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Appendix 1: The Six Rules of Improvement

The “six rules of improvement” provide a helpful guide to undertaking QI work.

1. Think in systems

Build processes and systems that support health care workers to provide reliable care. If you want a different result than you are currently achieving, then you need to adapt your system.

2. Explicitly state your aim and anticipated benefits

Often, change is attempted without a clear discussion about what is trying to be achieved. Meaningful and measurable aims are important. The team will be more engaged and motivated to participate in change if they are involved in planning for the improvement effort.

3. Continually make small incremental changes

Large scale change is difficult to achieve and has potential for unintended consequences. Progress can be made in small steps, checking the outcomes at every step. Large scale change is achieved from the culmination of continual small steps.

To plan and undertake improvement activities, use the Model for Improvement framework to help set aims and track progress against small changes that you think will help you reach your goal of improving cancer screening rates.

4. Keep score - measure your progress

All improvement requires change, but not all change is an improvement. Only measurement will tell you if a change is leading to a desired improvement. A set of measures to track your progress has been developed for you to use.

5. Steal shamelessly

It's important to look outside your own Health Service, or even the health system, to learn from the experience of others. You and your peers will improve faster by learning from each other. When we are all willing to share our success stories generously, everyone benefits.

6. Inspire a culture of “falling forward”

Sometimes in the busy environment of health care, we tend to do things a certain way because that's how we have always done them. By giving ourselves and our team(s) permission to change, we can do better.

Constant change can be exhausting but continuous improvement can be invigorating. This is why we should cultivate a culture of always doing things a little bit better; of falling forward.