

Assessment Tool for a Problem-Solving (Proposal) A3

Directions

Items Assessed by Direct Review of the Proposal A3

Items numbered 1 – 23 can be assessed without knowing the actual situation. Most items reflect descriptive content suggested in the accompanying A3 template.

Rating these items. For each item, review the A3 and assess the item using one of the four rating options. *Include information in adjacent sections when assessing items – information on the left side or on the right side may be in a different order/location on a specific A3.* Record the “points” (0 to 3) associated with the rating option to the right under “Item Rating.”

Overall mean rating for these items. At the end, add the item “points” to calculate the overall total rating “points.” Calculate the overall mean item rating by dividing the total rating points by 23, the total number of items. *(If completed on a computer, calculations are performed automatically – see below.)*

Items That Require Knowledge of the Actual Situation

Unnumbered items (noted with “➤”) address how well an A3 reflects the actual situation. Only individuals who are somewhat familiar with the specific context (beyond description in the A3) can assess these ten items. When these items can be rated, they assess the A3’s accuracy in representing the actual situation.

Rating these items. For each item, review the A3 and:

- If you have adequate knowledge of the actual situation, assess the item using one of the four rating options.
- If you are not familiar (or not adequately familiar) with the current situation, indicate “Cannot assess.”

These items are not included in aggregated mean ratings because not all raters will be familiar with the problem.

Providing Feedback

Provide feedback to A3 authors using the item ratings, comment box for each section, and overall ratings. For “Problem Solving” A3s in development, feedback provides important formative assessments. For finished A3s, feedback explains summative/final assessments.

Functions When Completing on a Computer

The assessment tool is a PDF fillable form that performs two functions when completed on a computer.

“Hover” for rating explanations. “Hover” your pointer over a rating option and a more detailed explanation will appear. *(Not functioning on this “Descriptions” form because the detailed explanation is presented below the item.)*

Entering ratings and calculating scores. Use the dropdown menu for each answer box to enter the score. For the numbered items, the total and the mean for the 23 numbered items will be calculated and appear at the end. *(If numbered items are not answered, they are scored as zero in calculating the total and mean scores.)*

Assessment Tool for a Problem-Solving (Proposal) A3

A3 Title: _____

Author: _____ Reviewer: _____ Date: _____

Items (based on A3 Template) and Rating Scale

Rating

Background *Why is the problem important?*1. **Negative consequences** (e.g., harm, frustration, waste): how specific is the clearest statement of a negative consequence of the problem?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. General (eg, "harm," "difficulties," "waste") 3. Specific type of consequence

0. Not Addressed – No negative consequences are mentioned.

1. Unclear – Statements are unclear or vague regarding whether the problem results in meaningful negative consequences or the problem is not differentiated from its negative consequences.

2. General (eg, "harm," "difficulties," "waste") – Statements are made about negative consequences occurring, but the type of consequences are stated only in general terms.

3. Specific types of consequences – at least one specific type of negative consequence is specifically stated (eg, increased patient length of stay, increased cost in providing care, increased staff frustration).

2. **Individuals/groups** impacted by the negative consequences (e.g., harm, frustration, waste): how specific is the clearest statement identifying an impacted individual, group/unit, or organization?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. General (eg, "staff," or "patients," but not which) 3. Specific individual, group, or organizational unit

0. Not Addressed – No identification of individuals or other entities impacted by negative consequences of the performance problem.

1. Unclear – Individuals or other entities impacted by negative consequences of the performance problem (e.g., patients, clinical personnel, or institution) are implied, but not specifically stated.

2. General (eg, "staff," or "patients," but not which) – Individuals or other entities impacted by negative consequences of the performance problem are stated broadly (e.g., "patients") without clarifying the specific type or group of individuals/entities (e.g., not clarifying patients with a specific medical condition).

3. Specified individual, group, or organizational unit – at least one set of individuals or other entity impacted by the negative consequences of the performance problem is clearly stated.

3. **Severity of the negative consequences** (e.g., harm, frustration, waste): how specific is the clearest statement of the severity (e.g., extent/amount) of at least one negative consequence?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. General (eg, significant harm) 3. Specific extent/amount

0. Not Addressed – the negative consequences of the performance problem are not addressed.

1. Unclear – statement that performance problems cause negative consequences (e.g., "causes problems for patients"), but no indication of their severity or extent of impact the consequences.

2. General (e.g., significant harm) – statement of the general severity of negative consequences (e.g., poor clinical outcomes, dissatisfaction) without indicating the degree of severity or extent of harm.

3. Specified extent/amount – for at least one negative consequence, a specific severity or degree of impact is indicated (e.g., % mortality, type of morbidity, length of prolonged hospitalization, level of staff dissatisfaction, amount of healthcare costs).

4. **Frequency of the negative consequences** (e.g., harm, frustration, waste): how specific is clearest statement of the frequency (# events/unit of time) of at least one negative consequence?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. General (eg, rare, often) 3. Specific frequency (eg, events per unit of time)

0. Not Addressed – the negative consequences of the performance problem are not addressed.

Description of Rating Options

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1. Unclear – statement that performance problems cause negative consequences (e.g., “causes problems for patients”), but no indication of the general frequency of the negative consequences.
2. General (e.g., rare, often) – statement of the general frequency of negative consequences (e.g., occasionally, frequently), with the no specific frequency indicated.
3. Specified (events per unit of time) – for at least one negative consequence, a specific frequency is indicated (e.g., patients affected per month, % of staff reporting extremely dissatisfaction last month, dollars wasted per year).

Note: This item is about the frequency of negative consequences. The frequency of negative consequences resulting from a performance problem may be confused with the frequency of a performance problem. Some performance problems may seldom result in negative consequences, so the frequency of negative consequences may be much lower than the frequency of the performance problem. However, if each instance of a performance problem results in negative consequences, the frequency of performance problems also reflects the frequency of negative consequences.

- Extent to which important negative consequences (e.g., harm, frustration, waste) are identified?
- | | | | | |
|------|------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| None | Inadequate | Adequate | Thorough | Cannot assess |
|------|------------|----------|----------|---------------|

Background – reviewer comments:

Current Situation *What is actually happening?*

5. Current level of performance

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 0. Not addressed | 1. General words, but no data | 2. Some data | 3. Thorough and robust data |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|

0. Not addressed – No information or data reflecting the current level of performance.
1. General words, but no data – Performance is stated only in general terms (e.g., “poor”).
2. Some data – General quantitative statements are made about performance (e.g., less than half of the time) or data may be questionable (e.g., based on a very small number of patients).
3. Thorough and robust data – Data are presented that directly represent the level/frequency of the performance problem (e.g., % of cases with recommended action not performed) and appear to be reliable.

6. How is work done (process/workflow)?

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| 0. Not addressed | 1. Addressed, but unclear | 2. Illustration/ description somewhat clear | 3. Illustration/ description very clear |
|------------------|---------------------------|---|---|

0. Not addressed – No information about how the work is done.
1. Addressed, but unclear – Presents information about a sequence of activities, but omits information about some steps or about who is involved.
2. Illustration/description somewhat clear – A process map or other description that includes most key process steps and usually indicates who performs them.
3. Illustration/description very clear – A process map or other description that details the key process from beginning to end and who is involved in each step.

7. Clear identification of who is involved in performing the work?

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 0. Not addressed | 1. Unclear | 2. Somewhat clear | 3. Very clear |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|

0. Not addressed – No visual or written statement on the A3 indicates who is involved in performing the work.
1. Unclear – General statements are made about the people involved in the work, but who was doing what work is not indicated.
2. Somewhat clear – Some of the individuals involved in performing some parts of the work are identified, but who does some of the work is not identified.
3. Very clear – Individuals involved in performing each step of the work are identified.

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8. Performance problem/gap?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. Partially specified 3. Clearly specified/quantified

0. Not addressed – A performance problem and gap are not stated.
1. Unclear – A performance problem and gap are stated in vague or unclear language.
2. Partially specified – A performance problem/gap is stated with some general information (e.g., “less than half”).
3. Clearly specified/quantified – a performance problem is stated with quantified gap.

➤ **Extent to which the A3 author demonstrates direct observation of the work process?**

Not observed A little Some All Cannot assess

➤ **Extent of demonstration of learning from the people involved in the process?**

None A little Some All Cannot assess

Current Situation – reviewer comments:

Goal *What target condition or specific performance is desired? By when?*

9. How specific is the goal?

0. Not addressed 1. Vague 2. Somewhat specific 3. Very specific

0. Not addressed – No statement is made about a goal.
1. Vague – A very general goal is stated (e.g., improve the performance).
2. Somewhat specific – A statement is made about the amount of improvement is made (e.g., improve by X percentage points) without specifying the baseline level of performance or the target level of performance.
3. Very specific – A statement is made that identifies both the baseline level of performance and the target level of performance.

10. Is the goal measurable?

0. Not addressed 1. Not measurable 2. May be measurable 3. Clearly measurable

0. Not addressed – No goal is stated regarding an aspect of performance to measure.
1. Likely not measurable – Performance related to the goal has not been measured (i.e., no baseline data) and for which performance is not likely to be measured easily (at least based on information in the A3).
2. May be measurable – Performance related to the goal has not been measured (i.e., no baseline data), but may be measurable from routinely available data (e.g., in an electronic health record, recording observable activities, surveys of patients or care providers).
3. Clearly measurable – Either performance related to the goal has been measured (e.g., in baseline data). obviously measurable, or measurement is described in the Action Plan.

➤ **How achievable is the goal?**

Not achievable Unlikely Possibly Probably Cannot assess

11. How relevant is the goal to addressing the problem?

0. Not addressed 1. Not relevant 2. Somewhat relevant 3. Very relevant

0. Not addressed – No goal is stated.
1. Not relevant – The stated goal is not relevant to the stated problem/performance gap.
2. Somewhat relevant – The stated goal is only generally related to the stated problem/performance gap.
3. Very relevant – The stated goal directly addresses the stated problem/performance gap.

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12. How time-bound (clear timeframe for accomplishment) is the goal?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. Somewhat clear (eg, relative timeframe) 3. Very clear (eg, date specified)

0. Not addressed – No timeframe is stated for accomplishing the goal.
1. Unclear – A general timeframe is stated (e.g., over the next year) for which no beginning and ending points are indicated.
2. Somewhat clear (e.g., relative timeframe) – A general timeframe is provided (e.g., over the next year) for which the beginning date is indicated.
3. Very clear (e.g., date specified) – A date is stated by which the goal is to be achieved.

Goal – reviewer comments:

Analysis *What is contributing to the problem? What are its root causes?*

13. Is the display of method(s) for analyzing root causes easy to understand? (E.g., fishbone diagram, “5-whys”/root cause tree diagram, Pareto chart)

0. Not displayed 1. Not understandable 2. Partially understandable 3. Easy to understand

0. Not displayed – No method(s) for analyzing root causes are visually displayed.
1. Not understandable – Methods for analyzing root causes are visually displayed, but the content and logic are not understandable (e.g., unclear, confusing).
2. Partially understandable – Methods for analyzing root causes are visually displayed, but the content and logic can only be partially understood.
3. Easy to understand – Methods for analyzing root causes are visually displayed with content and logic that are easy to understand.

14. How clear are the identified root causes?

0. Not addressed 1. Unclear 2. Somewhat clear 3. Very clear

0. Not addressed – No information is presented about root causes.
1. Unclear – While information about causes is presented, no causes are identified as root causes.
2. Somewhat clear – Some root causes are identified, but their meaning is not clear.
3. Very clear – For all identified root causes, the meaning is clear.

➤ Extent to which important root causes are identified?

- None Inadequate Adequate Thorough Cannot assess

Analysis – reviewer comments:

Countermeasures *What options/alternatives were considered? What countermeasures/strategies are proposed?*

15. How many options for countermeasures were considered?

0. None 1. One 2. Two 3. Three or more

0. None – No countermeasures are presented.
1. One – One countermeasure is presented.
2. Two – Two countermeasures are presented.

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3. Three or more – Three or more countermeasures are presented.

Note: This item emphasizes considering options for more than one or two countermeasures. In the two supplementary items at the end of the Countermeasures section, someone familiar with the local circumstances can indicate whether the proposed countermeasures (however many) are feasible and are likely to achieve the goal.

16. Identify the strongest countermeasure considered. How strong is it?

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| 0. No counter-measures | 1. Weak (e.g., policy change, education and training) | 2. Intermediate (e.g., standard work/roles, just-in-time reminders, or visual/cognitive aids) | 3. Strong (e.g., “forcing function” that ensures work done right way) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|

0. No countermeasures – No countermeasures are presented.

1. Weak (e.g., policy change, education and training) – None of the countermeasures is “stronger” than policy change, education, or training.
2. Intermediate (e.g., standard work/roles, just-in-time reminders, or visual/cognitive aids) – None of the countermeasures is “stronger” than standard work/roles, just-in-time reminders, or visual/cognitive aids.
3. Strong (e.g., “forcing function” that ensures work is done the right way) – at least one of the countermeasures makes it impossible to do a task incorrectly.

Note: Although strong countermeasures are not always feasible, combining two or more weak or intermediate countermeasures may be sufficient. In the supplementary item at the end of the Countermeasures section, someone familiar with the local circumstances can indicate whether the proposed countermeasures are likely to achieve the goal.

17. How many of the proposed countermeasures are linked to identified root causes? (Review each countermeasure and see if it addresses a root cause identified in the Analysis Section.)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 0. None linked to causes | 1. Minority linked to causes | 2. Majority linked to causes | 3. All linked to causes |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|

0. No linkage – No countermeasures are linked to (address) root causes.

1. Minority linked to causes – A minority (i.e., less than half) of the countermeasures are linked to root causes.
2. Majority linked to causes – The majority (i.e., more than half), but not all of the countermeasures are linked to root causes.
3. All linked to causes – All of the countermeasures are linked to root causes.

➤ To what extent are countermeasures feasible to carry out?

- | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Not feasible | Unlikely | Possibly | Highly likely | Cannot assess |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|---------------|

➤ How likely will countermeasures result in achieving the goal?

- | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Not possible | Unlikely | Possibly | Highly likely | Cannot assess |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|---------------|

Countermeasures – reviewer comments:

Action Plan *To pilot & implement the selected countermeasures: what, who, when?*

18. For the action plan on the A3, how clearly are activities described (i.e. “what” is to be done)?

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 0. Not addressed | 1. Unclear | 2. Somewhat clear | 3. Very clear |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|

0. Not addressed – No activities to be performed are listed.

1. Unclear – All statements about activities to be performed (“what” is to be done) are vague with no indication of the operational action to be taken.
2. Somewhat clear – Some statements about activities to be performed (“what” is to be done) are clear, but others are vague.

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3. Very clear – All statements about activities to be performed (“what” is to be done) are clear.

Note: Whether each countermeasure in the previous section is linked to an action in this section is part of item 23 concerning logic flow from one section to the next.

19. Are individuals identified to be responsible for each action item to be carried out (i.e. “who”)?

0. Not addressed 1. For the minority 2. For the majority 3. For all

0. Not addressed – No individuals are identified to carry out any of the activities (or if no action plan is listed).

1. For the minority – Individuals are identified to carry out actions for only a minority of activities.

2. For the majority– Individuals are identified to carry out actions for the majority of activities.

3. For all – Individuals are identified to carry out actions for all of the activities.

20. Are estimated completion dates identified for each action item (i.e. “when”)?

0. Not addressed 1. For the minority 2. For the majority 3. For all

0. Not addressed – No estimated completion dates are identified to carry out any of the activities (or if no action plan is provided).

1. For the minority – Estimated completion dates are identified to carry out actions for only a minority of activities.

2. For the majority– Estimated completion dates are identified to carry out actions for the majority of activities.

3. For all – Estimated completion dates are identified to carry out actions for all of the activities.

Note: Estimated completion dates should be stated for an activity. Specific dates (e.g., April 30, 2020) are clearest, although the month may be adequate with the end of the month understood as the completion date. More vague statements (e.g., by spring, by next year) are generally unacceptable because they are not practically useful for knowing when to see if work has been performed.

21. How clear is the plan for monitoring the implementation of actions in 18-20 above (what will be monitored, by whom, when)?

0. Not addressed 1. Plan unclear (no or minority of actions monitored – what, who, when) 2. Plan partially clear (majority of actions monitored – what, who, when) 3. Plan clear (all actions monitored – what, who, when)

0. Not addressed – No monitoring plan is noted for checking on whether the action plan is carried out.

1. Unclear – For none of the action plan activities or for only a minority (less than half) of action plan activities it is clear “what will be monitored by whom, when.”

2. Partially clear – For the majority of action plan activities it is clear “what will be monitored, by whom, when.”

3. Clear – For all of the action plan activities it is clear “what will be monitored, by whom, when.”

➤ How adequate is the action plan?

Not adequate Possibly Probably Very likely Cannot assess

Action plan – reviewer comments:

Follow-up Plans Checking whether desired goal(s) was achieved?

22. Is follow-up planned to measure achievement of the desired goal(s) (what will be measured, by whom, when)?

0. Not addressed 1. Plan unclear (no more than one of “what, who, when”) 2. Plan partially clear (two of “what, who, when”) 3. Plan clear “(what, who, when)”

0. Not addressed – No follow-up plan is noted for measuring on achievement of desired goal(s).

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1. Unclear – Measuring achievement of desired goal(s) includes no more than one element of “what is to be measured by whom and when.”
2. Partially clear – Measuring achievement of desired goal(s) includes two of the three elements of “what is to be measured by whom and when.”
3. Clear – Measuring achievement of desired goal(s) includes all three elements of “what is to be measured by whom and when.”

Across A3 Sections

23. How clearly does the title identify the problem to be addressed?

0. No title 1. Unclear 2. Somewhat clear 3. Very clear

0. No title – No title is listed.
1. Unclear – The title is completely unclear in indicating the problem is that the A3 is to address.
2. Somewhat clear – The title indicates that something needs to be improved in a general area, but does not indicate the performance problem.
3. Very clear – The title indicates the specific performance problem being addressed.

➤ How often does the logic flow clearly from one section of the A3 to the next section?

Not at all Occasionally Majority Always Cannot assess

➤ In general, how informative are the visual illustrations?

None used or not Not very Somewhat Very Cannot assess
informative informative informative informative

Across A3 Sections – reviewer comments:

OVERALL RATING (items 1 – 23)

Total points (max = 69)

Mean (divide total by 23 items)

Note: check that all 23 numbered items have been answered. Missing answers are coded “0”.