



STATE OF MAINE

VALUE STREAM MAPPING (VSM) PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK -

PREPARING FOR A PROCESS IMPROVEMENT VSM

About *Bend the Curve* in DHHS
Your (*Insert Name*) Charter & VSM Intervention
Thinking About Your Process
After the VSM: Expectations



THE IMPORTANCE OF *Bend the Curve*

Expectations for services provided by the department, both directly and through community agencies, are changing significantly at the same time as the human and financial resources available for these services. Addressing the challenge of improving services to the Maine individuals, families, organizations, and communities DHHS serves is of imperative importance.

Using the *Bend the Curve (BTC)* approach to services delivery and how the department does its work will result in effective and efficient, consistent, and high-quality services, that are valued by our customers and are based on standardized, evidence-based best practices with uniform oversight and accountability.

HOW DOES *Bend the Curve* APPLY TO YOU?

Do you --

Chase information?

Jump through multiple process and decision hoops?

Wait a long time for approvals?

Get constantly interrupted?

Have to have a batch of work before it's acted on or moved forward?

Feel your knowledge and work is not included in planning and decision-making?

Find that work gets lost between organizational silos?

Encounter multiple understandings about how work gets done?

Then *Bend the Curve* can help you !

The *BTC* Team can support you and your colleagues in making the changes necessary to meet the challenges of changing resources and expectations.

➤ What is the purpose of the *Bend the Curve* Team?

The primary purpose of the DHHS *Bend the Curve* Team is to provide support, consultation, assistance, and leadership in process and other improvement approaches and activities for departmental staff and work teams as they seek to continually improve their work culture, procedures, processes, and environments – all in order to meet the mission of the department and the expectations of Maine citizens.



Improving
Services to
DHHS
Clients

➤ **Who are *Bend the Curve* Team members?**

They are fellow State employees who have been trained as Continuous Improvement Practitioners. They are knowledgeable about the continuous improvement approach, tools, and implementation.

➤ **How can the *BTC* Team help you?**

- Provide awareness to you and your colleagues about *Bend the Curve* and Lean continuous improvement.
- Consult in identifying and defining work processes needing improvement.
- Identify and evaluate measurable cost and time savings, as well as quality.
- Assist with the development and monitoring of change/action plans.



Building Effective
Teams & Service
Processes

➤ **What will the *BTC* approach and methodology help you to do?**

- Problem-solve to improve the delivery of services.
- Involve the staff who know the work in decision-making.
- Improve work flow design and implementation.
- Meet client/customer service expectations.
- Focus on activities/work that are value-added.
- Use measurements for improving processes and planning.
- Implement improvements more efficiently and effectively.



Using the Power of the
Work Group for
Process Improvement

VALUE STREAM MAPPING -- A MAJOR TOOL

Value Stream Mapping (VSM) is a visual mapping tool that outlines all the steps in a process and helps to identify ineffective procedures and waste, as well as to develop implementation action plans for making continuous improvements. It develops a better way to --

- Identify a Current Process State.
- Design the improved Future Process State.
- Prepare a Change/Action Plan to move toward the Future State.
- Implement & monitor the Action Plan.



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

DHHS Vision

Maine people live safe, healthy, and productive lives

Mission Statement

Provide integrated health and human services to the people of Maine to assist individuals in meeting their needs, while respecting the rights and preferences of the individual and family, within available resources.

Guiding Principles

- *Treat consumers with dignity and respect;*
- *Deliver services that are individualized, family-centered, easily accessible, preventive, independence-oriented, interdisciplinary, collaborative, evidence-based, and consistent with best and promising practices;*
- *Value and support departmental staff as a critical connection to the consumer;*
- *Engage staff, stakeholders, providers and customers in a collaborative partnership that continuously seeks excellence in service design and delivery;*
- *Balance centralized accountability with regional flexibility; and*
- *Align systems, actions, and values toward a common vision.*

Department Goals

- 1. Protect and enhance the health and well-being of Maine people*
- 2. Promote independence and self sufficiency*
- 3. Protect and care for those who are unable to care for themselves*
- 4. Provide effective stewardship for the resources entrusted to the department*

Department Outcomes & Measures

- *High Performing Staff*
- *Excellent Provider Partnerships*
- *Integrated Services*
- *Superior Customer Service*
- *Efficient and Effective Administration*

➤ *Program Objectives* ➤ *Program Performance Indicators* ➤ *Staff Performance Expectations*

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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

What is Lean / Continuous Improvement? *“Common sense uncommonly applied.”*

As part of the effectiveness of State government, we want to provide the highest quality of life to as many of Maine's citizens as possible and to support each other in that effort. And we all want to do this -

- As quickly as possible.
- As simply as possible.
- With the highest quality possible.
- Using the fewest resources possible.
- Using facts whenever possible to solve problems.
- With a disciplined, best practice approach.
- In a way that is sustainable beyond our tenure in government/organization.

The continuous improvement model provides the philosophy and approach for us to do this. This philosophy is fundamentally about creating value for the customer/consumer while using the fewest resources possible. It's about getting the right service in the right amount to the right person at the right time, while minimizing waste and being flexible and open to change and improvement. It is, at its heart, essentially a disciplined thought process about the work we do and describes a dynamic process governed by a systemic set of principles, methods, and practices that embrace all aspects of our work.

It is, therefore, *a way of thinking* to adapt to change, eliminate waste, and continuously improve. It does not expect us to arrive at perfection. Instead, it stresses an evolutionary process of change and adaptation. It provides a number of tools and techniques to help us maximize the effort of our workforce and to operate as a lean government.

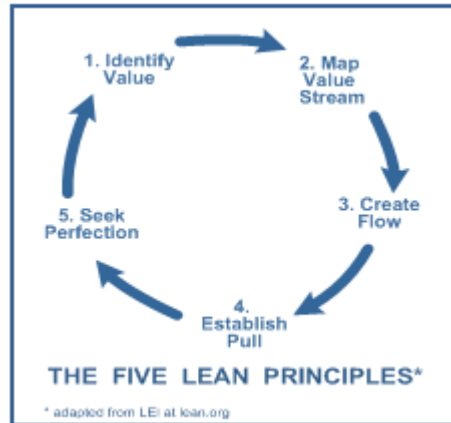
There are several key concepts that are at the core of this improvement/change philosophy:

- 1) Know your customer/client – who they are and what they want and when.
- 2) The customer defines value.
- 3) Keep the process simple and flowing smoothly (eliminate waste).
- 4) Do “it” right the first time.
- 5) Involve and empower employees.
- 6) Continually improve in pursuit of perfection.

Five Lean Principles:

- Define **value** as seen from the customers' point of view.
- Identify the **value stream** (activities) that delivers this value.
- Create **flow** in the value stream by eliminating waste.
- Create **pull** (customer demand-driven) in the value stream.
- Strive for **perfection** - create a culture of continuous improvement in the organization.

These principles probably appear to be common sense and straightforward and yet are often very difficult to make a reality. The principles assume that an individual, team, or an organization is consistently operating with a **PROCESS MINDSET**. Having a process mindset means that the notion of “process” is so imprinted into our worldview that it is an automatic filter through which we view reality. So much so, that when asked, “What do you do for work?” we see a process, not simply a task or an event. Not only do we see a process but also see many processes, weaving together -- as well as many levels of process.



Having developed this process mindset, we will also see other important conceptual constructs:

- We all have customers.
- All work is a process.
- Processes can be defined.
- Problems happen for a reason.
- Everything can be improved.
- Methods can be standardized.
- Processes can be measured.

With a process mindset, it also becomes easier to identify those things that do not add value from the customer’s perspective, such as **WASTE**. Waste (non-value-added tasks/steps) is something a customer would not be willing to “pay” for. In the Toyota Production System, waste is defined as “anything other than the minimum necessary amount of equipment, materials, parts, space, and worker’s time which are absolutely necessary to add value to the product [services].”

When our processes are simple and **FLOW** in a continuous, connected, unobstructed way, there is less waste and more value to the customer. Flow is the progressive achievement of tasks along a value stream so that a product or service proceeds from the beginning and into the hands of the customer without any stoppages/waits, waste, or backlogs. When we do things right the first time, there is less waste and more value to the customer. Through the value stream mapping process (VSM), we can visualize the process flow, measure it, and then plan and implement ways to improve it.

The term **PROCESS** is simply all the specific activities required to design, order, and provide a service or product to a customer. The bookends identified in a team’s charter specify the beginning and end of the particular process to be addressed.


Lean Management Concepts:

- Make the product/service to customer demand, not for inventory.
- Eliminate all non-value adding activities (waste).
- Success depends on the People who do the work.
- Stable, standardized Operations are essential.

Key Characteristics:

- Pull service delivery: Services are “pulled” by the consumer, not pushed from the service delivery end.
- First-time quality: Do it right the first time. Striving for excellence/perfection, for zero defects/redoing work. Identifying & solving problems at their source; achieving higher quality and performance at the same time; teamwork & worker empowerment.
- Waste minimization: Minimizing/eliminating activities that do not add value for the customer; maximizing use of resources (capital, people, and space), efficient use of just-in- time inventory.
- Continuous improvement: Continually improving quality, increasing productivity/ performance, reducing costs (resources), and sharing information.
- Flexibility: Being open to change; providing different mixes and/or greater diversity of services quickly, without sacrificing efficiency or effectiveness.
- Long-Term Relationships: Building and maintaining effective long-term relationships with providers/contractors through collaborative risk-sharing, cost-sharing, and information-sharing arrangements.

Parallels between Government and Private Business*

Accountability 	Business	Government
	Investors	Taxpayers
	Board of Directors	Legislature or Government Board(s)
	CEO	Governor or County Commissioner/Town Mayor
	Business Unit	Department or Division
	Products / Services	Products / Services

* Adapted from Ken Miller. *We Don't Make Widgets: Overcoming the Myths That Keep Government from Radically Improving*. Governing Books: Washington, D.C. 2006.



Improvement Charter

Improvement Name:			
Team Member Names	Position/Job	Phone	Email
<u>Sponsor:</u>			
<u>Manager:</u>			
<u>Staff Members:</u>			
<u>Data Manager:</u>			
<u>Caucus Members:</u>			
<u>CI-Practitioners:</u>			

System/Process/Issue Background Description:

Product(s)/Service(s):

Customers/Clients:

Supplier: (upstream)

<u>Boundaries / Improvement Scope:</u> <u>First Step:</u>	<u>Last Step:</u>
<u>Scope:</u>	

Problem Statement:

Ideal Situation:

Improvement Intervention & Work/Process Measurement:

Target Objectives	Specific Measurements:	Timeframe:
<u>Improvement Intervention:</u>		
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
<u>Project:</u>		
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.a. 2.b.	2.a. 2.b.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.a. 5.b.	5.a. 5.b.

Resources Available:

Role Expectations: *(Note expectations around decision-making and implementation)*



Improvement Intervention & Work/Process Deliverables:		
Objectives	Expected Deliverables	Timeframes
<u>Improvement Intervention</u>		
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4..	4.
<u>Project Process / Problem / Design</u>		
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.a. 3.b.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

Improvement Intervention Charter - Definitions and Examples

Improvement/Process Name: A brief name for the problem, challenge, or system/process for which the improvement intervention is being conducted. The charter describes what the team is about to address.

Improvement Team:

Sponsor: The person (the “owner”) with overall responsibility for the intervention and its implementation, for removing barriers (getting to *YES*).

Manager: The person responsible for managing the implementation of the plan and with the authority to implement it.

Other Staff Team Members: Other staff Team members – the staff who actually do the work and also others up and downstream who affect or are affected by the work, as well as customers.

Data Manager: The person who will be responsible for assisting the other team members to calculate and track the measurements.

Caucus Group Members: The resource staff who can be called on for specific expertise or other support as needed.

CI-P: The *Bend the Curve* Continuous Improvement Practitioners designated to work with and mentor the Sponsor, Manager, and team in planning, conducting, and following up on the requested intervention.

Background: A brief contextual description for the problem/challenge/process being proposed for improvement, including its purpose/mission.

Product/Service: The material, information, item, service, etc. demanded/wanted by the customer and produced/transformed by this specific work/process.

- A product is something created/transformed by work (the process activities) which can be given to someone else (the customer) to achieve a desired outcome/result. It is the bridge between the activities/tasks and the outcome/result.
- It is specific and must be -
 - a noun,
 - a deliverable,
 - countable, and
 - expressed as something that can be made plural with an “s”.
- A product has both **attributes/characteristics** (“A satisfying [*Product name*] is one that is” Characteristics such as *timely, flexible, cheap, easy to use*) and **features** (bring attributes to life, such as *24/7, electronic format, multi-language options, etc.*).
- A process may have more than one product.

Customer(s): Identifies the customer(s) of this work/process, both internal and external to the work/process itself. Be clear about who the actual end user of the product/service is.

- The customer can be determined only in relation to a specific product. Once you are clear about the product, you can determine who the customer(s) is.
- Not all customers are the same. Customers can play different roles with a product. Some are end-users, some are brokers, and some are fixers.
- The goal is to satisfy end-users first, then to worry about the others.

End-user -- The customer for whom the product is primarily intended. This customer will personally use the product to achieve a desired outcome. They actually receive it and use it to achieve a specific result -- and not some other product.

Broker -- A customer who acts as an agent of the end-user and / or the producer. This person does not personally use the product. As an agent of the end-user, the broker makes the product more accessible, easier to use, and more appealing. As an agent of the producer, the broker "encourages" the user to accept the product.

Fixer -- Any customer who will have to make repairs, corrections, modifications, or adjustments to the product at any point in its cycle for the benefit of the end user.

Supplier: The internal and/or external persons/entities that provide information, documents, supplies, people, etc. for the work/process.

Boundaries of this Process – and/or - Improvement Scope: Defines specifically where this work/process begins and ends for the purposes of this intervention. The first & last steps in a process and/or a specific description of the scope of the work to be addressed.

Problem Statement: The reason(s) -- with specific analysis and relevant data to provide needed (baseline) information -- you want to change/improve/create this work/process. And what you want to change, improve, or design/create.

Ideal Situation: A brief description of what the ideal situation would be for the improved process/problem/design. Identify in the measurements below how you will know if you are successful in achieving this state or in making progress toward it and whether or not it is an improvement.

Measurements: (See examples below.)

Target Objectives	Specific Measurements	Timeframe
<u>Improvement Intervention</u>		
1. To reduce the time it takes for the whole process.	1. Reduce the lead time by ____%.	90 Days
2. To simplify the process flow.	2. Reduce the number of process steps by _____%.	30 Days
<u>Project Process/Problem/Design</u>		
1. To increase the number of customers served in a timely way.	1.a Increase the number of customers served within one week of request by _____%.	90 Days
	1.b Over time, consistently continue to increase the number of customers served in a timely way by at least _____%.	Monthly
	1.c Over time, consistently continue to decrease the actual amount of time spent waiting by customers after request by at least ____%.	Monthly
2. Improve the collection and availability of project implementation/ measurement data/information.	2.a Update all improvement data on a daily basis.	60 Days
	2.b.	
3. To reduce errors and re-work, improving the quality of the work.	3. Increase the first-past-yield % by _____%.	60 Days
4. To reduce the staff time required in order to free up resources for other work.	4. Reduce Staff time by ____%.	30 Days
5. To reduce associated costs, increasing savings available for improving services.	5. Decrease changeover time by _____%.	30 Days

Resources/Budget: Identifies human, fiscal, and other resources available to the project team and project process.

Role Expectations: Describes expectations about authority and responsibility in relation to decision-making and implementation.

Improvement Intervention/Process Deliverables: Concise description of deliverables expected. (See examples below.)

Objectives	Expected Deliverables	Timeframe
<p><u>Improvement Intervention</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To facilitate team to analyze current process state. 2. To facilitate team analysis of current state to identify process improvements. 3. To facilitate team development of an action/change plan to implement identified improvements. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Current State Map. 2. Draft Future State Map. 3. Draft Improvement Implementation Plan 	<p>(CS Date)</p> <p>(FS Date)</p> <p>(IP Date)</p>
<p><u>Project Process/Problem/Design</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assure implementation of the intervention plan. 2. To evaluate effectiveness of changes for efficiency, effectiveness, & quality. 3. To identify needed areas of improvement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.a. Current Improvement Plan developed & maintained. 1.b. Future State fully implemented. 2. Regular and ongoing tracking, analysis documented. 3. Analysis of customer and program / process outcomes reported. 	

Improvement Intervention Team Member Roles

Sponsor

The process improvement Sponsor has primary oversight responsibility for the process team and process project, for enabling implementation of the change/action plan, and for removing barriers to change (*getting to "Yes"*), as well as assuring coordination with larger organizational goals, including meeting customer needs and demands.

- Has primary oversight of the process selected to be mapped.
- Attends improvement intervention meetings as needed to support the team.
- Facilitates the initial convening of the process team.
- Selects or approves the selection of the Manager.
- Communicates the relationship between project's goals and higher organizational goals.
- Develops or Approves the charter of the team, including meeting with the facilitator to review charter prior to intervention training.
- Monitors development and implementation progress:
 - Reviews metrics at regular intervals.
 - Facilitates course corrections as needed.
- Acts as resource to the intervention team as requested by team.
- Clarifies decision-making authority and boundaries with the intervention Manager.
- Communicates process improvement status with the BTC Steering Committee.
- Facilitates conflict negotiation at boundary interfaces.
- Commits to learning and continuous improvement.
- Removes barriers to improvement change.

Manager

In addition to any team member role he/she might have, the process improvement Manager has overall operational and program responsibility for the process team, project, and implementation activities,. This includes enabling and tracking progress of change activities, facilitating forward movement, and assuring the implementation of the change/action plan.

- Assigns responsibilities to team members as appropriate.
- Ensures priorities are maintained.
- Keeps focus on implementation plan.
- Models good meeting management.
- Ensures team charter is complete and approved by Sponsor.
- Facilitates team problem-solving.
- Elevates issues, concerns, and accomplishments to Sponsor.
- Maintains accurate records, data, and metrics.
- Reports and communicates results at regular intervals.
- Keeps Sponsor and other stakeholders informed and updated.
- Facilitates team learning.
- Maintains consensus decision-making.

Other Staff Team Member

The process improvement Team Member has responsibility for committing to operational process and program improvement as an intrinsic part of his/her work. (*It is the work !*) This includes actively participating as a member of the work process team, supporting change and the implementation of improvements, and continually seeking to improve performance and meeting the needs of customers.

- Attends and participates fully in the process improvement intervention sessions.
- Attends and participates fully in any related Kaizen event(s), as needed. [Date(s) as determined].
- Attends and participates in weekly/other intervention team meetings as needed (face-to-face, conference calls, or internet).
- Completes activities/assignments per the agreed-upon implementation plan created by the team itself.
- Develops, assesses, and monitors metrics and makes adjustments to plan as needed.
- Negotiates current workload and expectations with immediate supervisor.
- Communicates team results and learnings periodically. Keeps the Sponsor, Manager, and Caucus Members informed and updated.
- Models good meeting management.
- Commits to learning and continuous improvement.
- Maintains consensus decision making.
- Provides support and follow-up to the Data Manager.
- Commits to seeing and doing work as a process in continual improvement.
- Shares ideas and suggestions for improvement with other team and work members.

Data Manager

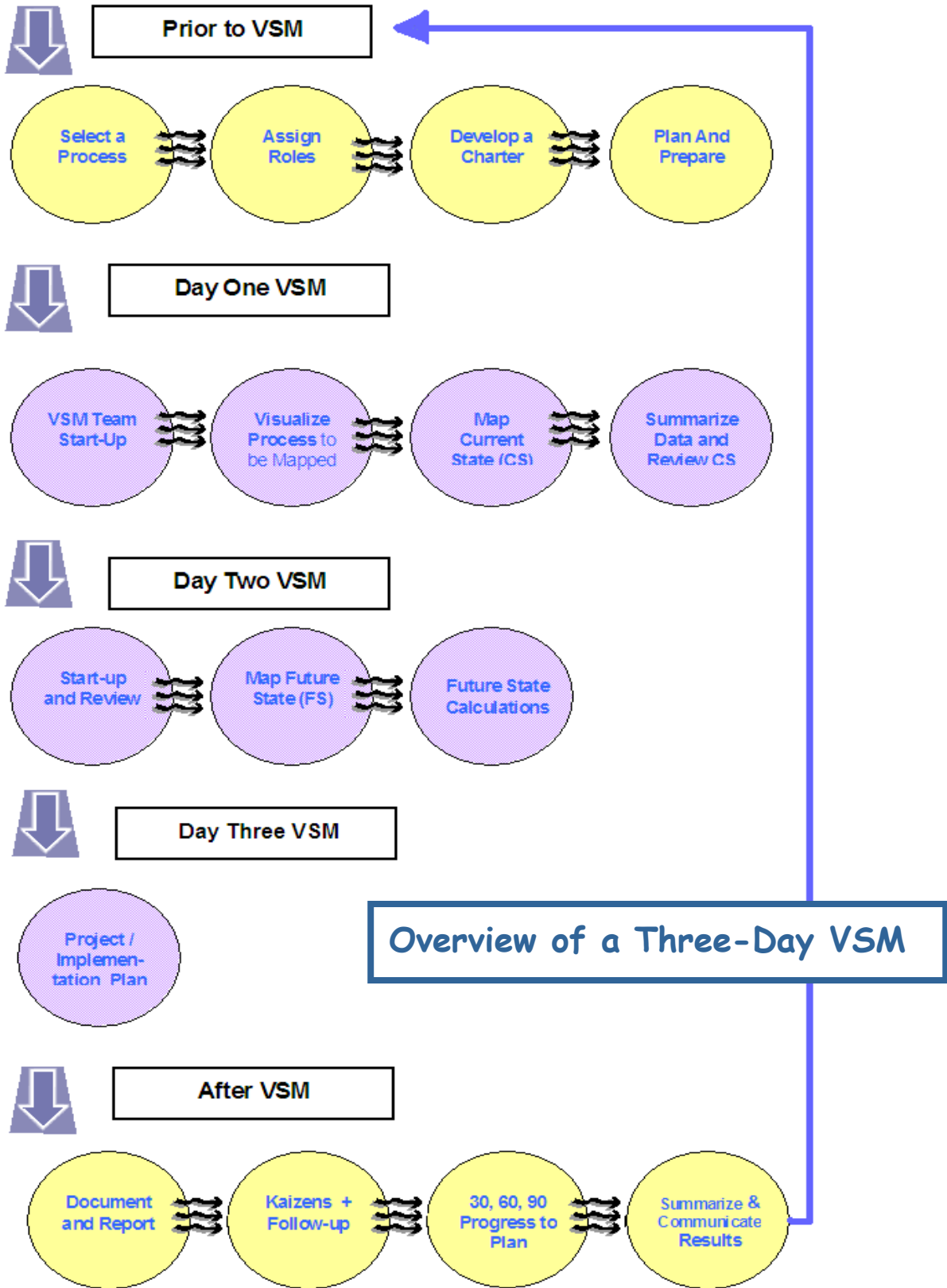
In addition to the team member role he/she has, the process improvement Data Manager is responsible for calculating and explaining the measurements at the time of the process improvement activity itself (such as Value Stream Mapping-VSM, Kaizen, etc.) and for tracking and reporting them for the duration of the process improvement project.

- Documents and Calculates metrics as team works through the mappings.
- Calculates the summary metrics.
- Calculates the implementation plan gains.
- Works, as indicated, with the Manager to track measurements during implementation / follow-up.

Caucus Member

The Caucus Member serves as a resource and support to the improvement intervention team by:

- Staying informed of the team's progress.
- Providing feedback, expertise, and input as requested.
- Participating in selected team meetings if needed.
- Providing other support as needed or requested by the team.



What is the overall structure for the upcoming Value Stream Mapping (VSM) process and team?

What are the Goals for the VSM?

- A. To develop an improved, standardized eligibility review process that is timely, accurate, consistent, and complete.
- B. To begin developing a continual improvement and process work mindset, including a growing knowledge and practice in this approach and available tools that can be used in everyday work.

How will this be done?

TEAM: Every team member should understand that they represent others' experiences and knowledge, as well as their own, and should establish communication with other staff regarding ideas and suggestions on how to improve the current process(es) -- as well as to later report on the status of the work of the team. Team members must commit and free themselves to participate in the entire three-day VSM and any follow-up activities. Their supervisors should support and enable this commitment.

PROCESS: A three-day value stream mapping session will be facilitated through the DHHS Office of Lean Management.

- During the first day, team members will map the steps in their current process(es) as they themselves understand and practice it. This mapping is being done to assure that the existing process the department is visualized and agreed upon. (You have to know where you are in order to get to your destination.)
- On the second day, once the current process(es) has been mapped, the team will identify needed changes and will create and map an ideal, uniform future process.
- After the improved future process has been mapped, the team members will go on to develop the implementation plan for how to get from the current process to the new, uniform future process. This implementation plan will describe the actions/activities needed to make the changes, their timelines, and the person(s) responsible for making sure they happen.

It should also include plan management objectives & tasks that will be needed to manage the implementation of the plan itself -- to track and assure the progress of the change action/activities.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: Keep in mind that this is the beginning of an incremental approach, so that the improvement of the process -- trying to make it better and better -- is ongoing. This is just the beginning of the improvements you might suggest and make over time.

- All of this work will be shared among staff. Everyone must be actively involved if the process is to be transformed.

As part of the upcoming process improvement VSM team, you will want to think about your process as you know it.

A. Your process as it is now –

1. Who are your customers/clients and what do they require?
2. Who are the players/staff involved?
3. What part of the process do you/they do?
4. How do you/they do it?
5. What are the steps in the process as you know them? For each step –
 - a. How long does it take?
 - b. Does more than one person have to work on the same one item/test/file/request in the same step at the same time?
 - c. Do you do anything in the step (or others in theirs) that you think is unnecessary or a waste of your time and/or effort? Examples could include:
 - Having to walk some distance to get materials that you use often.
 - Work that is a duplicate of work already done elsewhere (e.g. same data collected by multiple entities).
 - Using equipment that is old/outdated, slow, takes a long time to warm up, breaks down often, or -- as in the case of a PC -- crashes often.
 - A computer application that is down a lot or freezes often.
 - Multiple reviews and approvals/sign-offs required.
 - Persons needed to sign off are often not available.
 - Staff are not cross-trained, so that often only one person knows how to perform the work. No back-up for that one person.
 - Lack of training and/or clear instructions, which results in errors, rework.
6. Ask yourself if and/or how this process meets the requirements of your customers/clients.

B. Your process as you think it could be improved --

1. Think about the steps you've outlined above & how you would improve them. This could include, for example,
 - a. Steps that have little or no value in actually meeting the needs of your customers/clients.
 - b. Steps that take too long.
 - c. Steps that have a high error or rework rate.
 - d. Steps that could be combined.
 - e. Steps for which staff should be cross-trained.
 - f. Equipment that could be improved or better maintained.
 - g. Office, staff, supplies, and/or equipment layout that could be re-organized to improve work flow and save time going back and forth.

2. Use what you identified as being unnecessary or wasteful, and think about how you would modify or eliminate them.
3. At the same time that you're thinking about what this "ideal" process would be like, also think about what you believe could be accomplished in the very near future, say within the next three months. In other words, how these changes could be done quickly and incrementally – building on each other. What could you start with?

C. What actions you think it will take to change the process from what it is now to what you think it should be --

1. Identify the actions needed to achieve improvement: For each change (from the way things are now to what you think they should be), think about what it would take to get the process to this improved state and who you think would be responsible for assuring that the changes take place. In some instances, some of these needed change actions/activities might be mini-projects of their own. Examples of process-wide or organizational changes might fall under some of the following areas:

- Reorganization of work space; putting similar or connected functions, equipment, and/or materials in proximity to one another.
- Standardization of the work, so that it is done consistently in the same way and according to best practices.
- Simplification/Streamlining of the work.
- Development of training plans for both internal and external users to utilize staff better, provide backup.
- Development of ongoing communication channels with colleagues, business partners.
- Reduction in duplication of effort.
- Development/Modification of policies, rules, and/or laws.

This could mean, for example, taking specific actions to change, combine, or eliminate steps in your process; cross-training staff; sharing work; changing current practice standards; simplifying reviews/approvals; etc.

2. Aim for rapid improvements: These recommended actions will constitute the implementation plan for the proposed changes, improvements to get to the improved process. Keep in mind that you will want to make rapid improvements so that the process can move forward. While it is true that some changes could take considerable time (for example, those requiring legislative action), the implementation plan recommendations should at the same time also provide for improvements that can be made now.
3. Strive for continual improvement: Once the implementation for the improved process has been fully completed, the new, improved process becomes your current process/or the way it will be now. And, once again, you will want to look at what will then be your "new" current process and see how it can be improved. Remember that although improvement is continual, the process will never reach perfection – though all of us should continually strive for it.

Once you and the rest of the process improvement team have finished the VSM mapping process, what should you expect?

A. Follow-up Activities.

There are a number of follow-up activities that, depending on the nature of your work and role, you might expect to be a part of:

- Rapid Improvement Events (RIE): If your VSM process identifies any specific problem/issue areas that must be addressed in order to improve your process, you might expect to be a part of a rapid improvement event team if you are involved in the work itself.
- 30/60/90 Day Reviews & Reports: The Implementation Plan for making changes/improvements should include at the very least 30, 60, and 90-day (and beyond as indicated) status checks on the progress of the actions/change implementations planned. Any changes to the plan, whether in activities/tasks, responsible persons, or timelines should be documented, described, and agreed to by the Team, including the Sponsor and Manager. The status reports should be distributed routinely to all Team members.
- VSM Team Checkpoints: Expect the VSM Team to get back together to checkpoint the direction of the future state, its implementation status, and any emerging issues/problems. Generally, based on the time frames in the VSM Implementation Plan, the initial checkpoint can be scheduled in advance as one of the last things the VSM Team does. This way the whole group is still together and can agree on the checkpoint meeting(s) date and time.
- Special Team Sessions: It is possible that special sessions of the Team might need to be called by the VSM Sponsor or Manager.
- Establishment of Communication Lines: You will want to discuss and develop mechanisms for routinely and frequently communicating with one another. This could include e-mail team distribution lists, a shared folder on a common drive for process/team working documents that the whole team can see, regular *sharing/learning* communications, etc.

If you think that you've somehow slipped out of the loop, double-check with your process team Manager to make sure that communication and implementation channels are functioning properly.

B. Participate as an active member of the change implementation team.

As a member of the VSM Team, you will also be a member of the group responsible for implementing the changes the team identified for improving your process. This means that you should not only help to literally carry out the work, but also stay informed, keep track of the progress being made, make sure you see and read all the deliverables (map of your current process, the ideal process proposed, the implementation plan, status reports, etc.), and above all continue to *challenge the process*.

C. Start all over again – continually improving, always striving for excellence, seeking perfection.

The new improved process will, of course, become your “current” process. And you will once again want to improve it – to continue to try to make it better and better. Remember that you are in the key position to know the work and how it can be improved!

