**Continuous Improvement Step-by-Step Guide**

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| Continuous improvement seeks to improve every process in an organization by focusing on enhancing the activities that generate the most value for the client, while removing as many wasteful activities as possible. The objective is to reduce steps in a process to improve services and shorten timelines for government programs and supports. These improvements can happen over time or all at once. Below is a brief overview of each step in adopting a culture of Continuous Improvement. | |
| **PLAN** | * 1. **Assess Current State**   It is important to determine the current state of your program or service. This will not only help you establish baseline data that will later be used to measure change, but it will also enable you to get a complete picture of what your organization is doing well and where it struggles. An assessment will also help you figure out where your organizations pressure points or major stressors are before they break down. At this step, it is a good idea to develop a data collection plan. The data collection plan will detail the steps that you will follow in gathering the information you need to determine a baseline. This will help ensure that: everyone is on the same page with the process; time isn’t wasted collecting data that you don’t need; and important information isn’t overlooked and is communicated as necessary.  **PEP Tip:** Seek input from front-line employees. Service delivery professionals use departmental processes every day and are invaluable in providing insight into why some processes are working and others are not. Involving all employees in the process will also help build a work culture that encourages everyone to share their ideas for improvement. |
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| * 1. **Create a Process Map**   Once you have identified processes in need of improvement, it is time to prepare a process map to determine which steps add value to the overall process, and which steps are waste. Assess each step in conjunction with the feedback received from your colleagues, which will help in the development of a continuous improvement plan.  **PEP Tip:** This process can seem overwhelming, so try focusing your assessment on one process at a time. Once you have a clear picture of one piece, you can start moving on to the next. There is also a number of ways you can organize your information, depending on your work style; here a few examples:   * Use a sticky-note for each step in a process and arrange them on a large surface (e.g., wall, white board). This will help you to see the volume of steps in a process and will enable you to physically manipulate the steps before you chose a new approach to test. * Create an electronic process map. This will provide the same benefits as the sticky-note approach, but you will be able to manipulate and save your process map for future use. * Create a process manual for each aspect of your department. While this method will take longer, it will ensure you have an in-depth understanding of each and every process before you proceed. As a nice bonus, if you update your policy and process manuals as you implement your continuous improvement practices, these manuals will serve as helpful instructional guides for new employees. |
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| **DO** | * 1. **Put the Plan in Motion**   Now that you have a good understanding of your organization and your programs and services, what it does, and how it does it, it’s time to implement your continuous improvement plan.  **PEP Tip:** Do not start implementing everything at once. If you make all of your changes at once, not only will employees feel overwhelmed; but, it will also be a lot more difficult to assess which new processes (if any) need further adjustments, which ones provided favorable results and which may not have. |

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| **CHECK** | * 1. **Measure and Evaluate Change**   Now it is time to see if all of that work has paid off. Assess the new processes and compare the results to the baseline data that you collected at the beginning of this process, this will show you if there has been any improvement.  **PEP Tip:** Do not get discouraged if your evaluation doesn’t give you your desired result right away. Measuring and evaluating is not just about assessing whether the new processes work; instead, it is about creating the information and data to determine why it did or did not work. |
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| **ACT** | * 1. **Continuously Improve**   Act on the information collected from the measure and evaluate process. If the evaluation shows that more process improvements are required then tweak the changes and start the process all over again. If the evaluation shows that you have achieved your desired outcome, then develop a plan to continuously review the process improvements to ensure that they are always generating the most value for the client.  **PEP Tip:** Now might be a good time to assess any processes connected to this one. This will help you determine if your changes had any cascading effects. Consider all processes connected along the service pathway and make sure you review those as well. This will help to maintain and enhance the overall service flow. |



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