Continuous Quality Improvement Plan 2018
Table of Contents

I. Purpose and Scope
II. Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement
III. Structure
   a. Performance Management System
   b. Roles and Responsibilities
IV. Goals and Objectives
V. Staff Training and Resources
VI. Communication Strategies
VII. Monitoring and Evaluation
VIII. Appendix
    a. Definitions
    b. Continuous Improvement Council Charter
I. Purpose and Scope

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is a state agency charged with promoting and protecting the health of the environment and the public in South Carolina. Over the past three years, DHEC has experienced tremendous transformation – new leadership, new priorities, and a new approach to the way we do business. Our first strategic plan in more than a decade was approved in December 2015 and, as part of our commitment to continuous improvement, was enhanced in 2017 to better guide our 3,400 employees in fulfilling our vision of healthy people living in healthy communities.

As part of these ongoing strategic planning efforts, DHEC has developed the agency’s first performance management framework and quality improvement plan to help us continue to effectively chart a path toward modernization in service delivery, build on our existing successes, and aim to establish DHEC as a model of operational excellence in state government.

The performance management system (PMS) framework is directly aligned to the agency’s strategic plan and creates a formalized, enterprise-wide approach to systematically review the progress made toward achieving desired outcomes and streamline decision-making processes. DHEC uses the PMS framework to identify, monitor, and evaluate progress of key activities implemented across the agency. The PMS helps DHEC staff answer these essential questions:

- How good are we at achieving our goals and outcomes?
- Are we improving?
- How do we know we are improving?

The continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan also is aligned to the agency’s strategic plan and provides uniform guidance to DHEC staff on how they manage, deploy, and review quality throughout the organization. DHEC utilizes the CQI plan to focus on how we deliver services to our customers and how we ensure that these activities are consistently aligned with our customers’ needs. The CQI plan helps DHEC staff answer these basic questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we know if a change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in an improvement?

The CQI plan is a living document that will be reviewed and revised by DHEC’s Executive Leadership Team on a regular basis to reflect lessons learned and emerging strategic priorities. The agency anticipates several benefits to implementing the PMS and CQI plan, including:

- Better ability to demonstrate return on funds invested in agency programs and services
- Increased emphasis on quality of work performed by staff, rather than quantity
- Improved service delivery and increased customer satisfaction
- Creation of a culture of continuous improvement within all levels of the agency
II. Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

The culture of an organization is the embodiment of the core values, strategies, norms, behaviors and attitudes that collectively contribute to its daily operations. Culture defines the character of an organization and drives the policies and processes used to accomplish its work. It’s the “how” an organization conducts business.

When a culture of quality improvement is achieved, all employees --- from the executives to the frontline staff – infuse quality improvement into the way they do business on a daily basis. Employees continuously consider how processes can be improved or customers better served, and quality improvement is no longer seen as another task, but a state of mind in which applying QI tactics is second nature.

For DHEC, achieving a culture of continuous quality improvement aligns with the agency’s goal to become a model of operational excellence in state government, and supports our core values of pursuing excellence, inspiring innovation, promoting teamwork, and embracing service.

III. Structure

To achieve a culture of continuous quality improvement, DHEC must have a system and defined roles in place to support QI efforts. The elements described below make up the foundation of DHEC’s culture of quality improvement and outlines the processes and people that will guide the agency toward a sustainable, continuous QI culture.

a. Performance Management System

A performance management system (PMS) framework creates a formalized, enterprise-wide approach to systematically review an organization’s progress in achieving desired outcomes and streamlines decision-making processes. It’s guided by an organization’s strategic plan and provides a structured, data-driven approach to identifying and prioritizing quality improvement projects.

DHEC’s performance management system is modeled after the Public Health Foundation’s Performance Management System Framework, which uses a cyclical process of measuring, monitoring, and reporting of progress toward strategic organizational goals and objectives. The PMS framework includes four main components:
1. Selecting performance standards
2. Measuring performance
3. Reporting progress
4. Conducting continuous quality improvement based on results
Selecting Performance Standards

Under the Performance Management System Framework, DHEC establishes standards, targets and goals to improve public health or environmental regulatory practices. Performance standards chosen reflect the agency’s strategic priorities and may be set based on national, state or scientific guidelines. They also may be benchmarked against similar organizations (e.g., other state public health or environmental protection agencies), or agency leadership or elected officials’ expectations.

Measuring Performance

DHEC develops, applies, and uses performance measures to assess achievement of performance standards and refine indicators as needed. Data is collected every six months from the major business and program areas to track progress in meeting the performance standards outlined in the Annual Accountability Report to the Executive Budget Office.

Reporting Progress

DHEC documents and reports progress in meeting standards and targets, and shares this information through appropriate communication channels, such as the agency’s Annual Accountability Report or reports to grant sponsors.

Conducting Continuous Quality Improvement

DHEC utilizes the Model for Improvement, including Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA), to guide employees in implementing quality improvement activities within the organization.

Under this model, quality improvement projects demonstrate that project activities contain the following essential components:

1. **Plan** – Determine the actions needed, individuals responsible, and timeline
2. **Do** – Document observations, including any issues and unexpected findings
3. **Study** – Analyze findings, compare to predictions, and document lessons learned
4. **Act** – Determine actions to be taken to integrate process improvements into ongoing operations for long-term sustainability

This model encourages staff to demonstrate project activities through storyboards that outline the above PDSA components, which will provide documentation of the agency’s quality improvement activities and help staff to understand what they are trying to accomplish, how they will know if a change is an improvement, and identify what changes they can make that will result in improvements. It also allows for Lean Six Sigma and other potential improvement methodologies to be incorporated into the framework.

**b. Roles and Responsibilities**

Engaging in continuous quality improvement is inline with DHEC’s core values and strategic plan, and is expected at all levels across the agency. Key roles and responsibilities for CQI include:

**Executive Leadership Team (ELT)**

Leadership commitment is vital to the success and sustainability of a culture of continuous quality improvement. The DHEC Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is responsible for overseeing all agency programs and activities. Comprised of the Agency Director and chief executives of the organization’s major program and operational areas, the ELT provides general direction for the agency’s CQI activities. Responsibilities include:

a) Promote and support a culture of continuous quality improvement at the agency
b) Appoint one staff member from their respective program or operational area to serve on the Continuous Improvement Council (CIC)
c) Review and approve updates and revisions to the CQI plan on a bi-annual basis
d) Stay abreast of performance measures tracked by the CIC

**Director of Strategy and Continuous Improvement (SCI)**

The Director of Strategy and Continuous Improvement reports to the agency’s Chief of Staff and is responsible for spearheading DHEC’s CQI efforts. Responsibilities include:

a) Oversee the implementation of the CQI plan and PMS
b) Administer training, consultation, and technical assistance for CQI efforts
c) Coordinate and facilitate CIC meetings, associated communications, and work products
d) Serve as the liaison between the CIC and the Executive Leadership Team, including communicating continuous quality improvement activities, reviewing agency performance management assessments, and disseminating reports
e) Promote and support a culture of continuous quality improvement at the agency
Continuous Improvement Council (CIC)

The Executive Leadership Team appoints one staff member from each major program or operational area and two regional office representatives to serve on the Continuous Improvement Council for a 24-month term. Responsibilities of the CIC include:

a) Work collaboratively with staff from their respective program or operational area to draft and review annual performance measures for the agency
b) Submit quarterly updates on quality improvement projects underway in their respective program or operational area
c) Assist the Director of SCI in coordinating a baseline assessment of the agency’s performance management activities
d) Work with the Director of SCI to develop a performance dashboard for the agency and a guidance document for staff on how to select, develop and document quality improvement projects following the PDSA approach
e) Advocate for quality improvement practices and training, and support a culture of continuous quality improvement at the agency

Senior Leadership Team

Comprised of the organization’s approximately 135 top leaders (bureau chiefs, assistant bureau chiefs, regional public health directors, section chiefs, and program directors), the Senior Leadership Team provides key support in implementing quality improvement activities and promoting the CQI plan to staff. Responsibilities include:

a) Develop an understanding of quality improvement principles and tools
b) Assist CIC representatives in the development and tracking of the agency’s performance indicators and measures
c) Empower staff to identify opportunities for improvement and support the implementation of quality improvement activities and projects
d) Promote and support a culture of continuous quality improvement at the agency

All Staff

a) Develop an understanding of basic quality improvement principles and tools
b) Complete the agency’s online quality improvement training module
c) Identify areas for improvement and suggest improvement actions to their CIC representative
d) Participate in quality improvement activities as needed
### IV. Goals and Objectives

For 2018, DHEC will implement the following work plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1 – To achieve a sustainable culture of continuous quality improvement within DHEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 – Survey agency senior leaders (executives, bureau and section chiefs) to determine existing QI methods used and barriers to conducting QI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 – Establish Continuous Improvement Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 – Develop CQI communications plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 – Develop Annual CQI Plan Report to the Executive Leadership Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 – Submit CQI-related documents required to obtain national public health accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 – Implement quality improvement training and resources for staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2 – To implement a Performance Management System that is consistently used and applied across DHEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 – Conduct baseline assessment of the agency’s performance management activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 – Collect data updates from major program and operational areas on progress in meeting performance measures outlined in 2017 Annual Accountability Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 – Develop 2019 performance measures for each major program and operational area for 2018 Annual Accountability Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 – Develop agency performance dashboard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Staff Training and Resources

Creating a culture of continuous quality improvement requires not only instituting a clearly defined framework and processes, but also training employees to ensure they have the necessary awareness, knowledge, skills, resources, and support to infuse QI into how they do their jobs.

CQI training efforts are developed, evaluated, and updated by DHEC’s Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement. For 2018, the agency will undertake the following training initiatives:

All Staff

The Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement will work with the Office of Training and Development to create a web-based training module to introduce all staff to the basic principles of quality improvement. The module will include quality improvement terminology and principles, staff roles and responsibilities, agency CQI goals, and an overview of the benefits of quality improvement within the organization. CQI also will be added to the agency’s quarterly new employee orientation sessions.

Continuous Improvement Council Representatives

In addition to the web-based training provided for all staff, CIC representatives will receive ongoing specialized training in various QI methods and tools at regular meetings.

Tools and Resources

The Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement will create and maintain an online library of reference materials and resources to assist staff in developing and implementing QI projects.

VI. Communication Strategies

Building a culture of continuous quality improvement requires clear and consistent internal communication with all levels of staff. For 2018, the Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement will work with the Executive Leadership Team and the CIC to develop a CQI Communication Plan outlining the strategies and tactics the agency will utilize over the next 12 months. The plan will focus on:

- Utilizing existing internal and external communications platforms, such as the agency’s employee portal, the Agency Director’s quarterly newsletter, email, social media, and large-group meetings (e.g., Bi-Annual Leadership Team Meeting, Strategic Plan Champions meetings, new employee orientation quarterly sessions)
- Developing key messages on QI and performance management
- Increasing awareness of QI activities occurring across the agency and the staff spearheading these efforts, as well as how these efforts link to the strategic plan
Developing talking points and guidance for supervisors on how to explain QI and how it relates to employees’ daily work and the strategic plan

- Promoting QI trainings and resources to all staff
- Communicating the CQI plan’s rollout, major milestones, and accomplishments

VII. Monitoring and Evaluation

DHEC’s Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement works with the Continuous Improvement Council to monitor and evaluate QI for the agency, including:

**Monitoring**

CIC representatives submit quarterly updates to the Director of SCI on quality improvement projects in progress in their respective major program or operational area. The CIC also will work with the Director of SCI to draft and submit an Annual CQI Plan Report to the Executive Leadership Team outlining CQI-related progress and accomplishments of the past year.

The Director of SCI oversees the logging and tracking of requests for technical assistance and QI training activities.

**Evaluation**

The CQI Plan is evaluated annually by the CIC to determine if the goals and objectives of the previous year were met, as well as to determine the goals and objectives for the coming year. Lessons learned and discovered efficiencies and effectiveness also will be discussed. Proposed changes and editions to the CQI Plan are reviewed and approved by the Executive Leadership Team.

For 2018, an initial agency baseline performance assessment will be conducted by the Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement and results will be shared with the Executive Leadership Team and the CIC. Additionally, questions to assess CQI awareness and culture will be included in the agency’s annual employee engagement survey sent to all staff in the spring.
VIII. Appendix

a. Definitions

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) – An ongoing effort to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quality, or performance of services, processes, capacities, and outcomes.

Performance Management System (PMS) – A cyclical process of measuring, monitoring, and reporting of progress toward strategic organizational goals and objectives. A performance management system is guided by an agency’s strategic plan and provides a structured, data-driven approach to identifying and prioritizing necessary quality improvement projects.


Performance Standards – The establishment of organizational or system standards, targets, and goals to improve public health or environmental regulatory practices. Standards may be set based on national, state, or scientific guidelines, benchmarking against similar organizations, the public’s or leaders’ expectations, or other methods.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) – A cyclical, four-stage problem-solving model for improving a process or carrying out change. PDSA stems from the scientific method (hypothesize, experiment, evaluate). A fundamental principle of PDSA is iteration. Once a hypothesis is supported or negated, executing the cycle again will extend what one has learned.

Quality Improvement (QI) – An integrative process that links knowledge, structures, processes and outcomes to enhance quality throughout an organization. The intent is to improve the level of performance of key processes and outcomes within an organization.

Quality Management – The strategic use of performance standards, measures, progress reports, and ongoing quality improvement efforts to ensure an agency achieves desired results.

Storyboard – Typically a brief, one-page, visual summary of a completed quality improvement initiative. The storyboard highlights key aspects of a quality improvement effort by documenting the project from beginning to end and outlining the steps taken within the PDSA cycle. It usually includes a description of the problem, the methodology and quality improvement tools used, key metrics, lessons learned, and the plan for sustaining improvement.
b. DHEC Continuous Improvement Council Charter

1. Purpose of the Continuous Improvement Council (CIC)

The purpose of the Continuous Improvement Council (CIC) is to support the development of a culture of continuous quality improvement throughout the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). The CIC provides leadership and direction to the priorities for department-wide continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts at DHEC. The CIC also will provide leadership support and guidance for building capacity for CQI at all levels within the agency, communicating and sharing CQI activities and resources, and recognizing CQI efforts and successes.

2. Goals

- Formally document the return on investment (ROI) of the services that DHEC provides to the citizens of South Carolina.
- Provide guidance on incorporating CQI projects and performance management standards into employee performance evaluations in order to emphasize the quality of an employee’s work over quantity.
- Improve staff capacity to inspire innovation and embrace service, using CQI methodologies and practices to ensure that the agency is effectively serving our customers.
- Help foster a CQI culture at the agency that promotes sustainable, effective innovation through quality improvement (QI) efforts at all levels of the agency.
- Public Health accreditation standards related to quality improvement are met and sustained.

3. Guiding Principles

- The CIC will help develop a culture of CQI and promote the use of the Performance Management System Framework and the Model for Improvement (PDSA).
- The CIC will use the agency’s mission (to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians by protecting and promoting the health of the public and the environment) and vision (health people living in healthy communities) to make decisions that are in line with DHEC’s values and goals as an agency.
- The CIC’s processes will be transparent, collaborative and inclusive, modeling the importance of candid, respectful communication in CQI.
- The CIC will foster engagement and accountability with all involved in QI efforts.
- The CIC will focus on learning and improvement, rather than correction and blame, and value prevention as a best practice.
4. Continuous Improvement Council Structure

Appointment:
Staff are appointed by the Executive Leadership Team to serve as a Continuous Improvement Council member.

Membership:
The CIC will include one representative from each major program and operational area, as well as two members located in regional/field offices, one from the Bureau of Environmental Health Services in Environmental Affairs, and one from a Regional Office in Public Health. Representatives will consist of staff from a combination of supervisors and non-managerial staff. CIC members will serve for a 24-month period.

Meetings:
There will be one meeting held each quarter. CIC members will be asked to make these meetings a priority and will be consulted on the meeting schedule to ensure maximum participation. In the event that a CIC member cannot attend, he or she should send an appropriate representative.

Selection Criteria for CIC members:
Members will:

- Have an interest in and aptitude for QI
- Commit to help develop and promote quality improvement throughout the department
- Have a flexible and collaborative nature and be willing to be part of a developing concept
- Be available to regularly attend meetings and to complete required work when necessary
- Often have training/experience in quality improvement (although this is not a requirement for membership)

Staffing:
The Office of Strategy and Continuous Improvement will staff the CIC and provide both administrative and technical support.

Administrative support includes, but is not limited to, drafting agendas and minutes, securing meeting rooms, distributing materials, and delivering communication, as needed.
Technical support includes drafting an annual work plan and providing consultation, training, and facilitation to the CIC, as needed.

**Decision Making:**
Whenever possible, group consensus will be sought when making decisions. If group consensus is not achieved, the group will vote on the decision with members attending the meeting (in person or via phone). The majority vote will decide the outcome of the decision.

**Time Commitment:**
The estimated time commitment for CIC members will vary, but is anticipated to be two to four hours per month, including meeting time and meeting preparation.

5. **Roles, Responsibilities, and Scope**
See *Continuous Quality Improvement Plan*, Section II, a. Roles and Responsibilities.

6. **Reporting**
The Director of Strategy and Continuous Improvement will provide updates on activities to the Executive Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Team, and staff as necessary and appropriate. In addition, each year, the CIC will submit to the Executive Leadership Team a report summarizing:
   - Progress and accomplishments of the past year (Annual CQI Plan Report)
   - An updated annual CQI Plan

7. **Communication Plan**
The CIC will undertake communications activities each year that will include updating a CQI SharePoint site to house all materials related to QI, including: the CQI Plan, CIC agendas and meeting summaries, and other materials and resources pertaining to the CIC. In addition, the CIC will work with the Director of Strategy and Continuous Improvement and Office of Communications and Public Affairs to draft and create a communication plan to highlight Continuous Improvement activities across the agency.