COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

From Data to Action: 2025 CCA Data Days

July 28-29

Denver, CO

Agenda & Resources:
CompleteCollege.org/DataDays2025

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Navigating Resistance in Data Dialogues

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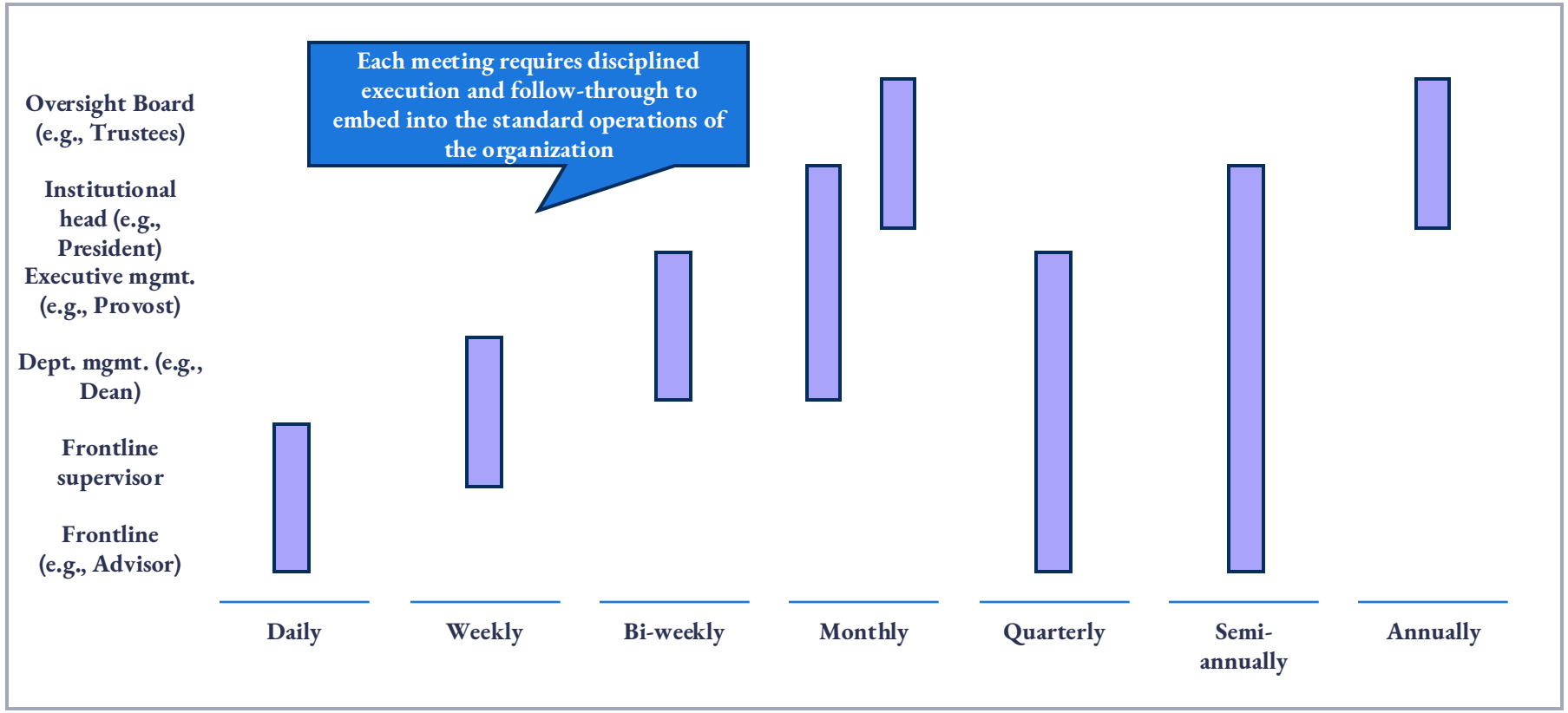
Common themes in 'resistance' to performance management

	Objection	Response
Wrong metric	▪ These may be ok metrics, but they miss the big picture – we should be measuring a lot of other things	▪ If you have suggestions for a different metric to track this outcome, do bring them forward!
Wrong data	▪ OK, even if I agree this metric is important, well, this data can't be right – this whole thing is obviously a waste	▪ This is the best data we have today; we will improve by tomorrow. In the meantime: we have to make decisions
Wrong analysis	▪ Actually, if this data is right, the analysis is obviously misleading – what statistical technique did you use?	▪ This is good enough to make a decision for what we do today - let's improve our approach for tomorrow
Wrong question	▪ I see, well, the analysis may be OK, but it raises a loooot of questions we have to answer first	▪ This is not a research question; the bar today is 'good enough to try something out and see if it works'
Wrong target	▪ OK, but … the targets are ridiculous, how did you come up with those?	▪ These targets are what is required for us to live up to our mission – in fact, they are probably not ambitious enough
Wrong person	▪ I understand we're in the middle of the pack, but you can't hold *me* accountable for this!	▪ Here we go. We're *all* accountable – who does what today, so the numbers are different tomorrow?

L&A

Metrics and derivatives must be discussed in highly structured conversations: performance dialogs



Structured agenda and follow-through

- Each meeting is highly structured focused on the following agenda items
  - Follow-up from action items from last meeting
  - Walkthrough of metrics that are not on-target
    - Action required on each to a) gather data for understanding or b) change behavior to drive different outcome
  - Follow-up on open/longer-term action items
  - Recap of action items for next meeting

High-quality dialogs require ongoing training and coaching

Good performance dialogs share a number of qualities

	Description
Fact-based	▪ Dialogs are informed by insights based on credible data understood by all participants
Action-oriented	▪ Managers establish clear expectations, develop action plans with individual accountabilities, and ensure commitment to deliver
Constructive AND challenging	▪ Manager use dialogs to provide coaching and support, as we as to create tension and pressure to improve performance
Targeted	▪ Dialogs have an explicit purpose and agenda, focusing on the most important issues rather than trying to cover too much ground

Dos and Don'ts follow

Fact-based

- Making conversations fact-based
  - Be creative in capturing data.
    - Over time, organizations can seek institutional solutions to data challenges.
  - Don’t be afraid to start with representative data.
    - If “perfect” metrics are currently infeasible, leaders should nonetheless keep them in mind; they may become feasible in the future as systems and reporting tools are upgraded

Action-oriented

- Ensuring that dialogues lead to action
  - Leaders use performance dialogues to clarify and reinforce expectations and assign individual accountability for specific actions.

  - At their best, performance dialogues have
    - a clear leader and a manageable number of participants, allowing each person to contribute actively to the discussion.
    - The meetings take place frequently enough to catch issues before they become big problems, but not so frequently that participants have no new information to share.

  - Use dialogues to set expectations, clarify accountabilities, and gain commitment.
    - The agenda should include follow-up on promised action items, deliverables, and target outcomes from previous sessions.
    - At the end of each session, summarize the commitments everyone has made.
    - Unambiguous meeting notes—explicitly stating the owners, action items, and time frames associated with each commitment—should be circulated within 24 hours
    - Performance dialogues provide an excellent opportunity for public praise and sharing of best practices when things go well. And when results are not entirely positive, the dialogue should serve as a **blame-free forum for conducting a constructive postmortem.**

Constructive AND challenging

- Stimulating constructive and challenging dialogues
  - Performance dialogues should provide coaching and support while also creating tension and pressure to drive improved performance. , set by the style of the senior leader

    - Become more constructive.
      - Celebrate victories and be generous with praise, emphasizing opportunities and expressing confidence in others.
      - Explicitly offer support, either as an individual or as a senior-management team.
      - Dedicate time to solving problems together, drawing out the ideas of all in the group and ensuring all viewpoints are heard, thus positioning the challenges as jointly owned.
      - Leaders should also elicit regular feedback from dialogue participants to reinforce a trusting, collaborative approach.

    - Become more challenging.
      - Leaders should proactively shape the agenda rather than waiting for issues to arise
      - Engage in rigorous questioning and drive problem solving, requesting follow-up analysis or briefing sessions to get more details on critical issues
      - Leaders should emphasize risks and potential roadblocks while expressing confidence that improvements are feasible.
      - They should set explicit personal expectations of teams and individuals involved in the dialogue and consistently reinforce these expectations.

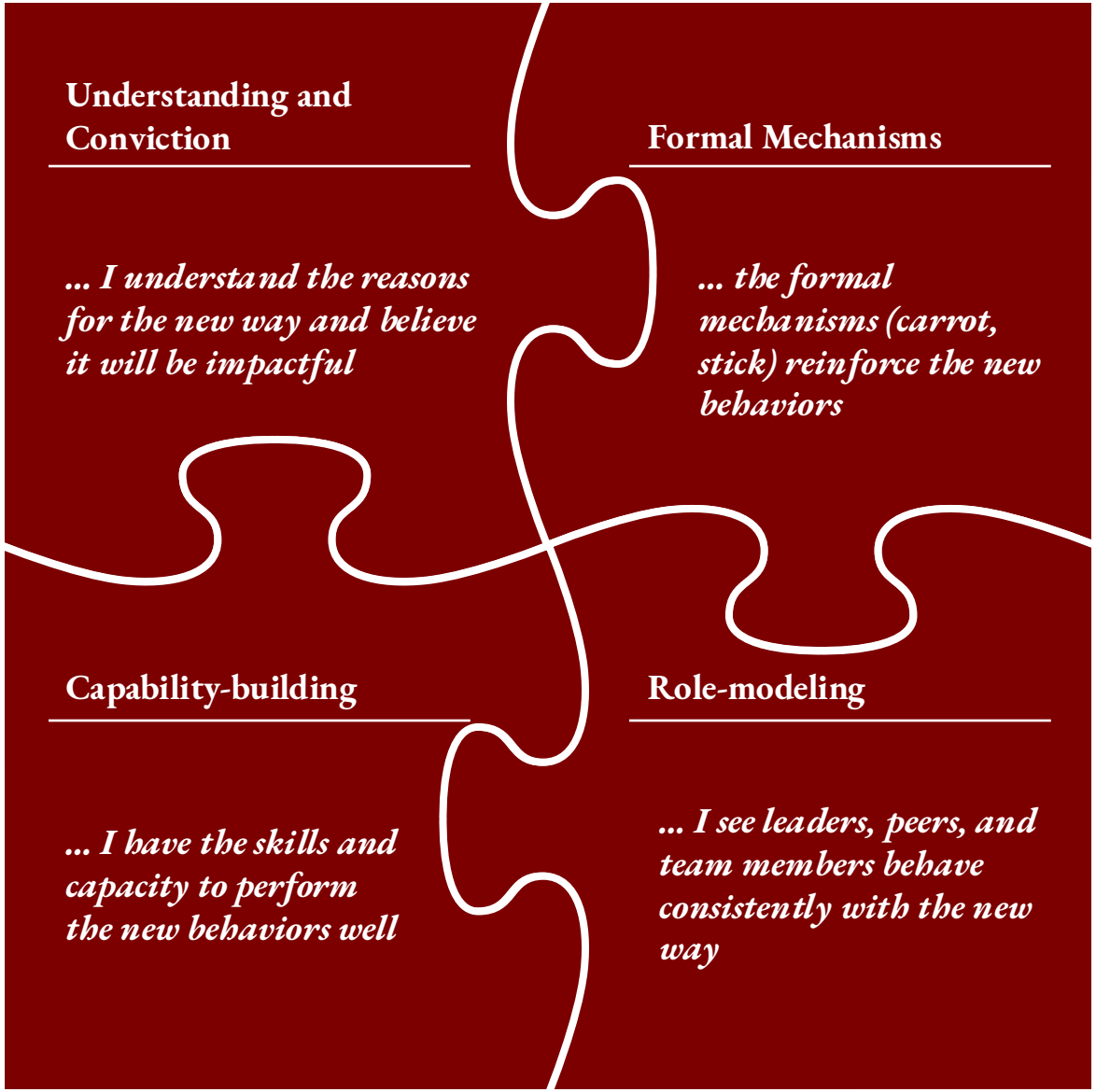
Targeted

- Keeping dialogues targeted
  - Many organizations fall into the trap of boilerplate status reporting of performance in one direction (for example, from each division leader to the executive in charge).
    - This takes a significant amount of time and is still unproductive. (Often with subtext, "This is why it's not my fault that we missed our numbers.")
  - Often materials contain whatever information happens to be available—rather than just the information needed to drive effective discussion.
  - In the best performance dialogues, the discussion's purpose and agenda are explicit and agreed upon beforehand.
    - Status reports are part of the pre-reading materials
    - The dialogues do not stray from the agenda items, but leaders ensure that tangential topics that come up are addressed in other forums.
  - Collect only the data that drive insightful conversations.
  - Leaders should balance insight with pragmatism, always aiming for the minimum amount and precision of data required (e.g., simple templates)

Pair up and discuss

- What will it take to overcome resistance in your organization?
- Plenary debrief

Influencing model: I will change my behavior, if…



The informal influencer survey

Objective	• To identify employees throughout the organization who affect the attitude and mindsets of their co-workers
Process	1) Start with the Leadership Team for an initial list of influencers – those seen as "go-to" individuals in the organization 2) These named employees will then be asked to name 3-5 more individuals who they perceive to affect the attitude and mindsets of their co-workers 3) The process will iterate until names begin to appear multiple times – indicating that the exercise has reached the bounds of the network of key influencers
Output	• The resulting list of individuals will help inform the communication strategy • Patterns among these individuals will be identified (i.e., certain job titles/roles that are repeatedly named or omitted)

Example: Identifying key influencers to accelerate change adoption and compliance

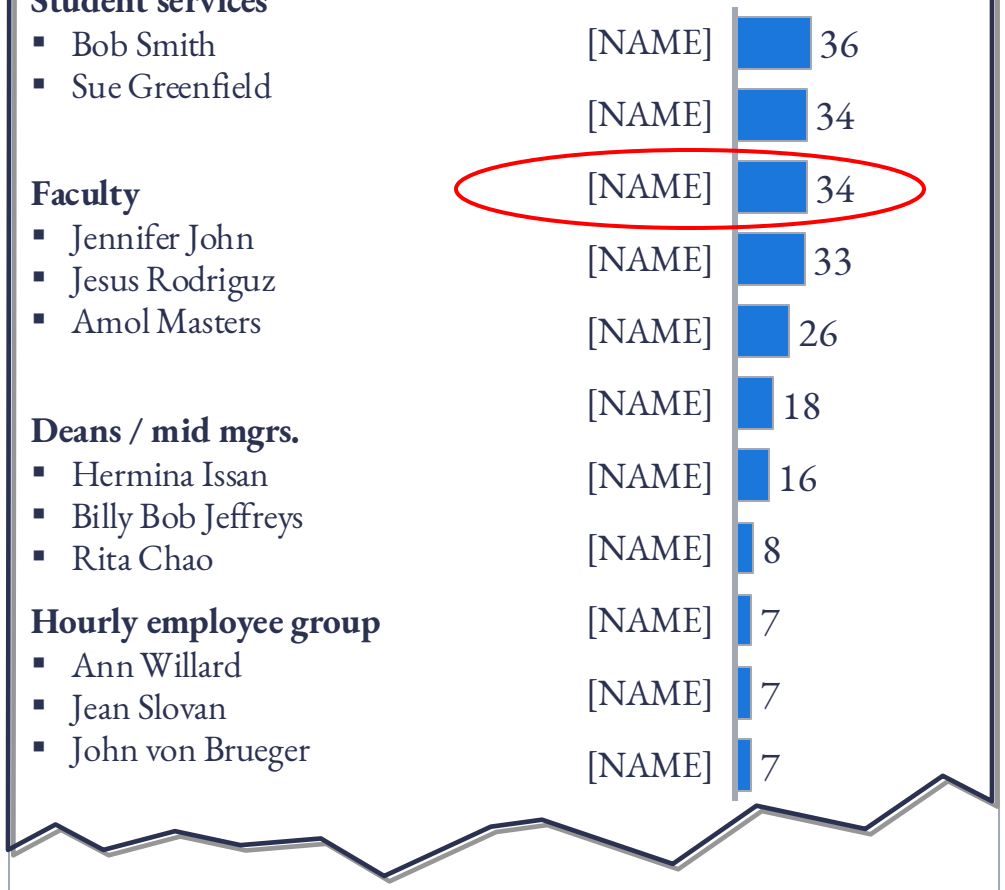
ILLUSTRATIVE

Analysis description

- **Goal:**
  - Identify potential influencers at each level to engage in change
  - Understand influencers at different levels of the organization
- **Definition:** Influencers are defined as employees with the highest number of citations on the survey question about whose opinion and advice people trust

Analysis results

Influencer list by level	Number of major citations
Student services	
▪ Bob Smith	[NAME] 36
▪ Sue Greenfield	[NAME] 34
Faculty	[NAME] 34
▪ Jennifer John	[NAME] 33
▪ Jesus Rodriguz	[NAME] 26
▪ Amol Masters	[NAME] 18
Deans / mid mgrs.	[NAME] 16
▪ Hermina Issan	[NAME] 8
▪ Billy Bob Jeffreys	[NAME] 7
▪ Rita Chao	[NAME] 7
Hourly employee group	[NAME] 7
▪ Ann Willard	
▪ Jean Slovan	
▪ John von Brueger	



Implications

- Include influencers from each level in training and rollout of changes
- Engage them in spreading the change communication in a non-hierarchical way

Personal reflection

- Individual exercise with plenary debrief
  - In your organization
  - 10 ideas to address resistance based on the influencing model
- 3-5 key influencers and outreach plan
- What will you do this week? Next week?

APPENDIX

Which would you rather have …

A **single** fish . . .

. . . or the **ability to catch** fish?

OR BOTH?

An institutional capability is much more than just people

The right fishing support infrastructure

Technical system
"The technical processes, tools, systems and assets that are configured to create outcomes"

Management system
"The organization structure, accountability model, performance and talent management processes required to drive results"

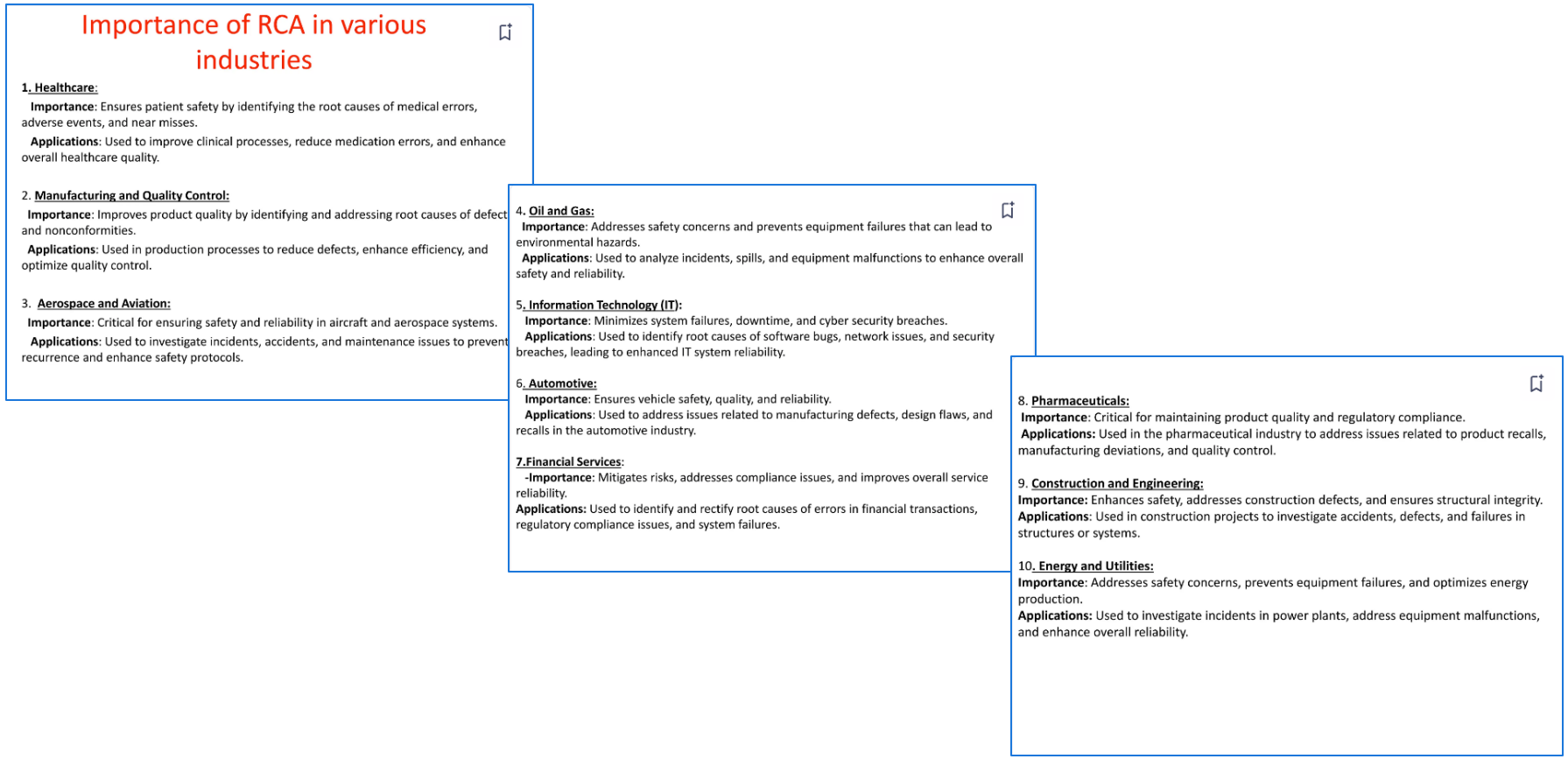
Perfor-mance

Behavioral system
"The right people with the right skills, mindsets, behaviors and ownership, both individually and collectively"

The right fishing equipment and technique

Fishermen with the right skills and mindset

Performance dialogs and root-cause problem-solving across industries



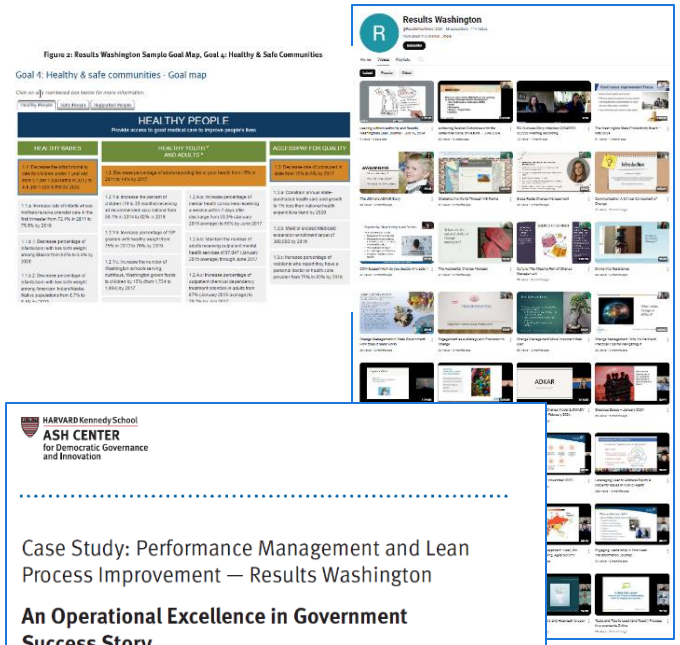
City Colleges of Chicago

- Overview of objectives and strategies
  - Reinvention 1, Reinvention 2, and Strategic Plan with 24 metrics across the district
- Organization and performance dialog structures
  - Reinvention teams, Directors of Strategic Initiatives, Completion calls, OD meetings, EVC weekly team meetings
- Role of top-down and bottom-up approaches
  - Both
- Key success metrics and outcomes
  - Graduation rate, completion, program relevance, , remediation changes, etc.
  - Lesson learned: do more, do it faster
- Q&A

https://www.ccachicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EXC-2889-Civic-Consulting-Alliance_Case-Study_City-Colleges_pressquality.pdf
https://www.ccachicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Spring_2016_big_change_on_campus-1.pdf

State of Washington

https://www.youtube.com/@ResultsWashington2024/videos



Overview of Objectives and Key Strategies Employed

- Objectives:
  - Improve operational efficiency across state and local government.
  - Achieve measurable results in five priority areas: World-Class Education, Prosperous Economy, Sustainable Energy and a Clean Environment, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Effective, Efficient, and Accountable Government.
- Key Strategies:
  - Performance Management: Align every activity with one of the five priority goals and track progress on a public dashboard.
  - Lean Process Improvement: Empower employees to remove bottlenecks and unneeded steps in processes, leading to streamlined operations and improved customer satisfaction.

Organizational and Performance Dialog Structure

- Goal Councils: Each priority goal is managed by a council of agency directors who set targets, develop strategies, and measure progress.
- Monthly Results Reviews: Governor presides over these meetings, which are data-driven and include public and private sector partners. These meetings are televised and live-streamed.
- Public Engagement: Continuous public feedback through interactive surveys and public results meetings.

Role of Combining Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches

- Top-Down Approach: Strong executive sponsorship from the Governor, who actively participates in meetings and engages with employees and department heads.
- Bottom-Up Approach: Employees are trained in Lean methods and are encouraged to participate in process improvement projects. A third of the workforce has been trained, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Key Success Metrics and Outcomes from the Implementation

- Success Metrics
  - Over 50% of nearly 200 goals are on track to meet or beat targets.
  - Indicators include complex challenges like homelessness, pollution, offender recidivism, and teen pregnancy.
- Outcomes
  - $4.5 returned for every $1 invested in the program.
  - $33 million in savings and avoided costs.
  - Significant reductions in process times and costs across various departments (e.g., 20% faster processing of DNA tests, $6.2 million recovered in overpayments, 15% decrease in speed-related deaths).
  - Improved public services such as faster service delivery, streamlined processes, and increased customer satisfaction.

Length	Description	Details
3 min	Welcome and introductions	Background and qualifications
7 minutes	Change is hard	Paired exercise emphasizing how hard it is to effectuate change. Change: ▪ Is loss ▪ Is difficult ▪ Snaps back almost immediately, if not actively managed
15 min	Comprehensive system of change management	▪ Most (>70%) of transformations fail ▪ 3 circles of simultaneous change required to execute and sustain ▪ Management system: Metrics (yesterday) and dialogs ▪ Overview of what constitutes good performance dialogs
10 min	Evaluation of current practices	Paired exercise OR MSU Denver ▪ Current practices in participants' organizations ▪ Themes for strengths and weaknesses
10 min	Pitfalls when managing performance	▪ Common pitfalls, mindsets ▪ This is not research, it's not about knowing the 'correct' answer ▪ It's about doing something different that causes the numbers to move (in a positive direction)
10 min	Root cause problem-solving	▪ Continuous improvement (Pitstop analogy) ▪ Presentation of tools to use in performance dialogs
5 min	Personal reflection	▪ How comprehensive is your change program, and to what extent is there a clear vision of the future state across each of the 3 systems? ▪ Do you recognize any of the pitfalls in your organization? Are they explicitly being addressed proactively? ▪ To what extent is your organization employing root cause problem-solving tools and techniques? How widespread is their use?

Navigating Resistance in Data Dialogues

Length	Description	Details
5 min	Common themes of resistance	6 common objections and how they can stall progress
10 min	Comprehensive system of performance dialogs	▪ Top-to-bottom organizational structure ▪ Standardized agendas and follow-through ▪ Use of AI in performance dialogs
10 min	What will it take to overcome resistance?	Paired exercise and plenary debrief ▪ Leadership for cultural change ▪ Develop four components o Role-modeling, Formal Mechanisms, Capability-building, Understanding & conviction
5 min	Introduction to influencing model	Walk through each of the steps in the model
10 min	Mapping of key influencers	Tools and techniques to identify and work with key formal and informal influencers (individuals) to overcome resistance
15 min	Organizational and individual commitments	Individual exercise with plenary debrief ▪ In your organization o 10 ideas to address resistance based on the influencing model o 3-5 key influencers and 'From-To' description ▪ What will you do this week? Next week?
5 min	Wrap-up	Recap of the insights from 10-12am session