

Overview Process Flow Outline

The Process Flow Outline tool was created by the Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor. It is used to document a process flow for a program, allowing for a visualization of the processes in place, points of contact between the program and its clients as well as the generic and specific interventions employed to foster client change.

The tool is used at the start of the service, in the planning phase, and also as a later follow up to the service. It is used internally to facilitate program design and evaluation.

Some considerations about using this tool:

It should be recognized that a program can be comprised of any varying number of interventions, and therefore evaluation of processes for a given program will be significantly different than that of a single intervention. Whether developing a new program or assessing an existing one, it is a useful exercise to document a process flow, allowing for a visualization of the processes in place, points of contact between the program and its clients as well as the generic and specific interventions employed to foster client change.

In this example we are documenting the process of the Volunteer Internship Program as it relates to students that have been admitted to the program. That being said, we would use the same format to create a separate document outlining the process as it relates to the student recruitment process and yet another to capture the program as it relates to the employers we work with.

We divided the program into multiple overall phases (Orientation, Job Posting, Placement and Reflection & PD) and then for each one we looked at three categories;

- What the student is doing
- What VIP staff is doing *onstage* (direct interaction with student)
- What VIP staff is doing *backstage* (not visible to the student)

Whether planning a new program, or implementing or evaluating an existing one, a process flow document can be a useful tool. Some potential uses of this tool are outlined below:

- With a clear overall picture of the process flow of the program, the decision on which generic interventions, specific interventions, and quality of service factors to assess in more detail is easier to make. For example, this type of document will prove useful when we redesign our satisfaction survey to assess quality of service.
- It becomes easier to determine how and when necessary data and input from the clients can be collected for use in tracking and assessment of outcomes. For example, when we set learning outcomes and overhauled our VIP program back in 2006, we documented our existing process flow and adjusted it accordingly as we began to operationalize the changes to the program. Understanding the process flow really helped us to determine at which points of contact we would implement interventions, collect data, and ask specific questions of our students in order to gather the data necessary to evaluate the achievement of the set learning outcomes.
- When gathering required data required to assess program outcomes, this tool can assist with determining at which point in the program certain pieces of data can be collected. For example, a review of all onstage items outlined on the process flow could support the decision of whether collection of new data should be incorporated into any of the existing points of contact or if it would make more sense to create a new point of contact to address the need.
- Clear understanding of the process is important when determining what materials are needed to deliver a program and furthermore, which resources are needed to gather those materials. For example, this can be especially useful during the planning stage when trying to determine the required inputs or establish timelines.
- After a program cycle, a process flow document can be used to evaluate program adherence and determine whether or not the program was delivered as intended. It can also help determine where there may be inefficiencies that can be improved upon.

While it may look complicated to create, anyone can create this same format in MS Word by inserting a *SmartArt* graphic. For this one, we chose the *Chevron List* graphic from the *Process* category of graphics.