Process mapping template and two-hour swimlane workshop

A process mapping template shows the steps of one process in order, with a lane for each role, so a team can see the hand-offs and the waiting. This kit is a timed two-hour workshop that maps one real case as it works now, with five symbol cards, a blank swimlane sheet, a step list that totals work and wait time, and a pain-point vote. The filled example follows a fictional course enrolment.

120 minutes | 5–10 participants | Online and adaptable in person

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The outcome

By the end of 120 minutes the group has an as-is swimlane map of one real case with decisions and hand-offs marked, work and wait time per step and in total, the share of time spent waiting, pain points ranked by vote and three next checks with an owner and a date.

Before the session

- For trainers and team leads who map one work process with the 5–10 adults who each do part of it. As-is only: no redesign.
- A week before, fill in the scope sheet with the sponsor and choose one real case from the last month. Invite one person per lane and ask them to bring the dates they have: emails, form entries, log lines.
- In a room: a wall or long table with lanes marked by tape, sticky notes, pens, the symbol cards and the swimlane sheet at A3. Online: a shared board, or the workbook on screen.
- Send the scope sheet, symbols and rules as plain text a day early. Each note carries a word, not a colour. Work seated; anyone may write instead of speak, or pass.

Included in this kit

A facilitator run of show, participant worksheets with real tables, reference tables, debrief questions, adaptation notes and a follow-up plan. Use the editable Word copy to tailor examples and prompts before delivery.

Original material by Superglue. Timings are suggestions; adjust them to your participants. This resource has not been independently evaluated.

What is inside

- Scope sheet
- Map check
- Symbol cards
- Swimlane sheet
- Step list
- Pain points and next checks
- Filled example: scope sheet
- Filled example: pain points and next checks
- Filled example: swimlane map
- Filled example: step list
- Facilitator section: run of show, reference tables, debrief and adaptations

Scope sheet

Fill this in with the sponsor before the session and read it aloud at the start. One process, one real case, a clear first and last step.

Question	Our answer
The process, in a few words	
What starts it (the trigger)	
The first step on the map	
The last step on the map: the result	
The one real, recent case we follow	
Lanes: the roles that touch the case	
Out of scope today	
Who decides the next checks, and how people take part	

Map check

The checker marks each line while the lanes are read aloud. Fix it in the room, or note who checks it.

Check	Yes	Fix	Note
The first and last steps match the scope sheet.	☐	☐	
Every step names one role and starts with a verb.	☐	☐	
Every decision is a question with a Yes path and a No path.	☐	☐	
Every hand-off says what is passed on, and how.	☐	☐	
Every wait has a number of working hours, or est.	☐	☐	
Steps that happen only sometimes are marked “sometimes”.	☐	☐	
Each person has read their lane aloud, or confirmed it in writing.	☐	☐	
Gaps are marked “?” with a name to check.	☐	☐	

Symbol cards

Print on card and cut along the lines. Fix one of each to the wall as the legend; use the others in place of sticky notes. Five plain symbols, not a full notation.

Card	Card
START The trigger. One per map. Lane: _____	END The result. One per map. Lane: _____
STEP One action by one role: a verb and an object. _____	STEP One action by one role: a verb and an object. _____
DECIDE A yes or no question. Turn the card on its corner. No goes to: _____	DECIDE A yes or no question. Turn the card on its corner. No goes to: _____
WAIT The case sits before the next step. Working hours: _____ est. ☐	WAIT The case sits before the next step. Working hours: _____ est. ☐
HAND-OFF Place on the arrow between two lanes. What is passed on, and how: _____	PAIN POINT P___ At step: _____ What happens (not who): _____

Swimlane sheet

One lane per role, in the order the case first reaches them. Write each step in its lane, from left to right, with its type word: START, STEP, DECIDE or END. Add the wait before each step, mark hand-offs and note pain points underneath. Use a second sheet for steps 9 onwards.

Lane (role)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Lane 1:								
Lane 2:								
Lane 3:								
Lane 4:								
Lane 5:								
Wait before (h)								
Pain point								

Step list

One row per step along the main path, numbered as on the map. Work is the minutes someone spends on the step. Wait is the working hours the case sits before the step starts. Write est. for an estimate. Hand-off in: Yes when the lane differs from the row above.

#	Lane	Type	Step: verb and object	Work (min)	Wait before (h)	Hand-off in	Pain point	Votes
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

Pain points and next checks

Number each pain point and write the step where it happens. Each person has three votes for three different pain points. For the top three, write one next check or small try, an owner who said yes, and a date. Park the rest for the review.

P#	At step	What happens (not who)	Votes	Next check or small try	Owner	By when
P1						
P2						
P3						
P4						
P5						
P6						
P7						
P8						

Filled example: scope sheet

A fictional learning team maps how an employee is enrolled on a course, on Tuesday 10 November 2026. The team, the course and the times are invented for this example.

Question	Our answer
The process, in a few words	Enrol an employee on a scheduled course from the learning catalogue.
What starts it (the trigger)	An employee finds a course in the catalogue and wants a place.
The first step on the map	The employee fills in the course request form.
The last step on the map: the result	The trainer has the attendee list and has checked the entry needs.
The one real, recent case we follow	A request for the two-day report writing course, made on Monday 5 October 2026. People brought the emails and booking log entries.
Lanes: the roles that touch the case	Employee, line manager, learning coordinator, finance team, trainer. One person per lane; two line managers came.
Out of scope today	Which courses run, course design, cancellations and the waiting list. Ideas for a new process go on the parking list.
Who decides the next checks, and how people take part	The learning team lead, in the room. Seven people vote; the facilitator, from another team, does not. Anyone may write, or pass.

Filled example: pain points and next checks

What the session produced, from the map and step list on the next pages: five pain points, 21 votes and three next checks confirmed by the learning team lead. P2 and P5 wait for the review on Tuesday 8 December.

P#	At step	What happens (not who)	Votes	Next check or small try	Owner	By when
P1	2	Requests wait in the manager’s inbox. Nothing reminds anyone.	6	Count how long the last 20 requests waited for approval, from the dates in the booking log.	Learning coordinator	Fri 20 Nov
P3	5	Finance checks cost codes once a week, on Thursdays.	5	Ask the finance lead whether a team’s code can be approved once for the year.	Finance assistant	Wed 25 Nov
P4	9	The trainer gets the list on the Monday before the course, too late to check entry needs.	4	For the next two courses, send each booking to the trainer the day it is made.	Learning coordinator	Fri 4 Dec
P2	3	The coordinator types the form again. Names get misspelt.	3	Parked for the review.		
P5	4	About one request in four comes back for a wrong cost code (est.).	3	Parked for the review.		

Filled example: swimlane map

The case of 5 October, as it worked. Ten steps in five lanes, two decisions and seven hand-offs. Wait is the working hours the case sat before each step.

Lane	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Employee	1 START Fill in request form							8 STEP Accept invite		
Line manager		2 DECIDE Approve? No: back to employee								
Learning coordinator			3 STEP Re-key into booking log	4 DECIDE Code and seat OK? No: back to manager		6 STEP Book seat, update log	7 STEP Send joining note and invite		9 STEP Send list to trainer	
Finance team					5 STEP Approve the charge					
Trainer										10 END Check list and entry needs
Wait before (h)	0	24	8	0	16	4	0	8	16	0
Hand-off in		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Pain point		P1	P2	P5	P3				P4	

Filled example: step list

The same case as rows. Work: 90 minutes. Wait: 76 working hours. Elapsed: 77.5 working hours, or 9.7 working days of eight hours, of which 98.1% was waiting. Seven people cast 21 votes.

#	Lane	Type	Step: verb and object	Work (min)	Wait before (h)	Hand-off in	Pain point	Votes
1	Employee	Start	Fill in the course request form	20	0			
2	Line manager	Decision	Approve the request? No: back to the employee with a reason	10	24	Yes	P1	6
3	Learning coordinator	Step	Re-key the request into the booking log	10	8	Yes	P2	3
4	Learning coordinator	Decision	Cost code given and a seat free? No: back to the line manager	5	0		P5	3
5	Finance team	Step	Approve the charge to the cost code	5	16	Yes	P3	5
6	Learning coordinator	Step	Book the seat and update the booking log	10	4	Yes		
7	Learning coordinator	Step	Send the joining instructions and calendar invite	8	0			
8	Employee	Step	Accept the calendar invite	2	8	Yes		
9	Learning coordinator	Step	Send the attendee list to the trainer	5	16	Yes	P4	4
10	Trainer	End	Check the attendee list and the entry needs	15	0	Yes		
			Total	90	76	7	5	21

Facilitator run of show

1 Open, scope and rules | 10 minutes

Four minutes: read the scope sheet aloud. Say: “Today we map how one process really works now, from this first step to this last step, by following one real case. We will not redesign it today. We leave with the map, the times and three things to check.” Four minutes: read the six rules and ask for questions. Two minutes: say how people can take part: aloud, on a sticky note, in the chat or by passing. Name the person who decides the next checks.

2 Symbols and lanes | 8 minutes

Three minutes: show the five symbol cards and fix one of each to the wall as the legend. Say: “Every note gets a word at the top: START, END, STEP, DECIDE or WAIT. The word matters, not the colour or the shape.” Three minutes: name one lane per role on the scope sheet, top to bottom in the order the case first reaches them, and write each lane name at the left edge. Two minutes: place the START note and the END note at the two ends of the wall.

3 Silent writing: my steps in the case | 12 minutes

Two minutes: say: “Write each thing you did for this case on its own note: a verb and an object, like ‘Re-key the request’. Write STEP or DECIDE at the top. One note per action.” Eight minutes of silence: each person writes the steps of their own lane and places them roughly in their lane. Two minutes: each person counts their notes and checks that every note starts with a verb.

4 Build the main path | 25 minutes

Fifteen minutes: walk the case from START. Ask: “What happened next, and who did it?” Move each note into order from left to right. Where two notes say the same thing, keep one. Where nobody knows, add a note with a question mark and a name to check. Five minutes: for each DECIDE note, ask: “What happens on No?” Write the No path in a few words on the note or under it. Five minutes: draw an arrow each time the case crosses into another lane, and write on it what is passed on and how: a form, an email, a system entry.

5 Break | 10 minutes

Ten minutes away from the wall or the screen. The facilitator numbers the steps 1, 2, 3 along the main path and copies them into the step list.

6 Walk the map aloud | 12 minutes

Ten minutes: one person per lane reads their steps aloud in order, as the case reaches them. A checker reads the map check sheet and marks each line Yes or Fix. Ask after each lane: “Is that what happened, or what should happen?” Correct the notes as you go. Two minutes: read out any line marked Fix and agree who corrects it now.

7 Work time and wait time | 15 minutes

One minute: say: “Work time is the time someone spends on the step. Wait time is the time the case sits before the step starts. We count both in working hours of an eight-hour day. Use the dates you brought. If you are not sure, write est.” Eight minutes: each lane writes the work minutes on each of its notes and puts a WAIT note with hours before each step that waited. Four minutes: the facilitator types the numbers into the step list, or adds them up on paper. Two minutes: read out the totals: work time, wait time, elapsed time and

the share spent waiting. Say: “These numbers describe one case. They show where to look, not how every case goes.”

8 Pain points and votes | 15 minutes

Five minutes of silent writing: each person writes pain points on notes, one per note, and places each one at the step where it happens. Say: “Write what happens, not who does it.” Number the notes P1, P2 and so on, and read them out, merging the ones that say the same. Five minutes: each person has three votes for three different pain points: marks on the notes, a slip to the facilitator or a message in the chat. The facilitator does not vote. Five minutes: count the votes, write the totals on the pain-point sheet and read out the top three.

9 Top three: what to check next | 10 minutes

Eight minutes: for each of the top three pain points, ask: “What do we know, and what would we need to check before we change anything?” Write one next check or one small try, an owner who says yes aloud or in writing, and a date. The decider confirms each one. Two minutes: name the date of the review and move the other pain points to the parking list for it.

10 Read back and close | 3 minutes

Two minutes: read back the totals, the top three pain points and the next checks with owners and dates. Say who will type up the map, and by when. One minute: each person says or writes one sentence about something in the process they did not know before today, or passes.

Reference tables

The five process map symbols

A small plain set taken from common flowchart shapes. The word on the note carries the meaning, so nothing depends on colour or shape. It is not BPMN or any full notation.

Symbol	Write on the note	Draw it as	Use it for	Example from the enrolment map
Start or end	START or END	Rounded box	The trigger that starts the case, and the result that ends it. One of each.	START: the employee fills in the request form. END: the trainer checks the list.
Step	STEP	Rectangle	One action by one role. Write a verb and an object.	Re-key the request into the booking log.
Decision	DECIDE	Diamond: a square note turned on its corner	A yes or no question. Draw both paths and say where each goes.	Cost code given and a seat free? No: back to the line manager.
Wait	WAIT	A note with WAIT and a number of hours, placed before the step	Time when nothing happens to the case. Write working hours, or est.	WAIT 24 h: the request sits in the manager’s inbox.
Hand-off	An arrow	An arrow that crosses a lane line	The case moves to another role. Write on the arrow what is passed on, and how.	Approved form, by email, to the coordinator.

Six rules for an as-is map

Read the rules aloud in the opening and keep them on the wall.

Rule	Words to say when it is broken
1. Map what happens now	“Is that what happened in our case, or what the procedure says should happen?”
2. Follow one real case	“Let’s stay with the request from 5 October. What happened to it next?”
3. One step, one role, one verb	“Who does that? What do they do: check, send, approve?”
4. Numbers, or est.	“Roughly how long? Write est. if you are not sure. A guess marked est. is useful.”
5. Pain points name a step, not a person	“At which step does that happen? Write what happens, not who.”
6. No fixing yet	“Good idea. It goes on the parking list. We look at checks once the map is complete.”

Debrief and next steps

Questions for reflection

- Which step or wait surprised the person who does the step before or after it?
- Where did the map differ from what the procedure says, and who would need to know?
- Which hand-off carries the most risk of something being lost, and what is passed on there?
- Whose view is missing from this map, and how will we check the steps in their lane?

Adapt the session

- For five people, one person per lane, the facilitator places the notes during the main path and the group skips the merging of duplicate notes. Keep three votes each.
- For a 90-minute version, collect each person’s steps in writing the day before and place them on the wall in advance. Cut the silent writing, shorten the main path to 18 minutes and the break to 5, and take the top two pain points only.
- Online, use a shared board with five drawn lanes, or the step list in the workbook, which builds the swimlane view by itself. People type their steps in the chat or the document, votes go to the facilitator as three P-numbers in the chat, and cameras are optional.
- For quiet participants and people who use a screen reader, send the scope sheet and the step list as plain text a day early and accept steps in writing. Read every note aloud with its number and lane. The whole map can be built seated at a table on A3 sheets, and anyone may pass.
- If the people disagree about what happens, map the case you chose first, then mark the other version as a branch with “sometimes” and a name to check. If the process is large, map 10 to 15 steps at this level and give one busy step its own session.

After the session

Type up the map and the step list within two working days and send them to everyone in the room for corrections. Each owner reports the result of their check in writing before the review. At the review, look at the checks and the parked pain points, and decide which changes to try, with the problem-solving activities kit when a pain point needs a cause and a small test. When the process is agreed, write the steps people need at their desk with the job aid template. Map the process again after a change, with a new real case.

Questions people ask

What should a process mapping template include?

A scope with a clear first and last step, one lane per role, the steps in order with a verb and an object, the decisions with both paths, the hand-offs between lanes and the time each step takes. A template for improvement also needs the wait before each step and the pain points. This kit has a sheet for each, plus a step list that adds up the times.

What symbols do I need? Is this BPMN?

Five are enough for an as-is map: start or end, step, decision, wait and the hand-off arrow. They are a plain subset of common flowchart shapes, and each note carries a word for its type. This kit does not use BPMN or any full notation; if your organisation needs one, redraw the agreed map in it afterwards.

How is this different from the problem-solving activities kit?

This kit maps a whole process as it works now and finds where the time and the trouble are. The problem-solving activities kit starts from one known problem and works through facts, causes, options and a test. Use this map first when nobody can see the whole process; then take its top pain point into the problem-solving workshop.

How do we measure wait time when nobody knows it?

Follow one real, recent case and use the dates people already have: emails, form entries and log lines. Count working hours of an eight-hour day. Where there is no date, write an estimate marked est. and name who can check it. The result describes that one case; to know how often a wait happens, count it across more cases afterwards.

Can we design the new process in the same session?

Not in two hours, and not well before the facts are checked. This session ends with an agreed as-is map and three next checks. Redesign is a second session once the checks are back. Swimlane maps are often traced to the cross-functional maps in Geary Rummler and Alan Brache’s Improving Performance (1990); the sheets and wording here are written for this kit.

What is included in the free and editable files?

The open PDF has the scope sheet, the map check, the symbol cards, the swimlane sheet, the step list, the pain-point sheet, filled examples of the scope sheet, swimlane map, step list and pain points, and the 120-minute facilitator script. Subscribers also receive the editable Word file, an Excel workbook with a step list that totals work and wait time, counts hand-offs and ranks votes, a swimlane view that builds itself, a next-checks log and a filled example of each, and a CSV of the workshop plan.

Use and sharing

Free to use and adapt in your own training sessions, including paid client work. Do not resell or redistribute the unmodified download as a standalone product. Share the resource page instead.