



VALUE STREAM MAPPING: Creating a roadmap for service transformation

Employment First initiatives and CMS settings rules are having a major impact on our nation’s disability service system. These directives are a positive step forward and are resulting in more meaningful lives and community employment for people with disabilities. However, for providers, shifting from center-based service models to community-based sites can be overwhelming, requiring a new mindset and a completely different approach to providing services and supports. In an effort to make change, many providers rewrite their strategic plans and set new service goals. Yet, despite their planning efforts, many organizations struggle to move in a new direction.

Making significant change is difficult. Braiding services and shifting programs requires more than just setting goals. Unfortunately, more often than not, strategic planning tends to focus at a “high level”. Leadership sets new goals, but little effort is made to evaluate “day to day” processes or to clarify new roles and methods. Therefore, managers and direct service personnel know what is expected—but don’t know what changes to make or where to start. In these situations, *Value Stream Mapping (VSM)* can be a helpful.

Value Stream Mapping (VSM) is a process improvement strategy based on *Lean* principles. The VSM process clarifies change, encourages buy-in and establishes a plan for moving forward. It focuses on the customer and gets down to the “day to day” process level. Resistance to change is often just confusion or a lack of clear direction. VSM encourages buy-in and addresses these issues by drawing a road map for change and creating consensus on how to move forward.

The VSM process starts by looking at the customers we support and mapping out current service methods and resources. The *Current State Map* graphically illustrate the existing service process from start to finish. This map is used to analyze (and untangle) current program service methods. While the map depicts a “step-by-step” process, it is more than just flow chart. *Current State Maps* provide a discussion platform. It identifies an organization’s bright spots and available resources, *while* exposing ineffective or unnecessary services.

After outlining the organization’s current processes, the group then creates a *Future State Map*, a map of what services should look like, a process that incorporates best practice and the team’s new ideas. Developing this ideal, “best of all worlds” map helps staff focus on new ideas and creative solutions- not fixing issues or addressing challenges created by agency’s current programs. The *Future State Map* is a roadmap for change and a dashboard for monitoring progress.

The final step of the mapping process is to use the *Future State Map* to set short-term goals and develop an *Implementation/Action Plan*. This action plan looks at how to address the issues and challenges identified during the mapping process and determine what is needed to establish the service methods depicted in the Future State Map. The team works together to identify priorities, set goals and determine how to get started.

If your organization is struggling with making change, VSM may be a useful process. Mapping is an engaging, empowering way to help staff brainstorm new program methods and embrace change. Providers throughout the country have found VSM to be an effective tool for getting their agencies to move forward-- together.

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