GUIDE FOR CREATING EFFECTIVE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAMS

Bernie Dana and Dorothy Ray

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Introduction

Most leaders understand the value of using a team approach to addressing key issues. Most employees want to be engaged in solving problems that affect their work. So why are both reluctant to participate in problem solving teams? The reluctance often comes from a distrust in the outcomes and the inefficiency of meetings. Meetings tend to take a lot of valuable time, are often controlled by a few, and use a problem solving process that is more emotional than rational. Because of past experiences, we think of people in teams trying to reach a common goal as involving lots of discussion dominated by a few people with preconceived solutions.

This handbook will give you a new perspective about teams and team meetings. It provides tools that will help form effective teams, shorten meeting times, give a clear focus to the purpose of the meeting, and assure that everyone has the same opportunity to contribute to the team's objectives.

This new perspective also changes the team leader's role. Rather than the traditional practice of bringing a solution to the table and persuading everyone to "buy into it," the team leader's job is to encourage everyone to contribute their insight to a consensus, fact-based solution. The team structure and process encourages everyone to adopt a common set of rules, study and eliminate the root cause problems, and recognize the value and insight of others.

The team practices shared in this guide are not limited to temporary teams created to solve specific problems. They will improve the efficiency of any kind of team that meets on a regular basis

Creating the Quality Improvement Team

The Creation of Teams

An organization should form a quality council or committee consisting of senior leaders that meets regularly to provide a sustainable focus and appropriate resources for continuous quality improvement. This can be an existing group such as the quality assurance committee. The primary role of this group is to:

a) Routinely monitor the performance of key processes.

b) Select process improvement projects.

c) Assign responsibility for the improvement effort.

d) Charter a cross-functional or departmental process improvement team when appropriate.

e) Allocate appropriate resources.

f) Recognize accomplishments.

It is very helpful to assign a person to assume the following responsibilities of a quality coordinator:

a) Maintain support and training for process improvement teams.

b) Facilitate the operation of the quality committee by providing data and reports on key processes.

c) Draft charters for process improvement teams.

d) Train and assign team facilitators.

Criteria for Selecting Projects

The quality council or committee should select improvement projects based on data and information that identifies unacceptable performance. The quality council should give priority to projects that provide the greatest opportunity for improvement rather than those that may be easiest to do. They should consider whether the improvement will:

- Increase the satisfaction of customers and potential customers.
- Bring compliance with internal standards or the Federal and State regulations.
- Increase employee productivity and customer responsiveness.
- Reduce operating cost, improve cycle time, or increase employee/resident safety.

The Charter

The quality council should prepare a written charter that clearly identifies:

a) The team leader, team members, and team facilitator.

b) The mission of the team and reason selected.

c) The resources and boundaries, including the target date for completing the mission.

d) The primary measurements for improvement and reporting requirements.

When the charter is prepared and team formed, the quality coordinator should meet with the project team leader (and facilitator, if assigned) to:

a) Review and clarify the project team's mission.

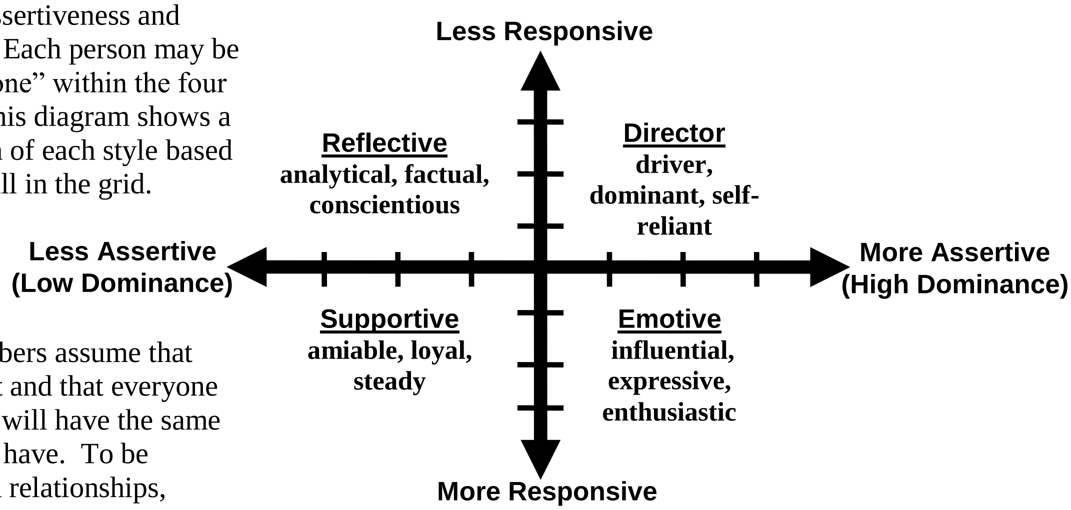
b) Review and clarify the operating guidelines.

c) Determine the support needed and process to be used to train and support the team members.

The charter establishes the expectations and parameters for the team effort. The team may review the charter and request changes that they believe will clarify their mission or improve their effectiveness by adjustments to the timeline and resources. **Appendix A** provides an example of a team charter.

WORKING TOGETHER

Each team member will have their own communication/social style that affects how they interact with others on a team. There are four basic styles that are defined by where they fit in relation to the dimensions of assertiveness and responsiveness. Each person may be in a different "zone" within the four basic groups. This diagram shows a basic description of each style based on where they fall in the grid.



Problems within a team often occur when team members assume that their style is best and that everyone else on the team will have the same perspective they have. To be effective in team relationships, team members need to recognize and respect the communication/social style of others on the team. The Director style must realize that his/her direct approach and eagerness to push ahead is not always acceptable to the Supportive style. Likewise, the Reflective person's desire to accomplish the task with quiet diligence may seem boring and ineffective to the person with the Emotive style.

Each team member must learn and be willing to "flex" his or her style in recognition of the significant gifts that each of the other styles contribute to the effectiveness of the whole team.

STAGES OF TEAM GROWTH

According to The Team Handbook[1], teams go through fairly predictable stages of growth as they learn to work effectively together. All members of the team need to understand that progressing through these stages is normal for any team. Understanding the behaviors associated with each stage enables the team to move forward to the prize of high performance.

Stage 1: Forming

At this stage, team members are exploring the boundaries of acceptable group behavior and trying to establish their position and status within the team. While being somewhat excited about the opportunity to be on a team, they may be suspicious and anxious about the job ahead. It is perfectly normal at this stage to see little progress, as the team may complain about the task and have lofty, abstract discussions (which cause some members to become impatient).

Stage 2: Storming

At this stage, team members realize that the task is different and more difficult than first imagined. Some may become impatient with the lack of progress and begin to assert their ideas, resisting the need to collaborate. Some simply withdraw as discussions may become testy and argumentative. They are beginning to understand one another and are realizing how the different communication/social styles are affecting them. Storming takes on many different forms, but seems essential to the "norming" stage.

Stage 3: Norming

This is the stage when team members are accepting the individuality of each person, beginning to trust the ground rules to keep equality in the process, and realizing that competitiveness must give way to cooperation. They begin to look forward to the contribution of the others on the team as a sense of team spirit and dedication to a common goal unfolds. With this shift in team energy, they begin to make significant progress.

Stage 4: Performing

Team members now have insights into personal and group processes. They recognize, and even anticipate, how they can each contribute to the mission. They quickly identify and resolve interpersonal communication problems. They develop a synergy that enables rapid progress.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT METHODOLOGY

It is important for all members of the team to adopt and understand a methodology that will be used to improve processes. It is very important that the team recognize that they must gather information to study and address the barriers that may prevent achieving the intended objectives rather than just jumping to solutions by implementing a plan that will meet resistance or require resources and a level of commitment that is not available to the team.

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[1] Scholtes, Peter R. and other contributors, *The Team Handbook*. Madison, WI: Joiner Associates, Inc. 1988

Sometimes the project assigned is to improve a system that consists of many processes. If so, it is important for the team to identify and first start working on the process within the system that would provide the greatest impact if improved. If necessary, the other processes can be improved later.

The key steps to an effective improvement methodology are:

1. Clearly define the desired outcomes in terms of goals and measurable objectives based on the mission of the team and the benefits to be gained by the people the organization serves.
2. Describe the current outcomes in measurable terms to establish a baseline of current performance that can be easily compared to the desired outcomes.
3. Collect and analyze data and information that identifies the barriers that may impede achieving the desired outcomes. Examine key issues such as availability of resources, lack of planning, low engagement of sufficient people, etc. that must be resolved for the objectives to be achieved. In investigating the root cause of the barriers, keep asking "why" to each result until you move past the symptoms and apparent causes to the real cause.
4. Develop potential solutions/strategies that remove the root cause of the barriers and develop consensus on the best solution.
5. Plan how to most effectively implement the strategies along with performance measures, tools, training, and policies to sustain the gains.
6. Implement and monitor the plans and strategies to check progress and make additional changes as needed to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

Whenever possible, Step 6 should be a pilot project that is tested on a small scale or submitted to a focus group of people who can give valuable feedback before full implementation. If the pilot is successful, then the implementation should be expanded. Step 6 is the entry into the "Plan, Do, Check (study), and Act" stages of experimentation commonly called the PCSA or Deming Cycle.

TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important to the effectiveness of a team meeting to establish and assign the following roles.

Leader

The leader of a team is a permanent role for the life of the team. He or she should develop a preliminary plan for each team meeting. The leader is responsible to coordinate and focus the meeting activity on the mission of the team. The leader actively participates as a member by contributing ideas and participating in the team processes and decisions. The leader is usually responsible for developing the record of the meeting outcomes and actions unless that role is specifically assigned to someone else. The team leader requests assistance from the team facilitator when the team is struggling with its ability to work together and use effective team meeting skills.

Facilitator

The most effective teams have a trained team facilitator in a permanent role to meet with them and guide their use of meeting skills and tools. If assigned, the facilitator should be present at most meetings, especially in the early stages of development when the team is learning how work together and how to use the improvement tools. If a permanent facilitator is not assigned to the team, then one should be available to assist the team when they are struggling with team processes or when they need advice or training.

The facilitator functions as a team advisor with expertise in the processes and tools that help teams be effective. The facilitator works with the team leader to make sure that information is gathered to study the issue being addressed, that an improvement plan is developed, and that the meeting record is being completed properly. The facilitator is the team's liaison with the quality council to help obtain resources. The facilitator must exercise personal discipline to avoid inappropriate participation in the team decisions.

The facilitator coaches the team in the use of team meeting skills and tools and gives impartial feedback to the leaders to improve their communication and the meeting process. The involvement of the facilitator normally diminishes as the team members and team leader gain more knowledge and skills about team processes and tools.

Member

Effective teams usually have of 4 to 6 members including the team leader but excluding the facilitator. The team may be larger, but the time commitment usually increases and the speed with which the team begins to perform is slower. Team members are usually selected because they represent a part of the cross-functional process that is being improved. Sometimes, a team member from outside of the process is included to give the process "fresh eyes." All team members have a responsibility to participate and respectfully share their knowledge.

Recorder

The recorder is a rotated position selected at the beginning of each team meeting based on the ground rules. The primary role of the recorder is to record content from brainstorming, consensus building, and other tools and processes on a flipchart that is visible to the team. It is important that the recorder write down what each team member says rather than their interpretation of what was said. Sometimes it is helpful to select two recorders when a lot of information needs to be logged.

Team members agree that they will not criticize the spelling or writing of the recorder. Every team member should be encouraged to fill this role, and be applauded for the patience and listening skills it requires. The recorder is a full participant in the team process while they are recording. The team leader may need to make sure that the recorder is given time to participate.

Timekeeper

The timekeeper is also a rotated position selected at the beginning of each team meeting based on the ground rules. The primary role of the timekeeper is to call out the time remaining on each agenda item at intervals the team determines is appropriate when developing their ground rules. In this way, the timekeeper assists the team in staying on task and managing its time effectively.

GROUND RULES

The Principle for Ground Rules

Ground rules are agreements about how the team will work together, behave as individuals, achieve mutual respect, and divide responsibilities. Ground rules are not restrictive, they are empowering. To be effective, ground rules require team members to be honest, willing to accept constructive criticism, and committed to a common mission. All members of the team are encouraged to intervene if the ground rules are not followed with the assumption that it is most likely not intentional, but just a prior habit.

General Guidelines

Ground rules should be established for:

- Attendance and promptness at meetings.
- Roles and responsibilities for record keeping, communication, and between-meeting assignments.
- Rotation of timekeeper and recorder roles.

- How decisions will be reached and conflict will be managed.
- Interruptions (phone calls, text messages, etc.).
- Communication courtesies.
- Fun, humor, and celebration.

Appendix B provides a model for establishing team ground rules.

STEPS TO EFFECTIVE TEAM MEETINGS

Purpose

Having a well-defined meeting process helps the entire team focus on the important meeting tasks.

Steps

1. Provide a suitable environment for the meeting. Team members should be in a room or area that is conducive to good communication. They should be seated at a table or in an open-ended circle with a flip chart at one end where all team members can easily see each other and the flip chart. Make sure there is an adequate supply of markers for writing on the flip chart. If the flip chart paper is not self-adhesive, have tape available so that the filled paper can be hung on a wall where it continues to be easily seen by everyone. This process of keeping all of the information visible to everyone is an important part of empowering the entire team.

2. Clarify the purpose and objectives of the meeting. Make sure that all team members are in agreement.

3. Determine who will be the timekeeper and recorder. Review at what time intervals the timekeeper should give feedback based on the ground rules.

4. Review the prior meeting's record and action list. Reviewing the action list provides team accountability for between-meeting assignments and brings relevant information to the current agenda.

5. Review the meeting agenda. Make sure that all team members understand and agree with the agenda and its time frames. If there is disagreement, the team leader should try to get a consensus agreement from the team on how the agenda should be changed.

6. Work through the agenda items within the time allotted to each. If time runs out on any item, the team must follow the ground rules to agree on how to proceed.

7. Review the flip chart information recorded during the meeting. Decide which information should be included in the meeting record and which should be discarded.

8. Develop a list of items that should be included on the next meeting agenda. Determine what assignments should be given to prepare for the next meeting.

9. Evaluate the meeting. Ask what the team did well and what the team could do differently to improve the meeting process. This is an important step. It is helpful to do this on the flip chart by drawing a vertical line, putting a plus sign on the left and minus sign on the right, and recording what was done well under the plus and opportunities for improvement under the minus. Improvement opportunities should be noted in the meeting record and incorporated into the next meeting.

Meeting Agenda

In order to have an effective team meeting, the team leader should develop a meeting agenda that utilizes the above steps. Every team member should have a copy of the meeting agenda and should agree to its content. The team leader can develop a template in Word or Excel for the meeting agenda based on the following sample.

Meeting Agenda

Team Name: ____

Meeting Date ________________________ Time: ____________

Location: ____

Team Members: ____

____

	Content	**Start Time**
1.	Clarify Purpose and Objectives	9:00 a.m.
2.	Select Timekeeper and Recorder (Review Roles)	9:05 a.m.
	Timekeeper: ______________________	
	Recorder: ______________________	
3.	Review Prior Meeting Record and Action List	9:08 a.m.
4.	Review Agenda	9:12 a.m.
5.	Work through the Agenda Item(s)	
	A. ______________________	Set start time for each item
	B. ______________________	
	C. ______________________	
	D. ______________________	
	E. ______________________	
6.	Review Key Activities, Information, and Decisions	9:40 a.m.
7.	Plan Next Meeting Agenda	9:45 a.m.
8.	Evaluate the Meeting	9:55 a.m.
9.	Adjourn	10:00 a.m.

It is very important that the meeting agenda include the time that each agenda item will begin. The team leader will estimate the amount of time in preparing the agenda. The ability to estimate the time improves with practice. Using the ground rules, the team members should agree to adjust the time whenever necessary to accomplish their goals.

MEETING OUTCOMES/ACTIONS

Creating a record of the outcomes and actions from each meeting is a vital part of the team communication process. This is not the same as keeping detailed minutes of a meeting. The following form identifies three key components of this record:

1. The key activities and decisions reached.
2. Actions needed before the next meeting.
3. Improvements to be embraced in the next meeting.

The easiest way to prepare this record is for the team leader to make notes on his or her agenda related to each outcome, action needed, and improvement. Some of the information can also be collected from the items recorded on the flip chart by the recorder during the meeting. The following model works well for this record. The record should be distributed to each team member within several days after the meeting so that team members will be reminded to follow-through on the action items.

PROJECT TEAM MEETING RECORD

PROJECT: ____

DATE: ____________________________ LOCATION: _______________________________

Meeting Outcomes/Decisions Reached:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Actions Needed:

WHAT	WHO	WHEN

Improvements for Next Meeting:

ENGAGING NEW TEAMS OR TEAM MEMBERS

Activities in the early meetings that help to engage new teams or team members include:

- Make sure the team members get to know each other. In some situations, it may be good for the team leader and facilitator to prepare an "ice breaker" exercise.
- Introduce the team to the various communication/social styles so they can explore and recognize their own styles and the styles of others in the group.

- Introduce them to the four stages of team growth so they can recognize the need to evolve.
- Develop interesting ways to verify that everyone on the team understands the mission.
- Train everyone on the improvement methodology.
- Anticipate possible tools that could be used in the meeting and include time in the meeting schedule to review the appropriate steps in using the tools.
- Establish the ground rules.
- Review the roles of the team leader, facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper.
- Get everyone's input and draft key goals and objectives based on the methodology.

IDEA GENERATING TOOLS

Sometimes the best way to begin a process improvement is to develop a comprehensive list of all of the possible causes for problems, options to consider, etc. Consensus building tools can then be used to identify the items on the list that should be explored first by gathering data and understanding the process. There are two disciplined approaches a team can use to develop such a list, and each approach requires that the list be clarified.

Brainstorming

PURPOSE

A group decision-making technique designed to generate a large number of ideas through team interaction without criticism and judgment. Brainstorming gets everyone involved and builds on each other's creativity.

STEPS

1. Clarify the brainstorming objective by writing it on the flip chart and making sure everyone understands it.
2. Call out ideas in turn around the group without any verbal or nonverbal response from others. Team members may pass if they do not have a prompt response. After several rounds of the group, the team may begin to call out ideas as they occur to members without the formal structure.
3. Record each idea on a flip chart exactly as it was presented. Sometimes it is helpful to use two recorders and two flip charts.
4. Generate as long of a list as possible. Resist stopping when ideas come slowly. Sometimes the best ideas come at the end of brainstorming.
5. After listing all of the ideas, review the list to clarify and eliminate duplicates.

Nominal Group Technique

PURPOSE

A group decision-making technique designed to generate a large number of ideas by sharing ideas developed individually. This process may feel safer than brainstorming to team members who are not yet accustomed to team participation.

STEPS

1. Clarify the nominal group objective by writing it on the flip chart and making sure everyone understands.
2. Allow time for each member to individually list as many ideas as possible on a piece of paper.
3. In turn, call out ideas from the lists without any verbal or nonverbal response from others. Team members may pass when they have presented all of the ideas on their list. However, team members may also share additional ideas that are built from ones that others present.
4. Record each idea on a flip chart exactly as it was presented. Sometimes it is helpful to use two recorders and two flip charts.
5. After listing all of the ideas, review the list to clarify and eliminate duplicates.

Clarification

PURPOSE

Clarification is the last step in both brainstorming and nominal group technique. Clarification is essential to working through communication filters like semantics, emotions, attitudes, role expectations, gender bias, and nonverbal messages that may cause team members to assign a different meaning than was intended by the contributor.

STEPS TO CLARIFICATION

1. The recorder reads each idea. If the idea is clear to everyone, the recorder moves on.
2. For ideas that are not clear to everyone, the author clarifies the meaning. Additional ideas may be added if any team member feels it would be appropriate.
3. The recorder captures the additional comments on the flip chart, if needed.

CONSENSUS BUILDING TOOLS

Once a list of ideas, problems, or solutions has been developed, there are tools that should be used to gain an overall consensus from the team on which ideas are the most important without extensive discussion and debate. The most frequently used tools are multiple voting, rank ordering, and structured discussion. Learning to anticipate when these tools will be helpful and using the tools properly will greatly reduce the meeting time and will more effectively bring team members to agreement.

The first step to any of the consensus building tools is to agree on the criteria that each team member will use to prioritize the list.

Criteria for Decision-Making

PURPOSE

Criteria are the guidelines or standards for evaluating ideas. Criteria are essential for a team to make effective decisions regarding a list of ideas. Consensus can seldom be reached if the team has not agreed to common criteria for evaluating the ideas. All of the ideas being evaluated are usually good. The criteria simply allow the team members to determine which ideas are most appropriate to consider moving forward at this time.

STEPS

1. List on a flip chart all of the possible criteria the team wants to consider. Potential benefit, ease of implementation, and relativity to current events are examples of decision-making criteria.
2. Through discussion, reach agreement on the criteria that all team members will use to evaluate ideas.
3. Display the agreed upon criteria in a place that each member can see during the decision making process.

Multiple Voting

PURPOSE

A method to build consensus in a group for reducing a list of **more than ten** ideas to a manageable number.

STEPS TO MULTIPLE VOTING

1. Agree on the criteria for selecting ideas.
2. Identify each idea on the list with a letter of the alphabet.
3. Determine the number of ideas for which each member will vote using 20-25% of the ideas listed as a general guideline.
4. Each member individually votes on paper, listing the letter of each selected idea.
5. Take turns calling out the letters of selected ideas while the recorder makes a tally mark on the flip chart by the letter selected.
6. Add the votes on the flip chart.
7. Decide which ideas should continue to be considered. Eliminate ideas that receive no votes. Ideas kept on the list include those that receive the most votes and any others about which any member feels strongly.

Consider taking a second multiple vote if more than ten ideas remain. As the number on the list becomes smaller, the members may choose to vote on "one-half plus one" of the remaining number, rather than 20-25%.

Rank Ordering

PURPOSE

A method to build consensus in a group by visually displaying the degree of agreement on a list of **ten or fewer** ideas.

STEPS

1. Agree on the criteria for ranking ideas.
2. Identify each idea on the list with a letter of the alphabet.
3. Individually list all of the letters on paper and rank each idea with "1" being the first choice, "2" being the second choice, etc.
4. Take turns calling out the ranking of ideas while the recorder enters the rankings in a column for each team member.
5. Add the rankings across the columns to get a total for each letter.
6. Analyze the results, looking at the total for each idea, as well as the degree of agreement among members. Discuss the ideas that have a wide range in their ranking.

Structure discussion is used when the list is down to five or fewer items. The steps to structured discussion are important. They keep the discussion orderly and focused on the agreed-to criteria for decision-making that have been previously defined.

Structured Discussion

PURPOSE

A method to build consensus in a group on a list of **five or fewer** ideas.

STEPS

1. Agree on the criteria for the decision.
2. Take turns expressing points of view without interactive discussion or debate.
3. Summarize points of agreement.
4. Debate and discuss conflicting ideas with the criteria as the reference point until a decision is reached.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE TEAM CHARTER

MEAL DELIVERY
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM

TEAM LEADER:	Mary Jones
TEAM MEMBERS:	Sally Hinkler, Joyce Collins, Jim Jefferson, Sandy Link, Mary Myers
TEAM FACILITATOR:	Cynthia Silken
MISSION:	Improve the resident satisfaction with the time it takes to deliver the evening meal.
REASON SELECTED:	We have received a number of complaints that it is taking too long for residents to receive their evening meal when they come to the dining room. Two residents say they have had to wait for more than 30 minutes. Four family members have also complained. A recent study over two weeks has verified that the total time to deliver the meal is not acceptable.
RESOURCES/BOUNDRIES:	For cost containment reasons, we need for the team to improve the delivery time without adding to the staffing hours. We will consider reasonable, cost-effective proposals for new equipment that can be justified as critical for improvement. Operating efficiency of the staff and the opportunity to improve customer satisfaction should drive the analysis. November 15 is the target date for completing the mission. A team facilitator will provide training and help improve the team meeting process.
MEASUREMENTS:	The primary measurement of improvement is the satisfaction of the residents. The dietary department does not presently have a way to routinely measure timeliness of meal delivery. The quality improvement team should identify a reliable and systematic measurement process that can be used as a quality indicator.
REPORTS:	The team should provide a copy of meeting records to the Quality Coordinator so she can advise the Quality Council of your progress.
DATE CHARTERED:	August 15, 2009

APPENDIX B: TEAM GROUND RULES TEMPLATE

Team Name: ____

Date Adopted: ________________________

The following ground rules are an important part of our team. We will use them to guide our behavior and optimize the contribution of each team member to achieve our mission.

Meeting Attendance and Promptness:

- ________ of the _________ team members should intend to be present in order for the team leader to schedule a meeting. _______ of _________ team members must be able to attend to proceed with the meeting.
- Everyone should be at the meeting site and prepared to begin the meeting at the scheduled start time.
- The team leader should start the meeting on time at the beginning and after all breaks.

Team Roles and Responsibilities:

- The **team leader** coordinates the work of the team as it achieves its mission. Through the use of ground rules, the leader is responsible to see that all members have equal standing on the team and equal opportunity for participation. The leader is responsible for preparing the agenda, arranging for equipment and supplies, preparing the final record of each meeting, and recognizing when the team may need assistance from the facilitator (instructor).
- The **team facilitator** is a team advisor who has expertise in the team meeting process and tools, and how teams can work effectively together. When engaged, the facilitator stays focused on how the team works rather than participating in the actual work of the team.
- The **timekeeper** is a rotated meeting role assigned to help the team manage time. The timekeeper calls out the time remaining on each agenda item at intervals determined by the team. It is the team's responsibility to manage time, and the timekeeper simply assists the team in this process. The timekeeper always remains an active participant.
- The **recorder** is a rotated meeting role assigned to help the team maintain a visible record of its work during each meeting. When appropriate to the process, the recorder logs significant content on a flip chart in front of the team. When an idea generating, consensus building, or decision making process is moving rapidly, two recorders may be used. Although word abbreviations are appropriate, the recorder should write down exactly what the team member says when recording their ideas and concerns. The recorder always remains an active participant in the team's work.

Selection of Timekeeper and Recorder:

- The team leader will (1) seek volunteers or (2) appoint team members **(choose either 1 or 2)** at each meeting to serve as timekeeper and recorder. The same person should not serve the same role for two meetings in a row.

Time Management Process:

- The timekeeper shall call out the time ___ minutes before the agenda item is scheduled to end, half way through the agenda item, and when the time is up.
- If any member of the team does not feel that the agenda item is completed when time expires, the team may choose to extend the time for the agenda item by: (a) borrowing time from another agenda item, or (b) extending the meeting time.
- A decision to extend the time for an agenda item, by whatever means, requires agreement by the majority present.
- Any team member may say "__________)" **(select a word)** at any time during the meeting that they feel that the discussion is not relevant, or that the meeting has become bogged down by debating the best way to word something, excessive attention to detail, or other time consuming problems. The team leader will ask the team member why they said the key word. After a brief explanation, the team leader will ask the team to indicate if they agree. If the majority agrees, the team leader will move on to the next point. A vote to support moving on simply means that the point being discussed may not be adding a lot of value to the team goals at this time. It does not mean that the point is not valid or should not be reviewed again at a more appropriate time.

Meeting Participation and Outside Assignments:

- Team members are chosen because they have the ability to contribute to the mission of the team. Team members share responsibility for the work of the team, both in meetings and outside of meetings.
- All team members are responsible for encouraging a team member who is reluctant to participate because of shyness or fear that their contribution will not be valued. One method is to directly ask the team member about their experience or ideas.
- All team members are responsible for reinforcing each group members' rights to discuss, explore, and give opinions. They are also responsible for giving an honest critique when one person tends to dominate group discussions. Team members should ask for information and facts from a person who confidently expresses personal beliefs and assumptions without supporting information.
- Rather than just decline, team members are responsible for advising the team of any reasons why they do not wish to participate in a team meeting process. To the extent possible, the team will then work to remove any participation barriers that are identified.
- Team members are responsible for advising the team leader of the reasons why they are not able to participate in a between-meeting assignment, or why they will not be able to complete a between-meeting assignment within the time frame agreed to by the team. The team leader will try to help resolve the problem or will reassign the task.
- The team leader and/or facilitator may privately counsel a team member who seems uncooperative to determine if a team conflict exists that can be resolved.

Interruptions:

- Team members agree that the following items are the only reasonable causes for them to leave a meeting to make or receive phone calls or messages:
  - ◊ Personal emergencies (perceived or real crisis that requires his or her involvement).
  - ◊ ____.
  - ◊ ____.

Decision Making:

- The preferred method of decision making is team consensus based on valid information and carefully defined criteria developed by the team as the basis to evaluate ideas. Consensus can be derived from methods such as multiple voting, rank ordering, or structured discussion.

- When consensus is not reached, the team should carefully explore the validity of the information, the clarity of the evaluation criteria, the need for operational definitions, and the reasons for differences among the team.

Basic Communication Courtesies:

- Listen carefully to each team member's contribution. Avoid thinking about how to express your own response or concerns while someone else is sharing.
- At the appropriate time, ask for clarification when you do not understand another team member's point or terminology.
- Be patient. Do not interrupt other members of the team.
- Do not react to a team member's suggestions or concerns in a way that may be perceived as judgmental.
- Avoid whispering and "side-bar" discussions between team members during a meeting.
- Team members should not have private discussions in which they evaluate the team's performance or an individual's contribution to the team.
- Except when assigned as a between-meeting project, team members should not engage in private discussions about aspects of the team's work. Such discussions should be limited to when everyone is present so that all participants can contribute to solutions.

Fun, Humor, and Celebration:

- Staying relaxed and enthusiastic about the team's work is important. Sometimes meetings can become intense. Good, clean humor is appropriate. Humor and fun should never result in a team member being offended or feeling "put down."
- The team should periodically take time to look back at their accomplishments. This is especially important as progress briefings are provided to the facilitator and positive feedback is received. The team leader and facilitator should take opportunities during each meeting and between meetings to give positive reinforcement to the process and work of the team.

Conflict Management:

- Conflicts within a team usually begin when one of the team members begins to perceive that another has, or is about to, ignore or resist one of his/her concerns. Once conflict has developed, it usually creates behaviors that affect all of the team members.
- Conflict often can be prevented when each person adheres to the ground rules established by the team to guide how the team will work together. When guidelines are broken (usually inadvertently), it is important that all members of the team intervene to address the issue. This helps all of the team to clarify and understand the importance of working within the group's norms.
- A team cannot function effectively with unresolved conflict. If disruptive to the function of the team, the conflict may best be resolved by participation of all of the team members. When appropriate, the

facilitator should be advised. The team leader and/or facilitator may choose to handle conflict in a special meeting with team members who seem most incompatible.

- Sometimes, the conflict may arise between a team member and the team leader. In these cases, the facilitator should be advised and asked to help resolve the conflict.

- The basic steps to resolve team conflict are:

  1. Each person should explain the situation as they see it, presenting their own perceptions of the situation. Specific facts and feelings should be expressed.
  2. Describe how it is affecting team performance. Focus on the teamwork issues and avoid personality discussions.
  3. Ask for the other person's opinions and thoughts, agreeing to listen carefully and respect the opinions given.
  4. Summarize and gain agreement on the problem. Once agreement is reached it is much easier to focus on solutions.
  5. Explore and discuss possible solutions. In order to ensure ownership in a solution, all participants should be involved in developing solutions.
  6. Agree on what each person will do to solve the problem. Each individual must accept his or her responsibility for making the solution work.
  7. Agree to follow-up to make sure that the conflict is resolved and not just controlled.