

Backlog Refinement

The parallel process required to create sprint-ready work

SIMPLIFIED, ONE-PAGE SUMMARY (SOS)



WHAT is Backlog Refinement?

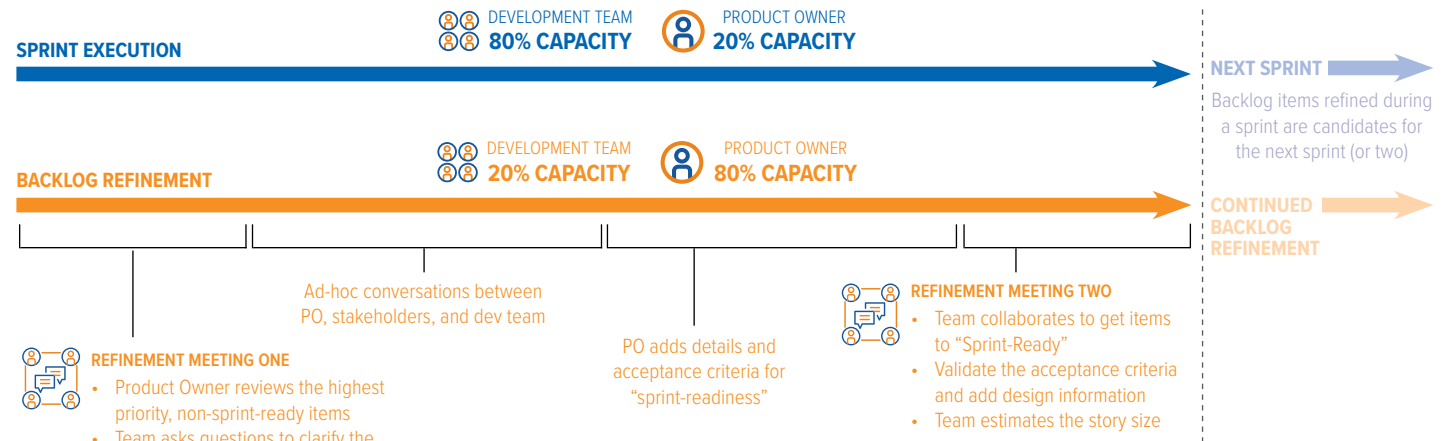
- The most common method used by scrum teams to add just enough detail to product backlog items to qualify them as “ready” to be worked in a sprint
- Refinement typically includes the decomposition of big ideas (sometimes called “epics”) down to desired outcomes that can be completed iteratively
- Teams refine backlog items to clearly define desired outcomes and determine how to deliver incremental and potentially valuable solutions

WHY is Backlog Refinement Important?

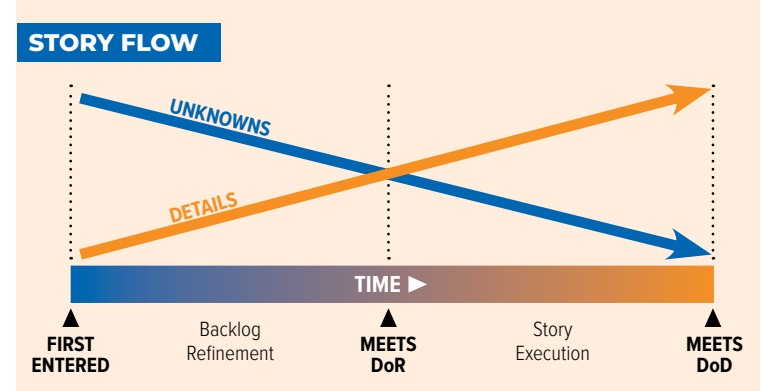
- It is typically challenging to deliver complete solutions in short iterations absent sufficient up-front information
- Each backlog item needs to be understood and developed collaboratively with the entire team to create the highest quality outcomes for stakeholders
- Many of the execution challenges faced by teams in a scrum framework can be traced back to a lack of solid backlog refinement practices

SAMPLE PATTERN

Teams should use whatever method works best for them, but consider the following:



- Refinement is done continuously and in parallel with both execution and delivery
- Refinement happens throughout the entire sprint duration—not just for a meeting or two



DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

- Refinement is done in parallel with sprint execution
- The entire team is involved
- Just enough requirements and design is completed to be able to estimate
- Stories are refined to a team agreed upon “Definition of Ready”
- One to two sprints worth of stories are ready for sprint planning

TIPS & TRAPS

- Use time boxes to constrain the team from going in to too much detail
- Consider splitting stories that cannot be refined in a short amount of time
- Every team will have their own “sweet spot” to define “ready” that will take some time to determine
- Product Owners need to prepare for refinement meetings with the team to narrow focus
- Most of the work required to refine the product backlog requires work outside of the regular meetings
- Ensure team members reserve capacity in planning meetings for refinement work
- Avoid the previously acceptable refinement term “grooming”

