



# Process Gates

**A method to understand the existence and flow of  
organizational processes and the barriers they encounter**

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Part of the SECURE Center Process Pathfinder for Research Security Professionals  
*Safeguarding the Entire Community in the U.S. Research Ecosystem*

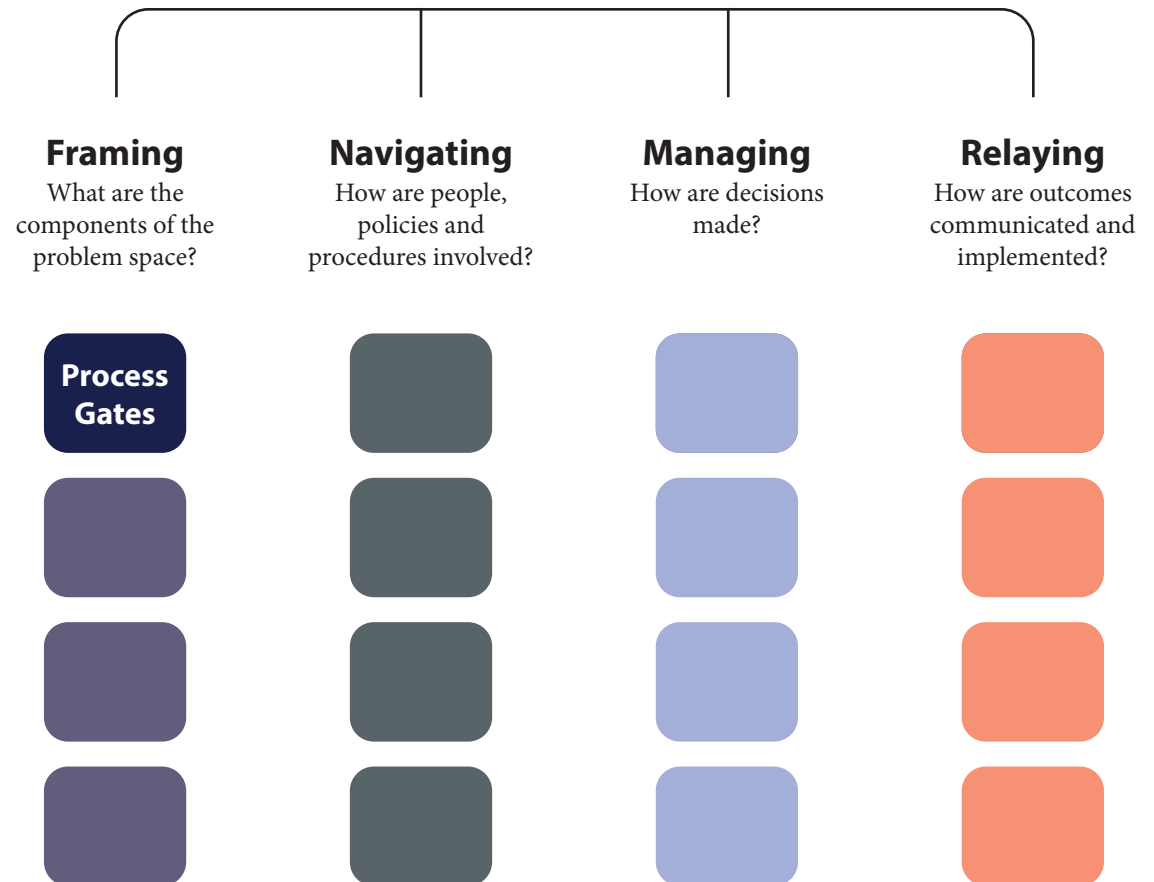
# Introduction

The SECURE Center has developed the Process Pathfinder as a means of helping those in research security understand their needs as individuals, departments and initiatives. The methods are interactive in nature, and meant for either digital or analog application with your research security team.

Whether established or emerging as a function, research security functions overlap those of your entire research organization, its ongoing needs and its diversity. This Process Pathfinder is designed to help you think through the complexities your organization may encounter.

Use multiple methods for a more comprehensive view of your problem space.

## 4 Modes to Address the Needs of the People inside of a Problem Space in Research Security



# Process Gates

## Tabletop Materials:

- Markers
- Large Notecards/Post-its
- Large Writing Surface
- Large Roll of Paper

## Variations

The SECURE Center uses a variety of tools to facilitate the Process Pathfinder - including digital whiteboards. Any writing surface will do so long as you are able to clearly document the elements outlined by the methods.

- 01** Context - Process Gates
- 02** How to Use Process Gates
- 03** What to do With Your Outcomes
- 04** Share Your Feedback

# 01

## Context - Process Gates

# Process Gates

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Process Gates is a diagramming method used to understand the existence and flow of organizational processes and the barriers they encounter.

Participants engage by describing a scenario and its stages of development, detailing the specific processes that contribute to each stage of that scenario's existence. The processes of any single stage are called "stacks". Stacks may include a combination of both internal and external processes - things that are developed by you or things that are delivered to you. Details for "why, who, where, what" contexts are added to each process stack, providing a clear view of the complexity that exists for any single situation. In between each stage is a "gate". Gates are formed by two additional questions: "What gets in the way?; How is it resolved?" After answering these questions, the next stage of the scenario is assessed.

### **Outcomes**

- A qualitative visualization coded to a scenario's stages of development and process complexity
- Details regarding the origin, utilization and existence of specific policies for a scenario that may be used to determine clearer desire paths of organizational operation

### **When to Use Process Gates**

Use this method when you need to understand the specific internal or external processes that are employed to guide your operations.

## 02 How to Use Process Gates

# Step 1: Choose Your Scenario

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### Example

PI Flash works in energy storage. Their lab is funded by corporate sponsors, NSF, and DOE. The lab also has licensed a few pieces of valuable IP providing the lab and the PI with additional income. Their research is generally fundamental, but it is profitable and businesses are often excited and interested in PI Flash's work.

PI Flash calls you. A post-doc-led team did inventory yesterday and noticed several concerning disparities, specifically missing supplies. These disparities led one of the post-docs to mention an incident from a few weeks ago that they had not paid much attention to: one morning they came in early to find the lab's door propped open with a trash can. They had not noticed anything missing, so they assumed it was a mistake and had gone about their day.

A graduate student also mentioned they have noticed that their lab notebook has, at times been found in a different drawer to where they left it. The PI did some rudimentary checking of lab computers and found software installed on a device they had not put there. The unapproved software seems to be for an VPN application. PI Flash is concerned, they have a key card-controlled lab and the movement of the lab notebooks and software installation seems to go beyond simple theft.

PI Flash is concerned they have an insider threat, but they are known as a caring mentor and diligent supervisor. PI Flash is very concerned about how the matter will proceed and who will be involved.

02

How to Use Process Gates

# Step 2: Divide Your Scenario into Stages

Scenarios tend to have distinct stages of development detailed by specific actions or responses to actions. The number of stages can be quite numerous. Evaluate your scenario and divide it into the most concise set of stages as possible.

### Example

| <div><div>Process Name</div><div>Process Description</div><div>Who needs it?</div><div>Why is it needed?</div><div>Where does it come from?</div><div>What does it aim to acheive?</div></div>                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |
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02

How to Use Process Gates

# Step 3: Assess Your Processes

Starting with your first stage, list and describe the processes employed to guide that stage of the scenario. Make note of the context of the process by noting: **who** needs it, **why** it is needed, **where** it comes from, and **what** the process aims to achieve.

### Example

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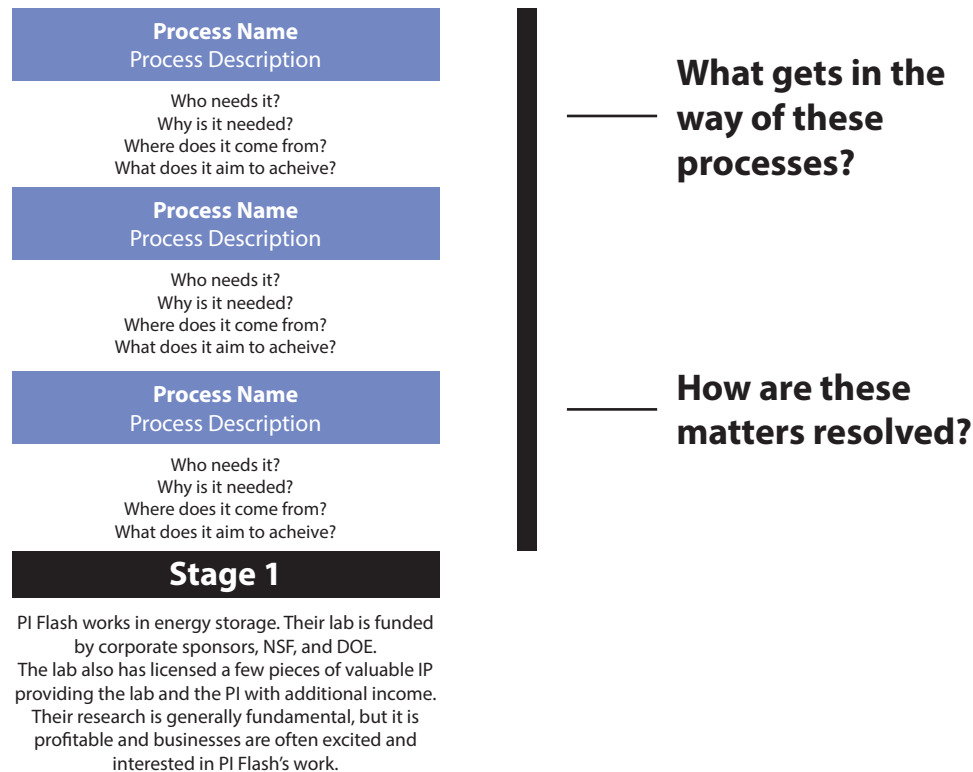
## 02 How to Use Process Gates

# Step 4: Assess Your Gates

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Draw a line in between your first and second stages. This is a “**gate**”. Gates are things that get in the way of your progress. Gates also keep things within so that they do not adversely affect the environment outside of their boundaries. **Create your gate by asking:** What gets in the way of these processes? **Unlock your gate by asking:** How are these matters resolved?

### Example





02

How to Use Process Gates

Step 5: Repeat

Stack your processes and evaluate your gates, from stage to stage, making note of any changes. Was a process left out? Was a process included that should not have been? Was a process internally or externally driven?

Example

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# 03

## What to do With Your Outcomes

### What to do with your process stacks

Summarize each stage and describe how each stack of processes impacts the momentum of the scenario. Scenarios may exhibit common themes from one to the next, but each occurs within a dynamic and contextual ecosystem. These contexts may differ drastically from one organization to the next. The goal is to understand, question and validate the existence of your processes as they relate to your organization and the scenarios your organization might encounter.

### What to do with the qualitative visualization of Process Gates

Work with your team to prototype something new by moving processes from one stage to the next. This may prompt insights that would positively affect your organization's operations or highlight gaps in effectiveness that need to be addressed, asking if they might be made more effective for **framing**, **navigating**, **resolving**, or **relaying** the problem at hand.

There is no "right" combination of processes, only the the most effective combination for the scenario at the time.

# 04

## Share Your Feedback

**Share your feedback  
by visiting**

**[secure-center.org](https://secure-center.org)**