Program Process Flow

This tool can yield valuable insight about how policy ideals are operationalized in an organizational context.

Program process flow is often used in business operations management and design. Diagrams are used to create a visual representation of the program technology (that takes inputs and transforms them to outputs) and sequencing of tasks. The creation of these diagrams can often provide a valuable learning experience for staff who might have little opportunity to come "up from the details" of day-to-day responsibilities, The steps described here emphasize engaging others. However, the same process can also be created by an individual familiar with the level of detail required for your intended use.

These process diagrams can be used in monitoring, program refinement, and to build awareness among a service team. They can be aligned with management information systems tracking and used to assess potential backlogs or improper sequencing.

What is needed? Post-Its, markers, open space, masking tape
Who is needed? Yourself, staff of your organization, potentially external stakeholders (program participants, community members, contractors, other related or interested stakeholders)
How long will this take? 2 hours

Activity
Step 1
Brainstorm the activities that take place in the engagement and/or intake process with the target population. Write each activity down on a Post-it. *Tip:* Cluster similar ones together as one activity.

Step 2
Use a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper as the backdrop.

Arrange the various activities in a sequential manner, left to right, top to bottom, bottom to top (which ever graphical representation most accurately represents your context). Sometimes, it is useful to think about arranging things in "swim lanes" so that all activities happening at the same time are arranged in the same "lane."
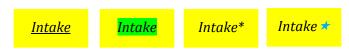
Step 3
Designate the 'steps' of the process, including any branching options and/or feedback mechanisms structured into the process with arrows (single headed or double wherever relevant).

Step 4
Add any final **graphic designators for substantively important activities** (those conducted by other organizations, those for which data are systematically gathered, etc).

Some ways to do this include underlining or highlighting the activities, or including an asterisk or a symbol on the side.

Intake	*Intake*	*Intake**	*Intake* ★

Step 5
Engage relevant stakeholders in analysis of the Program Process Flow. These questions can be used to guide your group discussion:
- What is most notable about this image? Consider its scope and complexity. Does it match the task at hand?
- Where are potential places where implementation challenges might result? What could be the cause?
- What are options for making the program process more efficient?
- What are options for improving effectiveness in interacting with the target group?