

Affinity Diagram

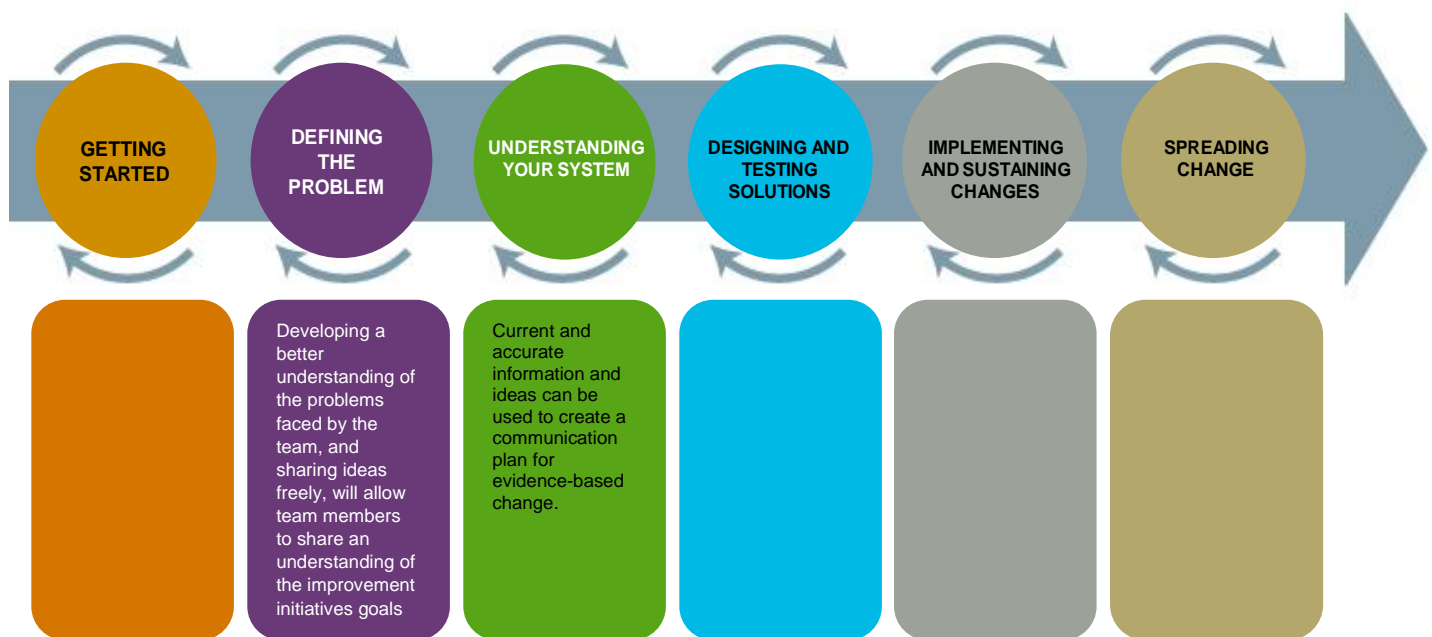
INSTRUCTION

Why use an Affinity Diagram?

An Affinity Diagram (sometimes referred to as an Affinity Chart) is a tool that is used to organize ideas, opinions, and issues and sort them into groups, based on their natural relationships. Improvement teams can then analyze these groups and determine how they affect workflow and processes. An Affinity Diagram can be used to engage each individual within a team, foster collaboration, and improve the ability of the team to address complex issues. For example, teams may use the groups identified through an Affinity Diagram exercise to develop the team's problem (or opportunity) statement.

This tool is particularly helpful when teams are inter-disciplinary or inter-departmental.

How would I use this tool differently at different stages of the QI Framework?



How do I use an Affinity Diagram?

1. Record the ideas, suggestions, and opinions of each team member on sticky notes. Team members should only write one idea/suggestion/opinion per sticky note and should be encouraged to create at least five sticky notes.
2. Post everyone's sticky notes on a wall
3. Ask all team members to come to the wall and quietly look for ideas/suggestions/opinions that seem to be related
4. Ask team members to sort the related sticky notes into groups
5. Ask a team member to write the titles of each group on different coloured sticky notes, which will be the team's Affinity Diagram Titles.

What do I need to create an Affinity Diagram?

Materials

Two pads of sticky notes (different colours). One colour can be used for ideas/suggestions/opinions, while other can be used for the titles of the groupings.

Timing

Anticipate Step 1 taking about 10 minutes.

Steps 2 to 4 may take 15 – 20 minutes, while Step 5 will require between five and 10.

Setup

A bright, ventilated meeting room with a clear wall space is required for an Affinity Diagram. It is also necessary for the floor space near the wall to be clear so the group can gather around.

What Tips and Tricks would be useful in facilitating an Affinity Diagram?

- Affinity Diagrams should be regarded as an opportunity to share ideas without facing criticism. Team members should also not be swayed by the opinions of their team members. An Affinity Diagram silence, which facilitates brainstorming and an all-inclusive, amiable, and accepting environment.
- If a team member is not comfortable with the placement of a sticky note or with an idea, then he or she should be encouraged to simply move the note in question. If it seems that an idea belongs to more than one group, then the facilitator may offer to write the same idea on the requisite number of sticky notes.