NIATx Change Leader Academy

E-Learning Course Desk Guide

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www.niatx.wisc.edu

This desk guide was developed as part of the NIATx Change Leader Academy e-learning course.

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Table of Contents

Course Introduction

This desk guide is designed to be your go-to companion as you move through the NIATx Change Leader Academy E-Learning Course. Whether you're just starting your journey or actively working on a change project, this guide offers a quick overview of each step along with tips and reminders to help you stay on track. Keep it handy as you apply what you're learning to your real-world change project!

About NIATx

The NIATx change model was originally developed to address some of the most persistent challenges in the substance use treatment field: no-shows, long wait times, and low rates of treatment completion. Designed as a simple, practical approach to change, NIATx draws on the insights of quality improvement pioneer W. Edwards Deming, who taught that everything we do can be understood as a process.

NIATx builds on this idea with a research-based framework: a study comparing 80 factors across 640 organizations revealed five key principles that separate successful improvement efforts from those that fall short. The five principles are:

1. Understand and involve the customer
2. Fix key problems
3. Pick a powerful change leader
4. Get ideas from outside the organization
5. Use rapid-cycle testing to learn what works

Among them, the first principle–*understand and involve the customer*–proved more powerful than the other four combined!

The early success of NIATx in substance use treatment led to its expansion into mental health, prevention, corrections, aging, and other human services. Ready to bring meaningful change to your organization? Use the NIATx Change Leader Academy E-Learning Course and this companion desk guide to learn how.

Did you know? NIATx (pronounced "NIGH-uh-tex," with accent on the first syllable), began as the Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment. Today, it's simply NIATx–reflecting its growth into a wide range of service areas.

Step 1: The Change Team

Identify key people to guide the change project

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
–African Proverb

Executive Sponsor

Inspires, supports, removes barriers

While not a direct member of the change team, the executive sponsor helps the team prepare for the change journey and removes barriers along the way. The executive sponsor:

- Creates a strong climate for change
- Guides the project to align with organizational goals

Change Team Leader

Guides, motivates, leads

The change leader organizes the team and facilitates meetings and other parts of the change journey. The change leader:

- Builds trust with the team members and executive sponsor
- Motivates the team through challenges
- Maintains focus on the project's aims

The Change Team

Collaborates, tests, improves

Change team members are people who know the process you want to improve. The team will use NIATx tools to:

- Define the change destination
- Develop strategies for moving forward
- Track progress using data

When forming a team, consider assigning one person to serve as a data coordinator.

How big should the change team be?

2–3 people sometimes struggle to get the job done.

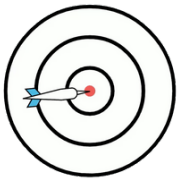
5–7 people ensures agility, experience, and multiple perspectives.

10–12: Can be too large to function effectively.

ACTION ITEM: Assemble Your Change Team
Identify your executive sponsor and team members and list them on the Change Project Charter you can download from niatx.wisc.edu

STEP 2: Define the Big Aim

Define a general area for improvement: the “big aim”



What is the Big Aim?

At this stage in the project, you may not know the exact focus of your improvement goal, but you likely have an idea of the problem you’d like to tackle and the improvement you’d like to see. The big aim serves as a clear identification of the problem and the improved outcome you are seeking.

Role of Leadership in Defining the Big Aim

To ensure the big aim aligns with organizational priorities, we suggest the executive sponsor and the change leader work together to define it. This step will also identify the right team members for your project. By clearly outlining the big aim, you can recruit staff or volunteers with the knowledge and experience needed to help improve your chosen area.

Two Key Questions for Identifying the Big Aim

1. What is the problem or issue you are facing?

At this point, you don’t need a lot of detail–just a concise, one-sentence description.

Example: An executive sponsor states, “Our Family Engagement Program is not working.”

- The change leader asks: “What do you mean by ‘not working?’”
- The response: “Parent attendance in the program is simply too low.”

2. What is the improved outcome you want to see?

Again, write down a simple description of what the improvement would look like.

Example: The executive sponsor defines the desired outcome: “We want to increase parent attendance.”

- The resulting big aim might be: “Parent participation in the Family Engagement Program is too low and we need to increase parent attendance rates.”

This is an example of the kind of clear and concise “big aim” we like to see at the start of a change project.

ACTION ITEM: Define Your Big Aim
Answer the two questions and define your big aim. Add to your Change Project Charter.

STEP 3: Focused Aim

Define a *specific* area for improvement

The focused aim is like a zoom lens that narrows the big aim into a specific area for improvement.

The Focused Aim:

- Unites the change team
- Keeps the project's mission front and center
- Prevents "scope creep"
- Helps the team stay on track with a specific, actionable goal.

Developing a Focused Aim

To develop a focused aim, the change leader should:

- Plan a change team meeting
- Use the *Problem, Process, Customer Worksheet* to guide discussions.
- Answer three questions to refine the project's focus.

These questions will sharpen your focus and align your team. The next page walks you through the three questions to help you focus your aim.

STEP 3: Focused Aim

Define a *specific* area for improvement

Answer Three Questions to Develop a Focused Aim

Question 1: What is the problem or issue you are facing?
This is the project's big aim, already identified by the executive sponsor and change leader. If the big aim is not defined, return to Step 2, The Big Aim.

Example Big Aim
Parent participation in the Family Engagement Program is too low, and we need to increase parent attendance rates.

Question 2: What is the process?
In order to correct the problem or issue identified in the "big aim," what organizational process would you need to look at to be able to improve? Write down the name of that process for question two.

Note: It's common to uncover multiple processes contributing to the big aim. If this is true for you, make a list of all relevant processes, discuss with your change team which process from the list has the most promise to impact the desired improved outcome, and focus on that one process.

Example Selected Process: In our example, the change team chose the "parent communication process."

Question 3: Who is the customer? (NIATx Principle #1)
Who is the person (customer) impacted by the process you identified in question two? This customer can be:

- Someone outside your organization who receives your products or services
- An internal colleague

Write down your identified customer group for Question 3.

Example identified customer: In our Family Engagement Program example, the change team identified the customer group as "parents and caregivers of school-aged children."

STEP 3: Focused Aim

Define a *specific* area for improvement

Forming the Focused Aim Statement

With the problem, process and customer identified, structure your focused aim as follows:

- We want to improve issue (A) – low parent attendance in our Family Engagement Program,
- As seen in process (B) – our parent communication process,
- Which impacts customers (C) – parents and caregivers of school-aged children.

Having your focused aim written in this clear and simple format will serve as a compass for your change project journey.

ACTION ITEM: Define Your Focused Aim
Add your focused aim to your Change Project Charter.

STEP 4: Aim Statement Data Plan

Clarify goals, guide efforts, measure progress

"Without data, you're just another person with an opinion.
–W. Edwards Deming

Define Your Goal and How You'll Measure Success

Step 4 involves creating an aim statement that includes a data plan to measure and track the change strategies your team in testing.

The Importance of a Measurable Goal

Imagine walking through a city at night—then losing power and being plunged into darkness. That's what a change project feels like without a clear measure: directionless. A measurable goal is your guiding light, showing whether your changes lead to improvement.

An aim statement combines your focused aim with a specific, measurable goal. It functions like a SMART goal: It is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound–and allows you to track progress.

TIP: Now is a good time to assign a team member as a data coordinator to manage data collection and reporting!

Four Components of a Measurable Goal

1. Indicator Measure
2. Baseline Data
3. Improvement Goal
4. End Date

Read on to learn more about each of the four components!

STEP 4: Aim Statement Data Plan

Clarify goals, guide efforts, measure progress

Four Components of a Measurable Goal

1.Indicator Measure: Defining and Tracking Improvement Goals
What do you want to increase or decrease? Your indicator measure is the quantifiable goal you'll track over time. For our Family Engagement program example, our indicator measure is number of attendees per meeting.

2. Baseline Data: reflects performance before changes begin.
Use existing data, if available, or collect just enough to establish confidence in your starting point. Examples include number of attendees at a meeting, client satisfaction scores, or time to complete a report. Make sure your measure is clear, trackable, and accessible.

For our Family Engagement Program example, reviewing past records showed an average of 23 attendees per meeting, establishing the baseline.

3. Improvement Goal

After selecting your baseline, choose a realistic but motivating stretch goal. Your goal should be challenging enough to inspire effort, but not overwhelming.

Our Family Engagement Program Change Team aimed for a 60% improvement, raising the attendance goal from 23 to 37 attendees per meeting.

TIP: If half the team thinks it's doable and half aren't sure, it's probably a good stretch goal!

4. Identify an End Date: Ask: How long will it take to reach our goal? Consider the process complexity and how long it will take to test changes and gather data. An end date keeps the team focused and encourages timely progress!

The Family Engagement Program Change Team chose an end date of June 30, allowing three months for the project, with meetings twice a month.

STEP 4: Aim Statement Data Plan

Clarify goals, guide efforts, measure progress

Creating the Aim Statement

Once you've identified your indicator measure, baseline, improvement goal, and end date, use the aim statement formula to create your aim statement:

We want to improve [Indicator] from [Baseline] to [Goal] by [End Date].
Or the shorter version: Improve I from B to G by D.

This clear, measurable, and time-bound statement becomes your project's guiding light.

Family Engagement Program Example: We want to increase attendance at our Family Engagement Program meetings from 23 to 37 attendees/meeting by June 30.

ACTION ITEM: Develop Your Aim Statement Data Plan
Record indicator measure, baseline data, improvement goal, and end date on your Change Project Charter.

STEP 5: The Walk-Through

Experience the process in the shoes of a customer

The Customer Experience

A walk-through is a role-play exercise to view a process from the customer's perspective. The walk-through helps identify which parts of a process work well and which need improvement. Here's how to do one:

Five Steps for Conducting a Walk-through

Ask these two key questions at each step:

•Is this step necessary?

•If yes, is this step the best that it can be?

Step 1: Select a Process to Walk Through.

Choose any process relevant to your change project–ideally one that your team uses often. This step helps you focus your efforts and provides a clear starting point for testing changes.

Step 2: Inform Staff in Advance

A walk-through is not a secret shopper exercise. We want maintain trust by avoiding surprises and focus on process, not performance.

Engage staff–let them know their input is valuable. The walk-through is most effective when staff members do their best so we can find the flaws in the process.

Step 3: Walk Through the Process as a Customer

Try to think and feel as your customer would. Here are a few tips:

- Include more than one person in a customer role so more team members can have the customer experience.
- Plan your role and stay in character.
- Include practical issues: parking, building signage, using technology.
- Ask staff to treat you like any other customer.

Emphasize that the goal is improvement, not evaluation.

STEP 5: The Walk-Through

Experience the process in the shoes of a customer

Step into your customers' shoes. What are they thinking and feeling at each stop of the process? Remember, you are role-playing that person and their life situation. Note your observations and feelings.

Customer Focus

Example: In the Family Engagement change project, the entire change team walked through the communication process, placing themselves in the role of busy parents juggling work, dinner, and multiple emails.

Step 4: Gather Staff Feedback

At each step, ask staff:

- What would improve the process for customers?
- What would improve the process for staff?

Record both staff suggestions and your own observations.

Step 5: Summarize Findings and Identify Improvements

Write down what worked well and did not work well in the process.

List the needs you discovered and any possible improvements.

With your change team, discuss the following:

- How did it feel to be a customer?
- What worked well, and what could be improved?
- What improvement ideas emerged during the walk-through?

Together, highlight the key issues to address for this change project.

In our Family Engagement Program example, the change team discovered from the walk-through that email communications weren't reaching parents. They decided to conduct phone interviews with parents and caregivers to better understand their needs.

Tip: If a physical walk-through is not practical, consider doing a talk-through of the process with the staff. Remember to keep the customer's perspective front and center.

ACTION ITEM: Complete a Walk-Through of the process you selected to improve. Use your Change Project Charter and the Walk-Through Instructions you can download from niatx.wisc.edu

STEP 6: The Flowchart

Visualize and clarify the process

"A flowchart is like a map for your brain–it shows you how not to get lost in your own process." –Unknown

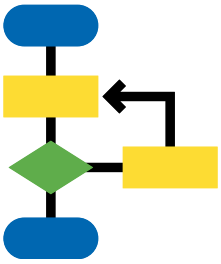
Didn't We Already do This?

A flowchart is a visual map that shows each step and transition in the process from start to finish. You might ask, "Why do we need a flowchart if we already did a walk-through?"

Here's why:

- Over 50% of people are visual learners. A picture of the process can improve communication and understanding.
- Creating a flowchart as a group helps your team agree on the current process, ensuring accurate documentation.
- The completed flowchart helps the team identify bottlenecks and barriers and generate ideas for improvement.

Basic Flowchart Symbols



Oval: Start and end points

Square/rectangle: Action

Diamond: Decision

Arrow: Transition

3 Steps to Creating a Flowchart

While you can draw a flowchart on paper, we recommend using a whiteboard or flip chart for better team participation. Use sticky notes to add and move steps.

Step 1: Title the process. Write the name of the process at the top of the whiteboard. In our example the process is the *Parent and Caregiver Communication Process*.

Step 2: Identify start and end points. Place the first and last steps of the process on the whiteboard. In our example:

- Start: Schedule a program meeting
- End: Conduct the program meeting

Step 3: Fill in the steps. Identify all action and decision steps.

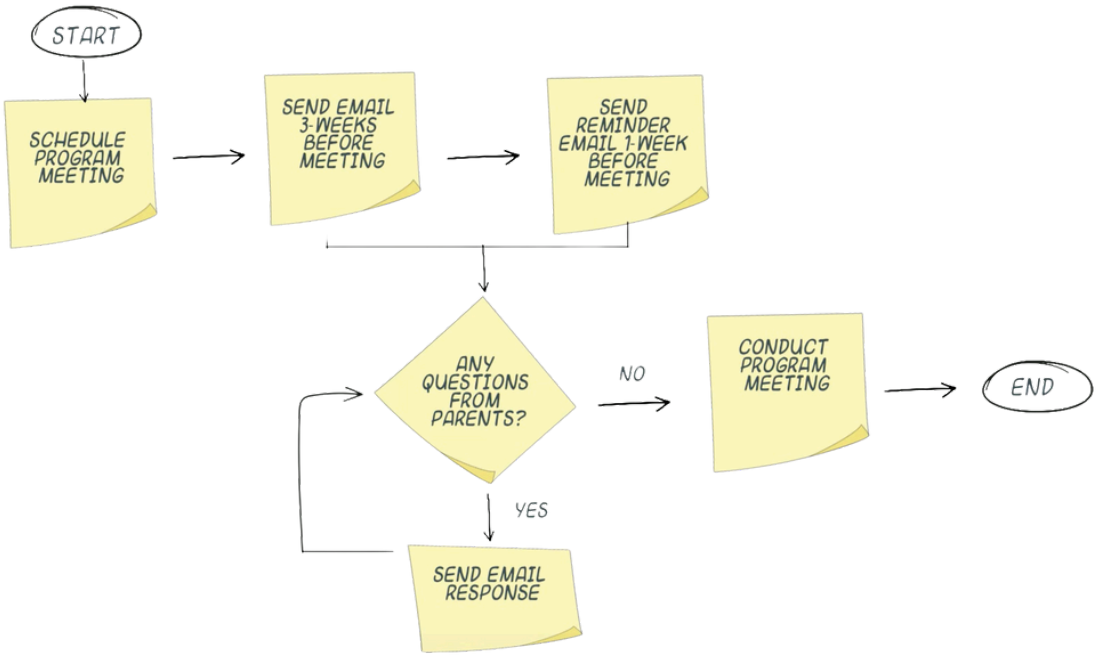
STEP 6: The Flowchart

Visualize and clarify the process

Tips for Effective Flowcharts

- Avoid unnecessary details–focus on key steps.
- Make sure the flowchart accurately reflects the process.
- Encourage discussion. Have the team review the flowchart critically to identify inefficiencies.
- Take a picture of the completed flowchart. If using whiteboard/flip chart, take a picture for documentation, then insert into your Change Charter under the *flowchart* tab.

Example: Parent/Caregiver Communication Process



ACTION ITEM: Draw a Flowchart of the Process
Use the process you experienced in the walk-through. Follow the Flowchart Instructions you can download from niatx.wisc.edu
Add your completed flowchart to your Change Project Charter.

STEP 7: Nominal Group Technique

Generate ideas and reach group consensus

"None of us is as smart as all of us." –Ken Blanchard

What is the Nominal Group Technique (NGT)?

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a structured group brainstorming process that promotes inclusion, creativity, and quick prioritization of ideas. It's a favorite tool for many NIATx change leaders because it avoids common pitfalls of unstructured brainstorming, such as:

- Tangents
- Dominant voices
- Premature judgment
- Disagreement on actionable ideas

The NGT solves these issues through a focused, equitable, four-step process.

Preparing for an NGT Session

One hour, big impact

NGT sessions usually take one hour with groups of 10 or fewer. For larger groups:

- Divide into groups of 10 or fewer
- Have each group conduct its own NGT
- Share results with the full group

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Markers
- Sticky notes and pens/pencils
- Timer or stopwatch

Prepare a specific NGT question

Write it at the top of the whiteboard.

- Too broad: "How can we improve our communication process?"
- Better: "How can we improve communication with parents and caregivers to increase meeting attendance?"

STEP 7: Nominal Group Technique

Generate ideas and reach group consensus

Four Steps to the Nominal Group Technique

Using our example question, “How can we improve our communication process with parents and caregivers to increase meeting attendance?” the facilitator writes the question on the whiteboard and explains the four steps.

Step 1: Silent Idea Generation: 5–15-minute reflection on the NGT question

- Start a timer and instruct group members to begin.
- Each person writes one idea per sticky note.
- Encourage participants to stretch their thinking with ‘out-of-the-box’ ideas.
- No discussion.
- This step supports quieter participants who need time to reflect.

Step 2: Round-Robin Recording of Ideas

- Go around the table. Each person reads one idea aloud.
- The facilitator places sticky notes on the whiteboard and numbers them.
- Repeat the cycle until all ideas are shared. Participants may pass.
- No discussion or judgement: This ensures all voices are heard.

Step 3: Idea Clarification

- Facilitator reads each idea and asks for questions and comments from the group.
- Discussion clarifies items and eliminates duplicates.
- Facilitator invites more discussion before wrapping up.
- Participants may pass.

Step 4: Voting (Multi-Voting)

Multi-voting gives each participant a set number of votes, which is usually equal to a portion of the total number of ideas listed on the whiteboard.

STEP 7: Nominal Group Technique

Generate ideas and reach group consensus

How to set up the multi-vote:

- Count total ideas. For our example, the group has generated 20 ideas.
- Multiply the total by 15% to determine the number of votes per person.

Example: 20 ideas x 15% = 3 votes per participant.

Choose a Voting Method: Public or Anonymous

Public

- Participants place a check mark next to their three preferred ideas.

Anonymous

Voting anonymously can reduce interpersonal influence/ peer pressure, especially if some of the members are senior leaders in the organization and other members might feel uncomfortable voting differently.

- Make sure you have all the ideas on the whiteboard numbered 1–20.
- Each participant writes the numbers of the three ideas they prefer on a piece of paper and hands it to the facilitator.
- The facilitator shuffles the stack of papers and places check marks by the ideas that received votes.

Once the Votes are Cast

- Circle the top 3–5 ideas.
- Choose the one with the most votes to test first.
- If there is a tie, or top ideas are close, vote again.
- Save remaining ideas for future testing.

STEP 7: Nominal Group Technique

Generate ideas and reach group consensus

Real-World Example

For the NGT question, “How can we improve our communication process with parents and caregivers to increase meeting attendance rates?” 20 ideas were generated. The top three after voting:

1. Send a reminder email three days before the meeting.
2. Send a day-of reminder email.
3. Change the meeting time from 6 to 7pm.

The change leader took a picture of the whiteboard and all the NGT ideas (highlighting the top three) and added it to their change charter document.

Can You do a Virtual NGT?

Yes! Here’s how:

- Use Zoom with the camera on.
- Participants share their ideas on paper and read them aloud during the round-robin.
- The facilitator types and numbers ideas on screen.

Voting Options

- Public: Participants share their top choices aloud.
- Private: Participants send a chat to the facilitator.

TIP: Save time doing a live or virtual NGT

- Complete NGT Steps 1 and 2 by using simple survey tools to gather ideas from team members.
- Share the resulting list of ideas with the group before a meeting.
- This allows the team to move right into Step 3–discussion of ideas–during the meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Conduct the NGT with Your Team
Add the NGT results to your Change Project Charter. Follow the NGT Instructions at niatx.wisc.edu

STEP 8: Change Strategy Selection

From ideas to action

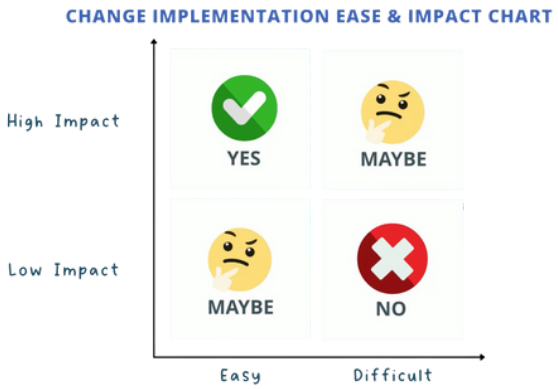
In Step 8, the change team selects a change strategy to test based on team input, considering ease of implementation and potential impact.

Facilitating the Conversation

Using the list of ideas from the change team's NGT exercise, the change leader facilitates a dialog with the team. Begin by focusing on the top-voted idea. Ask the team:

1. How easy will it be to make this change in the process and sustain it over time?
2. How much of an impact do you think the change will have?
   - The responses to these questions will help the team consider the return-on-investment (ROI) for the chosen change strategy

Here's a diagram to consider as you discuss a change strategy idea with your change team. If you have one that the team believes is easy to implement and has the potential for high impact, this may be the idea you want to test first.



Next Steps After Selection

1. Present the change strategy idea to the executive sponsor for leadership support.
2. Once the team and leadership agree, the change strategy is ready to be tested.

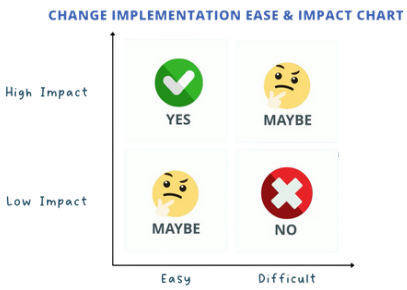
STEP 8: Change Strategy Selection

From ideas to action

Example from the Field

In our change project example where we are trying to improve the communication process with parents and caregivers to increase meeting attendance rates, the change team chose this strategy:

- Send a reminder email three days before the meeting.



Feedback from parents and caregivers showed that meeting reminders closer to the event would be more helpful. The team believed this was:

- Easy to implement
- Likely to have high impact

After receiving the executive sponsor's approval for this idea, the team decided to proceed.

ACTION ITEM: Select a change strategy and review its ROI. Get approval from your executive sponsor before testing. Document the strategy in your Change Project Charter.

STEP 9: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing

Test, measure, repeat, improve

Step 9 in the change project journey introduces the PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing method, a widely-used process improvement tool. For ease of use, this step is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 explains the PDSA approach and how to implement it with your change team.
- Part 2 illustrates multiple PDSA cycles using the parent communication change project example, including data visualization with a simple line chart.

What is PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing?

PDSA stands for Plan, Do, Study, Act–a four-step process that tests a change idea on a small scale to determine whether it leads to improvement.

Key Aspects of PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing

- Pilot-tests one change on a small scale for a short period.
- Uses test results to inform additional PDSA cycles.
- Compares each cycle's results to baseline data.
- Leads to one of three decisions: adopt, adapt, or abandon the change.

Benefits of PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing

- Minimizes risk and cost: Testing on a small scale reduces disruptions.
- Reduces resistance to change: Small tests are less overwhelming than large-scale changes.
- Accelerates improvement: Avoids long planning phases by testing and refining changes quickly.
- Proven effectiveness: NIATx research shows that successful organizations use this method consistently.

Using the NIATx Change Charter

The NIATx Change Charter template referred to throughout this course includes a section for tracking PDSA cycles.

TIP: Use the Change Charter template to plan, document, and analyze each PDSA cycle in your project.

STEP 9: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing

Each cycle follows four steps

Step 1: PLAN the test

When planning a PDSA cycle, test only one change at a time to accurately measure its impact. Tasks for the change team:

Define the test scope:

- Which work areas, shifts, or client groups will be involved?
- What is the duration of the test?

Assign responsibilities:

- Designate a data coordinator to collect and visualize results.
- Identify who will implement or train others on the change.

Prepare necessary documentation:

- Instruction sheets for new procedures.
- Data collection forms.
- Line chart templates for tracking results.

Get approval and notify staff:

- Share the test plan with the Executive Sponsor.
- Inform staff about when and where the test will occur.

Step 2: DO the Test

- Implement the plan as outlined.
- Check in with staff regularly and gather feedback.
- Document any unforeseen issues and adjustments made.
- Collect data the same way you did for baseline.

Step 3: Study the Test

Once the test period ends, review the data. Questions to discuss:

- Did the change lead to improvement?
- Did the team follow the test plan as intended?
- What feedback did staff provide?
- Did the change make processes easier for staff or clients?
- Should we adopt, adapt, or abandon the change?

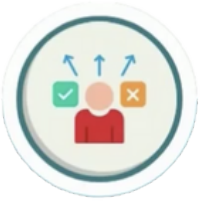
Tip: Be sure to document all responses and data results in your Change Charter template.

STEP 9: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing

Each cycle follows four steps

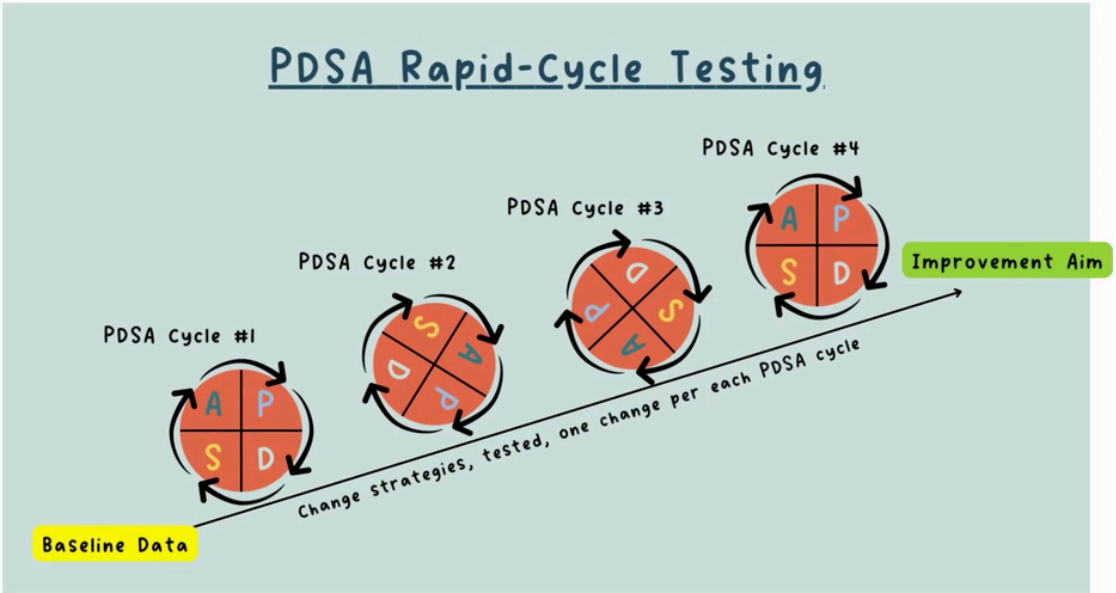
Step 4: ACT on the Findings

Based on the study phase, choose one of the following next steps:



1. **Adopt:** If the change was successful, make it standard practice and scale up for broader implementation.
2. **Adapt**: If the results were mixed, refine and re-test the change.
3. **Abandon**: If the change didn't work, consider the lessons learned and move on to a new strategy.

Encouraging teams to adopt, adapt, or abandon strategies ensures continuous progress.



ACTION ITEM: Conduct Your First PDSA Cycle!
Record all PDSA Cycle details in your Change Project Charter.

Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

Visualizing your Data

Welcome to Step 9, Part 2! In this section, we'll walk through a real-world example of PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing using a Family Engagement Program change project.

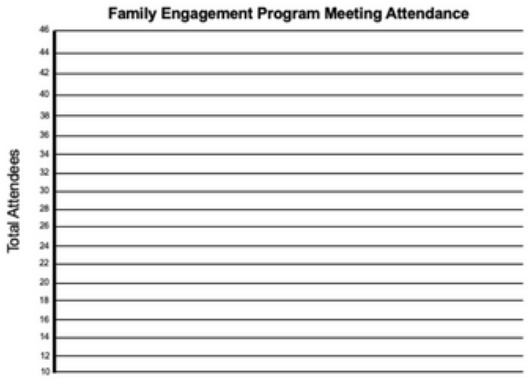
Reminder: PDSA stands for Plan, Do, Study, Act
If you haven't yet viewed Part 1 of Step 9, please do that now.

Why Visualize Data?

Visualizing data helps to tell the story of your change effort. While it's fine to record data in spreadsheets or on paper, creating charts can help people better understand the impact of your changes. Most change projects aim to increase or decrease a number over time, so a line chart is a great way to display this progress. A quick internet search for "How to create a line chart or graph from spreadsheet software" will yield many training videos.

Steps to Create a Line Chart

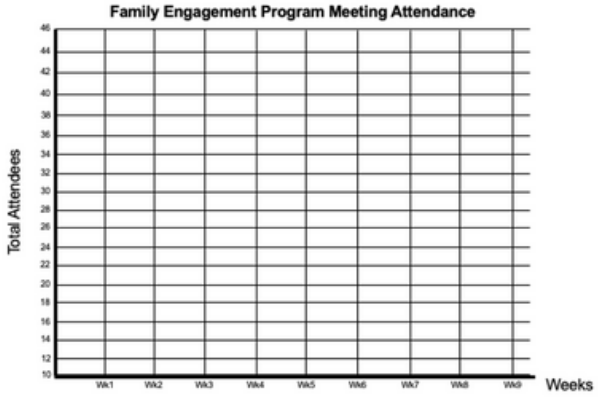
Draw the Y-axis (Vertical Line). Label it with your improvement measure.



Example: "Total Attendees" for increasing meeting attendance from 23 to 37.

Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

Draw the X-axis (Horizontal Line). Mark the time intervals when data is collected.

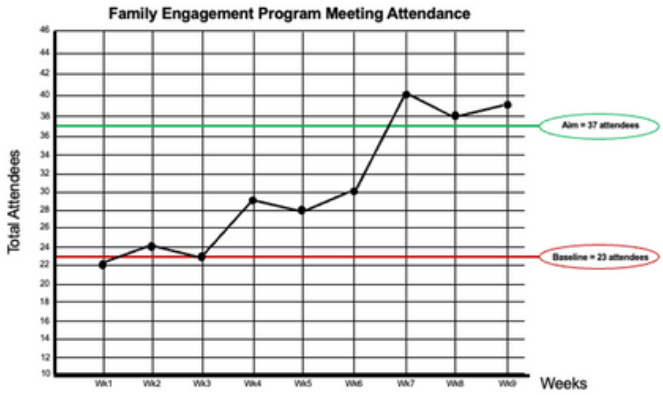


Example: Weekly meeting attendance.

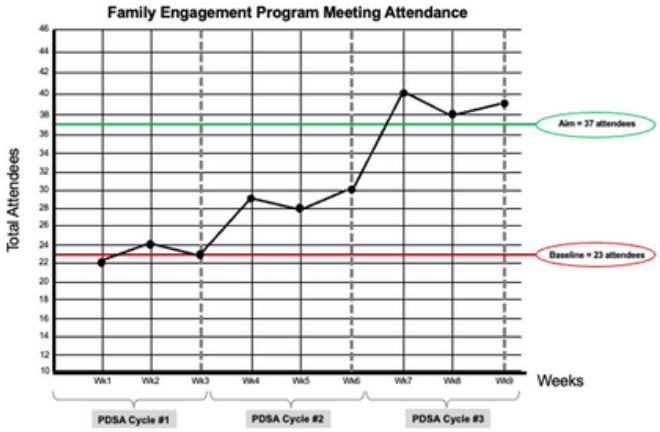
- ·Plot the Data: As data is added weekly, the chart will reveal trends over time.

Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

Add a baseline: Draw a horizontal line at the average number before changes



- Example: Baseline = 23 attendees.



- Add a Target Line: Show the goal (e.g., 37 attendees).

Mark PDSA Cycles with Vertical Lines: Label time periods for each PDSA test:

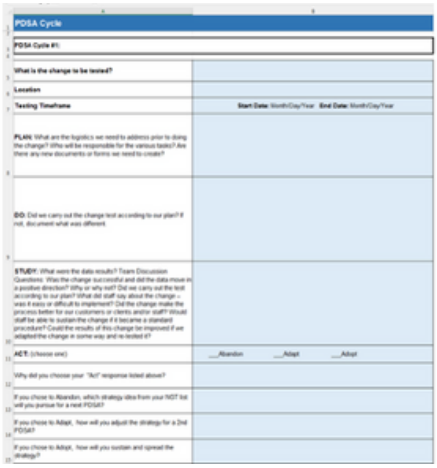
- Cycle 1: Weeks 1–3
- Cycle 2: Weeks 4–6
- Cycle 3: Weeks 7–9

Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

The Change Charter

The change leader called a meeting of the change team, and they opened the PDSA cycle template inside the Change Charter (slide 6) to begin discussing and completing it. They planned a test of the change idea selected during their strategy meeting: sending a reminder email to parents and caregivers three days before a program meeting. In keeping with rapid-cycle testing, they limited the test to one high school in the district over a three-week period.

PDSA Cycle Template
from the
Change Project Charter



PDSA Cycle	
PDSA Cycle #1:	
What is the change to be tested?	
Location	
Testing Timeframe	Start Date: Month/Day/Year End Date: Month/Day/Year
PLAN: What are the logistics we need to address prior to doing the change? Who will be responsible for the various tasks? Are there any new documents or forms we need to create?	
DO: Did we carry out the change test according to our plan? If not, document what was different.	
STUDY: What were the data results? Team Discussion Questions: Was the change successful and did the data move in a positive direction? Why or why not? Did we carry out the test according to our plan? What did staff say about the change – was it easy or difficult to implement? Did the change make the process better for our customers or clients and/or staff? Would staff be able to sustain the change if it became a standard procedure? Could the results of this change be improved if we adapted the change in some way and re-tested it?	
ACT: (choose one)	___Abandon ___Adapt ___Adopt
Why did you choose your "Act" response listed above?	
If you chose to Abandon, which strategy idea from your NOT list will you pursue for a next PDSA?	
If you chose to Adapt, how will you adjust the strategy for a 2nd PDSA?	
If you chose to Adopt, how will you sustain and spread the strategy?	

The team outlined the plan:

- Three days before each meeting, Sally, the program coordinator, will send a reminder email to Riverton H.S. parents and caregivers enrolled in the Family Engagement program.
- She will also create a standardized reminder email template.
- After each meeting, facilitators will record attendance in the main attendance log.
- Jim, the data coordinator, will create a line chart and update meeting attendance data every Friday during the three-week test.

Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

PDSA Cycle 1: Reminder Email Three Days in Advance

Plan

- Aim: Increase average attendance from 23 to 37 by June 30.
- Strategy: Send reminder emails three days before the meeting.
- Location: Riverton High School only.

Tools:

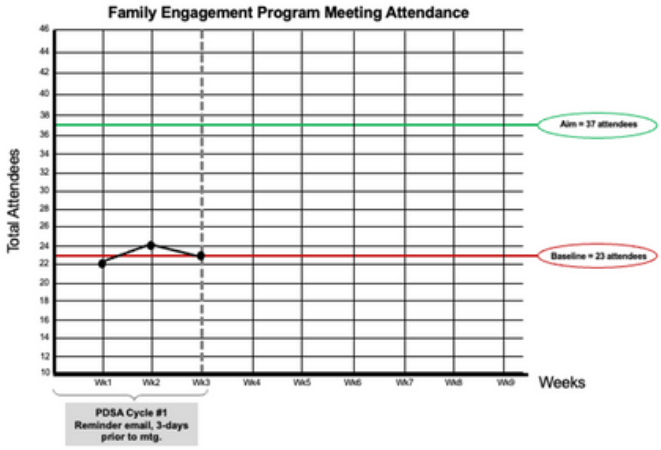
- Sally (Program Coordinator): Sends emails and creates template.
- Jim (Data Coordinator): Updates line chart weekly.

Do

Sally sends reminder emails. Jim collects and enters data.

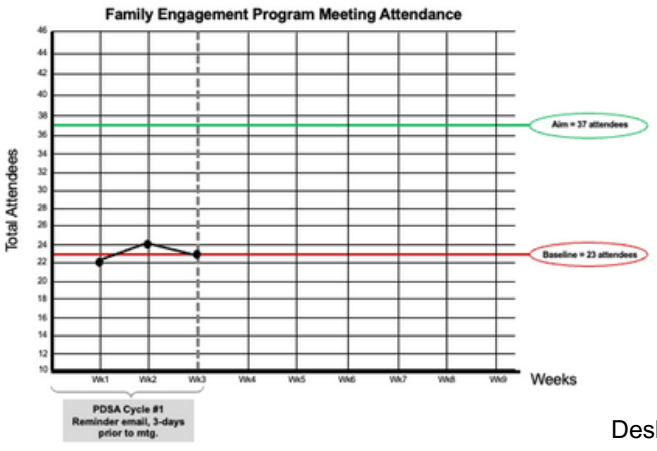
Study

Line chart (Slide 7) shows no change: still averaging 23 attendees. Discussion reveals many parents preferred same-day reminders.



Act

Decision: Adapt the strategy. Next test: Send same-day reminders (Slide 8).



Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

PDSA Cycle 2: Same-day Reminder Email

Plan

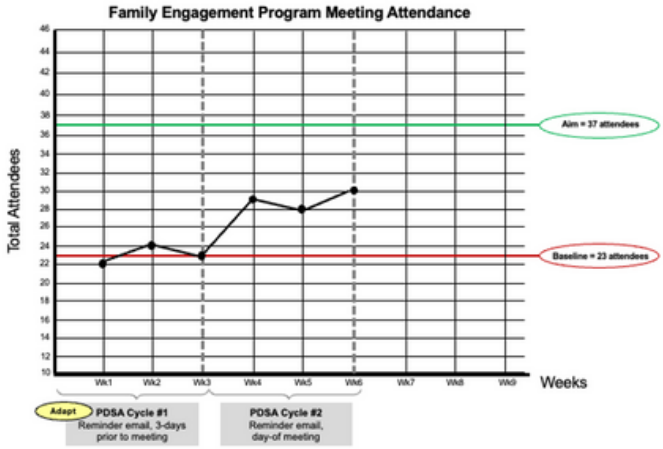
- Same location, staff, and three-week test period.
- Strategy: Send reminder emails at 9am on the day of the meeting.
- Location: Riverton High School only.

Do

Test is implemented with daily reminders.

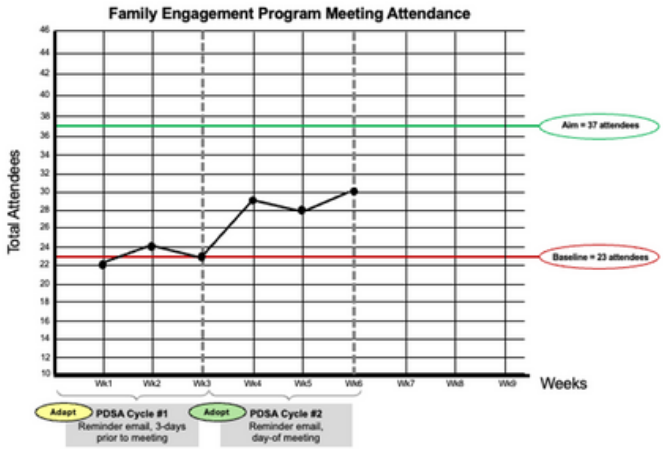
Study

- Post-change chart (Slide 9) shows attendance increased to 29 – a 26% improvement.
- Parents expressed appreciation for same-day reminders.



Act

Decision: Adopt the change as standard practice (Slide 10).



Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

PDSA Cycle 3: Move Meeting time to 7 p.m.

Plan

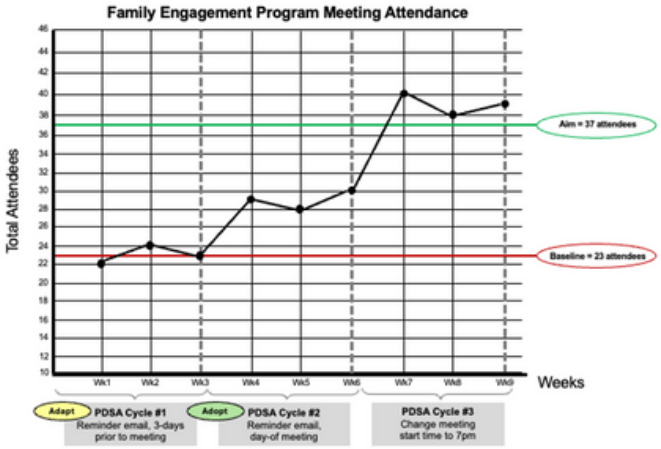
- Move meeting time to 7 p.m.
- Rationale: Over half of interviewed parents preferred a later start.
- Continue using same-day reminders.

Do

Parents are notified of the new time. Data is collected at three meetings over three weeks.

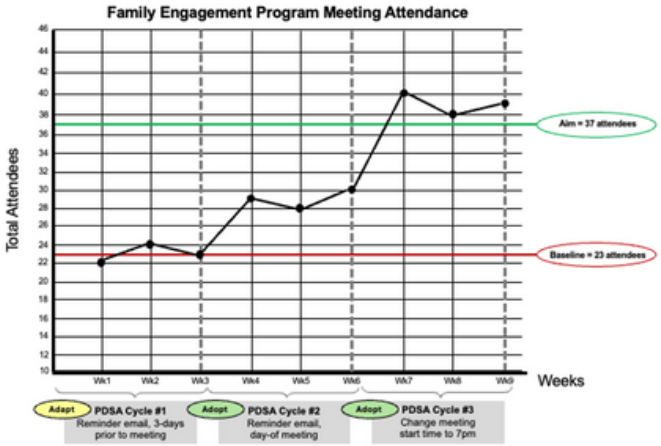
Study

- Line chart (Slide 11) shows attendance increased to 39 – exceeding the target.
- Later start time more convenient for parents.



Act

Decision: Adopt 7 p.m. start time as standard (Slide 12).



Step 9, Part 2: PDSA Rapid-Cycle Testing and a Data Line Chart

Wrap-up and Key Take-Aways

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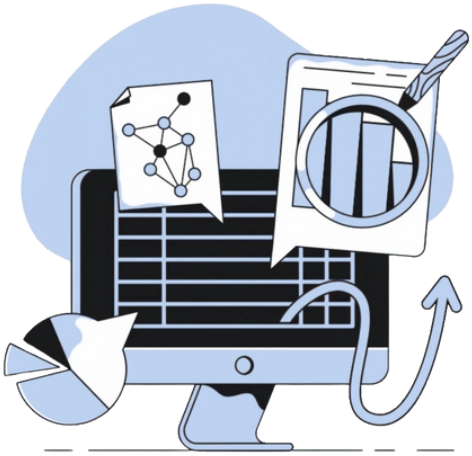
- Use the NIATx Change Project Charter to guide and document each PDSA cycle, helping your team stay focused and organized throughout the change project.
- Bring your data to life with simple line charts–an easy and effective way to visualize results and share progress with others.
- Remember that rapid-cycle testing delivers quick results that keep the momentum going and energize your team to keep testing new ideas.
- Stay curious, stay creative, and have fun!



Step 10: Complete the Change Project

Create a Sustainability Plan and Share Your Story

Create a Sustainability Plan

Once you've tested and implemented a successful change, your goal shifts to sustaining the improvement over time.

What is Sustainability?

- The ability to maintain improved outcomes in the long term
- Integration of the new process into your organization's systems and culture
- A process that is both resilient and adaptable
- Includes continuous improvement of the new process

Why it Matters

- Over 70% of change efforts fail to sustain past six months (British NHS)
- Sustainability doesn't happen automatically–it requires a structured plan and dedicated leadership.

When to Start Thinking About Sustainability

Although it begins after implementation, start considering it as early as Step 8. A strong sustainability plan will help your change project deliver lasting results. On the next page, learn about the five key elements to support long-term success!

Step 10: Complete the Change Project

Create a Sustainability Plan and Share Your Story

5 Key Elements of a Sustainability Plan

1. Choose a Sustain Leader

- Someone familiar with the change and responsible for the process
- Monitors data and ensures the change continues
- Does not have to be the original change leader

2. Standardize the Change

- Update procedure manuals and assign future monitoring responsibilities
- Keep documentation simple and easy to follow

3. Collect and Review Data

- Continue tracking key performance measures
- Use quick, simple methods
- Avoid collecting unnecessary data

4. Define Acceptable Fluctuation

- Set thresholds for what's normal and what needs intervention
- Revisit and adjust thresholds based on experience

5. Set a Change Date

- Pick a firm implementation date
- Communicate clear instructions to all affected staff

Step 10: Complete the Change Project

Share Your Story Using the NIATx 5 x 5 Slide Presentation

Five slides in five minutes!

Why Share?

- Honors team effort and shows results
- Promotes a learning culture in your organization
- Helps build support for future improvement projects

Slide-by-Slide Breakdown

Slide 1: Aim

- State your aim statement
- If you have a catchy title or team photo, include here

Slide 2: Change

- Describe the process that was improved
- List the tested changes and where they were tested

Slide 3: Results

- Show PDSA data
- Use a line chart if available
- Highlight what was learned from each test

Slide 4: Next Steps

- Explain what's next for the project
- Will the change be spread? Adopted organization-wide?

Slide 5: Impact

- Share outcomes for clients and the organization

Example: Increased parent attendance and wider program reach

Presentation Tips

- Present all five slides in five minutes
- Hold questions until the end
- Publicly recognize your team–it reinforces a culture of improvement

ACTION ITEM: Create a Sustainability Plan and a 5 x 5 Presentation. Add the sustainability plan and 5x5 to your Change Project Charter.

Questions?

We're Here to Help

Thank you for exploring the *NIATx Change Leader Academy E-Learning Course Desk Guide*. We hope you find it helpful as you complete the e-learning course and lead change projects in your organization. If you have questions, need support, or want to share your story, we invite you to reach out!

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