

Quality Improvement Basics: QI Charters & Workplans

Slide 1 Objectives

After completing this module, participants will be able to

- Identify common components found in a project charter.
- Discuss what is needed to build an effective workplan.

Slide 2 QI Charter: Organizing Around the QI Goal/Aim

One of the best ways to get a project off on the right foot is to have an effective project charter. The charter provides a high-level description of the need for the project or the problem to be solved. The charter describes why the project is important, what the project is hoping to accomplish, who should be involved, an idea of how long it should take, what resources might be needed, and includes other information such as previous work on the topic that may help the project team be successful.

When it comes to quality improvement projects, good planning during the initiation phase of the project can dictate whether or not the project will be a success.

Depending on the organizational processes and the specifics of a given project, the individual or group responsible for developing the charter may differ. In some cases, charters are developed by leadership teams and then handed off to the QI project team leader. At other times, the QI project leader or the QI project team may develop the charter and then seek leadership approval to move forward.

The QI project charter will help you define what your team is trying to improve, the problem or issue the team is being asked to address and includes a clear statement of the goal or aim that you are seeking to achieve. Organizations should consider having a consistent form that is used to create project charters.

A typical QI project charter includes the following components:

- It starts with a problem statement, including:
 - Specific dates in when the problem occurred or if it is ongoing
 - Specifics of the problem
 - Quantify the problem (for example, time, errors, dollars)
 - Difference between current and desired or expected performance
 - Impact of the problem on patients or the organization
- Any additional background that could be helpful for context
- The stated goals of the project stated as SMART goals (this is discussed further in the Model of Improvement module.)
- The Scope of the project – including what is in AND what is out of scope; for example, a project focused on reducing readmissions, you might start by focusing on patients with a particular diagnosis - such as chronic heart failure.
- Timeline – when is the project kicking off, when will it conclude and what are major milestones along the way
- Team roles & responsibilities – these are covered in detail in the Building Your QI Team module
- Resources required – including staff time, technology, supplies, etc.
- Barriers (Anticipated) such as: competing priorities for staff, low volumes of patients for a certain diagnosis or process, shifting long-standing practices, etc.

- Leadership Approvals
- Partners or Collaborators

Slide 3 QI Project Charter Form

Here is a sample of a QI project charter that incorporates all of these elements. Like all documents presented in this course, there is a template available to you on the web site where you launched this module. It includes directions on how to complete the document, including what should be entered in each field. Overall, the project charter should be able to describe the work your team is doing to someone who is unfamiliar with your QI work. In essence, it's a project overview and summary document.

It is important to remember that the charter is not a work plan; it does not describe specific tasks or activities to be done or how to complete the work. It is a higher-level guidance and direction document. A charter can be a good opportunity to indicate how the work being requested links back to the organizations strategic plan, mission, and vision.... this sort of statement can be entered in the 'goal' field. A good project charter is a written document that is clear and concise. Charters should not contain pages and pages of information but instead should focus on the key elements of the project. Additionally, the charter should be kept in a place where it is available to everyone involved because it can help the team stay focused and avoid expanding the work beyond what the project charter describes...also known as project scope creep.

Slide 4 QI Work Plan

The Quality Improvement work plan, in contrast to the project charter, does describe specific tasks and activities to be done.

The charter will provide critical information to the project team as they develop the workplan.

A work plan is important to develop and monitor for quality improvement project teams. A workplan typically outlines all of the steps to take over the course of a project, breaking them down into as much detail as possible. It also includes assigning individual activities to certain people, and anticipated timelines.

The work plan is typically developed by the project leader with team input and support.

The fields in the work plan include:

- Task/Objective: Enter the name of the task or objective. You may also choose to break major tasks into sub-tasks by indenting, numbering, and adding additional rows beneath the primary task.
- Detailed description: A brief narrative or some details to help clarify the task or objective.
- Assigned to: Enter names of individuals rather than roles to ensure accountability for assigned work. On occasion, you may have work assigned to groups or subgroups within the team.
- Due date: The date the task is expected or required to be completed.
- Actual completion date: Enter the actual date of completion, which can be compared with the due date to assess if the project is on track or if adjustments need to be made to the project timeline.
- Status: Indicate the status of assigned tasks such as: not started, in development or complete.
- Notes/Comments: Any additional narrative about progress, barriers, and resources needed for completion, etc.

It will help keep your team organized and accountable for the tasks and follow up items that you'll be implementing during your project work. For each task, you'll want to know the current status, who is responsible for specific tasks, due dates, actual completion dates and any notes about each task. Work plans come in many formats, varying level of detail and the one included here is straight forward, easy to use tool. Typically, the team leader owns this document, and it should be shared and reviewed with the team at each meeting to create accountability and ensure that progress is being made and any barriers to specific tasks are discussed and addressed.

Slide 5 QI Work Plan cont.

Here is a sample of a QI project work plan that contains the elements enumerated in the prior slide. Like all documents presented in this course, there is a template available to you on the web site where you launched this module. It includes directions on how to complete the document, including what should be entered in each field. Overall, the project work plan should be able to describe where you are in the tasks that you are working on within your project and keep you on track with milestones and deliverables.

Slide 6 Why do projects fail?

This slide lists some of the reasons quality improvement projects fail – and you have seen this in another module in this course. However, it is worth mentioning again here, as you can see all the points on the list would ideally be addressed in the project charter as well as in the workplan. It is not uncommon for organizations to avoid creating a project charter because they feel it takes time away from getting “real work” done. The problem is without a charter, if there are changes in leadership, important projects can easily get forgotten or pushed aside or resources can be diverted. In addition, teams can get so caught up in the details of what they are trying to accomplish that they miss seeing the forest from the trees. Without a charter to clearly define the scope of the project, it is also easy for projects to become much bigger than originally intended.

Slide 7 Summary

A charter helps to launch a team successfully. A charter provides a high-level description of the need for the project or the problem to be solved. It describes why the project is important, project goals, project scope, who should be involved, project timing and resource needs, and more.

The project work plan, in contrast to the project charter, describes specific tasks and activities to be done. It helps keep your team organized and accountable. A workplan outlines and breaks down the detailed steps in a project. It includes assigning individuals to tasks and anticipated timelines.