



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

IMPROVEMENT GLOBAL AIM

Chapter Purpose

Aim. To create a global aim statement to focus the improvement work based on the theme the lead improvement team selected.

Objectives. At the completion of this unit, you will be able to

- Define a global aim.
- Identify the importance of the relationship between the global aim, the

improvement process flow, and theme selection.

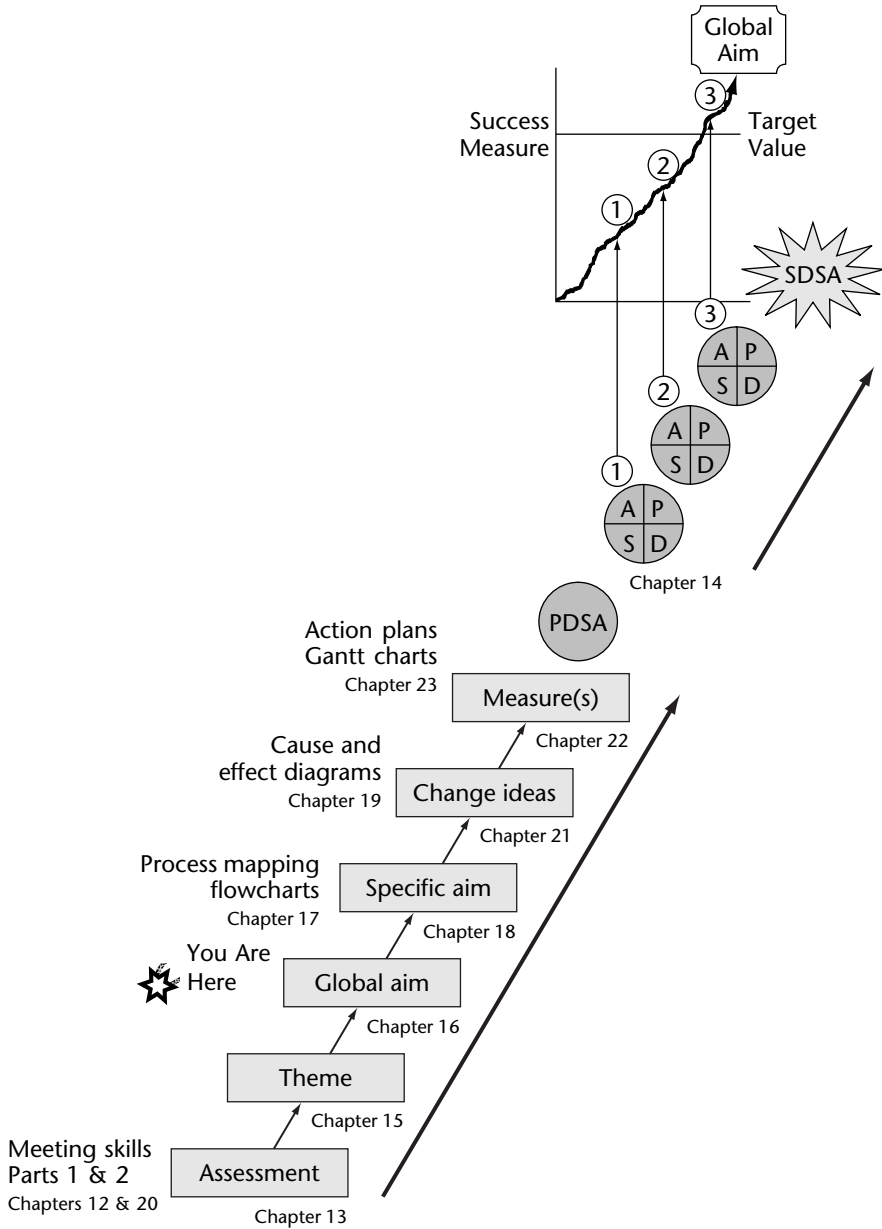
- Describe how to manage new ideas and topics within the context of writing a global aim.
- Write a global aim statement using a template.

After assessing your microsystem and selecting a theme, it is useful to write out a global aim. As this chapter explains, the global aim helps you become more detailed and specific about what you intend to improve (see Figure 16.1).

What Is a Global Aim?

A *global aim* is a statement about your improvement theme. It clarifies, bounds, and connects the improvement theme to your daily work processes. It points to an essential, theme-related process that is critical to patients and staff.

FIGURE 16.1. IMPROVEMENT RAMP: GLOBAL AIM.



Why Use a Global Aim?

The global aim puts your theme into context and is a great place from which to start your improvement work. The global aim states clearly what you intend to improve and may also state numerical goals and dates that will define improvement achievement.

It is often helpful to create *stretch goals* to strive for when setting out to make an improvement. Setting goals that are very easy to attain may not result in substantial improvement. Achievable stretch goals provide a high-bar aim to strive for. The scientific literature can sometimes help you identify a level of performance achieved by others that may be seen as a stretch target in your microsystem.

The global aim also helps you to operationalize and focus the improvement theme. It is easy to get excited and start tangential conversations when working on improvement. When topics not related to the global aim come up in conversations about improvement, it is often a good idea to write them down in a *parking lot* list that can be used to identify possible improvement efforts in the future. The global aim statement can keep you focused on the current theme.

How Do You Write a Global Aim?

The template in Figure 16.2 helps lead improvement team members write a clear global aim statement that is detailed and specific.

As you use this template, notice the increasing clarity of focus. The name of the process to be improved and the clinical location of that process are clearly identified, along with the points where the process begins and ends. This is an important step because health care staff are often not in the habit of identifying work processes, and many health care processes can be long and detailed. Identifying where you want to focus limits the general scope of the effort. For example, a microsystem might work to improve the access process beginning with the patient's entry into the clinical practice for a medical visit and ending after the physician sees the patient. This is taking a somewhat smaller "bite" of the "elephant" than the team would if it looked at a larger process that starts before the visit and extends until some time after the patient exits the clinic.

What Are the Next Steps?

Once the statement of the global aim for improvement is written and you have checked that it aligns with the selected improvement theme, you and your team should create a high-level flowchart of the process you wish to improve. Be

FIGURE 16.2. TEMPLATE FOR WRITING A GLOBAL AIM STATEMENT.

Theme for Improvement _____

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Global Aim Statement

Create your aim statement that will help keep your focus clear and your work productive.

We aim to improve _____
(Name the process)

in _____
(Clinical location in which process is embedded)

The process begins with _____
(Name where the process begins)

The process ends with _____
(Name the ending point of the process)

By working on the process, we expect _____
(List benefits)

It is important to work on this now because _____
(List imperatives)

prepared to revisit, adjust, and fine-tune the statement of global aim after the flowchart has helped you and your microsystem members “see” the work more clearly. For example, you may decide to change the start point or end point, or you may modify the process stated in your theme, based on additional information and understanding.

Case Studies

Intermediate Cardiac Care Unit (ICCU)

Having selected the theme of communication, the ICCU lead improvement team used the template in Figure 16.2 to develop a global aim statement. It states:

We aim to improve the *process of communication* in the ICCU. The *process begins* with the initial notification of the need for patient admission. The *process ends* with the appropriate discharge disposition of the patient.

By working on this process we expect (1) improved patient care and efficiency, (2) improved flow of consistent information between patients, providers, and families, (3) improved communication along the health care continuum, (4) a reduction in readmissions, and (5) a reduction in stress. *It is important to work on this now because* we have identified the need to improve (1) satisfaction of patients, families, and care professionals, (2) prevention of near misses and errors, and (3) preparation to care for patients.

Plastic Surgery Section

The global aim statement for the access theme identified by the lead improvement team of the Plastic Surgery Section reads as follows:

We aim to *improve the patient appointment access process* to plastic surgery. The *process begins* with the patient phone call for an appointment. The *process ends* with the initial evaluation of the patient in the clinic. *By working on this process we expect* (1) improved patient satisfaction with appointment scheduling, (2) decreased appointment backlog (currently 99 days until appt.), (3) improved staff satisfaction, with a decrease in workplace toxicity, and (4) increased productivity. *It is important to work on this now because* we have identified the need to improve (1) patient satisfaction, (2) staff satisfaction, (3) scheduling variations, (4) productivity.

Review Questions

1. Where does the global aim fit in the overall improvement process?
2. How does the selected theme inform the global aim?
3. What should you do when new topics and themes not related to the global aim arise out of conversations about improvement?
4. What does the global aim template ask you to do?

Between Sessions Work

1. Write a global aim for improvement based on your theme selection.
2. Share all global aim progress and drafts with all members of the microsystem.