

How do you select the project your team will work on?

You and your team should consider three areas:

1) Project Alignment

An improvement project cannot be determined in isolation. You must also take into consideration the mission, vision, and values of your organization and its current strategic initiatives. When you align your improvement project with one of the organization's strategic goals, you can be sure that the organization's leadership will be more willing to support the project.

2) Project Opportunity

Consider which processes seem to have the most opportunity for improvement and how they will impact other processes around them. The key for your first project is to look for the "low hanging fruit" – the areas where it will be (relatively) easy to create major improvements. It can also help to ask staff "what processes frustrate you / what do you feel wastes your time?"

Having a first project that achieves great results will build momentum and excitement in your organization as you continue forward with other projects.

3) Project Scope

There is danger at both extremes in determining project scope – with a really narrow scope, there can be some easy improvements but it may not be enough for the customer to notice. At the other end, the project can be so massive that it's impossible to move forward and achieve any real improvement.

To help determine the scope think of the following criteria. The project will be completed within a maximum 120 days, the project team will consist of 6–10 people, and the improvement phase will last up to 60 days. These criteria will help you think of the amount of "resources" available to complete the work within the 120 days. Remember everything does not have to be "fixed" in one project, continuous quality improvement is about always improving. So "focus and finish" one project then move on to the next.

Select a project that:

- Is aligned with a strategic priority in your organization
- Is in a process with lots of "low hanging fruit" (i.e., lots of inefficiency, but relatively simple to fix) so that significant gains are achieved
- Has a scope broad enough to make an impact but narrow enough to be manageable

Remember:

- Scope your project appropriately; it doesn't have to be fixed all at once
- Ask the people doing the work where the opportunities are
- Get buy-in from all parties on the opportunity
- Focus and finish