



NCAPPS

National Center on Advancing
Person-Centered Practices and
Systems

Overview of NCAPPS Learning Collaboratives

Human Services Research Institute, October 2019

NCAPPS Learning Collaboratives bring together “teams” from States, Territories, and Tribal human services agencies to engage in peer-to-peer learning. They provide a framework for teams to learn about, test, and implement specific systems change efforts focused on a global aim. They are guided by best practices and structured to promote and accelerate local efforts.

This brief provides a general overview of the NCAPPS Learning Collaborative structure. Individual Learning Collaboratives may differ based on topic development, areas of focus, team composition, and other factors. Our model for NCAPPS Learning Collaboratives was adapted from the Breakthrough Series Collaborative system from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

Learning Collaborative Topics

NCAPPS uses the following criteria to select and prioritize Learning Collaborative topics:

1. There are agreed-upon examples of **evidence-based practice** (research literature, subject matter expert consensus), or promising practices are emerging but still being developed.
2. There are **measures** that can be used to document agencies’ progress towards evidence based or promising practices and producing desired outcomes.
3. There is a recognized **gap between the status quo and desired outcomes**. This presents the opportunity for improvement. Each team will establish their own approach to making improvement, setting and working toward measurable goals and objectives that align with their own system
4. Topic areas are identified as **high priority** by stakeholders.

How Learning Collaboratives Work

Learning Collaboratives will be operating for a 12 to 24 month duration, depending on the topic and framework. During that time, teams will have 3 days of dedicated videoconference “Learning Sessions” to learn the framework, form implementation teams, share information, and chart progress. They begin with a global aim and a framework developed by a panel of experts. Teams learn the framework and then develop their own local aim based on the global aim. They select specific strategies from the framework to implement and test, along with measures that will help them to know if what they’re doing is leading to the desired results. Between the Learning Sessions, the teams conduct ‘tests’ using Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)



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cycles.¹ Teams will report data on their progress back to NCAPPS to support ongoing learning and understanding. In later Learning Sessions, teams will identify strategies for longer-term sustainability of systems change efforts.

For example, with the overarching goal of increasing self-direction, teams may apply one or more strategies involving participant outreach and education, support coordinator education, peer supporter partnerships, or the development of the network of support providers. When testing these strategies, the teams will measure against identified benchmarks (e.g., self-direction enrollment).




For topics for which practices are still in development and for which there is no clearly defined 'best practice', the Collaboratives encourage teams to identify and test various approaches locally. For example, for enhancing access to person-centered planning and supports for people with brain injury, teams will participate in developing ideas through local 'tests'. Using PDSA cycles, they'll test opportunities for developing community and eligibility-based supports, and for increasing participant engagement in planning processes.

The table on the following page provides a model structure for Learning Collaboratives.

¹ For more information on the Plan-Do-Study-Act model, see <http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/HowtoImprove>



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Events	Topic Development and Preparation	Expert Meeting*	Team Recruitment and Pre-Work	Learning Session 1: Aims and PDSA	Action Period 1 	Learning Session 2: Accelerating Change	Action Period 2 	Learning Session 3: Holding the Gains and Spread	Action Period 3 	Summit Meeting*: Sharing What We've Learned
Who's Involved	HSRI†, Contracting Officer's Representative Group	HSRI, 12-15 SMEs	HSRI, 2-5 Faculty, 10-30 Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams	HSRI, Faculty, Teams, COR Group, Other Invited Stakeholders
Actions and Resulting Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize Learning Collaborative Structure and Format Draft Mission and Goals Identify SMEs Business Case Team Recruitment Plan Expert meeting agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize Mission and Global Aim Charter Select Faculty Improvement Framework Measurement Strategy Example Aims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams and key contacts identified Establish buy-in and set expectations (via the Charter) Teams complete draft of local aims and driver diagrams Teams engage in Experiential Exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the Improvement Framework and Measurement Strategy Teams refine and finalize their aims and driver diagrams Learn the Model for Improvement Storyboards: Aims and Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate action (PDSA cycles) Coaching calls Monthly reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storyboards: Strategies and Successes Highlight successful Teams Review monthly reports and progress Revisit Charter, Change Package, and Measurement Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue action (PDSA cycles) Coaching calls Monthly reports Peer-to-peer sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storyboards: Strategies and Successes Highlight successful Teams Review monthly reports and progress Review strategies for sustainability (holding the gains and spread) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue action (PDSA cycles) Coaching calls Monthly reports Peer-to-peer sharing Wrap-up Summary report with sustainability plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Change Package and Measurement Strategy White Paper and Presentations on content and lessons learned

*In person or videoconference

†Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) Roles

Director – Oversees all aspects of the Learning Collaborative

Improvement Advisor – Supports the design and monitoring of the measurement strategy

Coordinator – Coordinates Collaborative logistics and provides administrative support for all aspects of the Learning Collaborative



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Definitions of Learning Collaborative Components

Action Period – The period between Learning Sessions during which Teams test strategies and gather data.

Aims – The Global Aim is an overarching goal for the entire Learning Collaborative. Teams will develop local aims specific to their situation and contexts. All local aims should align with the Global Aim but are tailored to reflect local contexts, team experience with the topic, and available measures.

Business Case – A brief, compelling rationale for the Learning Collaborative that details: why the topic is important to service users and their families, providers, administrators, policymakers, and the public; why it is urgent that change is needed now; and how specifically the Learning Collaborative can bring about the needed changes. The Business Case is used to recruit teams, encourage buy-in and persistence from all stakeholders, and communicate the products of the Learning Collaborative to the public.

Improvement Framework – Outlines the theory of change for the Learning Collaborative, along with specific strategies that can be tested to drive change. It includes a visual representation of the content theory (often in the form of a Driver Diagram). The Improvement Framework is the heart of the Learning Collaborative.

Charter – The charter is a document that is used to lay out clear expectations for Teams. It includes a problem statement, the Learning Collaborative Mission and Goals, Learning Collaborative structure and format (including the schedule of meetings), and roles and responsibilities related to engagement, activities, and reporting.

Coaching Calls – Regular calls held during action periods with Teams and HSRI/Faculty to discuss progress, troubleshoot issues, and provide guidance on the Team's activities.

Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) Group – Representatives from the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services who oversee NCAPPS.

Experiential Exercise – An action-based exercise that Teams complete before the first Learning Session to generate engagement with the Learning Collaborative topic and deepen their understanding of the theory of change.

Expert Meeting – A meeting of individuals, including people with lived experience, at the beginning of the Learning Collaborative. Experts review and refine the draft framework and assist in the identification and development of change strategies and measures.



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Faculty – Subject matter experts who have been engaged to support the work of an NCAPPS collaborative. Faculty provide topic-specific guidance to teams and HSRI throughout the Learning Collaborative process.

Learning Session – Videoconference meetings of the entire Learning Collaborative during which Teams learn about the collaborative, share best practice, and address common concerns. Each of the three Learning Sessions has a particular focus. The first is dedicated to teaching Teams about the Improvement Framework, Measurement Strategy, and Model for Improvement, and for supporting teams to develop their aims. The second is focused on capitalizing on early wins to accelerate change. The third involves strategies for holding gains and promoting spread.

Measurement Strategy – Includes a family of measures that can be used to determine whether the Teams’ activities are resulting in improvements. Also includes instructions about how to use the measures and tips for pulling data together.

Mission and Goals – The purpose and overarching goals for the Learning Collaborative.

Model for Improvement – A simple model for structuring improvement activities based on three questions: 1. What are we trying to accomplish? 2. How will we know a change is an improvement? 3. What change can we make that will result in improvement? Includes a series of Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles to test changes. The model was developed by Langley and colleagues (*The Improvement Guide*, 2009) and is used extensively by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (<http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/HowtoImprove>)

Storyboard – Visual displays of Team-specific content shared during Learning Sessions

Subject Matter Expert (SME) – An individual with specific expertise on a given topic. Experts include people with lived experience and their caregivers, direct/frontline service providers, administrators, and researchers

Teams – Groups of individuals within an agency who are working to implement the measurement strategy and Improvement Framework in their organizations. Depending on the topic and format, there will be between 10 and 50 teams participating in the Learning Collaborative