November 2022

SRAENE
Sexual Risk Avoidance Education
National Evaluation

Training Module 1

Continuous Quality Improvement Series

Introduction to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

This module is part of a series of guidance resources and tools on continuous quality improvement (CQI) developed as part of the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education National Evaluation (SRAENE). The series includes a template to guide CQI work, a set of modules providing detailed information on the steps included in CQI, a tool programs can use to assess their CQI practices and processes, and a brief describing the development process used for the series and lessons learned from a set of Sexual Risk Avoidance Education grant recipients that used the tools during a pilot. For all resources in this series, as well as other resources developed as part of SRAENE, please visit the SRAENE website.

For more products, visit the **CQI page on the SRAENE website**.

What is CQI?

CQI is a process for identifying and describing challenges; developing, testing, and assessing solutions; and monitoring progress toward improvement goals. Programs will have more success conducting CQI if they have a strong infrastructure to support it, including strong program monitoring processes and a culture that supports learning and innovation. This module situates CQI within a larger performance management process (that includes program monitoring plus CQI) and provides suggestions for developing strong monitoring processes and fostering a learning culture.

Contextualizing CQI – CQI as part of a performance management plan.

Performance management is an overall process of using data and evidence for improvement that includes both program monitoring and CQI. Program monitoring consists of defining outcomes and how to measure them, collecting data and evidence to track these, and learning through ongoing review. CQI is a systematic process for learning about challenges and developing solutions to address them. The four steps within the performance management cycle are next described. The first three steps—define, measure, and learn—support effective program monitoring, while the final step—improve—focuses on CQI

Define: *What are your priority outputs and outcomes?* Outcomes are what you want to achieve as a program. Outputs focus on the actions your program takes to achieve the outcomes (for example, the number of a type of service provided).

Measure: *What data and information do you need to monitor outputs and outcomes and how will you collect it?* Consider how you will track whether you are achieving outputs and priority outcomes based on benchmarks you set, what tools you will use to collect information (survey, administrative data, etc.), and

what staff will be responsible for tracking key data points and the timing of data collection.

Learn: How will you use the data to review priority outcomes? It can be helpful to develop a data sharing plan to identify how you will share and learn from data. For example, you could specify:

· Who needs to see specific data points (audience)

· What data points/outcomes you will share

· How often you will share the data

· Your method for sharing the information, and

· The purpose for or intent behind sharing the data

Below, Table 1 provides an example of a data sharing plan, which can help your team keep track of who needs to see which data points or outcomes and when.
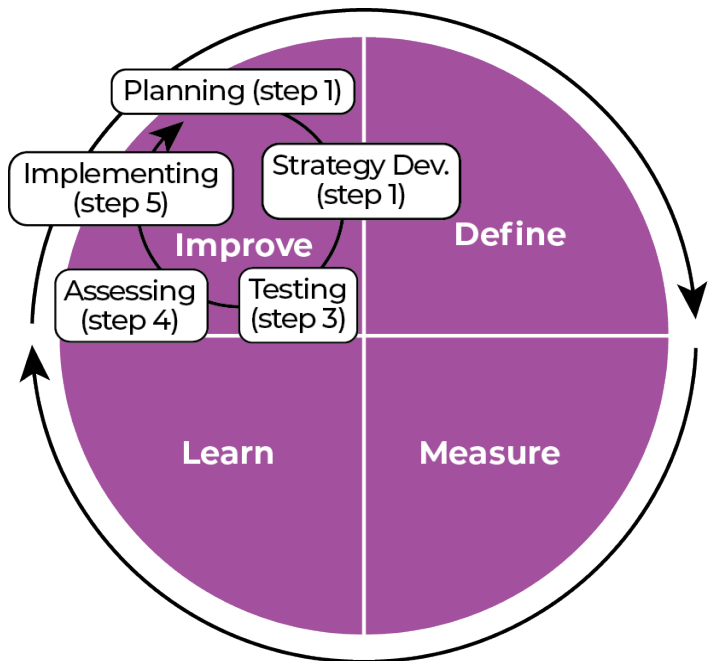
Figure 1: Performance management cycle

Table 1: Sample data sharing plan

Audience	Data source	Frequency	Methods for sharing information	Purpose
Frontline facilitators	Aggregated data from fidelity logs	Biweekly	Report emailed to all facilitators; discussed in supervision	Troubleshoot fidelity issues
Site partners	Results from youth satisfaction surveys	Twice a year	Data shared via biannual meetings with partners/staff	Discuss improvements; demonstrate progress
Participants	Aggregated results from pre-post survey	Quarterly	Results shared during participant focus groups	Assist with interpreting results

Improve: *When you identify an issue via program monitoring (or through other means, such as ongoing feedback loops with staff, partners, or clients), how will you address it through your CQI process?* The SRAE CQI Plan Template walks grantee teams through one approach to continuous improvement. Teams may also use other approaches; see the SRAE CQI pilot brief for broader principles of strong CQI. In the modules that follow, you can explore:

• **Step 1: Planning** (defining a challenge; developing a SMART improvement goal; understanding root causes)

• **Step 2: Developing strategies** (improvement strategies and rationale)

• **Step 3: Testing** (introduction to road testing; learning questions; data collection and analysis plan)

• **Step 4: Assessing** (assessments and reflection questions)

• **Step 5: Implementing** (communication plan considerations and monitoring progress)

CQI culture.

A culture that supports CQI – for example, one in which leadership set expectations for data use and learning and invest in staff capacity – is an important element of the infrastructure needed for an effective CQI system. Specific factors that can foster a culture of curiosity include:

- **Leadership**
  - Leading by example by using evidence to drive organizational decisions
  - Sharing data on priority outputs and outcomes widely; celebrating successes and solicit ideas for improvement
  - Fostering an environment in which it is safe to fail; both successful and failed strategies contribute to learning about what works; staff need to feel safe and empowered to suggest ideas for improvement

- **Organizational expectations**
  - Building expectations for using data and evidence for decision making into job descriptions
  - Setting expectations when bringing staff on board to engage in program monitoring and CQI

- **Staff capacity to engage in CQI**
  - Ensuring staff have time and resources to use data and engage in CQI
  - Providing staff training on program monitoring and CQI

For a self-assessment on learning culture and other elements that support CQI, see the SRAE CQI self-assessment.

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