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Hi, everyone. We are gathering for the Webinar for the technical assistance for Medicaid and CHIP projects. The title is “The Importance of Business Process Analysis in Health IT Project Planning and Implementation,” and we are going to begin the Webinar in just a minute. Thank you. This is Barbara from RTI international. We are going to go ahead and get started. I will be introducing our moderator. She will be taking it from there. Dr. Teresa Zayas-Caban serves as senior manager for health information technology at the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality. She oversees projects in the portfolio implementing and demonstrating the value of health IT. Dr. Zayas-Caban has helped through grand initiatives. She also does several contracts of clinical decision support and the design and implementation of health IT and its impact to consumers. She completed her training at the University of Wisconsin Madison where she was a National Science Foundation graduate research fellow in industrial engineering. Her dissertation focused on the development of methodology. While pursuing her doctoral degree, she worked with Partners HealthCare of Clinical Research and Development, Boston Children's Hospital program and the Cancer Care in Massachusetts (CAMA) Project, Harvard Center for Cancer Prevention project. Before joining, she served as a a post-doctoral trainee in Wisconsin where she worked on examining the process for health research projects to discover what factors influence the quality and decisions made by potential participants about whether or not to participate in the study. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Zayas-Caban.

Thank you, Barbara. I am very happy to be moderating today. As you probably heard, I am an engineer. Issues of business process analysis are near and dear to my heart. The goal of today is to provide an overview of business process analysis for the implementation of health IT. Before we start, I wanted to go over a few points with the participants. First of all, please note that you been placed on mute to avoid any issues with folks putting the call on hold and any phone issues. If you wish to be unmuted, raise your hand to notify the host and we will unmute you. We would prefer that we have plenty of time for question and answer period. We have about 40 minutes for our presenters and we may even get to end a little early today. When you send questions, please try to use the chat function and send questions to all to panelists. Please e-mail Nicole Knops if you'd like a copy of the slides. Her e-mail is on the slide presentation. RTI is currently in the process of posting all the slides for the Technical Assistance Webinars on the Web site listed on the screen. So, as I said, we have two great speakers today who will be tag teaming the presentation. Claudia Brogan serves as a training manager she provides training and support to staff and grantees on presentation skills, audience interaction, and understanding group dynamics. She contributes her understanding and experience in adult learning strategies to the design and implementation of trying materials and products for [Public Health Informatics Institute] programs. She is responsible for directing, developing, and evaluating a comprehensive set of training programs for multiple audiences in the Institute products and programs. She has had 20 years of experience in training and education; prior to joining the

Institute, she worked at CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention for 5 years, serving as adviser for Center scientists, as well as a project manager. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in theater, English, and education from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Master's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin. Kelley Chester is a business analyst at the Institute and provides expertise for collaborative requirements as well as guidance and training under the Institute requirement development methodology for project team. She has expertise related to information technology and health care systems prior to joining Public Health Informatics Institute She holds a Master's of Public Health and a degree in biostatistics from the College of Public Health, Georgia Southern University.

Thank you very much. Thank you for that great introduction. My name is Claudia Brogan. As we get started, I will let you hear both of our voices so you can tell us apart a little bit. This is Claudia speaking.

And this is Kelley Chester.

It is very good to be here with you this afternoon, and we appreciate this invitation. We want to share with you a little bit about business process analysis, the work that our Institute has been doing for several years. Our hope that is that this can still be engaging to you even though I know it is a bit of a funding constriction that you are all in different locations. Heaven knows what efforts it has taken for you to get to where you are sitting right now or standing right now and what contraptions are in front of you as you hear today's conversation. Our hope is today that as we go through the discussion, your brain can be focused enough with as few interruptions as possible that you can be thinking about applications all the way through as we go through this afternoon's material.

The general structure for how I will proceed is that we have some slides and materials to share with you. We fully intend to open it up for question and answers and ideas for applications in your particular work world. We think that if you can respond in that time period, it will make it feel worthwhile and applicable in your particular situations. Just a little bit about the Public Health Informatics Institute. We are located in the Decatur, Georgia area. We are a subgroup of the overall group called the Task Force for Global Health. It is a public health work group that is affiliated with CDC and is actually literally a subunit of Emory University. Our group has been working over the last 12 to 15 years in the arena of business process analysis. Some of the items that we thought would be useful today in the slides introduce you to the terms in ways that you can apply them in your work.

Here comes the next slide. There it is. Here is what we will do. First, we will lay out all the key terms for the landscape we will cover. Then we are going to focus on these particular tools. There are three tools listed on this slide; our hope is that by the time we get on with our discussion this afternoon, each of these tools is familiar to you and clear to you and you have actually either had an idea what it might look like to use each of these three tools in your particular arena. Then we will discuss each of those three tools, we will talk about ways both have been applied in public health. We also use different examples of agencies we have worked with over the last several years and ways of using these tools for real life improvements and examples. Here is what we hope will be true by the end of our time together this afternoon. We would hope that you would be able in your own words to describe what you would see as being the benefits of being related to and using the wisdom of the process analysis. We would hope that if there was a quiz at the end, you would be able to list those three tools and say a bit about what each of them would be or the personality of each and the way they might be named or used. Finally, [we hope] that you walk away with an understanding of each of the steps that a person would go through in considering the use of an application of these terms in public health. By the end of this session, we will check back with you about each of these objectives to see if those are true, to see if from your perspective you could describe what is useful about this particular set of tools in business process analysis, if you could name the three, and if you have a starting plan if you were to use and apply those in your particular situation.

Just to lay the groundwork, here are the terms you'll hear us use in the section of this conversation. We are going to spend a little time with each of these, just in case you have that reaction right now to see in the very words a business be used. By the end of our conversation, you will hear and be familiar with what we mean when we refer to “business process.” When we use the phrase business process analysis, what we mean is a follow-up piece for business process redesigned, and then finally how the use of each of those stages, if you will, or collections of work might lead you logically to requirement definitions. Those four bullets provided on your screen are intended to grease the wheels, to get you thinking along these lines as the terminology that we would use in the course of the discussion. All right.

Hello, everybody. I am Kelley Chester. I also work at the Institute with Claudia. I want to talk to you today all about the word “business.” Let's talk about this word business first. I'd like to ask you just to think about this. If I were to ask you, what is the business of public health? I did pause for a second and think about how you would answer that question. So, many people associate the word business with administrative tasks like ordering supplies, keeping track of your budget, or even organizing your personnel. No doubt these functions are part of the business of public health and are extremely important, but we have to keep public health running. They are not the only business of public health. So, the work you do as public health professionals and disease surveillance, running a clinic, managing cases, inspection, providing immunizations, getting health education, and every other activity that you take part in is the business of public health. The process of business process analysis that we will discuss today focuses on defining how you do your work and systematically how to document that work.

All right. So, we have a good understanding of what the business of public health is now, I hope. Now, let's talk about what is a business process. If you break down the business of public health and to a logical sequence or the logical parts, how would you do it? So, if we look in a dictionary and see what the definition of a business process is, we should see something similar to this. For instance, in public health, what actually goes into the work of doing a public health task? Say for instance, health inspection. Or maybe providing vital records to another entity. So, another example would be if your goal was to assure, for instance, a school cafeteria that was providing food was safe. How would you do it? You do it by embarking in one or more business process these. So, as the Health Department, you might develop criteria to grade the safety of the cafeteria, organize staff to do a visit, then do an inspection, and file a report. That is a whole set of activities that help achieve the objective of ensuring the school cafeteria is a safe place to eat. So, these qualify as business processes. So, figuring out how we do our work is what business process analysis is all about. It is the first step to the Institutes requirements building methodology. What I am going to show you here in just a minute is a diagram of the Institute's collaborative requirements development methodology. It is based on an industry standard methodology that is used globally, but as you'll later here, we stress the importance of implementing this methodology in a very collaborative fashion. To first understand your work, we must analyze it business process or, in plain English, we have to think through the tasks that are performed to meet the specific public health objectives that we are interested in. Second, we are going to we think through these tasks so we can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the process. This is called business process redesigned. Finally, we are going to describe what an information system must do to support the task. It is an approach for analyzing your processes. You re-think them, and if appropriate, we are going to define a requirement for an information system that could automate that work. So, we are moving from the abstract of think to the more concrete of describing the definition which could and then potentially lead to the design of an information system.

As Claudia mentioned earlier, the focus of today's conversation is going to be to explain what we saw in that very first column of the requirements development methodology. Business process analysis helps us really to think about and document how we do our work now. It is the current look at what we currently do. This is the purpose of the business process analysis. Business process analysis also allows us to ask, how do we do this? How do we today carry out the work of public health? So, to officially represent our business process, the Institute uses two graphical tools: a context diagram and a task diagrams as well as one text-based tool, which is the business process matrix. We are going to describe each one of these in detail as we move to the slide. The graphical representations of the business process really provide a great picture of who is going to participate in your process, what types of information are exchanged between participants, and how the work is accomplished.

To what Kelly just said, with each of these three tools, which in a few moments’ time are going to feel clear and useful to you, each of these tools is used in a way to help detect, illustrate, and help explain the nature of your work as useful tools that we study. First of all, what your tasks are at hand and what you think about your regular job functions? When you think about the regular processes that you are involved with, when you think about the regular people or offices or departments that you interact with, part of that first column in the methodology from a few spots ago was stopping to think about examining, what is the work? What are the patterns? What are we doing on a regular basis by exchanging information to get our work done? We start by thinking about, how is it now? Then we secondly think about, where could we make improvements to do this work better, faster, or in a different way? And then the third column being that we might be able to define what solutions, what improvements, and in some cases what information systems would help in order to do our work better. Now, here is the first of our three -- excuse me -- tools that we will cover this afternoon. The first one is what we call the business process matrix. As you'll see in just a few minutes, they really do interplay. By the time you've studied your situation, your work climate, the regular exchange of information in your function who that each of these three tools is really connected to one another. Now, the business process matrix is really in a sense a table reading from left to right with columns that would help to keep track of each of the particular elements of your business processes. If we were to show you the entire matrix reading from left to right, there are some in the audience that might not as a matter of fact say, you know what that reminds me of? That looks like a logic model. I know from my days when I worked at CDC that it was very common in our public health arena to create logic models as a way for us to consider goals and priorities. Now, the business process matrix is similar in that it maps out for us the big picture of what it is that we are to accomplish. The goals on the left side are the overall intention of what this portion of your work is set to accomplish. The objective being the second column and that gets more specific. As you know in the arena of public health, this smart objectives helps you be particularly clear about how we would measure progress we are making toward our goal. I am going to skip what might be a few of the middle columns and go to the far right-hand side. That is the column that would include measurable outcomes. In a sense, you can think of this as framing your work from left to right. In the left-hand column, you would charge a particular goal you are working on as an example in this matrix. Here it says the major goal of the process supports. The goal is the end state you want to achieve with a particular work function that you are considering and would be defined in terms of the benefit to this community. Secondly, what objective, a concrete statement. Measurable, attainable, realistic, and of course time bound. An objective is, what can you observe about the work getting done to accomplish the goal? Finally, on the right-hand side are the measurable outcomes of what will be true—at the end of this work will be accomplished. The purpose of this particular slide is to call your attention to three columns we would find in the business process matrix. In a sense, is really the frame of your work. Whatever work at hand, it is a sense of what's the go point and what is the end point? What is the naming of this particular function, and what will be true at the end of it that is measurable and the outcome of this particular function that we are examining? How will we know when it is being accomplished? I would suggest that for those of us working with public population or have the benefit of improving public health being their focus that you might consider—with the 60 of you on the call, you would be all over the map in terms of your particular functions. But you might ask yourself, what is an example of a goal that would be in the left-hand column for your particular work and an example in the far right-hand column? Now, the sense that we are talking about is inviting your brain to be a little creative with this and to be considering at all times how this would apply to you in your particular world. What would this look like for you to create a matrix with a goal on the left and the outcome on the right? That is the introduction. What I am going to do is come back to this in a few minutes ones we have gone to the tools. What I would like to do is ask you all for a particular example that you would like to share or clarification in your realm and services as suggestions for how this might apply. The first tool was business process matrix.

The second tool is context diagram. Now, the context diagram is really the who and the what of our work. When you think about your particular work days in particular projects on your desk right now, it really is a sequence of relationships. So, the second tool's called the context diagram. Imagine that we were to ask you to chart a context diagram for a portion of the work that you are involved in right now—sort of get a blank piece of paper and ask you to stop and think about this related to your work. Let me help you get familiar with the symbols that would be used in the diagram. First of all, the circles are entities. When you think about the key relationships that you interact with on a regular basis, the who that you have regular interactions with. The who—that would be exchanges of services or exchanges of information when you think about your great projects you are working on. But what is depicted by the arrows that come back and forth? Why is the outcome? When you examine the shapes, the who, you might put yourself in the entity circle. On the right-hand side you might be thinking about a regular department or colleague that you exchange information with on a regular basis. You would put them in the second entity circle. You would have arrows back and forth between you. For instance, if you're providing documentation from your left-hand circle and you were providing information on a regular basis to the entity on the right-hand side, you would draw the arrow from you to them. Very briefly, you might name what that transaction is by putting a few words on top of that. Let's say on every dollar basis the work you do with them, they respond or return after either proofreading or adding additional information. They return the documentation or the updates via electronic exchange, updates back to you. You would put a small code or word to detect the nature of that transaction above the arrow. In a sense this helps us become familiar with the who of your work and the what of your work. If you were to think about the context you were in on a daily basis, I wonder what you would put in your circles as your entity and what you would name those arrows as your transaction. Consider an example from some cousins in the public health arena. This may be applicable if you've ever eaten in a restaurant. Perhaps this example will sound familiar to you. Let's do a brief glimpse of what a context diagram might be. It involves exchange of information between a local health department and the restaurant that is seeking to become permanent. Imagine each of these three arrows as a separate interaction. For instance, the local health department is the left-hand circle, and the restaurant is the right-hand circle. The local health department let's say is contacted, because the restaurant is seeking a permit. Local health restaurant would provide—I'm sorry. We will read from the top down. The restaurant on the right-hand side submits the information in that top arrow. The first thing that happens is the application is submitted from the restaurant to a local health department. Picture a restaurant in your city right now that is currently going through the opening process. They submit an application to the health department. That arrow indicates that there is information exchange between the two entities. The first arrow is the application. Let's say the second arrow, the local health department, provides an inspector who would come on the premises to this local restaurant in your particular city that is applying for their permanent. They come on site and provide that inspection. There is the second arrow. That is the service exchange between the two entities. Upon successful completion of that inspection, you will see the third arrow is named permit. The local health department at the conclusion of a safe and satisfactory inspection would provide a permit for the restaurant. Here is a very brief example that each of us relate to that indicates to an exchange of information back and forth.

The reason this is up here is to ask you to consider in your own particular circumstances the key relationships that you interact with as entities and to consider how you would name and detect the exchange of information services back and forth. There is an example of a context diagram. Its purpose is that it helps us study the context within which this work is getting done. Context is detecting who and what of the exchange.

All right. Claudia has given you the beginning of a toolkit to perform business process analysis. Let's put another tool in our toolbox. A third tool that we are going to look at is the task flow. A task flow diagram really helps us visualize how the flow works. We know the who and the what, and we are seeing what information is going to flow between the entities. So, let's put more concrete visualization on this through the task flow diagram. You see the items in the center that are used when we draw a task flow diagram. So, the symbols that we use here at the Institute are just basic flowchart symbols, something that you probably seen before. We use rectangles before our task and activities. Diamond shape is for the decision. A directional arrow is just like we saw in the context diagram. Carrying forward a little further with what we just saw is the application to open the restaurant. This is an example we received from a grantee we worked with on one of our projects. This was developed by the New York State Health Department as they learned to create task flow diagrams so they could go back and show their business processes themselves. The process that they in particular wanted to study was this restaurant permitting process. On the slide, you will see it is just a very high-level version of this process. Again, the client at the very beginning, you see all the way to the left side, has submitted an application. This is the rep's arrived submitting the application to local health department. The application is reviewed and plans are reviewed. The restaurant is inspected. Upon successful completion, the permit is issued. So, this task flow diagram really provides a summary of the specific business processes. It helps agencies carry out a set of activities to ensure that a commercial food establishment is safe, they are doing one or more business processes. That is the objective. Remember, we spoke about objectives when we were talking about the business process matrix. You can see how the tools are beginning to tie together and flow. So, they can achieve the objective by a number of processes. They have to organize their staff to get a visit, they have to inspect, inform, and monitor each establishment. These activities or these tasks that they are performing are achieving the objectives, and then the overall goal that was established in the business process matrix. And that, essentially, is what a business process is. Now, in using this example, this local health department example, I know that this is a little bit different from what you do at Medicaid and CHIP agencies, but I hope that you can see that this can be tied in to what you guys do; it is just that you carry on different processes. Okay?

So, moving on to the next slide. This is a really little bit more detailed a visualization of the task flow diagram. Remember, task flow diagrams are to help us see how the work flows. You are going to notice in this particular diagram the additional of the horizontal boxes which represent the two entities that we talked about earlier and the context diagrams. So, a task flow, a formalized test flowed diagram shows the work that is being completed inside each one of the entities and helps us manage the flow of the information as it moves through out the context and across the entities in the environment. One thing that I would like to kind of backpedal just for a minute and do is define, what is a task? We have talked about it, but let me put a little more of a concrete definition on the word task. A task or an activity—sometimes called both—is something that can be performed from start to finish just by a single entity.

It is just a basic something that you do. For example, responding to an email. That is a task or activity. When we look at activities that are performed by many different people within the process, it may be helpful to think about the task as the work that could be required to move something from someone's inbox to someone's outbox. So, they have received the task and have done the work and now it has gone out. You also see on this diagram a diamond shape. This indicates that there is a decision to be made. Specifically, this decision is going to be made by entity number two. If the decision point is yes, then the process is able to move forward and go to the next task. If not, then the process simply looks back to the decision point until the decision criteria is met. Task flows are fantastic in their ability to show us the order or the sequence of how these tasks must happen from left to right and across entities. So, it can move up, down, and forward. In order to really get a full understanding of business processes through a business process analysis (or BPA), we are going to talk about the steps of BPA. So, the first step, like we discussed earlier, is to define goals and objectives. We need to know a clear understanding of what it is we are trying to accomplish. And this can be done through using a business process matrix or just simply defining the goals and objectives. We want to model the context of all our work. We want to identify certain business rules, described the tasks and workflow, and then hopefully be able to identify a common set of tasks that may be happen across programs or happen across departments within your agency. So, when we get started with BPA or business process analysis, some of the things that we can ask ourselves as an agency is, well, what do we do? What does it look like? Who is involved? How do they relate? We know that many of the tasks and activities that we accomplished in public health are very relatable across departments and across programs become even across state, federal, and local agencies. And then we want to find out, well, what activities actually take place based on what we are trying to accomplish? Throughout the steps, we can make use of the tools that we have shown you, the context diagram, the task flows, and the business process matrix to bring the process to life and help us see what we are actually trying to accomplish.

With this in mind, and I think when you think about the examples of this, I think there are actually such common topics of motivation between public health agencies and the work that you do in human services. Our hope is that as you think about this, it really does become clear that these techniques and the tools that we are talking about this afternoon are applicable. They really have a place in your work across each of the units and apartments and components of a public health agency. When you think about the work you do in Medicaid in the program administration, your particular angle and function within that, you are thinking about ways that and this applies in your work. Well, why would this be of any use to folks that would consider using these tools for this mentality in ways to understand their work? Our first thought is one of the most important purposes of using this kind of mindset of business process analysis, if you will, is that it really is a very practical and engaging use of including the various different stakeholders. For instance, if there is a problem with redundancies and the way that the documents are shared or fields are not completed or are completed on forms, for instance. The actual thinking process might be a way for the discussion to take place among the various different stakeholders and help them think about the current design of the way the work gets done to suggest ways it might be improved. So, the first bullet here is that it makes a useful conversation among those who are connected. Secondly, it helps us when we think about documenting or making a map of or sketch of the work that we are doing. It helps us actually stop in have a conversation and say, is that really how we do it? What we have seen time and time again—and maybe eight or ten different folks involved with the exchange of information, but by actually sitting down together in a group each having input, even a first of those columns when we started with the model at the beginning was to stop and think about the work that we are doing even having the conversation of creating that sketch. They will say, is that really how we do that? I didn't know this element. Or I didn't know that step of the process. Or I didn't know what the intake was like for our customers in the beginning of the process, for instance. It helps us gather important information just by stopping to examine the work that we are doing. Finally, it helps us get a very clear sense of what could be the problem statement at hand. What is calling out for improvement for streamlining or for clarification? Just by going through a stretch like this, it helps the group become more clear on ways this could be improved. The key word I would suggest to you in this entire slide is the emphasis on collaboration. The work that we do here is bringing together folks that do similar work. Helping them together describe the work they are doing then generates improvement. The emphasis is on the cooperation. When the group comes together and has common vocabulary or definitions, then folks are going to share a sense of improving the situation or doing problem solving. It also would help folks start to consider ways that any form of technology, whether it is an information system or any version of technology available to the people in their particular situations. It is also very useful that as we listen to each other's descriptions of the situation that folks would have suggestions for improvements and listening to each other helps us understand the process in a fresh way. Finally, if there are situations where it is useful to develop or define requirements for solutions, the more input folks have had together in the discussions, the more widely they will think about creating solutions. As we take a look at any definition we would have for a healthy and function, we would suggest that interoperability is a term that would be important for all folks to be clear about and the function operate well with other functions. Individuals operate well with other individuals and the information can be exchanged quickly. It would also increase the vendor interest in public health or human services by having gone through the process of collaborative—in a collaborative sense taking a look at problem-solving and generating a solution. We could all as a group go more wisely to a vendor and discuss potential solutions. And it is conceivable, as the third bullet says, that that would help yield financial support in ways that could generate the sharing of financial resources.

I agree with what we're talking about. One of the things that as far as collaboration—it is important that business processes really have a long shelf life. Once we have refined them, they can last a long time. Technology, as we know, is changing all the time. Once we understand the processes, we can apply latest and greatest technologies and even change technology as time goes on. But we cannot do that if we don't know what the business of what we are doing is. So, I want to talk to you a little bit about how we at the Institute have taken the whole requirements development methodology, which includes business process analysis, and how we have applied it to public health.

So, in determining how to apply the whole methodology, we realized we had to be very mindful of a lot of the special challenges. We know that public health is very problematic in nature. Typically, it is hard to discern how many unduplicated clients are being served, because client information, as you are well aware, is entered separately for each program. You guys in Medicaid and of the CHIP world probably have enrollees. There are probably also enrolled in other programs within public health and they are enrolled again in additional programs. They are probably floating around out there in systems, either paper or electronic, multiple times. We also have to be mindful that public health is accountable not to just the local level but also state and federal. That's about some of the cluster problems we had with Katrina. You're not just accountable to yourself. You are accountable to a lot of different agencies. As we were talking about in the previous slide, there is a great need for interoperability. We need to allow to share information so we can make better health, public health decisions. Confidentiality is a great issue. HIPAA affects us all. Sometimes we have a tough time wondering what we can share. What type of people in our community can share with? We have to follow legislative mandate. Funding is not always plentiful. Typically, we get funding for one program but the processes flow across multiple [programs], so that can be a great issue as well. So, we at the Institute have really realized as we are working on business process analysis projects, especially within public health departments and agencies, is that we really want to achieve this division of interoperability connecting state and local. We realize not only the need to define the work together, but that we should take the next step. We have to seek agreement across agencies on requirements for systems. What do systems need to do to support rather than drive our work? Another great lesson we have learned at the Institute is that our differences are less important than our commonalities. Whether we are in Atlanta or we are in Vermont or California or any of the other over 3,000 health departments or health agencies from country, there really is a way for us all to collaborate. Not only define what we do, but also to improve it. So, how do we know this? How do we know we can improve it? A major takeaway we have from a previous experience is that we were able to demonstrate at the local health department the similarities end processes for a health department that serves 65,000 and a health department that serves over five and a half million people. We were able to get them to agree that their work was more the same than it was different.

Our thought as we consider where we have come is that we started with the three pillars and urging us to each stop and think about the work we do now. Secondly, to reconsider or have new ideas for solving problems and making improvements. Another column being defined parameters for what solutions we might think be useful. Those were the three columns of our methodology. We talked about each of the three tools. We talked about the business process matrix, the idea of when you consider your particular arena within human services thinking about the goal that should drive the way the work is getting done. The second column being objective, ways we will measure or note that has taken place. What are the outcomes? What we aiming to be true when this is done? That is the business process matrix that should guide the way that we do our work. The second one to talk about was the context diagram: thinking about the context where we do our work; the who and what of your regular day; stopping to sketch for ourselves what the who and what might be as a way of understanding our work. Finally, thinking about the task flow diagrams. If we were to stop and chart the actual steps that we go through when there are pieces of information that the back-and-forth and exchanged and make progress through the different tasks. Eventually, the tasks help us finish and accomplish the goal. So, by making an actual sketch of what a task flow would look like, it helps us stop and examine the sequence of events in the exchange of information. Three tools, business process matrix, context diagram, and the task flow help us get an idea of understanding the work that we have at hand, the work you do this week. Helping us study our work in order to looking for ways to improve it. We encourage you if you're interested in learning more about this. This is the website for our group. You are welcome to any of the materials and any of the resources that are there. What we would like to do next is open for questions or comments. What are some questions that you are interested in discussing?

Thanks. I would like to open it up for questions. We have about 25 minutes for questions and answers. Please use the chat function on the WebEx. You can type the question and send it to all panelists. I guess while we wait for people to submit their questions, I will start off. Can you talk a little bit more about how the different tools you went over during your talk to can help you identify potential problems that require process redesign?

Absolutely. We talked today about business process analysis and its current state. What is currently going on within the agency or within just one specific process? One of the mantras that I think we like to use around here is that you cannot change what you can't see. That is why using business process analysis allows us to understand what we can do. Now that we can clearly see, we can begin to choose the process that needs to be redesigned. After we have followed all of our processes through the process analysis tools, we can begin to look at each one and say, is the process inconsistent? Are there any problems with this? Is it antiquated? A lot of times when you go through BPA and you are trying to choose a process to redesign, people just say, this is the way we have always done it. And you have heard it before within your agencies. This could be a process that is just out of date and we need to look at it. Processes are sometimes inefficient and redundant. For instance, you'll have three departments that do the same process. They may gather demographic information for the clients and would really only need to do it one time. Another way we can choose a process to redesign is to look at it and see if it is a high-volume task. Is it a process we do 50 times a day, 5 days a week? The inefficiencies may not be seen right away, but it is such a high value test that it is possible it needs to be redesigned. It may be perfect, but it never hurts to look at it and really work with the people on the ground or out in the field who do this process every day and say, hey, can we look at this process and redesign it? What are the pains in this process? Also, choosing processes that are possible to have higher risk. So, if the process—if it gets messed up or it does not properly, is there a risk for a very highly detrimental affect or outcome? Those of the types of processes we generally look at to begin the choosing process.

And this is Claudia. I agree with everything said in terms of understanding what are examples of our work that we are calling out to either be redesigned or reconsidered. An example of your own particular situation: if you were to stop and take a look at the way the work is getting done, you might ask yourself, where are their portions of our processes where we are inefficient? Examples of that might be, for instance, when there is duplication of effort. If one station where one of the clients comes is asking a very similar information to another point in the process, anytime there is a duplication of effort, that might be an example in your agency calling out for being redesigned by you. Another one is if you were to stop and examine your processes and look for anything that is an unnecessary task. We have always asked this question. In truth, when we track it down and just take a timeout, there is never any way in our process that we ever use that information. So, it might really slim down anything in the sequences of our work that are being done if there is an unnecessary tasks that turns out we don't need. For yet another way -- I am thinking of a recent agency worked with. They said, how do we know what to fix and where to begin? We said, act as if you are one of your very own clients. Just consider what the steps are that the clients go through. Either where do they get stuck or overwhelmed, or where you notice that they cycled back around and around? Either they get stuck or lost or they breeze right through this step of the process—here we have a group of 15 people all clustered together waiting. That would be a signal for you that is calling all for redesign or considered to do some problem-solving. Another way of looking back might be if each of the staff members in your group were asked to understand and describe the different steps of the process. If there are some parts of the process where they themselves could even explain why this step is needed or what is clear or not clear about the way the instructions and directions come through to our clients, that if it is not clear for folks that work in this arena, we need to take a fresh look at the language and communication and the directions we give. Also if we were to prioritize the work we do, there may be some things better on important tasks or not as crucial or could happen at another time or in another method. If we are trying to streamline or trim down the work that we do, is there any way you could consider an improvement that would be made by focusing on the most important sense of the process? Finally, if there is ever any big distance between physical distance or time distance between when a question is asked and when the information is gathered? That would be calling out, for instance, for reconsideration by you. If there are large gaps in time or space between when a question is answered, those are some examples we have discovered in working with agencies where we have helped them just look at their work and watch for patterns. Especially acting as if they are one of their own clients and asking themselves what is clear, what is not clear about our process. Is there any suggestion we would have for improving that? Good question. What other questions?

Thank you both. As you spoke about getting started with process analysis, can you talk a little bit about how do folks know where to start? Also, with the task flowchart, how high level or how granular should it be? You show an example fairly high example. It is sort of a little bit difficult to figure out the best level in terms of understanding an overall process. Can you talk a little bit about how that gets determined and what you found to be most helpful?

Great question. I will address the first part of what you said, how do we know where to start? So, here at the task force at the Institute, whenever we start any project, the first question we asked is what does success look like? Success for different agencies is different. The success of the project could be based on an internal quality improvement. Or it could be an external grant-funded project. Typically, what we want to do is once we know what success looks like is kind of moves through the three steps of the business process analysis, redesign, and then requirements and as far as the task diagram goes, I am glad you asked that. We actually have an extra slide that we want to show you. Let me see if I can get it. Nicole, if you don't mind passing the ball back so we could show a slide, that would be great. I am glad you asked this, because everyone can see this live. I didn't want to if it would get too confusing. I did not know about the time constraint. This is an actual slide of an actual task flow that we worked on in another project and that we have that is called common ground where we work with grantees that were local and state health departments. This is a task flow of the immunization administration, just the scheduling functions. As you can imagine within immunization, there are many processes. You will see the entities as well as be able to see to step through the process. Although this looks much more detailed than what we showed you in the presentation, this still is a rather high-level look at a process. The first is contact immunization office, request the appointment.

It might not be readable on your screens. Can you name the swim lanes for them?

Sure, the entities are the local community, which could be anybody within the community as a patient or the guardian of the patient. And then you'll see a little oval that says start. That is how we start off the diagram. The first box is contact immunization office. In this activity the parent or the party within the community is actually contacting an immunization office to, and the next step, request an appointment. And then it moves down to the following entities, which is the actual immunization office. These are the two entities that play into that process. The next step would be to document or determine the service request. You'll see a decision blocks that asks, is this a new patient? We sort of follow through the whole process until we get to the very end where we get to the point where we are able to send reminders to the patient, especially if this is an immunization that follows that they have to have a second follow up. Looking at this, is it granular to the point of are we walking through each step that has to happen in order for this immunization to be scheduled for the patient or the guardian? You could get much more detailed, or you can back off and be even a little more high level when you are determining what success looks like for your project. If you would determine, at what level do we want to get? Typically, staying in a medium range, not staying so high level that you cannot actually see the process, but not getting so detailed that you get bogged down in just the details of the process that could slow you down or even just bring frustration to were the project does not move forward the corollary—the regularity is determined by you.

This is Claudia. When you look at the slide, each of those legs gives you an idea for a possibility of where your system either should be supporting your process or could be supporting a process. Now, this is really related to the question Ellison has raised. I think this is a real good point. I want to start with the second question, which is this temptation to rush to adopt the new technologies, because they have such a razzle-dazzle that the vendor has some shiny product for us on the shelves and it looks so enticing. Our group is recommending caution and resisting temptation, not letting ourselves get lured into products which may or may not have much to do at all with our particular situation and solution in mind. That is why we become advocates for folks talking together privately offline before they let themselves get lured into this very magical vendor products. We've had so many folks approach us, so many agencies that we have met with have story after story of being disappointed with a razzle-dazzle product because it sounded really good but did not really fit the situation or help them solve their problem at hand. That is why we suggest to the folks that that is a third of the three steps in terms of examining particular vendor options, but it will not serve you and will be satisfactory in all cases if you have not stopped to think about the nature of your work and where you want your own improvements. That should inform you. I like what he said. I think that is an incredibly important question to overcome and resist the temptation for implementing the new technologies. Wherever in conversation you have influence, wherever you hear it being referred to as the newest pamphlet that landed in our mailboxes. Folks within the realm of this kind of thinking can stop and suggest that there would be a few steps to happen first before we examine a particular technology as being the solution for things. And I also wanted to just very briefly acknowledged the very smart question about getting the buy-in for any of this type of examination of the process. And I think the truth is I think that time after time when I have heard examples that an agency from the receptionist to director of that department sat down together at a conference table with flip chart and markers to talk together to examine their processes and have a good conversation about how things work around here. Again, the tone is set by a director—he or she being humble enough to have that discussion. The truth is that people support what they helped create. If all the folks involved in a particular process are asked for their input, the more folks in on that equation, the smarter we are going to be a more well-rounded we are to be in the way we examine the work being done. Great question. What else?

Well, sort of along those lines, you were suggesting that most if not everybody should be involved in some way in the business process analysis. In terms of getting by, who should lead this work at a particular agency? What has been your experience with that?

Great. Let me first offer thought. I know that Kelley Chester has an idea about this as well. First of all, I would stress that if there is any possible way that the word collaboration is a theme the way the discussions even get held, is a really interesting question. I am all in favor of a neutral person perhaps being able to conduct the conversation in the sense that they do not have a force in that race. They could help the group had a conversation without feeling like they are getting their toes trotted upon or that they have a magical answer. As an example, if there were two departments that wanted to have this discussion together, you could involve neutral people. One person from department H could help the group in the get-together, and they might be a will to facilitate the conversation or moderate the conversation because they do not have a secret, hidden answer. They would earn favors by doing that. I would urge the first word rebuild this on the sense of collaboration the folks together would be in on the discussion. What are your thoughts?

Well, typically when we are working on a project for BPA, we like to develop a work group. Generally, we have the fears of working or fears of groups. On the outer level, it is typically a pretty large group. These are your top stakeholders, the people who, like Claudia said, have enormous stake in the race. They want to know what is going on. While we suggest having a good group of people, what you get down to the core of who is like to define the process these and woodworking to define the redesign, we like to actually keep a smaller group, because a smaller group can be lean, nimble, agile, and they can work through the process at a much quicker pace. Typically, the people that we like to see within an analysis work group would be people that really have technical prowess. People who know the process and know what is going on. Not everyone can know everything, but each member needs to know a lot about the topics or what having a general understanding of what will be the focus of the work group. We like to call these people subject matter experts. It is also important for the subject matter experts to have had relative recent experience. We could have had work group members with 30 years of experience in, let's say, vaccine administration or whatever we are working on, but maybe that was 30 years ago. Maybe they have progressed up the ladder and now they are in management or they are higher level within the agency, but they were actually in the field just recently. Having people that are fresh from the field, fresh with experience is really, really important within the working group. We also like to have people who pass what we call the premise test. This is point to sound a little comical, but it is really important when you are working within a group that the person -- the people who are in the group, when they hear a name Donegal, I don't think I can work with that person. And that is also really, really important. As we know, if we are in a group with someone who has super strong personality and who may not be open to everyone's ideas, they might keep the other working members from speaking up and saying what they really feel. We always want our workgroup members to be respectful of everybody's expertise and their experiences. People need to be able to really think very specifically, but also take that step to think broadly. I think probably what you are going to look at within your agency is probably the single most important thing is, do they have a time to commit to the project? If you have a workgroup who cannot be committed to the time that you feel is necessary to complete the project, then you are really setting yourself up for problems. Those are some of the things we suggest when we get started. Great question.

Thanks.

I think we have time for just one more question. I will take the lead. Can you talk about how all process analysis can help its users identify one how the information technology or information systems may help a particular problem with the business processes?

Absolutely. I was showing this last slide that is already up here. After we go through the redesign process, we look at, well, what pieces or what tasks within this process can be led to like we have these little red flags up here? Basically, when we do that, we are asking a specific question. We are asking the question, how would you see information technology or an information system support this? So, it is really important that each task within each process that you have redesigned be looked at. We have to critically think about, what are the needs and what are the wants so that this activity or in this task can happen. Not all tasks are going to be flagged or could have information systems. It just so happens that this process in particular, we felt that every task could. Not all tasks will. Perhaps if we look at this particular process, we would say, what are the needs and wants for a system-enabled process? So, possibly one of the requirements that we could come up with before this or the way that we could see the system-enabling this process we could say, well, the system must have the ability to generate the immunization reminder based on an immunization schedule. And you will see that that would be past number 12, send reminder. So, we have said, send reminder. That could be a nurse Judy picks up a% chart and flips to deter and calls from or it could be a system-enabled task that the system automatically generates the immunization reminder based on a standard schedule. You see how we can look at each task and say, well, there is the human aspect or the way we do it now, but how could the system change that so we could do this technology and nurse Judy could do something else? That would be a more effective and more efficient use of her time. I think that is the way we look at how IT can address problems within the task where within the process. Anything to add?

No, that is good.

All right. Break. I would like to think Claudia and Kelly for taking the time to present today and for a great talk and for answering all these questions. Before we move on for those folks still on the call, we would like to invite you to subscribe. The address is listed on your screen. You'll get messages about upcoming calls and activities related to this effort. Also, we would like to remind you that there will be an evaluation that will pop up following the Webinar. Please go ahead and fill that out. We use the feedback you provide to organize future Webinar sessions and topics. If you don't have time to complete it, please go ahead and contact Nicole via email, which is also listed on her screen. Please, please, please. We are looking forward to getting your feedback. Go see the project website. Nicole, if you could get to the last slide. Please go to the private website listed on your screen or call toll-free or send us an email with recommendations and comments. Thank you all.

[event concluded]