Data Collection Plan How-to Guide

Use this How-to Guide to complete a Data Collection Plan.

Purpose

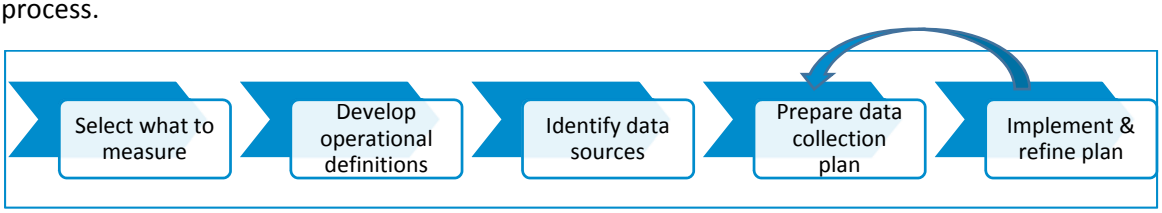
A data collection plan helps to ensure that data collected during an analysis or improvement project is useful and appropriately collected.

When to Use a Data Collection Plan

The data collection plan is typically used during the current state analysis portion of a process analysis or improvement project. It should be completed prior to collecting and analyzing process performance data. It may also be useful at the completion of a project when establishing new metrics and the procedures required for evaluating those metrics.

How to Use a Data Collection Plan

Proper data collection should involve a systematic approach to identify the data to be collected, plan how the data will be collected, collect the data and revise when needed. The following is an illustration of a common approach to data collection, including how the data collection plan is incorporated into the process.



1. **Select what to measure:** In selecting what to measure, focus on the key questions you are trying to answer or the key issues you're trying to resolve. What are the established measures of performance for the process? How do you know if the process is successful? Do you have any service level agreements (SLA's) for the process, and if so, how are those evaluated? Ideally, all metrics identified on the project charter would be included in this plan, as would any supporting metrics for those identified.

2. **Develop operational definitions:** Develop a common definition for the metric to be evaluated, being specific about items to be measured and any conditions that need to be applied to the plan. The definition must be agreed upon by everyone involved in the collection of the data and should be tested prior to the implementation of the plan.

3. **Identify data sources:** Identify the data sources that will be used for the collection of the data or that contain historical performance data. Historical performance data could provide the most insight, if the process has been stable and the operational definitions fit what is stored. Collecting new data can be more accurate for the current state, but requires significant time and possibly causes disruptions to current processing. Make note of where the data will be sourced

and if collecting new data, how it will be collected and by whom. If needed, create a Data Collection Form to assist in the collection of data.

4. **Prepare data collection plan:** Document the plan for collecting the data identified using a Data Collection Plan. Identify the following information for each metric: name, operational definition, data source, collection method, and owner.

5. **Implement & refine plan:** Execute the plan. Ideally start with a small pilot test of the plan and then review and revise as needed.

Tips

- Set realistic measurement priorities – target feasible measurements where the knowledge gained will be most helpful.
- Evolve your measurements over time – evaluate your plans regularly and learn from the data you collect and tweak your plan accordingly. Don't be afraid to stop measuring data that does not prove useful.

References

George, M. L., Rowlands, D., Price, M., & Maxey, J. (2005). *The Lean Six Sigma Pocket Toolbook.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

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