



Making the Most of Program Data to Improve Quality

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) as a Tool for Pursuing Program Excellence

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June 25-28, 2019



Partnering to Promote Positive Outcomes for All Youth

US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children,
Youth and Families (ACYF) Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB)
Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program Grantee Conference

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This project is supported by the Family Youth and Services Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under contract number HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337031T.



Today's Learning Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Define continuous quality improvement and describe APP grantee staff roles for implementing the CQI process,
2. Use a CQI framework to identify at least one data source and plan at least one analysis to assess at least one program quality improvement strategy, and
3. Develop a plan to support program improvement processes

What is CQI?

CQI Defined

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a process by which grantees may:

- Identify and analyze strengths and problems
- Implement, test, and revise solutions
- Always be moving toward program excellence

Other names or CQI tools

- Data-driven decision making
- Rapid cycle evaluation
- Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)
- Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI²)

CQI vs Program Monitoring

- Program monitoring *documents what is happening*
- CQI is a way to *use that information for improvement*



CQI: a Combination of Processes

CQI brings together different processes:

- Program monitoring
- Case reviews
- Quality control
- Strategic planning
- Performance measurement



Getting Started

- CQI requires planning
whether you are just getting started or have been doing it for awhile
- Everyone has a role
CQI depends on the participation of all staff
- It requires commitment and persistence
it requires a culture of learning



Developing a CQI Plan

Draft CQI Action Plan Template (handout)

Template offers instructions, tips, and links to other resources

Grantees can use the template to help develop their plans

The Implementation Team



Roles and Responsibilities of an Implementation Team

Implementation teams include at least three to five people who are actively and regularly involved in program implementation

- **Teams typically include a range of staff who have different roles in the program**
- **Although all staff participate in CQI, the implementation team manages and oversees the process**

Roles and Responsibilities of an Implementation Team (cont)

They meet regularly and frequently

They are the “doers” and “barrier busters” to program implementation challenges

- **Identify challenges, develop strategies, test and revise**

Identifying Team Members

Role	Responsibilities
Team leader	Organizes and oversees the CQI process
Key program staff	Identifies targets, develops improvement strategies, and monitors their implementation and testing
Data manager	Oversees data collection and analyzes data to measure progress toward goals
Training/technical assistance supervisor	Supports staff in implementing new strategies

Making Time for CQI Doesn't Just Happen

Everyone has competing demands for their time

Tips for successful Implementation Team meetings:

Establish a schedule

helps establish expectations

Identify communication modes

helps set the tone

Revisit decisions over time

helps meet the program's needs

Putting It Into Practice

With your group, discuss who on your APP grantee team back home should be included on your Implementation Team.

Remember the guidance:

- Implementation teams are small by design, just 3-5 members
- They include a range of staff who have different roles
- They are the “doers” and “barrier busters” and lead the CQI effort

Mapping the CQI Process

You have your team, now what?

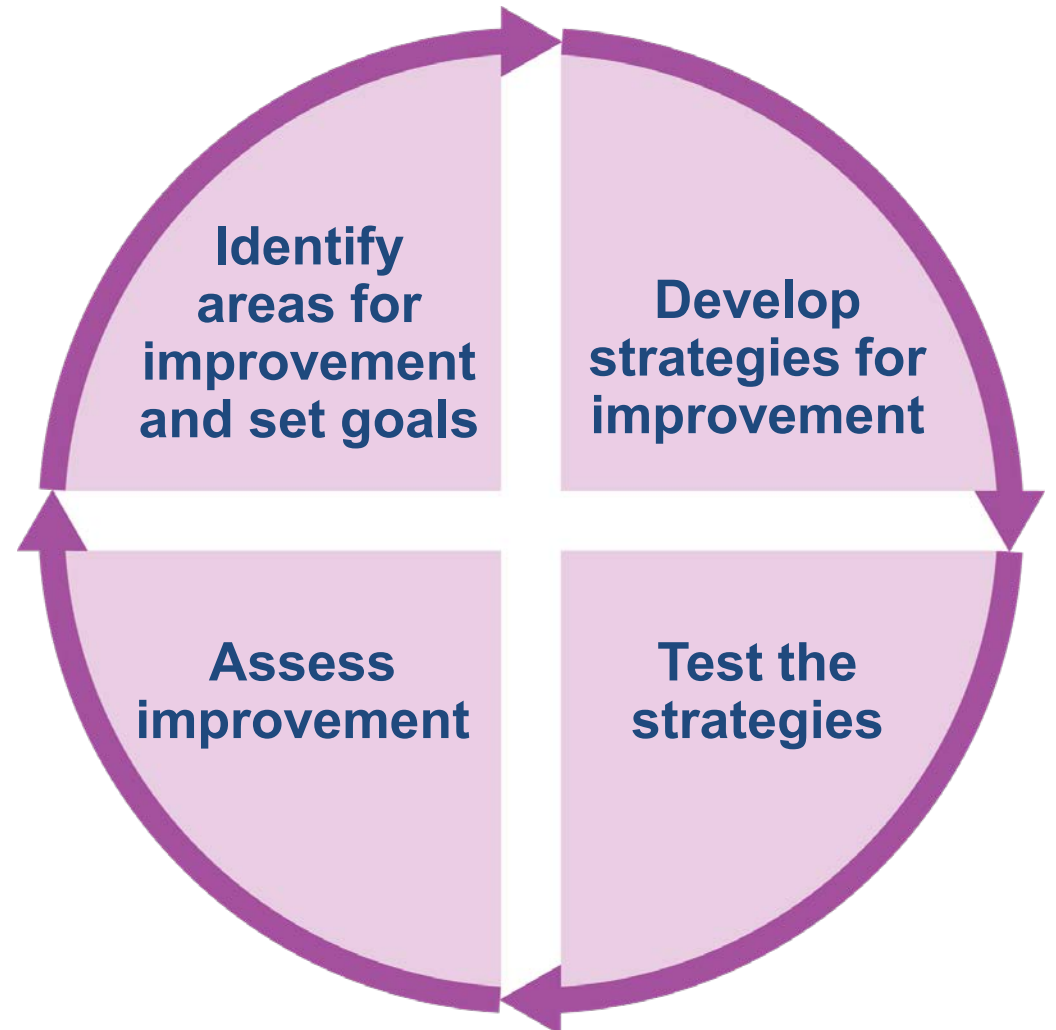
A CQI process should be tailored to your program context and culture

The template helps you map the CQI steps

Your team will have to prioritize

- It is not possible to change everything at once

CQI Process Steps



Identify Areas for Improvement

What can we do better?

- Work together to identify areas in need of improvement
- Discuss what success in those areas would look like and how your program can get there
- Set SMART goals

S = SPECIFIC

M = MEASURABLE

A = ACHIEVABLE

R = RELEVANT

T = TIME BOUND

Making Goals SMARTer

Increase attendance at program sessions

Is this goal:

S = SPECIFIC? ❌

M = MEASURABLE? ✅

A = ACHIEVABLE? ✅

R = RELEVANT? ✅

T = TIME BOUND? ❌

Increase attendance at program sessions from 60 to 80 percent

Is this goal:

S = SPECIFIC? ✅

M = MEASURABLE? ✅

A = ACHIEVABLE? ✅

R = RELEVANT? ✅

T = TIME BOUND? ❌

Increase attendance at program sessions from 60 to 80 percent within the next 3 months

Is this goal:

S = SPECIFIC? ✅

M = MEASURABLE? ✅

A = ACHIEVABLE? ✅

R = RELEVANT? ✅

T = TIME BOUND? ✅

Example SMART Goal: Improving Participation

Low participation

Area for improvement	FY 2018 participation in APP sessions was 75%.
Goal	Increase participation rate by 5 percentage points each quarter throughout 2019, with goal of 90% by the end of FY 2019.

Using the Draft CQI Action Plan to Identify Goals

Identify an area for improvement, a relevant SMART goal, and possible data sources to use (i.e., attendance, curriculum fidelity, pre- and post-surveys of youth)

Areas include:

- Enrollment
- Client participation in services
- Client completion of services
- Quality of Services
- Data collection
- Other (such as staff morale, organizational leadership, or teamwork)

Other Examples of SMART Goals

Enrollment is below ACYF/FYSB-approved target.

- SMART goal: Increase referrals by 25 percent within the next quarter.

Student participation data are not up-to-date.

- SMART goal: Facilitators enter student participation data in within 24 hours of an occurrence.

Staff morale is low.

- SMART goal: In three months, staff survey results show that most staff think the work environment is improving.

Putting It Into Practice

Working with your group, identify one or two goals for your program you'd like to reach over the next 6 to 12 months.

Using the guidance, make your identified goals SMART.

S = SPECIFIC

M = MEASURABLE

A = ACHIEVABLE

R = RELEVANT

T = TIME BOUND



Developing Strategies for Improvement

How can we do better?

- **Explore what might be causing performance issues**
Use data, listen to each other, bring in expertise from outside your program team, if necessary
- **Understanding the cause of performance issues will help you develop targeted solutions**

Example Strategy: Improving Participation

Low participation

Area for improvement	FY 2018 participation in APP sessions was 75%.
Goal	Increase participation rate by 5 percentage points each quarter throughout 2019, with goal of 90% by the end of FY 2019.
Strategy for improvement	Schedule sessions during the lunch hour (rather than after school) to more effectively engage interested participants.
Rationale for strategy	Sessions are scheduled to happen immediately after school, which means some students who would otherwise participate don't because they would miss the bus (their only transportation home).

Road Test the Strategies

Is this a good fit for our program?

- A road test assesses how well a strategy fits in your program
- Small numbers participate over short period of time (about four to six weeks) and provide feedback about their experiences
- Team analyzes data to identify successes and ways to improve
- Road tests often include at least two rounds

Why Conduct a Road Test?

Change can be difficult and some changes have unintended results

Testing the proposed strategy on a small scale gives the team key information

- How did staff and clients respond to the change?
- Whether and how you could improve the strategy?

Why Conduct a Road Test? (cont)

Implementing a change that isn't a good fit for the program could result in failure

- Uses resources inefficiently
- Can contribute to change fatigue among program staff

Example Road Test: Improving Participation

Low participation

Area for improvement	FY 2018 participation in APP sessions was 75%.
Goal	Increase participation rate by 5 percentage points each quarter throughout 2019, with goal of 90% by the end of FY 2019.
Strategy to road test	Schedule sessions during the lunch hour (rather than after school) to more effectively engage interested participants.

What do we hope to learn in the road test?

- Does moving the time the sessions are delivered from after school to during lunch increase participation?
- What worked well about the process?
- What did not work well about the process?

Planning a Road Test

Sample Questions:

- What is the strategy being tested?
- What are your learning questions for the road test?
- When and how will you implement the strategy?
- When will you start the test?
- What type of feedback and data will you collect during the test?
- When will you analyze the data and discuss the results within the implementation team?



Analyzing the Road Test Results

After a program has collected feedback, it is time to analyze and interpret the data

Analysis should identify:

- Strengths and challenges
- Opportunities and concrete suggestions for improvement

Analyzing the Road Test Results (cont)

Questions to consider

- What seems to have worked consistently well and not so well?
- What was inconsistent?
- How might your team build on and use your strengths?



What if the fit isn't quite right?

Implementation team should work with staff to understand what went wrong

- It is common for strategies not to work exactly as expected

Team determines whether the strategy should be modified or discarded

Road test the modified strategy or new approach

What if it DOES fit?

A successful strategy must not only be a good fit but also improve the underlying issue and help a program achieve its goals

After the road test shows the strategy is a good fit, programs should start assessing progress toward SMART goals

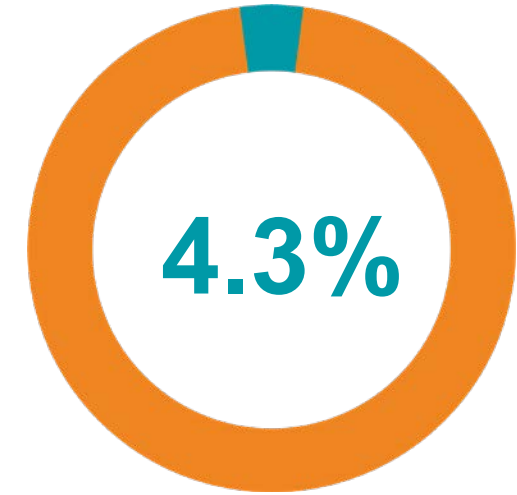
- As with the road test, start with a small number of staff and clients
- Starting small helps to avoid investing too much if the strategy does not work as intended

Track Performance Towards SMART Goals

Select a source from which to pull data

Determine frequency of monitoring

Assign staff responsibilities



Percent of target enrolled for the current grant year

 Current enrollment

 Remaining

Example: Check the Data

Low participation	
Area for improvement	FY 2018 participation in APP sessions was 75% of goal.
Goal	Increase participation rate by 5 percentage points each quarter throughout 2019, with goal of 90% by the end of FY 2019.
Strategies to road test	Schedule sessions during the lunch hour (rather than after school) to more effectively engage interested participants.
Performance metric	Percent who enrolled who attended at least one session
Data source	Attendance data
Frequency of monitoring	Monthly for three months before testing another strategy

Analyzing Improvement

Did we make progress toward our SMART goal?

After you have collected data as planned, the next step is analyzing the results

- What data source did your team use to assess improvement?
- When did your team collect data?
- How did your team measure improvement or change over time?
- What did your results show?

Putting It Into Practice

Working with your group and with the SMART goal(s) you formulated earlier, fill in the details of the CQI plan for these goals:

- area of improvement
- SMART goal
- strategies for improvement
- rationale for strategies
- performance metric
- data source
- frequency of monitoring

Putting It Into Practice: Example Plan

Low Student Participation

Area for improvement	FY 2018 participation in APP sessions was 75% of goal.
Goal	Increase participation rate by 5 percentage points each quarter throughout 2019, with goal of 90% by the end of FY 2019.
Strategies for improvement	Schedule sessions during the lunch hour (rather than after school) to more effectively engage interested participants.
Rationale for strategies	Sessions are scheduled to happen immediately after school, which means some students who would otherwise participate don't because they would miss the bus (their only transportation home).
Performance metric	Percent who enrolled who attended at least one workshop
Data source	Attendance data
Frequency of monitoring	Monthly for three months before testing another strategy

Keep Talking

During every step of CQI, communication among staff is critical

All staff should:

- Be informed about the organization's commitment to CQI
- Understand how they will be involved in CQI
- Have opportunities to contribute their ideas, feedback, and recommendations

Tips for Facilitating CQI Meetings with Staff

Meet regularly

frequent communication is crucial

Set an agenda and expectations

meetings should follow an agenda and include follow up action items

Distribute data prior to meeting

allow attendees to view data before the meeting

Come to the meeting prepared

bring questions, rationales, issues to the meeting

Expanding Successful Strategies

After testing, monitoring, and analyzing, you may decide to extend this strategy to other parts of your program, or to the whole program

- This is sometimes called “scale-up”

Scale up does not mean the end of monitoring

- Things can change when the strategy is expanded
- It is important to continue assessing improvement after scale-up



Discussion

- **Are the terms used/concepts clear? Are there concepts that could be better explained?**
- **Are there concepts you would expect to see that are missing?**
- **Is the formatting in a manner that is useful for you to continually use this tool?**
- **How would you envision using this with your team?**

Resources



2 Briefs with Guidance on the Process and Road Tests

CQI Action Plan draws on the Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI²) process

Two briefs are available on the Mathematica website

- An overview of the LI² approach to CQI
- Testing a strategy



Technical Assistance for CQI

Every program is likely in a different place when it comes to CQI – and that’s ok!

The plan can help you identify technical assistance needs around CQI



References

Brief: Overview of LI²

www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/learn-innovate-improve-li2-enhancing-programs-and-improving-lives

Brief: Testing a strategy using the LI² approach

www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/using-a-road-test-to-improve-human-services-programs-practice-brief

Conclusions and Questions

Conclusions

- CQI is systematic, continuous, and iterative focus on improvement
- It requires participation from and communication with all staff
- The process and results should align with the program's mission and values
- Handout provides step-by-step guidance on forming a CQI implementation team and mapping a plan

Questions, Comments, Other Thoughts

Acknowledgements

The content of this presentation is adapted from the work of

Seth Chamberlain

Acting Branch Chief, Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood ACF's Office of Family Assistance

Senior Social Science Research Analyst, ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

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