College of Policing

Continuous improvement self-assessment

A practical guide for facilitating self-assessment against a continuous improvement matrix

Contents

1.   About this guide

This guide is for anyone facilitating workshops and discussions to complete self-assessments that support continuous improvement in forces. Force improvement leads and practitioners may be aware of the College of Policing's continuous improvement self-assessment matrix (CI SAM), which is published to our **peer support webpage**.

The peer support team are often asked for advice and guidance on how to facilitate self-assessment against CI SAM. We have produced this guide to share an example of a self-assessment facilitation method that we use. This is just one example of a variety of different methods that can be used. This method can also assist implementation of self-assessment against any improvement matrix, not just CI SAM.

Force improvement leads and practitioners will determine what will work best within their force, considering factors such as resource availability, time, their force's improvement culture, and the risks and benefits of the approach. We would like to invite forces to contact us and share the different self-assessment techniques they use, and we can share these methods for all forces to access.

The need to share knowledge and practice among continuous improvement peers in forces has added impetus from the national **Policing Vision 2030**. The vision identifies priority themes to make transformative change across policing that are set out under five pillars. One of those themes is to embed a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in policing. The College's peer support team hosts 'Continuous improvement in policing peer network' meetings, which focus on how we can work together to better embed that culture. We hope you will join the network to share and learn with us and your colleagues in other forces. Recordings of all meetings held to date can be found in the 'CI in policing network' folder of the **peer support group on Knowledge Hub**.

To join the network or to share what you are doing in relation to self-assessment techniques and continuous improvement more broadly, contact us by email (**ODfaculty@college.police.uk**).

2.   College self-assessment workshop approach

The example set out in the following sections is a half-day facilitated workshop. The workshop aims to discuss and evaluate the findings from individuals' self-assessment of their force, unit, team or function against an improvement matrix. This is to reach a consensus on the strengths and areas for improvement, then to agree recommendations and to develop an improvement plan. The College has received positive feedback on this approach. It is a highly participative and visual process that allows participants to contribute to discussions in a variety of ways, reflecting different working and learning styles. This requires skilled and enthusiastic facilitators with active listening skills and an ability to use different types of questioning techniques to nurture an open and inclusive workshop. They must also be confident to facilitate disagreement and, through reflection and observation, to challenge 'groupthink' where different perspectives are necessary.

3.   Preparing for the workshop

3.1. Workforce communication and engagement

Senior leaders or a sponsor will want to set a clear direction, make sure that everyone is clear about the purpose of the workshop and ensure that the key people are invited to participate. Good engagement and communication at the start will allow workshop participants to fully understand the why, who, what, where, when and how of the self-assessment, including the benefits and any risks. It's important to check that participants understand the process from start to end, as well as what their involvement and commitment will be at each step.

3.2. Workshop participants

Careful thought should be given to the improvement culture of the force and the make-up of the workshop participants, to ensure that open and detailed discussions can take place. While having senior leaders involved may enhance the chance of successfully managing its output, it may also detract from creating an environment within which people feel safe to speak openly and honestly. It may be more productive to run several workshops with groups from different areas of, or at different levels of, the force. This can assist in capturing different perceptions from a

broader range of people across the workforce, as well as promoting a safe space for effective discussions.

3.3.　Preparatory work for participants

Issue participants with the improvement matrix, as well as any related guidance and templates that you want them to complete prior to the workshop. Ensure that you provide sufficient time for them to complete their individual self-assessments. Make clear that they are required to bring their completed self-assessments to the workshop, including a list of evidence they can point to that supports the maturity score they have attributed to each enabler.

3.4.　Materials and room setup

The figures, under section 4.2 below, show the use of pinboards and brown paper that has been coated with spray mount glue and cards. As a minimum, have the following materials to hand when conducting a facilitated workshop:

- a roll or sheets of brown paper

- sticky notes or cards of various sizes and colours

- a ruler (a large one if possible)

- flipchart pens

- flipchart paper

- Blu Tack

- scissors

- a digital camera or devices for taking photographs of the output from each step – this is a reliable and easy way of recording and sharing the event

Give thought to the choice of room and layout. Arrange chairs in a horseshoe layout facing the brown paper, which should be prepositioned on the pin boards or walls.

4.　Running the workshop

4.1.　Objectives

The key objectives for the workshop are to:

- share all scores for each enabler, from each participant's individual self-assessment

- discuss and understand the range of results and reasons behind any significant variations

- explore one enabler in depth, or several enablers at a higher level

- review the reliability of the evidence used to support each score

- group the issues preventing higher scores, to allow the group to focus on what steps can be taken to improve

- create an agreed, high-level action plan for improvement against the chosen enabler(s)

4.2. Suggested steps to achieve the objectives

Step one – Objectives

Following the introductions, clearly set out the objectives of the workshop and the steps to achieve the objective, as shown in Figure 1 below. Move the red arrow along the roadmap during the workshop to indicate which stage you are at.

Figure 1: An example of a roadmap used to set out the objectives of the workshop.
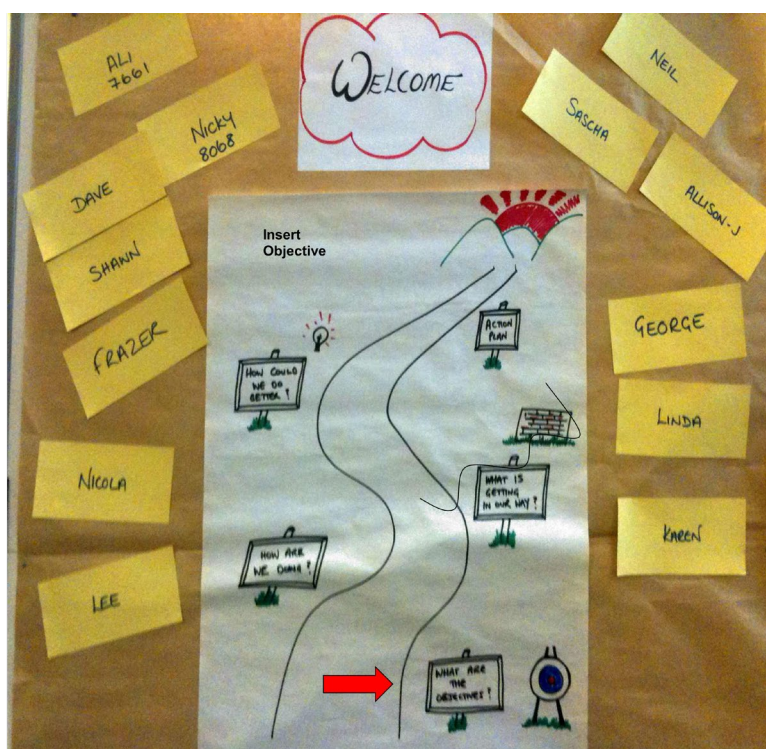
Step two – Display results of individual assessments

Ask participants to place their individual maturity assessment score against each enabler, as shown in Figure 2 below. The enablers and levels of maturity shown below are those used in CI SAM, but you can tailor them to reflect those used in the particular improvement matrix you are self-assessing against. You may want to ask participants to write the score on the sticker (or whatever other method you use, such as small sticky notes) before asking them to place it on the paper. This should prevent any peer pressure that could lead participants to change their score at the last minute in response to others.

Figure 2: An example of workshop attendees' individual maturity assessment scores placed against each enabler used in CI SAM.

Step three – Explore the outliers

Once you have captured all the scores, you can explore the reasons for any outliers. You may want to capture these reasons and display them next to each outlier. However, to maintain an atmosphere of openness, participants should not feel compelled to explain the reasons for their scoring.

Step four – Choose one or more enablers to explore in depth

For a half-day session, we recommend you either explore one enabler in depth, or several enablers in less detail. With all the results now displayed and discussed, ask the group which enabler(s) they want to explore. This may be based on the average scores – for example, the enabler with the lowest score. However, it is for the group to decide. If only one enabler is fully explored, then follow-up sessions could be arranged to cover the others.

Step five – Board blasting

Give each participant a marker pen and some cards or large sticky notes. Ask them to write the possible causes for scoring their organisation either high or low against each of the enablers. This could be based on the evidence identified during their individual assessments. Participants should only write one issue or piece of evidence per card, and it should be written clearly enough for others to be able to read and understand without further explanation.

Step six – Display and group

Depending on the size of the group and the number of different cards, you may only want to collect in some of the cards – for example, only their top five most important issues. It is recommended that this should be limited to 40. When displaying the evidence, the group will have an opportunity to add issues that have not already been covered by others. Collect all the cards and shuffle them – or if using sticky notes, vary the order in which you display them – to ensure a random mix. Display the issues on the board one by one, reading each out loud. This allows everybody to know what others have written, and to clarify any issues from the author if needed.

When displaying each issue, ask the participants whether it is the same or similar to the one that is already displayed, or completely different. If there is difference of opinion among the group, allow the author to decide, as only they know what they meant when writing the issue down. This will naturally generate groups. Once all issues have been displayed, separate the groups by drawing lines between them, and then ask the participants to name the groups, as shown in Figure 3 below. This can again lead to some debate, so stress that the name is not significant, just a convenient label.

Figure 3: An example of issues being grouped thematically and separated.

Step seven – Generate recommendations

Split the participants into two teams, with each team taking half of the group headings. Using the two templates shown in Figure 4 below, ask them to come up with ideas to address the issues, and to describe what the blockers to those ideas may be. Taking both the ideas and blockers into account, the teams should then suggest recommendations for improvement, again using cards or sticky notes.

Figure 4: A template for listing blockers, ideas and recommendations for improvement.
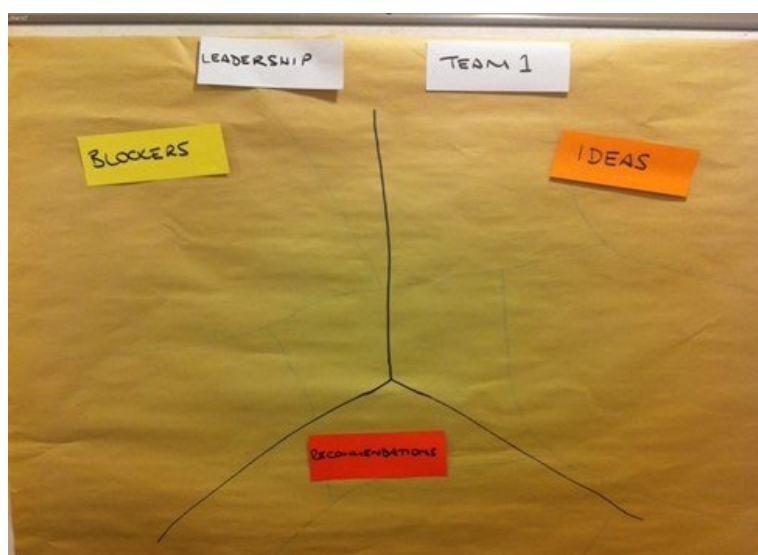
Step eight – Review each other's recommendations

Ask the teams to review each other's boards and put question marks against anything they do not understand or agree with. Bring them back together as one group and ask the relevant team to answer any questions.

Step nine – Next steps and action plan

Using the template shown in Figure 5 below, ask the participants to document the next steps against each recommendation identified in step seven above, including:

- what actions

- who is responsible

- with whom they will need to work

- when it should be completed

You may also want to consider any priority actions. It is advisable to use sticky notes or cards, rather than writing directly onto the brown paper, to allow changes to be made easily.

When identifying who is responsible, if possible, make sure that it is somebody who is in the room at the time of the workshop. This is so that actions are not assigned to people who have not been involved in the process, and so there is ownership for improvement by the group. This step naturally generates considerable debate, particularly around 'who' and 'when', and will need careful management to encourage all to reach a consensus. It is advisable to recognise how these may complement and progress objectives and priorities contained within other force strategies and plans, in order to integrate the two as part of the post-workshop activity set out below.

Figure 5: A template for participants to document the next steps against each recommendation identified.

5.   Post-workshop

Ensure that improvement actions are regularly reviewed by linking the self-assessment output to force planning and performance cycles.

To ensure that workforce engagement and morale is maintained, it is also essential that progress is frequently reported and celebrated. Acknowledge where there have been unforeseen barriers to implementing any of the improvement actions and what is being done to address that, as well as explaining why any actions may not be taken forward.

Consider and agree an appropriate timeframe to repeat the self-assessment process – for example 6, 12 or 18 months. Consider what is a reasonable expectation for the time it will take to implement most of the improvement actions and when you would therefore expect to see a positive movement along the matrix maturity levels.

6.   Contact us

We are keen to get your views on our practice example and to learn more about the approaches you use. We would also like to broaden the continuous improvement peer network across policing, so please do contact the peer support team by email (**ODfaculty@college.police.uk**).

About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge which officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

college.police.uk