

Quality Improvement Basics: Project Teams and Leadership

Slide 1 Objectives

After completing this module, participants will be able to

- Recognize the necessity of a team approach to quality improvement.
- Identify several barriers to team performance.
- Describe what effective team leaders do to empower team members to participate in quality improvement.

Slide 2 QI Is a Team Process

All QI projects involve a team process. Whether an organization is seeking to improve patient wait times, care for people with diabetes, or other quality improvement goals, a team effort is foundational for an organization to achieve significant and lasting improvements.

At its core, QI is a team process. A well-functioning team will harness the knowledge, skills, experience, and perspectives of different individuals within the team to make meaningful and lasting improvements. Underpinning these teams are leadership support, and policies and processes to organize and facilitate the work of the team.

Other key components of a well-functioning QI team are effective infrastructure elements such as meeting space (virtual or in person), tools such as project charters, work plans and communication plans, and the necessary resources (including dedicated staff time) to foster effective teamwork and communication.

A team approach is needed when

- The process or system is complex. (Which is quite often the case in health care, even when we think a process is fairly simple, when we map it out, we often are surprised by the number of people and steps that are actually involved).
- You are dealing with a recurring problem that you've tried to resolve in the past without success.
- No one person in an organization knows all the dimensions of an issue (which is almost always the case).
- The process involves more than one discipline or work area (most processes cross department boundaries or are multi-disciplinary in nature).
- Solutions require creativity.
- Staff commitment, involvement, and ownership are needed.

One or a combination of these characteristics indicate that a team approach is needed.

Slide 3 High-Performing Teams

There are several ingredients that contribute to achieving a high level of team performance.

Teams that perform well

- Have a clear and shared vision (or a shared 'mental model'.... which are mental pictures of the relevant facts and relationships defining our QI project and work...in other words 'are we all in synch and understand what we are doing?')

- Have a clear direction and aim.
- Have strong team leadership.
- Have clear roles and responsibilities.
- Communicate with each other, sharing feedback regularly
- Develop a strong sense of collective trust and confidence amongst team members
- Create and implement ways to work together collaboratively
- Identify, monitor, and measure performance outcomes

This module will provide strategies for cultivating these characteristics in your Quality Improvement teams.

Slide 4 Barriers to Team Performance

We all know that we encounter barriers and challenges in our daily work. We just reviewed some traits of high performing teams, so let's discuss some common challenges

- Inconsistent participation or high team member turnover
- Lack of strong leadership
- Unclear team goals and expectations
- Lack of time for team member participation and follow up.
- Lack of information sharing
- Unnecessary Hierarchy
- Defensiveness
- Conventional or uninspired thinking (when we need innovative thinking instead)
- Not adjusting to varying communication styles (which isn't inherently bad - in fact it's necessary, but it can still be challenging to navigate in a team setting.)
- Lack of coordination and follow-up
- Distractions and competing priorities.
- Fatigue and burn out.
- Heavy workload
- Misinterpretation of cues
- Lack of role clarity

Let's consider how leaders and team members can work to address some of these challenges.

Slide 5 Effective Team Leaders

We explore team roles in another module, but let's review some traits to look for in a team leader.

The person acting as the team leader should be able to

- Support the team with developing, implementing, and monitoring a plan to carry out and evaluate the teams work (convene and organize the team)
- Articulate goals clearly.
- Support effective meeting facilitation.
- Make sure the right people are at the table and part of the project.
- Empower members to speak up and share their ideas, knowledge, and perspectives.
- Focus on the use of quantitative and qualitative data to help guide decision making.
- Enable decisions through collective input of members.

- Actively promote and facilitate good teamwork.
- Skillfully work with the team to resolve conflict.
- Secure senior leader support of resources needed for the project.

Slide 6 Building Your Team

The team you'll need to assemble for any given project is based on the improvement topic you are working on, and the people with the skills, talents, and passion to fulfill the roles you'll need. Having people that carry out the work (not just managerial oversight) will be integral when it comes to analyzing your processes and designing and implementing changes to achieve your quality improvement goals.

As we are all constantly learning and growing in our own roles and work, you may be starting with many team members who are new to QI work. Their quality improvement skills will grow as your project unfolds. With the team leader's help and direction, each team member should be a champion of the project, carrying the message and purpose of the team to others. Each team member should

- Review and understand the specific QI Project Charter
- Understand their QI team roles and responsibilities.
- Provide useful ideas, information, and respectful feedback.
- Participate in team decision-making.
- Assist and enable their fellow team members in carrying out the work of the QI team.
- Contribute to conflict resolution.
- Reduce stress on the team by putting the needs of the team first.

Slide 7 Summary

We have talked about how important it is to use a team approach when working on quality improvement and what some of the barriers are to team performance as well as what effective team leaders can do to empower team members to participate in quality improvement. Remember, a well-functioning QI project team will harness the knowledge, skills, experience, and perspectives of different individuals within the team to make meaningful and lasting improvements.

Thank you for taking time to learn about Project teams and leadership as a part of the QI basics course.