HMRF grantee office hours: Continuous quality improvement

December 7, 2021, 2:00 – 3:00 ET

OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

OPRE

HMRF
HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

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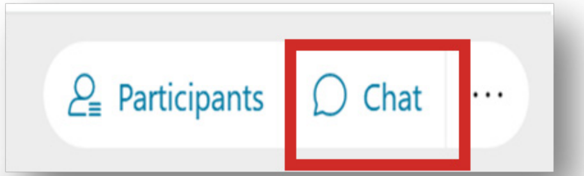
Progress Together

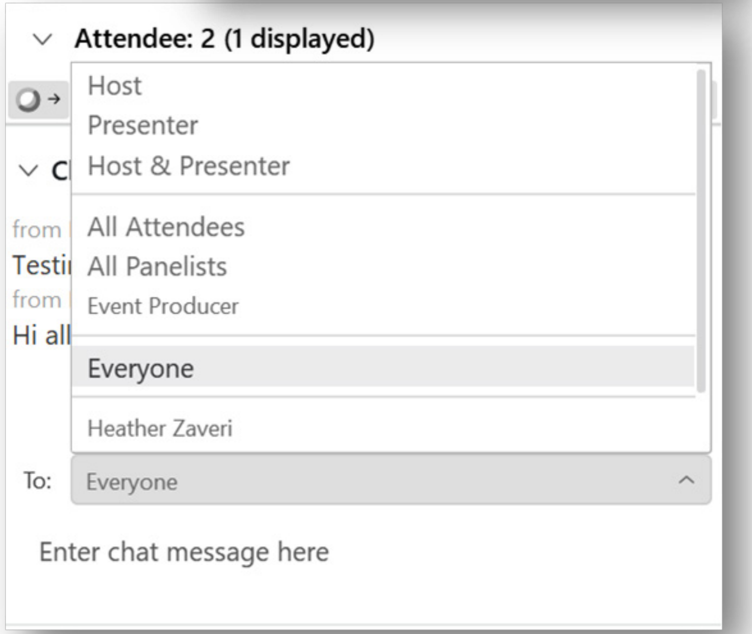
BUILD
Building Usage, Improvement, & Learning with Data in HMRF Programs

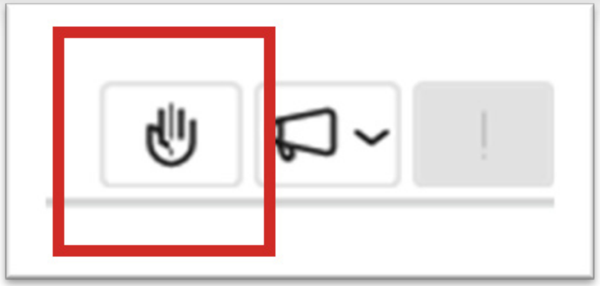
How you can participate

- Use the chat to ask questions
- Ask questions or share verbally using the hand raise feature

- REMINDER: Never text or email client personally identifiable information (PII), including during office hours or when contacting the TA teams







Today's plan

- ACF requirements for CQI plan submission
- Refresher on Sections D1-D3 of the CQI plan
- Breakout rooms – ask questions about your plans!
- CQI resources

D. Working through an issue

?

D1. Identifying an area for improvement and setting goals

Please identify an area in which your program could improve and goals for improvement. Goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Your logic model or other program documents can be useful for developing realistic, meaningful goals. If your program is meeting all goals, CQI can focus on enhancing program implementation.

Please select one area of improvement and then complete the table below describing the specific issue you are trying to solve in that area, one SMART goal, and possible data sources to use. If your program is working on a second issue at the same time, please describe the second issue in section E. Please see the Appendix of "Ideas for using nFORM data for CQI" for ways in which nFORM data could be used to measure progress towards goals in these areas.

a. Please select one area of improvement for your program:

☐ Enrollment
☐ Client completion of services
☐ Quality of services
☐ Data collection
☐ Other ____
(Please specify, such as staff morale, organizational leadership, teamwork or other important areas related to the success of your program)

b. For the selected area of improvement, please describe the specific problem that you are trying to solve, a related SMART goal, and possible data sources. Examples, shown in blue, are only intended to show the type of relevant information. Grantees are not required to use them.

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CQI plan submissions to your FPS

- **Submit plan for first road test (through D3) by December 31**
  - The following resources provide more detail about steps covered in sections D1-D3:
    - June office hours on identifying and learning about challenges
    - July office hours on SMART goals and Guiding CQI with SMART goals tip sheet
    - August office hours on strategy development and Identify an improvement strategy brief
    - October office hours on planning a road test
    - November office hours on conducting a road test

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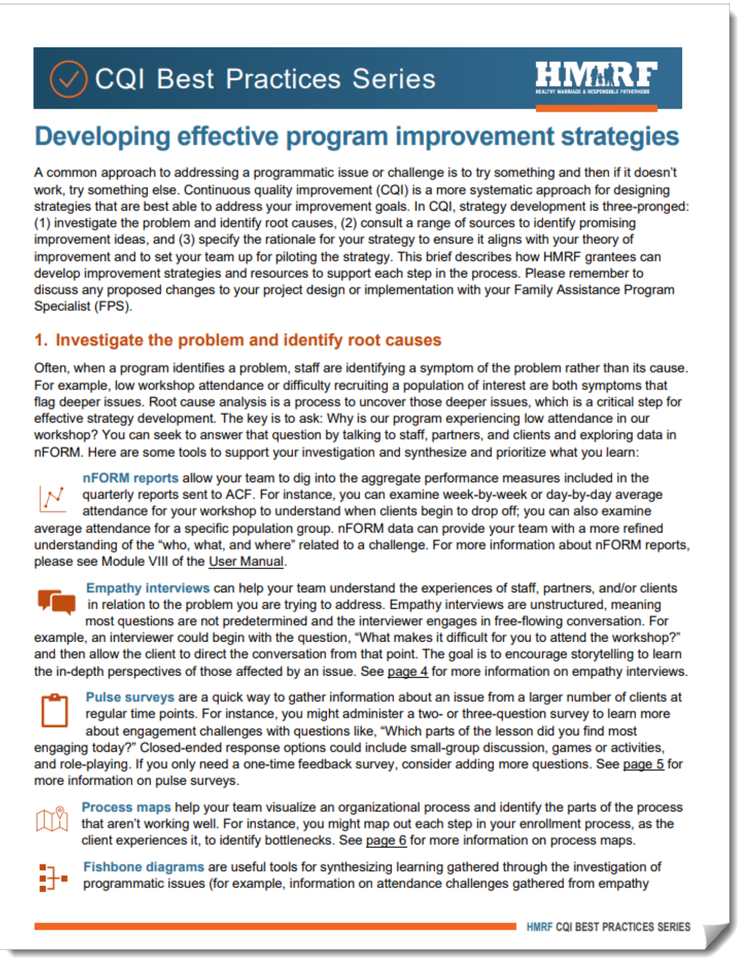
Improvement strategy brief



CQI Best Practices Series HMRF HEALTHY MARRIAGE & RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

Developing effective program improvement strategies

A common approach to addressing a programmatic issue or challenge is to try something and then if it doesn't work, try something else. Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is a more systematic approach for designing strategies that are best able to address your improvement goals. In CQI, strategy development is three-pronged: (1) investigate the problem and identify root causes, (2) consult a range of sources to identify promising improvement ideas, and (3) specify the rationale for your strategy to ensure it aligns with your theory of improvement and to set your team up for piloting the strategy. This brief describes how HMRF grantees can develop improvement strategies and resources to support each step in the process. Please remember to discuss any proposed changes to your project design or implementation with your Family Assistance Program Specialist (FPS).

1. Investigate the problem and identify root causes

Often, when a program identifies a problem, staff are identifying a symptom of the problem rather than its cause. For example, low workshop attendance or difficulty recruiting a population of interest are both symptoms that flag deeper issues. Root cause analysis is a process to uncover those deeper issues, which is a critical step for effective strategy development. The key is to ask: Why is our program experiencing low attendance in our workshop? You can seek to answer that question by talking to staff, partners, and clients and exploring data in nFORM. Here are some tools to support your investigation and synthesize and prioritize what you learn:

nFORM reports allow your team to dig into the aggregate performance measures included in the quarterly reports sent to ACF. For instance, you can examine week-by-week or day-by-day average attendance for your workshop to understand when clients begin to drop off; you can also examine average attendance for a specific population group. nFORM data can provide your team with a more refined understanding of the "who, what, and where" related to a challenge. For more information about nFORM reports, please see Module VIII of the User Manual.

Empathy interviews can help your team understand the experiences of staff, partners, and/or clients in relation to the problem you are trying to address. Empathy interviews are unstructured, meaning most questions are not predetermined and the interviewer engages in free-flowing conversation. For example, an interviewer could begin with the question, "What makes it difficult for you to attend the workshop?" and then allow the client to direct the conversation from that point. The goal is to encourage storytelling to learn the in-depth perspectives of those affected by an issue. See page 4 for more information on empathy interviews.

Pulse surveys are a quick way to gather information about an issue from a larger number of clients at regular time points. For instance, you might administer a two- or three-question survey to learn more about engagement challenges with questions like, "Which parts of the lesson did you find most engaging today?" Closed-ended response options could include small-group discussion, games or activities, and role-playing. If you only need a one-time feedback survey, consider adding more questions. See page 5 for more information on pulse surveys.

Process maps help your team visualize an organizational process and identify the parts of the process that aren't working well. For instance, you might map out each step in your enrollment process, as the client experiences it, to identify bottlenecks. See page 6 for more information on process maps.

Fishbone diagrams are useful tools for synthesizing learning gathered through the investigation of programmatic issues (for example, information on attendance challenges gathered from empathy

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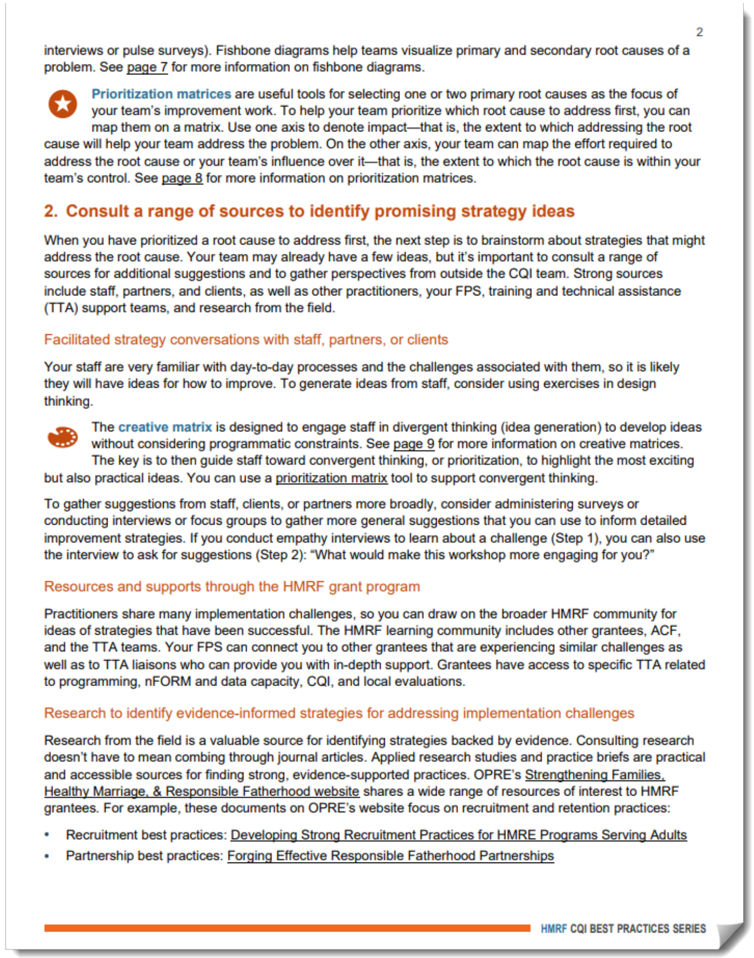

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interviews or pulse surveys). Fishbone diagrams help teams visualize primary and secondary root causes of a problem. See page 7 for more information on fishbone diagrams.

Prioritization matrices are useful tools for selecting one or two primary root causes as the focus of your team's improvement work. To help your team prioritize which root cause to address first, you can map them on a matrix. Use one axis to denote impact—that is, the extent to which addressing the root cause will help your team address the problem. On the other axis, your team can map the effort required to address the root cause or your team's influence over it—that is, the extent to which the root cause is within your team's control. See page 8 for more information on prioritization matrices.

2. Consult a range of sources to identify promising strategy ideas

When you have prioritized a root cause to address first, the next step is to brainstorm about strategies that might address the root cause. Your team may already have a few ideas, but it's important to consult a range of sources for additional suggestions and to gather perspectives from outside the CQI team. Strong sources include staff, partners, and clients, as well as other practitioners, your FPS, training and technical assistance (TTA) support teams, and research from the field.

Facilitated strategy conversations with staff, partners, or clients

Your staff are very familiar with day-to-day processes and the challenges associated with them, so it is likely they will have ideas for how to improve. To generate ideas from staff, consider using exercises in design thinking.

The creative matrix is designed to engage staff in divergent thinking (idea generation) to develop ideas without considering programmatic constraints. See page 9 for more information on creative matrices. The key is to then guide staff toward convergent thinking, or prioritization, to highlight the most exciting but also practical ideas. You can use a prioritization matrix tool to support convergent thinking.

To gather suggestions from staff, clients, or partners more broadly, consider administering surveys or conducting interviews or focus groups to gather more general suggestions that you can use to inform detailed improvement strategies. If you conduct empathy interviews to learn about a challenge (Step 1), you can also use the interview to ask for suggestions (Step 2): "What would make this workshop more engaging for you?"

Resources and supports through the HMRF grant program

Practitioners share many implementation challenges, so you can draw on the broader HMRF community for ideas of strategies that have been successful. The HMRF learning community includes other grantees, ACF, and the TTA teams. Your FPS can connect you to other grantees that are experiencing similar challenges as well as to TTA liaisons who can provide you with in-depth support. Grantees have access to specific TTA related to programming, nFORM and data capacity, CQI, and local evaluations.

Research to identify evidence-informed strategies for addressing implementation challenges

Research from the field is a valuable source for identifying strategies backed by evidence. Consulting research doesn't have to mean combing through journal articles. Applied research studies and practice briefs are practical and accessible sources for finding strong, evidence-supported practices. OPRE's Strengthening Families, Healthy Marriage, & Responsible Fatherhood website shares a wide range of resources of interest to HMRF grantees. For example, these documents on OPRE's website focus on recruitment and retention practices:

- Recruitment best practices: Developing Strong Recruitment Practices for HMRE Programs Serving Adults
- Partnership best practices: Forging Effective Responsible Fatherhood Partnerships

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Section D1: Area for improvement and SMART goal

Table D1. Your program's issue(s), SMART goal(s), and data source(s)

For the area of improvement your team selected above, please describe the issue you are trying to solve, a related SMART goal, and possible data sources you could use.	
What is the specific problem or issue you are trying to solve?	
What is the SMART goal that would show an improvement on this issue?	
What data source could you use to measure progress towards that goal?	

Get specific about the problem: Who is experiencing the problem, when/where are they experiencing it, and how extensive is it?
Tip: Use nFORM to learn more.

SMART goals guide your improvement work. They can be short-term, long-term, or both. What would be an early win? What does long-term success look like?

How will you measure progress toward the SMART goal? Some goals, like enrollment, might have easily identifiable data sources. Others, like engagement, may require collecting new data.

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Section D1: Area for improvement and SMART goal

	OK	Better
What is the specific problem or issue you are trying to solve?	Retention	Only 46% of our clients attend at least 50% of primary workshop hours. Data show that clients begin to drop out after the second session.
What is the SMART goal that would show an improvement on this issue?	Increase workshop retention	Increase the % of clients who attend at least 50% of primary workshop hours from 46% on average to 60% on average by the end of the next quarter
What data source could you use to measure progress towards that goal?	nFORM	nFORM operational reports: session series attendance report and primary workshop participation report – track attendance at sessions and cumulative participation

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Section D2: Improvement strategies

Table D2. Proposed improvement strategies

Area for improvement (from Section D1)	Strategy for improvement	Process for how strategy was developed	Rationale for the strategy: Why might this strategy lead to improvements?
Example: Low attendance at workshops	*Call each family the day before the workshop*	*Facilitators, case managers, and supervisors brainstormed ways to improve attendance. The team agreed this strategy was relatively easy to implement with high potential for improving attendance.*	*Checking in will remind families about the upcoming workshop, encourage staff and the client to build rapport, and allow the staff to help troubleshoot if the family has barriers to attendance (such as child care or transportation issues).*

How will what you do change attitudes, behaviors, or skills, and how will this lead to progress toward your SMART goal? Explain how your strategy will work.

Get specific about your strategy. Note aspects like schedule, staff roles and responsibilities, training plans, etc.

What people or sources did you consult to inform the strategy?

Section D2: Proposed improvement strategy

	OK	Better
Area for improvement	Retention	Only 46% of our clients attend at least 50% of primary workshop hours. Data show that clients begin to drop after the second session.
Strategy for improvement	Offer video makeup classes	We will record sessions and send out links within a day to those who miss the sessions.
Process for how strategy was developed	Staff brainstormed ideas	Talked to clients who had dropped out and learned that due to inconsistent work schedules and other obligations, they would miss a class and then feel too far behind to catch up.
Rationale for the strategy. Why might this lead to improvement?	Online makeups allow clients to watch missed sessions	Clients who miss a session fall behind and have a hard time catching up. By offering accessible makeup options, we can keep clients engaged and attending.

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Section D3: Road testing

Please answer the following questions on how you will test the strategy.[3]

a. What is the strategy being tested?

b. What are your learning questions for the road test?[4] For example, if testing calls before each workshop: How do families respond to calls before each workshop? How well are staff able to fit this task into their existing responsibilities?

c. Wh

f. What type of feedback and information will you collect during the test? *(Check all that apply)*

Staff feedback through:	Client feedback through:	Others' feedback:
☐ Questionnaire	☐ Questionnaire	*Please specify who and how*
☐ Focus group	☐ Focus group	
☐ Interview	☐ Interview	
☐ nFORM	☐ nFORM	
☐ Other *(please specify)*	☐ Other *(please specify)*	

g. When will you analyze the data and discuss the results within the implementation team?

Develop learning questions for your road test

- Focus on implementation and early outcomes, not effectiveness of strategy

Develop an implementation plan

- Specify logistics, such as timing of the road test
- Note data collection activities

Section D3: Road testing

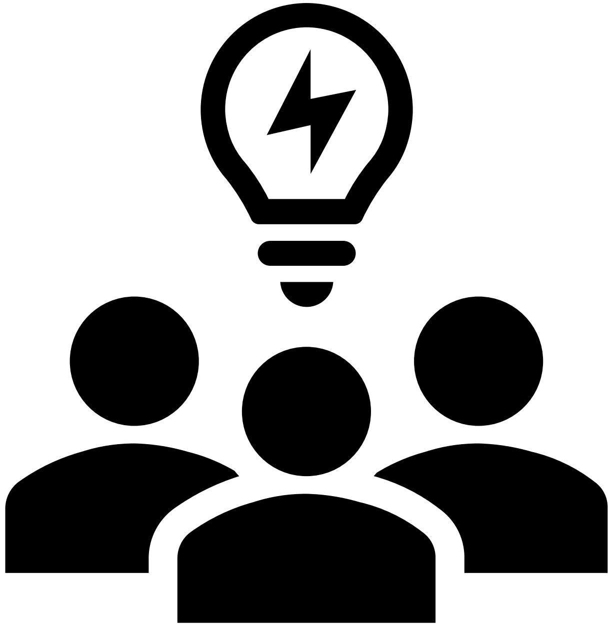
	OK	Better
Articulate the strategy	Offer video makeup classes	We will record sessions and send out links within a day to those who miss the sessions. Facilitators will be responsible for contacting clients via text or email.
Develop learning questions	Is this strategy effective?	-How feasible is it to record sessions and send out in a timely manner? -Do clients access/watch the videos? -Do clients who watch the videos feel they help them to stay engaged with the class?
Develop an implementation plan	We will start next month and will talk to staff and clients for feedback.	**Logistics:** We will implement in one site, starting the process with the next group (Jan. 3) and continuing for the remainder of the classes (ends Jan 25). **Data collection**: During the test, we will collect feedback from staff during a staff meeting about how it was to implement the strategy. We will also interview clients who were sent videos to learn whether they watched and if the videos helped them to maintain connection.

We want to hear from you with your questions!

Breakout room discussions

Ask your questions related to:

- Articulating challenges
- Developing SMART goals
- Specifying improvement strategies
- Planning a road test of a strategy



Section D1 – Identify challenges, set SMART goals

/ Grantee questions:

Setting SMART goals

How do I know my road test goals will be reasonable?

Our CQI team has questions about how to identify items that are fit for a road test.

Identifying challenges for CQI efforts

Some service delivery sites struggle with good documentation of referrals, service contacts, etc. Would that be an appropriate road test?

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Section D1 – Identify challenges, set SMART goals

Table D1. Your program's issue(s), SMART goal(s), and data source(s)

For the area of improvement your team selected above, please describe the issue you are trying to solve, a related SMART goal, and possible data sources you could use.	
What is the specific problem or issue you are trying to solve?	
What is the SMART goal that would show an improvement on this issue?	
What data source could you use to measure progress towards that goal?	

Other questions?

- Specifying challenges
- Developing SMART goals
- Identifying a data source to track progress

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Section D2 – Strategy development

Table D2. Proposed improvement strategies

Area for improvement (from Section D1)	Strategy for improvement	Process for how strategy was developed	Rationale for the strategy: Why might this strategy lead to improvements?
Example: Low attendance at workshops	*Call each family the day before the workshop*	*Facilitators, case managers, and supervisors brainstormed ways to improve attendance. The team agreed this strategy was relatively easy to implement with high potential for improving attendance.*	*Checking in will remind families about the upcoming workshop, encourage staff and the client to build rapport, and allow the staff to help troubleshoot if the family has barriers to attendance (such as child care or transportation issues).*

What are your questions related to:

- Developing improvement strategies
- Specifying how a strategy is expected to work

Section D3 – Road test planning

/ Grantee questions:

When is an ideal time to start the road test, or is it dependent on our program?

What is the suggested length of road tests before making adjustments/developing new road tests?

How many road tests should be run at one time? Or should only one road test be run at a time?

Our program's road test will be approximately 90-120 days. What is the recommended time frame to determine the effect of the road test?

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Section D3 – Road test planning

a. What is the strategy being tested?

b. What are your learning questions for the road test?[4] For example, if testing calls before each workshop: How do families respond to calls before each workshop? How well are staff able to fit this task into their existing responsibilities?

c. When and how will you implement the strategy?

d. When will you start the test?

e. When will you collect feedback?

f. What type of feedback and information will you collect during the test? *(Check all that apply)*

Staff feedback through:	Client feedback through:	Others' feedback:
☐ Questionnaire	☐ Questionnaire	*Please specify who and how*
☐ Focus group	☐ Focus group	
☐ Interview	☐ Interview	
☐ nFORM	☐ nFORM	
☐ Other *(please specify)*	☐ Other *(please specify)*	

Other questions?

- Developing learning questions for a road test
- Planning logistics (e.g., How long? Where? Who to involve?)
- Determining appropriate data collection methods for your test

CQI plan submissions to your FPS

/ Submit plan for first road test (through D3) by December 31

- For questions about CQI plan requirements or how to submit, please reach out to your FPS
- For questions about the process (for example, how to complete key steps), please reach out to the CQI TTA team at hmrfcqi@mathematica-mpr.com
- The following resources provide more detail about steps covered in sections D1-D3:
  - June office hours on identifying and learning about challenges
  - July office hours on SMART goals and Guiding CQI with SMART goals tip sheet
  - August office hours on strategy development and Identify an improvement strategy brief
  - October office hours on planning a road test
  - November office hours on conducting a road test

Additional questions?

/ **For more resources:**

- HMRF Grant Resources (https://hmrfgrantresources.info/continuous-quality-improvement) contains CQI template, tip sheets, and other CQI resources
- ***New*** Identify an improvement strategy brief

/ **Next office hours on Tuesday, Jan 25, 2022**

/ **Submit questions to hmrfcqi@mathematica-mpr.com**