

Generating rigorous evidence for CQI

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) office hours

October 22, 2024 | 2:00–3:00 p.m. ET



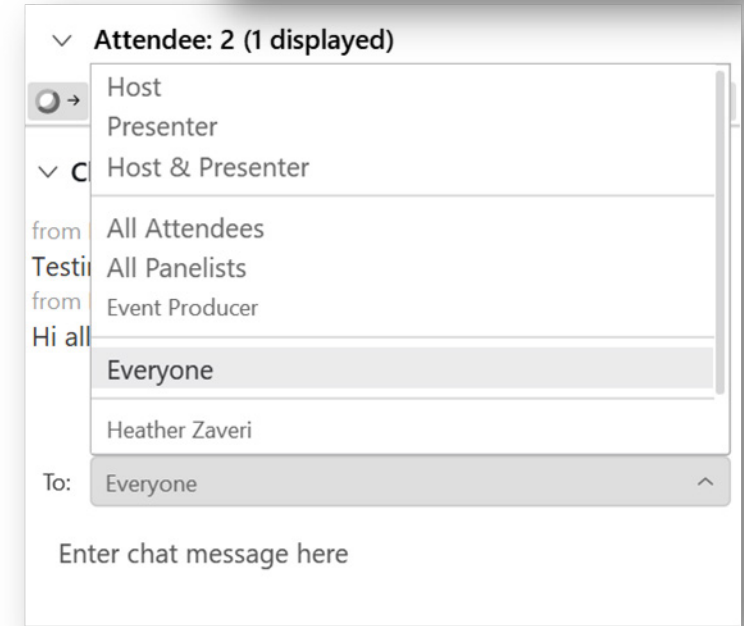
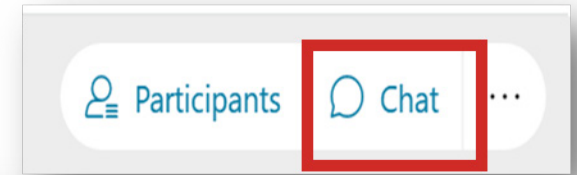
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families





How you can participate

- / **You may use the chat or share verbally using the hand raise feature**
- / **REMINDER: Never text or email client personally identifiable information (PII), including during office hours or when contacting the TA teams**





Maintaining and strengthening CQI practices

- / For many CQI efforts, evidence just needs to be good enough to inform next steps**
- / Today, we are focusing on rapid cycle evaluation methods, for when you need stronger evidence for CQI**





Agenda

/ **What claims can you make from a CQI road test?**

- Correlation vs. causation

/ **Rapid-cycle evaluation (RCE) methods**

/ **Grantee spotlight: Rigorous testing of outreach approaches**

- Jennifer Kearney, Project Director
- Malena Hyde, Project Manager



/ **Incorporating RCE into your CQI process**

/ **Announcements**



**What claims can you make
from CQI road testing and
monitoring?**



What can road tests and monitoring tell you?

- / Road tests help you work out issues with *implementation* to get a good strategy idea to work as intended
- / Longer-term outcome monitoring helps track and document the promise of a CQI strategy—if strategy is *correlated* with road test outcomes
- / Standard CQI methods do not establish a causal link that the strategy *caused* the outcomes

Road test implementation
Is the strategy feasible?
How can implementation of the strategy be improved?

Road test outcomes
Does the strategy influence short-term outcomes? Is it promising?

Monitoring outcomes
Are we making progress toward our SMART goal after implementing the strategy?

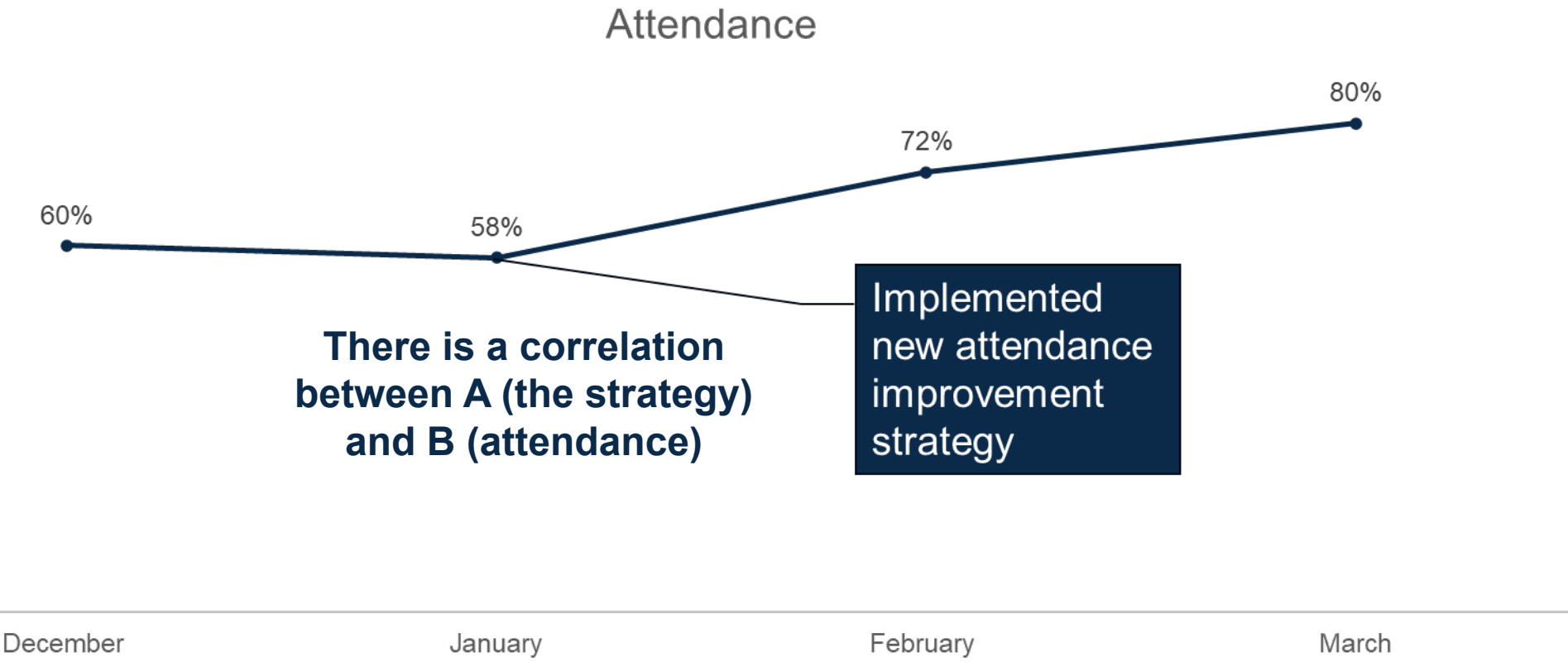


What is correlation?

- / Correlation: A relationship between two variables**
- / Example: If your time studying increases, your grade increases—there is a positive correlation between the two**
- / CQI example: When the program offers an incentive to attend the first session, we get better attendance at the first session**
- / Establishing a correlation supports the promise of a strategy**



Correlation vs. causation in CQI



What you can say:
After the implementation of strategy A, outcome B continued to improved

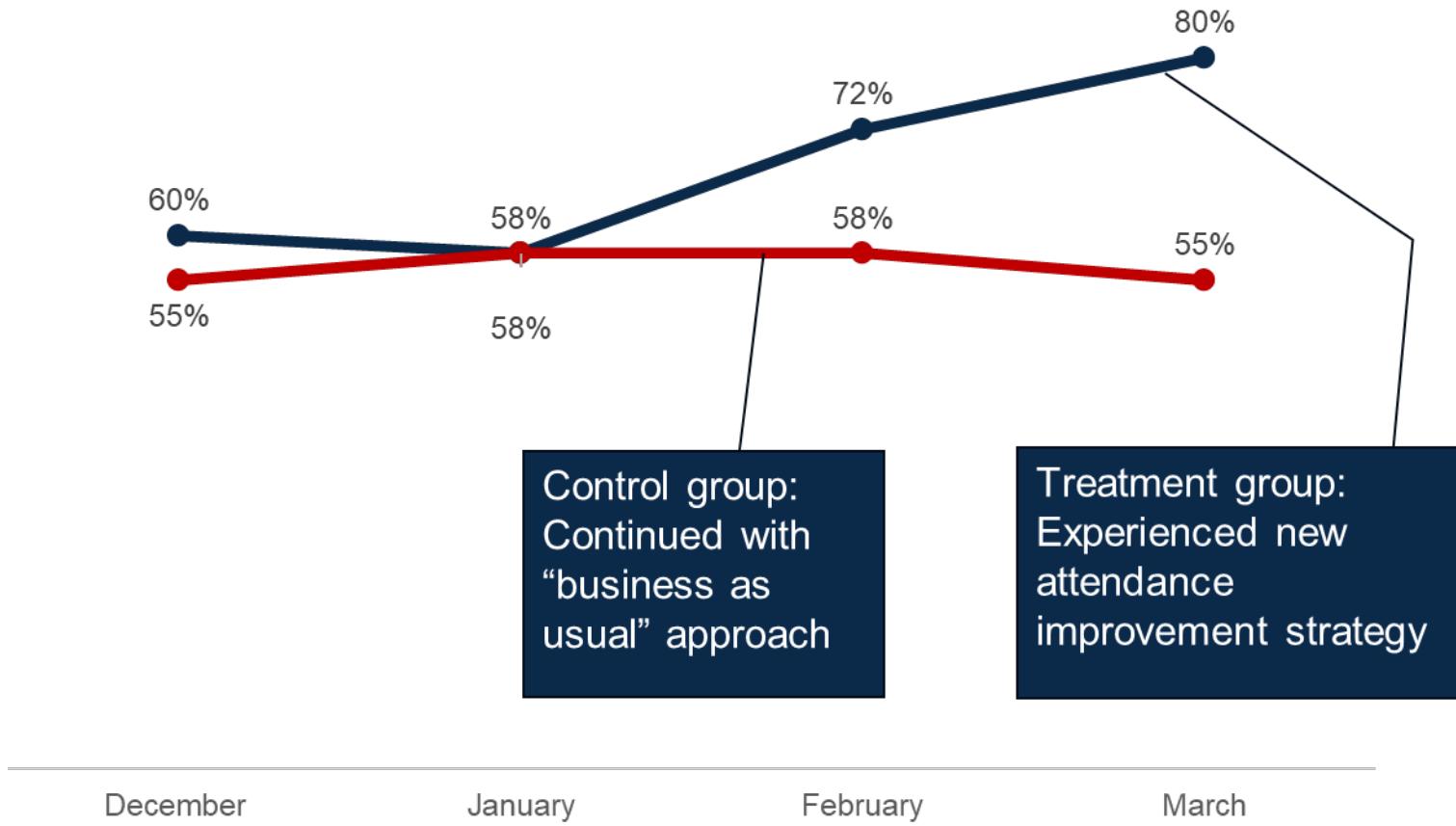


What you can't say:
Strategy A caused an increase in outcome B (attendance)



The value of a comparison group

By introducing a “business as usual” control group that represents the absence of the strategy, we can be more confident in saying strategy A caused an increase in outcome B





When is it important to establish causation?

- / Generally, establishing a correlation between implementation of a strategy and an improved outcome is good enough for CQI**
- / But if the strategy is resource intensive, in terms of staffing, funding, or time, you may want stronger evidence**
 - Establishing causation can be resource intensive
- / Example: You learn about a new motivation-based case management approach that will require investing in tools and staff training**



Rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) methods



What is rapid cycle evaluation?

- / A technique to conduct rigorous tests quickly enough to inform decisions about how to make a program better**
- / Focus on targeted changes or improvements to programs, rather than entire programs**
- / Focus on outcomes that can be assessed in a short timeframe**
- / Draws on impact evaluation methods to identify a causal link**



What are impact evaluation methods?

- / In a rigorous research design, two similar groups are compared so that any differences in outcomes may be attributed to the intervention—in other words, did the intervention cause changes?**
- / Experimental designs (randomized control trials, or RCTs) randomly assign participants to a treatment or control group to create similar groups on observable (age) and non-observable (motivation) characteristics**
- / Quasi-experimental designs (QEDs) identify a “matched comparison group” when randomization is not possible**



For CQI, what are the advantages of RCE?

- / Can help you establish a causal link that a CQI strategy *caused* the road test outcomes**
- / Can draw on either RCT or QED methods, depending on program goals and resources**
- / Control or comparison groups are drawn from existing program participants rather than outside the program**
- / RCE can rely on existing program administrative data for analysis, which helps manage costs and timeline**



When to use RCE in CQI efforts

/ **Road tests focus on implementation and early promise**

- They are intended to help calibrate a strategy to fit the program and determine whether a strategy shows early promise
- You still want to work out implementation issues before examining outcomes, because those issues could affect the outcomes

/ **RCE focuses on outcomes – does the strategy work?**

- RCE is a more rigorous alternative to long-term outcome monitoring in CQI
- Sometimes, teams need to monitor a strategy for several months after the road test to understand whether positive outcomes are sustained
- Using RCE instead of long-term outcome monitoring requires extra planning, but could produce more rigorous evidence, sooner



Share with us

/ What CQI strategy would you be interested in testing more rigorously?





Poll responses

**Retention
x5**

**Recruitment
efforts**

**Impact of
program
sessions at
school compared
to community
setting**

**Program
referrals**

**Evaluating and
comparing
retention rates
based on
demographic
data**



Grantee spotlight





Grantee spotlight



/ Fatherhood FIRE program in Ohio

/ Presenters:

- Jennifer Kearney, Program Director
- Malena Hyde, Program Manager

/ Rigorous testing of outreach approaches through the federal SIRF study

/ Passages has since tested various social media strategies



Incorporating RCE into your CQI process



Before you get started

/ **Grant teams can look for opportunities**

- Timing is important when testing a new strategy; if you've already started implementing and have not randomized, you can't go back

/ **Are you ready to launch a pilot and feel you need strong evidence?**

- Consider the nature of the pilot; if you're planning a process change, like a streamlined enrollment process, evidence generated in a regular CQI cycle is likely sufficient
- Is randomization feasible?

/ **Is an RCE for my CQI strategy compatible with my local or federal evaluation design?**



Initial steps

/ Identify a research partner

- If you're going to randomize participants and monitor groups, enlist support from a research partner to ensure quality, especially if you are new to RCE
- If you're participating in a local or federal evaluation, consult with your local evaluator, ETAP, and FPS
- If not done properly, the RCE could give you incorrect results or compromise your evaluation

/ Identify participants

- Work with your research partner to identify sample population, sample size, and distribution of sample within or across sites
- Your RCE sample may be everyone in your program or, if you design a strategy for a subset (e.g. teen parents), you may be focused on a smaller group



Randomize and monitor randomization

- / Maintain group assignments for the duration of the CQI process to prevent any contamination**
- / This requires the team to monitor randomization over time**
- / Need to monitor implementation (e.g., were participants properly assigned to treatment and control groups)**
- / ...and adherence (e.g., did participants receive the appropriate services for their assigned group)**



Data collection and analysis

/ **Collect data**

- To limit costs and time investment, RCE often draws on administrative data
- nFORM likely has outcomes of interest (attendance, program completion, engagement with staff)
- In some cases, you may collect additional data. For instance, if you are testing new outreach messaging, you may want to track what messages encouraged people to reach out to the program to express interest
 - If you plan to collect any additional data, check with your FPS and IRB, in case any additional approvals are necessary

/ **Analyze – compare outcome changes for the treatment group to changes for the control group**



Open Q&A



Announcements

/ **Join us for the next CQI office hours!**

- The next office hours will be on December 3, 2024
- A calendar invite will be shared soon

/ **The next nFORM office hours will be on November 12, 2024**

/ **Check out...**

- [HMRF Grant Resource Site](#) for HMRF CQI resources
- [OPRE Resource Library](#) for resources related to HMRF and other grant programs

/ **For CQI-related questions, reach out to the CQI helpdesk**

- HMRFCQI@mathematica-mpr.com



Thank you!

