

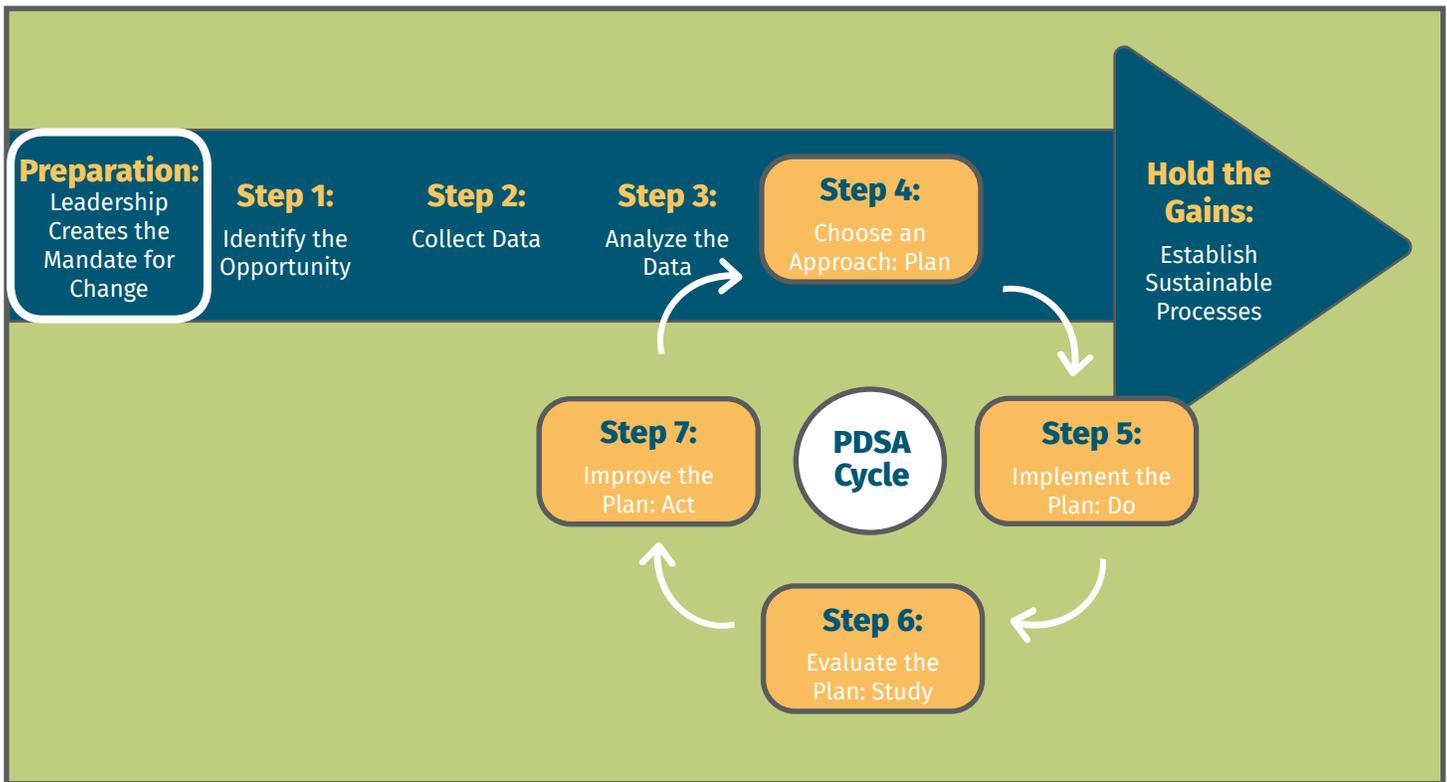


PREPARATION: LEADERSHIP CREATES THE MANDATE FOR CHANGE



THE QI APPROACH:

- About this Step
- Role of the Project Sponsor
- QI Team Membership
- The “Kick-Off”
- REFERENCES



About this Step

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to help you decide whether you and your organization should take a lead in cardiovascular care quality improvement efforts, and outline your tasks in leading this QI effort.

“Active and committed leadership is the most important determinant of success in making lasting improvements to patient care.”

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) emphasizes the importance of leadership creating a foundational infrastructure for quality improvement as fundamental to the way an organization does its work. They have identified Five Core Drivers for successful Quality Improvement Infrastructure, as described on the following page.¹

Foundation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop infrastructure: <i>Creating the structures to support quality</i> 2. Create a culture that enables and activates people: <i>Creating the activities and environment that support people to act</i>
Continuous Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Plan: <i>Understand and design to meet the customer need</i> 4. Improve: <i>Creating breakthroughs in improvement</i> 5. Sustain: <i>Assuring predictable and reliable process</i>

An activated and committed leadership that creates and articulates a mandate for change is essential for the success and sustainability of quality improvement to the care delivery system. A leader has the authority in an organization to make changes and delegate the resources needed to implement and sustain those changes. Without leadership commitment, progress toward the desired state will diminish and likely results will not be sustained even if they do occur.

Virtually any organization could assume a leadership role in cardiovascular care improvement if they have long term commitment, clear improvement goals, dedicated resources (staffing, budget, time, etc.), and provider interest and buy-in.

Clinic and organizational leaders (those with the authority to change policy or redirect resources) lay the groundwork by:

- Making cardiovascular care improvements a system-wide priority
- Establishing or adopting cardiovascular care guidelines supported by all clinicians
- Ensuring that a multidisciplinary improvement team is convened
- Defining the team’s mission and improvement aim
- Identifying a clinic leader to act as the project sponsor and liaison to management on behalf of the QI team. If there is a quality improvement infrastructure already in place, someone engaged with that process who also has an interest in cardiovascular health would be a possible choice.

Ongoing leadership commitment and support is essential for the success of any QI effort. Leadership will determine readiness of the organization to take on a QI project.

Role of the Project Sponsor

The unique role of the Project Sponsor will be to:

Create and maintain a supportive environment for change:

- Demonstrate the need for improvement
- Create an expectation for change
- Establish incentives (or remove disincentives) for improving cardiovascular care
- Help to identify and remove barriers to improvement

Prepare your organization for its leadership role:

- Establish cardiovascular care improvement as a very high priority for your organization
- Define your organization’s cardiovascular quality improvement plans
- Seek additional partners as needed to leverage scarce resources and extend reach
- Provide the opportunity for education of staff in the basic principles and techniques of QI
- Identify a team within your organization to implement the QI process and set expectations for roles
- Monitor and evaluate your organization’s progress

Spread successful improvement strategies:

- Maintain regular, effective communication to keep stakeholders informed, engaged, and committed to the improvement efforts.

- Share experiences and successes
- Spread the improvement program to other sites and to the care of other chronic conditions

Facilitate continuous improvement in the clinics/sites:

- Promote your organization’s long-term role in facilitating cardiovascular improvements
- Help clinics/sites create a culture of continuous improvement
- Offer recognition and rewards to stimulate continued commitment to improvement

QI Team Membership

One of the Project Sponsor’s tasks is to identify a Team Leader and a Clinical Leader to implement the QI process. They will be responsible for preparing for and conducting each meeting, ensuring accountabilities are defined, and ensuring progress is happening and communicated. They will also be responsible for identifying a Team Facilitator and team members for the QI Workgroup.

The number of QI Team members should be defined by the process and what pieces of the process need to be represented. Generally, having 8-10 people on the QI Team is manageable.

Regardless of the number of members, the QI Team should include the following roles:²

Leadership Team Members

- **Project Sponsor** – Someone with executive authority who can provide liaison with other areas of the organization, serve as a link to senior management and the strategic aims of the organization, provide resources and overcome barriers on behalf of the team, and provide accountability for the team members. The Sponsor is not a day-to-day participant in team meetings and testing, but should review the team’s progress on a regular basis. The Project Sponsor is a member of the QI Leadership Team.
- **Clinical Leader** – This is the person who will champion the work among other providers. This person has knowledge of the identified process, is well-respected among his/her colleagues, and is a team player. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) states this should be someone “with enough authority in the organization to test and implement a change that has been suggested and to deal with issues that arise. The team’s Clinical Leader understands both the clinical implications of proposed changes and the consequences such a change might trigger in other parts of the system.”
- **Team Leader**– This is the day-to-day leader and driver of the project, who will assure that tests of change are implemented and will oversee data collection. It is important that this person understands not only the details of the system, but also the various effects of making change(s) in the system. This person also needs to be able to work effectively with the Clinical Leader and other physician champion(s).

TIP: The Project Sponsor, Clinical Leader, and Team Leader comprise the QI Leadership Team.

It is important for the Sponsor to remain informed of the progress and to be available for assisting with challenges and barriers the team encounters. To do this, most Team Leaders and Clinical Leaders will schedule regular meetings with the Sponsor. The Clinical Leader and Team Leader are the connection between the organizational leadership and the full QI Team.

Other QI Team Members

- **Technical Expert** – This is someone who is very familiar with the content and the process that the workgroup will be tasked with improving. There may be several Technical Experts if the process involves many steps. Consider anyone involved with the process you are trying to improve. Team members might be nurses, pharmacists, and other clinical personnel, but also consider including any staff such as information technology (IT), reception, scheduling, laboratory technicians, or others who may be able to offer some insight to improvements that could be made.

- **Team Facilitator** – An expert on improvement methods can provide support by helping the team determine what to measure, assisting in design of simple, effective measurement tools, and providing guidance on collection, interpretation, and display of data. While some content experts may also have experience with facilitating QI project workgroups, having a Team Facilitator who is not also a content expert will allow all content experts to focus on the discussion and not be concerned with documenting the discussion, keeping everyone on task and on time.
- **Adhoc Members** – You may consider some people to be Adhoc Members who will participate only as their area of expertise is needed. Anyone who is considered an Adhoc Member should always be kept in the loop on all communications and progress. As you progress, you may find there are some people missing that should be at the table. Bring them up to speed prior to their first meeting so as to not hold the whole group up during a meeting. This is work that should be delegated to the Team Leader and Clinical Leader; they can keep the Sponsor informed of any changes in team membership.

The “Kick-off”

Purpose

Prior to beginning the QI process, hold a kick-off event to emphasize the need for action. This kick-off event will set the stage for the task ahead. The kick-off celebration will also help to build excitement and engage leadership in taking the first steps in the QI process.

Objectives

- Hold a festive event to announce the charge of the team
- Engage leadership in demonstrating full support of the QI effort
- Motivate the team and enlist their full commitment to the process
- Educate the team about the current state and why change is needed

Preparation

- Planners will likely be the appointed Team Leader plus the Sponsor
- Invite the selected team even if they have not fully committed. The kick-off can be used to help get that commitment and build excitement around the work.
- Prepare a brief summary and purpose of the initiative and the group’s mission as it is currently understood, for the benefit of any guests as well as for those who will be part of the team
- Present the QI process that will be used
- Present a high level timeline with milestones if known at this time
- Recruit and schedule guest speakers as desired and prepare a presentation outline for each
- Make it **FUN!**

REFERENCES

¹ McGrath P, Shippy AA, Williams DM. *Leading quality across a system. Healthcare Executive.* 2018 Nov;33(6):66-68. Retrieved from <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/Publications/Leading-Quality-Across-a-System-COO.aspx>

² Institute for Healthcare Improvement. *Science of Improvement: Forming the Team.* 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/HowtoImprove/ScienceofImprovementFormingtheTeam.aspx>