



## Get Ideas from Outside the Field: The Improvement Café

One of the five principles that guide the NIATx model for organizational improvement is to get ideas from outside the field. Organizations that “think outside of the box” or go beyond their own boundaries learn from others’ successes and failures and find new and innovative ideas.

At “The Improvement Café,” a breakout session at the Sixth NIATx Learning Session held in Orlando, Florida this May, participants looked at the four NIATx aims through the lens of the restaurant industry. The result? A catalog of creative strategies for rapid-cycle testing.

### **If your organization were a restaurant, how would you seat your customers?**

Examining restaurant seating options generates ideas for reducing waiting times and no-shows.

*Advertise immediate seating.* Let consumers know that they can have immediate access—through on-demand treatment or walk-in appointments.

*Schedule by demand.* Restaurants add staff to accommodate greater demand at peak times—before or after a sold-out cultural or sporting event. Treatment organizations can adopt the same practice to meet demand at peak times.

*Offer a drive-through window.* Treatment organizations can offer express service for consumers who want quick access to information: the organization’s important phone numbers, insurance coverage options, transportation and childcare services, or a directory of local Twelve-Step meetings.

*Publish your menu options in the yellow pages.* Listing your organization’s offerings similar to a restaurant’s carryout or delivery menu in the local yellow pages increases your customers’ access to information about your services—and could influence no-shows.

*Create a comfortable waiting area.* Would you rather stand in line for a table at a popular restaurant or take a seat in a comfortable lounge area listening to music or watching TV? Treatment organizations can offer their clients a pleasant and relaxing place to sit while they wait for an intake or assessment appointment.

*Establish a turnover team.* Busy restaurants employ staff to clear and set tables as they turnover. A turnover team at a residential treatment organization would be able to keep staff notified of up-to-the-minute bed availability.

These are just a few examples of ideas generated at The Improvement Café. Other brainstorming activities at the Café produced restaurant-industry inspired ideas for increasing continuation and admissions.

To view notes from the session, visit:

[https://chess.chsra.wisc.edu/niatx/PDF/LearningSession/LS6/LS6\\_Paralle11\\_HollowayBower\\_ImprovementCafe\\_NOTES.pdf](https://chess.chsra.wisc.edu/niatx/PDF/LearningSession/LS6/LS6_Paralle11_HollowayBower_ImprovementCafe_NOTES.pdf)

