**Job Aid:** Process Improvement Project Charter

**MLH Document:** MLH-PI-JA-001

**Background:** A project charter is one of the foundational tools when performing process improvement. It outlines the scope of a project, the involved team members, and sets expectations for results – both within and outside of the team.

**Instructions:** Refer to attached instructions.

**Example(s):** To be included in next revision.

**Version History:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Change Comments** |
| 01 | 3/6/2015 | (Anderson) Initial version-controlled release. * This draft was adapted from an existing template. Formality was added (instructions, document number, example, version control, references and help, etc.), in preparation for the new formal Green Belt training program and supporting resource organization/standardization efforts.
* Updated formatting/content of header/footer.
* Changed ‘Problem Description’ to ‘Problem Statement’ to better align with various literature.
* In ‘Project Scope’, added note about boundaries.
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| 02 | 3/7/2016 | (Anderson) Added Black Belt as a required person – so future Green Belt formal projects, that are to be recognized by PIPMO, will have a coach. |
| 03 | 7/23/2016 | (Anderson) Added “Epic Workflow Liaison” to account for new PIVOT coordination efforts. Updated disclosure statement guidance. |
| 04 | 3/13/2017 | (Anderson) Changed “Problem Statement” wording to include “opportunity”. Changed selections to match updated strategic imperatives. |
| 05 | 7/31/2017 | (Anderson) Updated per Navigant/Marketing. |
| Future | TBD | Currently considered/desired future changes:* Add additional examples
* Following 2017, update the ‘imperatives’ section based on the new MLH strategic plan.
* Check CEW structure for any updates.
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**Additional Help and Resources:** Please contact the Performance Improvement (PI) group within Main Line Health for additional help. Whether or not you are participating in formal lean six sigma training – the PI group can offer support and guidance when attempting to use these tools. Additional reading materials are also readily available.

**Document Owner(s):** The following points of contact are accountable for the configuration control of this Job Aid.

* Robert Anderson, andersonro@mlhs.org
* Andrew Keser, kesera@mlhs.org

Please make contact if errors are found within this Job Aid, so that necessary corrections can be made.

# Instructions

## General Comments

* If you add more text than can fit in the current template, ensure you adjust the template as needed to show all information (cell size may not automatically adjust). Use a second page if needed – the correct information is more important than the overall length!

NOTE: To increase the size of a cell, so you can see additional text, click on the table cell you’re trying to enlarge, then click on MS Word header for ‘Table Tools’ 🡪 ‘Layout’ 🡪 (adjust row height as needed up or down).



* The charter details are not set in stone at the onset of the project – but it should be relatively firm, as it guides the expectations of leadership. As more information is gathered through the Measure and Analyze phases of the DMAIC process, you may find it necessary to adapt the charter. Any material changes must be communicated as necessary to the proper stakeholders of the project. There’s a reason it is signed-off for approval.
* Most organizations have slightly varying charter templates. If you have a nuance to your project, or sensitive issue – adapt this template as needed to cover the issue. At the end of the day, it is more important that your charter be effective rather than standardized.
* Add additional documents as needed. This charter is designed to effectively communicate an overall planned project scope in a page or so. If you have a lengthy and complicated team structure, and you want to clearly list position titles and sub-team names – consider adding another page that specifies that info. If your project scope is nuanced – consider adding another page with a process map and/or SIPOC with boundaries clearly boxed-off.
* The first five available selections for “MLH Strategic Objective(s)” are based on the “core of the plan” from the 2012 – 2016 MLH Strategy Plan. Search the intranet for “MLH Strategy Plan” (<http://blog.mainlinehealth.org/Connections/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/StratPlan2012-WEB-FINAL-singleformat.pdf> ). The final selection, for “Regulatory Compliance”, was added since compliance is also a main driver for improvement.
* The available selections for “Clinical Environment Workgroup (CEW) Alignment” are based on the document, “Transforming Systems of Care: MLH Quality and Patient Safety Framework” (specifically, the CEW and Microsystems portion at the bottom of the document).

## Steps

1. Copy, re-name, and paste this file into your own locally-controlled work area.
2. Populate the template as appropriate. Comments surrounded by carrots (“<…>”) are intended to be deleted and replaced. Below is a list of minimum items to address in each section:
	* **Team Leader and Executive Sponsor:** Refer to your MLH Green Belt training for guidance on naming the appropriate person(s) for each of these roles.
	* **Start Date and Expected End Date:** When setting expectations, be sure it’s clear what the “expected end date” represents. Without clarifying, different people may assume different end points for this date, such as:
		+ Creation of the action plan, but before implementation
		+ Implementation of the action plan, but before verification of longer-term sustainment/control
		+ Implementation of the action plan, including verification of longer-term sustainment

In other project management contexts, “end dates” typically refer to the completion of all tasks associated with a project. However, a fundamental aspect of DMAIC improvements is that solutions are not finalized until after Measurement and Analysis phases are completed – and the charter (and associated “end date”) is typically drafted and approved by senior leadership well before specific solutions/tasks are defined. If accountability for meeting the end date is very high in your organization, I suggest specifying what deliverables will be available by the end date in the section for “Key Deliverables”.

* + **Problem (or Opportunity) Statement:** The problem statement is deceptively simple. It’s the main piece of information that defines the scope of your improvement event. It should represent a solvable problem. The problem statement creates clarity at the beginning of the project – and it should stand the test of time so that if someone were to review the charter a year later, they would still have a clear understanding of what problem(s) was being addressed. Include the “five Ws”, like you were writing a newspaper article:

(checklist)

* **Who** is affected by the problem (departments, people, or processes, etc.)?
* **What** is the issue(s) and impact of the issue? Use performance metrics to avoid subjectivity!
* **Where** is the issue(s) occurring (departments, locations, limited to certain processes, etc.)?
* **When** has the issue occurred or when does it occur? If you are referring to a span of time, note both the start and end dates – this makes it easier for people to understand when reviewing the same package at a much later date.
* **Why** is this an important problem to fix? This may be the same as the quantifiable impact noted above, but if not, relate the impact of this issue to the overall business strategy of the organization. Answer the question of why senior leadership should care.

Also…

* Note: The problem statement should not include solutions. For example, “The specimen laboratory needs additional training” suggests training as a solution. Stick to just the problems, and allow the M and A phases of DMAIC to shape your solutions.

All of the above can typically be covered in just several sentences. If written well, the problem statement can be used in the future to quantify whether your project actually had an impact – because that person in the future would know specifically what problem to measure for comparison. In the end, your problem statement should be: specific, clear, and quantifiable.

* + **Objective(s):** Your objective(s) should mirror your problem statement. Simply describe one or several goals for this project that you intend to be held accountable for. Examples include: “Significantly improve process-x cycle time”, “Significantly reduce defect type-y”, etc.. This section speaks directly to leadership to propose what you intend to accomplish in simple terms.

Note: Other organizations may use this section in a charter to answer the “five Ws” specifically with greater detail. However, the MLH charter already has other supplemental sections to address specific quantitative goals (“measurements” 🡪 “baseline vs goals”) and scope of impact (“project scope”).

* + **Project Scope**: This is another deceptively-simple section of the charter. Without taking the time to be specific and clear – ten different stakeholders may perceive your intent ten different ways. Never assume that everyone “gets it” by looking at the title of your project. By carefully defining the project scope, you will align the expectations of all your stakeholders. This is also a critical step in avoiding “scope creep”. While you need to remain flexible and should consider growing the scope of your project when valuable – the danger with scope creep, especially when it occurs past the Define phase of DMAIC, is that activities cannot be properly planned and carried-out to make sound decisions regarding the additional scope. As more scope creep occurs past the Define phase, the chances only increase that the overall project may become unnecessarily complicated and thus, less effective in the end (aka, “trying to boil the ocean”). By properly defining your scope at the onset of the project in the charter (and communicating it), you clearly set expectations with stakeholders about what is, and more importantly, what is-not, part of the project. The charter can then be referenced throughout the project to align expectations and to keep check on possible scope creep.

To be clear, project scope should include:

* Included vs Excluded information:
	+ Process scope is usually defined by naming specific processes or departments or occurrences. By clarifying what components of that process/department/occurrence is included and excluded – stakeholders know what items are on the table for consideration of improvement. This helps focus improvement analysis.
	+ Your improvement has many stakeholders. If every stakeholder had all of their individual desires included in your project, your scope may be large and unwieldy. Likely, you know that certain stakeholder desires may not be met with the intent of your project. Use this section of the charter to clearly identify what is Excluded, so that you can properly manage expectations.
* Boundaries, as appropriate: If your scope is based on a process, be clear about what is considered for improvement. Clarifying boundaries is very important regarding process suppliers and process customers, or upstream and downstream processing. For example, if trying to improve flow in the Emergency Department, how you define the end point makes a huge difference in process scope (“process end: request for in-patient bed” versus “process end: patient moved to inpatient bed”).
* “Monuments” as Excluded information: Monuments are considered scope that leadership specifically does not want you to try and alter. Change is “off limits”. They are “monuments” since they should be considered large, immovable objects. However, for the purposes of your scope, monuments can include more than just physical objects and structures, they can include processes or variable types within a process. For example, monuments may include: existing equipment, wall locations, steps within a process, people assigned to a process, specific suppliers or brands for inputs to a process, etc.. If you know of any monuments for your project, just be sure to list them in the section for Excluded scope.
	+ **Measurements:** If you’re looking to improve something, you should be able to quantitatively measure improvement. This section makes it clear what you want to improve. Notes:
		- Add more measures as needed. If you have a very small-scope project, you may have to remove measures – but you should always have at least one.
		- For “baseline” data, if the data was not readily available from a well-known and well-reported source (like a standard monthly report or dashboard) – consider creating a separate PowerPoint or document that details how the initial analysis was performed. Should others want to re-create a measurement to assess impact sometime in the future, they’d want to know how the number was collected, over what scope, and over what timeframe.
		- Define “goal” targets based on your leadership’s attitudes regarding accountability.
			* The true spirit of continuous improvement is to set challenging goals that may not necessarily be reached. The intent is to choose something that pushes the boundary of comfort so as to spur real innovation and to motivate the working team to consider bigger actions with bigger impact. In this way, if you aim very high – even if you fail to meet your target, you are likely to have still made a large impact.
			* Regarding the true spirit above, some leaders just seem to “get it”. However, other leaders may believe that the charter is a sort of contract, and if you promised an 80% improvement – then a 79% improvement is failure. While this viewpoint is misguided – you should still be aware and take caution. Part of facilitation is the management of leadership expectations – and act to explain the “true spirit” if you feel that your leadership needs it. Only then, if they still want the targets to be a contractual guarantee, should you consider lowering the actual “goal” values.
		- “Unit of measure” simply captures the correct measurement units. However, if the manner of measurement was important, consider adding the necessary detail. For example, “specimens per month, where lost specimens were not counted” or “days, working days only”, etc..
	+ **Project Team:** Refer to your MLH Green Belt training for guidance on naming the appropriate person(s) for each of these roles.
	+ **Key Deliverables:** Key deliverables should not include any specific solutions. Certain stakeholders may be tempted to demand specific solution-actions at the onset of a project – but remember that the Measure, Analyze, and Improve phases of DMAIC are intended to properly vet and identify corrective actions. For example, if you know you’re going to do an event with a focus on visual management, a key deliverable may be, “completed visual management analysis, with a supporting action plan defined”, or “a list of required signage and office equipment to be purchased to support visual management”, but should not be as pre-determined and specific as, “kanbans located at the admissions desk”.

Key deliverables typically include:

* + - Any completed DMAIC tools which may be of useful reference in the future (completed process maps, etc.)
		- Action plan
		- Control/sustainment plan
		- Any other deliverables that are specific to your project and desired by key stakeholders

Note: Remember to set expectations for what you plan to deliver by the charter’s “End Date”. Add clarification to specific deliverables as-needed.

Note: Try to stick to the SMART criteria (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria> ) for your deliverables, so at a later date you can clearly determine whether or not you delivered on what you promised: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

* + **Executive Sponsor Signature:** Complete the other steps prior to collecting this signature.
1. Review the charter for appropriateness with a lean six sigma mentor, or black belt, or equivalent.
2. Delete all superfluous pages from this job aid.
3. Collect the appropriate approval signature(s) (Executive Sponsor Signature).
4. Suggested: Scan and retain the signed version of your document. You can now insert this charter into other working documents for easy reference throughout the project. The approved charter is a useful reference to present to the working team for the following reasons:
	* It helps with buy-in, to see that the Executive Sponsor has already personally-approved the charter.
	* It helps settle discussions about what is and what is not part of the scope to be worked. The charter is an invaluable reference for a facilitator to keep a group on track.

It is suggested that you copy and paste the actual signed scan of the charter, or just add a reference to this file that states, “(signature on file)”, or similar.

Note: As the Measure and Analyze phases of DMAIC are completed, if the charter scope is materially-changed – make sure you update the charter as needed. Use your best judgment to determine if an updated signature is required, along with a review for all pertinent stakeholders.

# Example(s)

NA – examples will be shared in future versions.

| **Process Improvement Project Charter** | PROJECT NAME: < *Enter Project Name Here* > |
| --- | --- |
| PROJECT TEAM LEADER | EXECUTIVE SPONSOR | START DATE |  |
| < *enter Project Team Leader here* > | < *enter Executive Sponsor here* > | EXPECTED END DATE |  |
|  |
| **Element** | **Description** |
| **1. Problem (or Opportunity) Statement** | <*Describe the problem that needs to be solved, or the opportunity to be addressed*.> |
| **2. Objective(s)**  | < *What is the goal(s) of the process change, stated in objective terms?* > |
| **3. Project Scope**  | **Included:** | **Excluded:** |
|  | < *Which parts of the process will be considered to meet the project objectives? Identify boundaries as needed*.> |  |
| **4. Measurements**  | **Name of Measurement** | **Baseline** | **Goal** | **Unit of Measure** |
| **Primary Measurement** | < *List measurements that quantify progress and success*. > |  |  |  |
| **Secondary Measurement** |  |  |  |  |
| **Financial Measurement** |  |  |  |  |
| **5. Project Team** | Physician Champion: <*Delete if not necessary, based on project size/scope*>Project Manager: <*Delete if not necessary , based on project size/scope*>PI Facilitator: <*Use if MLH Black Belt is facilitating*>PI Green Belt: <*Use if PI Facilitator is not a MLH Black Belt* >, PI Black Belt Coach: <*All formal MLH PI projects require BB guidance*.>Epic Workflow Liaison: <*See Anderson to determine if applicable*>Additional Team Members: |
| **6. MLH Strategic Imperatives(s)**  | [ ]  Superior Experience[ ]  Research and Education | [ ]  Value[ ]  Community Health | [ ]  Highly Engaged Employees, Physicians, and Partners[ ]  Other: |
| **7. Clinical Environment** **Workgroup(s) (CEW) Alignment** | [ ]  Emergency Medicine[ ]  Inpatient / Critical Care | [ ]  Surgical Services [ ]  Ambulatory Services | [ ]  Mother/Infants[ ]  Rehab |
| **8. Key Deliverables** | < *List the key deliverables resulting from this project effort*. > |
|  |
| **Executive Sponsor Signature:** | **Date Signed:** |