



# AMS IN FOCUS

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## Intermediate Problem Solving: A3 Problem Solving - Strategy



### PURPOSE

Intermediate-level problem solving uses relatively sophisticated problem solving techniques to resolve complex problems and manage projects. Within the context of the Arizona Management System (AMS), teams use a standard, single-page, 11x17-inch (A3) template to manage and document their work. The template aligns with the familiar Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle of continuous improvement through five sections:

- **Purpose (PLAN)**
- **Analysis (PLAN)**
- **Strategy (PLAN/DO)**
- **Results & Issues (CHECK)**
- **Standardize & Sustain (ACT)**

This edition of AMS In Focus focuses on the Strategy phase of problem solving.

### Strategy (PLAN/DO)

The Strategy phase of A3 problem solving is when things begin to shift from planning to action. In this stage of problem solving, the team documents the countermeasure strategy and actions that will lead to improvement. The team determines the actions it will take based on its understanding of the current situation informed by the data collected and examined in the Analysis phase of the problem solving.

The A3 template provides an action tracking matrix where teams are to align their countermeasures to be implemented with the root causes that were identified. For visual clarity, it's a good practice to number the actions and reference back to the specific root causes identified in Analysis.

Teams need to manage this space appropriately and resist the urge to document every step taken. Show

major milestones instead. Sure, a lot of work is being done, but a key purpose of the A3 document is to tell the project story simply and clearly. Too much information confuses the message and distracts readers. More detailed documentation such as Gantt charts and other project data may be kept on separate tabs or outside the A3.

At a minimum, the action tracking matrix should include Actions, Owner, Due Date and Action Status shown as percent complete.

In formulating your strategy, you will want to ensure that any actions considered comply with all applicable statutes, rules and policies. You will also want to consider risks that may affect your team, your agency and other systems. Avoid solving your problem at the expense of others.

But don't let fear of risk create waste either. If we are serious about wanting to do more good for Arizona - and we are - then we cannot allow fear to hinder our organizational excellence. We're not talking about taking reckless risks, but risk should be the last thing we consider.

Will our ideas further the mission? Is there a value-add for the customer? Will our employees be better off? If yes, ask ourselves: How can we make this work? What's the fastest, best, least costly way we can get it done? Knowing these facts: Is it worth the effort?

Then, and only then, think: if we do it, what could go wrong? Do the potential benefits outweigh the risk? Develop your strategies for mitigating the risk, and if they're acceptable, proceed. When problem solving, be prepared to challenge the status quo, embrace change, and don't fear failure.



### ANALYSIS



### STRATEGY



### RESULTS & ISSUES



### STANDARDIZE & SUSTAIN