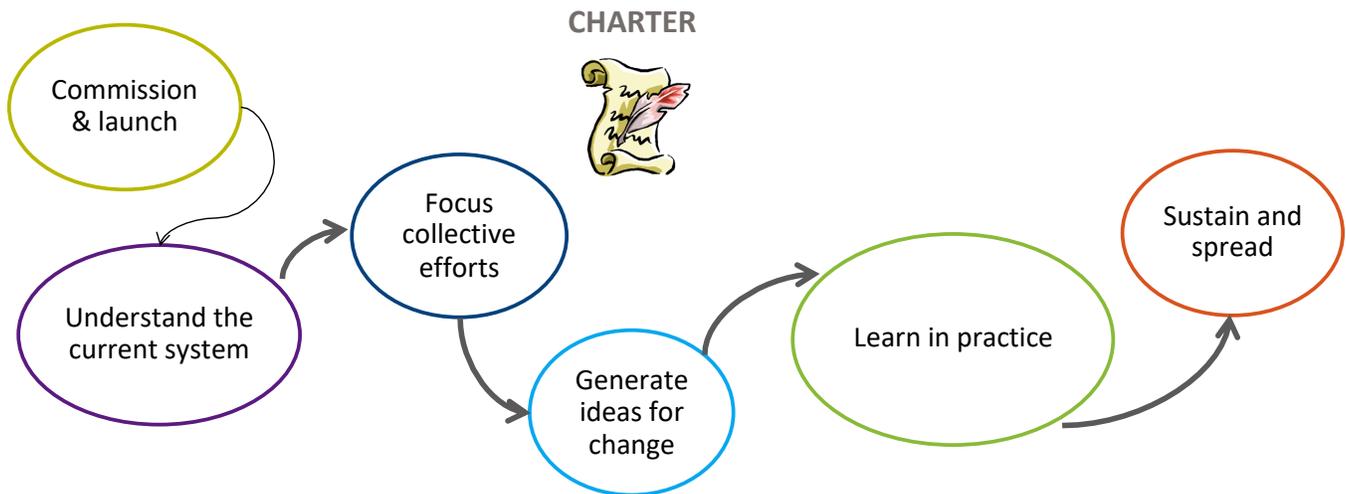


Improvement Charters

OCTOBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Improvement Journey



Organizational leaders often launch improvement initiatives in order to make progress on their most important organizational goals. These high-level priorities then need to be translated into specific improvement projects that can be pursued over time. A **charter** is a useful organizing tool in the early stages of the improvement journey, helping teams to set a destination and setting up the ways in which teams will learn in practice. As the team learns, the charter is updated to capture and share new knowledge. This guide provides an overview of the key elements in a charter and an outline of the activities involved in creating each.

IMPROVEMENT CHARTER

KEY COMPONENTS

Tab 1

COMPONENTS OF A NETWORK CHARTER

1. BACKGROUND	The background gives the essential information about the context to set the stage for improvement. May include basics on geography, history, size, demographics etc. Should be 3-5 bullet points or no more than one page of text.
2. IMPROVEMENT TEAM MEMBERS	Articulates who is responsible for improvement and their roles. Should include improvement team members and a leadership sponsor for the improvement work.
3. COMPELLING CASE	Makes a compelling case why improvement is needed. The case should connect to the vision and values of the organization. May not be a stand-alone section but rather woven through the background, problem analysis and aim.
4. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS	Summary of key insights resulting from investigating the performance of the current system. Often includes a problem statement and key artifacts that summarize current system practice and possible causes of current outcomes (e.g. cause and effect diagram, user quotes etc).
5. AIM & OUTCOME MEASURES	Aim statement for the improvement work. May include both a long-term and a short-term aim. In defining the aim, the outcome measures are also defined. The outcome measures can be included here or with the overall measurement system.
6. THEORY OF IMPROVEMENT	Initial driver diagram with aim statement, primary drivers, and change ideas linked.
7. KEY MEASURES	List of measures that the team will use to guide learning. The measurement system should include outcome (1-3), process (2-5), and balancing (1) measures. In the early stages of an effort, sometimes only the outcome measures are defined.
8. BASELINE DATA	Includes graphs of baseline data. At a minimum, baseline data should be provided for all of the outcome measures.
9. IMPROVEMENT TEAM ROUTINES	A sketch of the improvement team routines and timelines.

IMPROVEMENT TEAM ROLES

PURPOSE: Identify improvement team members and define roles and responsibilities



PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Activated improvement team members and a local leadership sponsor
- ✓ Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **IDENTIFY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT.** Identify where to focus your improvement efforts based on your organizational priorities, values and most pressing equity gaps. Select a starting place that is appropriate for the timeline and the resources you have to dedicate to the improvement effort.
- (2) **RECRUIT LOCAL CHAMPIONS AND IMPROVEMENT TEAM MEMBERS.** Review the roles and responsibilities on improvement team listed below. Recruit local champions and improvement teams to take on the work of discovering changes in practice. Consider teams that are deeply motivated to address the problem and be sure to allocate the time and resources for them to engage in the work.
- (3) **USER-PERSPECTIVE.** Design a strategy to engage the end-users voice and perspective in the improvement work. Include end-users on the team or create an explicit rhythm where users work together with the improvement team.

EQUITY PAUSE

- Who are the intended beneficiaries of the effort? How are their voices and perspectives being integrated into the effort?
- Are improvement team members representative of the communities and identities of the intended beneficiaries? What are the power dynamics that explain the gaps? How can they be addressed?

OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENT TEAM ROLES

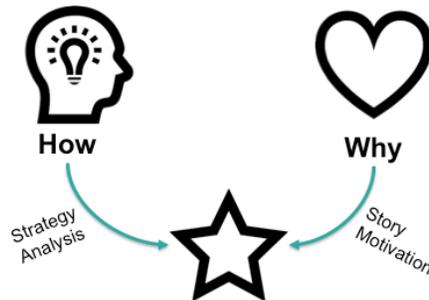
	Description	Key activities
Leadership Sponsor	Formal organizational leader that serves as a local champion for the improvement team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects time and space • Empowers the team • Removes barriers • Helps to spread the learning to the rest of the organization
Team Lead	Point person for the team. Manages the team and communicates with key stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize team meetings • Regular touchpoints with the improvement coach and team sponsor
Team Members (no more than 5)	High-functioning team that takes on the responsibility and day-to-day work of discovering effective changes to organizational practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings (2-4x month) • Test changes to practice • Collect and reflect on data • Consolidate and share learning
Improvement Coach	Experienced improver that supports the team in the flexible use of improvement methodologies to guide team learning. Dual expertise in the content area of the improvement work is preferred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the improvement team • Teach/facilitate improvement methods • Support data routines
Content Expert	Improvement teams need access to professional and research expertise. In cases where the improvement coach and team lead are not “content experts” consider identify a content resource for the team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the team access professional and research expertise that is relevant for the improvement work.

Improvement Team

Role	Description Who would be a good fit?	Roles and Responsibilities in Network Include time required, key activities and the frequency of those activities
Local Sponsor		
Team Lead and Team Members		
Other Stakeholders		

COMPELLING CASE

PURPOSE: Cultivate stories and visuals that provide a compelling case for the improvement project



Source: Marshall Ganz

PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Compelling case for improvement that resonates with network members.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **LISTENING TOUR.** Take time to understand the lived experiences of “end-users” and potential improvement team members. Provide time and space for people to tell their stories. Listen to what brings people to the work. Identify common values and motivations. Tap these stories and the specific language to shape the improvement priorities and make a case for improvement.
- (2) **CREATE A LEADERSHIP MESSAGE.** Leaders play a key role in calling others to action. They often do this by telling stories that connect the motivations of the people in the network. Marshall Ganz’ “public narrative framework” provides network leaders with one framework to create and practice using storytelling to activate change (*google “Ganz, public narrative” for a wealth of resources*).
- (3) **IDENTIFY KEY ARTIFACTS TO EMBED IN THE CHARTER.** The improvement charter should appeal to the hearts as well as the minds of people doing the work. Embedding striking visuals, a compelling user quote, a tagline, a critical story or a striking data finding are all ways to remind people of the why this improvement priority is important.
- (4) **VET YOUR CHARTER WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS.** Review your charter with an eye to the motivations all the stakeholders.

EQUITY PAUSE

- Who is not being served by the current system? Are these inequities explicitly called out in the case for improvement?
- How are the perspectives and voices of students and families raised up in the improvement charter?

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

WHY ARE WE GETTING THE OUTCOMES THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY GETTING?

PURPOSE: Create a shared understanding of current reality and identify key levers for improvement work.



METHODS FOR INVESTIGATING:

- Empathy interviews
- Observations
- Shadowing
- Data investigations
- Systems or process mapping
- Scanning research

END PRODUCTS:

- ✓ A clearly defined problem statement and/or description of the gap
- ✓ A summary of your current understanding of the current system that is producing the problem

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **IDENTIFY A TEAM** of people responsible for investigating the problem. Ideally the team is diverse, representing the perspectives of people that see the system from different vantage points. Alternatively, the team creates an engagement strategy to regularly test their evolving analysis with a diverse set of perspectives.
- (2) **COMMON UNDERSTANDING.** Generate an initial problem statement as a team with clear operational definitions. Create an initial understanding as a team of what you currently *know* about current performance and what you *want to know* (your learning questions).
- (3) **PLAN AN INVESTIGATION:** Prioritize a learning question (or questions), select an appropriate method and clearly define timelines. Team members can explore one question together or explore multiple learning questions simultaneously.

- (4) **GO INVESTIGATE!** Team members go out and investigate, using the method selected. We recommend that teams organize *iterative* investigations and set short timelines for each iteration (1-3 weeks). Scheduling team meetings at regular intervals where team members can share what they have learned and prioritize next steps, helps to create a rhythm for the iterations. The iterative investigations can either continue until the team identifies some “key levers” for improvement or as time allows.
- (5) **SUMMARIZING YOUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING.** At the end of the investigation phase, the team should summarize their current answer to the question “Why are we getting the outcomes we are currently getting?” along with associated evidence. This summary should include a revised problem statement and identification of a small number of causes of current performance. It can take the form of a cause-and-effect diagram, systems map or simple list. Have multiple stakeholders review it to see if it captures their perspective.

EQUITY PAUSE

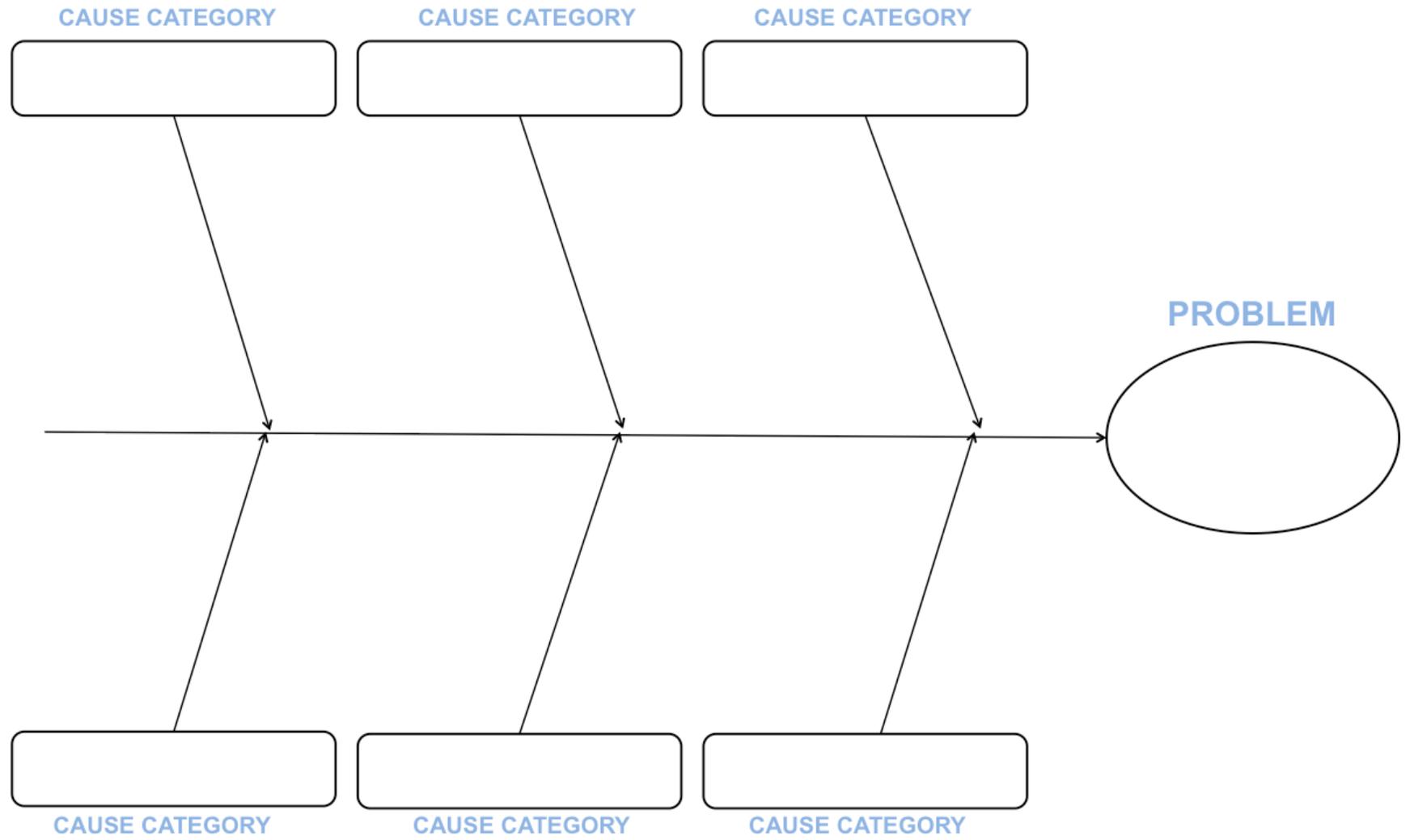
- How have the experiences and voices of students and families grounded the understanding of the current system?
- Where does our analysis locate the problem? Do we locate it in people or recognize the ways that the current system produces outcomes? What assumptions or biases do we need to explore?
- Have we attended to and recognized the assets that exist in our students, communities and organizations?

INVESTIGATION PLAN TEMPLATE

PROBLEM STATEMENT:			
What do you KNOW about current performance?	LEARNING QUESTIONS What do you want to know?	What METHOD might you use to investigate?	PLAN Who? By when?

*Place a * next to the learning questions that your team prioritizes.*

FISHBONE TEMPLATE



AIM STATEMENT & OUTCOME MEASURES

WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

PURPOSE: Create a clear, shared vision and definition of success for the network.

What specifically are we trying to accomplish?

- **What will be improved?** (clear operational definitions)
- **By how much?** (measurable, specific, numerical goals)
- **By when?** (time frame)
- **For what/whom?** (target population/setting or system/process)

PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Aim statement
- ✓ Outcome measure(s)

KEY ACTIVITIES

- (1) **CRAFT AN INITIAL AIM STATEMENT.** Get to a single sentence that represents your collective aspirations as soon as possible. You can iteratively refine your aim statement to make it more specific and compelling over time. Once you craft an initial aim statement you may find that you need to shop this aim statement around to various stakeholder to see if it can compel collective action.
- (2) **SELCT OUTCOME MEASURES.** Select 1-3 outcome measures that will define success for your project. You may find that you need to analyze current performance before selecting a specific target for improvement.

EQUITY PAUSE

- Who was involved in crafting an aim statement? How does it resonate with students and families?
- Have we explicitly called out an equity gap in our aim statement? How does our aim connect to the equity values and goals of our organization?

THREE IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS TEMPLATE

What specifically are we trying to accomplish?
(AIM)

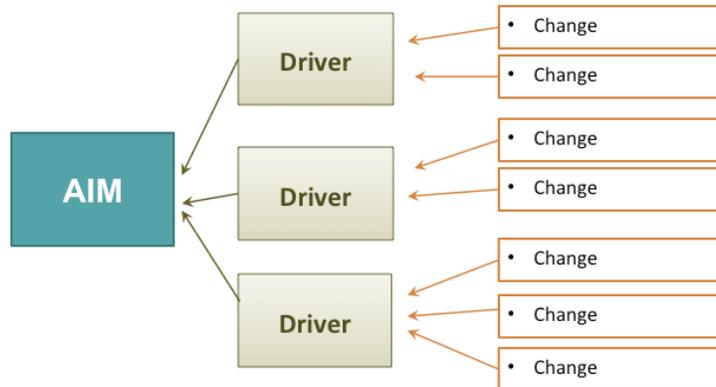
How will we know if a change is an improvement?
(MEASURES)

What changes can we make that might lead to an improvement?
(CHANGE IDEAS)

THEORY OF IMPROVEMENT

WHAT CHANGES CAN WE MAKE THAT MIGHT LEAD TO AN IMPROVEMENT?

PURPOSE: Create an initial shared theory of improvement that focuses efforts on high-leverage parts of the system.



PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Initial driver diagram for the network with shared language
- ✓ Develop specific change ideas that can be tested

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **CREATE AN AIM STATEMENT.** If you have done an investigation of the problem, you may also want to identify a provisional set of drivers based on what you learned to help scope the improvement work.
- (2) **SCAN FOR DIVERSE EXPERTISE.** Your driver diagram should be based on the best knowledge available. Identify a list of experts that could inform your driver diagram. These should include the user perspectives, “bright spots” in or outside your organization and research experts. Develop a plan to talk to the experts either through a mini-expert convening or individual interviews. After each activity, synthesize what you’ve learned. Repeat until similar themes arise.
- (3) **CREATE VERSION 1.0 OF YOUR DRIVER DIAGRAM.** Using what you learned, create version 1.0 of your driver diagram. It may help to have an improvement specialist facilitate this process.

- (4) **RATIFY THE THEORY WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.** Provide improvement team members with a chance to react to the initial theory of the network. Pay particular attention if they can locate their work within the diagram and how the language resonates with them.

EQUITY PAUSE

- How will the proposed changes specifically serve those who have been marginalized in the past? How might these changes actively or inadvertently reproduce inequities?
- Where do the change ideas come from? How have the “end-users” of the change effort been engaged as co-creators of the change ideas?

DRIVER DIAGRAM TEMPLATE

DRIVER DIAGRAM

VERSION:

AIM

OUTCOME MEASURES:

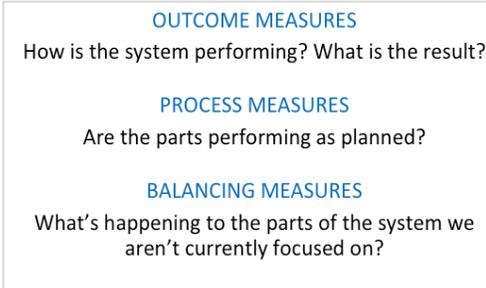
DRIVERS

CHANGE IDEAS

Probably wrong, definitely incomplete

BALANCED SET OF MEASURES

PURPOSE: Create a common set of measures that enables guides the learning journey of the improvement team.



PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Common measures
- ✓ Data collection instruments (if necessary)
- ✓ Baseline data

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- (1) **IDENTIFY MEASURES & CREATE OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS.** At the beginning of the effort, the improvement team may only be able to identify outcome measures. Use existing data whenever possible
- (2) **CREATE DISPLAYS OF OUTCOME MEASURES.** Create data displays that enable collective meaning-making and visualization variation across time, local sites and/or key subgroups of students.
- (3) **CREATE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.** If new data will be collected as part of the project, prototype data collection instruments and test out how easy they are to use in practice.

EQUITY PAUSE

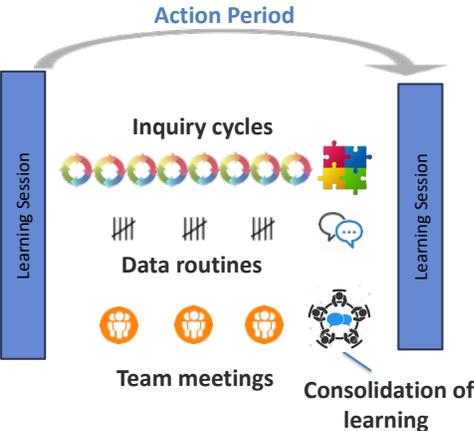
- What are the mechanisms to get feedback from end-users?
- How will you disaggregate data to visualize and track progress on equity gaps?

MEASURES TEMPLATE

Type	Name of Measure	Definitions	How you will collect it? (who, when, how)	Summary statistic
Outcome				

IMPROVEMENT TEAM ROUTINES

PURPOSE: Establish learning and collaboration routines to support collective improvement work



PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Agreed upon improvement routines

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- (1) TIMELINE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE.** Create a timeline the improvement initiative. Divide the initiative into phases and anticipate the focus for each phase. These phases can be updated based on learning.
- (2) LEARNING SESSIONS.** Organize learning sessions for teams to learn improvement methodologies. Create a rhythm of learning sessions and action periods.
- (3) LOCAL TEAM RYTHMS.** Support local improvement teams to establish 1) weekly or bi-weekly team meetings 2) inquiry routines and 3) data collection and analysis routines. Create rhythms for consolidating learning and checking in with the local leadership sponsor.

EQUITY PAUSE

- What is your strategy for regularly integrating the voices and perspectives of students and families into the work?
- How do we “set the table” to attend to similarities in identities, values and lived experiences as we work together?

IMPROVEMENT TEAM RHYTHMS TEMPLATE

IMPROVEMENT TEAM RHYTHMS

- (1) Determine and label the LAUNCH and END POINT for your project
- (2) Break the project into phases if applicable. Indicate with a vertical dotted line
- (3) Draw in improvement team meetings and other key improvement events

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