

# Continuous Quality Improvement in Action

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NCAP Management and Leadership Training Conference  
Orlando, Florida  
January 2026



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[www.communityactionpartnership.com](http://www.communityactionpartnership.com)

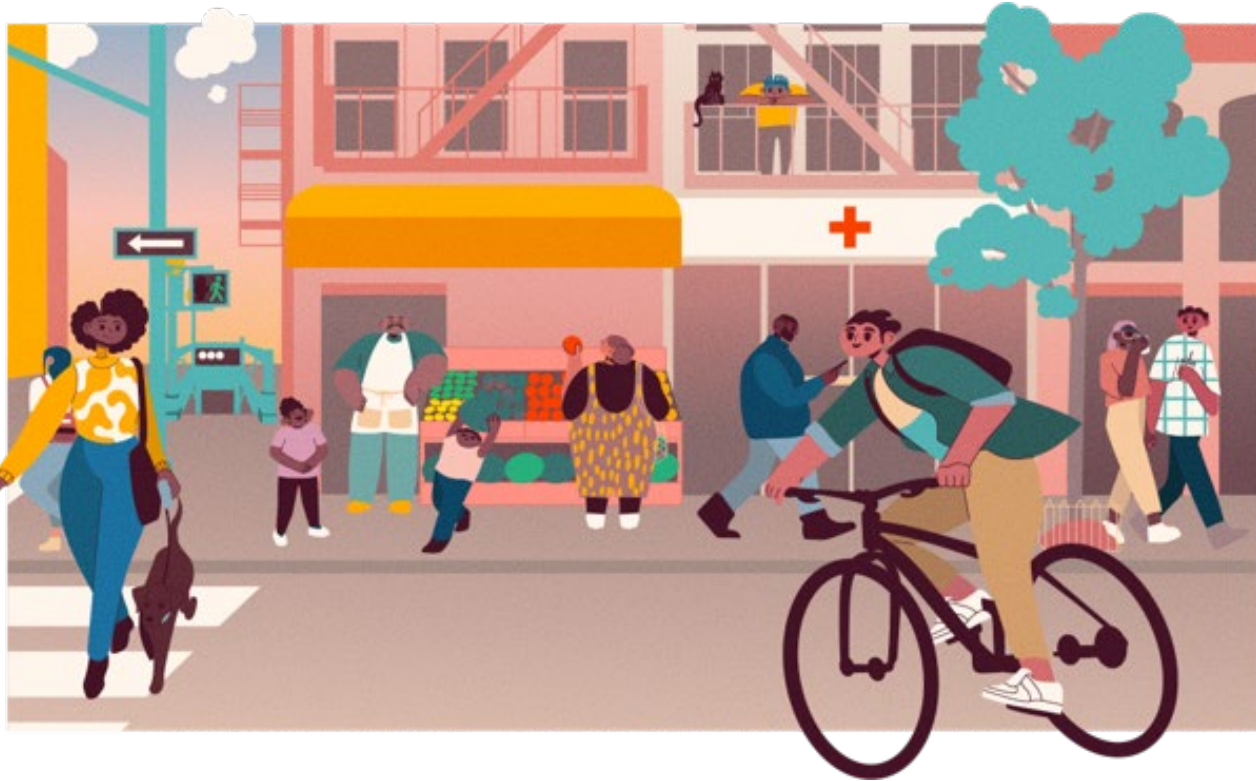
# The Promise Of Community Action

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*Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

# Communities Need and Deserve Excellent Community Action Agencies



*Every* organization can improve, and should continuously strive to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and to exceed expectations.

## The Three Steps of Nonprofit Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning



Source: The Bridgespan Group: [A Practical Guide to Nonprofit Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning](#)

# Creating Systematic Improvements

- Using a systematic approach to performance improvement is also a requirement for excellence.
- The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle is one way to implement changes in a controlled, measurable way that allows for reassessment and adjustments before large scale implementation.



# Creating Systematic Improvements – PDSA

## 1. PLAN

- **Define the Goal:** Identify one specific area to improve (e.g., increase employee engagement with professional development courses).
- **Set a Measurable Objective:** Example: “Increase employee completion of professional development courses by 20% over the next year.”
- **Develop a Small Test of Change:** Keep it simple and low risk. Example: “Offer monthly Lunch & Learn meetings.”

## 2. DO

- **Implement the Change on a Small Scale:** Test with a small group or one program rather than the entire organization. “Offer monthly Lunch & Learn meetings for Family Services staff.”
- **Document What Happens:** Note any challenges, unexpected issues, and initial feedback.



# Creating Systematic Improvements – PDSA

## 3. STUDY

- **Analyze Results:** Compare actual outcomes to your objective. Did completion of training modules improve? Did participants respond positively?
- **Gather Feedback:** Ask participants for quick input on the change.

## 4. ACT

- **Decide Next Steps:**
  - If successful → Expand the change to more programs.
  - If partially successful → Adjust and run another cycle.
  - If unsuccessful → Learn why and try a different approach.



# Creating Systematic Improvements – CQI

- **Keep it small and quick:** One change, one metric, short time frame.
- **Use simple tools:** A spreadsheet or free survey tool is enough for tracking.
- **Engage staff:** Make it collaborative so everyone feels ownership.




# Systematic Improvements = Greater Impact

## Common reasons nonprofits do impact measurement

	Measuring to Prove	Measuring to Learn
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Show success to funders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve strategy and outcomes</li></ul>
Audience Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal and external</li></ul>
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What worked</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What can be improved</li></ul>
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reports and compliance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategy, decisions, learning</li></ul>
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annually—based on reporting schedule</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly—to inform decision making</li></ul>

Source: <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/nonprofit-organizational-effectiveness/what-is-impact-measurement-and-how-can-organizations-use-it>



# Qualitative Data: Using the Story Behind the Numbers

NCAP 2026 Management &  
Leadership Conference  
January 29, 2026



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# We've come a long way!

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- In 2019, data was reported monthly on an Excel spreadsheet which was emailed back and forth
- Each quarter, program directors met with the Planning & Evaluation department to review their “numbers”
- Focus was on the numbers: Your target was 100, but you served 43. Tell us why.
- This approach often put program staff on the defensive
- The process was stressful for everyone

**Flip the Script:  
Start with the  
successes!**



# Success stories

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- **Story Summary:** 1–2 sentences describing individual or family impact
- **Program Link:** What services, support, or intervention led to success?
- **Takeaway:** Optional reflection on what this shows about the program





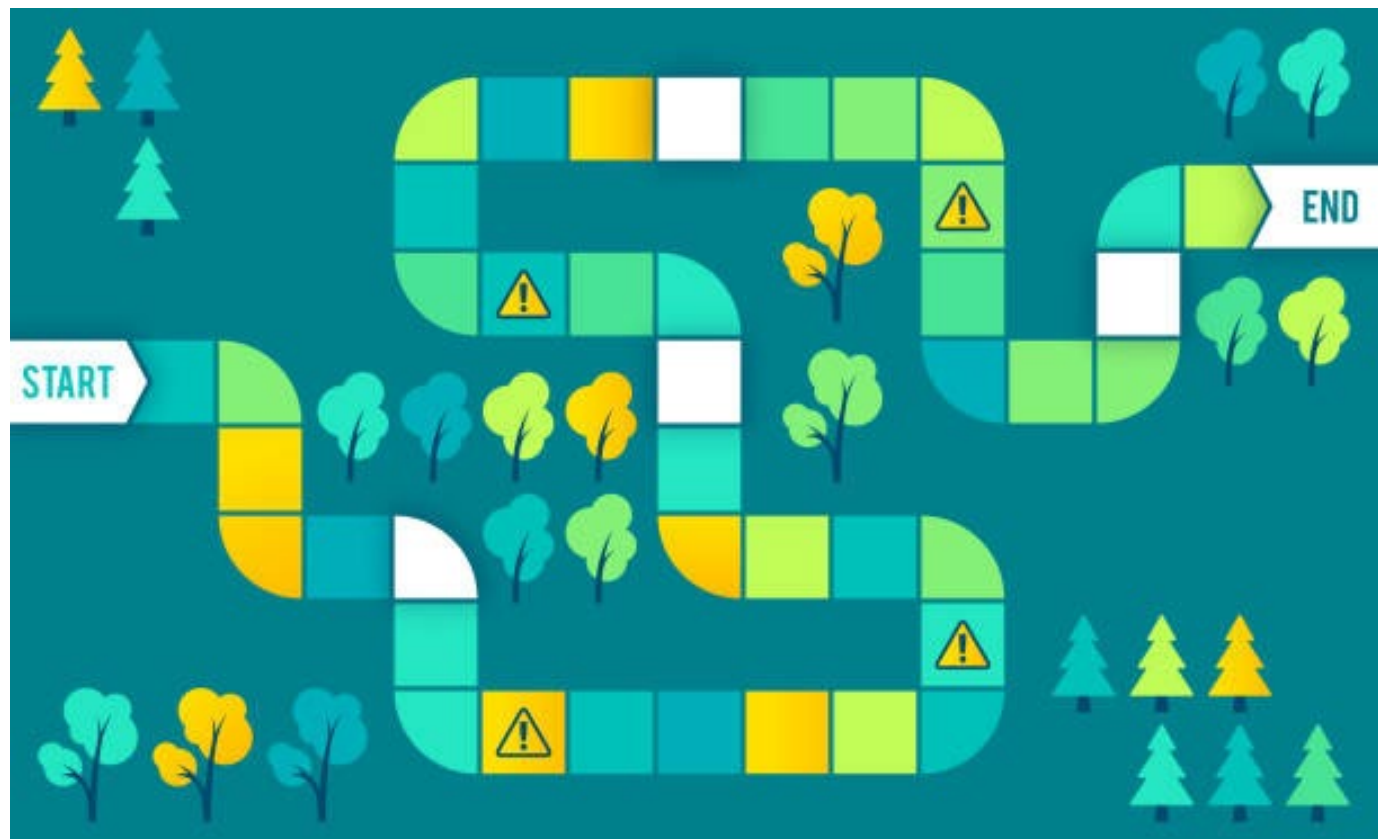
**Yes, but...!**

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# ***Move on to the challenges***

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- Review challenges identified in the previous quarter
- Discuss actions taken in the current quarter
- Identify new or emerging challenges identified in the current quarter



# ***Progress on prior challenges***

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- We saw repetition of the same challenges quarter after quarter, but no improvement over time
- We noticed very little intentional action to address the challenges
- There was minimal tracking of the impact of the efforts to overcome the challenges



# Bring forward ongoing challenges

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## Scenario for the Q2 meeting:

- **Q1 Challenge:** Description of the challenge that was identified in Q1
  - **Prior Action Taken:** *(Copy from Q1 narrative)*
  - **Prior Progress:** *(Copy from Q1 narrative)*
  - **New Action Taken in Q2:** What steps did you take to address the challenge?
  - **Progress/Outcome:** What happened as a result of your efforts in Q2?
  - **Status:** Resolved / Partially Resolved / Ongoing
  - **Next Steps:** What do you plan to do in Q3?

# Example: Substance Use Clinic

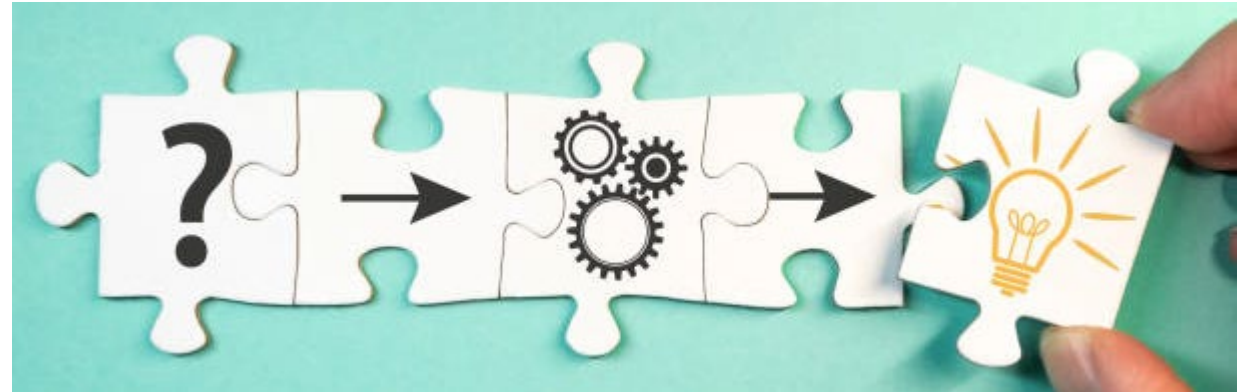
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- **2025 Q2 Challenge:** Lack of funding. The clinic is completely fee-for-service and needs to find sustainable funding.
  - **Prior Action Taken:** Submitted grant applications to Mother Cabrini Foundation and to Excellus BCBS.
  - **Prior Progress:** Expect decisions between October – December. *Update: Did not receive Mother Cabrini grant, still waiting for BCBS response.*
  - **Action Taken in 2026 Q1:** Dept. of Corrections and Community Supervision was looking for nonprofit agencies to provide treatment and reintegration support for individuals who are being released from one of 7 state prisons. WH reached out to one of their representatives and as a result of that conversation, they are now working on contract for ABC to provide those services.
  - **Progress/Outcome:** Contract is in approval process.
  - **Status:** Ongoing
  - **Next Steps:** Contract will be submitted for board approval.

# ***Link to continuous quality improvement***

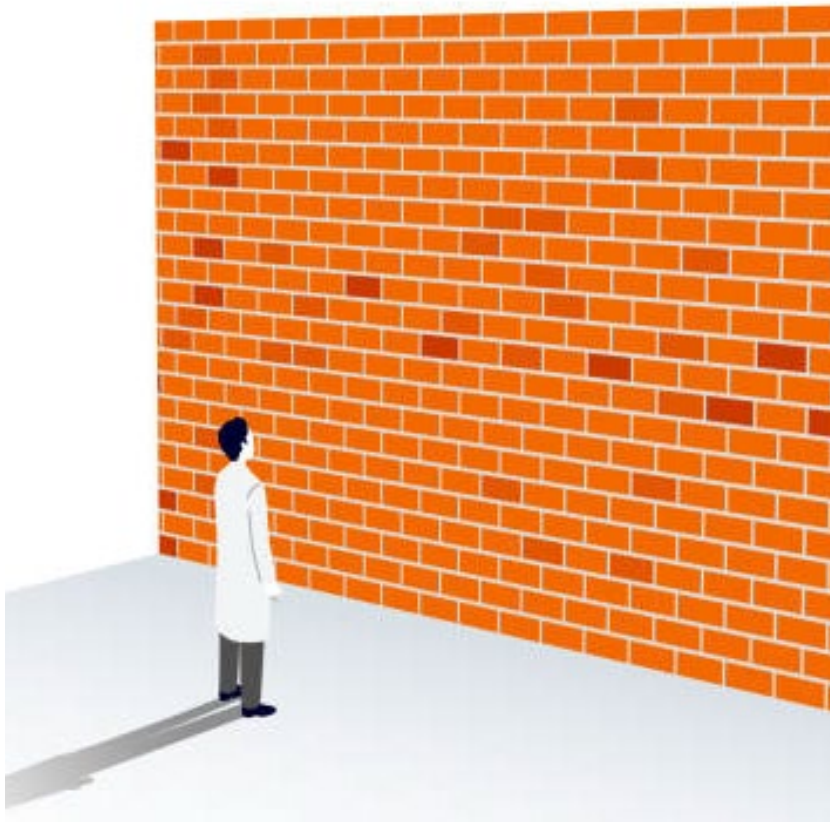
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- It's easy to say “We're going to try **X**”
- It's easier to get bogged down in the day-to-day whirlwind and lose track of **X**.
- We want to move forward toward real actions that lead to significant improvement
- **Accountability is essential.** Tracking next steps across quarters and across fiscal years will provide robust information about ongoing challenges, our efforts to solve those problems, and the impact of our actions on our community.



# Emerging challenges

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**New Challenge:** Describe the challenge

- **Cause:** What are the contributing factors?
- **Action Taken:** What have you tried?
- **Progress:** Note measurable results, improvements, or lessons learned
- **Status:** Resolved / Partially Resolved / Ongoing
- **Next Steps:** What will you try next?

# Quick review of “the numbers”

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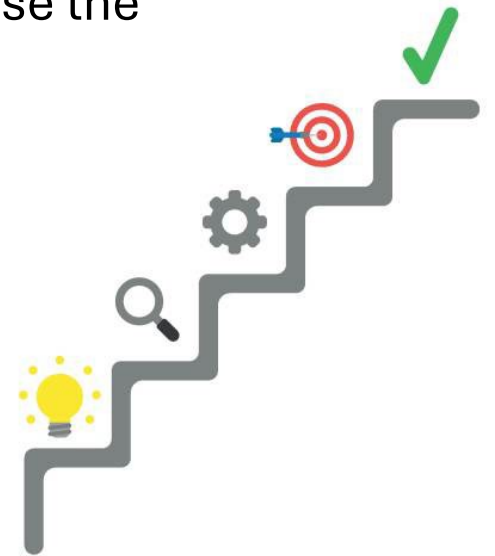
- YTD% should be +/- 20%, is there anything outside that range that we haven't talked about yet?
- This questions often brings unrecognized challenges to the surface



# What next?

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- Define what makes a success a success to collect stories that better showcase the impact of community action
- **Investigate trends**
  - How many programs report the same challenge (i.e. housing, childcare)?
  - How long have program staff been reporting the same challenges?
  - What have they tried?
  - Has anything worked?
  - Are these challenges widespread (state & national)?
- Successes: Can related service provision be turned into best practices?
- Programs that report that they have no challenges: What will you try next to grow or improve your program?
- Leverage our hard work into sustainable funding for our department



# Extras



# Data Check for Annual Program Report

## Client Characteristics

- Have all demographics been captured for the quarter?
- Do the demographic counts equal the number of participants enrolled?

## Staff Trainings:

- Have all staff training hours been reported?



# Data Quality

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- Has all data for the quarter been entered into your program's data system?
- Is the data accurate?
- Is the data complete?
- If no, what is your plan to enter the required data?
- [Person] will enter missing data by MM/DD/YYYY.



# Emphasizing Partnerships

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- Is each partner listed by its full name?
- Is each partner type correctly identified?
- Are all websites and contacts entered?
- Are the proof of partnership documents listed along with locations?
- Are there descriptions of each partner's contributions to the partnership?

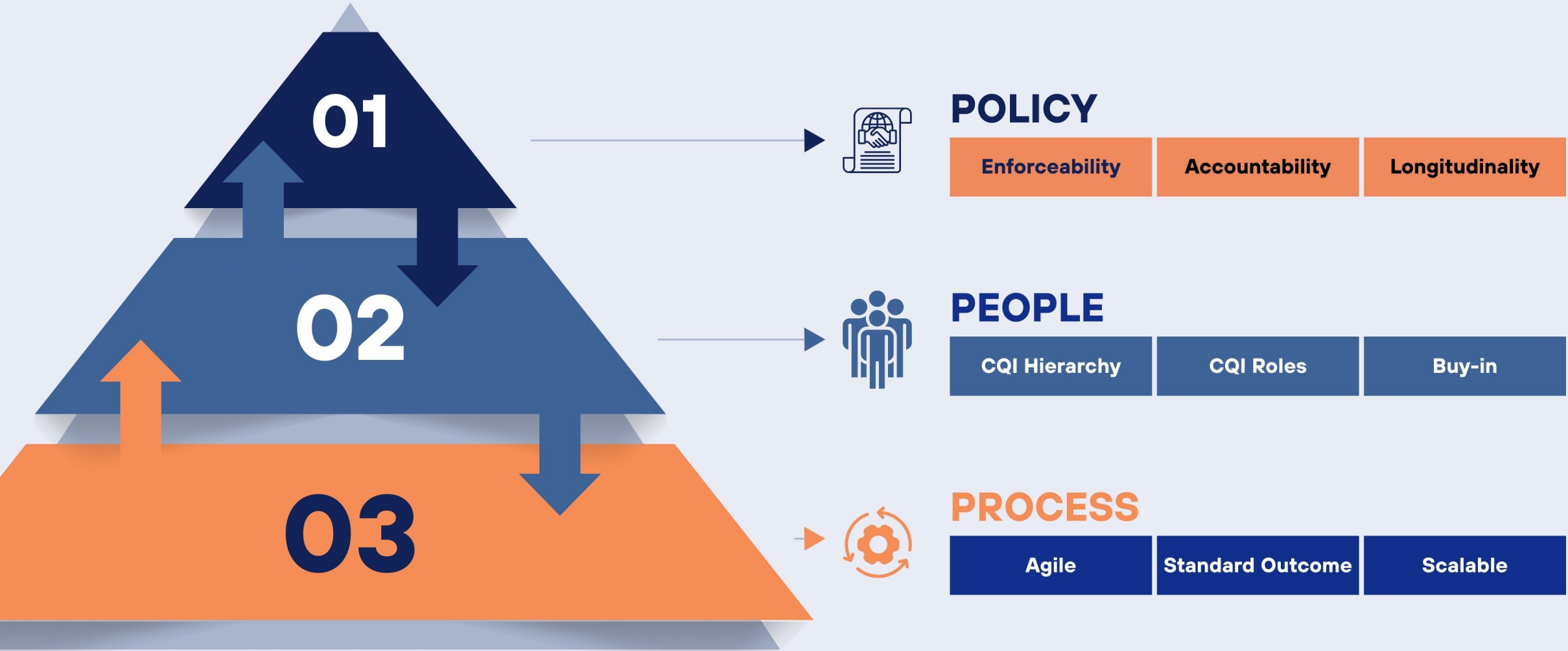




CAPRW, Saint Paul, MN

# Continuous Quality Improvement Pyramid

for sustained implementation & results



01



## POLICY

Enforceability

Accountability

Longitudinality

02



## PEOPLE

CQI Hierarchy

CQI Roles

Buy-in

03



## PROCESS

Agile

Standard Outcome

Scalable

# Thanks for Being Here!

1

If you didn't do so when you arrived, please scan the QR code outside the door to check in.

2

Please complete the feedback survey in your Whova app.

3

Slides will be uploaded to the NCAP website as soon as possible.