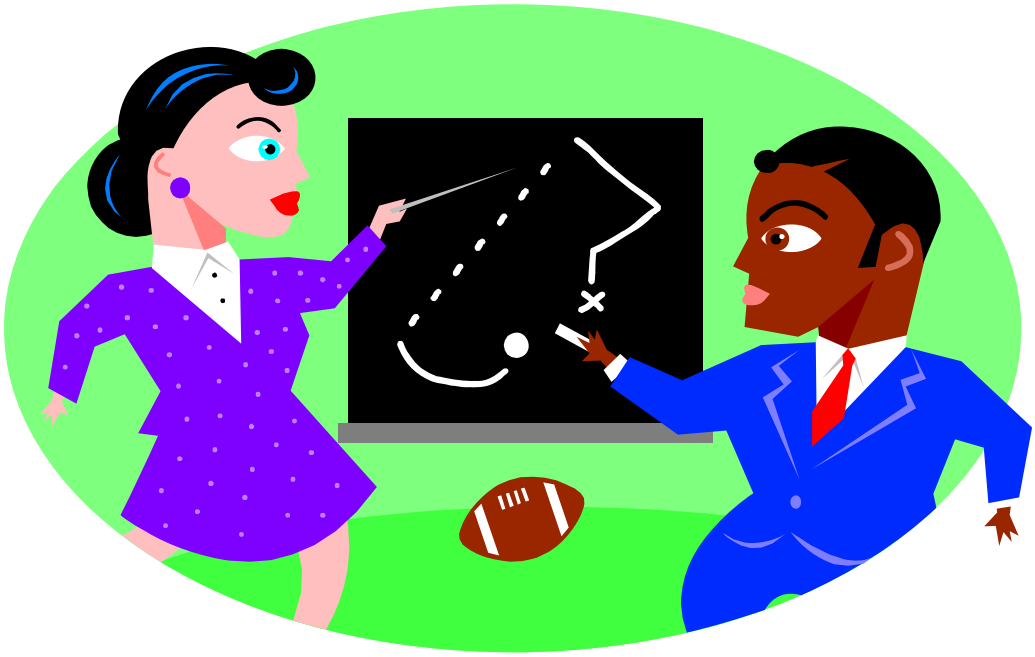
Process Review Manual



Institutional Effectiveness Committee
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What is a process?

A process, in our definition, is a sequence of work activities that has a specified beginning and a defined product of service as an output. Examples might include:

- Transcript evaluation
- Paying expense vouchers
- Producing a departmental report
- Purchasing equipment
- Handling complaints or concerns

Why should we be interested in Process Improvement?

We all experience events when there is too much to do and too little time or resource available for the stakeholders. In the end, we want to provide better and faster results and services to our customers and we want the actions to be based in data that we collect and use. Additionally, it will potentially leave us with more time to do other important work.

When we define the Process we also need to enumerate the measures of success associated with it. We need to document or "map out" the process, both the current one and an "ideal" where we would like to be. Once this step is done we can begin to collect the data and other information we need to help evaluate the process. Understanding our customer's needs and collecting data relative to their satisfaction is another important step.

After the data has been collected and coded, the process under review can be assessed for intended versus real outcomes, and ideas for improvement can be identified, analyzed, and prioritized.

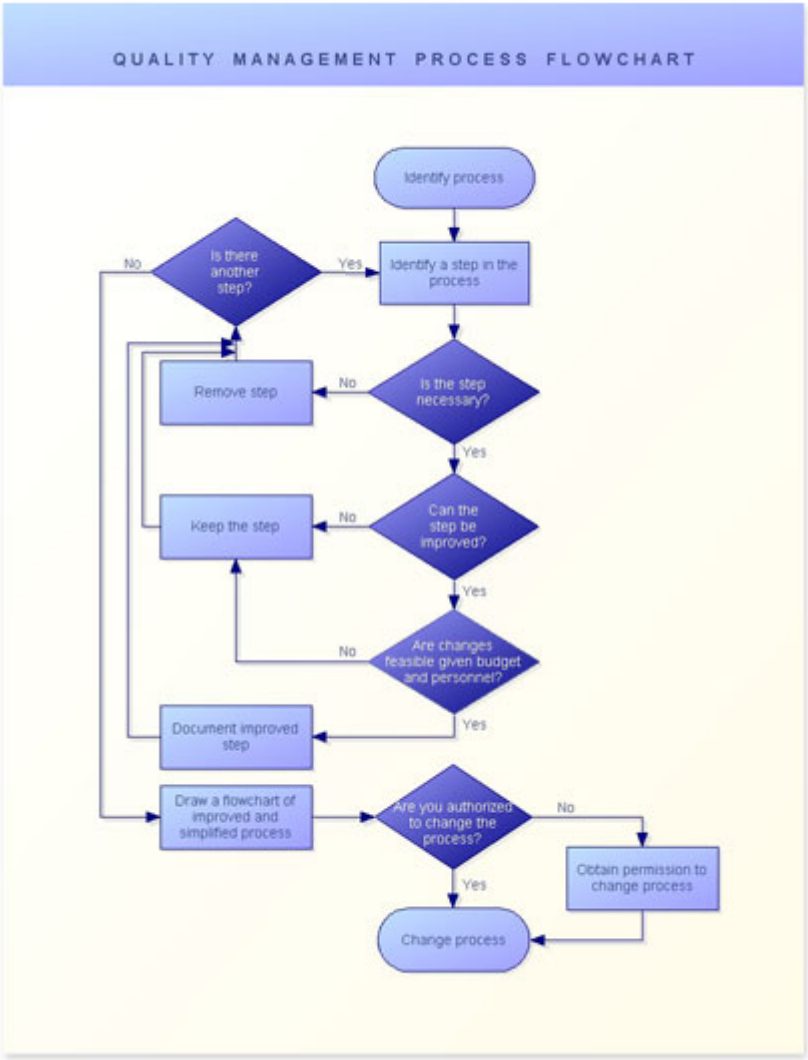
Any needs for changes in the process are identified based on the data collected and used in the review.

Mapping Your Process

Mapping your process (flowcharting) allows your team to visualize the process from start to finish, determine where loopholes/problems may exist, and more easily focus on any changes that should/could be made.

The following steps are helpful in mapping your progress:

1. Gather all persons that are physically involved with the process at the campus level.
2. Briefly summarize the process so that all group members clearly understand the particular process you plan to map.
3. Decide on a specific beginning point and a specific ending point for the process you wish to map.
4. The mapping activity itself can be accomplished in several ways, depending on the size of your group and the amount of visualization needed by the group to accomplish the task effectively:



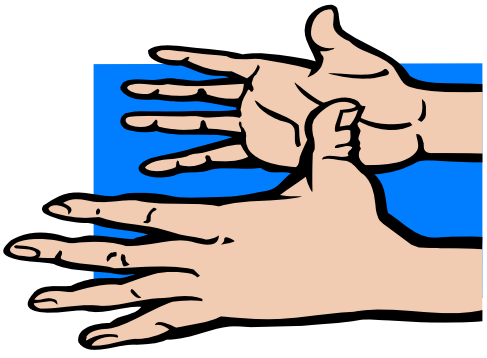
Example I:

Using bullets, list each step within the process from its defined beginning to its defined end. If a step can take more than one direction but remains in the control of the department owning the process, branch the step as in a family tree. Define what steps need to occur within each branch and bring it back to the main trunk to continue the steps.

If a step in the process must be completed by someone outside of the department, use arrows to denote that it is leaving the control of the department and list the steps that need to occur. Use an arrow back to reflect the completion of the required steps.

List all steps to the defined end.

Understanding and Using Baseline Data



Baseline data is a level of performance of a process that is considered normal, average, or typical over a period of time. This qualitative or quantitative information is gathered prior to deciding to change the process so that comparisons can be made after the change has been initiated.

Helpful Definitions:

Quantitative measures Quantitative approaches are those where you make measurements using some relatively well-defined measurement tool. This can include a well developed intelligence test or an informal questionnaire.

Qualitative measures Qualitative approaches refer to situations where you collect data in an unstructured way. If you use an unstructured interview you will have qualitative data. If you ask subjects to keep a diary of what they are doing, you are collecting qualitative data.

Steps to identifying baseline data:

1. What is the normal, average, or typical performance of the current process?
2. How do you know this? (List the qualitative and or quantitative data.)
3. What if anything needs to change? (These become your outcomes.)
4. How will you know if anything has changed? (These are your measures.)

Example of Baseline Data:

If LSC has discovered that students in a variety of programs were unable to graduate because of incorrect planners our outcomes would be to:

- Reduce the rate of incorrect program planners to within 50% of the first year and the additional 50% of the 2nd year.

- Reduce the number of untrained faculty on program accuracy checking skills to 100% within 2 years.

To measure the above outcomes, LSC will achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase the accuracy of program planners within two years

- Offer formal training program to faculty and advisors on accuracy checking skills

- Increase the number of shared best practices on two year college planners

The appropriate baseline data would consist of the following:

- Present and past program planners
- Present and past professional development activities in accuracy
- Current best practices in collecting program planners

Process Review: Best Practices

In the steps for doing a process review, it is important to check around to see if there are other institutions that may have already changed the process you are working on. No sense in reinventing the wheel. Searching for best practices is a method to do this. There are several ways to search for best practices. The two most useful to the designers of this process are shown below.

Step one: Have interested parties (people working on the process review) check with their professional organizations to see what current practices are. This can show if others have worked on this process already or if they are waiting for us to take the lead again.
Who: Anyone who belongs to a professional organization that may be affiliated with the process being worked on. These may include local organizations, state organizations, or national organizations.
What: An email through your professional organizations list serve works well.
When: Once the first draft of your new or revised process has been completed.

Step two: A simple but effective method to look for processes is to do a web search. This can yield a lot of information so be prepared to weed through it all. Also, be willing to spend some time working on and refining the search.
Who: Any member of the process review team.
What: Conduct a web search using the process you are reviewing as the key words.
When: Once the first draft of your new or revised process has been completed.

MODIFY PROCESS
At this point, the data has been collected and reviewed. The process needs to be reviewed in conjunction with the data collected. The data may point to multiple problems in the process. Some of these could include extra steps that can be omitted, incorrect routing of documents or forms, lack of sufficient staff at key points, inadequate budget for needed software or equipment, lack of coverage when someone is gone, additional training needed, or other problems. In light of this data, the process should be modified, additional staff hired or trained, adjustments made to forms or procedures, and budget needs identified.

- Review the process based on data needed with the team that mapped the process and collected the data. Input needed from people involved in the process. Any necessary procedural changes to the process need to be identified and documented and completed quickly after getting the data.

- Identify any recommended staffing changes especially during peak workload times. Review whether temporary or other staff can be used to assist at critical points. This would be determined by the team that mapped the process and the administrator (or designee) in charge of the affected unit.

- The Team would then identify any recommended training needs and work with administrators and the professional development committee to identify possible training opportunities along with a budgetary request if needed.

- Identify non-personnel budget issues along with the team needs. Appropriate requests submitted through budgetary processes.

- Review appropriate policies and adjust as needed. Take the policies to the policy committee.

- Identify a timeline in which to make the necessary changes.

- Lastly, map the new process based on the modifications determined above. Document all changes made.

COMMUNICATE PROCEDURAL CHANGES TO STAKEHOLDERS

Communication of the procedural changes to the appropriate constituent groups is a critical step in the process. It is important that all groups and individuals who access the process are identified to ensure that the modified process is consistently applied. The communication process may involve several steps and series of communications. Listed below is a step-by-step guide for communicating procedural changes to stakeholders.

- Brainstorm a list of all constituents who access and/or implement the process under review.

- Determine the most effective means for communicating the changes to each of the constituent groups. It is likely that a series of communications will be necessary to ensure that all parties are informed (e.g., departmental/divisional meetings, email, Shared Governance).

- Determine who will be responsible for communicating the procedural changes and define timelines for same.

- Gather all of the necessary information for the presentation(s) to ensure consistency and thoroughness in the communication(s).

- Present the changes. Information should include the following:

  1) Review the problems with the current process which precipitated the changes being made. This should include a presentation of baseline data gathered and positive effects anticipated with the procedural changes.

  2) Review the changes made to the process. This should involve a step-by-step review of the procedures. Any forms or modified printed materials should be distributed.

  3) Explain the anticipated outcomes and benefits anticipated and describe how the change will be measured.

  4) Review the implementation timelines and responsibilities.

  5) Allow for questions, suggestions and expression of any concerns.

EVALUATE THE MODIFIED PROCESS

Evaluation of the modified procedure is the final step of the process. This is a critical step as it provides data to support the changes being implemented and helps to identify any additional modifications that may be needed. The data-collection should take place after the modified process has been in place for a long enough period of time (generally months) to allow for valid measures of changes that have resulted. The data gathered at this step of the process should be compared to the baseline data gathered at the beginning of the process review to determine whether the procedural changes have had a measurable positive effect.

Result will help to determine next steps (if any) and should be communicated to stakeholders. Listed below is a step-by-step guide for evaluating the modified process.

- Review the baseline data elements gathered at the beginning of the process review.
- Review the anticipated outcomes for the modified process.
- Determine means for gathering the outcome data. Assign responsible persons and identify timelines.
- Compare the newly gathered data to the baseline data and analyze based on the anticipated outcomes.
- Determine the effectiveness of the procedural changes.
- Determine next steps (additional modifications to further enhance the process, if applicable).
- Communicate the result of the data analysis to stakeholders.