

NIC Initiation Hub Self-Assessment

Background and Instructions

BACKGROUND

This tool was designed for networks to assess their capacity and readiness to launch their Networked Improvement Community (NIC). The Self-Assessment Tool is organized around six domains of effort that we think are essential to initiate a NIC. The domains were developed by a team of researchers and improvers working with NICs to support initiation. The theoretical underpinnings of the domains are described in an article by Jennifer Russell and coauthors titled [A Framework for the Initiation of Networked Improvement Communities](#), found in *Teachers College Record*. There is no expectation that a team scores high on all areas of the assessment to be ready for launch. Teams might be further along in some areas than others. This tool is meant to be a formative assessment to help gauge where you are and guide you as you build more capacity within your team or seek external support.

The six domains include:

1. Developing a theory of practice improvement
2. Building a measurement and analytics infrastructure
3. Learning and using improvement science methods
4. Cultivating the network's social organization
5. Fostering the emergence and vitality of norms and identities consistent with network aims
6. Leadership

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 were actively involved in planning for the design and launch of the network.
- By **improvement teams**, we refer to the groups of individuals from different organizations that will join your network and engage in improvement work in their organizations.
- By **members**, we refer to the individuals who will join the Hub or the network, as appropriate. Typically, their membership will be identified in the context in which the term is used.

INSTRUCTIONS

The following protocol was developed to support initiation teams to use the tool independently. Network hub teams who used the tool initially did so with the support of a developmental evaluator or an improvement coach.

1. Have all members of the initiation or 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 ratings.
 - b. Pause and discuss where individual ratings are different. Explore differences, and seek consensus as a team.
 - c. Pause and discuss where ratings are low.
 - d. Pause and celebrate where ratings are high.
3. Complete one copy of the tool with the collective team ratings as documentation.
4. Discuss and develop next steps for the Hub team's initiation efforts. 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?

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #1:
Developing a 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
(1A) The Hub has engaged in causal systems analysis, by examining: (a) system performance data, (b) user perspectives, AND (c) expert knowledge in order to map the system that produces the current, unsatisfactory outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
(1B) The Hub has drafted a concise statement that clearly articulates the problem they are trying to solve.	1	2	3	4	5
(1C) The Hub has come to a consensus regarding the statement of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
(1D) The Hub has articulated an aim statement with a performance goal that is clear, unambiguous, and measurable.	1	2	3	4	5
(1E) The Hub has drafted a driver diagram, which identifies a manageable number (typically no more than 5 or 6) of high-leverage areas for action that are reasonably hypothesized to drive improvements toward the aim (primary drivers).	1	2	3	4	5
(1F) Appropriate content expertise was engaged during development of the driver diagram, so that the driver diagram is anchored in the best available research evidence.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your Theory of Practice Improvement is sufficiently developed to support the launch of your NIC.</p>					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #2:
Building 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
(2A) A family of measures is being identified/developed that will help the Hub see whether changes the network is making are improvements, including leading and lagging outcome measures aligned with the driver diagram.	1	2	3	4	5
(2B) An initial plan has been developed for collection of data related to a few key measures, as well as a plan for how to analyze that data.	1	2	3	4	5
(2C) Agreements regarding data sharing amongst NIC member organizations are in place.	1	2	3	4	5
(2D) The Hub is developing the network's capacity for analytics (measurement development, understanding variation, social processes for use of data to drive improvement) by identifying/hiring appropriate Hub members and/or developing relationships with external partners.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your Measurement and Analytics Infrastructure is sufficiently developed to support the launch of your NIC.</p>					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #3:
Learning and Using Improvement Science (IS) Methods in a Networked Context**

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
(3A) The Hub has developed or brought in sufficient IS capacity to support key activities in preparation for launch (e.g., causal systems analysis and driver diagram development).	1	2	3	4	5
(3B) The Hub has identified key network members who will act as improvement leads in order to target initial IS capacity building efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
(3C) The Hub is building the capacity needed (internally or through external partnerships) for teaching and coaching improvement leads to use IS methods.	1	2	3	4	5
(3D) The Hub has an initial plan for communication forums or routines that enable network members to learn from each other’s work.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your network is Learning and Using Improvement Science Methods.</p>					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #4:
Cultivating the Network’s Social Organization**

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) A membership framework is in place that includes criteria for participation and plans for ongoing recruitment.	1	2	3	4	5
(4B) The membership framework attends to the need to have individuals/organizations in the network that can provide access to diverse contexts to engage in testing and improvement research (e.g., opportunities to learn from variation).	1	2	3	4	5
(4C) The Hub is designing participation structures that specify members’ initial role in the network and clear expectations for initial engagement in the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(4D) The Hub has a vision for a networked collaboration structure, which specifies the expected ways that the Hub will interact with local improvement teams, and how connections will emerge within and between teams.	1	2	3	4	5
(4E) The Hub is conscious of how their actions can build relational trust by embodying competency, personal regard and integrity.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your plans for Cultivating the Network’s Social Organization are sufficiently developed to support the launch of your NIC.</p>					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #5:
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 Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(5A) The Hub has developed an initial narrative about the network’s work that speaks to the urgency of the problem and a rationale for forming this network to address the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
(5B) The Hub has a framework for the collection of common data to track progress toward the aim and guide local improvement work	1	2	3	4	5
(5C) The Hub has established necessary data sharing agreements with participating organizations	1	2	3	4	5
(5D) The Hub has plans for how they will engage network members with the narrative and build commitment to it as a collective story of what they together want to accomplish, including why this problem and why we work together in this way.	1	2	3	4	5
(5E) Initial participation structures are being designed that are aligned with desired norms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging network members in common work • Subjecting practice to disciplined inquiry • Documenting and sharing what was learned • Testing and building on the work of others 	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Considering your answers above, describe the extent to which your plans for Fostering Network Culture and Identity are sufficiently developed to support the launch of your NIC.</p>					

**Critical Domain of NIC Initiation #6:
Leadership**

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
(6A) 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
(6B) The Hub has an initial plan for network governance and decision-making, and plans to make it transparent to network members	1	2	3	4	5
(6C) Key organizational leaders have signed MOUs signaling that they understand what is required of their institutions and are prepared to make an informed commitment to address the aim by launching a NIC.	1	2	3	4	5
(6D) Improvement Teams include members that have authority to make decisions, as appropriate, to make progress toward the aim.	1	2	3	4	5
(6E) The Hub has an initial plan for knowledge management: a way to capture the learning that is occurring in the network, share it quickly and accumulate it over time.	1	2	3	4	5
(6F) The Hub has access to improvement science capability necessary to support the network's improvement work	1	2	3	4	5
(6G) The Hub is developing necessary analytics capacity and related routines and infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
(6H) The Hub includes or has access to sufficient content knowledge related to the problem of practice	1	2	3	4	5

	Haven't Thought About It	Thought About But No Action Taken	Preliminary Steps Taken	Achieved	Don't Know
(6I) Mechanisms are in place to learn from initiation efforts and to monitor the ongoing development of the NIC.	1	2	3	4	5
(6J) The Hub has developed an initial plan for communication routines, including the technology necessary to support them.	1	2	3	4	5
(6K) The Hub has amassed the necessary financial and material resources to launch and begin to operate the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(6L) The Hub has assessed the extent to which the current priorities of key stakeholders (such as district leaders) align with the aim of this NIC.	1	2	3	4	5
(6M) The Hub has identified aspects of the policy context that may challenge the work of the network.	1	2	3	4	5
(6N) The Hub has identified individual and organizational leaders in the context who may act as potential allies or champions.	1	2	3	4	5
(6O) The Hub is starting to coalesce 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>					