



An Australian Government Initiative

“The Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast Primary Health Network sought to provide tiers of support for quality improvement activities to our general practices in 2019-2020 and identified the Improvement Foundation as the preferred provider for this professional coaching and education service.

In 2019 all PHN’s were tasked by the Commonwealth Government with supporting general practice transition to a new Practice Incentive Payment specifically for Quality Improvement activities. This prompted consideration our internal capacity and our ability to consistency deliver this support across our PHN region. Whilst PHN staff had provided quality improvement advice and resources to practices over some years, the PHN’s service level in each geographical area was somewhat dependent on the experience and confidence of local staff members. We resolved to first support our staff refresh and update their knowledge and skill at supporting quality improvement activities, and secondly to commission a readily available suite of service offerings to our general practices that could be deployed consistently across our PHN region.

In the field of coaching and educating general practice on the implementation of quality improvement methods and approaches, PHN considered the Improvement Foundation to be the preferred provider. This assessment was based their history of working with general practice and achieving demonstrable health outcome improvements through the application of quality improvement methodologies.

The Improvement Foundations’ familiarity with the operations and priorities of general practice, and their empirical approach and application of an evidenced based methodology was well regarded by PHN. PHN staff who had experience participating in Improvement Foundation programs in past years provided favourable accounts and credited them with the development of their skill in the area. The Improvement Foundation also focuses exclusively on this particular field of health system management and clinical leadership in primary care.

PHN discussed the suite of service offerings we wished to provide and worked with us to come up with a series of education webinars, a suite of resources, and a more intensive coaching service. This range of service offering was designed to ensure all general practices could access support for their quality improvement activities in manner that suited the practice: self-service use of online resources, general education and upskilling webinars; and a more intensive twelve month coaching service offered to 30 practices through an EOI.

In addition, the Improvement Foundation were commissioned to provide a full days’ education for PHN staff, tailored to our needs, after completion of a de-identified assessment their understanding of quality improvement methodology. To further support our staff throughout the year, Improvement Foundation provided a series of group coaching sessions, where staff could pose questions and case study dilemmas from the general practices they were supporting.

Key to the PHN’s design of the coaching services was that practices were able to choose the subject matter they wished to do quality improvement activities on. The Improvement

Foundation was able to accommodate this open selection of subject matter. They were also able to provide a comprehensive monthly benchmarking data set on a wide range of health outcome measures to support this latitude.

The Improvement Foundation also accommodated the PHN's desire to place our staff alongside their consultants in the virtual coaching sessions, so as to gain the benefit of vicariously learning throughout the series of thirteen coaching sessions over the year. This provided our staff with a deeper and more practical understanding of not only the fundamentals of quality improvement methodology, but the skill of coaching a practice in the application of that methodology.

Crucially, the Improvement Foundation were able to accommodate a pause in the provision of coaching services to practice during the most disruptive three months of COVID-19 adjustment, and pick up the coaching again, circumstances had normalised in Queensland. This accommodation was appreciated by the practices and the PHN.

At every turn the Improvement Foundation were adaptive, professional and a pleasure to work with. With the overwhelming focus now on COVID-19, it is worth remembering that a commitment to fundamental principles of clinical leadership and practice is a perennially sound investment.”