# PROCESS MAPPING

***Purpose***

A Process Map is a picture of what is happening within a process. It is also called a flowchart. Process Mapping is a first step in understanding how and why a process behaves the way it does. Once a process is understood, process mapping can be used to improve it by simplifying, error proofing or even developing an entirely new process.

***When to Use it***

Process Mapping can be used on any type of process, whether it involves a flow of paper, material, or ideas. It is often used at the very start of a problem solving exercise to understand the process.

***How to Use it***

**1. Define the process you wish to study**

- Clearly define the boundaries of the process you wish to study, i.e.:- where it starts, stops and where it interfaces with other processes;
- Identify the "owners" of the process and the "process experts" - the people who actually do the job;
- Identify key measurements needed to understand the process, eg: quantity, quality, time, etc.;

**2. Define the level of detail required**

- There are usually three levels of process map used:
  ***Macro level*****,** often used to provide an overview of a process or of several processes.
  ***Mini level*****.** This is the most common level used. Process maps at this level often cross departmental boundaries and involve several people. Each step usually represents an activity which itself consists of many tasks.
  ***Micro level***, often used for the detailed analysis of a work function. Steps in this type of map are tasks, often performed by one person only.
- Gain agreement from the "process owners" on the definition of the process.

**3. Identify the steps within the process**

- Interview the "process experts". Do this by walking the process with them, i.e. follow the physical flow around;
- Determine key measurements for each step, obtain minimum, maximum and averages if there is identifiable variation;
- Question for delays, queuing, re-work loops - people often forget about these unless reminded;
- Map the flow AS IT IS, not as the process owner or expert thinks it should be, or how it is going to be after some future change (eg new equipment due in any time).

**4. Draw the map and finalise**

- Using the appropriate symbol, draw each step of the process and link them in correct sequence;
- Define the symbols used. There are many symbols in use, some commonly used ones are shown on the following page;
- Verify the map with process experts, owners and any other staff involved;
- Finalise the map.

# Process mapping symbols