**Job Aid: Fundamentals 4-16**

**Fundamentals of an Effective Problem-solving Laboratory**

* Assign an administrator (process owner), typically the Quality Manager, to oversee the continual improvement (CI) efforts of the laboratory. CI efforts involve actions to prevent future problems and are comprised of corrective action (CA) and preventive action (PA).
* Use a structured problem-solving method, such as root cause analysis (RCA), that provides a how-to roadmap for staff to follow.
* Assign ownership to every problem. Even if a team approach is used, the problem should still be assigned to a specific individual.

***Shared responsibility means that nobody is responsible –* W. Edwards Deming**

* Outline the tasks the individual assigned to the problem is held responsible for ensuring completion. Tasks could include:
* Recruiting the team members, if a team approach is needed,
* Acquiring resources,
* Leading the investigation into root cause,
* Facilitating the selection of possible actions,
* Ensuring that the action is implemented,
* Ensuring the effectiveness of the solution.
* Involve people familiar with the problem. Focus on people who have first-hand knowledge of the issues, regardless of their position in the laboratory.
* Start with simple tools, but use them well (e.g. interviewing, brainstorming, document and record review, cause and effect diagramming.
* Aggressively pursue root cause(s). Don’t accept weak or invalid root causes.
* Apply project management techniques to implement the appropriate solutions by assigning:
* Responsibilities,
* Time frames,
* Milestones,
* Reviews,

**Continue tracking progress to completion.**

* Make problem-solving the subject of frequent communication within the laboratory. Broadcast achievements any time the laboratory succeeds solving or preventing problems.
* Congratulate and celebrate improvement.