



Key Driver Diagram Description and Use

Aleece Caron, PhD

The MetroHealth System, Case Western Reserve University

Updated May 22, 2023

A key driver diagram is a visual tool used in quality improvement and performance management to help identify and prioritize the key drivers or factors that influence the success of a particular goal or outcome. It is commonly used in fields such as healthcare, business, and education to map out the causal relationships between different elements that contribute to achieving a specific objective.

Key driver diagrams typically consist of a diagram or flowchart with a main aim or goal stated at the top. Below the main aim, there are several key drivers or factors that are identified as critical to achieving the goal. These key drivers are then further broken down into smaller, more specific drivers or sub-factors. The relationships between the different drivers or factors are often depicted using arrows or lines to show the cause-and-effect or influence relationships between them.

The key purpose of a key driver diagram is to help organizations or teams clarify their understanding of the complex factors that impact a particular goal or outcome, and to provide a visual representation that can serve as a guide for planning and implementation of improvement efforts. It helps to prioritize interventions or actions by identifying the most critical drivers that need to be addressed to achieve the desired results.

Using a key driver diagram involves several steps, which can be summarized as follows:

1. **Define your goal or outcome:** Clearly articulate the specific goal or outcome that you want to achieve. This should be a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goal that aligns with your overall improvement initiative or project.
2. **Identify key drivers:** Identify the key drivers or factors that are believed to significantly influence the achievement of the goal or outcome. These drivers are the critical factors that need to be addressed or optimized in order to achieve the desired result. Brainstorm and list all the potential drivers that come to mind, and prioritize them based on their relevance and impact on the goal.
3. **Organize drivers in a diagram:** Create a diagram or flowchart that visually represents the relationships between the key drivers and the main goal or outcome. The diagram typically consists of boxes or nodes for each key driver, connected by arrows or lines to show the cause-and-effect relationships or influence between them. The main goal or outcome is usually placed at the top of the diagram.
4. **Define sub-drivers or sub-factors:** For each key driver, further break it down into smaller, more specific drivers or sub-factors that contribute to it. These sub-drivers or sub-factors should be relevant and actionable, and should be depicted in the diagram as sub-boxes or sub-nodes connected to the corresponding key driver with arrows or lines.
5. **Review and revise:** Review and refine the key driver diagram with input from relevant stakeholders, including team members, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders who can provide insights and feedback. Revise the diagram as needed to ensure that it accurately reflects the relationships between the key drivers and the goal or outcome.

6. Use as a planning tool: Once the key driver diagram is finalized, it can be used as a planning tool to guide the design and implementation of improvement efforts. It can help prioritize interventions or actions by focusing on the most critical drivers that need to be addressed, and can serve as a visual guide to keep the team aligned and focused on the goal throughout the improvement process.
7. Monitor progress: Continuously monitor and measure progress towards the goal or outcome, and use the key driver diagram as a reference to track the impact of interventions or actions on the identified key drivers. Update the diagram as needed based on new data or insights, and use it as a reference to guide adjustments or refinements to the improvement efforts.

By following these steps, a key driver diagram can be a valuable tool in guiding the planning and implementation of improvement initiatives, helping to prioritize efforts, align teams, and track progress towards achieving the desired goal or outcome.

Here's an example as it applies to smoking cessation:

Goal: Increase Smoking Cessation Rates

Primary Driver: Patient Behavior Change

Secondary Drivers:

1. Provider Counseling: Train healthcare providers on effective smoking cessation counseling techniques, including motivational interviewing, to support patients in quitting smoking.
2. Medication Support: Provide access to FDA-approved smoking cessation medications, such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), bupropion, or varenicline, to help patients manage withdrawal symptoms and increase quit rates.
3. Behavioral Support: Offer behavioral support programs, such as individual or group counseling, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), or mindfulness-based techniques, to address psychological and behavioral aspects of smoking addiction and enhance quit attempts.
4. Health Education: Educate patients about the risks of smoking, benefits of quitting, and available resources for smoking cessation, through various channels such as brochures, posters, websites, or social media campaigns.
5. Social Support: Engage family members, friends, and peers in supporting patients' smoking cessation efforts through social support networks, quit buddy programs, or community-based interventions.
6. Tailored Interventions: Use patient-centered approaches to tailor smoking cessation interventions based on individual patient characteristics, including readiness to quit, motivation, cultural beliefs, socioeconomic status, and comorbidities.
7. Follow-up and Monitoring: Implement systematic follow-up and monitoring to track patients' progress, provide ongoing support, and identify and address barriers to quitting, such as relapse triggers or psychosocial stressors.
8. Policy and Environment: Advocate for and implement policies and environmental changes that promote smoking cessation, such as smoke-free policies in public places, increased tobacco taxes, or restrictions on tobacco marketing.
9. Health System Integration: Integrate smoking cessation interventions into routine healthcare workflows, electronic health records (EHRs), and quality improvement initiatives to ensure consistent and systematic delivery of evidence-based interventions.

10. **Data Collection and Evaluation:** Collect and analyze data on smoking cessation rates, patient outcomes, and program effectiveness to evaluate the impact of interventions, identify areas for improvement, and inform decision-making.

It's important to note that key driver diagrams are meant to be dynamic and adaptable to the specific context and needs of the population or setting where the smoking cessation program is being implemented. Regular review, data-driven adjustments, and stakeholder engagement are essential for ensuring the effectiveness of the key driver diagram in achieving the goal of increased smoking cessation rates.

