



## Scaling and sustaining improvement efforts

When road testing is done and the CQI team has monitored outcomes, the CQI cycle is nearly complete. If the strategy is deemed a success—in other words, the test supports positive progress toward goals—teams should plan for how to scale a strategy more broadly (if applicable) and sustain the practice long-term. This tip sheet presents three steps and guiding questions your team can use to support successful scaling and sustaining of an improvement strategy.

When scaling and sustaining changes, these steps will help your team to distill what you learned from testing into a cohesive message and approach to support positive outcomes and a new way of working.

- **Reflect on learning.** Your CQI team had reflection points after the road test and may have checked in on what you were seeing throughout the monitoring phase. To help your team think more broadly about what you learned, your team should reflect across all steps in the CQI cycle and consider the most important points to communicate to others in your program who haven't been involved. (See [August 2022 Office Hours](#) presentation for more information.)
- **Formalize the strategy.** As you reflect, you should develop an implementation guide to document the steps of the strategy, what you learned about how to implement it well, and what parts of the strategy are core to its success. Describe what you found to be essential to maintain or flexible to change to help others replicate the strategy in their own context. This is also an opportunity for staff who were involved with testing to share their own tips for achieving success in implementing the strategy.
- **Make a tangible plan.** Scaling and sustaining improvement strategies does not happen organically; rather, scaling and sustaining require proactive planning. Consider what your team will do to transfer ownership of the strategy to other staff; communicate about the value of the strategy; hardwire the change to make it easy to implement; and reduce obstacles, such as workload challenges.

### Box 1. Defining terms

**Scaling:** Replicating or expanding an improvement strategy to a greater number of people (e.g., staff implementing or clients receiving).

**Sustaining:** Maintaining the strategy as is, directed at the same group of staff or clients, for a longer period of time. Sustaining is not just about doing the same thing for longer but thinking about how to institutionalize a strategy to make it the standard way of doing business.



### Reflect on learning

An important step when concluding a CQI cycle is to reflect on what the CQI team learned throughout the process. For instance, what did the team learn about the specific challenge and its root causes? What insights came out of the road test? Did data demonstrate success in the monitoring phase? Gather your CQI team to reflect on:

- **Why did we originally start this improvement effort? What were we trying to improve?**
- **What did we learn about the problem?**
- **What did we predict would happen as a result of implementing the strategy? What, if any, assumptions were challenged or confirmed through testing the strategy?**

- **What went well, and why? What could have gone better, and why?**
- **What progress have we made? For whom has progress been the greatest? What remains challenging?**
- **What information do others need to adopt this process successfully?**

When you are done, use the [HMRF CQI template](#) to distill key insights in section D7 as “We learned that ...” statements.



## Formalize your strategy

Reflection helps your CQI team get on the same page about lessons learned and sets the team up to formalize the strategy. Your team should develop an implementation guide to document these lessons and get more specific about what the strategy is and how to implement it. A guide could include documenting the individual steps required to implement the strategy as intended; who is implementing, overseeing, and receiving the strategy; and which parts of the existing workflow are essential for the new strategy to work. The implementation guide will help you transfer what you learned about implementing well to others, including current staff who weren't involved with testing or future staff who will need to own or implement the approach. Use the questions below to consider what to include in the implementation guide:

- **What is the strategy?**
  - Start with a succinct description of the strategy and how it differs from the current approach.
- **Who is responsible for enacting the strategy?**
  - Describe who would ideally implement the strategy. If you tested a new outreach strategy that was implemented by program facilitators and you found that they should be doing the outreach, be clear about that insight in the documentation that you share with others.
- **What are the steps to implementing the new practice? What should each step look like or not look like?** For each significant step, specify:
  - The first [second, ...] step is...
  - This looks like...
  - This should not look like...
- **What tips would the team provide about implementing the new practice?**
  - Consider what the team learned during road testing. Staff who participated in testing may have key insights from their experience and should share these suggestions with others.
- **What challenges might others encounter when implementing the new practice? What does the team suggest for addressing those challenges?**

When you have documented the new practice, your team is ready to plan to transition responsibility for the new practice away from the CQI team to other staff. As you are scaling the strategy and sharing it with new staff, remember to use the implementation guide as a training tool.



## Plan for scaling and sustainability

New practices rarely sustain on their own. Careful planning will help to ensure that staff who are expected to implement or oversee the practice agree with the change and can carry it out. Use the questions below to identify what your team can do to successfully transition an improvement strategy to a sustaining practice.

**Who will own the work?** During the testing phase, the CQI team oversaw implementation of the strategy and monitored outcomes. Since the CQI team will move on to other challenges and strategies, you'll need to find someone else to "own" and be responsible for scaling the practice and ensuring it is sustained. At the start, the CQI team should partner with this person to share their knowledge of what to do differently and why. However, the CQI team should aim to step away from implementation support over time. Ongoing responsibilities of the new owner should include:

- **Checking in with staff to ensure they continue to implement as intended.** This might include tracking key process measures to ensure staff are still doing what they are expected to do. The CQI team could share some of the process measures tracked during the testing phase to determine what is feasible for the new owner to monitor. When staff aren't implementing the strategy as intended, the person overseeing the strategy will be responsible for troubleshooting barriers to implementation. But, the CQI team can continue to be a resource to help brainstorm solutions, and the COM-B tool can be a helpful framework for considering barriers to change related to capability, opportunity, and motivation (See the [Using COM-B to support improvement tip sheet](#)).
- **Collecting feedback from staff to understand challenges, questions, or concerns.** The end of testing doesn't mean the end of feedback collection. As staff are being asked to do something differently, the new owner of the practice should create opportunities for staff to provide feedback on how it's going. This could include checking in during staff meetings, providing a comment box, or asking staff directly during 1-1 supervision meetings. When feedback leads to changes, the team overseeing this should also update the implementation guide.

**How will you communicate about the change?** It's important to keep in mind that some staff may not have been involved with testing the improvement strategy and, therefore, will not have the same level of buy-in for the new practice. When crafting your messaging and outreach, consider common barriers to buy-in listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Common barriers to building buy-in for strategies**

Common barrier	Potential solution	Example
<b>Leadership is not actively supporting staff to embrace the change, or worse, is opposed to making the change</b>	Getting leadership buy-in is just as important as gaining buy-in from implementation staff. Emphasize the outcomes you have achieved to foster buy-in. Consider using a CQI storyboard (See Box 2) to succinctly describe the problem and how your strategy supports improvement.	We will create a CQI storyboard that emphasizes the importance of addressing the issue and shows how our improvement strategy helps. We will talk through the storyboard in a program leadership meeting and will address any concerns. We will brainstorm ways that leadership can help to support staff in adopting the new practice.
	Don't just share outcomes at the start. Be sure to share results that demonstrate ongoing progress as the program scales or sustains the strategy.	The program already reviews key outcomes with leadership monthly. We will add attendance at the first session to the list of outcomes to monitor and will discuss progress and concerns.

Common barrier	Potential solution	Example
<b>Staff don't understand the need for change</b>	Ensure your messaging is clear on why the change is important.	In this grant year, we noticed that 62% of clients who register for our class attend the first session. Attendance at the first session is critical, as we know that most clients who attend the first session (88%) complete the course!
	Be clear on how your strategy supports improvement. For example, "We learned that our strategy improves (outcome) through (short-term outcome)."	We learned that our strategy to send personal reminder text messages ahead of the first session improves (attendance at the first session) by addressing (memory lapse) and increasing (accountability).
<b>Staff have skepticism about new changes because of past failed changes</b>	Recruit "change champions" who have credibility with staff who are being asked to implement the new strategy. For example, staff who were involved with road testing may already be champions for the strategy and might be the best messengers for its benefits with others.	Two facilitators participated in the road test of the text message strategy. We will involve them in training staff on the new practice and ask them to share how adopting the strategy supported their work as facilitators.
<b>The change impacts staff's current job role (e.g., it increases staff workload)</b>	Make space for feedback to listen to concerns. The CQI team can encourage or support the person taking ownership for the practice to think about how to gather feedback.	We will set aside 15 minutes during our biweekly program meetings to check in on challenges/barriers staff are encountering and will be intentional about asking staff about the new text message practice.
	If the practice increases workload, explore whether other responsibilities can be eliminated or transferred to others. If not, is there a way to make the practice more efficient? For example, by using technology or training staff on new techniques.	Staff have shared that sending individual text messages to all clients in advance of the sessions is too much of a burden, so we will train facilitators on how to streamline the process of personalizing and sending groups of text messages.

**How will you hardwire the change?** Hardwiring change means altering the environment to make it easy for staff to adopt a new way of doing things. If you rely only on motivation to change, you risk staff reverting back to the old way of doing things. Consider what needs to be modified in your program or organizational environment to support the change. For example:

- **Build training on new processes into employee orientation trainings**
- **Update employee manuals and job descriptions to reflect revised responsibilities**
- **Update forms and workflows to reflect new steps in a process**
  - Example: The program is trying to enhance participation in the case management component of the program and tests a strategy to require staff to describe available services during intake meetings with clients. To support the practice, the program will develop a brochure describing the range of available services, translated into all languages spoken by clients. Staff will be asked to track that they've shared the brochure during intake.

- **Eliminate steps in a process that are barriers to implementing new practices**

- Example: The program creates a strategy to keep fathers engaged throughout the pre-enrollment period by connecting them with a case manager early. In the current process, case managers only reach out to fathers after they have been enrolled in nFORM. However, this sometimes prevents quick connections between fathers and case managers when there are delays in enrollment. The program will alter when case managers initially reach out to fathers.

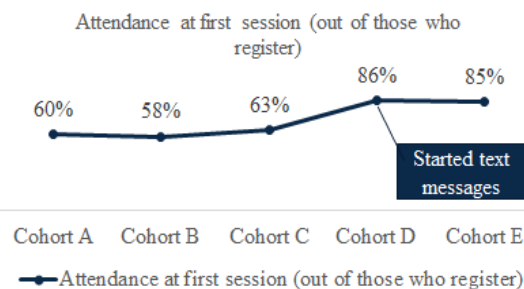
Box 2. **Example of a CQI storyboard.** Storyboards are useful tools for succinctly communicating the value of an improvement strategy. This example describes a program’s attendance strategy. Storyboards do not need to be complicated or professionally designed; they simply need to communicate results to promote buy-in.

**Challenge:** In this grant year, we noticed that 62% of clients who register for our couples program attended the first workshop session.

**Why it matters:** This was a concern, especially because attendance at the first session is critical for supporting sustained attendance. We saw that 88% of clients who attend the first session complete the course!

**Strategy:** Based on prior research, the CQI team decided to test a strategy to send simple text message reminders to both members of an incoming couple at one week and one day prior to the first session.

**Results:**



**What clients said:**  
“I have a lot going on, so it was helpful to get a reminder about the class. We really wanted to go.”

**What will you continue to measure?** While the CQI team will largely transition responsibility for implementing the practice to a new owner, the team may continue to monitor outcomes to determine whether gains are sustained. The CQI team may also help program staff monitor process measures to ensure the practice continues to be implemented as intended.

- **Outcome measures.** The CQI team should continue tracking progress toward the SMART goal you developed for the improvement effort. In some cases, these outcomes may already be part of your program’s ongoing monitoring. For example, if your goal is to increase attendance at sessions, you may already be monitoring attendance and will continue to do so. If the outcomes of interest are not already part of your ongoing monitoring—for example, a specific metric like attendance at the first session—your team should commit to continuing to monitor the outcome to ensure the new practice is supporting sustained improvement.
- **Process measures.** The CQI team should encourage the staff who take on responsibility for the new practice to track key process measures to ensure the practice is implemented as intended. For example, if staff will now send text message reminders to all clients in advance of the first workshop session, are they remembering to do this and documenting the reminders in nFORM? Are they sending the text messages at the correct points in time to encourage attendance?

In the [HMRF CQI template](#), use Section B (the CQI log) to note prior CQI efforts. In this section, you should specify what outcome(s) you plan to continue to monitor to determine whether the program is sustaining gains.

### **Box 3. Pulling it all together—Sustaining a strategy to support attendance at the first workshop**

**Strategy:** Staff will send text message reminders to both members of a couple one week and one day prior to the first session to increase the likelihood of attendance.

#### **Sustainability plan:**

The CQI team will recruit facilitators who were involved in road testing the text message strategy to share the new practice and tips for implementing it with their peers. These facilitators will make a presentation about the strategy at an upcoming team meeting during which they will use a CQI storyboard to present improved outcomes related to attendance at the first session and share tips for sending texts efficiently.

To support ongoing change, the CQI team will develop an implementation guide for staff to be clear about the processes and people involved with the strategy. The program will also revise their workflow, requiring that when supervisors pull a list of clients enrolled in a workshop one week prior to the session, they should also send that list to facilitators as a prompt to conduct their text message outreach. This step will be documented in the implementation guide.

Program supervisors will also check in periodically with facilitators to ensure they are implementing the practice and to gather feedback on challenges and successes.

#### **Continued monitoring:**

The CQI team will document the improvement effort in the CQI template log (section B). They will note plans to continue to monitor attendance at initial sessions of workshop series as part of their ongoing program monitoring. If they notice a sustained dip in attendance, they will set up a meeting with supervisors to explore the issue.

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