





Using Improvement Cycles to Accelerate Partnership Work for Transfer Student Success Texas Pathways Institute April 2021



Why Use an "Improvement" Approach to Work on Transfer?

- Large, complex problems can (and must) be broken down into 'bite-sized' pieces
- Modifying key improvement strategies for transfer efforts can make work doable, and can improve the pace & quality of efforts to lower barriers to transfer student success

Key Elements of an Improvement Cycle

- Driver Diagrams structure conversation about the most important challenges and opportunities for collaborative work can help cross-institutional teams go deeper faster into real work
- 90-Day Plans to turn driver diagrams into action plans provides a structure and light project management ethos to push work forward, keep teams on the same page, provide mutual accountability

A Good Driver Diagram...

... forces delineated articulation of <u>key</u> challenges

... serves as the theory of action to guide the creation of an effective short-term (90-day) work plan

... helps translate a high-level goal into a logical set of underpinning activities or projects

... captures the scope of leading challenges in a snapshot

... helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done

Guiding Questions

1. What is the existing condition that needs to be improved?

2. Why does it need improvement/ what's the evidence?

3. What are the root causes or core drivers of the specific challenge we want to make progress on?

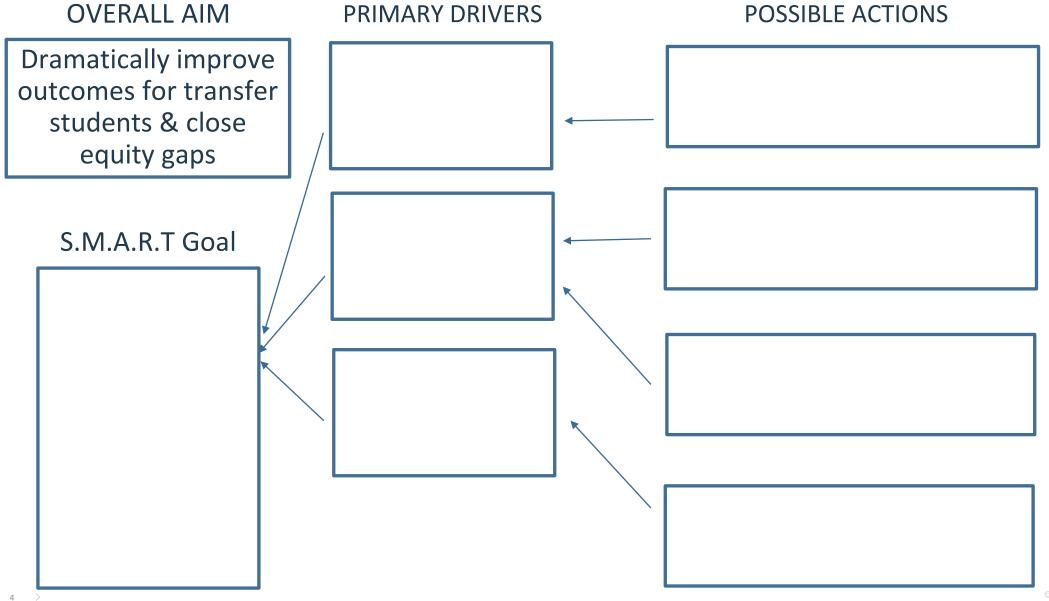
4. What is our role & long-term goal?

5. What is the "SMART" (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goal that we could achieve in 3 years?

6. What are the possible concrete actions that we could take that would help us make progress on our SMART goal?

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Driver Diagram Template



Driver Diagram Example #1

OVERALL AIM

Dramatically improve outcomes for transfer students and close equity gaps

S.M.A.R.T. AIM

Strengthen a multi-level partnership with our main transfer partner in our 3 highest-volume transfer programs to improve the experience & outcomes of the students in those programs. Absence of unifying vision for how shared commitment to transfer improvements 'fit' within our respective student success agendas

PRIMARY DRIVERS

Insufficient channels of communication & collaboration to strengthen mutual will for collaboration across institutions

Insufficient supports for mid-level leaders and frontline faculty & staff tasked with implementation of transfer improvements

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Identify impediments to senior leadership prioritizing and communicating effectively about transfer & prioritize strategies for addressing this

Assess key stakeholders' starting point attitudes, capacity, and will for crossinstitutional collaboration on transfer in these high-volume programs

Convene deans, chairs and academic advisors to identify/prioritize impediments & opportunities to improving transfer students' experiences & outcomes in these programs

Distinguish between unmet PD/training needs, staffing & resource shortfalls, disincentives, and communication breakdowns that need to be addressed: devise action plans & timelines for each **Driver Diagram Example #2**

OVERALL AIM

Dramatically improve outcomes for transfer students and close equity gaps

S.M.A.R.T. AIM

Align or improve math pathways to significantly increase applicability of math completed at the 2-yr for transfer students' programs of study at the 4-yr PRIMARY DRIVERS Lack of curricular alignment and shared clarity about the relationship between

course objectives/ outcomes

Insufficient connections between 2yr & 4yr institutions to establish shared understanding of barriers and opportunities around increasing applicability

Inattention to deeper structural and cultural impediments to creation of seamless math pathways

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Convene senior academic leadership (presidents & provosts) at 2yr & 4yr on an ongoing basis to look at data on which courses are/are not applying, and to identify the range of issues contributing to lowerthan-desired applicability rates

Convene math chairs and deans in programs serviced by math across the 2yr & 4yr to unpack the range of issues contributing to lower-than-desired applicability rates, and to identify key opportunities for improvements

Convene advising leadership from the 2yr and 4yr to clarify issues related to applicability with the aim of improving advising to ensure students take the right math for their longer term educational and career goals ...forces articulation of the relationship between the S.M.A.R.T goal & the near-term goal (requires next steps)

...is clear-eyed but ambitious, grounded in data, focused on *the most important* work (not just good work)

...includes careful consideration of both technical & adaptive dimensions of improvement

...includes deadlines, responsibilities, and owners of tasks

..helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done and hold each other accountable for progress

1) What do we want to accomplish in the next 3 months?

- 2) How will this contribute to our S.M.A.R.T goal?
- 3) How will we know if we're successful?

30	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status
	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status
60						
	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status
90						
90						

What Excellence Looks Like

an example from another state

From an Enrollment Manager at a Regional Public University:

Our College of Business (COB) had recent analysis on CC transfer applicants, which showed that students were meeting and exceeding the minimum GPA required for admission, but they were not completing prerequisites prior to transfer. The completion of prerequisites is critical to progression in upper-level courses and minimizes the risk of students graduating with excess credit hours

The reviewing team also reviewed key resources such as transfer guides, brochures, and websites, and noticed dated information.

5 Collaborative Achievements in 90-Days

- 1. Redesigned & offered a COB transition workshop for community college advisors;
- 2. Designed & delivered a COB transition workshop for students at the 2-yr
- 3. Updated all resources available to advisors and students
- 4. Designed a 1-page business advising guide with transfer tips and milestones
- 5. Resolved a key pain point by advocating for a computer competency exam at the 2-yr to satisfy the 4-yr's COB microcomputer prerequisite course.



Driver Diagram Template

OVERALL AIM	PRIMARY DRIVERS		POSSIBLE ACTIONS		
Dramatically improve outcomes for transfer students & eliminate equity gaps	Insufficient information & communication of transfer	•	Redesign a COB transition workshop for community college advisors		
S.M.A.R.T aim Significantly reduce the # of students	Inattention to viewing student needs through an		Design & deliver a COB transition workshop for students at the 2-yr		
accumulating excess credits while not completing prereqs in a high-volume program	equity lens Misalignment of advising resources to support seamless transfer		Update all information to advisors, faculty, and students		
			Design a 1-pger COB advising guide		

with transfer tips and milestones.

Finalizing 90-Day Plans: Key Questions that Need Good Answers

- 1) Are we clear about what specifically we want to accomplish in the next three months?
- Are we sure that what we're seeking to do is the most important thing we can be doing to make progress on our shared SMART goal? (Is it ambitious enough? Can it be done in 3 months?)
- 3) Whose input & support is essential for our progress? (have we captured that in the 'needs & implications' section of the 90-day plan?)
- 4) Do we have people assigned to action items and a plan for engaging our wider teams and individuals implicated in the 90-day plan?
- 5) Have we agreed on when/how the teams will come back together? (Are meetings scheduled?)



Thank you ! Alison.Kadlec@sova.org



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