Process Flows - At A Glance
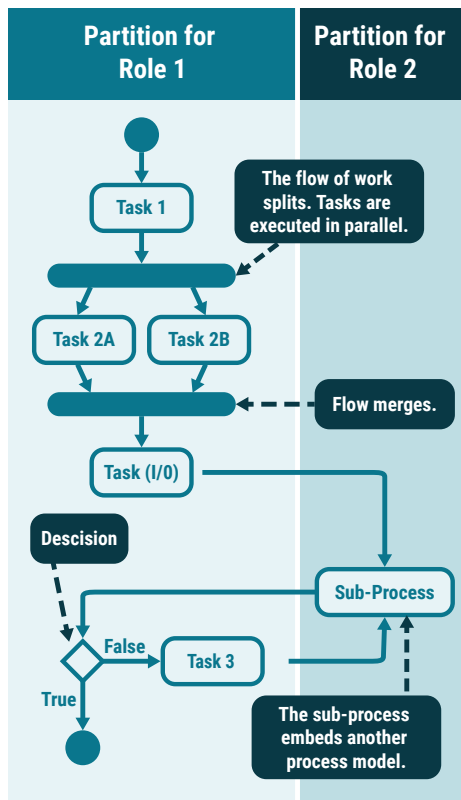
contributed by Emily Iem

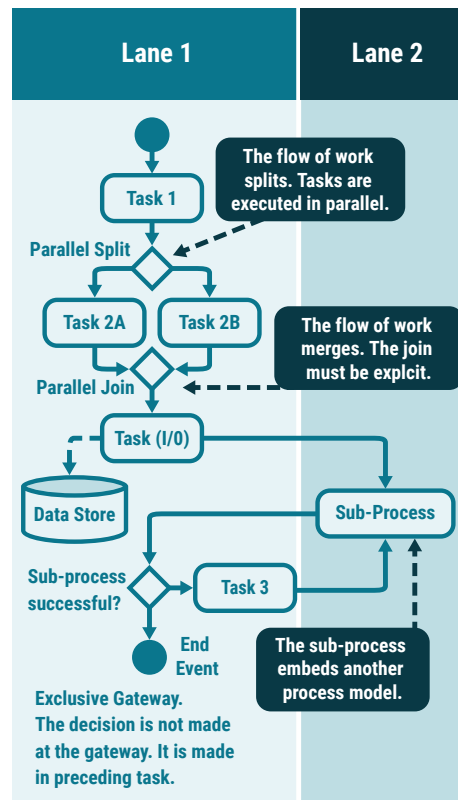## Different notations can be used for process modeling:

- Flowcharts and Value Stream Mapping (VSM)
- Data Flow Diagrams and Unified Modelling Language™ (UML®) Diagrams
- Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN)
- Integrated DEFinition (IDEF) Notation and Input, Guide, Output, Enabler (IGOE) Diagrams
- SIPOC and Value Stream Analysis
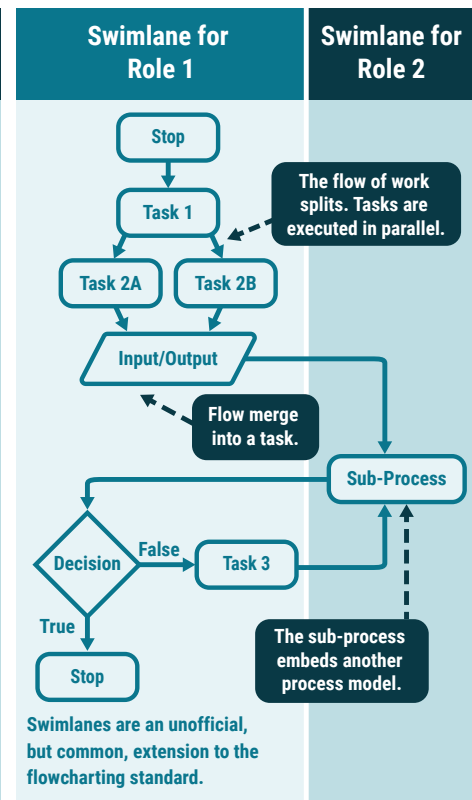
Examples of diagrams:

Activity Diagram

Business Process Model & Notation

Flowchart

Elements that are consistent across different model types:

- **Activity:** an individual step or piece of work that forms part of the business process. It may be a single task or may be further decomposed into a subprocess (with its own activities, flow, and other process elements).
- **Event:** a zero-time occurrence which initiates, interrupts, or terminates an activity or task within a process or the process itself. It may be a
  - › message received,
  - › the passage of time, or
  - › the occurrence of a condition as defined in the business rules.

- **Directional Flow:** a path that indicates the logical sequence of the workflow. In general, diagrams are drawn to show the passage of time in a consistent fashion (typically in the direction that text would be read).
- **Decision Point:** a point in the process where the flow of work splits into two or more flows (paths), which may be mutually exclusive alternatives or parallels. A decision can also be used to locate rules where separate flows merge.
- **Link:** a connection to other process maps.
- **Role:** a type of person or group involved in the process. Its definitions typically match those in the organizational model.

Remember these concepts when building a process flow:
- It needs to be simple enough so that everyone can follow the flow but it needs to have enough detail to describe the process.
- All flows should have a corresponding narrative to explain the steps.
- Decision points need all possible outcomes (if you can only move in one direction, it's not a decision point).
- Watch crossing lines/paths in the visual (it becomes confusing and difficult to follow).
- Swim lanes are a great tool to differentiate between roles or actors in a process flow.
- Use consistent language for the same types of model elements (if you're using a verb to start an activity, use verbs to start all activities).