Improvement Model for Evaluation (IME) Framework Materials

1. IME Framework Description

The Improvement Model for Evaluation (IME) is a structured, systems-based evaluation approach grounded in the principles of Quality Improvement (QI) and directly derived from the Model for Improvement (MFI). The IME emphasizes iterative learning processes, rapid-cycle testing, and decision-making informed by key stakeholders to enhance evaluation relevance and utility.
Aligned with the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, the IME embeds small-scale, data-informed testing and continuous learning into evaluation practices.

The IME Framework draws foundationally from the Model for Improvement, which was developed in the 1990s by Gerald J. Langley, Ronald D. Moen, Kevin M. Nolan, Thomas W. Nolan, Clifford L. Norman, and Lloyd P. Provost of Associates in Process Improvement (API). The MFI was first introduced in The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance (1996) as a structured framework for implementing and testing organizational changes.

The IME bridges the gap between implementation and evaluation, integrating real-time monitoring and adjustment to generate timely, actionable insights that support continuous program learning and adaptation.

2. Core IME Process Diagram

PRE-WORK ➔ PLAN ➔ DO ➔ STUDY ➔ ACT ➔ ADVANCE & DISSEMINATE

- Pre-Work: Identify context and frame the problem; engage co-producers.
- Plan: Develop the improvement plan, identify measures, and prepare for implementation.
- Do: Implement tests of change and collect relevant data.
- Study: Analyze data, reflect on findings, and evaluate results.
- Act: Adjust based on findings; adopt, adapt, or abandon changes.
- Advance & Disseminate: Sustain improvements and communicate learning across stakeholders.
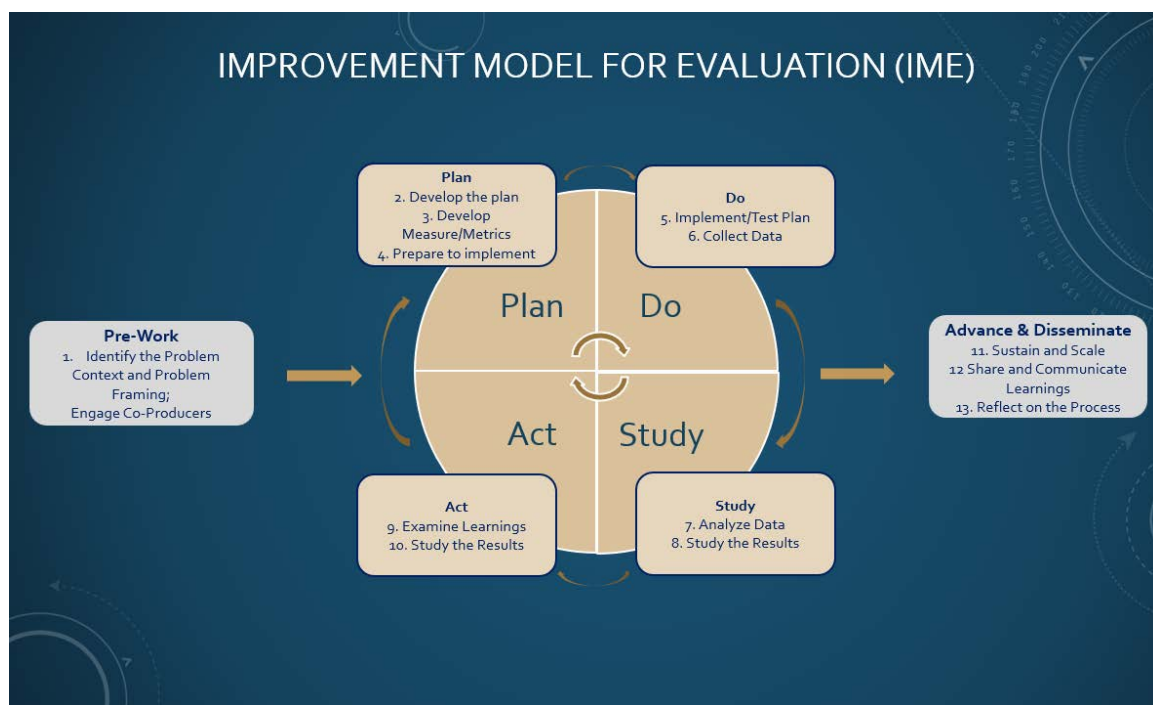
3. Diagrams and Figures

The IME Framework utilizes a variety of conceptual tools to support improvement-driven evaluation, including:

- IME Phase Cycle Diagram

- Selected Tools Organized by Purpose:
- - Planning & Change Design: Driver Diagrams, AIM Statements, Change Packages, FMEA, Force Field Analysis
- - Measurement & Monitoring: Run Charts, Control Charts, Data Collection Matrix
- - Exploration & Root Cause Analysis: Fishbone Diagram, 5 Whys, Process Maps, Pareto Chart, SWOT Analysis
- - Engagement & Co-Production: Co-Producer Mapping, Communication Plans, Co-Design Templates
- - Testing & Learning: PDSA Worksheets, Change Logs, Nominal Group Technique

4. IME Framework Phases (Tables)

The Improvement Model for Evaluation (IME) is organized into distinct but interconnected phases that structure the evaluation process. Each phase builds on iterative learning and rapid-cycle feedback, supporting continuous improvement and adaptive decision-making. The following tables summarize the key activities, purposes, and outcomes associated with each phase of the IME framework.

Relationship of Improvement Model for Evaluation (IME) to PDSAs

IME Phase	IME Step	Corresponding PDSA Phase	Purpose/Notes	Example Tools
Pre-Work	1. Identify the Problem	Context/problem framing	Clarifies what needs improving and why; Co-Producer input begins here.	Fishbone diagram, driver diagram, Co-Producer analysis
Plan	2. Develop the Plan with Co-Producers	Plan	Designs the change idea and defines an AIM; connects with logic models or theories of change.	AIM statements, logic models, theory of change
Plan	3. Develop Measures and Metrics	Plan	Specifies how success will be measured and tracked.	Measurement plan, SMART goals, operational definitions
Plan	4. Prepare for Implementation	Plan	Defines roles, timeline, and logistics for the test.	RACI chart, implementation checklist
Do	5. Implement and Test the Plan	Do	Execute the change in a real-world setting; begin capturing implementation notes.	Test logs, observation protocols
Do	6. Collect Data	Do	Gather data to monitor fidelity, implementation context, and progress on defined outcomes.	Metrics of aims and measures
Study	7. Analyze Data	Study	Compile and organize data for review; prepare key summaries for interpretation.	Qualitative and quantitative data
Study	8. Study the Results	Study	Interpret results against the AIM; identify patterns, outliers, and key lessons for learning and improvement.	Run charts, control charts, qualitative analysis
Act	9. Examination of learnings from PDSA	Act	Synthesize learning to inform next steps and ensure knowledge capture for future cycles.	Decision matrix, change package tracker
Act	10. Adopt, Adapt, or Abandon	Act	Make a judgment based on findings to refine or scale the change strategy.	Summary and outcome documentation
Advance and Disseminate	11. Sustain and Scale	Outturns Post-PDSA (scaling/sustaining)	Supports integration of effective practices into standard operations.	Sustainability rubric, spread plan
Advance and Disseminate	12. Share and Communicate Learnings	Post-PDSA (knowledge sharing)	Disseminates results across teams or systems to support organizational learning.	Storyboard, learning report, A3 summary
Advance and Disseminate	13. Reflect on the Process	Post-PDSA (meta-evaluation)	Assesses the improvement process itself to inform future efforts.	Process reflection guide, evaluator journaling

PRE-WORK

IME Phase	IME Step	Corresponding PDSA Phase	Purpose/Notes	Example Tools
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PLAN

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STUDY

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5. Key Benefits for Evaluators

The IME Framework offers evaluators a structured approach that strengthens evaluation practice in several key ways:
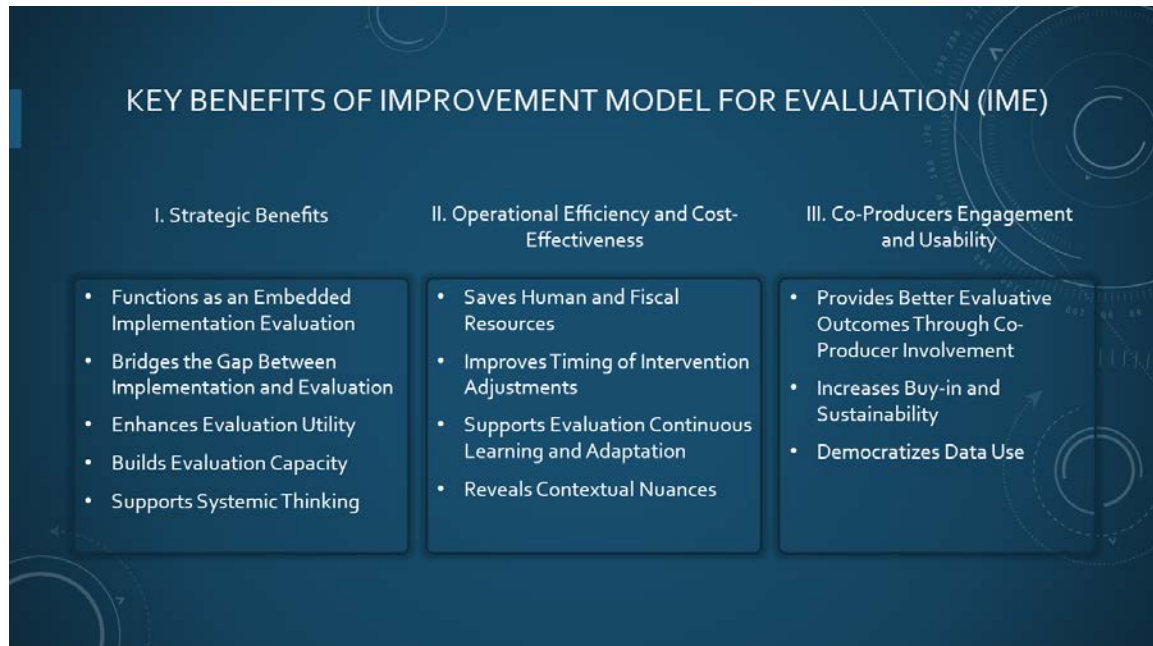
Strategic Benefits
- Embedding evaluation within implementation processes
- Enhancing real-time data utility for decision-making
- Building evaluation capacity among practitioners
- Supporting systemic, theory-driven analysis

Operational Efficiency
- Reducing human and financial resource waste
- Enabling earlier adjustments to interventions
- Promoting continuous learning and adaptation
- Surfacing contextual nuances critical to success

Co-Producer Engagement
- Increasing stakeholder buy-in and sustainability
- Democratizing access and use of evaluation data
- Ensuring evaluation relevance through active co-production

6. IME Framework Manual Outline

Introduction
- Purpose and Value of the IME Framework
- Alignment with Improvement Science and Evaluation Practice

Core Concepts
- Systems Thinking and Variation
- The Role of Stakeholders in Evaluation
- Importance of Iterative Testing and Learning

Phased Approach
- Pre-Work
- Plan
- Do
- Study
- Act
- Advance and Disseminate

Tools and Techniques
- Practical Resources for Implementation
- Data Collection Strategies
- Reflection and Continuous Improvement