COMPLIANCE AND IMPROVEMENT MONITORING

5 Whys Protocol

The Five Whys protocol is a simple but powerful tool for cutting quickly through the outward symptoms of a problem to reveal its underlying causes. It facilitates teams through a line of inquiry to reach a shared understanding of the cause of the problem. The Five Whys is most useful when considering simple to moderate problems.

Participants

Roles: Facilitator, notetaker

Group Size: 4+ people

Time: 10-20 minutes

Materials

In Person: Whiteboard or flipchart paper, markers

Virtual: Virtual shared workspace

Instructions for Use

1. Assemble a Team. Identify and gather a diverse group of stakeholders familiar with the problem.

2. Define the problem. State the problem and why it's the focus of the conversation (include data points, references to previous meetings/discussions or rationale for the problem).

3. Ask the First Why? Ask the participants why the problem is occurring.

4. Ask "Why?" Four More Times. Ask subsequent "Why?" questions. Each time, frame the question in response to the answer received.

a. Example:

- Why do our team meetings always run late?
  - We don't start on time.
    - Why don't we start on time?

b. Continue asking "Why?" questions until everyone involved is satisfied they have arrived at the root cause.

5. Document the underlying cause. Invite participants to consider next steps including improvement planning to address the identified cause(s).