

TOOL: Cause and Effect Diagram

What is the tool?

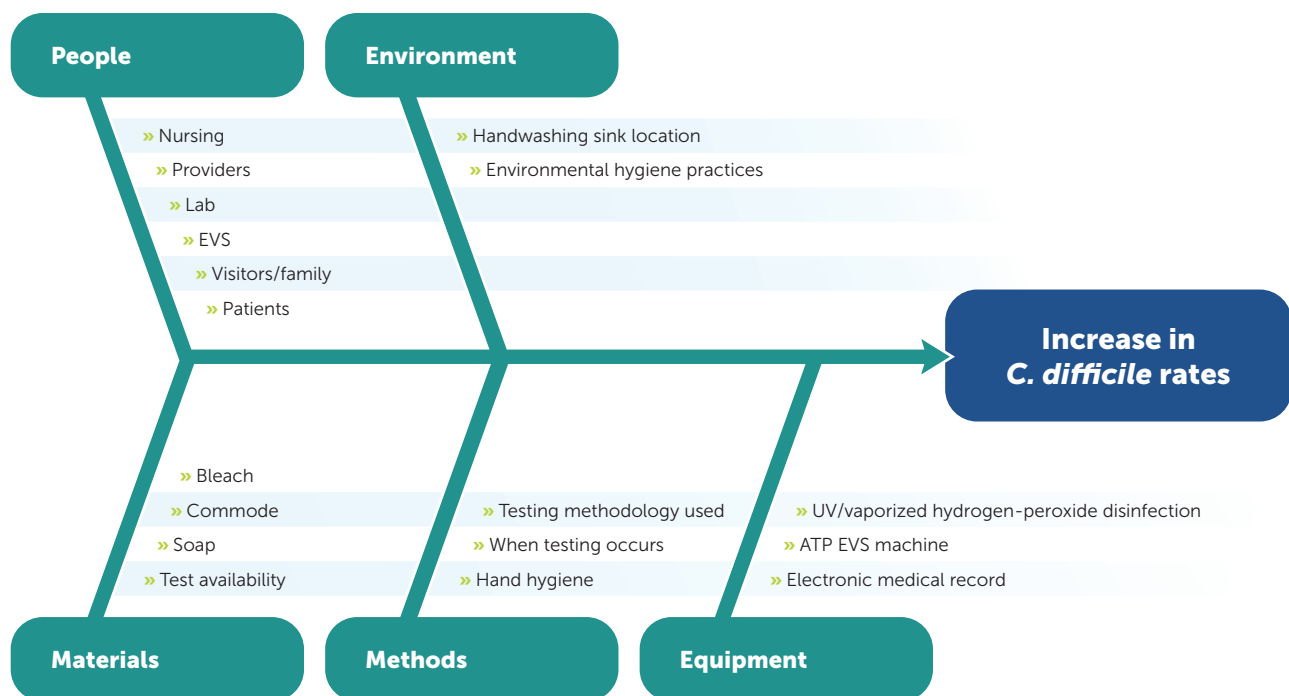
The **Cause and Effect Diagram** is a graphic tool used to explore and display a list of causes associated with a certain effect. The graph organizes the list of causes into categories and is also known as an Ishikawa or “fishbone” diagram.



When should the tool be used?

Teams should use a cause and effect diagram to explore multiple causes that may be contributing to a particular outcome. It can be used for a brainstorming activity and can help identify previously undiscovered areas for improvement. The cause and effect diagram should be constructed by a team comprised of stakeholders who are familiar with the process that produces the effect.

Example: Hospital data show an increase in *C. difficile* rates. A team of stakeholders was assembled to explore the possible causes of the rate increase. Because there were numerous possible causes that were contributing to the increased rate, a cause and effect diagram was used.



REFERENCE:

QI Essentials Toolkit: "[Cause and Effect Diagram](#)."