

Insights

Leadership Engagement Bootcamp: Exercise 3: Using Evidence to Make Your Case

This is one of a series of posts based on the [“Engaging Senior Leadership in Your Quality Improvement \(QI\) Work”](#) webinar.

When requesting information, a familiar refrain from cops is, “just the facts ma’am.” Similarly, when a leader or boss is asked to support a new initiative, a common refrain is, “show me the evidence this will work.”

When proposing a new quality improvement (QI) initiative to leaders to gain their support, you’ll need different kinds of evidence (e.g., stories from families the initiative will impact, examples of where this has worked before, etc.) and data to support your case.

“Leaders want to know you’ve done your homework before committing to a new project, and to hear the potential impact this change will have on outcomes,” says NICHQ Director of Programs Meghan Johnson, MsC. “A good place to start is to evaluate data and gather anecdotes about the existing systems that would be affected by the QI project. This can help contextualize the status quo and provide a framework for improvement plans so leaders can understand the intended outcomes and their overall implications.”

Once you’ve set the scene of the current state and the future desired state, Johnson recommends answering three questions to help build up the right evidence for getting leadership support:

- Is this a best practice?
- Who else is doing this?
- Has it been successful?

In cases where evidence shows that a project is a best practice, relying on tested information and finding ways to apply to an organization should be sufficient for engaging leaders. After all, no one would want to eschew a tried-and-true means to success.

Evidence from the field can support a proposed initiative that is not an established best practice. As strategies evolve over time, stakeholders adopt new tactics and test changes in order to keep

pace with evolving trends. Letting leaders know that partners and competitors have instituted a similar initiative and had success could bolster interest in a proposal.

Bottom line: Understand the evidence available and think about it from a leader's perspective before proposing an initiative. In cases where the evidence aligns with what leadership wants and the organization's goals, engagement could be secured easily. Facing a dearth of supporting information, it might be time to rethink the overall initiative to ensure a positive outcome before approaching leaders for their support.