



Prioritisation Matrices Guideline

Priority matrices help us choose the issues/solutions we should prioritise and the ones to avoid, to make the most of our efforts and resources.

A priority matrix can be used during the defining phase of a QI project when deciding which issues should be addressed first. It can also be used during the improvement phase of a project to identify which proposed strategies or solutions should be implemented.

An Action Priority Matrix requires teams to assess issues/ solutions against the impact and effort required, then plot on a 2x2 grid. The Decision Matrix involves weighting each issue/ solution against relevant criteria before totalling each score. The highest scores are generally prioritised first.

Which Priority Matrix?

Deciding on which Priority Matrix to use will depend on the time available and the detail of consideration that issues/solutions require. Both matrices have merit by making team members more aware of time-consuming projects and increasing understanding of those that provide more benefit.

An Action Priority Matrix is simple and provides a visual of what issues/solutions are priority. It allows teams to act on tasks that make a positive impact quickly. The Action Priority Matrix helps teams identify which issues/solutions of a QI project will have greater impact relative to effort.

Alternatively teams can generate their own criteria they consider relevant to the project (e.g. frequency, importance, ease of implementation) and assess issues/solutions on a Decision Matrix. A Decision Matrix is particularly useful when one improvement issue or solution must be selected to work on. Arguably a bit more time consuming, a Decision Matrix can be more accurate and easier in the long run when determining a priority.

Action Priority Matrix

1. Brainstorm with your team the issues/solutions that need to be addressed.
2. Draw a Priority Matrix Grid with the Efforts of the activity (x-axis) plotted perpendicularly on the Impact (y-axis).





3. Write each issue/ solution identified on Post-It notes and score them for **impact** (0=no impact, 10= maximum impact) and **effort** required (0 = no real effort, 10 = a major effort).
4. Tally the scores for each issue/solution.
5. Plot each issue/solution (Post-it) on your 2x2 matrix. For example, activities that score highly for both impact and effort will sit in the top right quadrant, those that have a middle score (e.g. 6) for impact but low in effort (e.g. 2) would sit in the lower part of the top left quadrant.
6. Prioritise the issues/solutions appropriately, and outsource or eliminate the hard-slogs.

“Quick Wins” = High impact, low effort

Quick Wins are activities that require little effort but create the most value or have the most impact. These activities or projects have the highest priority and teams should focus as much time as possible on them.

“Major Projects” = High impact, high effort

Major Projects are also activities which create a lot of value, but unlike Quick Wins they also require teams to put a lot of time and effort into them. These types of projects are second on the priority hierarchy. Major Projects can take a lot of time and energy so plan for enough time on a regular basis to do these tasks.

“Fill Ins” = Low impact, low effort

Fill Ins are activities that require little effort but their outcomes also don’t leave a big impact. This is why teams should only do these tasks if there is time. Often ‘fill ins’ can stagnate activities with a higher priority. Consider delegating or outsourcing these tasks to another team or individual if possible.

“Hard Slogs” = Low impact, high effort

As the name already indicates, the Hard Slogs (or “thankless tasks”) require a lot of effort but have a comparably low impact. If possible outsource these tasks to experts or consider dropping.

Tip: Use common sense to interpret the lines that separate the four quadrants. There's only a small difference between a 4.9 impact activity defined as a "Hard Slog" and a 5.1 impact task defined as a "Major Project."

The Decision Matrix

1. Brainstorm with your team the issues/solutions that need to be addressed.
2. Develop evaluation criteria that are important for the listed issues /solutions generated from your team brainstorming session. Examples of typical criteria include:
 - a. **Frequency:** How frequent is the problem? Does it occur often or only on rare occasions?
 - b. **Importance:** From the point of view of service users, what are the most important issues? What are the issues the team wants to resolve?
 - c. **Low cost**
 - d. **Potential Benefits**



e. **Ease of Implementation**

f. **Feasibility:** How realistic is it that we can resolve the problem? Will it be easy or difficult?

Alternatively choose other criteria if they better fit the situation being discussed.

3. List all criteria on a flipchart or whiteboard; Narrow criteria to around 5 through consensus or voting.
4. Draw up a table with identified issues/solutions listed down the left column and each criteria along the top row. Title the far right column TOTAL. For example:

Issues	Frequency	Importance	Feasibility	Ease of implementation	TOTAL
Incomplete referrals					
Client records not updated					
Children and whanau waiting long for appointment					
Whanau missing appointments (DNAs)					
Clinicians with private paper diaries					

5. Score each issue/solution from 1 - 5 (1= not much or low, 5 = a lot or high) against each criteria.

IMPORTANT: Word criteria and set the scales so that the high end of the scale (5) is always the desirable rating. Criteria such as cost, resource use and difficulty can cause mix-ups: low cost is highly desirable. If the rating scale sometimes rates a desirable state as 5 and sometimes as 1, the results will be incorrect. This can be avoided by rewording criteria: Say “low cost” instead of “cost”; “ease” instead of “difficulty.”

6. Total the scores of each issue/problem.
7. Prioritise according to the highest number. Issues/solutions that score highly will generally require attending to first – whether this means implementing an agreed intervention or undertaking further QI enquiry, such as cause analysis. The relative scores can also generate meaningful discussion and lead the team toward an agreed approach.

Tip: Sometimes multiplying rather than adding the numbers shows a greater difference, making it easier to rank