

Developing NIC Hub Self-Assessment

Purpose and Instructions

PURPOSE

This tool was designed for network hub teams to assess their current capacity to operate a Networked Improvement Community (NIC). It is intended for use in networks that are in their first 1 to 3 years after launching as a NIC. The Self-Assessment Tool is organized around seven domains of effort that we think are essential as a NIC develops:

- Understanding the problem to be addressed
- Iteratively refining the theory of practice improvement
- Learning and using improvement methods
- Utilizing a measurement and analytics infrastructure
- Structuring the network's collaborative improvement activity
- Fostering vital norms and identities consistent with a scientific-professional learning community
- Leadership

These domains are grounded in a theory of network development described in [The Social Structure of Networked Improvement Communities: Cultivating the Emergence of a Scientific-Professional Learning Community](#) by Jennifer Russell et al.

Throughout the tool we refer to the *Network Hub*, *Improvement Teams* and *Network Members*. For clarity, we briefly define each group as follows:

- By the **Network Hub**, we mean the group of people that are actively involved in the management of the network and/or contribute expertise to the management and operation of the network.
- By **Improvement Teams**, we refer to the groups of individuals from different organizations that joined your network and engage in improvement work in their organizations.
- By **Network Members**, we refer to all individuals who participate in the network.

INSTRUCTIONS

The following protocol was developed to support NIC hub teams to use this tool independently. Network hub teams who used the tool initially did so with the support of a developmental evaluator or an improvement coach who compiled results and facilitated discussion.

1. Have all members of the Hub team complete the self-assessment tool individually.
2. Schedule a meeting for the Hub team to discuss their individual ratings together. At the meeting,
 - a. Share and discuss the individual responses, Explore differences, and seek consensus as a team.
 - b. Identify and celebrate ratings that reveal strengths. .
 - c. Identify items or domains where ratings are consistently low.
 - d. Complete one copy of the collective team ratings,
3. Prioritize items for further hub or network development and plan next steps. Consider:
 - a. Where might you need to focus your efforts to grow or develop?
 - b. Where might you need to develop internal capabilities? How might you do this?
 - c. Where might you need to seek external support? Who might you partner with?

Note: There is no expectation that you score a 4 on every item to be a successful NIC. We see this as a formative assessment tool to help you reflect on your network's development and to inform identification of areas for support and further development.

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #1:
Understanding the problem of practice**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven’t Thought About It	Thought About But No Action Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don’t Know
(1A) The Hub has engaged in causal systems analysis to map the system that produces the current, unsatisfactory outcomes by <i>examining system performance data</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
(1B) The Hub has engaged in causal systems analysis to map the system that produces the current, unsatisfactory outcomes by <i>examining user perspectives</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
(1C) The Hub has engaged in causal systems analysis to map the system that produces the current, unsatisfactory outcomes by <i>examining expert knowledge</i> (research-based and practitioner).	1	2	3	4	5
(1D) The Hub has a concise statement and visualization (e.g., a fishbone) that clearly articulates the problem they are trying to solve.	1	2	3	4	5
(1E) The Hub has engaged network members with the problem statement and visualization, in order to promote a shared understanding of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #2:
Iteratively refining the theory of practice improvement**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(2A) The Hub has articulated an aim statement with a performance goal that is clear, unambiguous, and measurable.	1	2	3	4	5
(2B) The Hub has elaborated its driver diagram based on learning from initial tests of its theory of practice improvement, including the elimination, addition, or revision of primary and secondary drivers, and related change ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
(2C) The Hub has continued to consult content experts as it elaborates the driver diagram (e.g., identifying secondary drivers and change ideas).	1	2	3	4	5
Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #3:
Learning and Using Improvement Methods**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven’t Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don’t Know
(3A) The Hub has developed or brought in improvement science capacity to support key activities of a developing network, including consolidation of learning from PDSA cycles and refinement of driver diagrams based on testing.	1	2	3	4	5
(3B) The Hub is supporting the ongoing development of improvement science capacity among its improvement leads.	1	2	3	4	5
(3C) Improvement leads are designing and leading effective improvement science training opportunities for network members (e.g., coaching, modeling the use of improvement tools).	1	2	3	4	5
Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #4:
Utilizing a Measurement and Analytics Infrastructure**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(4A) The Hub has developed leading and lagging measures of its aim in order to see whether the changes it is making are leading to improvements.	1	2	3	4	5
(4B) The Hub has developed at least one measure for each primary driver where testing is being conducted.	1	2	3	4	5
(4C) The Hub has developed the process measures needed to support the testing of change ideas happening in the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(4D) The Hub has developed at least one balancing measure in order to protect against potential unintended consequences of improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
(4E) Data has been collected related to a few key outcome and process measures. Initial analyses of those data have been completed, leading to some insights about the problem or working theory of improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
(4F) Agreements regarding data sharing amongst NIC member organizations are in place, and these agreements are being updated to accommodate new network members.	1	2	3	4	5
(4G) The Hub continues to ensure it has capacity to execute on the network's measurement and analytics needs.	1	2	3	4	5

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(4H) The Hub is learning from variation in the data it collects, such as changes over time and/or variation in performance across settings.	1	2	3	4	5

Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #5:
Structuring the Network’s Collaborative, Improvement Activity**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven’t Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don’t Know
(5A) The Hub utilizes its membership framework to guide ongoing recruitment and selection of network members. [The membership framework identifies: (1) important characteristics of network members (e.g., commitment to aim); and (2) criteria for network participation.]	1	2	3	4	5
(5B) The Hub adapts its membership framework as necessary to support the network's changing needs.	1	2	3	4	5
(5C) Individuals/organizations in the network represent diverse contexts in which to engage in testing and improvement research (e.g., opportunities to learn from variation).	1	2	3	4	5
(5D) The network includes critical domains of expertise: knowledge of the problem (e.g., literacy), knowledge of the contexts or systems where improvement work is being done, improvement science methods, and network organizing.	1	2	3	4	5
(5E) The network engages school and district leaders with the authority necessary to support members in their practice improvement work.	1	2	3	4	5
(5F) The Hub has participation structures in place that specify members’ roles and clear expectations for ongoing engagement in the network. This likely includes planning and executing: (1) network meetings and (2) activity during action periods between meetings.	1	2	3	4	5

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(5G) The Hub has begun to enact an intentional networked collaboration structure (e.g., interacting with local improvement teams and providing opportunities for connections to deepen within teams and emerge between teams), and is revising collaboration structures based on early experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
(5H) The Hub is engaging in interactions with local improvement teams that support team and network learning.	1	2	3	4	5
(5I) The Hub is taking concrete steps to support connections within and across local improvement teams that contribute to team and network learning.	1	2	3	4	5
(5J) The Hub is actively monitoring how members respond to Hub actions, and to each others' actions, with specific attention to any responses that signal a breach of trust.	1	2	3	4	5
Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #6:
Fostering the Emergence of Culture and Identity Consistent with Network Aims**

Rate the current state of your NIC’s development with respect to the following areas. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(6A) The Hub continues to elaborate and refine a narrative in collaboration with network members. The narrative speaks to the urgency of the problem and a rationale for forming this network to address the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
(6B) The Hub is communicating a narrative about the network’s work in its various forums (e.g., network meetings, coaching interactions).	1	2	3	4	5
(6C) Network member talk and/or writing in network forums reflects the network narrative.	1	2	3	4	5
(6D) There is emerging evidence that network members are subjecting practice to disciplined inquiry and documenting and sharing what was learned through inquiry	1	2	3	4	5
(6E) The Hub is continuing to engage members in community building processes, which enable them to see their participation as a contribution to a broader learning endeavor that will benefit them and the collective.	1	2	3	4	5
(6F) Network members' talk and actions exemplify a commitment to the network's collective work (e.g., they are motivated to engage in network activities in order to improve outcomes across participating organizations, not just their own sites of practice).	1	2	3	4	5

Examples of how our network is (or is not) meeting these criteria:

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #7:
Leadership**

Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the current state of your NIC’s development. Answer the open-ended question at the end.

	Haven’t Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don’t Know
(7A) The Hub includes leaders with the convening power to recruit network members (e.g., an individual or lead organization that is widely respected in the relevant field).	1	2	3	4	5
(7B) The Hub is utilizing consistent methods for making decisions and sharing decision making processes with network members.	1	2	3	4	5
(7C) The Hub has begun to manage knowledge by capturing the learning that is occurring in the network, sharing it quickly, and accumulating it over time.	1	2	3	4	5
(7D) Mechanisms are in place to monitor the development of the NIC (e.g., opportunities for network members to share their experiences, administration and analysis of a network member survey).	1	2	3	4	5
(7E) The Hub is regularly enacting communication routines and using technology to support them, as necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
(7F) The Hub has financial resources in place for at least one year of network operation and a plan to acquire the financial and material resources necessary to continue to operate the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(7G) The Hub is working to ensure that the priorities of key stakeholders (e.g., district leaders) align with the aim of this NIC.	1	2	3	4	5

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(7H) The Hub has plans to accommodate and/or work to change aspects of the policy context that may challenge the work of the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(7I) The Hub has identified individual and organizational leaders in local, state, and/or national educational contexts who may act as potential allies or champions (e.g., from the funding or policy communities).	1	2	3	4	5
(7J) The Hub functions smoothly as a leadership team that is working together to operate core Hub functions and coordinate network activities.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your plans for Leadership are sufficiently developed to support the launch of your NIC.</p>					