

NS Health Quality Improvement and Culture Strategy 2021-2026

Nova Scotia Health Quality Improvement Approach

In April 2021, NS Health launched its Quality, Safety & Performance Framework “NS Health is committed to creating a culture of QI – one where team members are supported to develop the capability and capacity to implement, evaluate, sustain and spread successful QI initiatives at all levels of the organization” ([NS Health, 2021](#)).

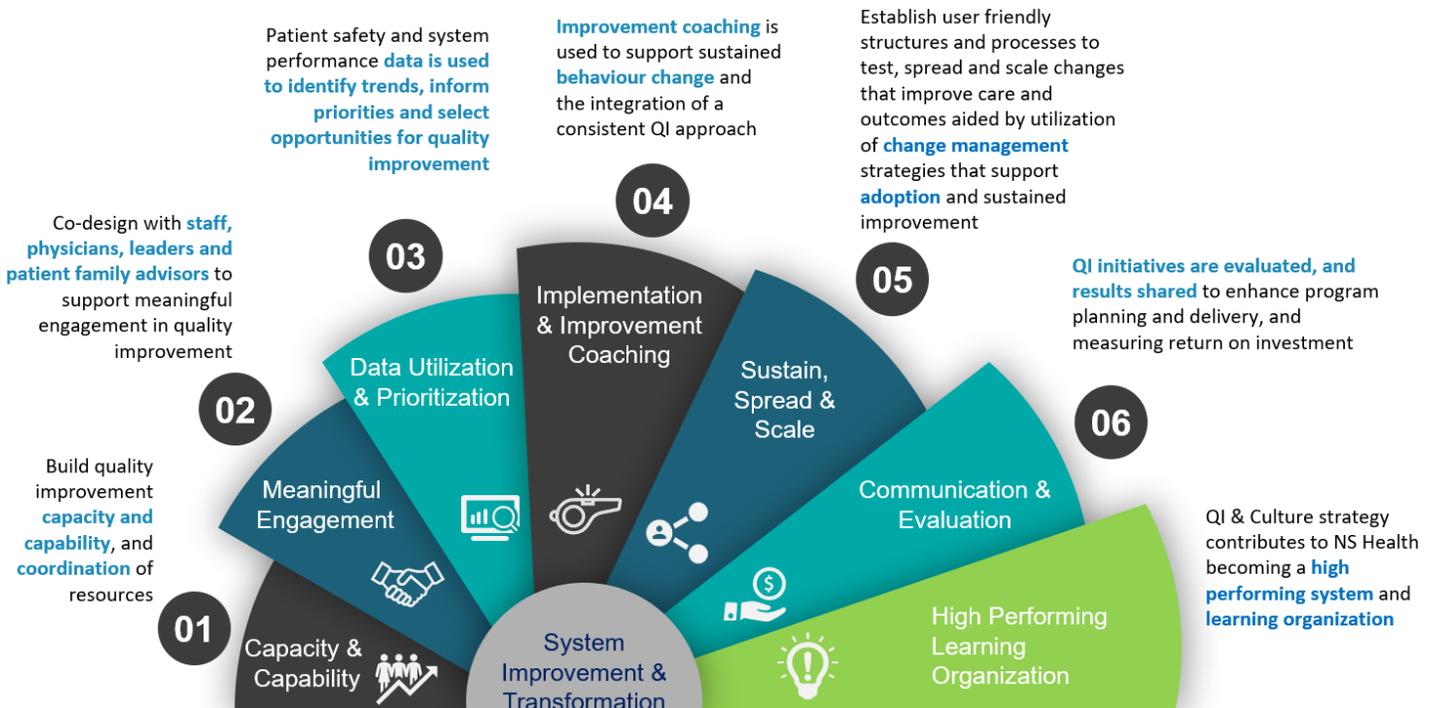
NS Health Quality Improvement Approach



Our goal is to become a high performing health system ([Action for Health: A Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#)), where everyone from the front line to senior leaders have the knowledge, skill and confidence to identify problems, test changes and identify improvements which are embedded into practice, sustained, spread and scaled. We have the right people to be high performing too – and we trust our talented people and will provide improvement coaching to ensure they have the help they need to apply the new skills to improve care and outcomes for all Nova Scotians.

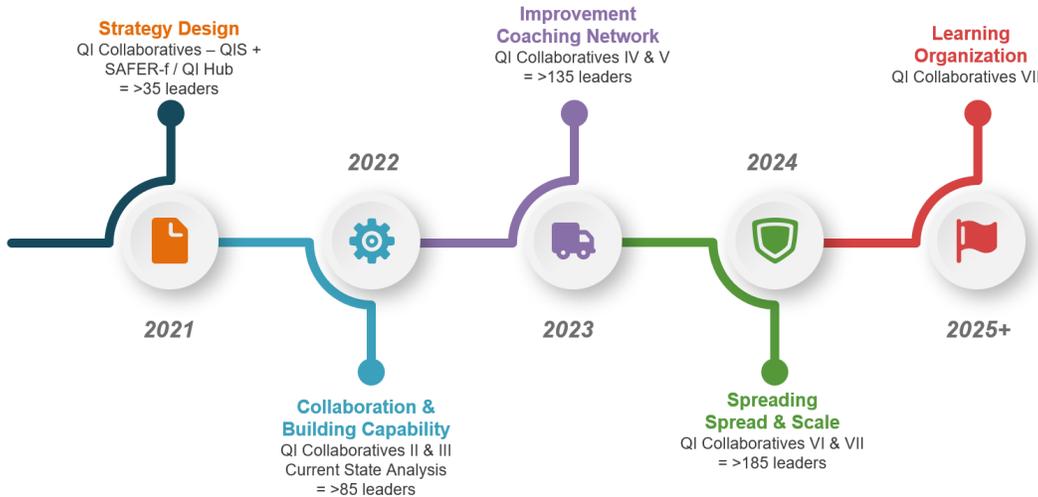
In the fall of 2021, NS Health led by the Quality Improvement and Safety portfolio began the process of developing an evidence informed strategy to support the integration of a quality improvement culture across NS Health. Following months of stakeholder engagement, the NS Health Quality Improvement and Culture Strategy has been developed which has 6 core elements.

NS Health Quality Improvement & Culture Strategy 2021-2026



The QI & Culture Strategy has now completed its first phase of “Strategy Design” which took place from October 2021 – October 2022. The full strategy will be implemented over the five years through 2026. The main 6 elements of the strategy are expected to remain stable and will be implemented on a rolling basis, with new strategies to be identified over the course of implementation. This approach allows for responsiveness to end users feedback as well as evolving organizational priorities.

NS Health QI & Culture Strategy – 5 year

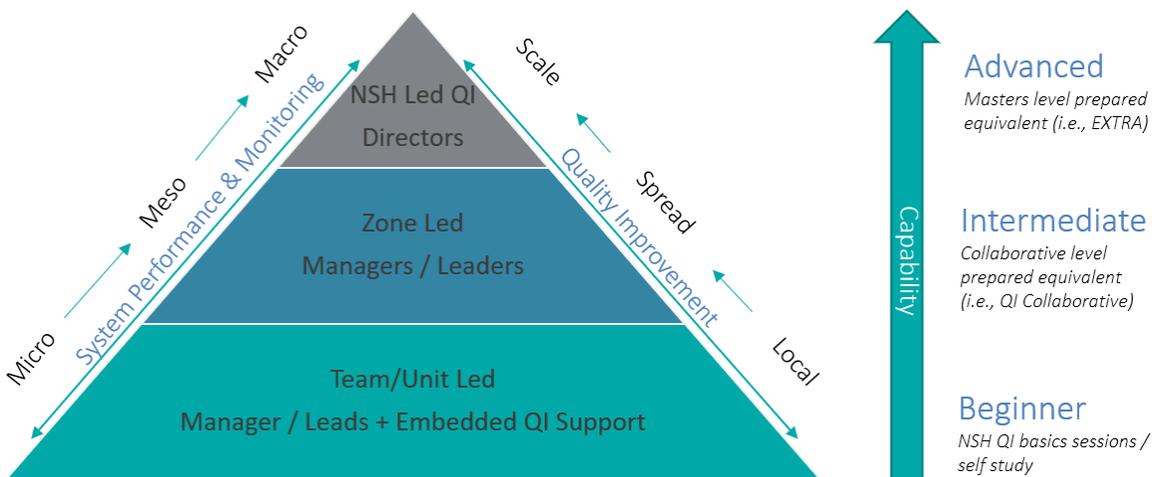


The summary below provides additional insight into the 6 elements of the strategy, and progress to date during the “Strategy Design” phase of the strategy’s implementation, and early progress toward the “Collaboration & Building Capability phase.

01 Capacity & Capability

Building a culture of quality improvement requires a consistent approach, a common language, and a continuous investment in building both the capacity and capability at all levels of the organization. NS Health’s QI Approach creates the common language, including the required resources and tools to support all staff and physicians so they understand when using a quality improvement approach would be most useful, and how to apply a QI approach guided by accessible evidence-informed user-friendly resources and tools. It also requires a concerted and coordinated effort of organizational resources dedicated to support system improvement and transformation.

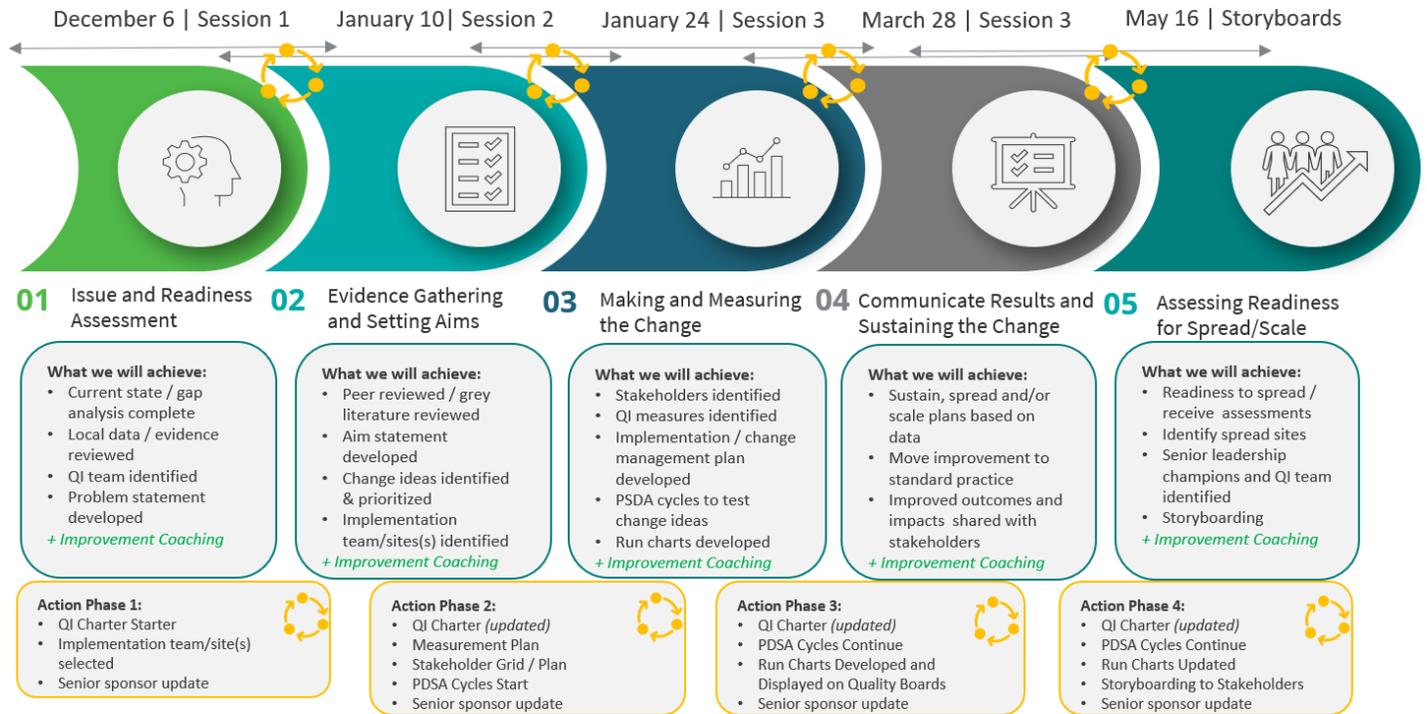
To embed a QI approach across the organization, NS Health has identified varying levels of QI capability from beginner (front line), intermediate (emerging/ mid-level leaders), to advanced (senior leaders).



Nova Scotia Health Quality Improvement Collaborative Series

The Quality Improvement and Safety team has designed the QI collaborative series to meet the needs of staff, physicians, leaders and patient family advisors who are (or will be) leading quality improvement initiatives.

NS Health Quality Improvement Collaborative Series Fall/Winter 2022-2023



How the collaborative works

Over five months of the collaborative, participants join four, two-hour virtual learning sessions and work collaboratively with a small local team to design, implement and evaluate an evidence-informed QI initiative that addresses a pressing clinical, site/service or unit focused priority or challenge. Participants during the collaborative have access to a minimum bi-weekly improvement coaching by experienced zone-based quality improvement and safety leaders. Collaborative members will also benefit from peer-to-peer support among participants.

This is a journey and building an embedded QI culture will take time, but the first building blocks are already in place.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ Creation of the NS Health Quality Improvement Approach – launched May 2022
- ✓ Creation of the Quality Improvement Hub – launched May 2022
- ✓ Creation of NS Health Quality Improvement Collaborative – launched September 2021, May 2022 (SAFER-f), June 2022, December 2022
- ✓ +10 QI Basics Sessions Facilitated

02 Meaningful Engagement

Quality improvement is fundamentally based on meaningful engagement of staff, physicians, leaders, and patient family advisors who collaborate to test changes, implement improvement, and sustain those that demonstrate improved care and outcomes for patients and providers. What is considered meaningful will differ by stakeholder and vary by the phase of implementation. Stakeholder engagement is core to quality improvement, and the involvement of end users is consistently referenced as essential to successful quality improvement. It requires curiosity and openness for dialogue to understand how people want to learn about and contribute to quality improvement initiatives.

This spirit of curiosity has been a guiding principle of the development of QI & Culture Strategy and therefore stakeholder engagement within and across NS Health structures (zones, programs, portfolios) and key stakeholders (staff, physicians, leaders, and patient family advisors) has been instrumental in the development of the strategy to date.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ Quality Improvement & Culture driver diagram and strategy development informed by stakeholder consultation with zone, program and portfolio stakeholders including Research, Innovation & Discovery, Performance Analytics, Interprofessional Practice & Learning, NS Health Strategic Networks – May 2022.
- ✓ With input from strategic physician, leader, patient family advisor and staff advisors designed a current state analysis to assess the current knowledge of QI and confidence in applying core QI skills and tools; to validate the existing structures, processes and QI priorities; to map QI initiatives, and assets and resources that can be leveraged; and to identify gaps and strategies for stakeholder engagement and QI capacity development which will inform continued development and implementation of the QI & Culture strategy – October 2022.

03

Data Utilization & Prioritization

Building on a solid foundation of patient safety and just culture, all NS Health staff, physicians, leaders and patient family advisors should feel empowered and trusted to go beyond having access to reliable data to using data in the test of changes and implementing improvement. High performing health systems are noted as those where staff utilize data to inform programing design, delivery and improvement. NS Health has better access to high quality reliable data now more than ever, but there is work to be done to ensure that all staff have access to the data, know that that they have access, know how to navigate the data available, interpret results and apply the data to inform improvement. High performing health systems also increasingly share and report on progress against stated improvement and system transformation priorities and have clear accountabilities.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ NS Health is sharing results publicly regarding progress against internationally standardized comparisons such as WHO's Hospital Standardized Mortality Ratio and Hospital Harm measures reported by CIHI – December 2021.
- ✓ Developed Zone Quality Improvement and Safety Council (Central) Key Performance Indicator Dashboard which will be used to inform zone improvement priorities – September 2022.
- ✓ QI measurement integrated as core content within the NS Health QI Collaborative – October 2022.
- ✓ QI Collaborative aligned with the NS Action for Health strategic plan to advance the 6 core solutions for healthcare – May 2022.
- ✓ SAFER-f QI Collaborative co-designed with the Access and Flow, and Integrated Acute Care Network with teams utilizing custom QI measurement plan and data scorecard to support unit implementation – May 2022.

04

Implementation & Improvement Coaching

The NS Health QI & Culture will go beyond building capacity and capability, with an intentional focus to move swiftly toward sustained behaviour change of staff, physicians, leaders and patient family advisors to utilize a quality improvement approach to test changes and implement, spread and scale those that improve care and outcomes. It is not enough to do educational sessions to achieve and embedded culture of quality improvement. To become a learning organization, where staff feel trusted and empowered to identify problems, see opportunities and test change ideas requires the organization to invest in providing improvement coaching support.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ Developed NS Health Improvement Coach role and provided training Quality Improvement and Safety Leaders – January 2022.
- ✓ Identified the need for additional capacity to meet the growing need for improvement coaching – May 2022.
- ✓ Integrated improvement coaching as an essential component to all NS Health QI collaboratives – June 2022.
- ✓ Developing NS Health Improvement Coaching Network conceptual design and implementation plan – in development.
- ✓ Made Improvement Coaching consults available upon request via the QI Hub – May 2022.

05

Sustain, Spread & Scale

Another challenge for health systems is to progress beyond using quality improvement to support local / one off quality improvement initiatives. This requires development and consistent utilization of user-friendly and accessible mechanisms and process to support improvements to be sustained, spread and scaled appropriately. Large complex adaptive systems, such as healthcare, frequently miss the opportunity to reduce duplication and spread improvement by failing put in place mechanisms that support spread.

To build upon established change management practices, and support adoption of improvement, the NS QI Approach clearly identifies assessing readiness for spread and scale as a core step (#5) to the approach.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ Creation of the QI Hub which allows all NS Health staff, physicians, leaders and patient family advisors to share openly regarding the Quality Improvement and Clinical / Service Quality Projects they are undertaking and to provide ongoing updates with emerging results – May 2022.
- ✓ QI Collaborative participants are required to submit to the QI Hub and moving forward all Quality Improvement and Safety Council / Teams which oversee QI initiatives will ensure they are reported and captured in the QI Hub – May 2022.
- ✓ Creation of the QI vs Research Navigation tool, which provides direction regarding if the initiative may be quality improvement or applied research and helps to navigate the user to the most appropriate resources to support their work – May 2022.
- ✓ Integrating the use of validated readiness to spread and readiness to receive assessment tools to inform spread and scale planning – in progress.

06

Communication & Evaluation

Another fundamental aspect of NS Health QI Approach is that teams undertaking quality improvement must measurement and share of data to inform implementation. This data should be first and foremost be shared locally with the team and end users involved, as well as in the QI Hub so that others can benefit and learn from their peers, and so that Quality Improvement and Safety Councils and Teams, as well as senior leadership and continuously monitor for those QI initiative that demonstrate potential readiness for spread and aligned with team/zone/provincial priorities.

Teams are encouraged to share their emerging results in a variety of forums including their unit / team quality boards, during team huddles, during quality improvement and safety council / team meetings, on the QI Hub, to senior leadership via storyboard presentations, posters, conferences, and other effective communication strategies.

A subset of QI initiatives will be targeted for return-on-investment analysis, as a part of a robust strategy evaluation plan being designed by the Research, Innovation & Discovery Implementation Science team in collaboration with Quality Improvement & Safety leads.

Strategy Design | October 2021-2022

- ✓ QI Hub is known as a go-to source for information regarding QI initiatives that are underway, and utilized to confirm if work is / has been done to address a specific issue or problem, and as a source of ideas to address system challenges – in progress.
- ✓ Development of a robust evaluation of the QI & Culture Strategy is underway, with advice and guidance from strategic advisors – in development.
- ✓ Development of a comprehensive QI & Culture Strategy communications plan to ensure all NS Health staff, physicians, leaders and patient family advisors are aware and to celebrate the impactful QI initiatives – in development.

All the above strategy elements are evidence-informed and rooted in leading improvement science practice to contribute to NS Health becoming a high performing system and learning organization.

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