ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

SPARK
Strengthening Performance, Analysis, Reporting, and Knowledge in HMRF Programs

HMRF
HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

nFORM
Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management

# Identifying an improvement strategy


## Data Capacity and CQI TTA Team


October 27, 2026

# Presenters



**Scott Baumgartner**
Data Capacity and CQI
TTA Team Member



**Scott Richman**
Data Capacity and CQI
TTA Team Member

# Join us for future nFORM/CQI office hours!

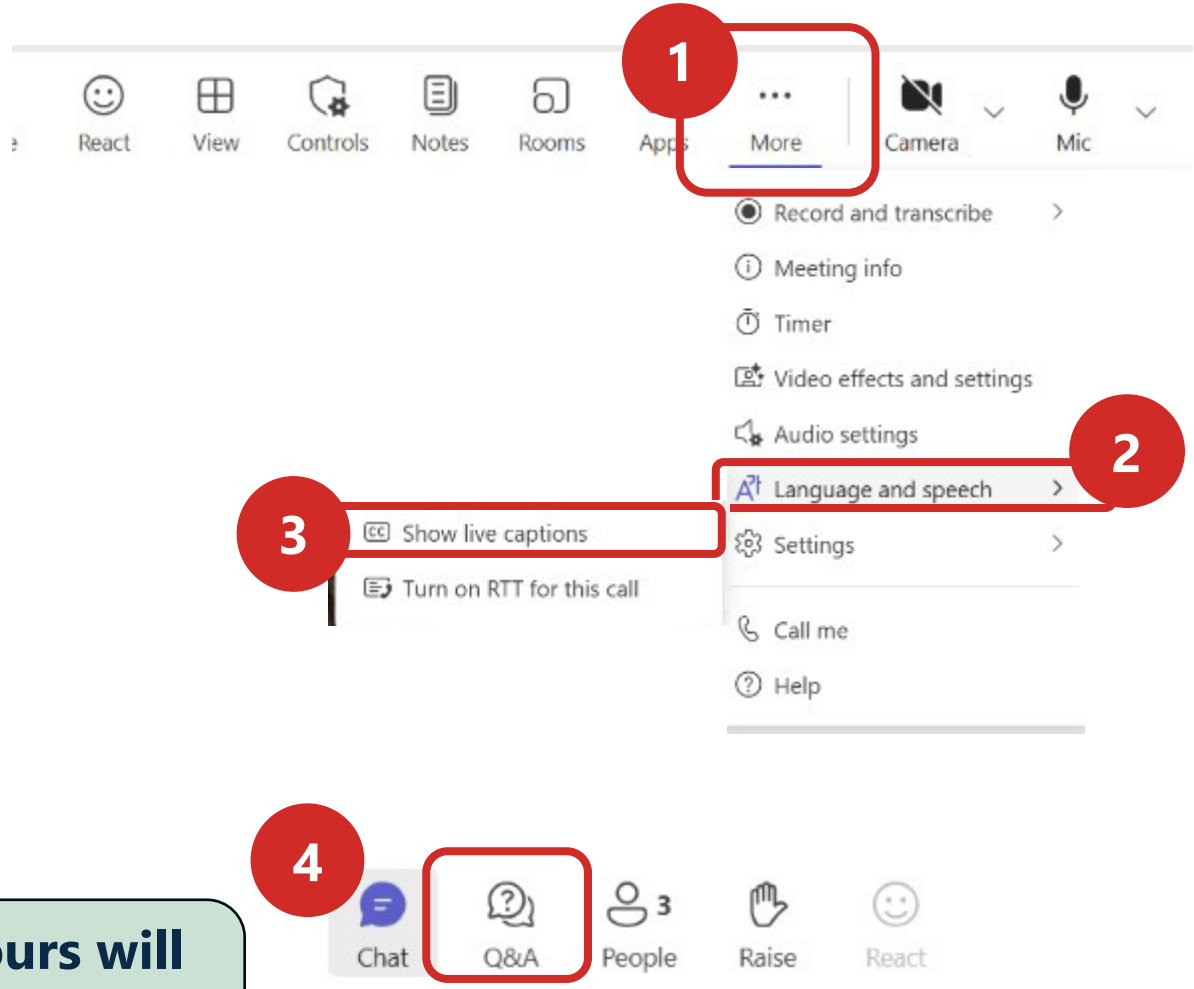
**Learn about collecting and monitoring data prior to enrollment during office hours on Tuesday, November 10, 2026 – 2-3pm eastern time**
During this session, the Data Capacity and CQI TTA team will review how to track potential applicants during outreach and recruitment. **Scan the QR code** to register for the office hours.

## Check out the HMRF weekly grantee digest every Wednesday

- Scroll down to "Plan for this" to register for office hours and "Use this" to find links to the latest resources
- Click on the office hours registration link; follow the registration instructions and click the "Add to calendar" button on the upper right of the Teams registration page
- Make sure everyone on your team receives the weekly digest by following instructions under "Do This" or the "Weekly Digest Signup" link at the bottom of the email
- Contact us at nFORMCQITA@mathematica-mpr.com with any questions

# Housekeeping

- Please mute your line
- Access closed-captioning by clicking the “More…” icon in top right corner, select language and speech, and click “show live captions” (Steps 1, 2, 3)
- Use the Q&A to ask questions (Step 4)




**Recording and slides from today’s office hours will be made available on the HMRF Grant Resource site at https://hmrfgrantresources.info/**



# Today's objective

- Learn how to develop an improvement strategy to address a program challenge

# Today's agenda

- Recap: Using CQI in your HMRF program
- How to develop an improvement strategy
- Questions and wrap up

# Recap: Using CQI in your HMRF program

# The CQI cycle



# Step 1: Identify a challenge and set a goal

**Before deciding what to improve, HMRF grant recipients need to understand what's actually going on and why**



## Identify the challenge

Look at nFORM and other program data to identify patterns and trends



## Get specific

Identify where this problem is happening, to what extent, and who it affects

Explore why it is happening (root causes)



## Set a clear goal

Define what will improve, by how much, and by when

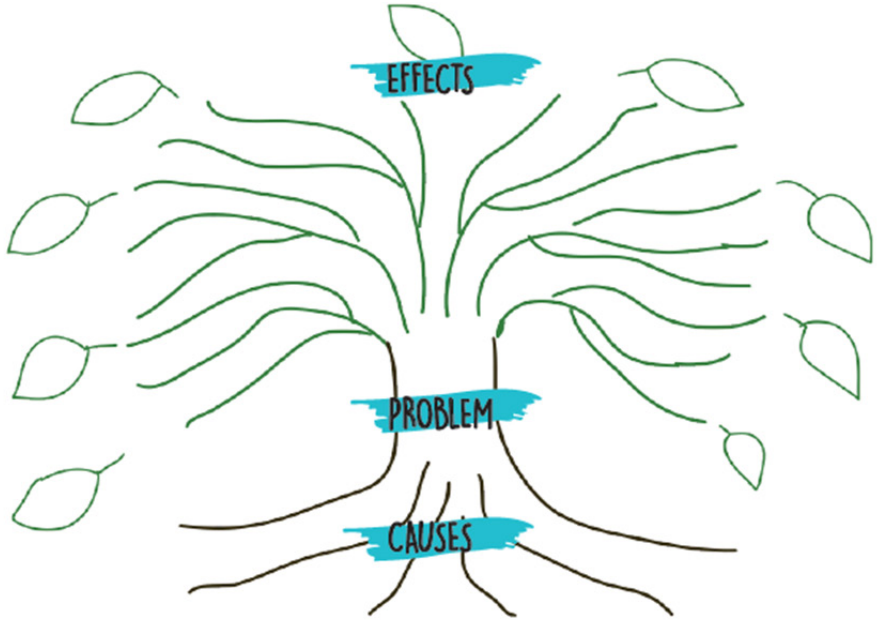
Create an improvement goal that is SMART

# Learning about the challenge: Identifying root causes

**Root cause analysis: The process of breaking down challenges into discrete causes**

**Helps ensure that you're addressing the cause of a problem, rather than a symptom of it or what you see on the surface**

**Identifying discrete causes allows your team to develop targeted improvement strategies**



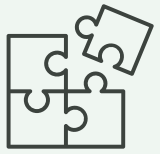
# Today we'll walk through Step 2: Identifying an improvement strategy



**Brainstorm potential strategies**



**Prioritize and select a strategy**



**Specify how your strategy will work in practice**

# Brainstorm potential strategies

# Brainstorming strategies

## The goal is to generate a wide range of potential strategies, not to identify the best strategy right away

- Prioritize quantity over quality
- Encourage creativity and open thinking—welcome all ideas!
- Do not judge or dismiss ideas at this stage

## Draw on internal knowledge and external sources

- Engage people with different roles, experiences, and expertise to generate a broader range of ideas

## Think creatively

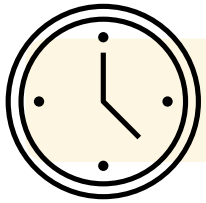
- Strategy ideas can range from modest updates to the way you do things now to outside-the-box ideas

# Engaging your team's practice wisdom

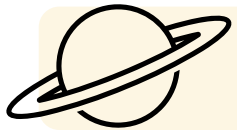
**Get the right mix of people in the room to explore potential solutions to the challenge**

- Decision-makers (program managers)
- Keepers of the culture (seasoned staff)
- Staff with firsthand experience with the challenge (case managers, facilitators, recruiters)
- CQI team (CQI lead, data manager)

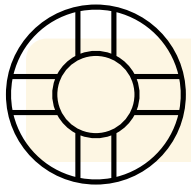
## Ingredients for creative, human-centered thinking



Time to think



Space to try



Safety to fail

# Sparking creativity: Statement starters

**To invite your team to brainstorm ideas, convert your SMART goal into an aspirational question starting with the phrase "How might we?"**

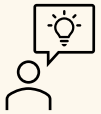
**SMART goal:**

**Increase the number of clients attending an initial workshop session from 6 to 10 in the next workshop series starting on December 1.**

How might we increase the number of clients attending an initial workshop session?



**Brainstorm** in small groups



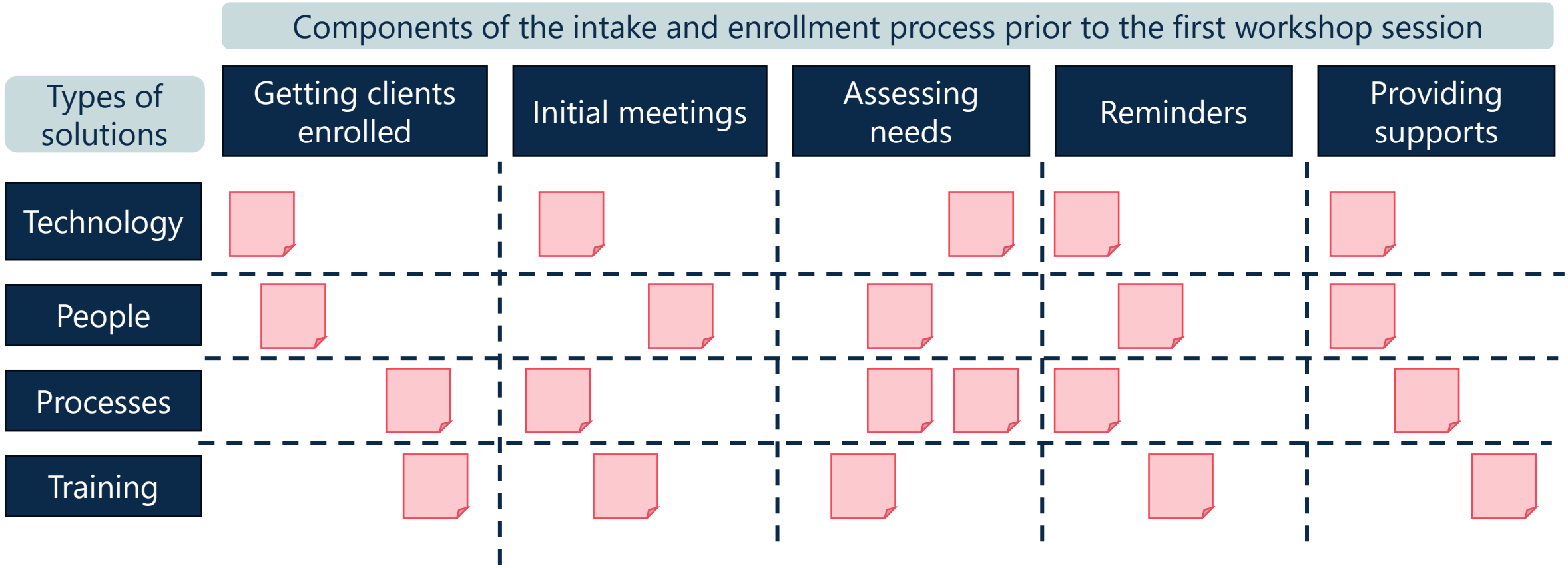
Each group **shares** their favorites



Have a full group **discussion** about the most promising ideas

# Sparking creativity: Creative matrix

**Use a matrix to organize ideas by the components of the challenge area and types of solutions**



# Bright spots method

## Sometimes, solutions to problems already exist within a program

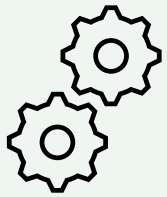
- Reframe the problem to focus on program components that are excelling
- Study data to find the high performing practices and dig into what is different about them

## Once a bright spot is identified, discover what supports success and whether it can be replicated

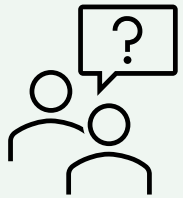
- What is the recipe to the “secret sauce”? Use interviews or observations to understand better
- Frame the effort as knowledge sharing, not that one part of your program is better than the rest



# Other places to go for ideas



TA providers



Your FPS



Research

# Prioritize and select a strategy

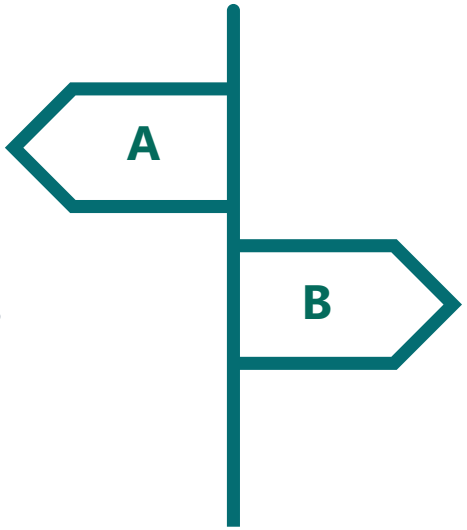
# Selecting a strategy

## Determine how your team will select a strategy to test

- Collaborate as a team to review all the strategy ideas, and make a decision together
- Include input from staff and partners who understand the challenge
- Foster consensus and buy-in

## Choose one strategy to focus on

- Keeps CQI efforts focused and manageable
- Helps isolate what is helping to address the challenge; trying multiple strategies makes it difficult to know what is working or not
- Ensure the selected strategy addresses the root cause of the challenge
- Have a clear understanding of why you think the strategy will lead to improvements



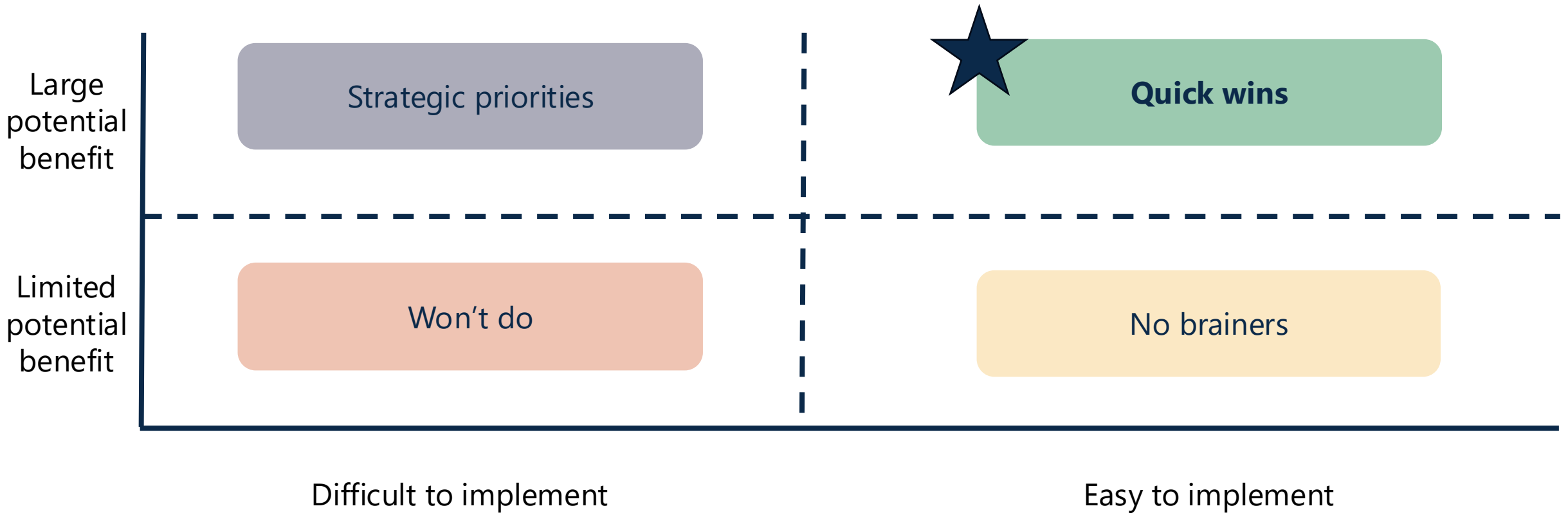
# Prioritize as a group

Building consensus together enhances buy-in and staff ownership over the improvement process and implementation of promising strategies



# Building consensus: Benefit-effort matrix

Rank strategies first by their potential benefit, then by how hard it would be to put them into practice

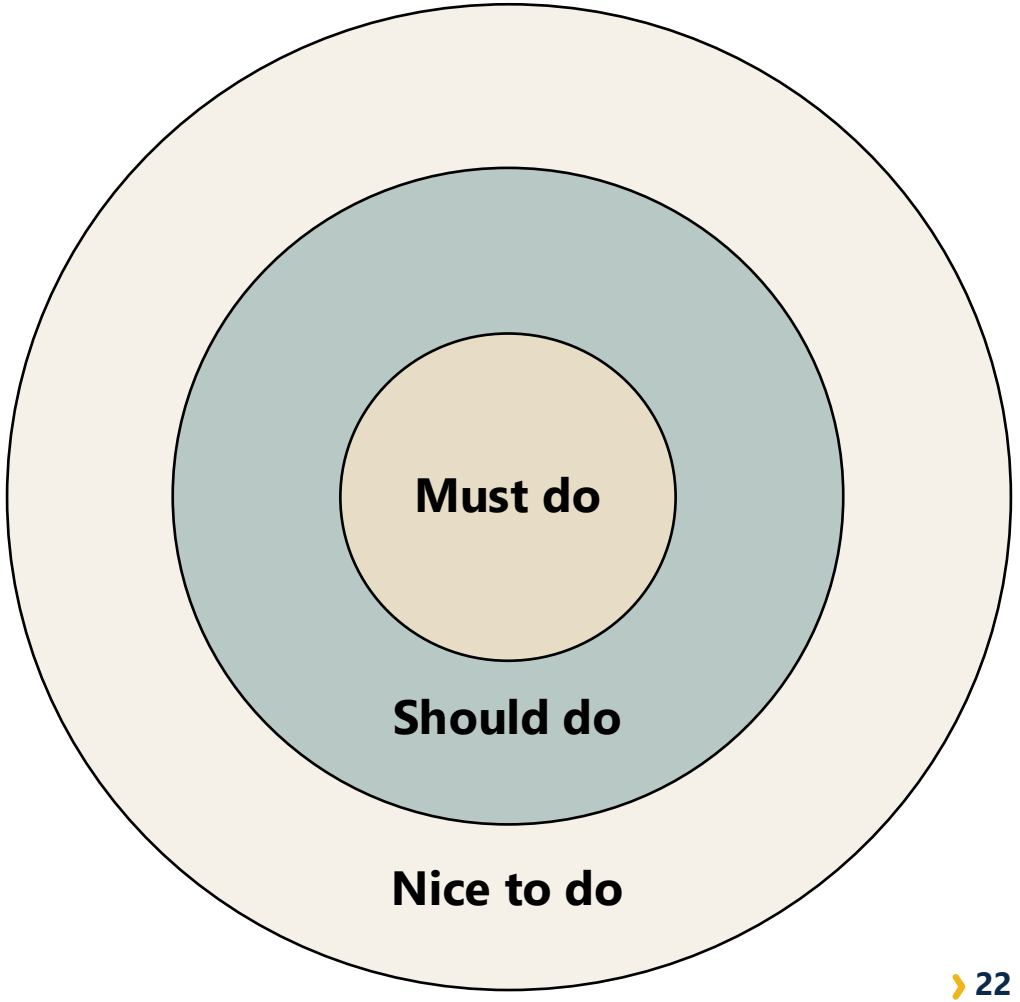


# Building consensus: Bullseye diagramming

A way for your team to vote on the ideas are most important to them

## Steps for bullseye diagramming

1. Each person chooses a few strategies from the brainstorming exercises
2. Each person places the strategies they selected on a ring of the diagram
3. Discuss individual and program priorities
4. As a group, move the top 1-2 strategies to “Must do” and the remainder to the middle and outer rings



# Developing a rationale for your priority strategy

**What is our priority strategy?**

Case manager holds a 5-minute welcome call with clients within three days of the first workshop session

**How will this address our challenge?**

Strengthen relationships with clients who *[had a long wait between enrollment and the beginning of a workshop series]*

[Root cause]

**What does success look like?**

Higher attendance at first workshop session

# Specify how your strategy will work in practice

# Adding details to your strategy

## Clearly describe how the strategy should work in practice

- Define roles, responsibilities, timing, and key activities
- Develop common understanding among team of what consistent implementation would look like
- Clarify what will be tested and what data you need to learn about the strategy's implementation and effectiveness



## Document factors that might help or hinder the team's ability to implement the strategy as designed

- What supports are needed?
- What potential barriers should be addressed ahead of time?

## Developing a clear, detailed plan helps everyone know the goals of the strategy and their role in its success

# Use the four Ps to build out your strategy



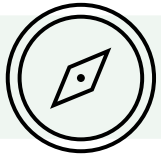
## People

Who delivers the strategy? Who receives it? Who oversees it?



## Practices

What is the practice? What is each step? When does each step happen? For how long and how often?



## Principles

What values guide implementation (such as centering participant voice)?

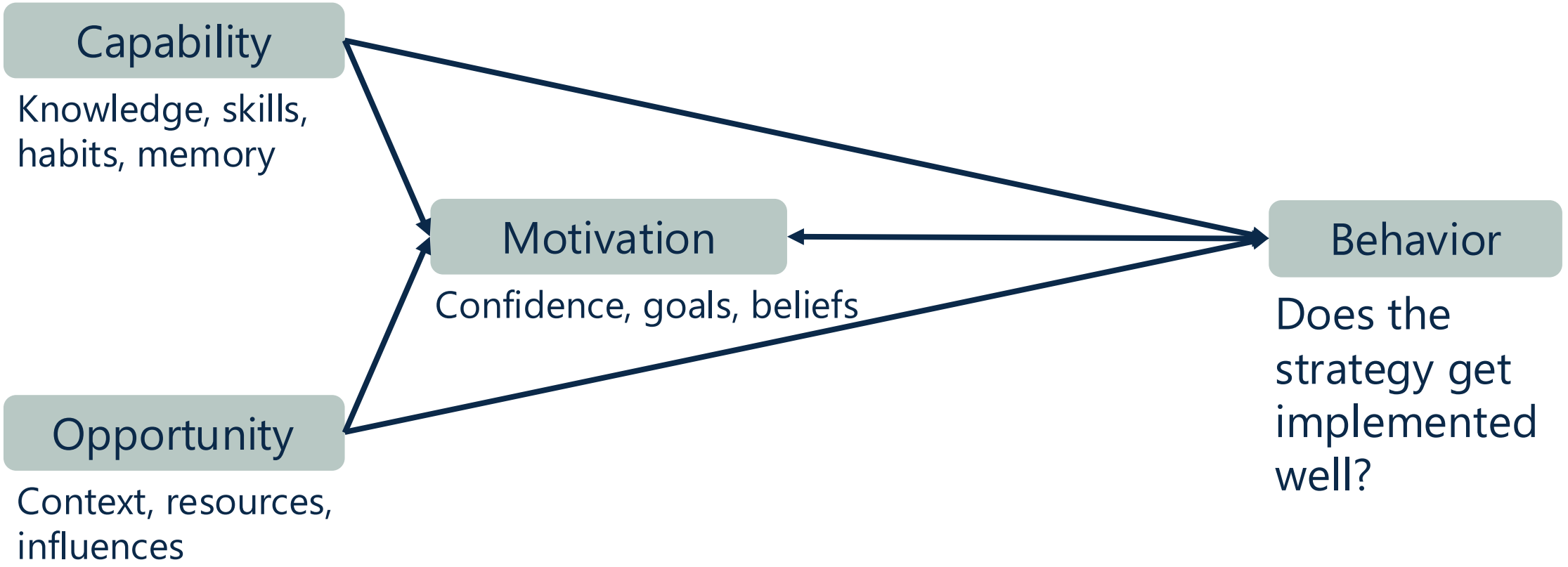


## Products

What tools, technology, and training are needed to implement the strategy?

# The components of behavior change

What to account for in developing an improvement strategy





# Anticipate potential barriers

**Ask what could go wrong and build ways to minimize obstacles into your strategy.**

## Your turn!

To address low initial attendance, your team wants to introduce a touchpoint with a case manager between a client's enrollment and first workshop session.

**In the Q&A, share:** What do you need to know to make sure this strategy can work? What are some potential barriers you might want to address before you try the strategy?

# Develop a road map for change to check whether the strategy can plausibly address the challenge

**Challenge:** The program loses touch with clients before the first workshop session, leading to low initial attendance

### What is your strategy?

**People:** Case managers
**Practices:** Hold a 5-minute welcome call within three days of first session
**Principles:** Strong relationships will encourage attendance
**Products:** Conversation guide

### How will it get done?

**Build motivation:** Highlight why strong client-staff relationships are important
**Create opportunities:** Recruiters try to get more contact information, and program managers email daily updates about new clients
**Strengthen capabilities:** Weekly check-ins with case manager supervisor to discuss progress and address challenges

### How will you know if the strategy is working?

**Processes:** Number of informational service contacts for new clients
**Short term outcomes:** Initial attendance rate
**Longer term SMART goal outcomes:** Average hours of participation and program completion rate

**Potential barriers:** Limited contact information, not enough time to make calls, delays in notification about caseload additions, concerns about how to address client crises in the moment

# Next: CQI Cycle Step 3 (Road testing)



What do you want to learn about the strategy?



How long will you try the strategy and with whom?



How will you know if it has been successful?



Who is responsible for collecting data?



How will you share and discuss results?

# Questions?



# Reminder: PPRs are due on Friday, 10/30!

- ✓ Complete grant year 1 program operations surveys and PPRs in nFORM
- ✓ Finalize and generate PDF of PPR from nFORM
- ✓ Your grant's authorized official should review PPR and sign cover page
- ✓ Grant staff with appropriate Grant Solutions access upload final report and supporting attachments as "Grant Messages" (formerly called GrantNotes); nFORM access not required to upload PPR to Grant Solutions
- ✓ Submit to Grant Solutions before 11:59pm ET on Friday, October 30
- ✓ Consult September 8th office hours materials and nFORM user manual on HMRF Grant Resource site or contact help desk with PPR questions
- ✓ Consult the "?" menu in Grant Solutions with upload questions and your grant specialist with SF-425 questions

# Wrap up

**All nFORM and CQI resources on HMRF Grant Resource site at https://hmrfgrantresources.info/**

**New resources include data dictionary and updated nFORM user manual**

After reviewing resources, contact the data capacity and CQI TTA help desk with any questions at **nFORMCQITA@mathematica-mpr.com**

## Data security reminders

- Never text or email personally identifiable information (PII) like client names – including to the help desk
- Never take screenshots of client PII from nFORM
- Everyone who interacts with client data should watch the **Keeping Data Secure training video** and review **Module I of the nFORM user manual**

Don't forget to register for the next office hours on **November 10!**