

## IMPROVE YOUR WORKFLOW: Conducting a Process Review

More emPower Tools  
+ learn more about each topic  
[thecapacitycollective.org/resources](http://thecapacitycollective.org/resources)

**Purpose:** This document is intended to help organizations review processes to identify opportunities for process improvement. Many concepts reflected here have been taken from the Lean Management System. This is just an overview and introduction to help start the process!

### I. Identify opportunities for “Best Time”: being able to use your time the way you want to use it! (see more on [Improve Your Workflow: Finding Your Flow - Eight Opportunities](#) emPower Tool)

<p><b>Bonus</b> </p> <p><b>Get bonus time and energy by doing things right the first time!</b> Get back the time and energy you would have spent doing something incorrectly and then inspecting and fixing the errors.</p>	<p><b>Enough</b> </p> <p><b>Do enough</b>—not <u>so</u> much that it takes away from your well-being or your time to serve other clients. Doing more than necessary or doing it sooner than needed can take time away from higher priorities.</p>	<p><b>Stops</b> </p> <p><b>What are the stops or pauses in your processes?</b> Having to wait for a step or work activity before you can complete a task, can eat up time and resources for clients and staff.</p>	<p><b>Talent</b> </p> <p><b>What talents, ideas and skills does your staff have that aren’t being utilized yet?</b> You miss out on human potential when employees are not engaged, supported or encouraged to share ideas.</p>
<p><b>Transportation</b> </p> <p><b>Are you unnecessarily moving items, clients or staff?</b> This shows when the physical workspace makes a task more time-consuming, or when staff travel is dispersed over wide areas.</p>	<p><b>Inventory</b> </p> <p><b>Does a tool or material need to be on hand,</b> or is it cluttering the workspace and flow? What copies, tools and supplies need to be on hand? What could be moved out?</p>	<p><b>Motion</b> </p> <p><b>Do employees have to move a lot</b> from room to room and building to building to complete a task? <b>Does it take a lot of clicking and scrolling</b> to find an electronic file?</p>	<p><b>Extra</b> </p> <p><b>What work does staff do that doesn’t help the mission,</b> like entering extra data that’s not used, or collecting more details than necessary?</p>

### II. Get rid of what’s keeping you from your “Best Time”

#### Step 1: Understand your Current State

Methodically observe the process you want to work on. You can use a tool like the [Improve Your Workflow: Process Review Worksheet](#) or more freely discuss the process. Some items to note for each step of the process:

- **Process overview:** name of the process you are reviewing, when it is completed, and when it is repeated.
- **Description** of a step in the process (include waiting and decisions made).
- **Person/people responsible** for this step in the process.
- **Resources** needed for this step. This includes forms, computers, files, materials, and so on.
- **Time** the step takes, including waiting time.

While completing this review, it is helpful to think about the opportunities to improve each step. Use the [Improve Your Workflow: Finding Your Flow - Eight Opportunities](#) emPower Tool as a guide.

#### Step 2: Define and Document the Processes

Define and document each process or task so it is easy to follow and replicate. If there is no established process, it is difficult to identify issues in the process because everyone may do the tasks differently. If you can’t find an issue, you can’t fix it. Even if the defined process isn’t perfect, it should be documented and *standardized* so that you can work toward improving it. A *Defined Process* is a baseline to start from. It is always a work in progress as you refine and improve it over time (see the [Improve Your Workflow: Define and Document Processes](#) emPower Tool).



### Step 3: Establish your Reduction Goals

After you have defined the process (Step 2), look at the improvement opportunities you noted (Step 1). Now comes the harder part of defining what changes should be made to improve the process and implementing the changes!

- **Identify the cause.** To make a truly sustainable change, keep asking **why** a problem is occurring so you can identify the real cause. You may ask “why” 5 times or more before really understanding what led to process breakdowns. **Causes are always in the process and never in a person.**
- **Note the specific problem and compare it to the standard process (the one that has been agreed upon by the group).** It’s not enough to just state what’s wrong.
- **Identify the ideal you want.** That will help determine how to set and achieve a specific goal.



Original Problem: “It’s too hot in the office.”



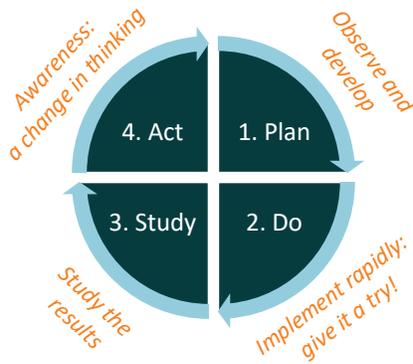
Ideal/Goal: Keep the office at 70°, max



Specific problem compared to ideal/goal: “The office is 3° over our ideal temperature max of 70°”

- **Include the whole team in the discussion.** There may be resistance to change, so listen and take into account ideas and hesitations along the way (see [Create a Data Culture: Engage Your Staff](#) emPower Tool).

### Step 4: Improve the Current Defined Process using PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act)



- The **PDSA cycle** can help us understand as quickly as possible:
  - what won’t work and what might work.
  - that failure is as good as success because it teaches us why something won’t work and allow us to make changes.
- **Don’t be too ambitious.** Start with small corrections, see if they work, and then continue to refine the process little by little. Better to do small changes well than dump and overhaul that never actually takes off.
- **Follow up.** Check in regularly (even daily!) at the beginning to see how the corrected process is working, until the team feels comfortable with it.
- **Define new process.** Everyone should know the new standard process.
- **Celebrate successes.** When changes work, they should be celebrated by the group! Those that brought the opportunity to the group can be thanked, creating a culture where everyone feels able to point out issues.

### III. Keep up your “Best Time”

Once you have gone through the process of identifying opportunities to improve and make the changes needed, keep using the changes you created! Find a few tips below (and see other [emPower Tools](#) for more!).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Follow Up on Changes</b></p> <p>After a change is made, leadership should check in to make sure that (1) it is working well and (2) it is being used consistently by all staff.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Follow Up with Staff</b></p> <p>Changes can be hard on staff, so it is also important to see how staff are adjusting. Give time and space for staff to express concerns or just talk about the adjustments!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Create a Culture of “Hand-Raising”</b></p> <p>Ideally, you can start to create a culture of continuous improvement, a culture of “hand-raising.” When an opportunity is identified, staff should be encouraged to share this! Hand-raising is not blaming; it is working as a team toward improvement. Process is the problem, not people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>In order to share, staff need to: 1) feel it is safe to share, and, 2) believe it makes a difference.</b></p>	