

Continuous Quality Improvement: USING DATA & INQUIRY TO IMPROVE LIVES

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a process of collecting, analyzing & using data to improve the quality of services or products on an ongoing basis. Put simply, CQI helps teams “get better at getting better.”

Over the past fifty years, the practice of CQI has been instrumental in improving products and services in various industries, including manufacturing and health-care. CQI can also be applied to the thousands of social service programs working to improve outcomes for people, from healthy birth, to a quality education, a well paying job, and healthy and secure aging.

Root Cause has developed a holistic approach to strengthening the capacity of social service providers by applying CQI principles in their programs. Our approach enables organizations to:

1. Clearly define intended results and the path to achieve them.
2. Use the best available evidence of what works.
3. Understand the barriers that hinder progress.
4. Use data in real time to decide what actions to take.

Unlike third party evaluations, CQI offers opportunities for ongoing program learning and improvement of day-to-day activities so that services are better delivered and more effective. It leads to professional development for program staff and improved satisfaction among program participants.

The CQI framework below provides the foundation for programs to determine how well they are doing and where to focus and improve their capacity.

CQI Framework For Social Service Programs



Life Outcomes &
Indicators



Domains of
Program Quality



Performance
Measurement Capacity

1. **ACCESSIBILITY**
How do programs address barriers to participation caused by race, class, gender & geography?
2. **USE OF EVIDENCE**
How do programs use the best available research to best meet the needs of participants?
3. **TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE**
How are programs designed to identify and address the consequences of trauma?
4. **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**
How are families involved in the planning, development, leadership, and evaluations of programs designed to serve them?
5. **REFERRAL PROCESS**
How do programs give and receive referrals that lead to seamless service coordination between programs?

1. **CULTURE**
Successful measurement, learning, and improvement begins with leaders prioritizing and embedding it within the program's culture.
2. **FRAMEWORK**
A program's hypothesis should rest on sound logic and clear assumptions explaining how and why its activities address a need and produce the outcomes it aims to achieve.
3. **SYSTEM**
Measurement systems include staff time, processes, and tools to collect, store, analyze, report, and learn from performance data on an ongoing basis.

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Root Cause partners with public and nonprofit organizations to strengthen the capacity of social service programs to practice continuous quality improvement. Using Root Cause's approach, programs work with their CQI coaches to take the following steps.

CQI Process For Social Service Programs



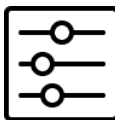
Lay the Groundwork

The path to practicing continuous quality improvement starts with a clear vision of what quality looks like and an understanding of how a program works.



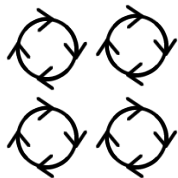
Assess Program Strengths & Challenges

Program leaders complete an online assessment that focuses on three areas: 1) Life Outcomes and Indicators; 2) Program Quality; and 3) Performance Measurement Capacity. The results of the assessment are the foundation for ongoing collaboration between program staff and Root Cause CQI coaches.



Set Improvement Cycle Priorities

Root Cause coaches review CQI Assessment results with program staff and together they identify opportunities for strengthening their practice.



Plan / Do / Study / Act (Repeat)

Root Cause coaches support program staff to implement Plan / Do / Study / Act (PDSA) improvement cycles that strengthen program capacity in priority areas. The PDSA cycle can be repeated as often as the program chooses to focus on various areas of the CQI Assessment.



Strengthen Capacity & Culture

Programs retake the assessment to gauge how their capacity has improved after an appropriate amount of time has passed since PDSA cycles have been completed. Successfully building and sustaining a CQI practice depends on creating a culture that fosters learning and a spirit of inquiry. Programs that excel collect and use data in ways that go beyond compliance with funder requirements or other external performance standards, and create time and space for staff to develop skills that support CQI practices.