

# Sustaining Your Improvement Gains

'If sustainability would be easy, we would have figured it out already.'

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# Welcome & Flash Introductions



- What is your **name**?
  - What **motivates** you to attend our meeting?
- OR
- Share **one barrier** to sustain current successes moving forward?

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# Objectives

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- Understand different **frameworks** for sustainability
- Identify **challenges and barriers** of sustainability (e.g., turnover)
- Identify practical sustainability **methods and assessment tools**
- **Apply sustainability approaches** using case studies and recommended action steps for sustainability



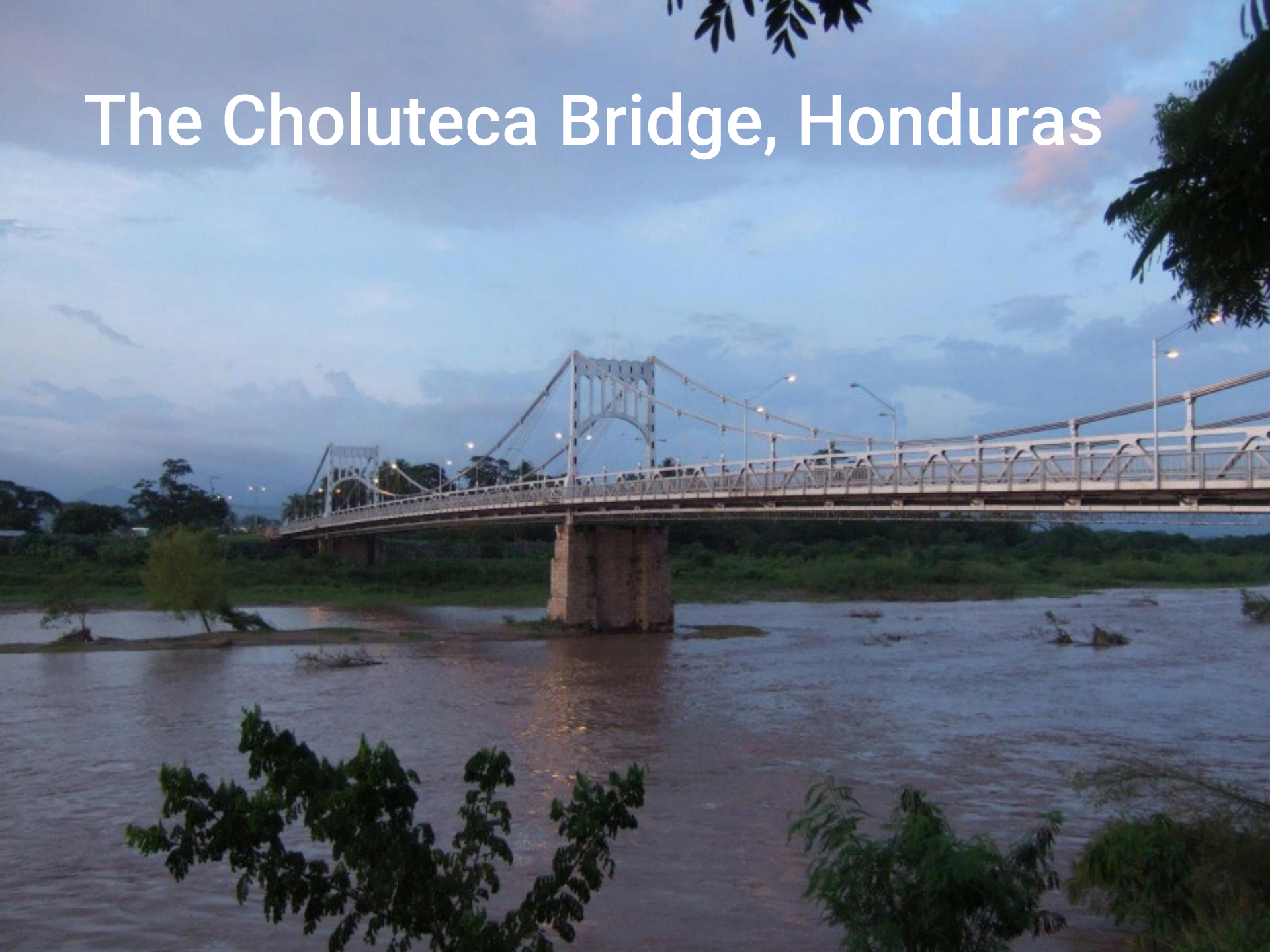
# Poll

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- What is your familiarity with the topic of sustaining your quality improvement efforts?
  - 1-Beginner – do not know much about it
  - 2-Intermediate – I know little about it and want to learn more
  - 3-Advanced – I know about sustainability and have applied its principles
  - 4-Expert – I can teach on this topic



# The Choluteca Bridge, Honduras



**Munster, B. “Why A Honduran Bridge Is A Perfect Metaphor For Disruption”**

<https://medium.com/road-less-ventured/why-an-honduran-bridge-is-a-perfect-metaphor-for-disruption-2a2d7c910535>





Choluteca Bridge, Honduras

# Static Sustainability

Maintaining systems,  
programs, policies, and  
practices as they are



# Generative Sustainability: Creating Abundance

- Dynamic
- Sustains the change process
- Allows for adaptation based on changing conditions
- Allows programs, systems, policies, and practices that are no longer relevant to be phased out and new programs to take their place
- Invites planning for scaling of programs, systems, policies, and practices that are relevant



**Reflections:**

**Why is Sustainability Important?**



# Reflections

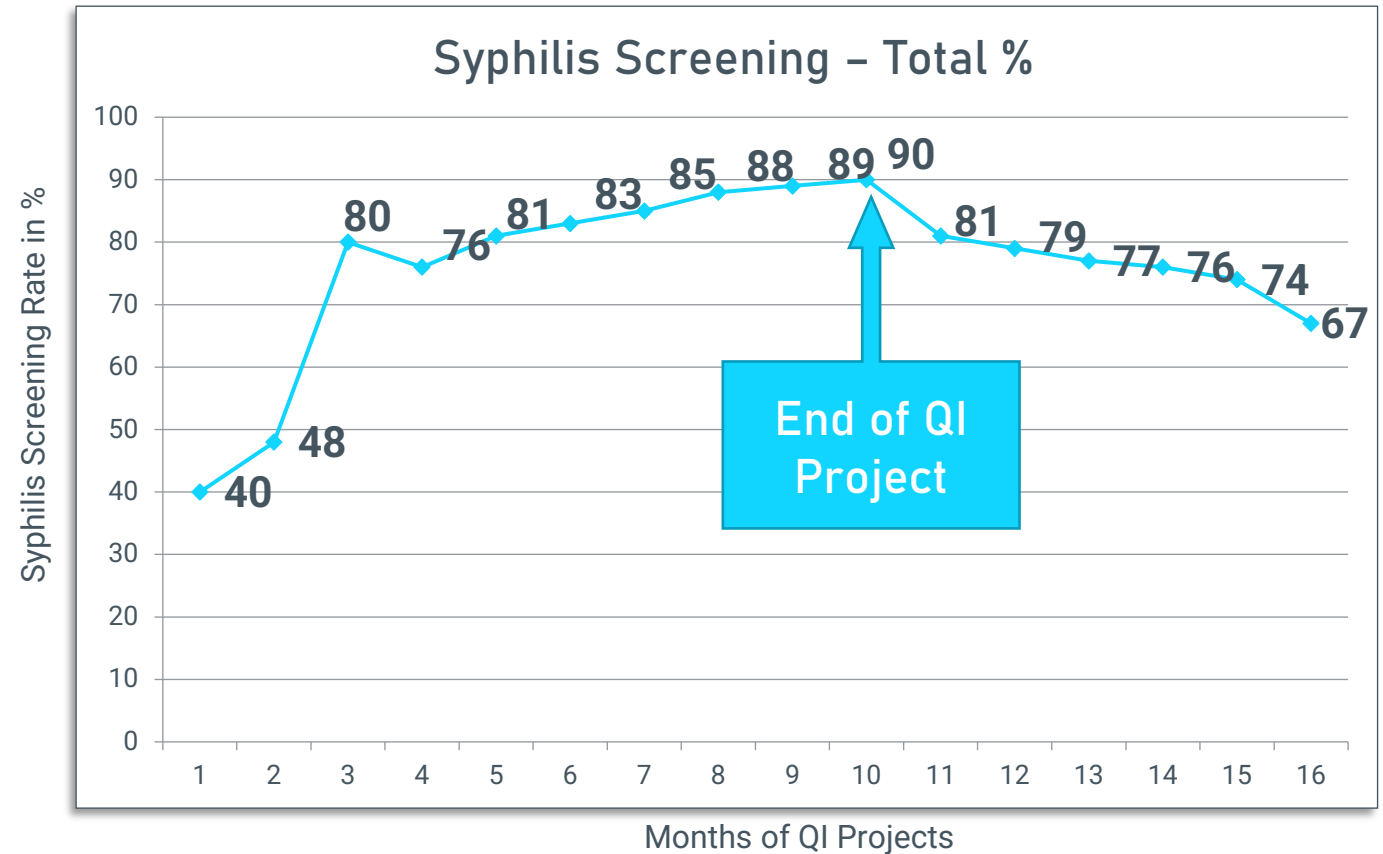
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- Sustainability is as fundamental as Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles in our quality improvement (QI) language
- Sustainability is a non-negotiable expectation in quality improvement and practice transformation



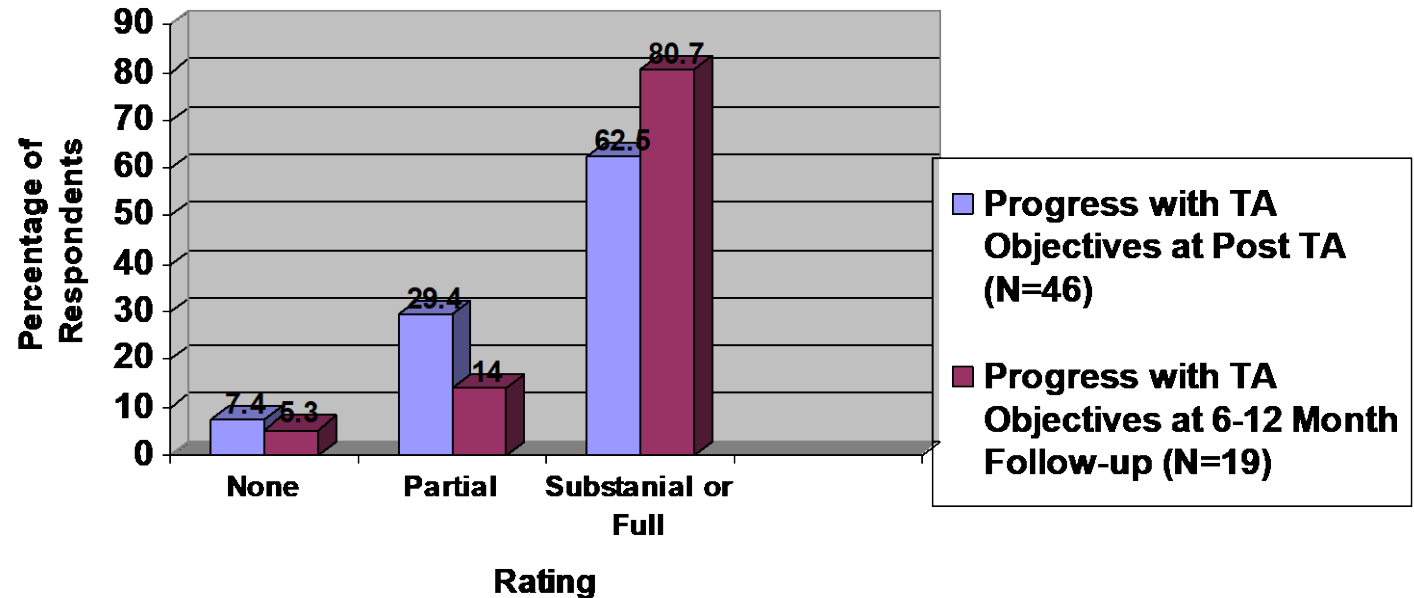
# Example: Standardization Fail

- This QI project relied on intensive work from medical case managers and program staff to improve the syphilis screening rate.
- Because it utilized a “screening blitz” model that only listed clients who were overdue (+12 months) for a syphilis screening, the values decreased as soon as attention shifted to other improvement priorities without a standard recurring process supported with adequate resources.



# Example: Technical Assistance Sustainability

- Review of CQII technical assistance (TA) efforts: To what extent were the TA objectives achieved among recipients receiving TA?
- TA participants made substantial progress on their TA objectives. At post-TA, 62.5% of survey respondents had reported a substantial or full achievement of objectives; while at follow-up TA, 80.7% of respondents reported a full achievement of objectives.





# Sustaining Your Gains

Sustainability of improved outcomes has been defined as:

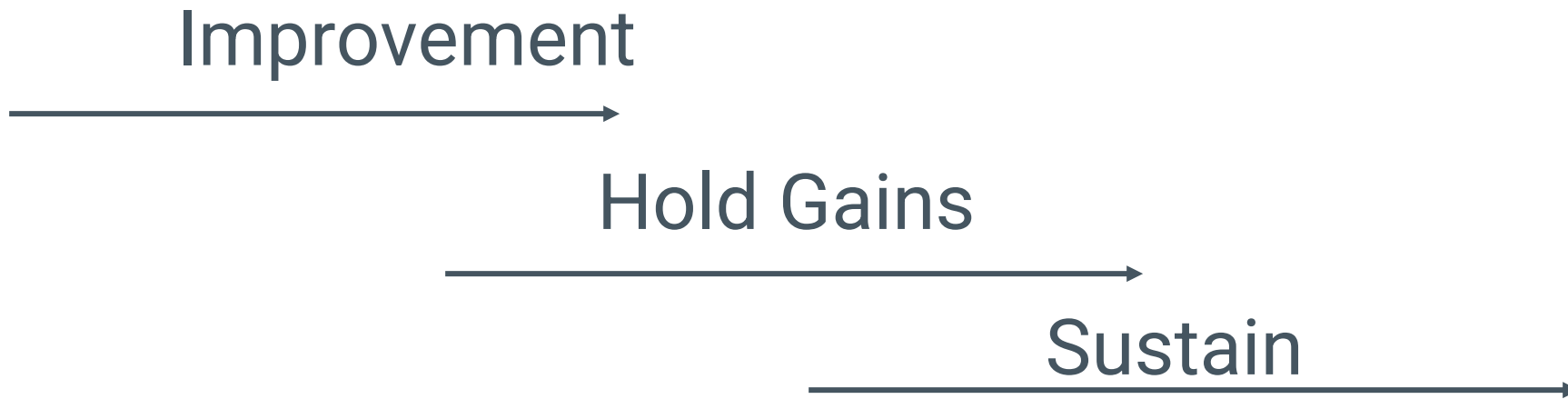
*“When new ways of working and improved outcomes become the norm”*

# What's the Sequence?

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??? more like ...



# Holding the Gains After Implementation: Inhibitors

Old System

New System

“We met our goals”

“We assume improvements will hold”

“We can only focus on one QI project at a time”

“It takes too many resources to maintain the improvements”

“Did not learn how to hold the gains”

“Infrastructure not in place”



# Holding the Gains After Implementation: Readiness

Old System

New System

“We need to plan for holding gains”  
“During the project cycle, we have started planning”  
“Holding gains is an expectation”  
“Integration into existing data systems is routine”  
“I know steps on how to keep my improvement gains”  
“I can work on the next project”

# Poll

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- Which of the following domains are critical when defining QI sustainability?
  - 1-Sustainable improvements are not short-lived; they withstand the test of time and contribute to ongoing organizational success
  - 2-Sustainability should be an integral part of quality improvement efforts; standard approaches often enhance sustainability by streamlining processes and optimizing clinical resources
  - 3-Sustainable initiatives adapt to changes, including amendments to policies, staff training, resource integration, and IT system upgrades
  - 4-Effective sustainable interventions address underlying problems and simplify clinical workflows

# Definition of Sustainability in Quality Improvement

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- Sustainability in quality improvement ensures that positive changes endure, benefitting both the organization and patient outcomes
- Sustainability occurs when processes or improved outcomes continue within an organization after implementation has taken place
- An improvement that becomes ingrained in the organizational culture and is maintained consistently, regardless of workforce turnover, exemplifies sustained improvement



# Sustainability Domains

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- **Long-Term Impact:** Sustainable improvements are not short-lived; they withstand the test of time and contribute to ongoing organizational success
- **Integration:** Sustainability should be an integral part of quality improvement efforts; standard approaches often enhance sustainability by streamlining processes and optimizing clinical resources
- **Adaptability:** Sustainable initiatives adapt to changes, including amendments to policies, staff training, resource integration, and IT system upgrades
- **Problem-Solving:** Effective sustainable interventions address underlying problems and simplify clinical workflows

# Barriers to Sustainability

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- Sustainability of a single QI project takes away resources for future QI efforts
- The sustainability 'Heisenberg Principle'
- The words "ending a collaborative" is in conflict with "sustaining" QI efforts
- "Triple S" confusion with terms like sustainability, spread, and systemization

# Activity #1



# Activity #1

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Write individually in the chat the answers to the following question:

- Identify **your key challenges to sustainability** in your settings and improvement work

# Top 5 Clinic Challenges IHI/CQII Meeting (2023)

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A meeting of CQII staff/coaches, HIV providers, QI experts and people with HIV was held in December 2023 to brainstorm on sustaining QI efforts. The following challenges were identified by this group:

1. **Insufficient funding**/resources for sustainability
2. **Competing priorities**
3. **Lack of staff** will and motivation for QI
4. Inadequate, **ineffective use of data** and storytelling
5. Limited number, pipeline, and effort for **QI champions** and staff

# Top 5 Networks/Systems Challenges IHI/CQII Meeting (2023)

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A meeting of CQII staff/coaches, HIV providers, QI experts and people with HIV was held in December 2023 to brainstorm on sustaining QI efforts. The following challenges were identified by this group:

1. **Trust** (community mistrust, distrust/disconnect among people with lived experience & health dept)
1. **Planning** (lack of succession planning, lack of alignment of goals & mission, competing priorities)
3. **People** (staff turnover & capacity)
4. **Communication** (lack of clear guiding policies & procedures, lack of clarity about how to sustain)
4. **Motivation** (staff burnout, low motivation/energy, "not my circus, not my monkeys")
4. **Silos**

# Sustainability Models

From the Perspective of Improvement Science



# Our Approach to Sustainability is Grounded in a Holistic View of Quality

Sustainability is not just in Quality Control

## The Whole System Approach: Juran Trilogy

### Quality Improvement

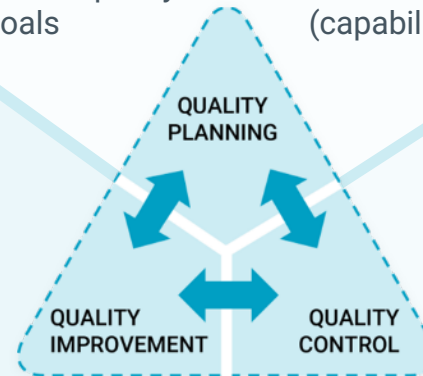
- **Focus** on strategic priorities for the system
- **Train and coach** staff in improvement methods
- **Collaborate** across patients, communities, and staff to ensure voice of the customer is embedded in processes
- **Test, learn, and adapt** process changes towards improved performance

### Quality Planning

- **Identify** customer needs
  - **Assess** performance and gaps
  - **Define** quality goals
- **Set priorities** for improvement
- **Invest** in required inputs (resources/structures)
- **Invest** in people (capabilities)

### Quality Control

- **Ensure protocols, skills, and processes** for key activities
- **Reduce unwanted variation** from expected performance
- Establish **new standards and protocols** based on results of QI initiatives to promote **sustainability**
- Integrate **licensing, accreditation, and professional oversight bodies**



## Cultivating a Learning System

### Improvement Methods



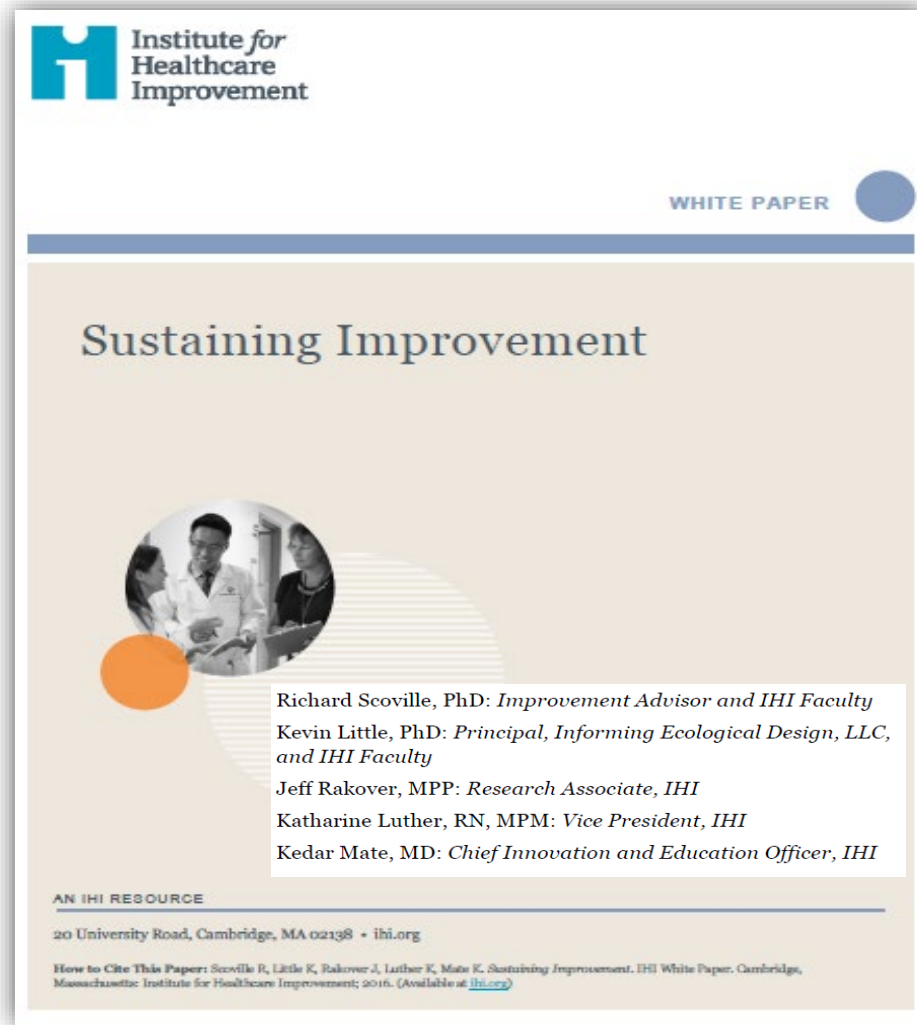
# How Do Leading Organizations Sustain?

Interviews with 10 leading North American healthcare organizations.

Three in-depth case studies

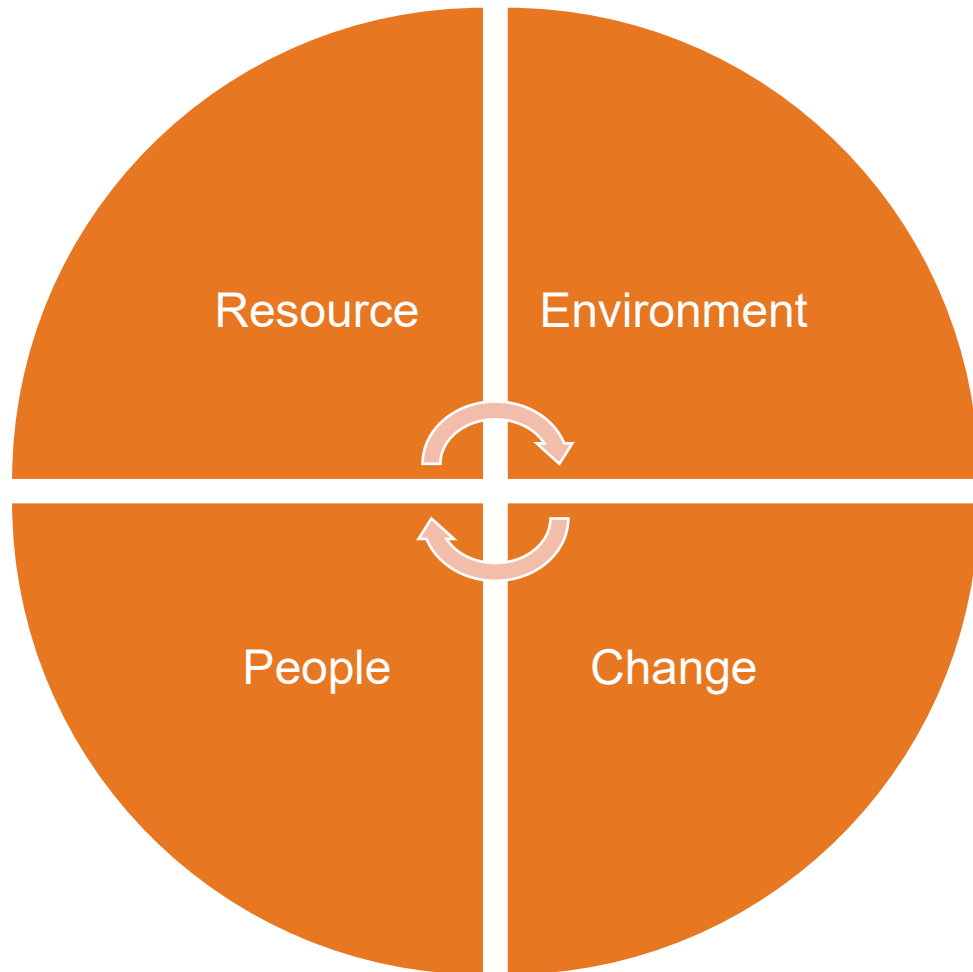
Literature review

“By focusing first on implementing ***standard work with frontline clinical units and managers***, such as a charge nurse or team lead, organizations can build a solid ‘bottom-up’ foundation for Quality Control and Quality Improvement that then supports more robust high-performance management at the system level.”



# 4 Domains of Planning For Generative Sustainability

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**A framework developed by 100 Million Healthier Lives/IHI with participating communities**

**Based on** Stout S, Anderson J, Brooks K, Munene E, Knox P and Schall M. *Leading for Abundance: Approach to Generative Sustainability*. SCALE 1.0 Synthesis Reports. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2017.

# Resource Sustainability



# Resources

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## Intrinsic

Build motivation to create the change!

- Joy
- Meaning & purpose
- Energy
- Motivation
- Hope



## Extrinsic

Tangible things that are needed for a process to sustain or scale

- Supplies
- Education
- Money
- Opportunity
- Assets
- Relationships





# Environmental Sustainability



# Standardization Roles & Responsibilities

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## Organizational and Quality Leaders

- Be cheerleaders for the improvement vision
- Know and express the keys to your QI project success, ensure that everyone knows what a “win” looks like
- Incorporate project goals into existing priorities and key performance indicators
- Align infrastructure for standardization – particularly related to measurement
- Know the needs of your clients and staff

## Program Staff and Team Members

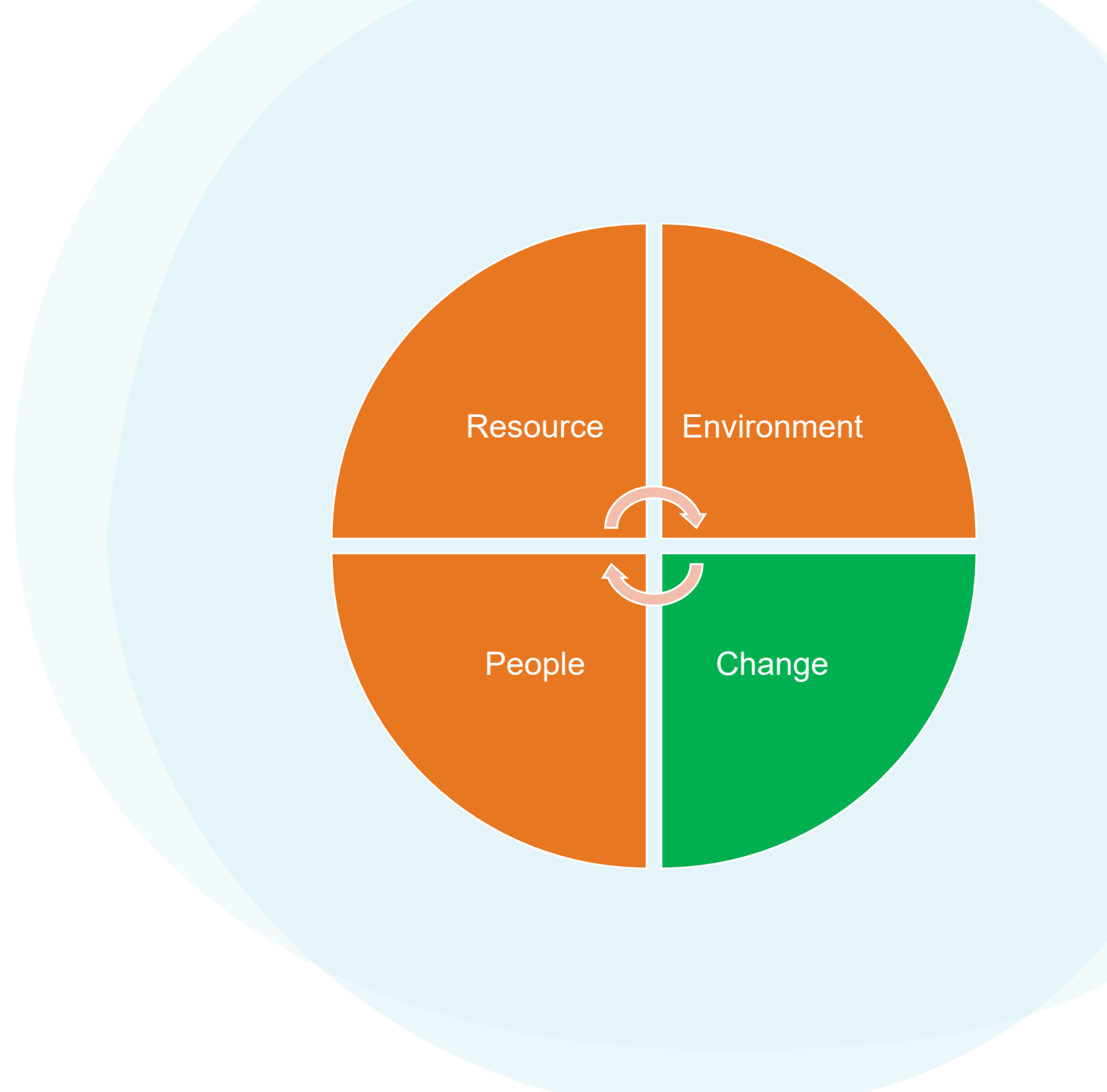
- Engage in QI and know what to work on next
- Take advantage of opportunities to provide feedback and direct tasks
- Understand how their work fits into the big picture
- Have opportunities to work on the critical priorities



# Policy

- Establish and routinely update policies, procedures & protocols
- Set up internal resources, job descriptions & systems re-aligned with new processes
- Document quality improvement activities and policies
- Embed project outcome and process measures in performance measure portfolio
- Establish official channels of communication
- Update quality management plan to reflect changes

# Change Sustainability



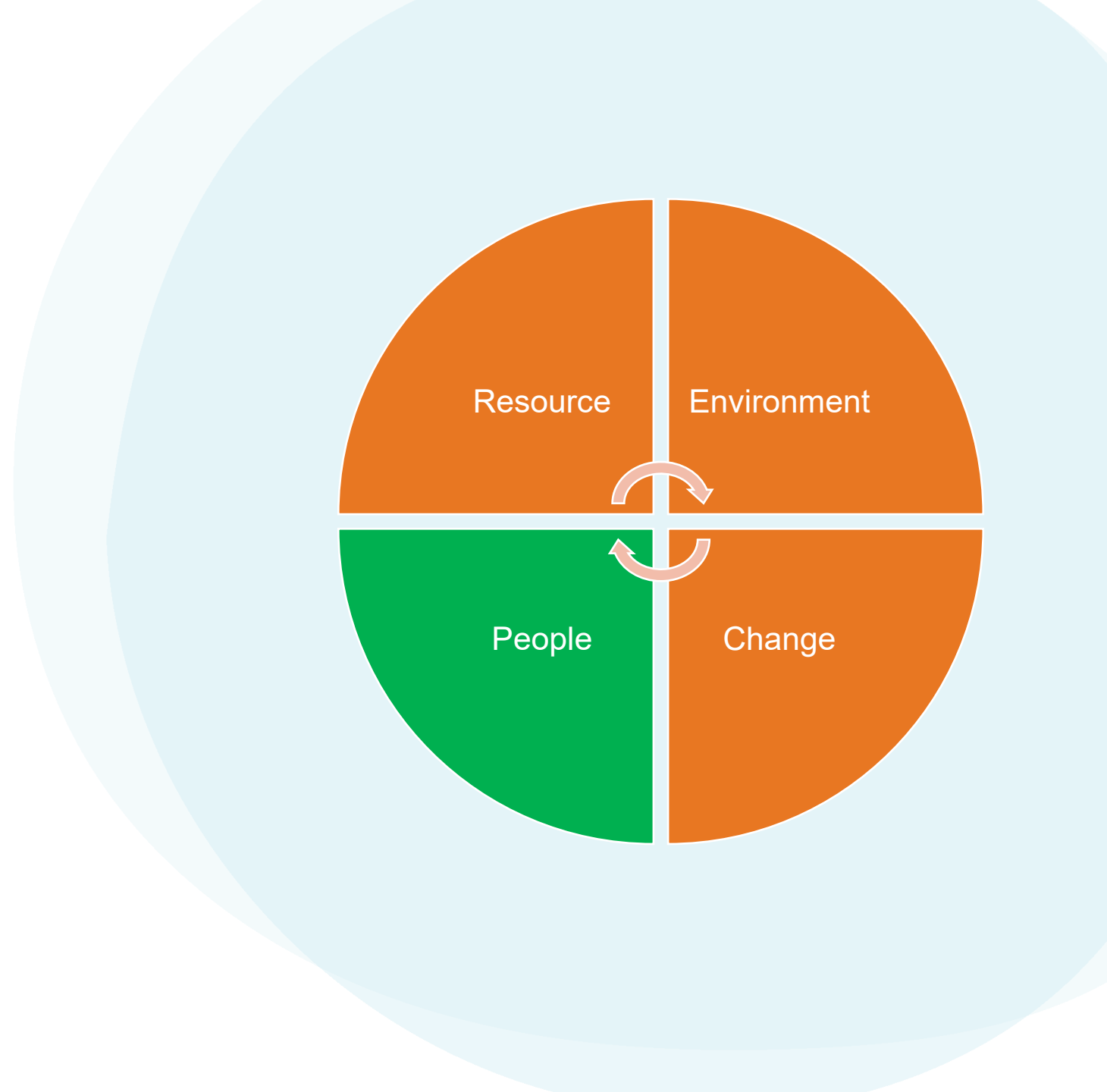
# Process Steps

- Set up regular meetings to revisit the intervention
- Establish multi-modal plan for communication
- Measure level of acceptance of new process
- Define processes for ongoing improvements & monitoring
- Remeasure performance at pre-established intervals and data results
- Respond to performance changes over time





# People Sustainability



# People

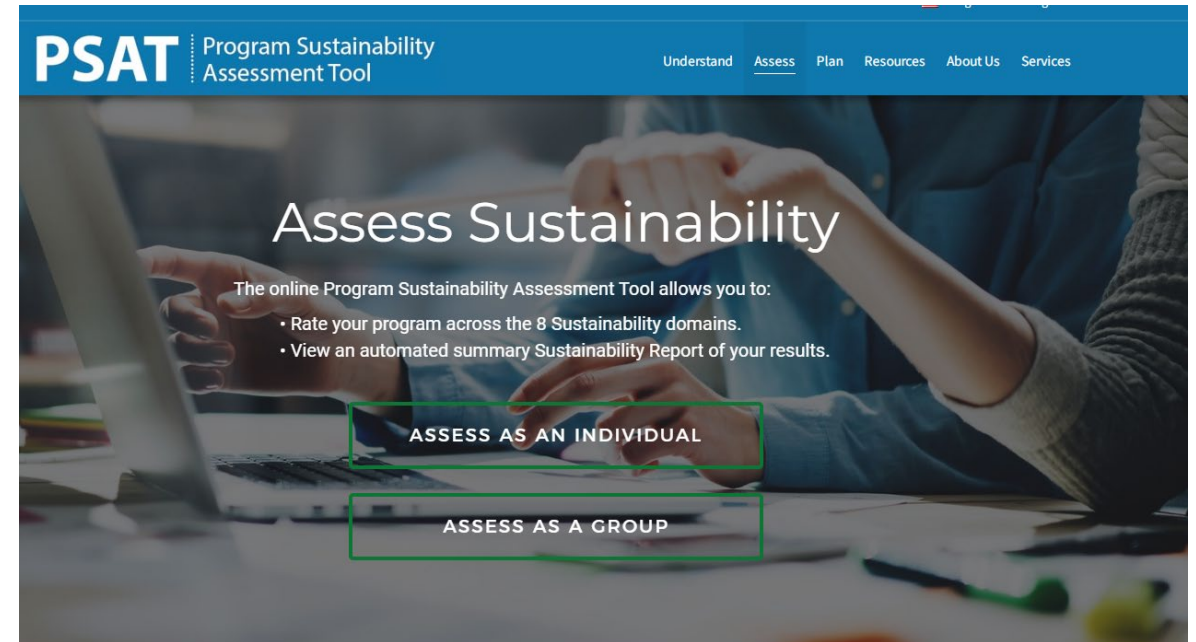
- Engage engagement of senior leaders
- Dedicate teams to champion improvements
- Incorporate intervention trainings into new employee orientation
- Train front line staff using a variety of modalities on processes with clear roles & responsibilities
- Involve people with lived experience
- Celebrate accomplishments & recognition of contributions



# Sustainability Assessment Tools

# Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT)

- The PSAT is a self-assessment used by both program staff and stakeholders to evaluate the sustainability capacity of a program
  - You take the assessment online and receive a summary report
  - The assessment is made up of 40 questions and takes about 10-15 minutes to finish
  - You will rate your program or set of activities across 8 sustainability domains
  - The assessment can be used by programs at community, state, and national levels.
  - The assessment can be taken as an individual or group



#### **New shorter version of Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT) available**

The Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS) has developed a shorter version of the PSAT that is made up of 24 questions. To create a shorter tool while maintaining reliability, our center removed two of five questions addressing each sustainability domain. The shorter tool does not replace the original tool, but may be considered as an alternative to reduce participant burden, especially when the tool is combined with other survey measures. Please note that the original PSAT items may be important for a more comprehensive

<https://sustaintool.org/psat/assess/>

# Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT)

## Program Evaluation: Assessing your program to inform planning and document results

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent			Not able to answer	
1. The program has the capacity for quality program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program reports short term and intermediate outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. Evaluation results inform program planning and implementation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. Program evaluation results are used to demonstrate successes to funders and other key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program provides strong evidence to the public that the program works.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

## Program Adaptation: Taking actions that adapt your program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent			Not able to answer	
1. The program periodically reviews the evidence base.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program adapts strategies as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program adapts to new science.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program proactively adapts to changes in the environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program makes decisions about which components are ineffective and should not continue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

## Partnerships: Cultivating connections between your program and its stakeholders

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent			Not able to answer	
1. Diverse community organizations are invested in the success of the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program communicates with community leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. Community leaders are involved with the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. Community members are passionately committed to the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The community is engaged in the development of program goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

## Organizational Capacity: Having the internal support and resources needed to effectively manage your program and its activities

	To little or no extent			To a very great extent			Not able to answer	
1. The program is well integrated into the operations of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. Organizational systems are in place to support the various program needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. Leadership effectively articulates the vision of the program to external partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. Leadership efficiently manages staff and other resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has adequate staff to complete the program's goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

# Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT)

**Communications:** Strategic communication with stakeholders and the public about your program

	To little or no extent		To a very great extent					Not able to answer
1. The program has communication strategies to secure and maintain public support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. Program staff communicate the need for the program to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program is marketed in a way that generates interest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program increases community awareness of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program demonstrates its value to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

**Strategic Planning:** Using processes that guide your program's direction, goals, and strategies

	To little or no extent		To a very great extent					Not able to answer
1. The program plans for future resource needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program has a long-term financial plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program has a sustainability plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program's goals are understood by all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

**Environmental Support:** Having a supportive internal and external climate for your program

	To little or no extent		To a very great extent					Not able to answer
1. Champions exist who strongly support the program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program has strong champions with the ability to garner resources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program has leadership support from within the larger organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program has leadership support from outside of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has strong public support.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

**Funding Stability:** Establishing a consistent financial base for your program

	To little or no extent		To a very great extent					Not able to answer
1. The program exists in a supportive state economic climate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
2. The program implements policies to help ensure sustained funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
3. The program is funded through a variety of sources.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
4. The program has a combination of stable and flexible funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
5. The program has sustained funding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA



# Clinical Sustainability Assessment Tool (CSAT)

- Clinical sustainability capacity is defined as the ability of an organization to maintain structured clinical care practices over time and to evolve and adapt these practices in response to new information



The screenshot shows the CSAT website homepage. At the top left is the logo 'CSAT Clinical Sustainability Assessment Tool'. To the right are navigation links: 'Understand', 'Assess', 'Plan', 'About Us', and 'Services'. The main heading reads 'Welcome to the online Clinical Sustainability Assessment Tool.' Below this is the subtext 'Rate the sustainability capacity of your clinical practice to help plan for its future.' A green-bordered button labeled 'GET STARTED' is centered. At the bottom, a four-step process is shown with orange circular icons:

- 1. Understand**: Icon of a lightbulb. Description: Understand the factors that influence a clinical practice's capacity for sustainability.
- 2. Assess**: Icon of a clipboard. Description: Use the Clinical Sustainability Assessment Tool to assess your practice's sustainability capacity.
- 3. Review**: Icon of a clipboard with a checkmark. Description: View results from your assessment as a Sustainability report.
- 4. Plan**: Icon of a bar chart with a key. Description: Develop an Action Plan to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

<https://sustaintool.org/csat/>

# Activity #2

# Anita | HIV Testing

Anita is the assigned CQII QI coach for a primary care clinic in the South. She has been working with the clinic for the last 18 months to implement routine syphilis screening processes to increase the % of patients screened and tested for HIV. As of April 2024, the clinic QI efforts resulted in an increase of 45% and achieved the objectives outlines in the aim statement.

The medical director initially requested the project and reached out to CQII. The local QI committee was peripherally involved to set the goal for this project. The chairs of the local consumer advisory committee (CAB) were supportive of the program and the medical director provided routine updates to the CAB.

The medical director provided the internal support and resources where needed. She mentioned the importance at routine staff meetings. Test kits were ordered, and all relevant staff are trained to engage patients to be tested. Due to time constraints, syphilis screenings are not routinely done, and new staff are not properly introduced to new procedures.

# Case Study | Anita

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- Key Questions:
  - How can we best support the needs of the replicator to support the uptake of the QI gains?
  - What resources and materials should be created?

# Deloris | Rapid ART

Deloris is the QI coach for a small clinic on the West Coast. Deloris has been asked to work with the clinic to implement rapid ART for those newly diagnosed or returning to care after being lost to follow-up. The results after 16 months show that it was relatively successful, reaching 2 out of 3 measurable goals set at the beginning of the program.

The clinic has shared the results in a conference abstract and created a storyboard for the waiting room to increase visibility to staff and patients. The clinic also worked with the local health department to publicize their efforts. The community advisory board (CAB) is also informed. New staff are trained on the process going forward.

The medical director was clear from the beginning of the project that no additional funding is available to these efforts ("*We have to work with what we have*") and wants to use the Rapid ART successes as a motivator and incentive to gain more clients with HIV. Key sustainability strategies were discussed – specifically the various roles and responsibilities among staff, but no formal plan is in place.

# Case Study | Deloris

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- Key Questions:
  - How can we best support the needs of the replicator to support the uptake of the QI gains?
  - What resources and materials should be created?

# IHI/CQII Expert Meeting: Sustainability

December 2023



# Clinics/Sites Elements of Sustainability

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- Striving toward a shared vision based on best and equitable outcomes (informed by data over time) AND the leadership of people with HIV, including health, well-being, financial, and operational goals to guide implementation/de-implementation
- Involving the right people with the right level, including leaders AND people with HIV, engaged in a collaborative process over time
- Starting with *planning* for sustainability (as a standard of care) and then continuing with an iterative, evolutionary process that ensures the work stays relevant
- Requiring continuous, learner-specific training and knowledge transfer, supported by tools (e.g., PSAT) and guidance, especially for key positions (threat of turnover)
- Always anchoring and re-anchoring our collective why or purpose, acknowledging the effort will be fluid

# CQII Next Steps (Ranked by CQII Staff)

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Set clear expectations on sustainability from the onset

Celebrate successes and champions

Cross-promote other opportunities for learning

Provide staff recognition

Make connections with community members – meet and talk with them regularly

Set an aim and develop a plan around sustainability near the end of the engagement

Provide framework/pathway, including use of self-assessment and connection to tailored resources. CQII provides questionnaire

Create and leverage peer-to-peer mentoring, support, and networking

Identify and use a Sustainability Assessment

Provide training and technical assistance around effective use of data, including expanded methods/tools, such as: Provide data visualization and storytelling supports

Involving people with lived experience in each step of the planning process

# Potential Action Steps for Webinar Participants

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- Share the sustainability slides with others in your agency
- Download the PSAT and complete at the next QM meeting
- Conduct a sustainability training with staff
- Select one QI project worth sustaining and plan for sustainability of its successes

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# Thank You!

**Clemens Steinbock, MBA**

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