### UCSF A3 User Guide

The A3 is designed to build consensus around improvement strategies and experiments. It is a tool that the team can use to communicate and validate improvement work. A3s also help to direct the implementation of the action plan proposed. The A3 format incorporates PDCA problem-solving process.

#### Title: Sponsor: Owner: Coach: Revision: Last update:

#### 1. Background: What problem are you talking about and why?

- Identify the basic problem you are talking about, give background context on the problem, and state why this is considered to be a problem.
  - Quantify the problem, expressing it in terms of the True North plan of the organization – e.g. safety, reliability, satisfaction, performance, cost
  - State a specific time period during which the problem has occurred.
  - Include a benchmark or other comparative value (how serious is this problem?)
  - Illustrate the background statement with A3 visual storytelling tools:
    - Chart
    - Current-state value stream map
    - Stick figures
    - Sketches
    - Timeline

Write a concise problem statement that uses data in the definition of the problem.

#### 2. Current Conditions: Where do things stand now?

- Illustrate the current conditions with charts or graphs that measure what is going wrong.
  - What facts and data define the problem (i.e., prove that the problem exists)?
  - Clearly show the current conditions in a visual manner. Consider using charts, graphs, process maps, or other A3 visual storytelling tools.

#### 3. Target Conditions (Goals): What specific outcomes is desired?

- Illustrate the target conditions that define what success looks like when the problem has been addressed.
  - Quantify the target goal, expressing it in terms of the True North plan of the organization
  - Use S.M.A.R.T metrics (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely)
  - State a specific target date for achieving the target
  - State the improvement measurement to be used by saying “as measured by…”

#### 4. Gap Analysis: Why does the problem exist?

- Identify the root causes of the problem. In addition to root causes, discuss any constraints or organizational barriers that must be addressed.
  - Consider using a gap analysis tool such as 5 Whys or a Fishbone diagram
  - Clearly describe why you are experiencing this problem. What needs to be changed?
  - What constraints or barriers are preventing you from achieving the goals?
  - Gap analysis must be based on data, e.g. direct observations, surveys, reports

#### 5. Experiments: What countermeasures do you propose and why?

- What experiments or countermeasures do you propose to address the root causes?
  - What are the best countermeasures for addressing the gaps and improving performance in the current situation?
  - Give a clear reason why these options are the best. (Consider using a pareto)
  - Consider using best practices in other organizations as useful benchmarks
  - Start with two or three alternatives. Try to include those that impact predisposing, enabling, or reinforcing behaviors
  - Experiments should be based on ideas from the gemba made by team members who actually do the work

#### 6. Action Plan: How will you implement?

- Document actions, steps, outcomes, timelines, and roles.
  - Consider using a Gantt chart or milestone chart
  - WHAT: What exactly needs to be done? What will be the main actions?
  - WHO: Who will be responsible for what, when, and how much? What support will be required?
  - WHERE: Identify where the implementation will take place.
  - WHEN: Establish the basic timing for the scheduled items.
  - HOW: How will preparations be handled?

#### 7. Study, Reflect, Plan Next Steps: How will you assure ongoing PDCA?

- Commit to regular reviews to study the progress of implementation and make necessary adjustments.
  - Consider creating a “visibility board” to track progress towards major targets and to confirm milestones in the Gantt chart
  - Here are some questions to think about when you meet at your visibility walls:
    - How will you know if you meet your targets?
    - Did you meet your targets? Do you know why/why not?
    - What processes will you use to enable, assure, and sustain success?
    - How will you share your learnings with other areas?
    - What have you learned? What would you do differently next time?
    - What new problems or unintended consequences have surfaced? What recommendations do you have for others?