

Sustainability

As we have witnessed the significant and powerful performance improvement changes associated with NIATx, our attention has turned to the sustainability of improvements.

Webster has defined sustainability as follows: “A characteristic of a process or state that can be maintained indefinitely; to keep in existence, to maintain or prolong.”

What family of strategies can help us maintain the important changes we have made? As you complete a performance improvement effort and a rapid-cycle series ask and address these questions:

1. Describe the change you want to sustain.
2. What are the organizational structures that can be put in place to help sustain the clinical, business, and oversight processes improvements?
3. What are the ongoing data needs that will help the organization know if the desired change is being sustained? Who will gather this data? Who will review it and when?
4. What is the business case and the strategic advantage for the improvement you want to sustain?

One Organization's Plan

One organization's plan for sustaining access improvements included the following:

- a) Two policy changes to ensure same day treatment.
- b) A mandate to revisit the process if same day treatment was unsuccessful for two continuous days.
- c) Continuous measurement in the first year after the improvement using a step down approach (e.g., measure weekly, then monthly, then quarterly).

A well-crafted plan for sustainability is a must for longevity. Inclusion of these dimensions can help improve the precision of the sustainability plan and cover a wide reaching set of strategies to “hold the gain” across the organization. This strategy works equally as well within single and complex organizations, and statewide collaboratives.

Sustaining the Gains

1) Describe the change you want to sustain.

2) What organizational structures can be put in place to help preserve the process improvements that you have made?

3) What are the ongoing data needs that will help the organization know if the desired change is being sustained? Who will gather this data? Who will review it and when? Is there a standard meeting that could own this responsibility?

4) What is the business case and the strategic advantage for the improvement you want to sustain?
