

# Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process

## What is it?

The **Creative Problem Solving (CPS)** process is a structure for examining and defining problems and identifying solutions to address these. This is key to the continuous improvement process.

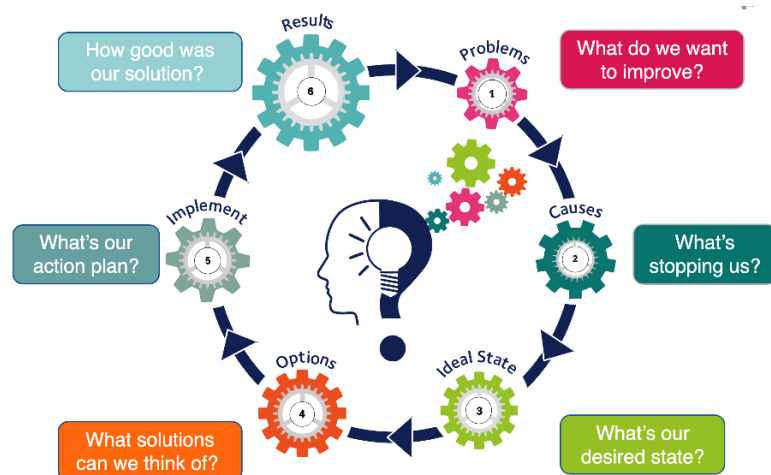


Figure 1: The Creative Problem Solving (CPS process

### Benefits at a glance....

- CPS provides a structured approach to finding solutions to complex problems
- brings together those with hands-on experience of the problem with other key stakeholders
- brings in a new perspective
- avoids a 'quick fix' solution that fails to solve the whole issue

## When to use it?

Use the **CPS Process** when you want to find solutions to:

- entrenched problems
- complex issues with stakeholders
- limited ability to make changes
- uncertainty about what the problem really is

## How to use it?

***BEWARE:** The human brain is designed to solve problems. Once you've had an idea you'll keep on thinking about it and use working memory capacity to keep it at the front of your mind - you may find that by doing this you are closing your mind to others' ideas. Counter-intuitively we need to stick to the process as everyone in the team will come up with ideas throughout.*

*Putting up a **Solution 'Car Park'** to capture ideas as they occur allows all potential solutions to be captured whilst freeing up our brains to be truly creative.*

As per the diagram above, there are six steps in the **CPS Process**:

### 1. Explore and define the problem

Start by creating a **SMART Problem Statement** which is a simple sentence that contains the



problem but no causes or solutions. The resultant **SMart** objective should be **Specific** and **Measurable**. Plan at this stage how the impact of the change will be assessed and capture baseline data.

2. **Identify the root cause**

Use the *Fishbone* visual tool to stimulate thinking and to help you to articulate the possible causes of a problem. Prioritise the causes and then explore in depth using the *5 Whys* analysis tool to drill down to the root cause.

3. **Define the ideal state**



Imagine that you have a magic wand! What would a perfect solution give you? Describe the desired outcomes and benefits to provide you with a 'North Star' so set direction and guide you when you in the next step.

Figure 2: Waving a magic wand

4. **Explore the options**

Use the 'collective intelligence' of the team to generate and bring all your ideas and concepts together to find solutions in an 'ideal world'. Use the *Fresh Eyes* of people outside of the team or new members of staff to generate new ideas. Explore and rank solutions graphically by plotting the impact on the objective against the effort to implement.

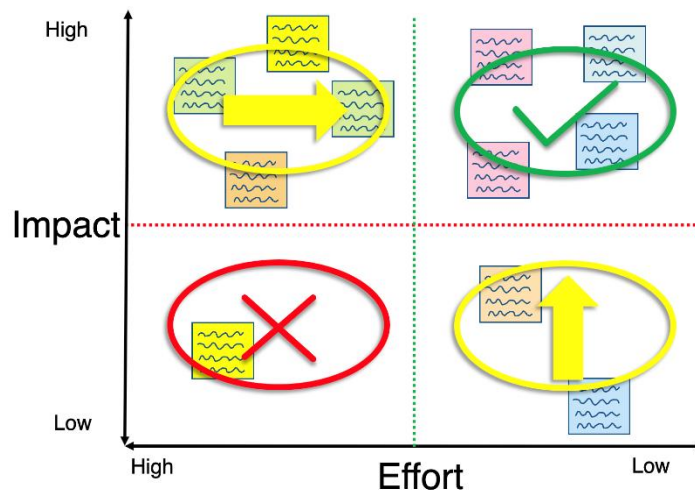


Figure 3: Impact/Effort matrix

When considering options, ensure that solutions that are chosen are **smART** in that they are **Achievable** (and able to be implemented), **Realistic or Relevant** and **Time-bound**.

5. **Implement the solution**

Use the *Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle* as the framework for devising and implementing a plan for your chosen solution. Agree a delivery schedule, actions, and responsibilities.

6. **Review the results**

Review how you did against the baseline data, hold an *After Action Review (AAR)* (either at key milestones or at completion) and celebrate successes.