

Training Module 7

Continuous Quality Improvement Series

Road test—Strategy implementation plan

This module aligns with CQI Step 3: Road testing—Try a strategy and learn how to improve it

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](#).

A road test is a way to pilot your strategy on a small scale to understand feasibility of implementing, user experiences, and early promise. Road testing involves three key steps: Specify the strategy; develop learning questions; and develop a testing plan. The steps are detailed below.

- 1. Specify the strategy.** As noted in [Module 6](#), after brainstorming strategies, your team should prioritize one. Testing one strategy at a time will reduce burden on staff who will be responsible for supporting implementation and data collection responsibilities. Testing strategies individually also allows your team to tease out the practices that are most promising; if you bundle strategies together, it may be more difficult to understand what made a difference. If you must test multiple strategies at the same time due to time constraints, know that you are testing the promise of the bundle of strategies rather than individual practices. Once you pick a strategy to test, it is important to specify the details of how you will test it. For example, which staff are responsible for carrying it out, how often will it be implemented, what training or tools are required to support staff in implementing it? Being clear on the components of the strategy will help your team to understand which parts work well and which parts need refinement.
- 2. Develop learning questions.** Learning questions make clear what your team hopes to understand about the strategy in order to inform refinement and assess promise. Specifying learning questions also helps to frame the scope of your road test and make clear what you need to find out through data collection and analysis ([Module 8](#)).

When considering what questions to ask, think about implementation, early outcomes, and broader context. CQI involves three types of measures:¹

- **Process questions** (implementation): What happened? How was the strategy implemented?

- **Outcome questions** (early outcomes): What changed? Outcome measures for road tests will be short-term changes that will help achieve your improvement goal but are not your improvement goal itself. Think about what you wrote in the **Step 2: Strategy development** table in the [CQI Plan Template](#) about the kinds of behavior, skills, or attitude changes you expect to see as possible outcome measures.

“Without questions,
there is no learning.”

—Edward Deming

- **Balancing questions** (broader context): Were there any unintended impacts? Strategies aren't implemented in a vacuum and, thus, can affect other parts of the system. Ensure your learning questions guide your team to uncover unintended impacts.

Learning questions for a road test should focus on the feasibility of implementation and early outcomes (for example, changes in attitudes or behaviors) rather than effectiveness. They might focus on process considerations, short-term outcomes, or unintended consequences. Your learning questions can be documented in **Step 3: Road testing** section of the [CQI Plan Template](#).

Examples of road test learning questions.

Suppose your program wants to use youth program champions, as noted in [Module 6](#). The team should develop a detailed implementation plan that considers the types of youth participants who would be ideal program champions; how staff will prepare and/or train youth to message the program effectively; how staff will incentivize and track referrals to the program; and how staff will support youth as they take on their role as champions for the program. The following are examples of helpful learning questions and one to avoid:

- ✓ What kinds of youth are interested in and enthusiastic about being program champions?
- ✓ How did the program prepare youth program champions to support recruitment efforts and was it sufficient?
- ✓ What strategies do youth program champions use to connect with their peers? What are the benefits of using youth to support recruitment?
- ✗ Is the use of youth program champions an effective strategy for increasing enrollment?

The question marked with an X is not a helpful learning question because road tests aren't designed to produce causal evidence of the effectiveness of a strategy. Their purpose is to enable your program to prototype a strategy, resolve usability issues, and assess whether it shows promise before launching it program-wide. For more on road testing, see the [Learn, Innovate, Improve practice brief](#).

3. Develop a testing plan (Module 8). The final step is to develop a testing plan, which involves specifying test logistics and a data collection plan. [Module 8](#) contains more information about a testing plan.

¹ Langley, G., et al. The Improvement Guide: 2nd ed. Chichester, England: Jossey Bass Wiley, 2009.

Completing the CQI Plan Template



In the first table under **Step 3: Road testing** detail your strategy and learning questions. For a sample road test, see [Appendix B](#).

Specify your strategy. Note details about the parts of your strategy (e.g., duration, frequency, staff responsibilities, technology/training)	Develop learning questions. What do you want to learn about how the strategy works?
We will develop program champions, drawing on youth alumni of the program, to make the pitch for the program to other youth. We will provide information to youth alumni to ensure they know how to message the program appropriately. One full-time staff person will be responsible for managing program champions to ensure they receive referral incentives and are supported with any questions.	What are the characteristics of youth who are a good fit to be program champions? How did the program prepare youth program champions to support recruitment efforts and was it sufficient? What strategies do youth program champions use to connect with their peers? What is the value add of using youth to support recruitment?

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