Evaluation of Improvement Capability Grants:
Lessons from the Field, Part 2

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Q1. In the past year have you been involved in a team to improve work processes or outcomes?

- No

- Yes, as a team member

- Yes, as a team leader

- Yes, as an improvement advisor/facilitator/coach

Systems Redesign (SR) competitively awarded 30 grants

- RFP with broad guidelines to encourage local strategies to build improvement capability

- Grants awarded to VISNs & medical centers
  - 10 grants in 2009 to 7 medical centers & 3 VISNs
  - 20 grants in 2010 to 18 medical centers & 2 VISNs

- Three-year grants with total possible funding of $450-$500K/year

- All grants now completed

Participating Grant Recipients

2009
- Alaska HCS (Anchorage)
- Cincinnati
- Erie
- Fargo
- Indianapolis
- Muskogee
- Tampa
- VISN 6
- VISN 7
- VISN 12

2010
- Ann Arbor
- Bay Pines
- Chillicothe
- Cleveland
- Columbia SC
- Connecticut HCS
- Detroit
- Durham
- Greater Los Angeles HCS
- Lexington
- Madison
- Southeast Louisiana HCS (New Orleans)
- Nebraska-Western Iowa HCS (NWI)
- Orlando
- Palo Alto HCS
- Providence
- Tomah
- Washington DC
- VISN 17
- VISN 22

COLMR evaluation approach

- COLMR two-person teams conducted site visits with the 30 grantees at 6 month intervals
  - Grantees included VISNs & individual facilities
- Currently conducting
  - One-year follow-up visits with 2009 sites
  - End of grant visits with 2010 sites

Majority of sites showed good progress

- 74% fully or mostly met their grant objectives

- 65% fully or mostly spread grant activities beyond the original pilot area or clinical focus

- 68% fully or mostly planned to sustain grant activities after grant funding ends

An improvement culture consists of:

- Engaged staff with improvement skills

- Infrastructure of expert skills, structures & culture to support improvement

- Senior leaders engaged in system improvement

Q2. How would you describe the improvement culture in your organization?

- Improvement work throughout the organization

- Scattered pockets of improvement work

- Minimal improvement activities

Key factors in developing improvement capability that builds a culture of improvement

- – Improvement training linked with application to improvement projects
- – Data & skills to analyze
- – Strong improvement infrastructure
- Front-line staff engagement
- Middle manager engagement
- Senior leadership engagement
- Strategic alignment with organizational priorities

Conceptual Framework for Improvement Capability Grants
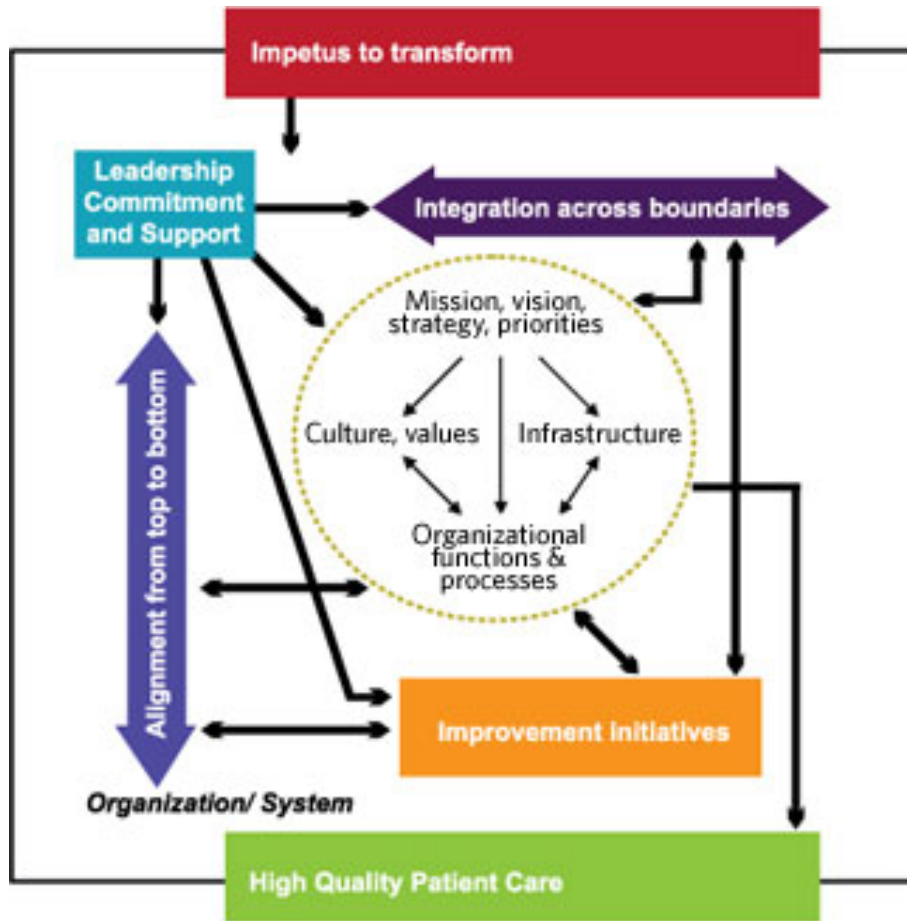
- *Impetus* to transform,
- *Leadership* commitment to quality,
- *Improvement initiatives* that actively engage staff in meaningful problem solving,
- *Alignment* to achieve consistency of organizational goals with resource allocation & actions at all levels of the organization, &
- *Integration* to bridge traditional intra-organizational boundaries among individual components.

VanDeusen Lukas, Carol, Holmes, Sally K., Cohen, Alan B., Restuccia, Joseph, Cramer, Irene E., Shwartz, Michael, Charns, Martin P. (2007). Transformational change in health care systems: An organizational model. Health Care Manage Rev, 32(4), 309-320.

Front-line engagement

- Important because front-line staff
  - Provide direct perspectives on what needs improvement
  - Will be involved in implementing the improved practices
- Involving them in improvement activities
  - Gets better solutions & results
  - Gains staff buy-in needed for sustained change
  - Provides skills and motivation for further improvement

Front-line engagement

- ## Challenges
  - Lack of knowledge of systematic improvement methods
  - Training without opportunity to apply
  - Day-to-day responsibilities make it difficult for staff to participate on improvement teams

- ## Engagement beyond training is facilitated when
  - Time for improvement teams & committee work is built into scheduling for front-line staff
  - Involvement in improvement activities is part of performance goals

Middle manager engagement

- Middle managers play critical roles in the organization
- Challenges
  - Lack of understanding of & skills in improvement methods
  - Pressures of staff time for regular duties
  - Skepticism about new methods
  - Desire for training targeted to middle managers

Middle manager engagement

- Ways to increase middle management engagement in improvement
  - Target for training
  - Provide coaching & support in conducting projects
  - Involve in management guidance teams to convene & oversee projects
  - Hold accountable for improvement in performance plans
  - Create a culture where leading an improvement team or serving on a management guidance team is a sign of status

Senior leadership engagement

- Engaged leaders:
  - Develop & communicate a vision for continuous improvement aligned with strategic priorities
  - Are knowledgeable about & model improvement principles & behavior
  - Understand requirements for improvement success & develop systems to support that success
  - Foster active collaboration in improvement by establishing a psychologically-safe environment
  - Are knowledgeable about PI projects, training & other activities

Senior leadership engagement

- Challenges
  - Changes in leadership typically slow progress &/or change priorities
  - Lack of shared vision among Quadrad members about the role of improvement
  - Lack of constancy of purpose
- Strategies for meeting challenges
  - Build on Leading Organizational Improvement Workshops (LOIWs)
  - Mount communication campaigns using successful examples in redesign
  - Create systems redesign peer mentors for Quadrad members

Q3. How engaged is senior management team (quadrad) in improvement work in your organization?

- All members are knowledgeable & regularly supportive

- Some but not all members are knowledgeable & supportive

- There is little consistent engagement & support by the quadrad

Improvement aligned with organizational priorities

- History of improvement projects being done in isolation
  - Teams don't have support if they run into problems or need to cross organizational boundaries
  - Projects don't have resources because not high priority
  - Project success does not last or spread

Improvement aligned with organizational priorities

- Strategies
  - Select projects to support clinical & business strategic directions
  - Implement use of processes & tools for project selection
  - Ensure accountability & allocate resources to improvement projects
  - Develop systems for monitoring & sustaining improvement results
- Infrastructure designed to support alignment

Complementary SR & other initiatives

- Leading organizational improvement workshops (LOIWs) -- completed in FY12
- Veterans Engineering Resource Centers (VERCs)
  - Direct support to national, VISN & local redesign efforts
  - Training in lean methods at different levels
  - Targeted middle manager training
  - Lean deployment pilot
- Improvement culture guidebook
- Field-based analytics workshop

For more information, contact Ro Hurley at ro.hurley@va.gov

Developing improvement capability to build culture of improvement

- Improvement training linked with application to improvement projects

- Data & skills to analyze

- Strong improvement infrastructure

- Front-line staff engagement

- Middle manager engagement

- Senior leadership engagement

- Strategic alignment with organizational priorities

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OTM references

- OTM model available at: otm.bu.edu

- Lukas CV, Holmes SK, Cohen AB, Restuccia J, Cramer IE, Shwartz M, Charns MP. An organizational model of transformational change in healthcare systems. *Health Care Management Review*, 2007; 32(4): 309-320

- Lukas CV, Engle RL, Holmes SK, Parker VA, Nealon Seibert M, Petzel RA, Shwartz M, Sullivan JL. Strengthening organizations to implement evidence-based clinical practices. *Healthcare Management Review,* 2010, 35(3), 325-245