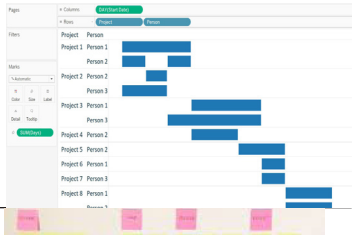
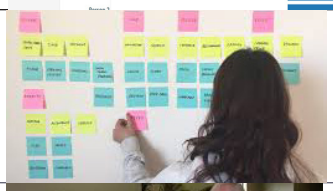
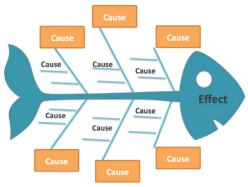
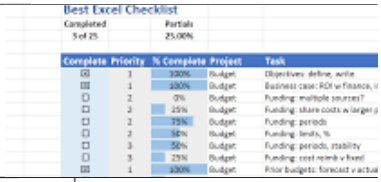
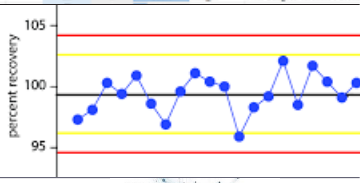
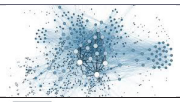
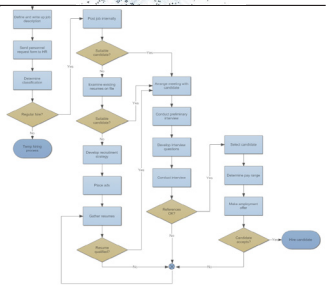
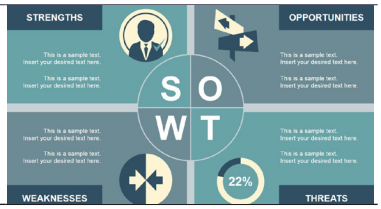
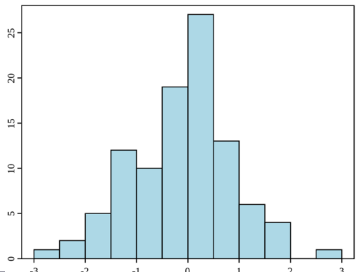
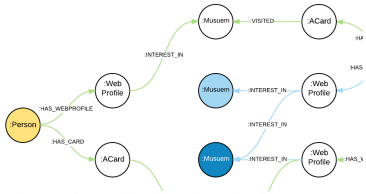
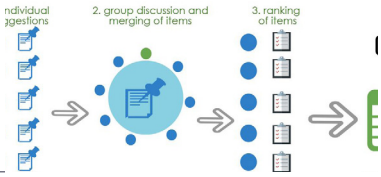
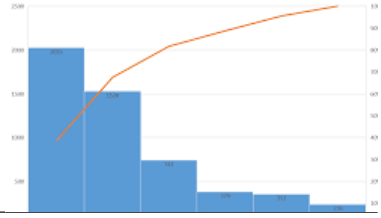
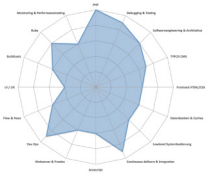
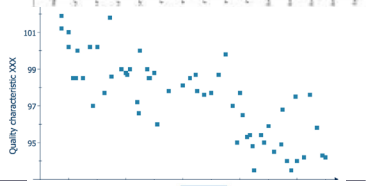
Quality Improvement: Tools for Making Adjustments

Adapted from the Crook County Health & Human Services Quality Improvement Toolbox.

Implementing public health modernization may require making adjustments to the process along the way. Throughout planning and delivery, it's important to regularly pause and review current actions to identify opportunities for improvement. The list below identifies various tools that can be used to make mid-course adjustments. You can review the purpose beside each tool to see what activity might work best for your team's current circumstances.

Tool	Purpose	Example
Activity Network Diagram/ Gantt Chart	**Used to schedule sequential and simultaneous tasks** • Gives team members the change to show what their piece of the plan requires and helps team members see why they are critical to the success of the project. • Helps teams focus its attention and scarce resources on critical tasks.	
Affinity Diagram	**Used to gather and group ideas** • Encourage team member creativity by breaking down communication barriers. • Encourage ownership of results and helps overcome "team paralysis" due to an array of options and a lack of consensus.	
Brainstorming	**Used to gather bigger and better ideas** • Encourage open thinking and gets all team members involved and enthusiastic. • Allow team members to build on each other's creativity while staying focused on the task at hand.	
Cause and Effect/ Fishbone	**Used to find cause and effect** • Enables a team to focus on the content of the problem, not the problem's history or differing personal issues of team members. • Creates a snapshot of the collective knowledge and consensus of a team around a problem. • Focuses the team on causes, not symptoms.	
Check Sheet	**Used to count and accumulate data** • Creates easy-to-understand data – makes patterns in the data become more obvious. • Builds a clearer picture of "the facts", as opposed to opinions of each team member, through observation.	
Control Charts	**Used to recognize sources of variation** • Serves as a tool for detecting and monitoring process variation. Provides a common language for discussing process performance. • Helps improve a process to perform with higher quality, lower cost, and higher effective capacity.	
Data Points	**Used to turn data into information** • Determines what type of data you have. • Determines what type of data is needed.	
Flowchart	**Used to illustrate a picture of the process** • Allows the team to come to agreement on the steps of the process. Can serve as a training tool. • Shows unexpected complexity and problem areas. Also shows where simplification and standardization may be possible. • Helps the team compare and contrast the action versus the ideal flow of a process to help identify improvement opportunities.	

Force Field Analysis	**Used to identify positives and negatives of change** • Presents the "positives" and "negatives" of a situation as they are easily compared. • Forces people to think together about all aspects of making the desired change as a permanent one.	
Histogram	**Used to identify process centering, spread, and shape** • Displays large amounts of data by showing the frequency of occurrences. • Provide useful information for predicting future performance. • Helps indicate there has been a change in the process. • Illustrate quickly the underlying distribution of the data.	
Interrelationship Diagram	**Used to look for drivers and outcomes** • Encourages team members to think in multiple directions rather than linear. • Explores the cause and effect relationships among all issues. • Allows a team to identify root cause(s) even when credible data doesn't exist.	
Nominal Group Technique	**Used to rank for consensus** • Allows every team member to rank issues without being pressured by others. • Makes a team's consensus visible. • Puts quiet team members on an equal footing with others.	
Pareto Chart	**Used to focus on key problems** • Helps team focus on those causes that will have the greatest impact if solved. (Based on premise that 20% of the sources cause 80% of the problems) • Progress is measured in a high visible format that provides incentive to push on for more improvement.	
Radar Chart	**Used to rate organizational performance** • Makes concentrations of strengths and weaknesses visible. • Clearly defines full performance in each category. • Captures the different perceptions of all the team members about organizational performance.	
Run Chart	**Used to track trends** • Monitors the performance of one or more processes over time to detect trends, shifts, or cycles. • Allows a team to compare a performance measure before and after implementation of a solution to measure its impact.	
Scatter Diagram	**Used to measure relationship between variables** • Supplies the data to confirm a hypothesis that two variables are related. • Provides a follow-up to a Cause & Effect Diagram to find out if there is more than just a consensus connection between causes and the effect.	
Tree Diagram	**Used to map the tasks for implementation** • Allows all participants to check all of the logical links and completeness of every level of plan detail. • Reveals the real level of complexity involved in the achievement of any goal, making potentially overwhelming projects manageable, as well as uncovering unknown complexity.