



Continuous Improvement for Excellence

“The things we fear most in organizations – fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances – are the primary source of creativity.” – Margaret J. Wheatley

Margaret Wheatley’s quote speaks to the invigorating, creative, and realistic side of change as well as the need for all members of an organization to look at how to continuously improve in order to be nimble and able to creatively address fluctuations, opportunities, disturbances, and imbalances. Thinking about future possibilities and directions to meet stakeholder needs allows organizations to break out of their current way of thinking, look at their processes and service models, and tap into their creativity. Today, more than ever in the history of higher education, individually and organizationally employees are being called upon to be innovative, to look at processes, procedures, and structures and ask, “How can we do things more effectively and efficiently?”

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Why Strive to Continuously Improve?



Cornell realizes the importance of continuous improvement and the synergy and power that results from aligning purpose, people, and values – what is done (purpose), resources to do what is done (people), and how people go about doing those things (values).

Organizational Development for Faculty & Staff (ODFS) facilitates processes, sessions, and retreats to help leaders align and integrate their organizational goals and objectives with those of the university. We work with groups to optimize and align the talents of each employee to the university’s strategic plan and goals, and help the group understand the current state and align future goals, objectives, action plan/tactics, and resources to achieve greater productivity and efficiency.

While ODFS might suggest some processes and frameworks that are known to work and that have proven to be successful across units, we tap into each group’s individual and group expertise. A planning process involves the group:

- Developing a sense of team such that the group can engage in honest and respectful dialogue with the goal of being nimble and increasing effectiveness and efficiency.
- Understanding the group’s mission and vision and how it fits into the whole of Cornell.
- Understanding the environment in which the group works and how that environment impacts their work.
- Understanding their stakeholders’/decision-makers’ (Cornell Board of Trustees, president, provost, vice presidents, deans, directors, co-workers, and customers) expectations, needs, and wants.

- Understanding how the group engaged in the goal alignment is perceived by key stakeholders/decision makers, in order to use that information to inform future continuous improvement. This information is often gathered from customers/clients (individuals to whom the service is exchanged), employees (the group engaged in the goal alignment effort), and owners/administrators/key decision-makers (president, provost, vice presidents, deans, directors to whom the group reports) using reliable processes and metrics to determine future directions and possibilities.

Various frameworks can be applied when striving to achieve excellence. One example that has been developed and applied at Cornell is the [Stakeholder Alignment Model](#), which focuses on:

- Developing the organization by developing each individual;
- Engaging all employees in actively managing their own performance and professional development;
- Providing supervisors and managers with resources and tools to create and develop processes that work for their staff; and
- Consciously focusing on continuous improvement.

Leaders at Cornell are leaders of organizational change. Leaders can expect to be called upon to consider the processes and tools available to make changes at an organizational level, and will strive to develop best practices that result in excellence for individuals, units, and the university. A leader can only know if something is a best practice if the change is measured. That makes it possible to determine if that practice resulted in continuous improvement. Hence, strategic planning at the level of the president and provost goes hand-in-hand with change leadership, which includes goal alignment, process improvement, implementation and continuous improvement.

A first step is to know where the university is going and why (strategic planning at the university level). Once senior leaders have determined the strategic plan, it is important for each unit to align their goals to that plan and determine if current processes and/or behaviors are effective and efficient. If they are not, the goal of the change leadership is to creatively and systematically create new processes, procedures, or structures that help individuals and groups be more effective. Once changes are identified, it is important to consider the impact that making the change will have to the organization and individual employees: “What will the change mean for those who are responsible, those who are accountable, those who are impacted? How will it alter work flow and work processes? What needs to be considered in terms of technology, individuals, and team dynamics?”

Continuous Improvement for Excellence as a Method to Measure Progress

Cornell’s Continuous Improvement for Excellence (CIE) is a systematic methodology that provides tools to help enhance existing programs and processes, improve effectiveness, foster a collaborative work environment, and tap the expertise of employees. More +

Our focus on continuous improvement is built on:

- Knowledgeable and ever-developing leadership at all levels, with leaders who understand and are committed to Cornell’s mission of supporting and furthering education, research, and community outreach.
- Understanding one’s stakeholders and aligning and prioritizing their wants and needs by using effective processes and service approaches. Stakeholder alignment involves aligning the various needs and wants of key customers, employees, and owner/administrators with you own work and service capabilities so that the priorities of all three kinds of stakeholders are met.
- Open and honest team dialogue, effectiveness, and decision making that lead to quality improvements and a common understanding of systems and processes.
- Measuring what matters and developing quantifiable data and consistent values for decision-making.
- Conceptual and applicable links to strategic planning, unit, department, and individual measurable goals.

Continuous Improvement for Excellence Tools

ODFS uses a variety of individual, supervisor, manager, and team or group measurement tools and processes, and will help you custom-design any survey or tool to best meet your needs. Tools we have readily available are below. If a tool is underlined, click on it to see a sample web version. More +

360-Degree Feedback

- [for Staff](#) (pdf)
- [for Supervisors](#) (pdf)

- [for Department and Division Leaders](#) (pdf)
- Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI) – Please contact [Kathy Burkgren](#) at 255-7867 to learn more about ECI.

Climate Check

- Sample [Climate Check](#) (pdf)survey

Customer Survey Examples: (Customer surveys are customized to the group)

- [CUFA Human Resource Development Services \(sample survey\)](#) (pdf)
- [Campus to Campus Bus Service Survey](#) (pdf)
- [Department of Building Care Survey](#) (pdf)

Supervisor and Team Assessments:

- [Supervisor Feedback Survey](#) (pdf)
- [Team Feedback Survey](#) (pdf)
- [Group Management Questionnaire \(GMQ\)](#) (pdf)

Process Mapping

- The appropriate individuals work together to define the current process, look for efficiencies, and map out, vet, revise, and implement the new process.

[Stakeholder Alignment Model](#)

Learn more about the Stakeholder Alignment Model and how it can help to achieve excellence. This page includes an overview and an in-depth look at the model.

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