

Teams Getting Started

Introduction

Quality improvement principles will provide state government the tools to continuously improve the products, services, and information it provides to the citizens of North Carolina. **An important aspect of quality improvement is the establishment of improvement teams.** An improvement team is a group of individuals working toward a common goal to make an improvement or solve a problem. These teams will address improvement opportunities and problems that impact customer satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, and organizational efficiency. A team charter is a document that helps the team by clearly identifying the opportunity or problem, the actions the team will take, and the limitations of the project. **This guide will assist with project identification, role definition, charter development, and other steps in the team chartering process.**

Both private and public sector organizations are realizing the value of teams and are using teams in many, and in some cases all, of their operations. Teams are a valuable resource for breaking down barriers, fostering creativity, and improving work processes.

Each department or agency needs to clarify how it will create improvement teams. Team success can be greatly enhanced if steps are taken to ensure that key organizational issues are dealt with effectively. The team chartering process will address:

- When to create a team;
- How team members are selected;
- Who should be on the team;
- The tasks and responsibilities of the team;
- The extent of the team's authority; and
- Support available to the team.

CHECK LIST

Before an improvement team begins working, make sure the following steps have been completed:

- Identify a Team Sponsor

- Identify a suitable project
- Develop a Team Charter
- Identify stakeholders and develop a Communication Plan
- Select team members
- Organize the team's first meeting

Completing these steps before the improvement team begins working on their project will help ensure the team is successful.

Definition of Terms

Continuous Improvement Process: a detailed method that guides a team through a series of steps to identify and implement improvements, solve problems, or create new processes.

Customers: direct recipients of the products, services, or information an organization produces.

Facilitator: a skilled communicator who is knowledgeable about group processes and interaction as well as quality principles and process improvement. Facilitators guide teams in effective team processes.

Leadership: the senior leaders or decision makers in an organization.

Outputs: the products, services, or information produced by a process.

Process: a series of steps taken to produce an output (product, service, or information).

Process Owner: the individual who is ultimately responsible for a process as well as process performance and results.

Quality: the goodness of outputs or results as perceived by customers. Meeting or exceeding customer needs, expectations, or requirements.

Sponsor: the individual who provides support, guidance, and mentoring for a team. Sponsors provide a link to organization leadership, remove barriers, and acquire the necessary resources for a team to be successful.

Stakeholders: individuals who have a vested interest, or a stake, in a team's work. They may be affected by implementation of a team's recommendations, or they may have a potential impact on implementation of a team's recommendations.

Team: a group of individuals working together toward a common goal. An improvement team is a group of individuals working together to make an improvement or solve a problem.

Team Charter: a working document that is designed to assist in defining the expectations for the work of a team and in developing agreements that significantly impact team success.

When To Set Up An Improvement Team

- Potential reasons for setting up an improvement team are:
- Evidence suggests that the output of a process is failing to meet customer needs and expectations.
- A work process is inefficient - as evidenced by rework, delays, excessive cost, or chronic frustration.
- A work process needs fixing, and the job cannot be done effectively by an individual.
- The work of a group is not well-organized and how the work gets done is not well-defined or understood.
- An issue is complex enough that improvement would require input from different work areas, disciplines, or agencies.
- Effective implementation of improvements depends upon a large part of the organization and will require major coordination.
- There is a belief that even if the process doesn't have major problems, it could be improved.
- The likely benefits of improvement substantially outweigh the cost of continuing as-is.

Not Every Issue Requires A Formal Team

Not every issue requires a formal team - quality improvement principles, processes, and tools can be used by people even if they are not on teams.

- Individuals should begin using flowcharts, cause and effect diagrams, and the many other quality improvement tools in all aspects of their jobs.
- Managers should encourage employees to begin using quality improvement tools and techniques in their daily work.
- Decision makers should routinely request to see data from quality improvement tools prior to making decisions.
- Informal groups should use tools and techniques as a natural way of doing business.

Role Of Leadership

Leadership is defined as the senior leaders or decision makers in the organization (department, division, section, or unit). Leadership is responsible to the citizens of North Carolina for delivering results consistent with the mission, or purpose, of the organization. Leadership will have a major role in the early stages of establishing teams. They will **develop guidelines that will be used to create improvement teams in the organization**. They may even sponsor some of the first projects in order to focus on the critical improvement efforts of the organization (see page 5). As implementation continues, leadership will work on strategic issues and on the key objectives of the organization. Leadership will **support teams by removing barriers, providing resources, and endorsing team recommendations for implementation**. They should not, however, become too deeply involved in the day-to-day details of each individual team's work.

Early on, leadership may select or approve initial improvement projects. This should not be looked at as another layer of control, but rather a means of assisting the team sponsor in making sure the project proposal is well thought out and the project is consistent with organizational objectives. It is also important for leadership to ensure that the aspects of the project are not currently being addressed by other means, the team charter does a good job of focusing the project, and the project has a good chance of success.

The role of leadership at these early stages is that of student and educator. Leadership acts as a **student** in that there will be lessons learned with each team and these lessons should be absorbed. Leadership acts as an **educator** in that they will share lessons learned with others and will teach those involved in the process so they may effectively use teams on their own in the future.

Leadership's role will evolve as implementation continues. Leadership will assess how the process is working and provide feedback, will provide guidance on how to effectively create improvement teams, and will follow up with lower levels in the organization to provide them with assistance when needed. Leadership is able to offer information that may help to avoid potential problems or provide insights that enhance each team's ability to succeed. Leadership will also **put in place a monitoring process** to identify what teams have been created, the processes they are addressing, results of team efforts, and a means of communicating lessons learned to the rest of the organization. Finally, leadership will **recognize teams for their contributions to the organization and the improvement process**.

Members of organization leadership can best carry out their responsibilities when they have had experience serving as a team leader, a team member, or a facilitator for an improvement team. This firsthand experience is important in establishing credibility and providing effective guidance.

Role Of The Sponsor

Successful improvement teams are supported by a sponsor. Sponsors serve as "champions" and provide support, guidance, and mentoring throughout the life of a team. They **help the team translate the organization's mission, the purpose of the organization, and vision, the desired future state of the organization, into action.** Sponsors also **remove barriers and acquire the necessary resources for the team to be successful.** In many cases, the sponsor may select the team members.

Specifically, team sponsors:

- Ensure support of supervisors!
- Take the lead in developing the team charter.
- Insulate the team from premature judgment.
- Provide a link between the team and organization leadership.
- Assist in the development of a communication strategy and communication plans that address stakeholder needs.
- Act as a sounding board for team ideas.
- Remain in close contact with the team.
- Provide support to the team as needed, but do not get overly involved in the details of the team's work.
- Help the team review progress periodically to ensure they are moving toward the intended objectives.

Each department or agency needs to determine how it will identify individuals to fill this critical role. The **process owner**, the person ultimately responsible for process performance and results, may be the ideal candidate for team sponsor for several reasons. First, since they are responsible for results, they have a vested interest in seeing the process improved. Second, they will have valuable insights about process operation and process interactions with the various work centers that affect or are affected by the process. Third, they can provide the team access to people, information, and resources related to the process.

The sponsor is encouraged to select the team facilitator (see page 15) early in the process and to ask him/her to help in setting up the project and the team. The team facilitator is a resource that helps guide the team in effective team processes. Skilled facilitators will be able to provide sound advice and counsel based on their knowledge and experience.

The sponsor should ensure that the team is enabled to do what it was chartered to do. At the end of the improvement process, the sponsor reviews the actions taken by the team and the recommendations made by the team, and works with the team to **ensure solutions are effectively implemented.**

Quality Resource Advisors

The Quality Resource Advisor is an internal consultant in the department or agency who is familiar with quality improvement principles. He/She can assist the team sponsor with the team chartering process and can assist the team in understanding the charter, the purpose for the project, the desired results, and team roles and responsibilities. The Quality Resource Advisor supports the work of the team by matching the needs of the team with available resources such as training and facilitation. Quality Resource Advisors should be contacted when quality resources are needed.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals who **have a vested interest in a team's work**, may be affected by implementation of a team's recommendations, or may have an impact on implementation of a team's recommendations. Customers fit the definition for stakeholder, but differ from stakeholders in that they directly receive or use the products, services, or information the organization produces and a stakeholder may not. For example, if a team is working to improve a state government agency's process for communicating with the public, a citizen who contacts the agency for information is a customer (a direct recipient of the service or information). A state government employee who handles citizen requests for information at the agency is a stakeholder since the process the employee uses to provide information may be affected or changed by the team's recommendations.

Prior to beginning the improvement process, the team should identify all stakeholders so stakeholder interests can be taken into consideration. Stakeholders can assist the team by responding to requests for information, providing input, or giving feedback. Stakeholders may be asked to meet with the team to provide important information on work processes or implications for implementation of recommendations. Stakeholders may also be contacted to garner support for implementation.

Stakeholders should be informed of:

- The general project and the team's purpose;
- Specific information of interest to them;
- How they will be involved and when they can expect to be consulted;
- How communication will be structured; and
- Any other information they may request. .

How Are Team Projects Selected?

Teams are formed when a process needs to be improved or a problem needs to be solved. This is best accomplished using the collective experience, skills, and knowledge of a group. The process or problem may be identified by:

- Customers;
- Leadership;
- Process Owners;
- Sponsors;
- Work groups with representatives from different departments, divisions, or sections;
- Managers and Employees; or
- Internal or External Stakeholders.

At first, because everyone is learning and there are limited resources to support teams, leadership traditionally selects early projects. Later, when more people have experience with teams and more teams can be supported; formal consultation with leadership will be less frequent. **Keep in mind that teams require a substantial investment of time and the organization should select only the number of projects it can support well.**

Leadership will always be a valuable resource to consult when selecting projects. Their knowledge of lessons learned by past teams, their unique perspective on organizational objectives, and their access to resources will help any team achieve success. When a project is large in scope or is cross-functional in nature (involves more than one organizational unit), leadership will play a major role in terms of project selection and monitoring. However, employees desiring to solve problems and improve the quality of services within their scope of responsibility will be able to do so with little oversight.

Each agency must develop a system for project selection that achieves an appropriate balance between flexibility and control. Offering an appropriate level of flexibility prevents the creation of barriers that hamper team creativity and effectiveness. However, control is important in ensuring that the team's activities are consistent with organizational objectives and that resources are used wisely. **The best projects are ones that are connected to the key priorities and objectives of the organization.**

Getting Started: How to Select Your First Projects

When selecting a project, it is important to review the organization's mission and vision, and follow the Continuous Improvement Process to ensure the project is aligned with organizational objectives. The Continuous Improvement Process is a detailed method that guides a team through a series of steps to identify and implement improvements, solve problems, or create new processes. The Team Chartering process complements the Continuous Improvement Process by establishing a framework for the project and by identifying key roles.

The Project Selection Worksheets and the Reality Check are tools that can help you select a project and test project suitability.

Project Selection Worksheets

The Project Selection worksheets will help you select an improvement project. Use the worksheets to:

- Select an output to improve.
- Identify what processes affect the chosen output.
- Choose a process for improvement based on established criteria.
- Clarify the steps of the chosen process.
- Determine who should be on the team.
- Solicit feedback on the project idea

Reality Check: Project Suitability

Use the three-part "reality check" to test project suitability in terms of:

Strategic Issues
Participation Issues
Technical Issues

Strategic Issues

- Does the project have a customer focus?
- Is the project compatible with the mission and vision of the organization?
- Does the project help the organization accomplish its mission or move closer to its vision?

Participation Issues

- Is the project something the department has control over, or do other agencies have some involvement in it (i.e. own a piece of the process being studied)?
- Is leadership willing to implement improvements on a pilot basis, as long as the solution is within the guidelines and boundaries given to the team?
- Assuming a successful pilot implementation, is leadership prepared to implement the change on a full-scale or organization-wide basis?
- Are any preconceived solutions being forced upon the team?

- Is the organization prepared to allow the team members the time they need to work on the project and make a difference? Will the organization support adjustments to the team members' other work assignments to accommodate their work on the team?

Technical Issues

- Does the project deal with a process?
- Does the process occur frequently enough so it can be reliably measured?
- Has the process recently been changed?
- Is the appropriate data available? Can data be gathered without excessive time, effort, or expense?
- Can the project be completed within the desired time frame?
- Is the project urgent? Will there be enough time for the team to do the work?
- Is there a good probability of success? (The team should avoid trying to take on too much.)

It should become obvious after using the Reality Check whether or not a proposed project has the potential to be a good project. The Reality Check will also raise issues that should be addressed to increase the chances for project success.

What Is A Team Charter?

The team charter is a working document that is designed to assist the process owner, sponsor, facilitator, and team in defining the expectations for the work of the team and in developing agreements that significantly impact team success. It helps to ensure agreement among everyone affected by the team's work (i.e. leadership, process owner, sponsor, facilitator, team members, and stakeholders), keeps the team focused on the original goal, and helps determine when the team's work is complete.

Obstacles are a fact of life for teams. The charter is designed to address the early obstacles teams' encounter that directly affects their success in achieving expected results. Generally, these relate to teams needing:

A clear sense of direction. Teams lose their way when they pursue inappropriate or ill-defined goals. There should be no confusion about the team's fundamental reason for being formed. This includes clear direction from the sponsor about the team's purpose and the work to be accomplished by the team.

A clear understanding of stakeholders. Teams who have not thought through the identification of stakeholders (see page 6) for the process, problem, or implementation of recommendations may not have a good understanding of the issues they will face when they ask stakeholders to implement the team's recommendations.

What Does The Team Have Authority To Do?

The **Team Charter** should indicate what the team is being asked to do. It should be very clear on whether the team is enabled to implement the solution(s) they develop or if they are just being asked to develop recommendations. A discussion on this should take place between the sponsor and the team members at their first meeting. Avoid any misunderstandings by openly discussing the charter and documenting what has been agreed upon.

A clear communication plan. Teams can significantly improve results by developing a well-thought out communication strategy. This strategy should be developed jointly by the team, process owner, and sponsor. Teams must have clear communication plans that address the needs of the process owner, sponsor, and critical stakeholders, particularly at significant points in the team's work. These plans help the team gain and maintain the support and commitment of these key individuals. Similarly, the sponsor has a responsibility to ensure support for the team's work by communicating with leadership on the team's purpose, progress, and recommendations.

The team charter should be drafted before team members have been selected and should be clarified and negotiated with the team as they begin work on the project. This applies regardless of whether the team is being chartered by leadership or by a division

or section initiating their own effort. If a facilitator and team leader have been selected, the sponsor is encouraged to involve them in the team chartering process.

Essential Components Of A Team Charter

In addition to defining the task of the team, a team charter provides a description of the process to be improved or problem to be solved, and the time frame for project completion. Other essential components of the team charter include:

- Background information on the project and why it is a high priority.
- A clear definition of the scope of the project to include whether the team will be able to pilot improvements or just make recommendations. It should identify any other restrictions.
- A specific time when the process owner and/or sponsor meet with the team to discuss the assignment and answer questions.
- The name of the process owner, the sponsor, the team leader, and the facilitator.
- A list of team members.
- A list of resources likely to be required for the project.
- A list of potential stakeholders.

Developing A Communication Plan

The first step in establishing a communication strategy is to list stakeholders. Then the team, sponsor, and process owner should come to agreement on which key stakeholders the team should communicate with over time. Once these key stakeholders have been identified, the team should develop a communication plan that includes how stakeholders will be involved in the improvement project, consulted at key points during the work of the team, contacted for specific information, or informed of the team's progress. The communication plan should answer the following questions:

- What is the stakeholder's interest in the team's work?
- What information does the stakeholder need to know?
- When is the best time to inform them?
- How should they be informed?
- Which team member has the primary responsibility to inform them?

Once the team has drafted communication plans for each key stakeholder, the plans should be reviewed by the sponsor and process owner to make sure that all of the critical interests have been taken into consideration. It is appropriate for the sponsor to have responsibility for specific stakeholder groups such as leadership. **The communication plan is best monitored by making it a standing item at each team meeting.**

Who Picks The Team Members?

The person or persons who pick team members depends on who is closest to the process being improved, and who is the most knowledgeable to make the decision. Leadership may be familiar enough with the process to select the team members. Sometimes, people closer to the process, such as the process owner, are needed to select the team members and serve as the sponsor to ensure team success. In all cases, there needs to be clear communication between the sponsor (or leadership), the potential team members, and their supervisors to make sure everyone understands the commitment needed and that team members are willing and able to participate.

In some cases, the team itself may request additional members based on analysis of the process. Reasons could include: a critical expertise is lacking; a key organization is not represented; an especially important stakeholder is desired; or one of the initial team members can no longer contribute. Eventually, teams may form naturally and select their own members.

Who Should Be On The Team?

Teams should have the complementary skills they need to do their job. Team members should have job knowledge and technical, problem solving and interpersonal skills. With the exception of specific job knowledge and technical skills, most people can develop the skills they need after they join a team.

Team size is an important consideration to assure success. **The ideal size for an improvement team is 5-8 members.** Larger teams have more difficulty reaching consensus or making progress. Too few members can limit the potential number of ideas or overburden each individual. Please note that the team does not have to add to its membership in order to gain access to needed individuals (i.e. a stakeholder or an expert in a particular technique). These individuals can be invited to attend a session or two when their participation is most needed.

Training

Team performance improves when members receive appropriate skills-building training shortly before they attempt a new task. This training may include guidance in using quality improvement tools and techniques, as well as exploration of group interaction dynamics. Teams also improve their chances for success when team members understand quality improvement principles and know how to use the Continuous Improvement Process. Please check with your Quality Resource Advisor to identify training options available in your organization.

Having members with appropriate expertise will enhance the functioning of the team as a whole. **Team membership should include people who have knowledge of the process under consideration.** These individuals clearly represent a program, office, or work unit significantly affected by the process to be improved or the problem to be solved. In addition, **a member or two who have little or no knowledge of the process can also be an asset,** since they have no vested interest in the way things currently operate. Their contribution can be a fresh perspective on the process and the ability to clearly see steps in the process that may not be adding value. If the team is dealing with a tight deadline, a controversial subject, or some other significant constraint, this may suggest that the team include members whose team skills are already fully developed. It is always helpful if all of the team members have basic knowledge and understanding of quality improvement principles.

How To Select Team Members

Team member selection should occur only after clearly defining the project and its scope to ensure the right people are chosen for the team. For example, knowing where a process originates, where it ends, and the different steps it takes along the way will serve as a basis for determining the areas that should be represented on the team. In addition, the sponsor should determine if there are any special skills the team needs before making final selections.

Establishing a team whose members are enthusiastic goes a long way in ensuring team effectiveness. In all cases, **the members should be willing to serve on the team** - and not be there against their will. Take time early in this process to **be sure that all the participants are aware of what will be involved**. It works best if the sponsor talks to each of the team members personally about what the project will involve and their expectations.

It is also important that each team member have the support of their supervisor. The role of the sponsor in securing this support cannot be underestimated. **The sponsor should meet with the potential team member's immediate supervisor to discuss the member's participation on the team to ensure that the supervisor understands the commitment of time and effort that will be required, approves the member's participation on the team, and commits to make adjustments in the member's other work assignments, as needed.**

It is generally not a good idea to ask for volunteers. You may find that you have too many volunteers and, therefore, have to refuse someone's help. You may also find that some of your volunteers don't have the required knowledge, skills, abilities or supervisor support that you are looking for. It is usually better to identify who would best contribute to the team, and then discuss the opportunity with them. At that point, they can volunteer or choose not to participate. **Willing and committed participation goes a long way in achieving team success.**

If there are a number of potential team members to choose from, all of whom do the work and represent the entire process, there should be additional thoughtful discussion as to which people to select. Items to consider include:

- Does the person's job duties allow them the time needed to serve on the team?
- Is the team diverse in terms of race, gender, geographical location, or job classification?
- Does the team represent an appropriate cross-section of the organization?
- Are any special skills needed for the team (i.e. computer skills, statistical skills, etc.)?

Team Roles

Once team members have been selected, they need to realize there are several roles to be filled and understood. This requires very little work, but is an important step early in the process. It reduces the number of times that people will say: "I didn't know I was supposed to do that!"

It is the facilitator's job to explain all the roles to everyone on the team. The most common roles are:

- Facilitator
- Team Recorder
- Team Leader
- Team Timekeeper
- Team Member

Role of the Facilitator

Facilitators are skilled communicators who are knowledgeable about group processes and interaction as well as quality principles and process improvement. They **assist the team in achieving its objectives by guiding the team in effective team processes.** The facilitator should be an objective team resource that is detached from the process being improved. This allows the facilitator to remain active in process and neutral on content.

Specifically, facilitators:

- Maintain a climate conducive to listening, understanding, learning, participating, and creating.
- Assist the group in coming to consensus, defining and committing to next steps, and reaching timely closure.
- Work with the team leader to plan meetings, structure tasks and assignments, and incorporate quality tools and techniques into the team's work.
- Challenge members to be open, to be individualistic, and to take risks.
- Keep the team on track by following the ground rules they established.
- Help the teams make process changes or revise ground rules as needed.
- Provide technical guidance in:
 - Determining what data to gather-and how to gather it;
 - Graphing and presenting data; and
 - Designing and rehearsing presentations to leadership.
- Teach the team members how to use the tools and techniques on their own.
- Encourage the group to evaluate its own effectiveness by leading a meeting assessment activity at the end of each meeting.

If you are in need of a facilitator, contact your CPI coordinator.

Role of the Team Leader

The team leader **organizes and manages the work of the team.** As a full-fledged team member, the team leader **participates in discussions but is cautious not to dominate them.** Often, team leaders are supervisors or managers in the project or

work area, although another team member may assume the leader role. Regardless of their role on a team, managers and supervisors must leave their rank outside the meeting room.

Specifically, team leaders:

- Take responsibility for team records, such as correspondence, team chartering information, and process maps.
- Serve as a full-fledged team member, participating as a "leader among equals."
- Focus the team's attention on the objective of the project.
- Work with the sponsor to remove external obstacles and obtain resources.
- Convene team meetings and ensure all logistics are handled.
- Work with the facilitator to plan upcoming team sessions.
- Establish group interaction and encourage participation of all team members.
- Ensure that decisions made by the team are carried out.
- Act as a liaison between the team, the sponsor and various groups in the organization, such as leadership.

Role of the Team Members

Team members **share in the responsibility for achieving results**. Members should participate in discussions, decision making, and other team tasks such as gathering data, analyzing information, assisting with documentation, and sharing results.

Specifically, team members:

- Treat team membership as a part of their job.
- Are diligent about attending team meetings.
- Understand and work toward the team mission.
- Know and adhere to all ground rules.
- Learn and make full use of quality principles, tools and techniques.
- Apply all their experience and skills, contributing as fully as possible.
- Carry out between-meeting assignments.
- Work closely with some stage of the process under examination.

IMPORTANT!
Decisions should be reached by consensus, with all team members having an equal voice.
CONSENSUS
means that all team members can support a decision although the decision may not be the preferred decision of all members.

Role Of The Team Recorder

The team recorder is one or more team members who are **responsible for recording the team's ideas, decisions, and recommendations** on the flipchart and in the minutes during each team session. When working at the flipchart, the recorder's printing should be legible and large enough for everyone on the team to read. The team recorder should write down ideas or suggestions verbatim. The team recorder should not interpret the individual's ideas, but instead, ask for clarification if a point is vague.

The team recorder maintains the "team memory" by recording the minutes from each team meeting. The minutes will be important to the team as they do their work. The team will refer back to the minutes frequently to recall their ideas, decisions, the rationale behind decisions, the actions to be taken, and who is responsible for the actions. The team recorder should distribute the minutes in enough time for team members to be reminded of the actions they are responsible for and complete them before the next meeting.

Role Of The Team Timekeeper

The team timekeeper is the team member who **keeps track of the team's use of time** in relation to the time allotted to each activity on the agenda. They help the team optimize its use of time and keep to the meeting schedule by giving regular updates to make team members aware of the time expended and time available. In addition, the team timekeeper notifies the team leader or facilitator when the team has reached the end of its allotted time for each segment of the meeting. When this occurs, the team can move on to the next segment of the meeting or reallocate its time and continue with the current topic.

Using The Continuous Improvement Process

Using a process that leads to viable solutions is one of many factors that influence team success. Teams should not haphazardly jump to solutions. Instead, the Continuous Improvement Process will lead teams through a series of steps that will help align the improvement project with organizational objectives, identify customer needs, describe the process, identify improvement opportunities, implement improvements, and identify ways the improvements can be used in other areas of the organization.

If the improvement project under consideration is large, of extreme significance to the department or agency, cross-functional in nature, or covers a sensitive issue, leadership should complete the first step of the Continuous Improvement Process to more clearly define the project and establish a team charter. By doing this, leadership will choose an output that is critical to achieving organizational objectives and will pursue an improvement effort that focuses on a specific process or

problem that has the potential for significant improvement. In this case, the project will be turned over to the team with Step One completed. The team will then review the first step and proceed with Step Two.

A division or section within a department or agency may decide to attempt an improvement effort on its own within its area of responsibility. In this case, the division or section should establish a team charter and follow the complete Continuous Improvement Process.

No matter where the improvement effort is initiated, all of the steps in the Continuous Improvement Process must be completed to ensure the project is aligned with organizational objectives and is addressed in a logical and thorough manner. It is important to review the organization's mission and vision before starting this process. In some cases, it may also be advisable to do some preliminary work with Steps Two through Five before chartering a team to better clarify the project.

The Team's First Meeting

Ideally, the first meeting of a newly formed improvement team will include a "Team Launch." A Team Launch is a workshop that will enable the team to accomplish in a day what typically takes a few team meetings.

The first portion of the workshop includes clarification of team roles, development of team ground rules, and a careful review of the team charter to ensure that everyone understands the task. There will also be opportunities for the team members to get to know each other and begin working together.

The second portion of the workshop involves the team learning about team development and the Continuous Improvement Process. The team will also begin working on their project with the facilitator using the Continuous Improvement Process.

The Team Launch can be a powerful tool to help the team get off to a good start. Understanding how teams work, what team member responsibilities are, and how to use the Continuous Improvement Process is critical to teams performing effectively. See Appendix E, for a sample of a Team Launch agenda. Please note that this sample agenda is included to provide an example of what a Team Launch might entail.

An actual Team Launch should take into consideration the team's unique needs.

For example, the sample agenda assumes that the team members have already received some basic team training, but would benefit from a review of team development concepts and the Continuous Improvement Process as well as some team building. If the team members have not received any training, the Team Launch agenda would have to be tailored and expanded to meet the team's training needs. If the team

has just completed training, a review of the concepts and the Continuous Improvement Process may not be necessary.

See below for information on Appendix A - F

APPENDIX F - Bibliography

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Their spirit of cooperation and sharing is one we will strive to emulate.

If you want support in implementing a project idea in your unit, E-mail [Contact Us](#) for support.

Need support with:

- Filling out the Continuous Improvement Project Submission Form.
- Have questions about the CPI program in general
- Have questions about any content in the Continuous Improvement website

Please email "[NCDOT Continuous Improvement](#)" for support.

The following appendices are available for reference below.

Appendix A - [Continuous Improvement Process](#)

Appendix B - [Project Selection Worksheets](#)

Appendix C - [Team Charter](#) [Team Charter Example](#)

Appendix D - [Communication Plan Worksheet](#)

Appendix E - [Sample Team Launch Agenda](#)



Appendix A - Continuous Improvement Process

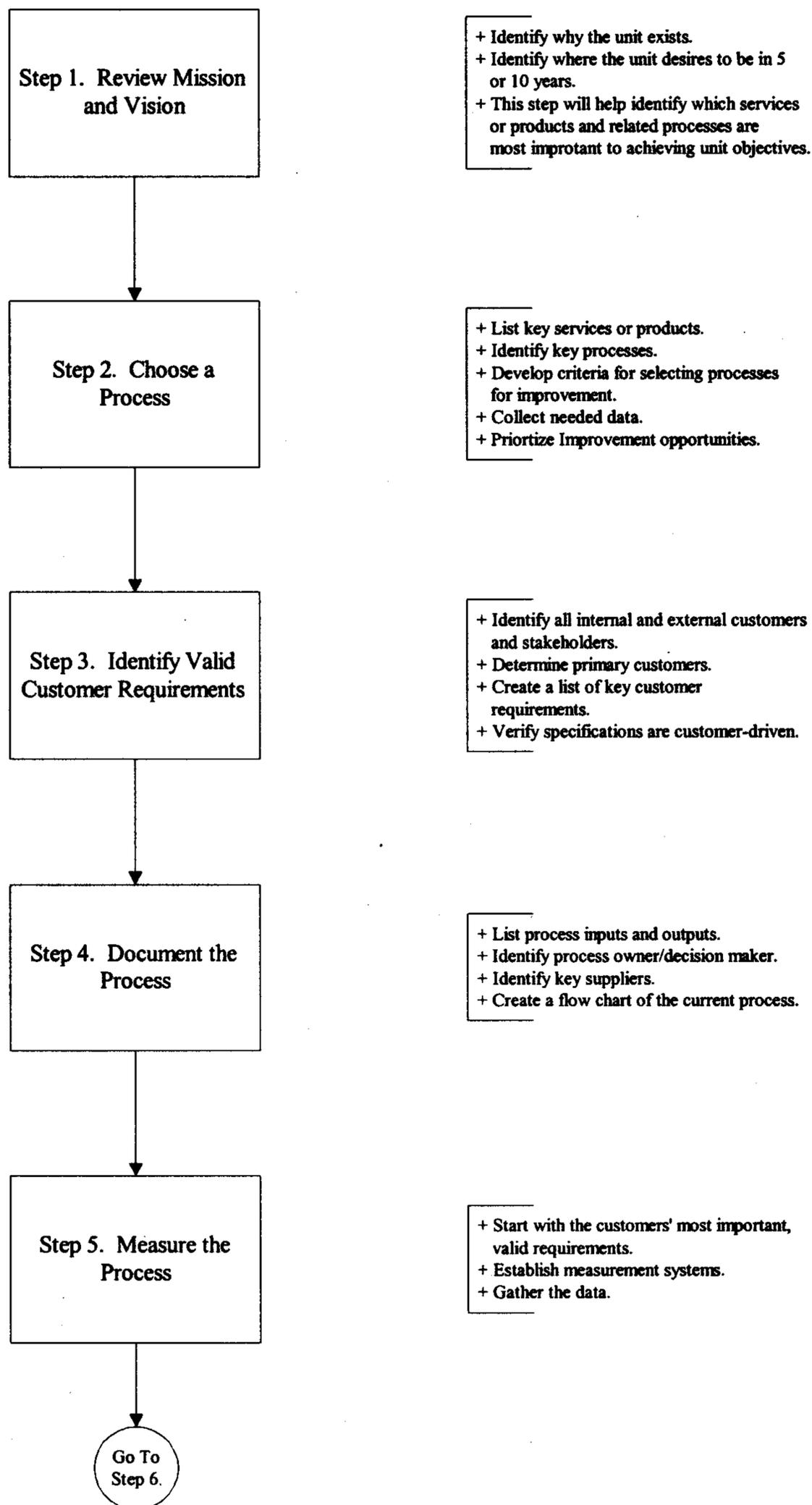
Teams:

Getting

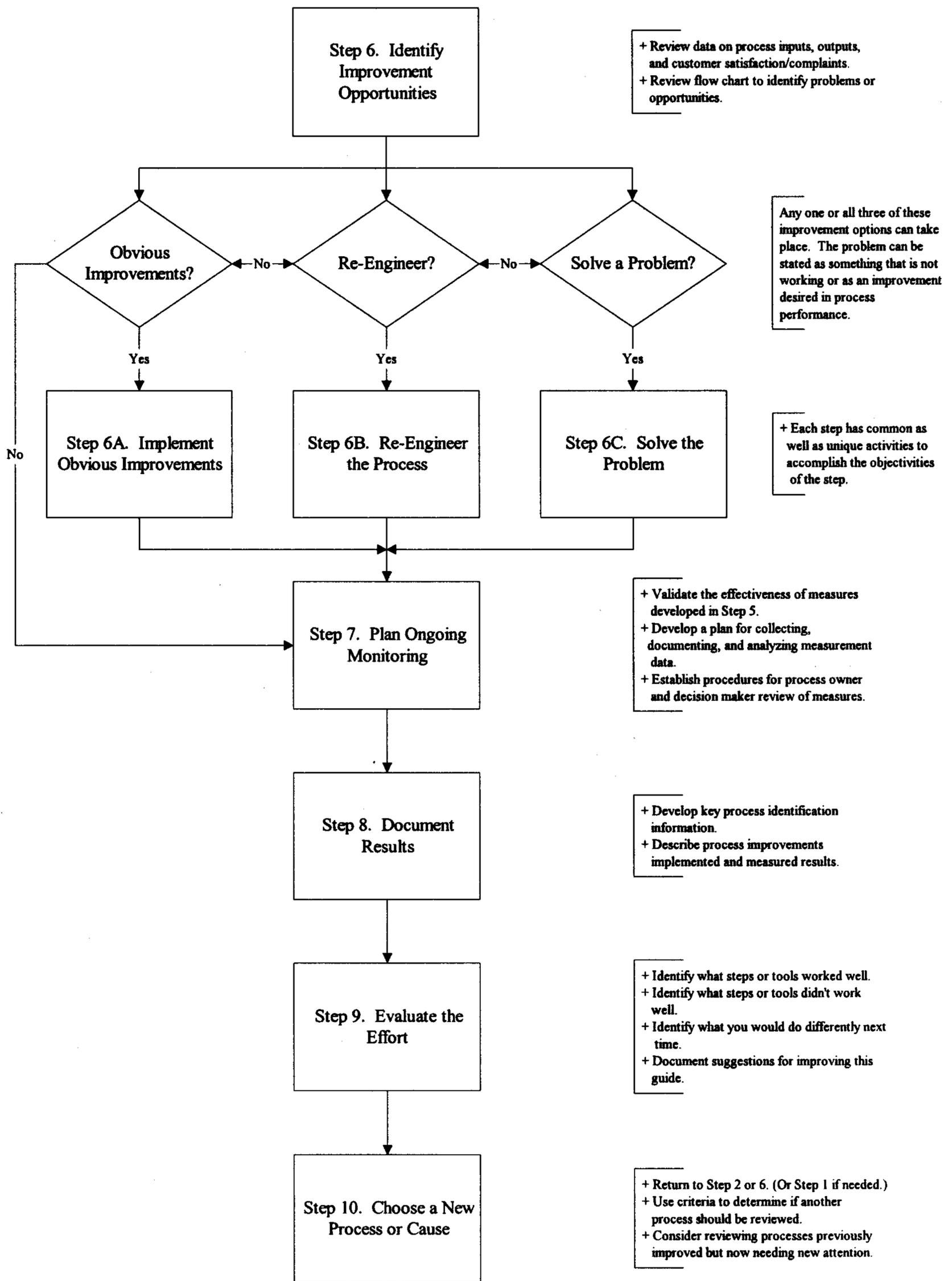
Started

The following two pages outline the Continuous Improvement Process.

PART 2. CPI PROCESS OVERVIEW



Continuous Process Improvement Guide



Appendix B - Project Selection Worksheets



Teams:

Getting

Started

The following three pages contain blank Project Selection Worksheets that you can photocopy and use in your improvement effort.

Project Selection Worksheets

The following eight activities can help you identify an improvement project and lay the groundwork for chartering a team.

Step 1. Review the organization's purpose (i.e. mission, vision, and statutory requirements) to ensure that any project considered is aligned with organizational objectives.

Step 2. List the outputs of the organization — the products, services, and information the organization provides to its customers. Prioritize these outputs based on their value to the customer. Rank the outputs and choose one to address.

- | | | | |
|-------|----|-------|----|
| _____ | 1. | _____ | 5. |
| _____ | 2. | _____ | 6. |
| _____ | 3. | _____ | 7. |
| _____ | 4. | _____ | 8. |

Chosen Output

Step 3. Identify the processes that impact production of the output for the customer.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Project Selection Worksheets

Step 4. List criteria for selecting a process for improvement. Examples of criteria include impact on the customer, cost of implementation, and likelihood of completing the project within the allotted time.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Step 5. Choose the one process for improvement that meets the criteria and has the greatest potential for significant improvement (for example, greatest gain in customer satisfaction). The three-part Reality Check on page 9 is a good test of project suitability. List the chosen process, the customers of the process, and customer needs.

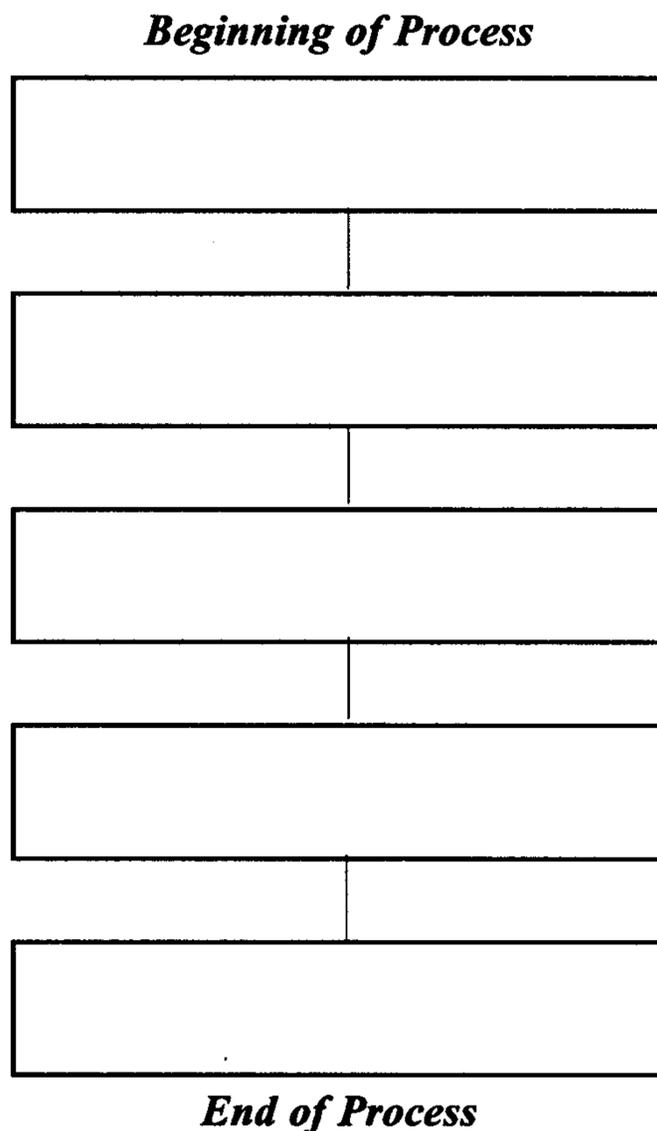
Chosen Process

Customers of the Process

Customer Needs

Project Selection Worksheets

Step 6. List the major steps in the chosen process.



Step 7. Now that the major steps of the process have been identified, list the job functions, sections, divisions, or departments that should be represented on the team.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Step 8. If the project is being initiated by leadership, take this opportunity to have a dialogue with the process owner and/or sponsor to more clearly define the project and establish the team charter. If the project is being initiated internally by a division or section, solicit feedback from peers and co-workers on project value and feasibility. The Reality Check on page 9 could provide a framework and questions for discussion. Once you have a clear understanding of the project and its purpose, develop the team charter (see page 10).

Team Charter

Team Name _____

Opportunity / Problem Statement:

(Provide a clear statement describing the improvement opportunity or problem.)

-

Project Mission Statement:

(Provide a clear statement describing what the team is being chartered to do.)

-

Description:

(Describe the process to be improved or problem to be solved, or identify the steps in the process from beginning to end.)

-

Background:

(Identify what has been happening, the importance of the project / process / problem to customers and stakeholders, and why the project is a high priority.)

-

Scope:

(Identify the limits on the project to include whether the team will be able to pilot improvements / solutions or just make recommendations. Also identify any fiscal, budgetary, regulatory, legal, or procedural restrictions.)

-

Time Frame for Project Completion:

Date Prepared _____

Team Charter

Team Name _____

Date / Time for Team Launch:

Date / Time for Process Owner and Sponsor to meet with the team to discuss the assignment and agree on the project specifics:

Process Owner:

Sponsor:

Team Leader:

Facilitator:

Team Members:

List of Resources:

Potential Stakeholders:

Team Contract:

We have read and understand this Team Charter, understand our roles, and have come to agreement with the Sponsor and/or Process Owner on the opportunity or problem to be addressed, the actions to be taken, and the limitations on the project. If at any time it becomes apparent that the Team Charter needs to be modified, we will consult the Sponsor and/or Process Owner and come to agreement on the modifications.

(Signatures of Team Members)

Date Prepared _____

Team Charter

Division Scheduling Team

Opportunity / Problem Statement:

(Provide a clear statement describing the improvement opportunity or problem.)

-Inadequacies in the scheduling process result in understaffing, particularly during the division's seasonal increase in maintenance activity. Understaffing increases the time it takes for project completion which results in delays, backlogs, decreased customer satisfaction, and low division morale. There is no mechanism in place within the scheduling process to ensure there will be adequate coverage when employees need to be away from the job site for meetings, appointments, training, or leave.

Project Mission Statement:

(Provide a clear statement describing what the team is being chartered to do.)

-Review the existing scheduling process, document the process as it currently exists, make recommendations for improvement to alleviate any further risk of negative customer impact, and implement improvements division-wide.

Description:

(Describe the process to be improved or problem to be solved, or identify the steps in the process from beginning to end.)

-The scheduling process is currently not well documented. However, the beginning and end of the process may be defined as follows. The process begins when a member of the crew identifies a need to take time away from work for a meeting, appointment, training, or leave. The process ends when the crew member's supervisor approves the request.

Background:

(Identify what has been happening, the importance of the project / process / problem to customers and stakeholders, and why the project is a high priority.)

-Several county maintenance engineers have expressed concern about the scheduling process because of some difficulties they had during last year's seasonal increase in maintenance activity. In one instance, only one full crew was available to handle emergency maintenance requests during a peak period. This understaffing incident caused numerous delays and subsequent complaints.

-Inadequate coverage can have immense negative customer impact. It results in increased delays and, therefore, decreased customer service and satisfaction.

-Since the expected seasonal increase is approaching, this issue must be addressed immediately.

Team Charter

Division Scheduling Team

Scope:

(Identify the limits on the project to include whether the team will be able to pilot improvements / solutions or just make recommendations. Also identify any fiscal, budgetary, regulatory, legal, or procedural restrictions.)

-The Team will recommend an improved scheduling process and a strategy for implementing the new process division-wide. If the chosen course of action includes a pilot test of the process before full implementation, the team should recommend a county to do the pilot test.

-The Team's improved scheduling process must be consistent with the leave policies outlined in the State Personnel Manual.

-No budget has been allocated for this project.

-The Team should provide the Sponsor with weekly progress reports and should consult with the Sponsor any time there is a need for clarification or support. If in doubt, consult the Sponsor.

Time Frame for Project Completion: March 15, 2001

Date / Time for Team Launch: January 24, 2001

Date / Time for Process Owner and Sponsor to meet with the team to discuss the assignment and agree on the project specifics: January 25, 2001

Process Owner: Wesley Barnes, Division Maintenance Engineer

Sponsor: Mack Jones, Division Engineer

Team Leader: Sarah Jessup, County Maintenance Engineer

Facilitator: Robert Garcia

Team Members: Mason Rogers, Crew Leader
Christina Hoo, Maintenance Clerk
Kim Kendall, Crew Leader
Jim Davenport, Assistant County Maintenance Engineer
Jerry O'Neal, Road Maintenance Supervisor

List of Resources: Access to division staff for inquiries.
Access to other division's regarding their scheduling processes.
Conference Room 312 and routine office supplies for meetings.

Team Charter

Division Scheduling Team

2000 scheduling records.

Potential Stakeholders: Citizens

City / County Government

MPOs

All Division Employees

Division Leadership

Division Supervisors

Safety Officers

Other highway divisions

Team Contract:

We have read and understand this Team Charter, understand our roles, and have come to agreement with the Sponsor and/or Process Owner on the opportunity or problem to be addressed, the actions to be taken, and the limitations on the project. If at any time it becomes apparent that the Team Charter needs to be modified, we will consult the Sponsor and/or Process Owner and come to agreement on the modifications.

(Signatures of Team Members)

Appendix D - Communication Plan Worksheet



Teams:

Getting

Started

The following two pages contain a sample Communication Plan and a blank Communication Plan worksheet that you can photocopy and use in your improvement effort.



Communication Plan

Stakeholder:

Division Supervisors.

Stakeholder Interests:

Productivity, adequate staffing, adequate customer service, decreased customer complaints, and a scheduling process that is easy to manage.

How will the stakeholder be involved in the project?

They will be asked to provide information about the scheduling process as it currently exists and feedback on proposed changes to the scheduling process to ensure the new process design is effective and easy to manage.

What specific information is needed from the stakeholder?

Their concerns about the current process, their assessment of the number of employees needed to ensure adequate coverage, and their input on how to improve the process.

What information does the stakeholder need?

Information on potential changes to the scheduling process and how the changes might affect their current operations.

Why does the stakeholder need this information?

Changes to the scheduling process may impact other division work processes. All division employees will need an orientation on the new scheduling process and division supervisors will have to take an active role in this orientation.

When will the stakeholder be consulted? How will they be consulted?

During documentation of the process as it currently exists and after a draft of the proposed changes is developed. They will be consulted through personal interviews.

When will the stakeholder be informed of progress? How will they be informed?

Progress reports will be delivered weekly at staff meetings.

Who has responsibility for communicating with the stakeholder?

Christina Hoo, Team Member.

Communication Plan

Stakeholder:

Stakeholder Interests:

How will the stakeholder be involved in the project?

What specific information is needed from the stakeholder?

What information does the stakeholder need?

Why does the stakeholder need this information?

When will the stakeholder be consulted? How will they be consulted?

When will the stakeholder be informed of progress? How will they be informed?

Who has responsibility for communicating with the stakeholder?



APPENDIX E - Sample Team Launch Agenda

Teams:

Getting

Started

Team Launch Agenda

Morning

- Introduction/Overview
 - Objectives
 - Ice breaker
 - Ground rules for today
- Team building exercise
- Clarify team roles
- Appoint Team Recorder and Team Timekeeper
- Develop team ground rules
- Discuss the Team Charter
- Develop Communication Plans

Afternoon

- Team development stages
- Work style and personal preferences
- Adopt a team name
- Review the Continuous Process Improvement Model
- Begin work on the project using the Continuous Process Improvement Model
- Decide on meeting frequency, duration, time, and location
- Draft agenda for next meeting
- Evaluate meeting
- Adjourn

Note: This sample Team Launch Agenda is included to provide an example of what a Team Launch might entail. An actual Team Launch should take into consideration the team's unique needs.