

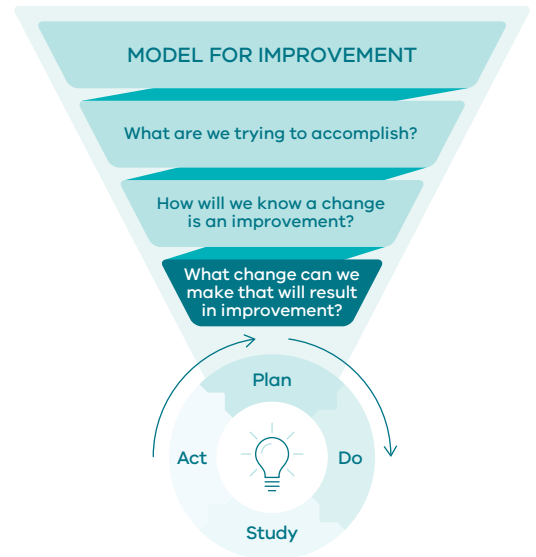
Driver diagrams

Overview

A driver diagram is a visual tool that helps to build and communicate your Theory of Change for your quality improvement project. It outlines what is needed to achieve your quality improvement aim and answers the third question of the model for improvement: What change can we make that will result in an improvement?

A driver diagram clearly outlines the relationships between the aim of the improvement project and the changes to be tested and implemented. It outlines your rationale and exactly how you expect your change ideas to help you achieve your quality improvement aim.

A driver diagram can help craft the measurement strategy of an improvement initiative. Outcome measurements should be embedded in the aim statement for most driver diagrams. A driver diagram will also help to define which aspects of the system should be measured and monitored to see if the changes and



interventions are effective, and if the underlying causal theories are correct. Driver diagrams are living documents. Not all changes tested will lead to improvement, and driver diagrams are intended to be reviewed with your stakeholders and team and updated based on the learning and evidence gathered through the testing and measurement stages.

Components of a driver diagram

A driver diagram is composed of:

- **Aim statement:** An aim statement is written documentation of what you want to achieve with your improvement project and a timeframe for achieving it. It should cover what will be improved, by how much, for whom, by when and why. Establishing an agreed-upon aim statement is the first step to creating a driver diagram. For more information on crafting an aim statement see SCV Quality Improvement Toolkit
- **Primary drivers:** Primary drivers are high-level factors or themes that you need to influence in order to achieve your improvement aim.
- Primary drivers should be written as clear statements rather than numerical targets. Try to limit your primary drivers to a total of three. If you need more, you may need to scale down your aim statement.

- Primary drivers can be based on three elements. (Please note not everything may fit into these.)
 - Structures that comprise the system, i.e. the physical design of a space, product, or software. For example, patient wards, operating rooms, and diagnostic facilities.
 - Processes that represent the workflow of the system, and how things are accomplished. For example, patient admission, medication administration, and discharge planning.
 - Operating norms, or the accepted rules and expectations that govern how individuals within a group or organisation behave, interact, and make decisions in their day-to-day activities. They can be described as 'the way we do things around here'. For example, a lack of reporting of near-miss incidents.
 - **Secondary drivers:** Secondary drivers are specific factors or interventions that are necessary to achieve the aim through at least one primary driver. You must consider the specific contexts and settings where the change is most crucial. One approach used for secondary drivers is to consider them the '**When?** **Where?** and **Who?**' within the process or system that you need to influence to achieve your aim.
 - **Change ideas:** Change ideas should be specific, actionable ideas which can be tested to understand their influence. Each change idea will contribute to at least one secondary driver (shown using 'relationship arrows').

Avoid defining your change idea as a task or a specific action or activity that needs to be completed.

 - Task: design a new assessment form
 - Change idea: implement assessment form for X

Avoid including change concepts, which are general notions or approaches to change that are useful for developing specific ideas for changes that lead to improvement.

 - Change concept: improve team communication.
 - Change idea: introduction of a weekly huddle to improve team communication.
- For more information on change ideas and Theory of Change see [SCV Quality Improvement Toolkit](#).

How to build a driver diagram

1. Identify and invite people you need to collaborate with to develop your Theory of Change.
2. Develop your aim statement: what will be improved, by how much, for whom, by when and why. For more information on crafting an aim statement see SCV Quality Improvement Toolkit.
3. Once there is an agreed improvement aim, driver diagrams can be created. Decide if your next step will be to:
 - a. identify the important themes or factors (primary drivers) and build your theory of change from left to right, or
 - b. brainstorm change ideas and create your driver diagram right to left.

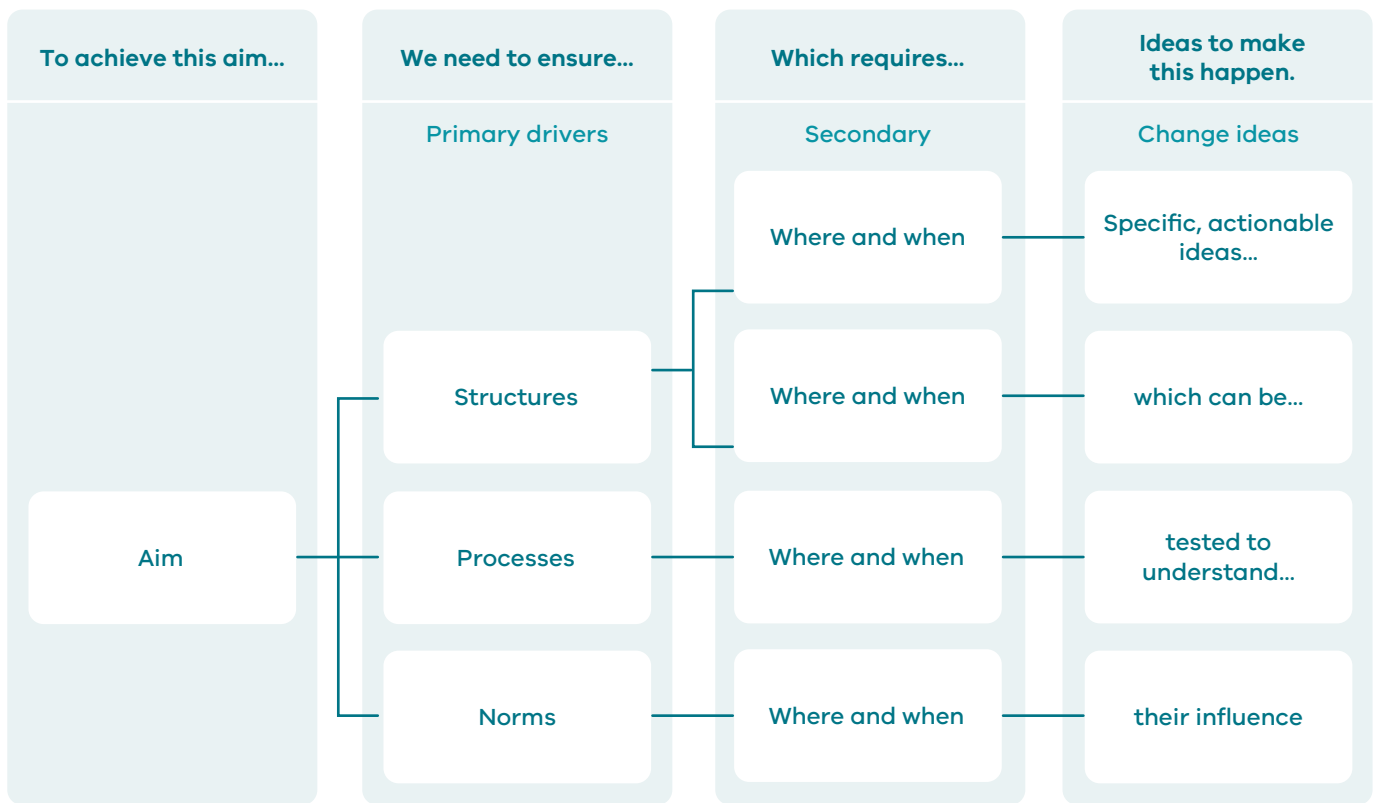


Figure 1: Structure of a driver diagram

Summary

A driver diagram is a tool for planning and visualising an improvement initiative. It can help teams stay focused when the diagrams are regularly reviewed and updated as the team acquires new knowledge

and experience. A driver diagram will also help to define which aspects of the system should be measured and monitored to see if the changes and interventions are effective, and if the underlying causal theories are correct.

Driver diagram template

Below is a basic driver diagram template, which can be used to help you start creating driver diagrams. It has not been designed for complex projects.

Remember: It’s unlikely that a single individual has a clear view of an entire

complex system. When developing a driver diagram, enlist the help of team members and stakeholders who are familiar with different aspects of the system under review.

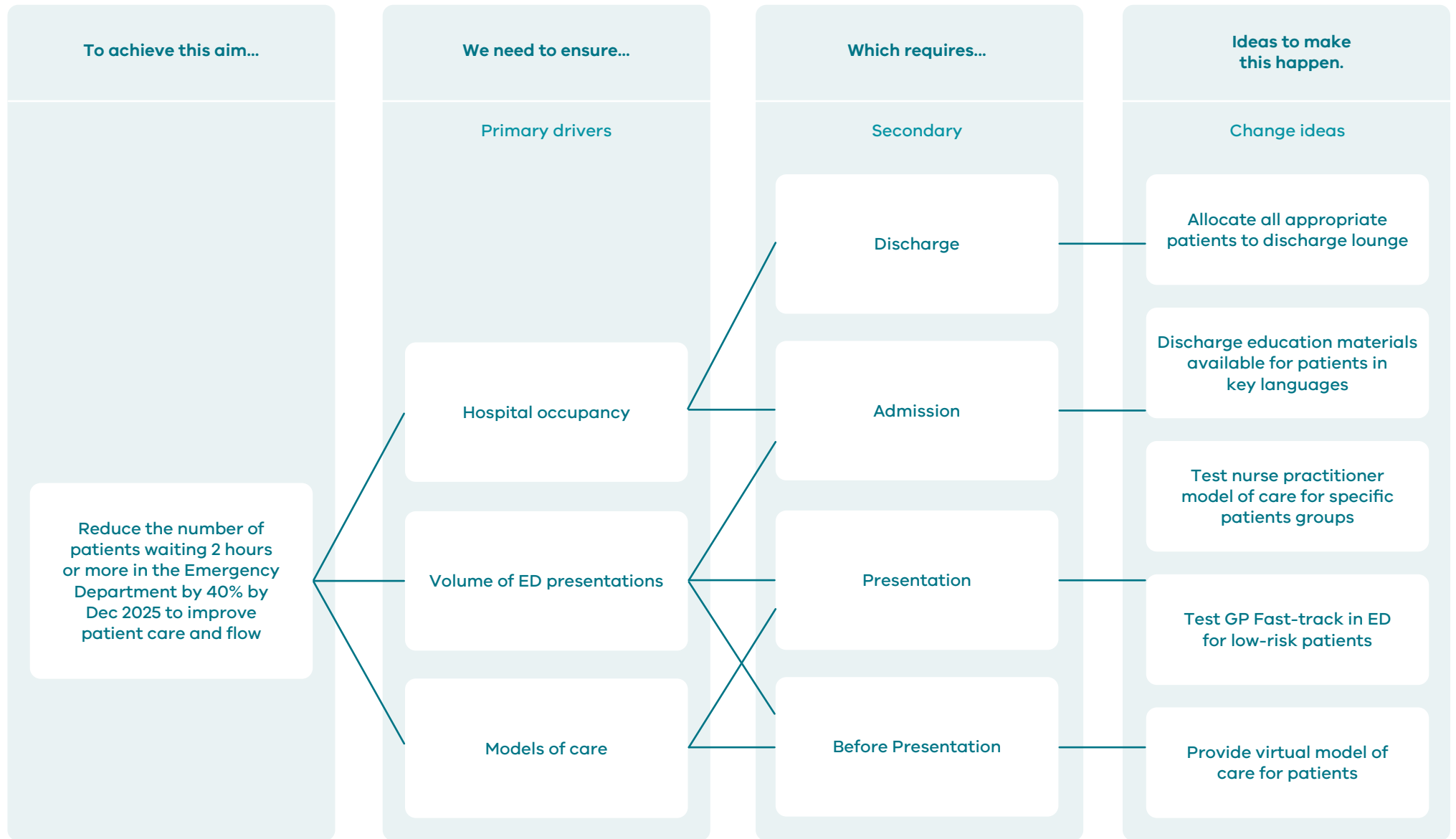
Additional resources

To learn more about Quality Improvement you can access the following resources:

- [SCV Quality Improvement Toolkit](#)
- [Institute for Healthcare Improvement website](#)
- [NSW Clinical Excellence Commission Quality Improvement Tools](#)
- [Advanced Driver Diagram Template](#)

Content adapted with permission from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and the Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC)

Example of a completed driver diagram



Basic Driver Diagram Template

