

---

# How do I know if my action plan is working?

Outcomes measures are important and the target of many strategies. But they are not always useful in understanding the journey; they are not helpful in identifying challenges along the way. Put simply, if your outcomes measures don't move after an action plan has been put in place, what is the cause? Is it because it is targeting the wrong issue? Is it because it is not being implemented effectively? Is it because it is being implemented inconsistently? At some point, you are going to want to evaluate the success of the plan and you will want this decision to be evidence-based. Process measures indicate whether the unit is complying with the action plan and are more immediate and directly tied to behaviors. Depending on the need, these process measures can be either objective or subjective.

## Objective Process Measures – “Did the process occur?”

Objective measures simply involve things like measuring whether an event did or did not occur; they tend to be accessible. Often, these measures are already being captured (e.g., time waiting to be seen, being seen within 15 minutes of appointment), or require little creativity (e.g., counting IV trees in the hallway, measuring how often the greeter was able to escort the patient to the right office). Part of a strategy's success is rooted in consistency and routine, so begin measurement here and continue with subjective process measures.

## Subjective Process Measures – “How did the process occur?”

Action plans focused on changing the nature of patient contact often require a subjective measure in addition to an objective measure. Whether an action plan seeks to address call light response, bedside hand-off, or discharge information, it should not focus on simply the WHAT of an encounter, but the HOW. As a leader, you don't simply want to know that these events are happening, but the nature of these events. When the nurse responds to the call light, how does he or she enter the room, address the patient, etc.? With discharge information, for example, you'll want to identify not just that information is being provided, but whether it's being provided in a compassionate way that connects with patients.

Subjective measurement is often housed in a form of rounding on staff. Effective rounding about an action plan doesn't simply measure whether staff is engaging in the new plan, but identifies wins and problems. Questions during this round might include, “How do you feel when you...” “How do you feel this new process is going?” “How have patients responded to you?” Identifying subjective wins (e.g., reduction in anxiety, increase in engagement with patients, better communication) and difficulties (e.g., not understanding what, exactly, to say when we greet patients, ambiguities around timing) helps you and your team tweak the plan to make it more successful. Subjective measurement is just as much about gathering information from your team as it is demonstrating to your team that their input is important.

To assess the success of any action plans, you will need both types of measures. Information from these objective and subjective measures helps you identify gains and difficulties that will shape the plan's evolution and impact.

