# Building and Sustaining an Improvement Culture

## Virtual Meeting Facilitation Guide

## [Date], [Approx. 120-Minute Time Slot]

### Objectives:

* Review definitions and models of Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) and continuous improvement
* Describe strengths and weaknesses of various improvement frameworks
* Examine key principles for building improvement cultures
* Evaluate your organization’s readiness to engage in continuous improvement

| Time\* | Topic | Activity | Learning Objectives | Resources |
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| **5 min.** | Welcome and Introductions |  | * Welcome participants and provide time for new participants to introduce themselves. Ask new members to share their name, position/title, organization affiliation, and core job responsibilities/expertise.
* Summarize the previous meeting objectives and outcomes (Implementing Plan-Do-Study-Act [PDSA] Cycles).
* Introduce key objectives for this meeting (see above).
 | * Agenda
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| **45 min.** | Building an Improvement Culture | Presentation | * Using the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation, present on principles for building an improvement culture.
* Allow time for discussion and Q&A. Show PPT slides 9-10 and allow the group to reflect on each continuous improvement mode. Ideally, an organization should pull from multiple improvement models when implementing improvements (e.g., performance management, evidence-based practice; see PPT slides 9-10).
* What improvement model(s) does our organization prioritize?
* How is reliance on that model serving us now?
* Are we, as an organization, too reliant on one particular model of improvement? If so, how is that supporting or limiting our ability to implement a continuous improvement model? For example, your organization’s ***performance management*** process may be robust and effective, as evidenced by the organization’s clear improvement targets, accountability procedures, and sophisticated data dashboards. However, intensive investments in strong performance management procedures may come at the expense of local flexibility. That is, local schools may not have the time or data literacy necessary for interpreting data and applying it to contextually based problems. What are some examples where this type of overreliance on one model, at the expense of another, is occurring in your organization?
* Reflect on principles for building an improvement culture (see PPT slides 11-33)
* What do we, as an organization, do well? Where do we excel in terms of implementing these principles?
* What are our weaknesses? What barriers must we remove to improve in these weaknesses?
* What sites (e.g., schools, classrooms) represent exemplars for implementing a continuous improvement model?
* How can we capitalize on these sites’ strengths as we consider building organizational capacity to scale continuous improvement?
 | * PPT Presentation
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| **40 min.** | Assessing Readiness for Continuous Improvement | Conduct a Readiness Assessment  | * Use the *Checklist for Assessing Readiness for a Continuous Improvement Effort* (Shakman et al., 2020, pp. I-5) to determine strengths and weaknesses in the organization’s readiness to implement continuous improvement.
* Provide the handout to each person on the NIC Initiation Team. Ask the team to *individually* complete the checklist by (1) marking the boxes ([x] ) where the organization meets the criteria, (2) leaving the box blank where the organization does not meet the criteria, and (3) documenting the evidence to support each answer.
* As a large group, facilitate a discussion to reach consensus on each criterion, documenting the collection of evidence the group agrees upon to justify their answers. In cases where consensus is not reached, work with the group to develop action steps and evidence sources that would be needed to reach consensus (e.g., consensus is contingent upon 90% of people in the district/school agreeing that change is needed and that they will actively support change via a continuous improvement process. An educator survey will be used to gather evidence of support). Consider using a Google Doc or Jamboard to organize evidence supporting whether the organization meets/does not meet each criterion. If the meeting is in person, the facilitator could also use flip chart paper, asking team members to write evidence supporting or refuting the organization’s readiness against each criteria.
 | * PPT Presentation
* Handout 1: Readiness Assessment (Shakman et al., 2020, pp. I-5)
* Shared Document (e.g., Google Doc)
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| **20 min.** | Building Continuous Improvement Capacity | Develop an Organizational Capacity-Building Plan | * Using the evidence criteria and action steps produced during the readiness activity (see above), develop a plan for addressing any unmet readiness criteria. Pull up a new page in the shared document (e.g., Google Doc, Jamboard). Ask a recorder to document the following information:
* According to consensus, which criteria have we *not* met?
* For which criteria is evidence insufficient or currently unavailable?
* For each unmet criterion identified above, use the following questions to develop and carry out a readiness action plan:
* What action steps do we, as an organization, need to take to address this unmet criterion? What needs to happen for us to be confident that we are ready to implement continuous improvement?
* Who is responsible for implementing the necessary action steps? What are the action steps?
* By when will these action steps be implemented and/or completed?
* Who is responsible for collecting and reporting the evidence to determine when the criterion is met? What evidence source(s) will be collected and reported? What is the data collection and reporting timeframe?
* Note: If significant capacity-building efforts are needed, consider assigning an organizational leader to lead the development and implementation of a readiness plan. Recruit a group of individuals and form a task force to support the plan’s development and execution
 | * Shared Document (e.g., Google Doc)
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| **10 min.** | Wrap-Up and Next Steps |  | * Review roles, responsibilities, and next steps for completing readiness action steps.
* Schedule the next meeting.
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\*Times are estimates only. Time may fluctuate based on the nature of the discussion, group size, and meeting format (e.g., face-to-face vs. virtual).

## Resources for Building an Improvement Culture

Shakman, K., Wogan, D., Rodriguez, S., Boyce, J., and Shaver, D. (2020). *Continuous improvement in education: A toolkit for schools and districts* (REL 2021-014). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands. Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2021014.pdf>