

# NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

## Factsheet: Continuous Improvement Planning

This resource has been developed to assist providers to meet the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Practice Standards (Practice Standards) with regards to **continuous improvement**.

There are several outcomes, quality indicators and references to continuous improvement in the Practice Standards that require organisations to have a documented approach to continuous improvement. It is a condition of registration that NDIS providers respond to the Practice Standards and implement the required actions.

This resource includes:

- **What is continuous improvement and why is it important?**
- **Continuous Improvement and the NDIS Practice Standards.**
- **Audits and evidencing continuous improvement.**

## What is Continuous Improvement and why it is important?

Continuous improvement is always looking for ways to do things better.

Organisations that are committed to continuous improvement create a culture where the people they support are listened to, mistakes are something to be learned from and staff at all levels are encouraged to contribute and speak up.

Continuous improvement strategies can help identify and reduce risks within an organisation, create efficiencies or boost productivity but most importantly, continuous improvement strategies can lead to business process improvements, improved service delivery and better outcomes for people with disability.

One of the key principles of the NDIS Act is a requirement that ‘innovation, quality, continuous improvement, contemporary best practice and effectiveness in the provision of supports to people with disability are to be promoted.’

### How does innovation link to improvement?

As part of the Business Characteristics Survey released in July 2022, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released [Key innovation data in Australian Business](#). Australian businesses shared the key benefits they experienced from introducing new goods, services or processes to their business. These included:

- improved customer service
- increased revenue
- increased productivity
- gaining a competitive edge
- reduction in costs
- improved work safety standards
- social benefits – e.g., more community engagement
- environmental benefits.

**When asked about the sources of ideas or information of innovations,** businesses advised these were most commonly found, within the business or organisation or from clients and customers. Other ideas or information came from competitors, research, conferences and seminars, government agencies and industry associations.

Continuous improvement opportunities may be identified in everyday work and life. They may be raised in conversations, in feedback, complaints, following a focused review of practice or as the result of an incident. Ideas to improve services can come from anyone including people with disability, family, carers, staff, and volunteers.

Each organisation is different, but an organisation that demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement will:

- have tools and systems in place to identify, track and record issues or risks;
- invest in solutions; and
- actively seek feedback and suggestions on how they can improve.

### Continuous Improvement and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Practice Standards

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has a focus on improving quality and safety of NDIS supports and services. They educate, guide, and provide best practice information to NDIS providers. This includes supporting continuous improvement and delivery of progressively higher standards of supports and services to people with disability.

There are several outcomes, quality indicators and references to continuous improvement in the Practice Standards that require organisations to have a documented approach to continuous improvement. It is a condition of registration that NDIS providers respond to the Practice Standards and implement the required actions.

Below is an outline of the modules, outcomes and quality indicators which include concepts or direct reference to continuous improvement.

Core Modules	
Core Module	Outcome and /or Quality Indicator
<b>Governance and Operational Management</b>	<b>Quality Indicator:</b> (5) The performance of management, including responses to individual issues, is monitored by the governing body to drive continuous improvement in management practices.

Core Modules	
Module	Outcome and /or Quality Indicator
Quality Management	<p><b>Outcome:</b> Each participant benefits from a quality management system relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider, which promotes continuous improvement of support delivery.</p> <p><b>Quality Indicators:</b> (1) A quality management system is maintained that is relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider and the scope and complexity of the supports delivered. The system defines how to meet the requirements of legislation and these standards. The system is reviewed and updated as required to improve support delivery.</p> <p>(3) The provider’s quality management system supports continuous improvement, using outcomes, risk related data, evidence-informed practice and feedback from participants and workers.</p>
Feedback and Complaints Management	<p><b>Quality Indicator:</b> (3) Demonstrated continuous improvement in complaints and feedback management by regular review of complaint and feedback policies and procedures, seeking of participant views on the accessibility of the complaints management and resolution system, and incorporation of feedback throughout the provider’s organisation.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the <a href="#">NDIS Code of Conduct</a> also states that providers should use complaints data to inform continuous improvement.</p>
Incident Management	<p><b>Quality Indicator:</b> (3) Demonstrated continuous improvement in incident management by regular review of incident management policies and procedures, review of the causes, handling and outcomes of incidents, seeking of participant and worker views, and incorporation of feedback throughout the provider’s organisation.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the <a href="#">NDIS Code of Conduct</a> also states that providers should ensure incidents and responses inform continuous improvement.</p>



Supplementary Modules	
Module	Outcome and /or Quality Indicator
Functional Behaviour Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans	<b>Outcome:</b> Each participant’s quality of life is maintained and improved by tailored, evidence-informed behaviour support plans that are responsive to their needs.
Behaviour Support Plan Monitoring and Review	<b>Outcome:</b> Each participant has a current behaviour support plan that reflects their needs, improves their quality of life and supports their progress towards positive change. The plan progresses towards the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices, where these are in place for the participant.
Supporting Assessment and Development of Behaviour Support Plans	<b>Outcome:</b> Each participant’s quality of life is maintained and improved by tailored, evidence-informed behaviour support plans that are responsive to their needs.
Reportable Incidents Involving the Use of a Restrictive Practice	<b>Quality Indicator:</b> (4) Where an unauthorised restrictive practice has been used, the workers and management of providers implementing behaviour support plans engage in debriefing to identify areas for improvement and to inform further action. The outcomes of the debriefing are documented
Early Childhood: Capacity Building	<b>Quality Indicator:</b> (4) Collaboration is undertaken to affirm, challenge, and support the child, family and collaborating providers to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships. Feedback and learnings from the child, family and other professionals is used to improve support delivery



## What information can trigger improvement actions?

Different activities within an organisation could trigger or uncover a need for an improvement action. It is important to have processes in place to capture this information, so it can be recorded and followed up.



**Participant or organisational outcomes:** Reviewing the organisation's performance in different areas.



**Risk related data:** Both potential and actual risks identified and managed through your organisation's systems.



**Evidence informed practice:** The knowledge and input of workers. The outcomes and support goals being achieved by the participants you support.



**Feedback from participants and workers:** Information gathered by the organisation, informal and formal, through engagement with participants.



**Complaints, incidents and investigations:** Issues which occur through the process of service delivery.



**Performance reviews:** Performance of your teams, key performance indicators.



**Emergencies and disasters:** Prevention, preparation, response and review of emergencies and disasters.



**Audit findings:** Your audit report may identify opportunities for improvement.



## Continuous Improvement and Audits

Providing evidence of continuous improvement is not just desirable at audit time, it is expected. At any stage of audit, it is expected that any non-conformities received previously have been addressed, but also that there is an ongoing commitment to a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation.






Through the audit process it is important for providers to be able to demonstrate that systems and processes are underpinned by the principles of continuous improvement and show the progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement.

### How can continuous improvement be evidenced?

Through documented evidence of auditing and reviewing:

-  Policies and procedures
-  Board skills and effectiveness
-  Staff performance
-  Organisational performance
-  Participant and staff satisfaction
-  Effectiveness of risk management
-  Complaints and incidents management

Through improvements that are evident in:

-  Workers' practices which align with policies and procedures
-  Continuous improvement and risk registers which show the improvement from start to finish
-  Strategic and operational plans
-  Outcomes of participants and evidence of how this was achieved
-  Feedback which is regularly gathered and acted on



This factsheet from the NDIS Commission [NDIS Commissions Continuous Improvement Continuum Factsheet](#) identifies a range of continuous improvement activities that NDIS providers do.

For information and resources to assist you to develop and implement these activities, see [NDS Quality Management](#).

**Please note:** This resource was reviewed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.

