

# What makes a High Quality CQI Plan

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Office Hours

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# What is CQI?

- ▶ CQI is a process focused on:
  - ▶ Identifying and analyzing strengths and challenges
  - ▶ Implementing, testing, and revising solutions
  - ▶ Continuously improving your program!!

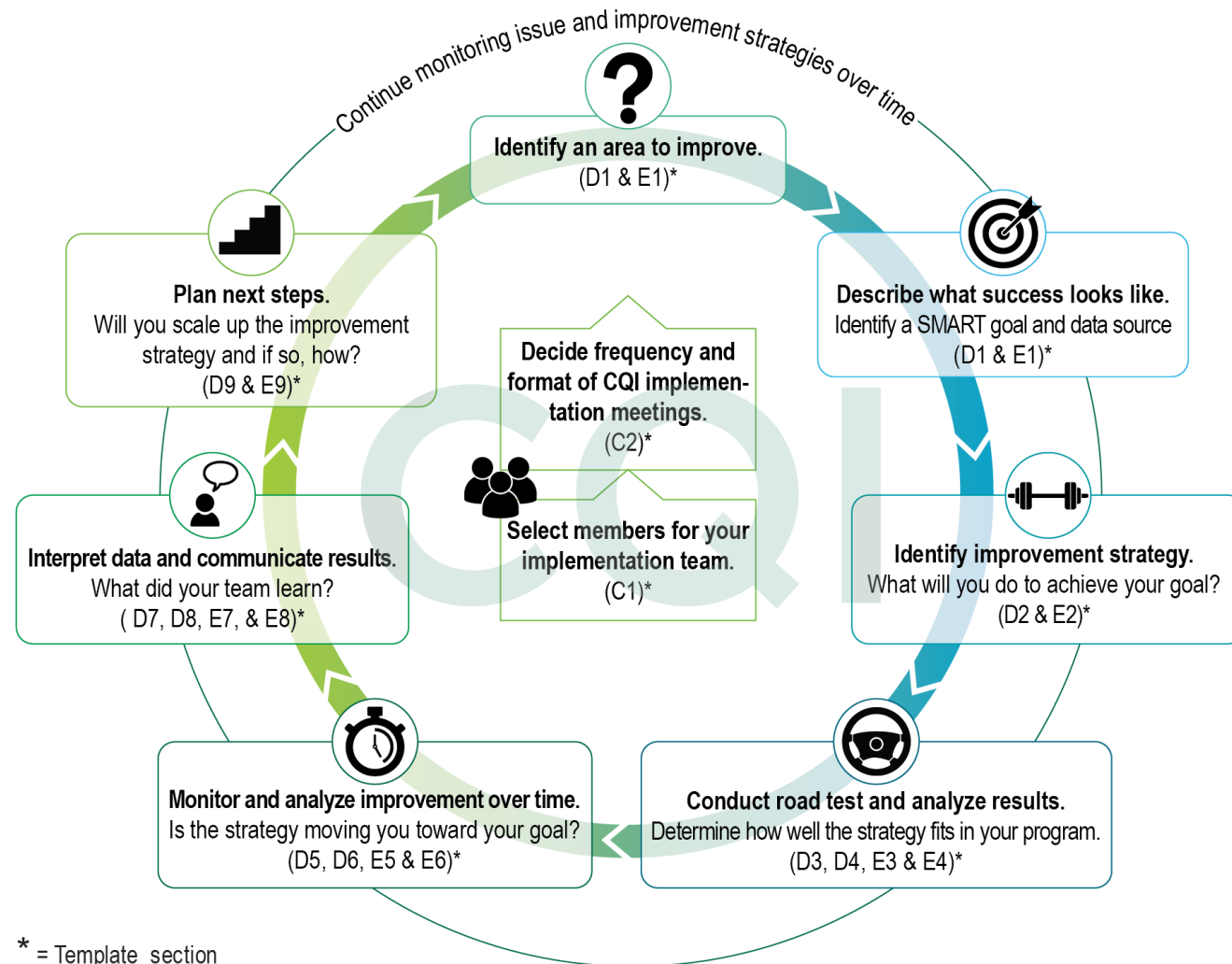


# A High Quality CQI Plan:

- ▶ Is specific and detailed
- ▶ Sets clear responsibilities
- ▶ Identifies reasonable timelines
- ▶ Follows some key steps

# A Successful CQI Approach Requires Planning

- ▶ ACF developed a CQI Plan Template for use by grantees
- ▶ 9 components to the plan
- ▶ Let's review each one.....



\* = Template section

Your CQI template can keep you on the right track...



## CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE



### Instructions

Please use this template to describe your continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan for OFA. You can either (1) add your text within each section and submit this document as your written plan for CQI (note that each table is fillable), or (2) use these headers and describe your CQI plan in another document. This document is meant to be updated and changed over time as you work on CQI.

### A. Grantee and CQI plan information

Grantee name	
Type of grant (HM, RF-New Pathways, RF-ReFORM)	
Date of CQI plan	
Changes to this version of the CQI plan	

### B. Summary of CQI work to date (if any)

Please summarize past CQI issues that your team has worked on and the current status of those issues in Table B1. If you have not engaged in any CQI, leave this blank. Strategies for improvement should be monitored over time to check if they are still working as intended or need to be revisited.

# Section D1 (& E1): Area for improvement and SMART Goals

	Ok	Even better.....
<b>What is the specific problem or issue you are trying to solve?</b>	Low exit survey completions	We only achieved an average quarterly exit survey completion rate of 50% in the last quarter of Grant Year 4.
<b>What is the SMART goal that would show an improvement on this issue?</b>	More people completing the exit surveys	Increase the rate of exit survey completions from 50% (% of enrolled participants who complete an exit survey within 4 months of program entry) to 60% by quarter 1 of Grant Year 5 and 70% by quarter 2 of Grant Year 5.
<b>What data source could you use to measure progress towards that goal?</b>	nFORM	nFORM query tool data (and data export) of individual program enrollment, participation, and entrance/exit survey completion.

Greater specificity of the extent of the issue

Specific and reasonable timeline that shows short- and long-term goals

# Section D2 (& E2): Developing Improvement Strategies

	Example: Area for improvement	Strategy for improvement	Process for how strategy was developed	Rationale for the strategy: Why might this strategy lead to improvements?
<b>Ok</b>	Low exit survey completions	Incentivize participants to complete the survey.	Staff brainstormed ways to improve attendance.	People like to get money.
<b>Even better.....</b>	We only achieved an average quarterly exit survey completion rate of 50% in 2019.	Provide participants who complete the exit survey a \$100 gift card at the end of their last class and inform/remind them of the incentive following each class.	IT interviewed 7 program non-survey completers to find out why they didn't complete. They learned that child care was needed to cover the amount of time needed to attend classes and paying for child care was an issue. Participants suggested that financial help to cover their time might work.	Participants have costs related to their time spent in classes and some people might not be able to afford it, including child care. Helping them with these costs can facilitate their class attendance and ultimately exit survey completion.


Details on the strategy implementation and timeline

Information on who was involved in developing strategy

# Section D3 (& E3): Conducting a road test: Assessing how well the strategy fits with the program

- ▶ The template presents a series of questions to help you plan your road test
- ▶ Examples of questions include:
  - ▶ What are your learning questions?
  - ▶ When and how will you conduct the road test?
  - ▶ When and how will you analyze the results?
  - ▶ When and how will you make adjustments?

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**D3. Conducting a road test: Assessing how well a strategy fits with the program**

A road test allows you to examine how well a strategy fits in your program. In a road test, small numbers of staff and clients participate over a short period (about four-to-six weeks) and provide feedback about their experiences using the new approach or strategy. Afterward, the team analyzes the data and feedback to develop concrete recommendations for refining or revising the strategy. Road tests often include two or more of these feedback periods.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The road test is based on the Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI<sup>2</sup>) approach. For more information on LI<sup>2</sup>, see [www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/learn-innovate-improve-li2-enhancing-programs-and-improving-lives](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/learn-innovate-improve-li2-enhancing-programs-and-improving-lives).

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**Why take the extra steps for a road test?**

Change can be difficult and some changes have unintended results. For these reasons, it is important to test the proposed strategy on a small scale and gather feedback on it. This gives the team practical information, such as how staff and clients responded to the change, and whether and how you could



# Section D3 (& E3): Conducting a Road Test

Specificity in what the CQI team wants to learn from the road test

	Ok...	Even better!
<b>Road Test Design</b>	We want to know if an incentive will increase exit survey completion. We will start providing an incentive the first week of February for exit survey completers and then discuss how it goes.	<p>Learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What worked well and not well with communicating the incentives?</li> <li>- What did staff observe about participants' reactions to the incentive?</li> <li>- What worked well and not well with distributing the incentives?</li> <li>- How did participants (if at all) change their behavior?</li> </ul> <p>Plan: We will start informing new enrollees of the incentive the first week of February. We will continue for 4 weeks and then follow-up for 4 weeks (8 weeks total). We will talk to 5 staff and 5 participants to learn how well the incentives were communicated and distributed. We will track exit survey completion by week and assess results. Within one week of analyzing the data, our Implementation Team will meet to discuss the results and decide to continue the incentive as is or tweak it.</p>

Timeline on how the road test will unfold

Staff involved in the road test and their roles

# Section D4 (& E4): Analyzing the road test results - Implementation

**D4. Analyzing the road test results: What worked well, what should change?<sup>5</sup>**

After a program has collected feedback from relevant stakeholders such as supervisors, staff, and clients, it is time to analyze and interpret the information. Analysis should seek to identify strengths and challenges of the implementation process as well as opportunities and concrete suggestions for improvement. Please use your data to answer the following questions.

<sup>5</sup> Text and questions from LI<sup>1</sup> road test brief. For more information, see [www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/using-a-road-test-to-improve-human-services-programs-practice-brief](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/using-a-road-test-to-improve-human-services-programs-practice-brief)

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a. What seems to have worked *consistently* well and not so well? What was *inconsistent*?

b. What, if anything, was surprising, given expectations about how the new strategy would work?

	Ok...	Even better!
<p><b>How to analyze the results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>What worked well</b></li> <li>- <b>Does behavior seem to be changing?</b></li> <li>- <b>How might we build on the results?</b></li> </ul>	<p>We were able to distribute 50 gift cards to exit survey completers. We talked about how well participants liked it. We decided to continue with the incentives.</p>	<p>After talking with 5 staff and 5 participants we learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff thought communicating the incentive early on was important. Connecting the incentive to child care costs was useful. No problems reported.</li> <li>- Some participants did not understand why they were getting the incentive. Some did not understand what the purpose of the exit survey was.</li> <li>- We plan to give the staff a script and include additional information to address what participants wanted to know.</li> </ul>

Specific findings on staff implementing strategy and participants experiences with it

# Section D5 (& E5): Monitoring improvement over time

Timeline that monitors strategy effectiveness as it unfolds

Specifying which staff are involved and their specific roles

	Ok....	Even better!
<b>Frequency of monitoring</b>	Review the completion rate at the end of quarter 1 and quarter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff enter data into nFORM</li> <li>- Implementation Team lead analyzes data and informs IT at the end of each month</li> </ul>
<b>Staff responsibilities</b>	Review the completion rate weekly. Analyze whether the completion rate differs by certain characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Program manager enters data into nFORM the day of collection</li> <li>- Data lead analyzes data and presents to IT</li> <li>- IT reviews data and discusses at IT meeting</li> <li>- IT suggests different ways to analyze the results</li> </ul>

# Section D6 (&E6): Analyzing the results over time



## D6. Analyzing improvement over time: Did we make progress toward our SMART goal?

After you have collected data as planned, the next step is analyzing the results. Please answer the questions below.

- a. What data source did your team use to assess improvement? If the data source is a survey (either from nFORM or developed by the program), please describe the questions used in the analysis. Generally, the data source will be the same as the source listed in Table 3 above, but if a change was needed, please explain why

- b. When did your team collect data? For example, you might have measured enrollment for three months: January 2019 to March 2019.

- c. How many people are included in your data? Please specify if the people included are clients, staff, or other stakeholders. For example, this could be the number of clients or staff who answered questions in a survey or number of stakeholders interviewed.

- d. How did your team measure improvement or change over time? For example, your team might have measured participation in at least one workshop occurrence for

	Ok...	Even better!
What did the results show?	nFORM data showed that the exit survey completion rate increased to 55%.	We used nFORM enrollment and survey response data to assess weekly exit survey completion rates for the first 3 weeks of March 2020, to correspond with participants who were enrolled in February 2020. Our sample included 25 participants. We noticed that the rate improved each week. By week 3 the rate increased to 55% from 50%.

Details on the results and change over time

Specifies data sources and timeframe

# Section D7 (&E7): Interpreting the data - Putting it all together

Description of how and why strategy led to the intended outcome (or not)

	Ok...	Even better!
<b>We learned that:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentives worked</li> <li>- People like incentives</li> <li>- Exit survey completions increased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentives needed to be communicated well to participants, including why and when they would receive them.</li> <li>- Staff need to communicate why participants are getting the incentives (to cover costs).</li> <li>- Once additional information was provided, participants felt that the incentives resulted in them attending more classes.</li> <li>- The incentives seemed to increase exit survey completion, but not as much as we hoped. Other strategies might be needed.</li> </ul>

# Section D8 (&E8): Communication

	Ok...	Even better!
How will we communicate the results to staff?	We will send out an email to all staff about offering the incentive to participants to complete exit surveys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within one week after the road test, IT lead will send out an email explaining the incentive strategy and a quick summary of the road test results.</li> <li>- IT lead will present the results at the next all staff meeting.</li> <li>- IT will solicit additional feedback at the all staff meeting.</li> <li>- Within two week after the road test, IT will develop a script for staff to explain the motivation and purpose behind the incentives to participants.</li> </ul>

Detailed communication steps and specifics on which staff are involved

Timeline for how communication will unfold and by when key tasks will be completed

# Section D9 (& E9): Plan next steps

Specifics on decision to scale and how/by when the team will do so

	Ok...	Even better!
<b>What are the next steps?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phew....we are done!</li> <li>- We will wait until the results of our next Capstone review to see if we need to improve more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Program team will “scale-up” - begin offering incentives to all participants, incorporating the feedback to properly communicate the purpose to participants.</li> <li>- IT will continue to monitor the exit survey completion rates weekly.</li> <li>- After 3 months, IT lead will reassess whether the exit survey completion rates are meeting goals.</li> <li>- If not, IT will implement another CQI cycle on this issue.</li> <li>- IT will brainstorm another strategy to road-test with the same issue and goal.</li> </ul>

CQI is a continual effort.

# Resources



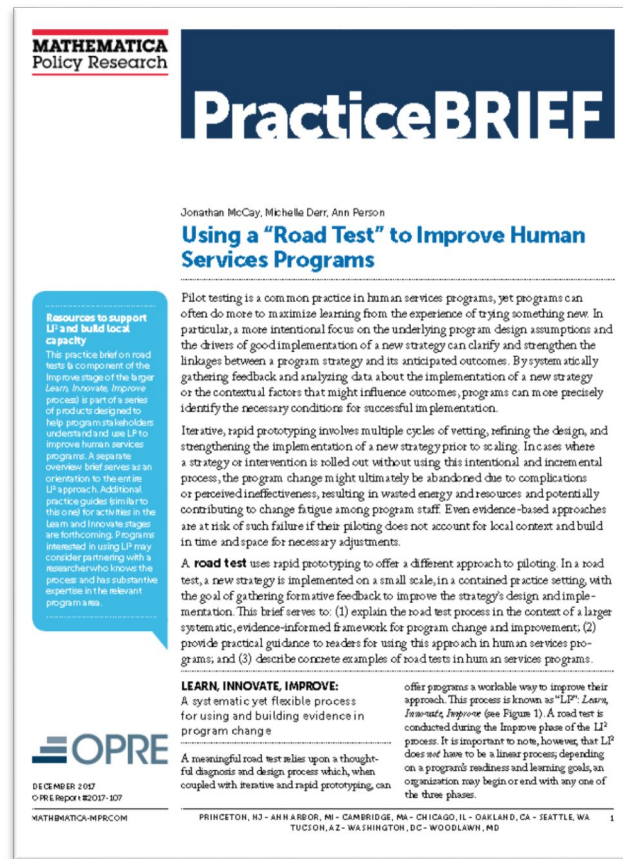
# CQI Resources

- ▶ A series of CQI Best Practices is being distributed over winter and spring 2020
  - ▶ Overview of CQI and key best practices
  - ▶ Implementation team agreement
  - ▶ Sample Implementation team agenda
- ▶ Webinars (materials available on FastTRAC)



# Want to learn more about the Learn, Innovate, and Improve framework?

- ▶ ACF's CQI template draws on the Learn, Innovate, and Improve (LI<sup>2</sup>) process for CQI
- ▶ Two briefs are available on the Mathematica website
  - ▶ An overview of the LI<sup>2</sup> approach to CQI
  - ▶ Testing a strategy



**MATHEMATICA Policy Research**

## Practice BRIEF

Jonathan McCay, Michelle Derr, Ann Person

### Using a "Road Test" to Improve Human Services Programs

**Resources to support LI<sup>2</sup> and build local capacity**  
The practice brief on road tests is a component of the Improve stage of the larger Learn, Innovate, Improve process. It is part of a series of products designed to help program stakeholders understand and use LI<sup>2</sup> to improve human services programs. A separate overview brief serves as an orientation to the entire LI<sup>2</sup> approach. Additional practice guides similar to this one are forthcoming. Programs interested in using LI<sup>2</sup> may consider partnering with a researcher who knows the process and has substantive expertise in the relevant program area.

**BACKGROUND**  
Pilot testing is a common practice in human services programs, yet programs can often do more to maximize learning from the experience of trying something new. In particular, a more intentional focus on the underlying program design assumptions and the drivers of good implementation of a new strategy can clarify and strengthen the linkages between a program strategy and its anticipated outcomes. By systematically gathering feedback and analyzing data about the implementation of a new strategy or the contextual factors that might influence outcomes, programs can more precisely identify the necessary conditions for successful implementation.

**Iterative, rapid prototyping** involves multiple cycles of vetting, refining the design, and strengthening the implementation of a new strategy prior to scaling. In cases where a strategy or intervention is rolled out without using this intentional and incremental process, the program change might ultimately be abandoned due to complications or perceived ineffectiveness, resulting in wasted energy and resources and potentially contributing to change fatigue among program staff. Even evidence-based approaches are at risk of such failure if their piloting does not account for local context and build in time and space for necessary adjustments.

A **road test** uses rapid prototyping to offer a different approach to piloting. In a road test, a new strategy is implemented on a small scale, in a contained practice setting, with the goal of gathering formative feedback to improve the strategy's design and implementation. This brief serves to: (1) explain the road test process in the context of a larger systematic, evidence-informed framework for program change and improvement; (2) provide practical guidance to readers for using this approach in human services programs; and (3) describe concrete examples of road tests in human services programs.

**LEARN, INNOVATE, IMPROVE:** A systematic yet flexible process for using and building evidence in program change

A meaningful road test relies upon a thoughtful diagnosis and design process which, when coupled with iterative and rapid prototyping, can offer programs a workable way to improve their approach. This process is known as "LI<sup>2</sup>." Learn, Innovate, Improve (see Figure 1). A road test is conducted during the Improve phase of the LI<sup>2</sup> process. It is important to note, however, that LI<sup>2</sup> does not have to be a linear process; depending on a program's readiness and learning goals, an organization may begin or end with any one of the three phases.

**OPRE**  
DECEMBER 2017  
OPRE REPORT #2017-107  
MATHEMATICA-MPRC.COM

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## Practice BRIEF

Michelle Derr, Ann Person, Jonathan McCay

### Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI<sup>2</sup>): Enhancing Programs and Improving Lives

**Who can use LI<sup>2</sup>?**  
A broad array of public and private sector human services practitioners can benefit from and use the LI<sup>2</sup> process. Human services include the variety of programs designed to help people lead successful lives—for example, workforce development and employment services, safety net programs, child welfare services, early childhood education programs, and healthy family programs, among others.

Human services practitioners want to improve their programs and practices in order to better help their clients. For various reasons, however, they may not always take a systematic, evidence-informed approach to program improvement. Such an approach could position the program for greater success while, at the same time, generating evidence to inform others facing similar challenges.

To meet this need, Mathematica Policy Research, in partnership with the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and the Harvard Center on the Developing Child<sup>1</sup> developed a framework for program improvement that embeds analytic methods into the process of designing, implementing, and iteratively testing program changes: The Learn, Innovate, Improve process—or LI<sup>2</sup>—is a series of replicable, evidence-informed program improvement activities, supported by collaboration between practitioners and applied researchers. LI<sup>2</sup> brings social science theory, research evidence, and practice wisdom together, with the goal of creating innovations that are practical, effective, scalable, and sustainable.

**BACKGROUND**  
This brief is the first in a series that seeks to advance welfare and family self-sufficiency research and practice through enhanced linkages between social science and human services programming. This first brief provides a high-level overview of the LI<sup>2</sup> process; later briefs will offer more in-depth guidance for practitioners and applied researchers interested in using the process to improve program outcomes while generating actionable evidence for program decision making and the field. This brief can help research and practice audiences consider how a collaborative improvement process might work in their particular contexts and prepare them to ensure such a process. Though participation in the LI<sup>2</sup> process will vary by setting, the program stakeholders involved often include administrators, supervisors, and frontline staff; research partners typically—though not necessarily—come from outside the organization, so as to bring a fresh, external perspective.

**THE THREE PHASES**  
The LI<sup>2</sup> process unfolds in three phases: Learn, Innovate, Improve. Each phase builds upon the previous phase, but programs may enter the process at any point, depending on their individual situation and readiness. The three phases are as follows:

**1. Learn** The first phase helps practitioners clarify their reasons for seeking change and the specific problem or problems they are trying to solve. The learning stage

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# Your CQI template can keep you on the right track...

- ▶ Everyone is likely in a different place when it comes to CQI - and that's ok!
- ▶ Remember to document your efforts and reasons.
  - ▶ This will really save everyone time down the road!
  - ▶ And keep everyone on the same page and pointed in the same direction.
- ▶ The template can help you deepen your CQI inquiries and improve the quality of your program in a methodical and efficient process.
- ▶ More to come!



# Links to Resources

- ▶ Brief: Overview of LI<sup>2</sup>
  - ▶ [www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/learn-innovate-improve-li2-enhancing-programs-and-improving-lives](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/learn-innovate-improve-li2-enhancing-programs-and-improving-lives)
- ▶ Brief: Testing a strategy using the LI<sup>2</sup> approach
  - ▶ [www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/using-a-road-test-to-improve-human-services-programs-practice-brief](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/using-a-road-test-to-improve-human-services-programs-practice-brief)
- ▶ nFORM help page
  - ▶ [www.famlecross-site.com/nForm/Contact](http://www.famlecross-site.com/nForm/Contact)
- ▶ FastTRAC
  - ▶ [www.hmrffasttrac.com](http://www.hmrffasttrac.com)



# Questions?

