



Implementation Science & Continuous Improvement

Louisiana Board of Regents
2026 Meauxmentum Summit

Our Time Together

- **Hello & Welcome!**
- **Meet Sova; Meet Sarah**
- **Implementation Science**
- **Continuous Improvement Framework**
- **Driver Diagram Development**
- **Moving Plan to Action**
- **A Few Considerations**
- **Let's Connect!**



At Sova, we partner with higher education systems and institutions, associations, and philanthropies to achieve large-scale change through careful attention to actionable strategy and practical implementation support.

We use problem solving as a pathway toward equitable outcomes and strengthened social and economic mobility for all.

Who here is....

→ a big idea thinker?

→ a details-oriented, implementation thinker?

→ both?

The SOVA logo is located on the left side of the image. It consists of a solid olive-green square. Inside this square, the word "SOVA" is written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a white circular icon containing a stylized bird, possibly a phoenix or a similar mythical creature, with its wings spread.

SOVA

Implementation Science

WONDERY

THE BIG FLOP

F



N

7,000,000 POINTS

PEPSI, WHERE'S MY JET?

Federal Student Aid

**A better FAFSA[®] process
means a better future
for everyone.**

**AWARD
YEAR
2024-2025**

Full implementation is
right around the corner.

**Where have you seen examples of
big ideas successfully
implemented?**

Implementation Science

Implementation science is the scientific study of methods and strategies that facilitate the uptake of evidence-based practice and research into regular use by practitioners and policymakers.

The Know-Do Gap

The field of implementation science seeks to
**systematically close the gap between what
we *know* and what we *do***

by

**identifying and addressing the barriers that slow or halt
the adoption of proven interventions and evidence-
based practices.**

Frameworks Driving Implementation Research

- **Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR)**
 - Examines five domains that influence implementation
 - intervention characteristics,
 - outer setting
 - inner setting
 - individual characteristics
 - implementation process.
- **Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARIHS)**
 - Suggests successful implementation depends on:
 - evidence quality
 - context receptivity
 - facilitation
- **RE-AIM Framework**
 - Evaluates interventions based on:
 - Reach
 - Effectiveness
 - Adoption
 - Implementation
 - Maintenance



Continuous Improvement Framework

Dynamic Sustainability

Emphasizes ongoing adaptation and improvement rather than maintaining rigid fidelity to original interventions.

1. **Data-Driven Decision Making**
2. **Adaptability**
3. **Sustainability Focus**
4. **Learning Systems:** *knowledge generation is embedded in daily practice*

The healthcare industry - a learning system - paved the path for the convergence of implementation science and continuous improvement and the subsequent adoption in higher education.

Strategic Need

Leaders across the higher education landscape are constantly identifying key strategic needs to meet a host of demands: finance, service provision, mission alignment, emerging legislation, etc.

Implementation Dilemma

The ability to move from strategy to implementation remains challenging across higher education - from strategic priorities to basic programming.

The implementation dilemma is costing higher education time, money, resources, capacity, etc. and, ultimately, outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Framework

Because change and implementation needs to happen at the organizational level but is led by those across the organization with varying skill sets and priorities, progress is often stymied.

Employing continuous improvement as a framework provides structure for identifying key goals, barriers to success, and clear and concise plans for making progress within a timeline that prioritizes intended outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Framework

Continuous improvement is the ongoing process of analyzing performance, identifying opportunities, and making incremental and breakthrough changes to processes, products, and personnel.

By analyzing and fine-tuning processes, organizations can create efficiencies, build capacity, meet goals, and improve decision-making.

Continuous Improvement Benefits

**Makes overwhelming
and complicated
scenarios more
manageable.**

**Forces
acknowledgement of
key challenges
thwarting success**

**Allows competing
priorities to be managed
with focus on
organizational needs &
health**

**Creates structures for
progress and
accountability**

**Provides intentional
space for reflection and
mid-course changes to
drive innovation**

Learn Fast, Fail Fast, Improve Quickly

Elements of Continuous Improvement Cycles

For 30, 60, and 90 day intervals and evaluated every 30 days



WHAT?

What are your
near-term goals?
What are the activities
to reach your goals?



WHO?

Who is
accountable for
each goal and
activity?



HOW?

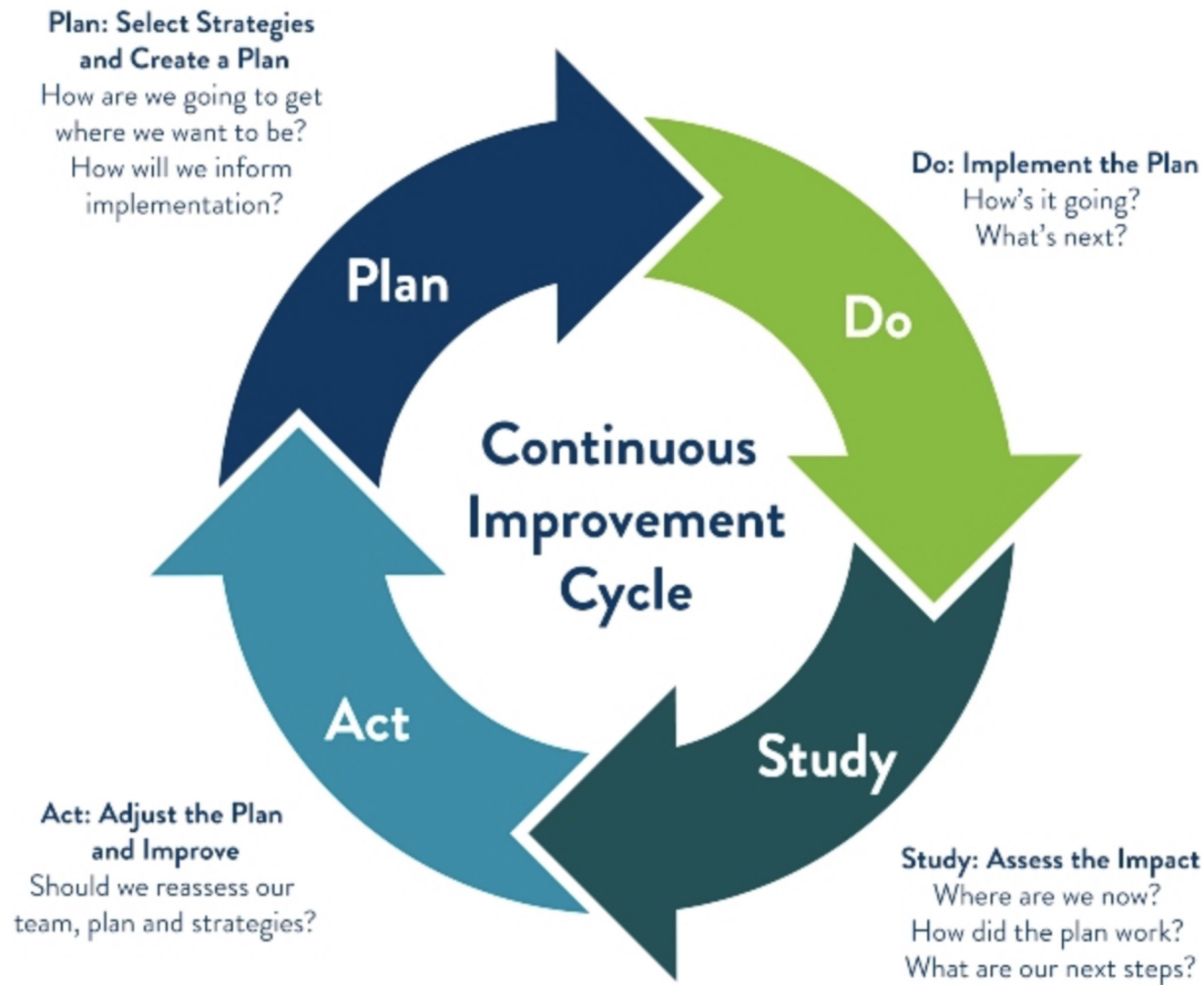
How will you know
when you have met
your goal?



WHEN?

When will you
complete each goal
and activity?

New cycles begin every 90 days, with time in between for reflection & reset





Driver Diagram Development

Driver Diagram Creation

Often, implementation approaches become so focused on tactics that the strategic goals of the project are lost and key metrics are not considered.

Through development of a **driver diagram** - a foundational component of continuous improvement - leaders:

- state strategic goals
- identify intended outcomes
- select metrics to measure progress and success
- examine key barriers to progress
- determine tactical projects.

This provides useful guardrails in collaborative work where many competing priorities exist and decision-making can become challenging.

**What is a big challenge you
are hoping to solve?**



**Strategic
Priority**



How does finding a solution for your challenge align with an institutional strategic priority?



**Strategic
Priority**

SMART Goals

Key Metrics

How will you know you are successful?

What metrics are available to you?

What do you need to know?



**Strategic
Priority**

SMART Goals

Key Metrics

**Barrier to
Success**

**Barrier to
Success**

**Barrier to
Success**

**Barrier to
Success**



**What are your greatest
barriers or challenges
to solving or challenge or achieving
your desired goals?**



**Strategic
Priority**

SMART Goals

Key Metrics

**Barrier to
Success**

**Barrier to
Success**

**Barrier to
Success**

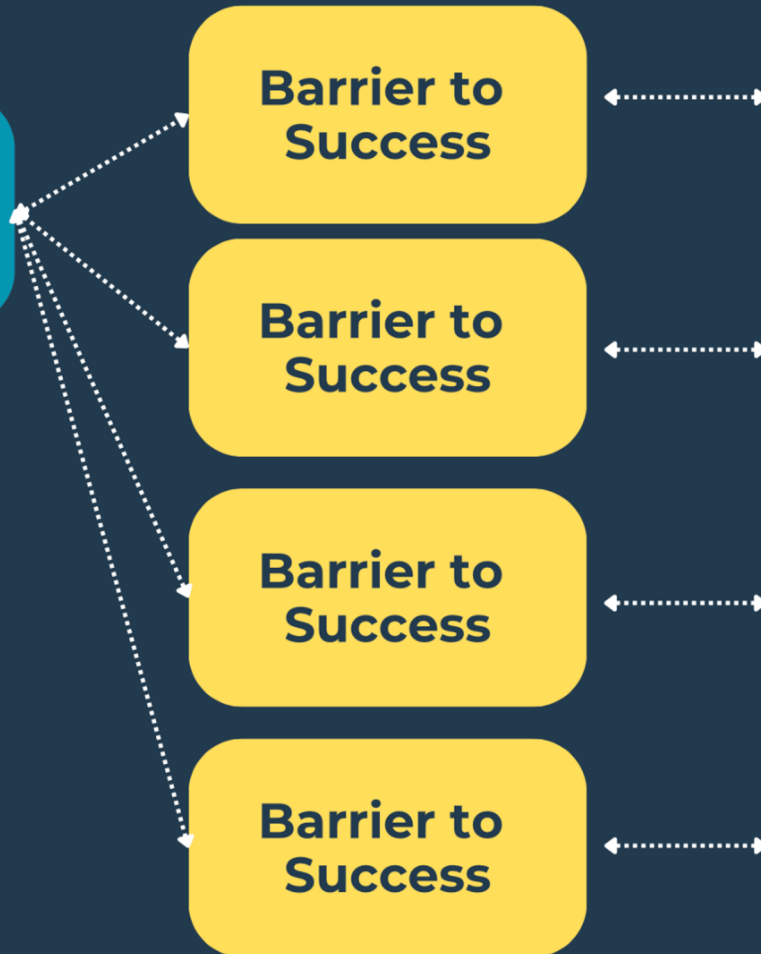
**Barrier to
Success**

**Improvement
Project**

**Improvement
Project**

**Improvement
Project**

**Improvement
Project**



What are the improvement projects that directly solve your challenges or barriers?

Sample Institution/Entity Driver Diagram

Institution Focus Area

What are we trying to accomplish?

INSTITUTION FOCUS AREA

SMART Goal

*A high-level improvement goal. Specific. Measurable.
Achievable. Relevant. Timed.*

Increase the first-gen retention and graduation rates by 2% annually for a total of 8% over the next four years.

Metric

The specific metric(s) you are seeking to address

Track retention and graduation rates of first-gen students at the following intervals: Fall-to-Spring retention rate; Fall-to-Fall retention rate; Fall graduation rate; Spring graduation rate; Term credit hours attempted vs. completed; Retention and graduation rates based on in state vs. out of state

Communication

1

There is a need to help current and prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and supporters and other campus constituents know how we define first-generation and the resources available to support students.

Data Collection and Sharing

2

University reports primarily focus on the retention and graduation rates of first-gen students. There is a need-to-know other metrics and to be able to disaggregate the data. In addition, feedback on student experiences and needs should be collected.

Faculty and Staff Training

3

Faculty and staff are instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging and support for first-gen students. It is necessary to increase their understanding of the best ways to serve this population from an asset-based approach.

1 Strengthen Communication:



Develop a communication plan for all constituent groups, which highlights the information they need to know and the timeframe for when it needs to be communicated.

2 Improve Data Collection and Sharing:



1) Add a first-gen filter for all categories to existing university databases. 2) Create a one-page document that highlights significant data points. 3) Develop a first-gen student survey. Also, encourage other offices to capture and to share their survey data regarding first-gen students.

3 Faculty and Staff Training and Informational Sessions



1) Promote the First-Gen Forward faculty and staff module. 2) Participate in New Faculty Academy. 3) Speak with different campus groups (e.g. College Deans; CADO Officers; Staff/Faculty Senate)

4 Remove Financial Barriers



1) Partner with Residence Life & Housing to develop a plan to offer on-campus housing to first-gen students after their first year. 2) Submit grants to provide students with an opportunity to apply for funding to participate in high impact practices (e.g. Study Abroad, internships, undergraduate research)



Moving Plan to Action

Improvement Project #1: *<description>*

30 Days

- **Tasks**
- **Timeline**
- **Responsible Party**
- **Completion Tracking**

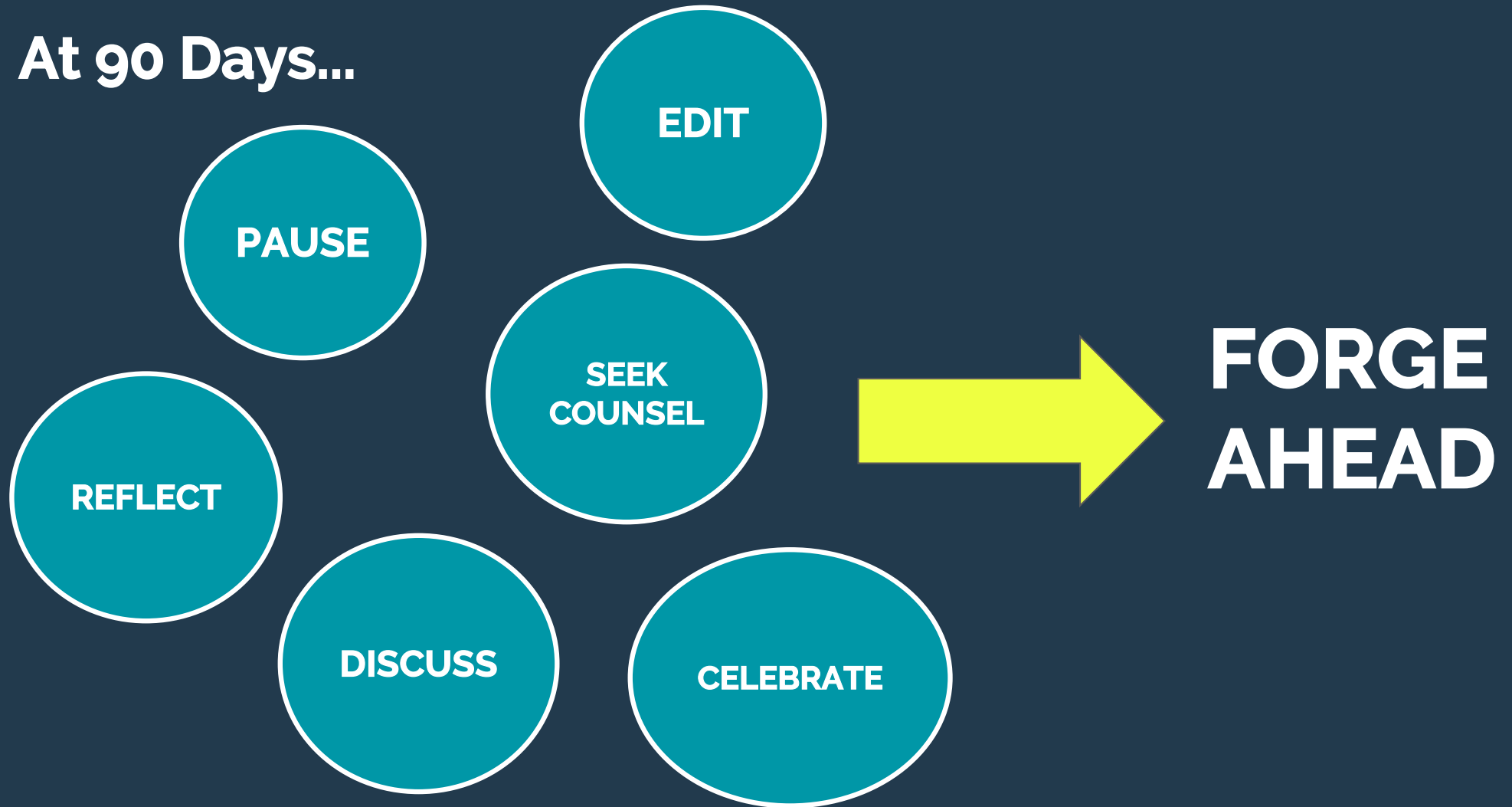
60 Days

- **Tasks**
- **Timeline**
- **Responsible Party**
- **Completion Tracking**

90 Days

- **Tasks**
- **Timeline**
- **Responsible Party**
- **Completion Tracking**

At 90 Days...



Project Management

**Strategic Priority
Leadership Team**



**Improvement
Project Working
Group**

**Improvement
Project Working
Group**

**Improvement
Project Working
Group**

**Who are the key people you
need on your team?**



A Few Considerations

Continuous Improvement Requires Change Management

Adopting Proven Strategies Can Help

Integrated Implementation Process

Pre-implementation Phase

1. **Change management:** Stakeholder analysis, readiness assessment, coalition building
2. **Continuous improvement:** Baseline measurement, gap analysis, process mapping

Practical Integration Strategies

- **Hybrid Leadership Teams:** Include change managers and improvement specialists
- **Consolidated Implementation Plans:** Merge change management and QI plans
- **Unified Metrics:** Develop measurement systems that track both technical and adaptive changes
- **Shared Learning Systems:** Create feedback mechanisms that inform both processes
- **Joint Training:** Cross-train teams in both methodologies

**Driver Diagrams & Action Plans are
TOOLS for YOU,**

not a homework assignment for leadership.

Consider Proven Implementation Strategy Research

Successful implementation occurs when explicit attention to the culture, history, values, assets, and needs of the community are integrated into the principles, strategies, frameworks, and tools of implementation science.

- **Cultural Adaptation**
- **Trusting Relationships**
- **Critical Perspectives**
- **Community-Defined Evidence**
- **Dismantling Power Structures**
- **Audience-Informed Investments and Decision-Making**

Stanford Social Innovation Review: Implementation at Work

SPACE

&

GRACE

Let's Connect

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