**WRITING A PROBLEM STATEMENT**

An essential first step in trying to solve a problem is to define what problem you are trying to solve. Writing a clear Problem Statement is critical for achieving a common understanding among team members and stakeholders about the nature and scope of the problem.

Below is a template for writing a Problem Statement and two examples.  The text in orange speaks to scope and scale and could be removed if the information is captured elsewhere in a project charter.  The remaining text would be what you typically see in a problem statement.

**Fill-in-the-blank template**

We have a <**insert process name here**> process to <**describe what process is intended to do**>.  The process starts <**identify the process starting point**> and ends <**describe the process ending point**>. The scope does not include <**list process steps outside the focus of the improvement initiative**>. The process as performing is not meeting our needs.  <**Quantify how the process is not meeting your needs compared to a desired goal**>.  The goal of the project is to <**describe project goal**> resulting in <**describe benefit**>. The scale of the improvement effort includes <**list**> and excludes <**list**>.

**Examples**

* We have an **Accounts Payable Process** to **pay outstanding invoices each day**.  The process starts **when the employee asks for a bill to be paid**and ends**when the check is sent**.  The scope excludes **invoice preparation and check deposits**. The process as performing is not meeting our needs.  **It takes an employee about 2 hours per day to gather the information needed to pay the invoice correctly versus a goal of 1 hour.**  The goal of the project is **to reduce the time required to collect the required input to prepare for payment to 1 hour per day,**resulting in **30 hours less time per month.**  The scale of the improvement effort includes **invoices from the western region only**and excludes **other regions of the state**.

* We use the **Daily Appointment Process** for **scheduling of customer meetings with our professionals**. The process starts **when a meeting is requested**and is completed **when the meeting is successfully scheduled**.  The scope excludes **making calendar updates at the start of each day**. The process as performing is not meeting our needs.  **Each day, two people on my team process about 15-25 requests per person for professional appointments which takes about 2 hours per day per employee versus a goal of 1 hour per day per person.  This impacts customer satisfaction because of the time required to set up the appointment and affects employees because of the waiting time involved.**  Our goal is to **reduce the time required to successfully complete the booking of these meetings to 1 hour per person per day,** saving **60 hours work time per month, while not increasing the number of staff people to do this**.  The scale of the improvement effort includes **customer-requested meetings only** and excludes **meetings requested by our professionals.**