

Setting Up a Project

Making the time to establish a well-designed and well-implemented team improvement project increases the likelihood that the project will be successfully completed. The information below outlines recommendations and steps to take when setting up a project to address the well-being or experience needs of a group. The commonly used Plan/Do/Study/Act (PDSA) cycle for improvement projects is also briefly described. You can use the associated Better U Project Template to move through these actions.

Preparation and planning

Define the problem: Make time to clearly identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. Compose a clear problem statement

Some useful questions to review may include:

- What is the problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- How does the problem impact specific individuals or groups (e.g., faculty, staff, front-line workers, etc)?
- When does the problem occur?
- Where does the problem take place?
- What supporting data sources exist that exemplifies the problem (e.g., Better U data, exit interviews, retention, anecdotal, etc)?

Establish a SMART goal: Identify a project goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound will better ensure project completion. If just starting the improvement process, selecting an impactful project that can be completed in 6-months or less will create momentum and show the college, department, team, etc that feedback is being acted upon.

Build a team: Identify individuals from all areas of the process being improved or issues being addressed that should be involved in the project. Consider what

expertise, knowledge, and experience is needed to solve the problem, including sponsors of the project or key individuals who would benefit from being in the know about this work. In addition to forming the team, assign specific roles to each group member in order to ensure alignment from the start of the project. This includes a project leader and/ or project manager.

Collect baseline data: Ensure you have all the baseline data and key metrics to measure success of the project. You may consider conducting a root cause analysis or focus groups in order to better understand the issue or gather recommendations for solving the problem.

Design and Implement Intervention:

- **Plan:**
 - Identify the changes that need to happen in order to meet the SMART goal
 - Create a formal plan with action steps, including assigned roles and responsibilities, timeline, and intended outcomes with each step.
- **Do:** Implement the change(s), potentially on a smaller scale initially. This includes tracking associated short-term and long-term metrics of success, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- **Study:** Evaluate the results of the intervention and determine if the project met the established goal and contributed to improvement.
- **Act:** Determine next steps based on project results. Decide whether to adopt, adapt, or abandon the change implemented. For instance, does the goal need to be adjusted or do the project steps or methods need to be changed?

Communication and Sustainability

- **Share progress and results:** It is important to communicate progress throughout the project with the team and associated sponsors and key individuals. This can be accomplished at already established individual

and group meetings, in town hall format, in email or newsletters, or other modes of team communication.

- **Scale solutions:** Once a successful change is identified and if conducted on a smaller scale, the improvement can be standardized across a team, department, college, etc to ensure it is embedded long-term.
- **Document findings:** Make the time to document what was learned during the project, what worked and did not work, and share results. With employee well-being and engagement being of local and national importance, many projects, if well-designed and well-implemented can be submitted for publication or presentation at respective professional conferences.