

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Toolkit



Midwest Hub
Mental Health 
Implementation Support

Acknowledgments

AUTHORS

Center for Mental Health Implementation Support, 2026.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This work was supported by cooperative agreement H79SM090078 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of SAMHSA/HHS.

DISCLAIMER

All material appearing in this publication, except that taken directly from copyrighted sources, is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from SAMHSA or the authors. Citation of the source is appreciated. Do not reproduce or distribute this publication for a fee without specific, written authorization from the Midwest Hub of CMHIS. For more information on obtaining copies of this publication, contact the Midwest Hub of CMHIS at midwest@cmhisupport.org.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Roosa, M., & Gatzke, S., and the Center for Mental Health Implementation Support, Continuous Quality Improvement Workgroup. (2026). *Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Toolkit*.



Why a CQI Toolkit?

CQI requires consistent dedication to monitoring services and taking action to improve them. Today's mental health and human service settings often have limited fiscal and staffing resources. Day-to-day service delivery requirements often take priority over CQI efforts, resulting in a reactive model that responds to crises rather than actively managing quality. These tools have been gathered to support teams of direct care staff, supervisors, and managers in your efforts toward an efficient and continuous approach to quality. Using these tools will help build a culture of quality. This practice will ensure a fulfilling experience for your organization's workforce, and the best outcomes for the people you serve.

These tools describe their general application, which may or may not align with your specific needs. All of the tools are adaptable. We encourage you to explore adaptations to address your unique needs and welcome your questions. We hope that this toolkit encourages your ongoing dialogue with your regional CMHIS Hub. As you explore these tools, please reach out to CMHIS with questions and technical assistance needs.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Find your regional Hub at cmhisupport.org.

Visit the CMHIS website to [submit a request](#) for technical assistance (TA) and implementation support.



Table of Contents

Phase 1: Organizational Assessment

Environmental Scan	13
Value Sort & Alignment Tool	15

Phase 2: Team Engagement

Past Implementation Effort (PIE)	17
The Implementation Climate ESR Tool	19
Implementation Climate Worksheet	20

Phase 3: Goal Definition

SWOT Analysis	21
SWOT Analysis Worksheet	22
SOAR = Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results	23
Cause-and-Effect Diagram	24

Phase 4: Measurement Planning

The Aim Statement	25
SMART Goal & 3Ms Checklist	26

Phase 5: Understanding the Problem

The Walk-Through	27
Walk-Through Worksheet	28
The Flowchart	30
The Flowchart Worksheet	31

Phase 6: Strategy Selection

Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	32
NGT Worksheet	34
The Decision Balance	35
Affinity Diagram	37

Phase 7: Strategy Testing

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)	
Rapid Cycle Change Model	38
PDSA Deep Dive Questions	39
PDSA Worksheet	40
Gantt Chart	41
Gantt Chart Worksheet	42

Phase 8: Sustainment of Improvement

Sustainability Infrastructure	43
5x5 Change Story	44

CQI Tools: Quick Reference Definitions

The tool definitions below are organized according to the eight phases of the CQI sequence found in the CQI toolkit. The tools are also sorted according to a recommended priority for utilization.

Primary Tools (PT): It is recommended that you consider these first when working on this phase of the CQI sequence.

Supplemental Tools (ST): Consider these tools as additional options if (1) the primary tool is not an appropriate fit, or (2) you are seeking ways to further explore this phase of the CQI sequence.

Below each tool definition is a brief description of how to use the tool and why it matters to the CQI agenda. For further information about the details of each tool, please review the descriptions attached to each tool in the sections of this workbook.

Each phase is also briefly described to orient the user to the purpose of the tools for that phase.

CQI Sequence		Primary Tools (PT)	Supplemental Tools (ST)
1	Organizational Assessment	Environmental Scan	Value Sort
2	Team Engagement	PIE: Past Implementation Experience	Implementation Climate ESR Tool
3	Goal Definition	SWOT Analysis	- SOAR - Cause-and-Effect Diagram
4	Measurement Planning	Aim Statement Tool	Smart Goals/3Ms
5	Understanding the Problem	- The Walk-Through - Flow Charting	
6	Strategy Selection	Nominal Group Technique	- Decision Balance - Affinity Diagram
7	Strategy Testing	PDSA	Gantt Chart
8	Sustainment of Improvement	Sustain Plan Tool	5x5 Change Story



Phase 1: Organizational Assessment

Effective CQI requires an organizational culture that understands the need for continuous improvement and embraces change. The purpose is to assess how well the organization's current people, processes, and structures are working to target improvements, strengthen what works, and align change initiatives with values.

TOOLS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT:

Environmental Scan (PT)

A systematic review of environmental factors that may impact change efforts. This includes social, political, and economic factors at the team, organization, community, and public policy levels, as well as other relevant factors.

How to use it:

Gather a group of people who understand the broader environment in which the CQI effort operates. Try to include staff members from direct service, middle management and the executive team, along with representatives from all relevant organizational departments/programs. Work through each box of the grid and consider any important factors that might impact your CQI agenda or efforts.

Why it matters:

Environmental factors have a huge impact on change efforts. The environment can be like a strong river current. Consider the difference between swimming with the current and swimming against it.

Value Sort (ST)

Pre-established lists of values are used to gather feedback from individuals about their priority values to better understand the worldview and felt mission of participants. It can also be used to compare the value priorities between individuals, teams, organizations, and broader communities.

How to use it:

Gather team members together to consider their priority values, or to compare their understanding of the priority values of themselves, the team, the organization, and/or the broader community. Look for places of alignment or misalignment that may help or hinder your change effort. Consider how you need to engage certain individuals or groups based upon their core values orientations.

Why it matters:

Values are powerful drivers of behavior. Even in the face of clear evidence that a change will create an improvement, a misalignment with core values can hinder the change's adoption. Often, individuals and teams have limited awareness of these values that are driving their decision-making, so efforts to surface these important drivers will help a team to mindfully engage in change efforts.



Phase 2: Team Engagement

Effective CQI requires a team approach. Leadership must engage a multi-disciplinary and diverse team that includes powerful change leaders and a commitment to fix key problems.

TOOLS FOR TEAM ENGAGEMENT:

Past Implementation Experience (PIE) (PT)

A simple series of questions designed to support teams in reflecting on a past implementation to understand the team's organizational style. This will help the team address any facilitators or barriers that may impact the proposed change effort.

How to use it:

Select a recent change effort that has had a significant impact and has required a significant amount of time and resources. Work with your team to explore the sequence of questions to understand your change style better.

Why it matters:

The best prediction of future behavior is past behavior. Most systems are unaware of their own change process patterns. This exercise will help the team reveal important patterns that can help or hinder the coming change effort.

Implementation Climate (ESR) (ST)

Leadership support, or executive sponsorship, is critical to change implementation. At the core of this tool is the three-question checklist to ensure that leaders are expecting, supporting, and rewarding the proposed change.

How to use it:

Engage leaders and non-leaders, either separately or together, depending on the team climate and capacity for transparency. Explore the three questions related to what leadership is currently doing, or could do in the future, to expect, support, and reward change. Note that rewards can take many forms of appreciation and are not limited to tangible incentives.

Why it matters:

Leadership engagement in the change process requires leaders to be activated to support the change. Passive support, which may include mixed messages, is common (e.g., I support this new project, but it should not get in the way of your regular work duties). Prioritizing improvement efforts means deciding what to do, and what not to do, or what to quit. This tool will assist leaders in making these hard choices and help teams select areas for change that are adequately supported by leadership.

Phase 3: Goal Definition

Effective CQI requires a clear understanding of the issue that needs improvement, the process that reflects it, and the customer of that process. The goal can be defined according to the customer's needs, based upon a simple equation: Improve X so that Y.

TOOLS FOR DEFINING GOALS:

SWOT Analysis (PT)

A review of factors impacting an organization's capacity to achieve goals, including internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) to the organization.

How to use it:

Gather your team together to make lists of drivers in each of the four quadrants that impact the organization and your change effort. Be sure to clearly differentiate between strengths and weaknesses as internal to the organization, and opportunities and threats as external to the organization.

Why it matters:

The organization seeking to improve has a wide array of assets and challenges that will impact the change effort. Awareness of these elements is like understanding the path before a long trek. It is best to know where the path has hazards that may cause us to trip or slip. It is also important to know about places where we can find shade and water on a hot day. Likewise, current factors in the broader community or marketplace will likely be key barriers and facilitators to our improvement effort.

SOAR (ST)

A strength-based alternative to SWOT, which focuses on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. Avoiding a focus on weaknesses and threats can help some teams build confidence and activation for change.

How to use it:

You can use the SOAR in a similar way to the SWOT. Gather the team and work through the questions in dialogue.

Why it matters:

Sometimes teams lack confidence, have concerns about change, or become demoralized due to a lack of leadership encouragement, a challenging environment, or previous change efforts that have been understood as failures. These experiences may lead to a lack of trust in the CQI process. In such environments, a focus on weaknesses and threats can demoralize or paralyze the team's change efforts. The SOAR provides a strengths-based model based on affirmative inquiry. Many find that weakness and threat items surface when SOAR is used to explore the environment for change implementation, so a focus on these deficit-based elements may not be needed.



Cause-and-Effect (5 Whys) (ST)

A chosen problem is reviewed by asking what causes the problem, and what causes those causes, and what causes those sub-causes, until root causes emerge. It is recommended that a series of five “why” questions be asked to ensure root causes have been defined and more actionable items have been revealed.

How to use it:

State the problem as a simple phrase. Then work with the team to explore causes of the problem by asking “why does that happen?” Continue to ask this question with all the causes and sub-causes until you reach the root causes of the problem.

Why it matters:

The initial “answers” regarding how to fix a problem are often filled with assumptions and lack awareness of all the factors driving the problem. Asking a series of why questions will result in finding root causes that are often simple and more actionable than the initial answers to the first “why?” question.



Phase 4: Measurement Planning

Effective CQI requires data-driven decision-making to know whether a change is an improvement. Use both quantitative and qualitative data to guide the change process.

TOOLS FOR PLANNING MEASUREMENT:

Aim Statement (PT)

All improvement efforts require measurement. An indicator metric must be measured at baseline, and then regularly measured during the improvement effort to see if the established goal can be achieved by the planned date. This is the aim statement equation: (Improve I from B to G by D).

How to use it:

Gather the team to consider the best way to measure the issue that needs improvement. Are there key performance indicators (KPIs) that we are monitoring that have alerted us to the need for change? Try to find an indicator that can be measured frequently. If the best indicator of improvement can only be measured monthly or quarterly, or is only likely to show variability with a monthly or quarterly review, then consider finding an alternative “good enough” indicator that can be measured/show variability weekly. This will build team habits around data engagement by maintaining the team’s attention to the indicator.

Establish a clear understanding of the current baseline data for this chosen indicator. Stretch goals can be established by identifying a level of improvement that half the team considers achievable. Efforts should be made to set a completion date for a change effort that is as short as possible, to encourage a more rapid cycle change model.

Why it matters:

Improvement efforts that are undertaken without a clear measurement strategy are like trying to drive down a winding country road at night with no headlights. Regular access to high-quality data is the only way to understand the impact of QI efforts and to respond accordingly with adjustments that increase the likelihood of success and sustainment.

SMART (ST)

An acronym for developing goals when engaged in improvement efforts. Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

How to use it:

Once a goal has been established, use the SMART checklist to measure the goal against the five criteria. If the goal does not meet the five criteria, then explore with the team ways to refine and improve it.

Why it matters:

Teams seeking to make improvements are often focused on urgent concerns. There is, therefore, a tendency to rush to action. Clearly defining the goal and ensuring it meets these five criteria can save time by ensuring the development of high-utility goals and providing a strong foundation for improvement.



3Ms (ST)

A simple alternative to the SMART goal approach that reflects the same elements. Effective goals are meaningful (specific and relevant), measurable, and manageable (attainable, time-bound).

How to use it:

The 3Ms can be used similarly to SMART. Goals can be compared to the 3Ms criteria and adjusted accordingly.

Why it matters:

The SMART criteria can be a bit challenging in some environments. Many people find that they need to keep reviewing the criteria and tend not to memorize or integrate it into their thinking. The 3Ms list is shorter, easier to remember, and covers very similar topics when compared to SMART.

Meaningful = Specific and Relevant

Measurable = Measurable

Manageable = Attainable and Time-Bound



Phase 5: Understanding the Problem

Effective CQI requires understanding the customer's experience of the current process. Innovations, adaptations, and ideas from a wide array of sources (including from outside of the field) can help us improve.

TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM:

Please note that both the walk-through and flowchart are included as primary tools, as they are best used together as a powerful sequence for understanding the problem.

Walk-Through (PT)

A role-play process in which an individual seeks to understand the customer experience by engaging in typical customer behaviors. This process can reveal unnecessary steps and steps that can be improved.

How to use it:

Use the instructions provided to work with staff to conduct a role-play experience of a part of the process that appears to need improvement.

Why it matters:

There is no better way to understand the customer than to walk in their shoes. The walk-through provides an excellent way to develop a strong understanding of the customer experience, which can be used to inform all CQI decisions.

Flowchart (PT)

A map of the workflow using simple shapes to define the existing work process and to reveal areas in that process which may need improvement.

How to use it:

Use the instructions to draw a simple process map that includes the steps of the process (boxes), the transitions between the steps (arrows), and any decision points in the process (diamonds: if yes, go here; if no, go there). Gather the team around a large sheet of paper with sticky notes and work from the beginning to the end of the process. Many templates and tools can also be used to create a digital flowchart that includes the entire group in simultaneous flowchart creation. Include people who clearly understand the details of the process. When the draft is complete, identify areas in the workflow with pinch points, stressors, log jams, frequent complaints, delays, or other challenges. These will make excellent targets for improvement. Be sure to draw the process as it currently exists, and not as you would like it to be improved.

Why it matters:

Team members often have different perspectives on the workflow of a process that needs improvement. A clear definition of the current state is critical for a team to reach consensus on the process and consider needed improvements.



Phase 6: Strategy Selection

Effective CQI requires teams to build strong consensus when selecting strategies that will have a high return on investment. Prioritize innovations that are easy to implement and will have a substantial impact. Be mindful of a team's capacity when selecting strategies and consider what the team may need to stop doing to start the newly selected strategy.

TOOLS FOR SELECTING A STRATEGY:

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (PT)

A brainstorming process designed to ensure a high volume of diverse ideas. It is often used once a problem has been defined to consider potential strategies to address the problem.

How to use it:

Follow the four-step sequence of the NGT. Be sure to maintain silence during idea generation and prevent discussion and judgment during the reporting-out and clarification steps.

Why it matters:

Unstructured brainstorming often captures only the ideas of the louder, extroverted, quicker, more assertive, and more powerful voices. It often fails to gather the ideas of the quieter, introverted, more contemplative, less assertive, and less powerful voices. And this latter group has just as many valuable ideas. The NGT sequence prevents judgment and requires balanced participation, thereby creating a larger and more diverse list of ideas. A better list means better opportunities for improvement.

Decision Balance (ST)

A simple two-column pro-con list to consider a specific strategy can be supplemented with additional elements, such as an analysis of the viability of alternative strategies and ways to address the strategy's deficits.

How to use it:

The decision balance can be used as a simple pro-con list to evaluate the merits of a particular idea. It can be used with the NGT if you have difficulty deciding between two or three ideas. The final page of the decision balance can be used for a deep dive into the unique viability of the pros and ways to address the cons related to an improvement strategy.

Why it matters:

Individuals often like or dislike a particular option based on preconceived ideas, limited knowledge, or prejudice for or against the option. Skillful decision-making can be facilitated by working with the team to uncover why members favor one idea over another, ensuring the full team's insights are used to inform all members about each potential strategy.



Affinity Diagram (ST)

A tool used to sort ideas into useful categories, it can be used as a stand-alone brainstorming process, and as a supplement to the NGT (see below).

How to use it:

Sometimes NGT voting results in a wide spread of votes for many ideas. When voting fails to produce consensus, an affinity diagram can be a good way to reframe the ideas generated. Stepping back to strategy categories can help a group agree on the general area of focus, which can lead to selecting a specific strategy.

Why it matters:

Often, team members have different visions of the primary drivers of a problem, which leads to very different opinions about strategies for fixing it. Grouping ideas into categories enhances team dialogue about these different perspectives.



Phase 7: Strategy Testing

Effective CQI includes carefully testing new strategies to determine whether the change is an improvement. Otherwise, resources may continue to be dedicated to activities that have minimal benefit, or even a negative impact.

TOOLS FOR TESTING A STRATEGY:

PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) (PT)

A widely used model for rapid-cycle change that involves planning a change, doing it (implementing the plan), studying the data and experience related to the change, and then taking action based on those results to abandon, adapt, or adopt the change.

How to use it:

You can implement any improvement strategy using PDSA. This tool can be used as the central organizing structure for implementing and monitoring the strategy.

Why it matters:

Rapid-cycle PDSA change is at the center of most high-fidelity CQI implementation.

Gantt Chart (ST)

A grid tool for organizing work projects, which includes all involved parties, all required tasks, deadlines, and completion times for each. It effectively depicts who does what when.

How to use it:

The Gantt chart is an excellent way to organize the operational details of a strategy's implementation. It can organize tasks across time and maintain accountability and coordination among team members during the planning and doing phases of the PDSA.

Why it matters:

Many CQI efforts struggle to maintain active engagement among team members in completing process-related tasks on time. Most organizations are engaging staff in CQI efforts who have other duties. Simple Gantt chart tables, or the wide array of more complex Gantt chart tools currently available, can create efficiencies, help team members stay organized, reduce frustration, and maintain project momentum.



Phase 8: Sustainment of Improvement

Effective CQI sustains improvements by documenting the improvement effort and continuously measuring key performance indicators (KPIs). Innovations then become standard operating procedures (SOPs) as the new practices become the norm.

TOOLS FOR SUSTAINING THE IMPROVEMENT:

Sustainment Plan Tool (ST)

A checklist tool of the key elements used to ensure that a successful improvement has a high return on investment through long-term sustainment of the change.

How to use it:

Once a QI strategy has been implemented and has shown strong results, use the sustainment plan tool to consider key factors to ensure the optimal return on investment.

Why it matters:

Sustainment is perhaps the most challenging aspect of CQI. Many QI strategies that are successfully implemented and that yield strong results fail to be sustained. The resulting return to baseline functioning demoralizes team members, lowers service delivery quality, and represents a tremendous waste of CQI resources.

5x5 Change Story (PT)

Tell the story of your improvement effort using five key concepts, including (1) the aim, (2) the change, (3) the results, (4) the next steps, (5) the impact. You can share these ideas in a brief presentation (five slides in five minutes).

How to use it:

Use the instructions to create a simple PowerPoint or one-pager that describes the CQI effort.

Why it matters:

The 5x5 creates an excellent documentation of the CQI project. It can be used to promote CQI efforts to other staff, promote organizational quality efforts to customers or funders, and celebrate the team's work.

Environmental Scan

This commonly used planning tool helps to create awareness of the broader environmental factors that may impact an implementation. Several versions can be easily found with variations in the categories. The sample below includes the common elements. It may be helpful to frame questions that correspond to the cells of the table that need to be considered.

- What is the state/national demographic trends that will impact our implementation?
- What are the local demographic trends in our industry that will impact our implementation?
- What is the state/national economic trends that will impact our implementation?
- What are the local economic trends that will impact our implementation?
- What are the local political trends that will impact our implementation?
- What is the state/national technology trends that will impact our implementation?
- What are our team and organizational clinical trends that will impact our implementation?



Environmental Scan Worksheet

	Team	Org	Community <i>local and industry-specific trends</i>	Public Policy <i>state, national, broader cultural trends</i>
Social Demographic Trends				
Economic Trends				
Political Trends				
Clinical Trends				
Tech Trends				

Value Sort & Alignment Tool

S	T	O	C	
☐	☐	☐	☐	Accuracy/Precision
☐	☐	☐	☐	Adventure/Excitement
☐	☐	☐	☐	Achievement
☐	☐	☐	☐	Assertiveness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Autonomy
☐	☐	☐	☐	Careful/Cautiousness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Caring
☐	☐	☐	☐	Challenge-Oriented
☐	☐	☐	☐	Change/Improvement-Oriented
☐	☐	☐	☐	Commitment/Dedication
☐	☐	☐	☐	Communications
☐	☐	☐	☐	Compassion/Kindness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Competence/Skill Mastery
☐	☐	☐	☐	Competition
☐	☐	☐	☐	Consistent/Reliable
☐	☐	☐	☐	Cooperation/Collaboration
☐	☐	☐	☐	Courage
☐	☐	☐	☐	Creativity/New Ideas
☐	☐	☐	☐	Curiosity/Adventuresome
☐	☐	☐	☐	Decisiveness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Dependability/Reliability
☐	☐	☐	☐	Detailed/Thorough
☐	☐	☐	☐	Discipline/Self-Control
☐	☐	☐	☐	Diversity of Experience

S	T	O	C	
☐	☐	☐	☐	Empathy Toward Others
☐	☐	☐	☐	Fairness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Family-Focused
☐	☐	☐	☐	Fiscal Well-Being/Wealth
☐	☐	☐	☐	Flexibility/Adaptability
☐	☐	☐	☐	Freedom of Choice
☐	☐	☐	☐	Generosity/Service to Others
☐	☐	☐	☐	Growth Orientation
☐	☐	☐	☐	Happiness/Satisfaction
☐	☐	☐	☐	Hardworking/Industrious
☐	☐	☐	☐	Harmony/Serenity/Peace
☐	☐	☐	☐	Honesty/Integrity
☐	☐	☐	☐	Hopefulness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Humility
☐	☐	☐	☐	Justice
☐	☐	☐	☐	Kindness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Learning/Continuous Learning
☐	☐	☐	☐	Loyalty
☐	☐	☐	☐	Moderation/Balance
☐	☐	☐	☐	Nurturance
☐	☐	☐	☐	Open to Different Perspectives
☐	☐	☐	☐	Organized
☐	☐	☐	☐	Outcome-Focused/Effectiveness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Passion

S	T	O	C	
☐	☐	☐	☐	Patience
☐	☐	☐	☐	Pride/Esteem
☐	☐	☐	☐	Future-Oriented/Planful
☐	☐	☐	☐	Pleasure/Fun/Leisure
☐	☐	☐	☐	Popularity
☐	☐	☐	☐	Power/Authority
☐	☐	☐	☐	Productivity/Industry
☐	☐	☐	☐	Prosperity/Wealth
☐	☐	☐	☐	Purpose/Meaning
☐	☐	☐	☐	Quality-focused
☐	☐	☐	☐	Recognition
☐	☐	☐	☐	Recognition
☐	☐	☐	☐	Resilience/Perseverance
☐	☐	☐	☐	Respect/Courtesy
☐	☐	☐	☐	Responsibility/Duty-Bound
☐	☐	☐	☐	Responsiveness, Quick-Acting
☐	☐	☐	☐	Risk-Taking
☐	☐	☐	☐	Rule-Based/Orderly
☐	☐	☐	☐	Safety
☐	☐	☐	☐	Security
☐	☐	☐	☐	Self-Acceptance/Esteem
☐	☐	☐	☐	Self-Knowledge/Insight
☐	☐	☐	☐	Service-Orientation
☐	☐	☐	☐	Simplicity
☐	☐	☐	☐	Stability
☐	☐	☐	☐	Strategic Thinking/Planning
☐	☐	☐	☐	Strength-Based

S	T	O	C	
☐	☐	☐	☐	Task-Oriented
☐	☐	☐	☐	Teamwork/Collaboration
☐	☐	☐	☐	Tolerance/Acceptance
☐	☐	☐	☐	Tradition/Honoring the Past
☐	☐	☐	☐	Trustworthy/Genuineness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Truth/Realism/Rationality
☐	☐	☐	☐	Uniqueness
☐	☐	☐	☐	Variety, Diverse Offerings
☐	☐	☐	☐	Wisdom/Knowledge
☐	☐	☐	☐	Wellness/Team Health
☐	☐	☐	☐	Other Value:
☐	☐	☐	☐	Other Value:
☐	☐	☐	☐	Other Value:
S	Self: My Individual Values			Use the list of values to help different groups consider their worldviews and priorities and compare perspectives within and across groups to better understand the level of values alignment.
T	Team: My Team's Values			
O	Org: Organizational Values			
C	Community: Larger Community Values			

Copyright © Mathew Roosa, 2026. All rights reserved.

Past Implementation Effort (PIE)

Our previous actions are the best indicators of our future actions. As Shakespeare said, “the past is prologue.” When we focus on the process elements of any change or new practice implementation, we can start to see patterns in the way our organization functions. We tend to be good at certain parts of the process and struggle with others across a range of different change efforts. The worksheet below can help a team consider a past implementation to prepare for a future one.

1. Ask team members to tell the story of a previous implementation. This might be a large or small project.
2. Ask the team to answer the following questions:
 - What makes you proud of this change effort?
 - How does this change effort show who you are and how you operate?
 - What strengths of your organization are revealed by this change effort?
 - What vulnerabilities of your organization are revealed by this change effort?
3. Fill out the worksheet below and consider other ways to use these questions to understand better your team’s style, strengths, and risks related to implementing change.

TIPS FOR USING THE PIE TOOL:

- It may be helpful to start the process with a previous successful implementation, as this can build energy and motivation toward future changes.
- Some groups struggle to understand how the past implementation may instruct a future implementation. This is because they tend to focus on the content of the activity and less on the process variables that might reflect their culture or style. It may be helpful to ask them the final questions on the tool: *What is your implementation style? Do you have repeating implementation patterns?*



PIE Worksheet

1. Briefly describe a recent change or implementation conducted by your team.

2. Enter the number that best describes the success of this change/implementation:

1	2	3	4	5
Unsuccessful		Mixed Results		Successful

3. What went well?

4. What were the challenges?

5. What do the responses above tell you about how your team does change/implementation?

6. What is your implementation style?

The Implementation Climate ESR Tool

Executive sponsorship is a key part of any implementation or change effort. If senior leaders do not support a change, it is unlikely to be implemented in a timely and effective way, and even less likely to be sustained. This tool is designed to address the three core ways that leaders can support change efforts.

1. What can leaders do to show the team that they **expect** the change to be implemented? Can they create performance expectations and measures to track the effort? Can they build the new activity into job descriptions? Etc.
2. What can leaders do to show the team that they **support** the change to be implemented? Can they remove obstacles? Provide staffing or other resources? Reassign other tasks to ensure that the change project is a high priority? Etc.
3. What can leaders do to show the team that they **reward** the change to be implemented? Are there financial incentives? Is there a ritual or other public way to appreciate participants? Does engagement in the change effort result in status, opportunities, or other rewards? Etc.

The worksheet below can be completed by individual team members or as part of a group dialogue. The results can then be shared with leadership to encourage the kinds of sponsorship that are needed through the expected, supported, and rewarded categories.

It can also be helpful to ask leadership to complete ESR questions 4-6 so that they can consider and commit to actions that will support the proposed implementation.

TIPS FOR USING THE ESR TOOL:

- Groups sometimes struggle to understand the difference between the three concepts of “expected, supported, and rewarded.” Using the two questions related to each item can help participants understand the differences.
- Some staff participants may be reluctant to share their opinions if leaders are a part of the process. It can be helpful to conduct this exercise with leaders and line staff separately if there is concern that people may be inhibited from sharing in an inclusive group.
- Use the open-ended tools to facilitate an inclusive dialogue.
- When the change that is sought is the implementation of a specific evidence-based practice (EBP), then the three core questions in the table below can assist you in exploring the implementation climate.



Implementation Climate Worksheet

(EXPECTED-SUPPORTED-REWARDED)

Engaging Leadership in the Implementation/Change Process

1. Briefly describe a change that your team/organization is planning to implement.
2. What are the specific actions, behaviors, or measures that will indicate that this change has been successfully implemented?
3. What are the specific actions, behaviors, or measures that will ensure that this change is sustained?
4. What can our leadership do to show that they expect a successful implementation and sustainment? How do leaders create accountability for progress? Are structures in place that measure the level and volume of utilization of the change among trained staff?
5. What can our leadership do to show that they support successful implementation and sustainment? How do leaders communicate that they want this to happen? Do leaders provide resources and encouragement to maintain the change? What should we stop doing if we begin this change?
6. What can our leadership do to reward successful implementation and sustainment? How do leaders appreciate progress? Are those who implement the change provided with incentives to encourage their efforts?

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is a popular tool that helps you better understand the organization's current status. It supports efforts to better understand internal resources and challenges, as well as environmental considerations. It can be helpful to think of the SWOT as similar to checking your bag before a trip. You need to consider what you already have, what you need to pack or purchase, and what you can do without before you leave on your journey.

The SWOT analysis requires a team to answer the four questions below, then consider the answers as part of a planning process, and then use the answers in the planning process to support readiness for a change or new implementation.

1. What are our organizational/team strengths? (What do we do well?)
2. What are our organizational/team weaknesses? (What do we need to improve?)
3. What are the opportunities for our team/organization in our market environment?
4. What are the threats to our team/organization in our market environment?

SOME GENERAL TIPS FOR USING THE SWOT TOOL:

- Remind participants of the distinction between internal and external items to avoid repetition in the top and bottom boxes.
- Focus on one box at a time in sequence (SWOT) and ask participants to generate as many ideas as they can for each.
- You may want to edit each box to the core themes that the group shares.
- Try to end the exercise by focusing on the group's insights, strengths, and opportunities instead of just ending with a threat conversation.



SWOT Analysis Worksheet

SWOT is a widely used planning tool to help you understand the strategic position of your organization or program. As you fill in the four boxes, be sure to differentiate between those items that are internal to your organization (SW) and those that are from the external environment (OT). This tool is best used as part of a team planning effort. It will help you to chart a course that harnesses your resources and steers around avoidable obstacles.

	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths <i>What we do well</i>	Weaknesses <i>What we need to do better</i>
External	Opportunities <i>Community needs, market niches, etc.</i>	Threats <i>Competition, fiscal/political climates, etc.</i>

SOAR = Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results

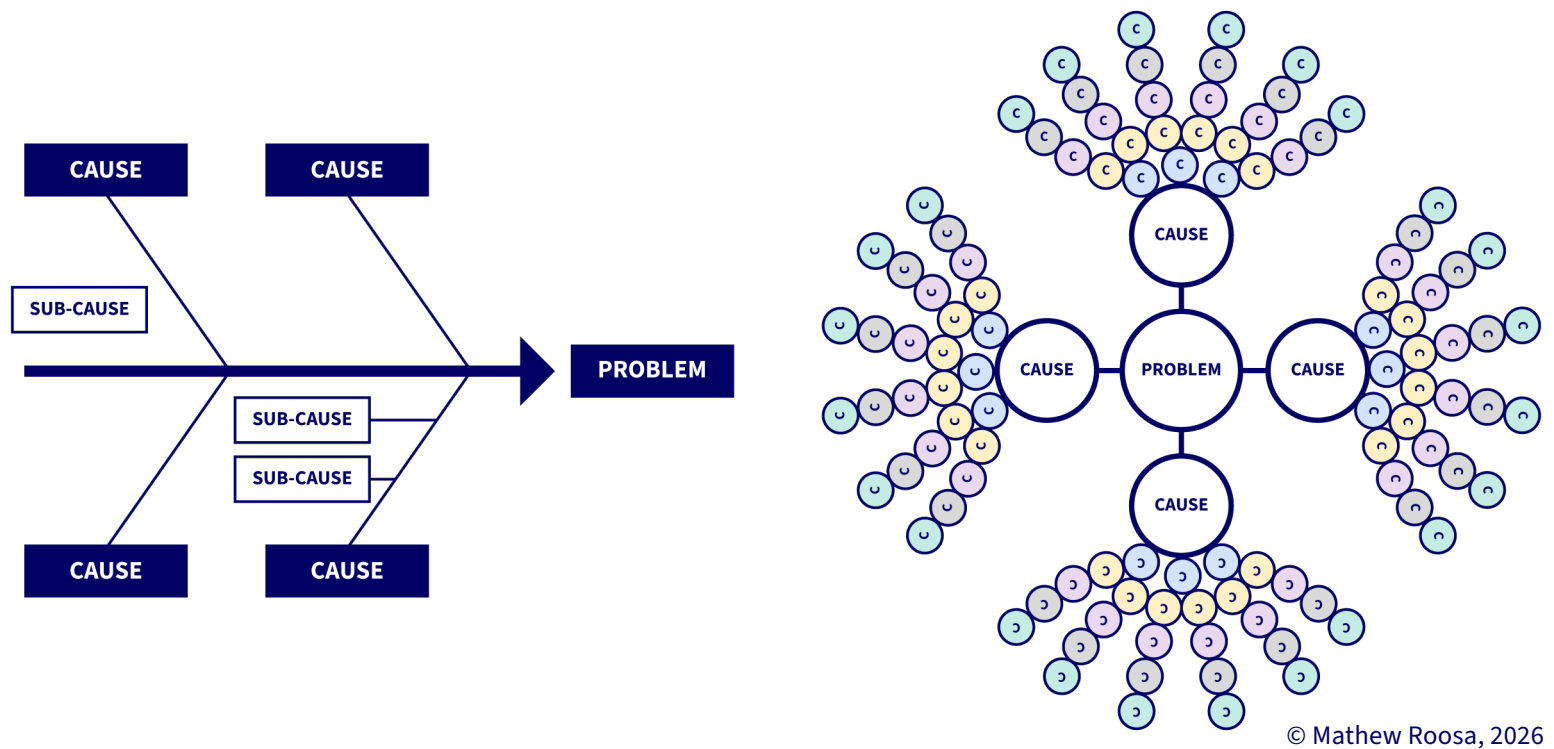
SOAR is a strength-based alternative to the SWOT analysis that is based in Appreciative Inquiry. Teams and organizations that may lack confidence or adequate hopefulness can sometimes be negatively impacted by the weaknesses and threats components of the SWOT. Maintaining a focus on the positive elements can energize and encourage, while still surfacing the key organizational needs prior to a new implementation.

The worksheet below includes key questions for each of the four categories. It may be helpful to review these question options to select the language that will be most helpful to your exploration of the four categories.

- 1. What are our strengths?** What makes us proud? What makes us unique? What is our most outstanding achievement(s)? How do we use our strengths to get results? How do our strengths fit into the environment?
- 2. What are the opportunities?** Where can we apply these strengths? How do we make sense of the opportunities in our environment? What are our partners asking for? What are the top three opportunities to focus on? New partners? New initiatives? Can we reframe challenges into opportunities? Are new skills needed?
- 3. Which of these opportunities do we aspire to pursue?** What do we care deeply about? Who are we? Who should we become? Where should we go? What is our most compelling aspiration? What strategic initiative would support our aspirations?
- 4. How would we measure the results of applying our strengths to this valued opportunity?** How do we know we are succeeding? Do we have meaningful measures? Do we have scorecard indicators to track progress? What resources are needed to implement these measures?

Cause-and-Effect Diagram

The cause-and-effect diagram is also known as the fishbone or the Ishikawa diagram. The facilitator asks a group to consider a problem, then asks for the causes of the problem and the causes of the causes, and continues until all potential root causes have been explored. The most immediate cause of an implementation challenge may lead to a string of sub-causes that lead to root issues.



Some prefer a hub-and-spoke approach when creating the cause-and-effect diagram, as seen on the right side of the sample above. This model is typically easier to draw and explore with a group by following the steps below to construct the diagram:

1. Define the problem in a center circle.
2. Draw a cause circle at each of the four compass headings.
3. Ask the group to define at least these four causes (there may be more) and place them in the circles.
4. Explore the sub-causes of these four causes by asking “why does that happen?” and continue until all causes have been explored. The “5 whys” concept comes from the exercise of asking “why does this happen?” at least five times for each initial cause

The result will be an inventory of granular root causes, some of which will be excellent targets for improvement.

The Aim Statement

We plan to reduce customer waiting time from 30 minutes to 15 minutes by the end of next month.

We seek to increase admissions from the current 12-17 per week to 25 per week by the end of the next quarter.

These goals follow a simple and effective aim statement formula:

Improve the **I**ndicator from the **B**aseline to the **G**oal by the **D**ate. (Increase **I** from **B** to **G** by **D**)

- **Indicator:** How will you measure progress on the chosen strategy? Find a measure for which you can gather valid and reliable data that will indicate the effectiveness of the strategy you are testing.
- **Baseline:** Gather baseline data on your indicator measure that reflects your current state, before commencing the change effort. This will allow you to compare pre-change and post-change data to show your results clearly.
- **Goal:** Try to develop a stretch goal that will motivate your team to try to achieve a strong result. A good formula for a stretch goal is to find a goal level that approximately 50% of your team thinks is achievable.
- **Date:** Your change should be completed in as brief a period as possible. Set a deadline for the number of weeks that you think will be required to complete the test of your strategy.

TIPS FOR USING THE AIM STATEMENT FORMULA:

1. Use an indicator measure that is readily available and easy to manage.
2. Try to gather baseline data during a period of typical service/activity, so that it accurately reflects your current state. If you have seasonal highs and lows, be mindful of how the timing of your data gathering may skew your baseline.
3. Use this aim statement in conjunction with your chosen strategy to create improvement.

The table below will aid your efforts to define a clear and focused aim that will drive your team’s actions, and to assess the components of the aim statement using the:

- SMART goal criteria: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound
- 3Ms criteria: meaningful, measurable, manageable

Improve I from B to G by D	IBDG Draft	SMART Alignment Checklist	3Ms Alignment Checklist
I = Indicator: What is your measure of progress?		Is the indicator specific, measureable, and relevant?	Is improvement in the indicator meaningful and measurable?
B = Baseline: What is the indicator measurement prior to your change effort?		Is the baseline a valid measurement?	Is the baseline measurable?
G = Goal: What is your stretch goal?		Is the stretch Goal motivational and achievable?	Is the goal manageable?
D = Date: What is the deadline for the completion of the change effort?		Does the deadline represent a clear and realistic time limit?	Is the goal manageable within the chosen time frame?

SMART Goal & 3M Checklist

DRAFT GOAL:

Check the box if the goal meets the SMART criteria		
<u>Specific</u>	☐	Can the goal be broken down into several specific steps?
<u>Measurable</u>	☐	Are data available to measure progress toward this goal?
	☐	Are the data easily quantifiable (can we count something)?
	☐	Do all participants easily understand the goal?
	☐	Are the data likely to change over time if procedures are altered?
	☐	Are the data consistently captured?
<u>Attainable</u>	☐	Does the team have ready access to resources needed to address this goal?
	☐	Is there consensus that this goal is a relevant goal that can be attained with the identified resources?
	☐	Is there leadership engagement and support to address this goal?
<u>Relevant</u>	☐	Does the goal address an important unmet need?
	☐	Does the goal consider the needs of all groups and people with different and unique experiences?
<u>Time-Bound</u>	☐	Can this goal be implemented and evaluated within a reasonable time period?

ADJUSTED GOAL, BASED ON SMART CONSIDERATIONS:

The 3Ms: An alternative way to review goals. Aligns with SMART.

- Is the goal **meaningful**? (relevant)
- Is the goal **measurable**? (see above)
- Is the goal **manageable**? (specific, attainable, and time-bound)

The Walk-Through

A walk-through is a simple role-playing exercise to help staff understand the process from the client/patient/customer's perspective. Staff members take on the customers' role and complete the chosen process elements. Use the tips and worksheet below to structure your walk-through exercise.

- Inform your staff. The walk-through should be planned, not a surprise or a "secret shopper" approach. Avoid anything that could damage trust among team members. Even if staff members are on their best behavior, the walk-through will still reveal plenty of opportunities for improvement.
- Include two participants. One in the role of the client and one in the role of a family member or other support. Two sets of eyes and ears, from two perspectives, will result in more observations and insight. It can help to include someone new to the process, as a fresh pair of eyes can more easily ask, "why do we do it that way?"
- Begin your walk-through role-play before you meet program staff. Make phone calls, travel to the appointment, and find the building and office. These are all critical pieces of the walk-through experience.
- Plan your roles. Develop some basic ideas regarding the client role you are playing. What are your concerns? Why are you seeking treatment? How old are you? What is your background? This will help you maintain your role during the walk-through and maximize opportunities to see the program through new eyes.
- Stay in roles. Staff members sometimes have difficulty with the role-play and start saying things like, "at this point in the interview, I would..." Advise them to treat you as they would any recipient.
- Take notes. Many details will be lost if you don't note them during the process. These details will be critical to the later analysis of the experience. Use a version of the worksheet below to document your experience.
- Focus on the emotional experience. Recipients are engaged (or not engaged) by your service based on their emotional experiences. At each step, ask yourself, "how does this feel?"
- Look for "value-added" (how could things be better?) With each step of the process, ask yourself: Is this step needed? If it's required, is this step the best it can be?
- Select a manageable portion of the process to walk through. You won't be able to move into a residential facility to experience the service for a week. Still, you could spend two hours experiencing the intake and admission process for that program.
- At each step, ask the staff what they think.
- Ask staff/stakeholders what changes would make it better for the customer and what changes would make it better for the staff. Write down their ideas as well as your own.
- Summarize what you learned.
- Finally, write down a list of the needs you found and any improvements that could be made to address these needs. Be sure to address what the needs are from both the customer and staff/stakeholder perspectives.
- Complete the entirety of the portion of the process you selected.
- Make the phone call. Do the paperwork. Wait in the waiting room. Do all of the elements that are a part of the portion of the process that you have selected. This will help you better understand the full customer experience related to that specific process. These investments will yield a strong return as you review the experience.

Copyright © NIATx, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2026. All rights reserved.



Walk-Through Worksheet

Name of process:

Date:

Staff completing:

	STEP	NOTE	FEELINGS	NEEDED? Y/N	BEST? Y/N	FIX?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						



	STEP	NOTE	FEELINGS	NEEDED? Y/N	BEST? Y/N	FIX?
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

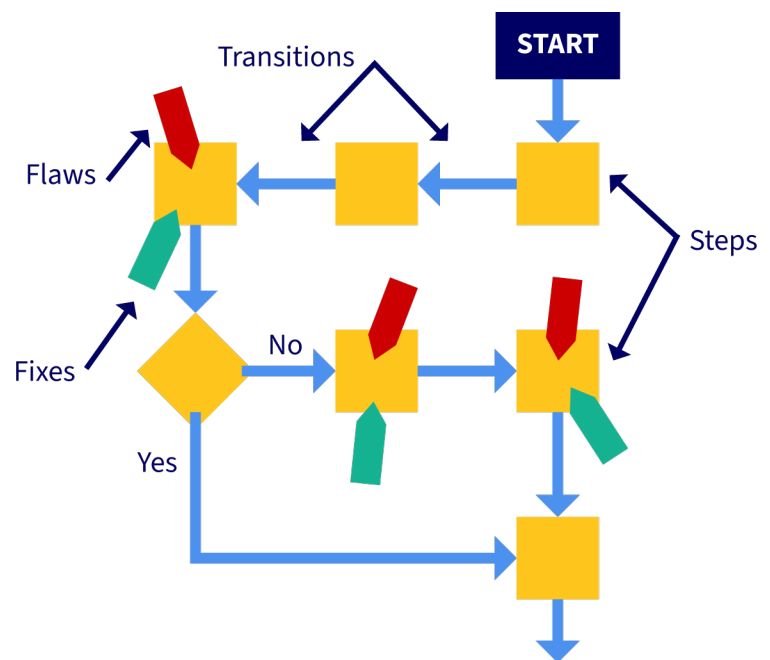
The Flowchart

The flowchart is a visual map of the process, designed to show steps and transitions. It helps identify bottlenecks, roadblocks, and other challenges that prevent a smooth flow in the service process. The flowchart is often used to map the process experienced during the walk-through. The flowchart should be used to draw the current state that you want to improve, and not to draw a desired future state.

SIMPLE STEPS FOR COMPLETING A FLOWCHART:

1. Name the process.
2. Draw the start and stop points.
3. Fill in the steps and transitions of the process with boxes and arrows.
4. Draw decision points as diamonds.
5. Note any flaws.
6. Consider possible fixes for those flaws.

You can draw the flowchart by hand, with sticky notes, or using any software you prefer. The table below provides a sample for a simple vertical flowchart. (This is best used with a linear sequence that does not include decision points. You can add an additional column to address the separate flows of a decision point.)





The Flowchart Worksheet

Step/ Transition	Name/Note	Flaws <i>Steps or transitions that create challenges for recipients or staff</i>	Fixes <i>Strategy ideas to correct the flaws that you observed</i>
S-1			
T-1			
S-2			
T-2			
S-3			
T-3			
S-4			
T-4			
S-5			
T-5			
S-6			
T-6			
S-7			
T-7			
S-8			
T-8			
S-9			
T-9			
S-10			
T-10			

Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

NGT is a brainstorming technique that ensures team member inclusion and generates a high volume of diverse ideas.

Bad Brainstorming:

- No structure/facilitation, a free-for-all.
- Has no focus, tends to wander across topics.
- Is dominated by the loudest/most powerful.
- Discourages ideas through judgment or criticism.
- Creates opposing factions and dissent.
- Generates the same old opinions.

Good Brainstorming:

- Is structured/facilitated by a leader.
- Is focused on a specific question or problem.
- Includes all participants.
- Encourages all ideas.
- Engages individuals in a team effort.
- Generates a wide range of new ideas.

NGT is Good Brainstorming

THE FOUR STEPS OF NGT

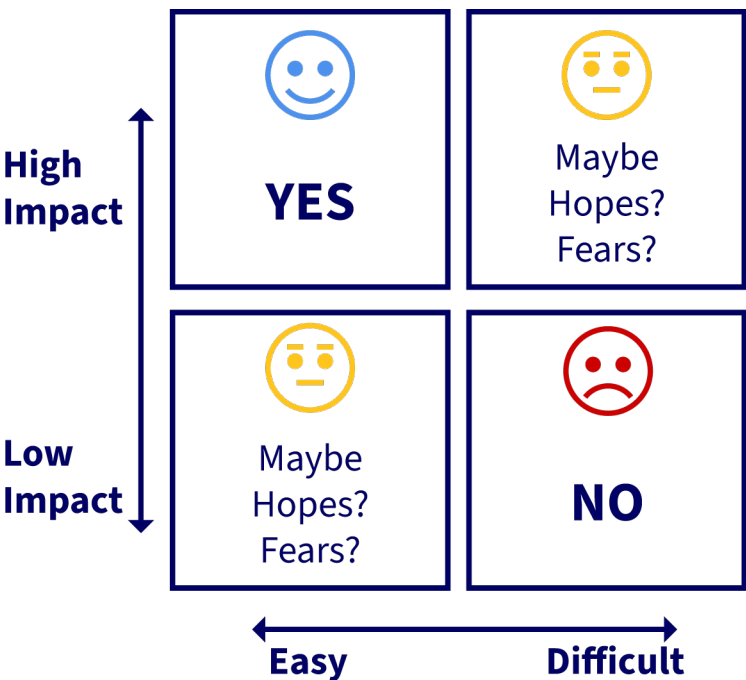
Note: this description reflects an NGT that is conducted with a group of people in a room together. The NGT can also be conducted via video conference, or asynchronously, with steps one and two being completed via survey, etc.

- 1. Silent generation of ideas based on a strong question:** Each individual generates their own list. Tip: Use sticky notes: one idea per page.
 - Tip: Encourage short “bumper sticker” responses: 5-7 words.
- 2. Round robin report and record:** Go around the room, one idea per person, record and number ideas as stated for all to see.
 - Tip: Have each person read their idea as it is placed on the board/sheet for all to see. Tip: Avoid editing the ideas.
 - Tip: Maintain a neat, numbered list of the ideas.
- 3. Discussion for clarification:** Questions are asked regarding the ideas shared. Ensure that all members understand all ideas.
 - Tip: Read all the ideas out loud.
- 4. Voting:** Use sticky dots, a show of hands, or anonymous paper votes. Allow individuals to vote for a number of items that encourage tough choices.
 - Tip: Create simple voting criteria. For example, select the ideas that are doable and most likely to succeed. Tip: Allow voting for 10-15% of the items, e.g., a list of 20 items might result in allowing three votes per member. Ask members to avoid placing all votes on one item.
 - Tip: Anonymous voting reduces peer pressure.
 - Tip: Dialogue and a second round of voting may help when votes are split across several favored items.
 - Tip: Avoid commenting on or judging the merits of the ideas. Ideas will be validated or discarded by the voting process in step 4.



The 2x2 matrix below will help participants select the best ideas: Ideas that are easy to implement and have a big impact. Ideas that are difficult and have a low impact should always be avoided. Discuss and consider ideas in the other two quadrants in relation to team members’ hopes and fears about implementation.

The table below may help you select from multiple ideas that receive a volume of votes. The NGT facilitator can also use it to record the ideas that are shared during, and the votes that each idea receives. A four-point Likert scale may also help the group rate items using the questions below.



Criteria for making a final selection among NGT ideas with high vote volume	Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3
Does the change idea have the support of executive sponsors?			
Will the change idea be easy to implement?			
Will the change idea have a big impact?			
Will progress with the change idea be easy to measure?			
Will other staff members appreciate and understand the change?			
Does the change idea have a high likelihood of a positive result?			



NGT Worksheet

NGT Question:

#	Idea	Votes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

#	Idea	Votes
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		

#	Idea	Votes
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		

The Decision Balance

Most of us have used a simple pros and cons list for decision-making. One way to enhance this simple plus/minus list is to add an inverse question to each side of the balance, as seen in the example below and on the following worksheet. This supports thoughtful consideration of the upside and downside of change, as well as the upside and downside of not changing. This can create a more nuanced understanding of the proposed action's benefits and risks.

- What are the pros of change? (and the cons of not changing?)
- What are the cons of change? (and the pros of not changing?)
- Should we move forward with the proposed change?

THE DECISION BALANCE DEEP DIVE

Sometimes the issue being considered in a decision balance is subtle and complicated. Often, there is no obvious tip in one direction or the other on the pro-con scale. The eight-step sequence below and the accompanying worksheet will provide you with a more focused and detailed analysis for a deeper dive when you are considering the pros and cons of a proposed action.

1. Define the proposed action with clear and brief language.
2. List the pros: What are the potential advantages/benefits/rewards associated with taking the action? How can it help?
3. List the cons: What are the potential disadvantages/risks/losses associated with taking the action? How can it harm?
4. Record "alternative vehicles" next to each pro: If we do not take this proposed action, how else might we achieve this advantage?
5. Record "fixes" next to each con: If we take this proposed action, how might we fix or address the resulting disadvantages?
6. In the far-left column, provide a manageability score for each alternative vehicle: How doable is this alternative? (High, medium or low?)
7. In the far-right column, provide a manageability score for each fix: How doable is this fix? (High, medium, or low?)
8. Analyze the results.
 - If the pros clearly outweigh the cons, then we should proceed with the proposed action.
 - If the cons clearly outweigh the pros, then we should avoid the proposed action.
 - If the pros and cons have similar weight, then we need to explore alternative vehicles and fixes.
 - If there are manageable alternatives that will allow us to achieve the advantages of the pros, and if there are no manageable strategies to fix the cons, then the proposed action should be avoided.
 - If there are no manageable alternatives to achieve the advantages of the pros, and if there are manageable strategies to fix the cons, then the proposed action should be taken.
 - If the alternatives and fixes have comparable manageability, return to step 2 and consider additions to the pros and cons lists for further review.
 - Remember that you can always review your selection change after initial implementation steps are completed to ensure the team is comfortable with the choice proposed.

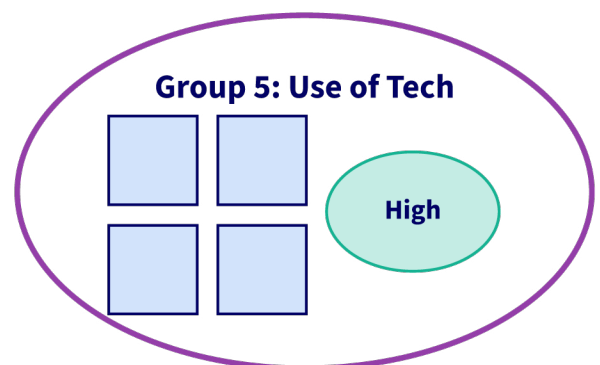
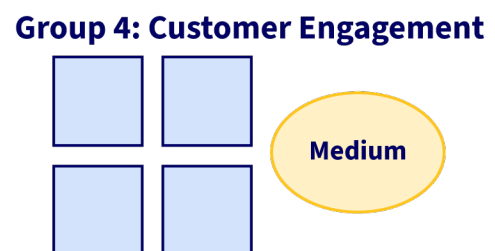
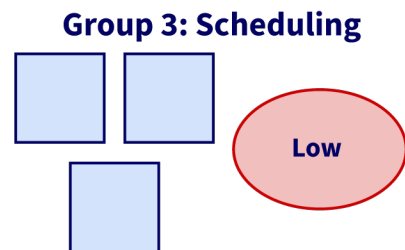
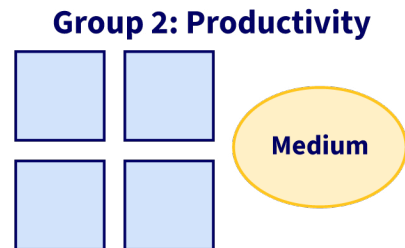
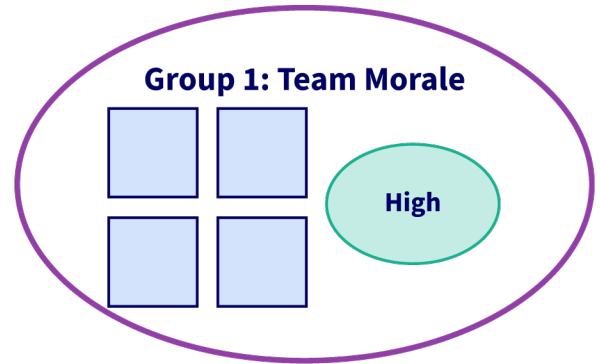


Manageability of the Alternative <i>(H, M, L)</i>	Alternative Vehicles?	PROS	CONS	FIXES	Manageability of the Fixes <i>(H,M,L)</i>

Affinity Diagram

The affinity diagram is another tool that can be used in conjunction with the NGT, or as a stand-alone tool for organizing and sorting a group of ideas. When NGT voting does not result in the selection of preferred idea(s), the affinity diagram can help reorder the list to consider priorities better. A simple affinity diagram might include the following steps:

1. Record a list of ideas in a manner that makes them easily movable for sorting. Sticky notes on a wall, or text boxes on a projected Word document, etc., work well.
2. Ask your team to make a short list of the themes that they see in the items.
3. Share these themes and reach consensus regarding the key themes that can be used to group the ideas.
4. Move the ideas into the groups and place a label above each group. Duplicate any ideas that belong in more than one group, so that they can be properly represented in each of those groups.
5. Review the groups and consider any adjustments.
6. Number the groups.
7. Ask participants to write down the numbers representing the groups and then to rank each group in relation to its level of priority (high, medium, low). Ask participants to label at least one group with each priority level and to label all groups.
8. Gather all of the priority responses, and translate them into scores (low=1, medium=2, high=3) and aggregate the scores for the item groups.
9. Share the priority level scores for the idea groups, and dialogue with the team to consider action steps related to the high-priority group items.



Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Rapid Cycle Change Model



The PDSA Rapid Cycle Change Model has been used in a wide array of environments to support improvement efforts. Below you will find several resources to help you use PDSA cycles:

- The basic steps and questions of the PDSA sequence.
- PDSA deep dive questions.
- A PDSA one-pager worksheet.

Steps in the PDSA Change Process	Key Questions
Choose a goal.	What do we want to improve?
Choose a change.	What changes will lead to the desired improvement?
Plan to measure progress.	How will we know if the change is working?
PLAN the change.	What resources and activities are needed?
DO the change.	How do we implement our plan?
STUDY the results.	Can we adjust the change to make further progress toward our goal? What have we learned?
ACT on the data and lessons learned.	What should we do next?
Multiple PDSA cycles (Adapt the change as needed, based upon our data results.)	What are our next steps? (Adopt, abandon, or adapt the change?)
Sustain the change.	How can we maintain progress?
Spread the change.	How can we spread a successful change to a new team/location?



PDSA Deep Dive Questions



1. What is your goal?
2. What will you test and how will you test it?
3. What questions are you trying to answer with this test?
4. What do you expect will happen and why?
5. How will you measure the results of this test?
6. What data will you need to collect?
7. Where will you collect the data? (What service/clients?)
8. When will you collect the data? (Start and stop date?)
9. How will you collect the data?
10. Who will collect the data?



1. What are you learning as you go?
2. What is going well?
3. What problems have you had with the test?
4. What has surprised you?
5. What problems have you had collecting data?
6. What is the data showing?
7. What issues arose during this phase?
8. How do the results compare to your prediction?



1. What did you learn from the study?
2. Did you experience problems/challenges?
3. Did you achieve your goal?



1. Are you ready to adopt? (Goal achieved)
2. Are you ready to adapt? (Next cycle ideas?)
3. Are you ready to abandon? (Consider a different test?)



PDSA Worksheet

Goal:

Aim: Improve indicator from baseline to goal by date (Improve I from B to G by D)

Team members:

Change strategy to be tested:

Data collection plan:

Expected impact:

Cycle start date: **Cycle end date:**

Gantt Chart

Who does what when? These three variables (who, what, when) are at the core of the Gantt chart's function. There are dozens of templates and versions of Gantt chart models. Many of them include a very high level of complexity. Most process changes or implementations can be planned and managed with a simple grid that includes these three variables.

1. Who: Staff assigned.
2. What: Task to be completed.
3. When: Time frame and deadline for completion.

Use the Gantt chart to organize a project and monitor the sequence of activities completed by team members across time. A Gantt chart can be completed before activities begin as a planning tool and then used during the project to monitor progress and productivity.

The table below is a simple Gantt chart for a project that includes seven tasks completed over eight weeks by a number of staff members or departments, represented by colors.

	WK1	WK2	WK3	WK4	WK5	WK6	WK7	WK8
Task 1/staff								
Task 2/staff								
Task 3/staff								
Task 4/staff								
Task 5/staff								
Task 6/staff								
Task 7/staff								

Use the larger template below to plan your project.

A swim lane diagram is an alternative version of the Gantt chart in which each row represents staff or team members, and the tasks are included in the time columns to reflect the order of events. The swim lane is useful when the focus is on the transitions/hand-offs between the different staff roles in the swim lanes/rows.



Gantt Chart Worksheet

Project:

Time Periods:								
Task 1:								
Staff:								
Task 2:								
Staff:								
Task 3:								
Staff:								
Task 4:								
Staff:								
Task 5:								
Staff:								
Task 6:								
Staff:								
Task 7:								
Staff:								

Sustainability Infrastructure

1. What are the key strategies that you will use to sustain your change efforts?
2. What are the elements that are most likely to derail your change/improvement efforts?
3. What will get in the way of you sustaining successful changes, or starting new improvement projects?
4. What infrastructures will you build to sustain your improvement efforts?
5. How will you be mindful of your organization's culture/values/worldview as you plan for sustainment?

	Item	Y/N	Plan of Action
1	Orient/train staff on measuring improvement in our organization.		
2	Establish/regularly review & update QA/QI policies and procedures.		
3	Ensure leadership (BOD, admin.) regularly review results of improvement efforts.		
4	Include improvement efforts in all strategic planning.		
5	Establish/maintain opportunities for leadership to collaborate with other organizations on best practices for improvement.		
6	Assign change leaders to ensure improvement of project sustainability.		
7	Develop systems to maintain measurement of current and future changes. (Share results with the team/staff)		
8	Create change teams that include a range of roles to implement improvement.		
9	Define priorities to ensure improvement efforts are manageable.		
10	Other sustain ideas/challenges/plans:		
11	Other sustain ideas/challenges/plans:		
12	Other sustain ideas/challenges/plans:		

5x5 Change Story

FIVE SLIDES AND FIVE MINUTES TO SHARE THE STORY OF YOUR CHANGE PROJECT.

Can you tell the story of your improvement efforts to key stakeholders in a one-minute elevator ride? The “elevator speech” approach can help you develop a succinct message to engage funders, other organizations, oversight entities, and other key partners.

A 5x5 is a communication tool that can help you hone your message about your change efforts and move toward an effective elevator speech. Below are tips and an outline to help you create a short 5x5 PowerPoint presentation.

- **Keep it simple** – You have five minutes to present five PowerPoint slides that tell your story. This translates to about one minute of speaking time per slide.
- **Use key words and bullets** – Concisely tell your story instead of writing out each point in complete sentences.
- **Personalize the message** – Add photographs, logos, and illustrations to help the audience understand who you are and what you do.
- **Share your data visually** – Use simple bar and line graphs to display your results in a manner that has greater impact. Pictures are always more powerful than narrative and numbers.
- **Success comes in many forms** – Even if you did not achieve a measurable improvement toward the desired aim, you likely learned some important lessons. Understanding what doesn’t work can significantly affect the future direction of your improvement efforts.

The outline for the 5x5:

- **Title Slide:** The name of your project, organization name, names of people who participated from your organization, etc.
- **Slide 1-THE AIM:** What was the aim of your project? What do you want to achieve?
- **Slide 2-THE CHANGE:** What changes did you make? What activities did you implement? Slide 3-RESULTS: What were the results? Did you see improvements? What did you learn?
- **Slide 4-NEXT STEPS:** What will you do next? Will you implement additional changes toward achieving the aim? Has a new aim emerged? How will you sustain a successful change?
- **Slide 5-IMPACT:** How did this project impact your team? Your organization? Your customers?

Copyright © NIATx, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2026. All rights reserved.