QUALITY TOOLKIT

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TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

The Toolkit is structured around the idea of a cycle of inquiry. Quality is not static, a box to check off; it's a process of continual learning and striving for improvement. By following the phased structure of Visioning, Auditing, Implementing, then allowing the results of reflection and revision to feed into the next round of planning, program managers and organizations can develop a true practice of quality in action. Each phase includes processes of critical reflection to help program managers and organizations get curious about their own work.

The topic of quality is one that organizations should return to again and again. The Toolkit provides multiple pathways into the cycle of thinking about quality, and a structured process to help you define your vision for quality practice in dialogue with the vision that has been developed by the arts education community. This is a cycle you should constantly be working in, though you will be isolating and drilling down on a problem of practice one at a time.

STRUCTURE OF THE TOOLKIT

Visioning Quality

What are your educational programming values? What are the issues you are facing in your education programs? What's your strategy for enhancing the quality of your practice? How do you define your vision of quality practice? Answering these questions will help an organization to define a unique vision of quality. Part of developing this vision is developing a strategy for enhancing your practice of quality by articulating a series of problems of practice questions that represent core tensions and dilemmas in your work, problems that must be solved in order to make progress. The process of visioning quality should be specific to your arts education programming, but also weave notions of quality into larger organizational practice. Consider it your primary landscape analysis.

VISIONING QUALITY STEPS
1. Craft Values and Vision of Quality
2. Articulate a Problem of Practice
3. Identify Outcomes
4. Create a Project Management Plan

Auditing Quality

How does your vision align with your current practice? What do you need to do to solve the issues? How do you go about investigating how to solve your issues? This step in the cycle guides you along a process of inquiry to determine the extent to which your current practice aligns with your vision and best practices across the sector. This process of inquiry will help you investigate your problem of practice and determine a workable solution. Consider it a self-assessment or needs analysis.

AUDITING QUALITY STEPS
1. Evaluate Your Data Capacity Needs
2. Identify Acceptable Evidence and Data
3. Analyze, Evaluate, and Interpret Your Data
4. Create a Timeline for Implementation

Implementing Quality

How do you move from plan to action? What/who is responsible? What have you learned and how do you talk about it to stakeholders? This stage in the cycle helps you to parse out a strategy for putting your vision of quality, and solution to your problem of practice, into action. The accompanying tools help you identify the individuals responsible for each task, and to build your organization's capacity as needed.

IMPLEMENTING QUALITY STEPS
1. Implement Your Goals
2. Reflect and Learn
3. Communicate to Stakeholders
4. Identify Another Problem of Practice

BUILDING A QUALITY TEAM

Ingenuity recommends working through the Toolkit with a team of individuals from the same arts partner organization. At a minimum, this team should include one individual in each of the following types of roles: teaching artist; program manager or director; and executive director or director of education.

Teams can include more than one person representing each role, though we recommend keeping the team to a size that is manageable for meeting regularly and collaborating effectively. Don't worry—there will be plenty of opportunities for engaging everyone else in your organization throughout the process.

We also recommend inviting a board member to participate in the Quality process. Though it may not be practical for the board member to have as extensive a role as the staff members, it is important that at minimum, the board member be regularly updated, engage in conversation where possible, and have buy-in to the process and results.

Why is it important to go through the Quality process as a team? Quality is a team effort. Throughout the process, you will notice that every aspect of an organization's work is relevant to the quality of the arts teaching and learning that it facilitates. Developing solutions to your problem(s) of practice will require the perspective, insight, and collaboration of people in every role in your organization. For example, if you wish to develop a new curriculum, you will need the insights of a teaching artist into what will be most effective in the classroom; the insights of a program director in how that curriculum forms a part of the larger programmatic strategy; and the insights of an executive director if you need additional funding and board engagement to make the new curriculum a reality. Finally, at times key issues of quality can be solved simply by improving communication across the organization. Building a vertically integrated team facilitates communication during the Quality process and has been proven to provide organizations with new insights into how to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration once the Quality process is over.

FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY: 7 DIMENSIONS

The Foundations of Organizational Quality describe overarching processes of capacity-building that organizations need to pursue in order to enhance their practices of quality. The processes described in the Foundations enable organizations to achieve the specific dimensions of quality that are articulated in the **Organizational Framework.** For example, organizations need to be appropriately resourced—both financially and in terms of people power—before they will be able to fulfill their visions of quality.

The seven dimensions of the Foundations track with the processes of organizational development for quality contained in this Toolkit. In other words, the Foundations describe at a macro level the best practices that an organization would follow after it has successfully completed a quality review process.

The Foundations can be used by those responsible for an organization's high-level strategic planning—including but not limited to executive directors, boards, and funders—to ensure that quality is integrally woven into the organization's plan for capacity building.

1. Reflect and Strategize

MAKE A PLAN. Executive-level staff and board set quality as a strategic priority and allocate staff time—including a vertical cross-section of all levels of staff throughout the organization, i.e., Teaching Artists, program management, and executives—to dedicate to going through a process of strategic planning for quality. Even after the initial strategic planning for quality process takes place, staff have dedicated time to implement the results of that strategic planning process, and to continue to iterate on the organization's practices of quality.

2. Define

KNOW WHO YOU ARE. The organization has an institutional vision of and values for quality, which relate to the organization's overall mission and vision. This definition of quality is evident in every facet of the organization's practice.

3. Evaluating Capacity

WHAT DO YOU WELL AND WHAT DO YOU NEED TO IMPROVE? The organization regularly evaluates its capacity with respect to quality practice, and aligns its capacity-building goals for quality with its broader capacity-building efforts. The organization uses diagnostic tools and processes of reflection to assess strengths and weaknesses in its practice and plans accordingly to enhance its practice in areas of weakness and to continue its practices in areas of strength. The organization's capacity to provide its service is aligned to the real community demand for its service.

4. Data Fluency

HOW DO YOU KNOW? The organization clearly understands its needs and objectives regarding data, assessment, and evaluation. The organization's capacity for collecting, analyzing, and using data for assessment, evaluation, and organizational research purposes is aligned to its needs and objectives. The organization regularly assesses this capacity, and incorporates planning for its data collection, analysis, assessment, and evaluation needs into its broader strategic planning for capacity building. The organization is a learning organization, making meaningful use of its data products as part of its cycle of inquiry into its own work. Data products are not just for other stakeholders to demonstrate success—they are used as the foundation for the organization's critical reflection on its own work. The organization uses sound research and analysis methods, within the scope of its abilities and capacity, to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data itself and of the understandings the organization develops as a result of this data.

5. Budget

HOW MUCH MONEY? The organization's overall and program-specific budgets reflect investment in characteristics of quality, as defined by the organization's own vision of quality and by the **Quality Frameworks.**

6. Time

HOW MUCH TIME? The organization budgets and plans for the appropriate amount of staff and Teaching Artist time to carry out the elements of its own vision of quality, and of quality best practices (such as those reflected in the Framework). For example, Teaching Artists and staff have dedicated planning time in addition to content delivery minutes.

7. Message

WHAT'S YOUR STORY AND WHO'S LISTENING? The organization has consistency in message and vision, but targets communications appropriately to different stakeholders. The organization has an understanding of the range of stakeholders with which it needs to communicate and partner with in general, and with respect to implementing particular goals for quality. The organization has an understanding of what information those stakeholders find trustworthy, meaningful, and relevant, and translates its vision, assessment, and implementation of quality to the appropriate type of information for the given stakeholder.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Quality takes time and effort. You will not complete the Quality Toolkit in a day. This process will be most effective when supported by dedicated capacity—in the form of time, effort, and mental energy—across the organization. We recommend that in pursuing the Quality Toolkit process, organizations make this work a strategic priority. This includes setting aside staff time for the members of the core team to do this work; setting aside somewhat less time for the rest of the members of your staff to interact with members of the core team in organization-wide conversations and updates; and most importantly, gaining buy-in from every core constituency of your organization.

Reflecting on quality will make every organization and individual feel somewhat vulnerable. This is okay—it means you're thinking about the important questions! The Quality Toolkit process will succeed best if all participants are committed to meaningful, deep inquiry, and to creating a safe space for the reflective conversations that need to happen.

Buy-in also requires a commitment to making the changes that need to happen in order to achieve the vision of quality that you identify. Resources permitting, are the members of your organization ready to change processes, practices, and behaviors in response to your quality process?

Below are some sample timelines for completion of the Quality Toolkit process. The process will be most effective when completed in as intensive a manner as is practical for the capacity of your organization—momentum is helpful.

Three-Month Timeline

MONTH 1: VISIONING QUALITY
- Clarifying Organization's Values, including Organization-Wide Quality Conversation
- Framework Diagnostic
- Comparative Quality Conversation (organization's vision compared with Framework Diagnostic)
- Developing and Refining a Problem of Practice

MONTH 2-BEGINNING OF MONTH 3: AUDITING QUALITY
- Planning with the End in Mind: Thinking Critically About Assessment, Data, and Research
- Research and Data Capacity Assessment
- Research Thinking Training; Developing a Plan for Organizational Research
- Carrying Out Plan for Organizational Research
- Analysis and Interpretation of Organizational Research

END OF MONTH 3: IMPLEMENTING QUALITY
- Reflecting on Organizational Research and Progress on the Problem of Practice
- Mapping Strategy for Quality to the Framework
- Bridging the Capacity Gap
- Developing Understanding: Reflection and Analysis
- Communicating to Stakeholders
- Creating a Timeline and Plan for Implementation

Six-Month Timeline

MONTH 1: VISIONING QUALITY
- Clarifying Organization's Values
- Organization-Wide Quality Conversation

MONTH 2: VISIONING QUALITY
- Framework Diagnostic
- Comparative Quality Conversation (organization's vision compared with Framework Diagnostic)
- Developing and Refining a Problem of Practice

MONTH 3: AUDITING QUALITY
- Planning with the End in Mind: Thinking Critically About Assessment, Data, and Research
- Research and Data Capacity Assessment
- Research Thinking Training; Developing a Plan for Organizational Research

MONTH 4: AUDITING QUALITY
- Carrying Out Plan for Organizational Research

MONTH 5: AUDITING QUALITY
- Analysis and Interpretation of Organizational Research

MONTH 6: IMPLEMENTING QUALITY
- Reflecting on Organizational Research and Progress on the Problem of Practice
- Mapping Strategy for Quality to the Framework
- Bridging the Capacity Gap
- Developing Understanding: Reflection and Analysis
- Communicating to Stakeholders
- Creating a Timeline and Plan for Implementation

Twelve-Month Timeline

A twelve-month timeline may be more appropriate for organizations who are otherwise undergoing a strategic planning process or other major change.

Organizations seeking to do the Quality Toolkit process in tandem with another strategic planning process are advised to integrate specific Toolkit tools with their existing processes of strategic planning. For example, organizations revising their mission and vision statements can integrate the Visioning Quality tools into that process and even use the Visioning Quality tools to inform their new mission and vision.

Organizations who are undergoing a major change, but do not have a separate structured planning process in place—for example, this may happen after a leadership transition— are advised to start by doubling the six-month timeline and adjust as necessary for your particular situation.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE QUALITY PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Carefully review the Project Management Workbook on the next page. As you walk through the tasks and responsible staff, consider the following questions:

Who is the team of individuals engaged in this process?

At a minimum, this team should include one individual in each of the following types of roles: teaching artist; program manager or director; and executive director, education director, or senior-level decision maker.

How will your board be involved?

Though it may not be practical for a board member to have an extensive a role as the staff members, it is important that at minimum, the board member be regularity updated, engage in conversation where possible, and have buy-in to the process and results.

How will you vertically integrate communication about the Quality Process across the organization?

Building vertically integrated communication has proven to provide organizations with new insights into how to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration once the Quality Process concludes.

What is your desired timeline for completion?

The process will be most effective when completed in as intensive a manner as is practical for the capacity of your organization—momentum is helpful.

What additional tasks do you envision needing to add to the process?

Color Code for Quality Process and Timeline Management: Red = not yet complete | Yellow = in process | Green = complete

Phase	Task	Staff Responsible	Year (circle)				Status	Notes
VISIONING QUALITY	Clarifying Organization's Values, including Organization-Wide Quality Conversation		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Framework Diagnostic		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Comparative Quality Conversation (organization's vision compared with Framework Diagnostic)		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Developing and Refining a Problem of Practice		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
AUDITING QUALITY	Planning with the End in Mind: Thinking Critically About Assessment, Data, and Research		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Research and Data Capacity Assessment		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Research Thinking Training; Developing a Plan for Organizational Research		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Carrying Out Plan for Organizational Research		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Analysis and Interpretation of Organizational Research		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
IMPLEMENTING QUALITY	Reflecting on Organizational Research and Progress on the Problem of Practice		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Mapping Strategy for Quality to the Framework		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Bridging the Capacity Gap		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Developing Understanding: Reflection and Analysis		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Communicating to Stakeholders		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
	Creating a Timeline and Plan for Implementation		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		

02

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ROADMAP TO VISIONING QUALITY

02

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this section of the Quality Toolkit is to develop a vision of quality in practice tailored to your organization that is specific, clear, and actionable.

The tools in this section will help you to explore your organization's values and aspirations, and to translate these core principles into a statement describing how those values would be expressed in practice: in the classroom, in the conference room, and in the community.

> **THE VISION FOR QUALITY THAT YOU ULTIMATELY DEVELOP WILL BE:**
> - Clearly defined
> - Aligned to your organization's mission, vision, and values
> - Observable
> - Specific enough to identify how close your organization already is to achieving that vision

The Visioning Quality portion of the Toolkit is based on two parallel processes of exploring what matters to your organization. Your team should complete both processes—it doesn't matter which one you do first.

CLARIFYING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VISION FOR QUALITY:
This process will help you to identify your organization's values and objectives; identify the personal values around quality that members of your Quality Team and your organization at large hold; and to come to consensus around the values and objectives that you wish to reflect in your vision for quality.

VISIONING QUALITY USING THE ORGANIZATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK:
This process will help you to understand how your organization's vision for quality compares to the best practices outlined in the **Organizational Quality Framework.** You will complete a self-assessment to understand where your organization's vision and practice does or does not align to the Framework.

After completing both processes, your team will facilitate an organization-wide Quality Conversation to compare and contrast your results. You will then finalize your vision for quality, which will animate your work throughout the rest of the Quality Toolkit process.

The final stage of Visioning Quality will help you to translate your vision into a strategy for quality: What are you already doing well? What would you like to improve or change? You will identify a problem of practice—a dilemma that you need to solve in order to achieve one or more of your goals for quality—and work through it in the Auditing and Implementing Quality sections of the Toolkit.

The vision for quality that you develop here is intended to be a big-picture vision, one that can serve you in the long term—it should remain relatively constant and only change when your organization's underlying goals and values change. However, the specific approach you take to achieving this vision may vary each week, month, quarter, or year. After going through the Visioning Quality process once, you can return to the Auditing and Implementing Quality portions of the Toolkit over and over again to work on different problems of practice.

03

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ARTICULATING A PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

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03

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this tool is to help you to articulate a tangible and manageable Problem of Practice to guide your work in the rest of the Toolkit process. It's not possible to achieve perfection in an instant—enhancing your practice of quality can only be achieved one step at a time. This Problem of Practice is your first step.

The Quality Toolkit is designed to be cyclical. After you address your first Problem of Practice, you can revisit your strategy for quality and choose another, then work through the Toolkit from this point forward with respect to the new Problem of Practice that you have identified.

In the space below, draft a Problem of Practice—in the form of one or more questions—that articulates a burning question or dilemma you have about enhancing your practice of quality in one area of your work. The Problem of Practice should be designed to ask a question that leads you to a solution to a problem, one that will close a gap between your organization's current and future state. The answer to this question—to be investigated in the Auditing Quality portion of the Toolkit—must be practical, observable in some way, actionable, measurable, and applicable to more than one or a few people. Finally, the Problem of Practice should be designed to inquire into how to make your vision and values come to life.

> **HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:**
> Many of our students appear disinterested in theatre class. What can teaching artists do to increase interest and participation? What can teaching artists do to engage and inspire students? How can teaching artists promote student engagement?

In this Problem of Practice, the organization has identified a weakness in its practice of quality: many students appear disinterested in class. The organization has values of engaging and inspiring students, and wants its teaching artists to promote these values through their practice. At this point in the process, the organization does not know exactly how it can accomplish this—which is precisely the point. If the organization already knew the answer, it wouldn't be a problem! Now the organization can move forward with designing a plan to investigate this question. By solving this problem, the organization will be able to embody its values around quality in a way that is observable and actionable: it will see increased engagement and participation, and will have a concrete plan for supporting teaching artists in promoting student engagement.

You may have multiple Problems of Practice come to mind at this time. Choose the one that seems most critical—the key to unlocking multiple ways to enhance your organization's practice of quality. Looking at the different options before you, which Problem of Practice needs to be solved first, before you can achieve—or even begin to investigate—other problems?

Our draft Problem of Practice:

_____

_____

04

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

CLARIFYING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VALUES

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This tool is intended to help you identify your organization's fundamental values. Most organizations' core values are expressed in their mission, vision, and/or values statements. Some organizations also have other documents expressing their objectives.

Begin by gathering any mission, vision, values, and/or objectives statements that your organization has developed. Gather statements that apply to the organization as a whole, as well as any that might be specific to your education programming, if applicable.

If your organization does not have a mission statement, consider going through the process of creating one prior to beginning the Quality Toolkit.

COPY YOUR MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND/OR OBJECTIVES STATEMENTS BELOW, AS APPLICABLE. SIMPLY FILL IN ANYTHING YOU ALREADY HAVE ON HAND; DO NOT WRITE NEW STATEMENTS.

Our organization's mission statement:

Our education program's mission statement:

Our organization's vision statement:

Our education program's vision statement:

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Our organization's core values:

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Our education program's core values:

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Our education program's objectives:

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IDENTIFYING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CORE VALUES:

1. **Distribute** copies of your organization's mission/vision/values/objectives statements to everyone on your Quality Team. (You can also involve other people if you'd like, but it's not necessary.)

2. **Ask** each person to circle or highlight the words in each statement that jump out at them as descriptions of the organization's core values.

3. **Compare and analyze**

WORKING INDIVIDUALLY: If you are working with more than one mission/vision/values/objectives statement, how do the words or phrases you highlighted in each compare to each other? Are you seeing similar concepts across each statement? What are the key differences you are seeing between the values highlighted in each? How might the ideas highlighted in one compare with the ideas highlighted in another? For example, many organizations find that their objectives are more specific ways of articulating what their values look like in practice, and can identify this connection. You may find it useful to sketch, outline, or create other visual representations of how these concepts relate to each other.

Write down the words, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts that resonate across each of the statements you just reviewed.

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Write down any words, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts that you identified as important in one or more of the statements, but are still struggling to integrate into the bigger picture.

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Copy down any visual representations you may have created that describe how these concepts relate to each other.

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AS A GROUP, COME TOGETHER FOR A CONVERSATION AROUND THE VALUES YOU HIGHLIGHTED IN EACH STATEMENT.

Which words, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts did all or most people identify as important?

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Were there any words, phrases, ideas, and/or concepts that only certain people identified as important?

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Work to come to a consensus around the organization's core values, allowing the voices of everyone on your Quality Team to be heard. List these core values below.

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05

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

VALUES FOR QUALITY CROSSWALK

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05

Now that you have identified your organization's core values, you can explore these values further by placing them in context. This crosswalk tool will help you to compare your organization's values to the values of quality.

Values for Quality: A set of values for quality arts education practice as articulated by the arts education community.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWALK:

- **THIS CROSSWALK TAKES THE FORM OF A CHART OR GRID.** Please write your organization's values—as identified in the prior activity—across the top of the chart where indicated, one per box.

- **VALUES FOR QUALITY:** This crosswalk is already pre-populated on the vertical axis with the Values for Quality. Once you have placed your organization's values for quality across the top, you are ready to begin. Distribute a copy to each person on your Quality Team. Each person should check off the boxes where they feel one of the organization's values for quality aligns to or represents the corresponding Value. There are no right or wrong answers—it's simply about surfacing similarities and differences. Save each person's completed crosswalk.

YOUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES →
Key phrases, ideas, and concepts

Values of Quality

Student Centered and Student Driven Quality arts teaching and learning is student centered and student driven, both in and out of the classroom. Quality teaching and learning supports student agency, self-knowledge, self-discovery, self-expression, and self-empowerment.

Process Focused Quality arts teaching and learning is process focused—at all levels of scale, from classroom-based activities to understanding partnerships and relationships as processes.

Physically and Emotionally Safe Quality teaching and learning can only take place in a physically and emotionally safe space where students have the opportunity to grow through vulnerability and productive discomfort.

Pedagogically Aligned Best Practices Quality teaching and learning by arts partners makes use of research-tested pedagogical best practices, and includes alignment and collaboration with CPS teachers and administrators.

Collaborative, Relational, and Relationship Based Quality is collaborative, relational and relationship based. Quality relationships are equitable, respectful, trusting, and reciprocal. Quality in the classroom depends on strong relationships among all stakeholders, which in turn ensure that all parts of the arts education ecosystem work together to provide a quality experience for students.

Embraces Diversity and Cultural Competence Quality is built on an embrace of Chicago's diversity and on strong practices of cultural competence in all stakeholder relationships.

Strengths Based Quality is strengths-based at all levels, making use of the assets that all stakeholders bring to the table.

Required Equity Quality requires equity: of funding, resources, and access, including access to excellence and to a wide variety of artistic experiences. Quality thus requires advocacy by the arts sector and collaborative support from funders and policymakers.

Purposeful and Intentional Quality is purposeful and intentional. Expectations and outcomes are clear, shared, and planned for.

Is in the Physical, Tangible Details Quality is in the physical, tangible details. Fresh crayons and the right classroom space are as important as big-picture curricular strategies.

Is the Right of All Students Quality is the right of all students and is an end in itself.

06

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

PERSONAL VALUES FOR QUALITY CROSSWALK

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Now that you have identified your organization's core values and compared them to the Values for Quality, you can explore these values further by placing them in context. This crosswalk tool will help you to compare your organization's values with your personal values around quality.

The personal values for quality of individuals within your organization.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWALK:

● **THIS CROSSWALK TAKES THE FORM OF A CHART OR GRID.** Please write your organization's values—as identified in the prior activity—across the top of the chart where indicated, one per box.

● **PERSONAL VALUES FOR QUALITY:** This crosswalk is designed to help individuals within your organization understand their own values for quality, and where those values do or do not align to the organization's overall values for quality. Again, there are no right or wrong answers—this is just designed to surface perspectives as grounds for further conversation. Place your organization's values for quality across the horizontal axis on the top of the chart. Distribute a copy to each person on your Quality Team. Each person should reflect on their own values for quality and list these down the vertical axis of the chart on the left-hand side. Then, each person should check the relevant boxes where they feel one of their personal values intersects with or aligns to one of the organization's values. Save each person's completed crosswalk.

Personal Values of Quality

ORGANIZATION'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES
Key phrases, ideas, and concepts ↓

07

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

QUALITY CONVERSATION

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YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VALUES AND VISION FOR QUALITY

THIS TOOL IS DESIGNED TO:
- Share your Quality Team's thinking around your organization's values for quality with the broader organization in order to check your thinking and build buy-in
- Come to consensus around your organization's values for quality across the organization as a whole
- Translate your values for quality into a concrete, specific, and actionable vision for quality

This tool is a discussion guide to facilitate a Quality Conversation within your organization. Begin by identifying who you would like to invite to this conversation. For example, a smaller organization might wish to invite everyone, whereas it may be more practical for a large organization to invite only the education department plus a few colleagues in other departments with whom you frequently collaborate.

Once you have identified your participants, schedule a one-hour meeting, or one-hour portion of a larger meeting or retreat, dedicated only to this topic. Plan to audio-record this meeting (this can easily be accomplished using almost any model of phone or computer). Of course, give notice to your participants that you would like to record, and ask their consent to do so. Save your audio recording in multiple secure locations for future reference!

FACILITATION PROTOCOL FOR THE QUALITY CONVERSATION:

1. The Quality Team should share its work thus far in identifying the organization's values for quality.

- **SHARE THE VALUES** that you developed, and share the insights you gained when you compared the values articulated in different statements and sources. It may be useful to share your circled/highlighted statements and/or any visual representations you may have developed along the way.

- **ASK THE GROUP** whether the organization's values for quality resonate with them. Are there any changes that people might suggest? Work with the group to come to consensus around a final set of organizational values with which you'd like to move forward in the next stages of the Quality Toolkit process.

- **SHARE YOUR CROSSWALKS** and the insights you gained when comparing your organization's values for quality to the Values for Quality and your personal values for quality.

2.   Next, ask everyone present to complete their own crosswalks—both the Values for Quality and the personal values crosswalks (on pages 24 and 27 of this toolkit, respectively). Make sure to save copies of these completed crosswalks.

3.   After everyone has completed their crosswalks, facilitate a discussion around the following questions. Make sure to take notes, and to save these notes.

Where do people notice areas of similarity and difference between the organization's values for quality and the Values for Quality? After looking at the Values for Quality, are you inspired to add any values to your list? Or are there some that you think simply aren't relevant to you and your work? Why or why not?

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Do you notice any patterns in the similarities or differences identified—perhaps by job role or department?

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Where do people notice areas of similarity and difference between their personal values and the organization's values?

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How important is it to your organization that there be individual consensus around organizational values—and why or why not? For example, some organizations feel strongly that all staff should share particular values, while others do not feel that this is important. There is no right or wrong answer—this is about identifying what feels right to your organization. How does your group's answer to this question reflect your organization's values, approach, and/or philosophy?

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Based on your group's discussion around part the question above, are you inspired to make any changes to your organization's practice? For example, past organizations that have gone through this process have identified core values that they now plan to discuss in the hiring and orientation process for new teaching artists.

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AFTER YOUR ORGANIZATION'S QUALITY CONVERSATION, MAKE SURE TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO CAPTURE YOUR DISCUSSION:

Save and upload your audio recording to a secure location—ideally, more than one location.

Save any notes you may have taken and upload them as evidence.

If your group decided to revise your organization's values for quality, list your new values here:

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If your organization made drastic changes to your original list of values, your Quality Team may wish to consider going through the crosswalk activity again. If you choose to do so, save copies of these crosswalks as well.

After your organization's Quality Conversation, your Quality Team should reconvene to process the insights from this conversation and do further analysis.

Note: This does not have to be on the same day! In fact, it is probably better to wait at least a few days so that you have time to reflect on the discussion.

TAKE NOTES ON YOUR CONVERSATION AROUND EACH OF THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

If your organization-wide group decided to make changes to your organization's values for quality, take a moment to reflect on these changes. Were there any surprising perspectives that surfaced in your group-wide conversation? Where are the new values that were suggested coming from?

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Review the Values of Quality crosswalks that everyone completed in your organization-wide Quality Conversation. Please take notes on the similarities and differences you noticed among the staff in the Conversation and in completing the crosswalk of the Values of Quality against your organization's values for quality. In reflecting on this exercise, where is there consensus among the staff? Where is there diversity of perspective?

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REVIEW EVERYONE'S CROSSWALKS COMPARING ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL VALUES FOR QUALITY. WHAT JUMPS OUT AT YOU WITH RESPECT TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS? PLEASE TAKE NOTES IN RESPONSE.

Where do you see overlap between staff and organizational values? What about consensus among staff values?

_____

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_____

Where do you see divergence between staff and organizational values? What about differences of opinion among staff members?

_____

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What other interesting patterns do you notice? For any patterns that you notice, please share a few thoughts as to why you think these patterns might exist, and if you think it would be worthwhile for your organization to reflect further on any of them or incorporate any takeaways into your practice. (For example, if there are significant differences of opinion between teaching artists and administrative staff, it might be important to open communication around these differences to understand why they exist and whether you'd like the organization to come to greater alignment.)

_____

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_____

Take a moment to reflect on your organization's final list of values for quality. Did any insights surface in your organization-wide Quality Conversation as to how these values might be expressed in practice? Write down anything that comes to mind.

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08

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

08

ingenuity

ARTS PARTNER STANDARDS OF PRACTICE
DIAGNOSTIC TOOL: ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Quality in arts education is about:

1. **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR QUALITY**

2. **PREPARING FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION**

3. **EXECUTING QUALITY INSTRUCTION**

4. **CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

Organizations and individuals will exhibit a range of behaviors and actions across these four focus areas dependent on the context in which they operate. It is essential that all organizations are competent in each of the four focus areas: Building Capacity for Quality, Preparing for Quality Instruction, Executing Quality Instruction, and Continuous Quality Improvement.

To help practitioners understand and apply the **Organizational Framework**, each focus area is divided into components and each of these components is further divided into descriptive elements which organizations should be able to demonstrate.

This diagnostic tool aims to help you manage your own learning and development by allowing you to reflect on which areas of the Framework you and your organization would like to develop further.

1. Build Capacity for Quality

An integrated teaching approach that successfully combines both artistic and educational practices in the classroom is one of the most essential elements of quality. As an organization, supporting the integrated approach requires training and development for teaching artists and other staff members as well as a supportive, healthy organizational culture that supports excellence from the entire workforce. Look at the statements on the next page. On the scale next to each statement, choose a rating that reflects your competency in that area.

● **NO:** the organization does not have the item or characteristic described in this section

● **DEVELOPING:** the organization recognizes the need for the item or characteristic described in this section, and has made a commitment to develop or acquire it

● **YES:** the organization possesses the item or characteristic described in this section

Total your scores and reflect on what you have given yourself/the organization. If you have mainly "no" or "developing" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to develop further. If you have mainly "yes" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to articulate, leverage, or share learning around.

BUILD CAPACITY FOR QUALITY

	NO	DEVELOPING	YES
Integrate Educational and Artistic Practices			
Training and Development: Does the organization have a clear, transparent outline of the capabilities Teaching Artists, program, administrative, and executive staff should embody in order to fulfill the work of the organization?			
Teaching Practice: Has the organization developed clear expectations on the teaching practices and capacities Teaching Artists bring to the organization?			
Artistic Practice: Does the organization offer consistent opportunities for Teaching Artists and organizational staff to engage in artistic discussions and reflective practices?			
Create a Healthy Organizational Culture			
Onboard Teaching Artists: Does the organization share clear and transparent pay, hours, and job descriptions/roles with Teaching Artists as part of the onboarding process?			
Retain Teaching Artists: Does the organization maintain regular communication with Teaching Artists and connect them to learning opportunities?			
Cultural Inclusion: Does the organization have a clearly established definition of Cultural Inclusion as it relates to its own organizational culture?			
Advance Equity: Does the organization have an articulated vision for how it advances equitable distribution of the arts in a diverse city? For example, does the organization use data on access to arts education when it selects partners and sites?			
Staff Diversity: Does the organization have clearly established and transparent diversity goals at every level of the organization?			
TOTAL			

2. Prepare for Quality Instruction

Once capacity for quality instruction is in place, there are steps necessary to prepare to launch quality programming. Organizations support preparation by developing their own understanding of the context in which programming will occur and the people it will reach. To varying degrees, organizations also play a design role in preparing quality curricula, assessment practices, relationship building with partners, and readying the environment in which programming will take place. Look at the statements on the next page. On the scale next to each statement, choose a rating that reflects your competency in that area.

NO: the organization does not have the item or characteristic described in this section

DEVELOPING: the organization recognizes the need for the item or characteristic described in this section, and has made a commitment to develop or acquire it

YES: the organization possesses the item or characteristic described in this section

Total your scores and reflect on what you have given yourself/the organization. If you have mainly "no" or "developing" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to develop further. If you have mainly "yes" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to articulate, leverage, or share learning around.

PREPARE FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION

	NO	DEVELOPING	YES
Seek Understanding			
Understand the School: Does the organization conduct a needs assessment with school partners?			
Understand the Community: Does the organization make materials and content available to families in their language of choice, with sensitivity to cultural norms?			
Understand the Students: Does the organization conduct a needs assessment with students?			
Design Curriculum			
Plan for Quality: Has the organization engaged in strategic planning for quality programming?			
Plan for Quality: Has the organization developed a vision of and values for quality?			
Program Goals and Objectives: Does the organization share educational programming content, goals and learning objectives, and desired student outcomes with all members of the organization?			
Align Assessments			
Aligned Assessments: Does the organization regularly review student assessments and evaluate alignment between program quality and the organization's vision of, and values of quality?			
Compose the Environment			
Organizational Role in Planning: Has the organization clearly evaluated and articulated its role in partnership development and program planning?			
Organizational Role in Planning: Does the organization's budget for programming reflect an investment in quality practices?			
Sufficient Time: Does the organization take adequate time to thoughtfully plan curriculum in collaboration with Teaching Artists and schools?			
Suitable Materials: Does the organization clearly articulate who will source, restock, and pay for materials needed to run the program successfully?			
Physical Environment: Does the organization clearly articulate their space needs for quality programming?			
Physical Safety: Does the organization have an accessibility plan?			
TOTAL			

3. Execute Quality Instruction

Once instruction has launched, there are quality practices the organization may cultivate, including the program's grounding in the artistic discipline at hand and development of a healthy classroom culture. Look at the statements on the next page. On the scale next to each statement, choose a rating that reflects your competency in that area.

NO: the organization does not have the item or characteristic described in this section

DEVELOPING: the organization recognizes the need for the item or characteristic described in this section, and has made a commitment to develop or acquire it

YES: the organization possesses the item or characteristic described in this section

Total your scores and reflect on what you have given yourself/the organization. If you have mainly "no" or "developing" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to develop further. If you have mainly "yes" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to articulate, leverage, or share learning around.

EXECUTE QUALITY INSTRUCTION

	NO	DEVELOPING	YES
Integrate Educational and Artistic Practices			
Artistic Connections: Does the organization's education programs provide students with the opportunity to develop their own artistic voice?			
Teaching Artist Growth in the Classroom: Does the organization regularly conduct Teaching Artist observations?			
Teaching Artist Growth in the Classroom: Does the organization conduct formal and informal pre-and-post observation meetings with Teaching Artists?			
Support a Healthy Classroom Culture			
Expectations and Boundaries: Does the organization have a clearly established process in place for knowledge sharing between staff, Teaching Artists, and classroom teachers?			
Emotional Safety: Does the organization have a clearly articulated definition of emotional safety ("safe space") for its programs?			
Cultural Inclusion: Does the organization have a clearly established definition of Cultural Inclusion as it relates to students, families, and program content?			
TOTAL			

4. Continuous Quality Improvement

Engaging in continuous quality improvement requires adopting a learning culture, collecting and using data regularly, and embracing evaluation as an important tool for accountability and quality improvements. Look at the statements on the next page. On the scale next to each statement, choose a rating that reflects your competency in that area.

NO: the organization does not have the item or characteristic described in this section

DEVELOPING: the organization recognizes the need for the item or characteristic described in this section, and has made a commitment to develop or acquire it

YES: the organization possesses the item or characteristic described in this section

Total your scores and reflect on what you have given yourself/the organization. If you have mainly "no" or "developing" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to develop further. If you have mainly "yes" marks in any particular component, these may be areas you wish to articulate, leverage, or share learning around.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

	NO	DEVELOPING	YES
Conduct Evaluation			
Evaluate Capacity: Does the organization have sufficient capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to evaluate the extent to which programs are meeting quality goals?			
Evaluate Programs: Does the organization have a robust post-program protocol to reflect on program impact in partnership with schools?			
Analyze Data: Does the organization use data to fuel evolution in its practices, including curricular approaches?			
Strive for Sustainability			
Expand Arts Learning Among the Funding Community: Does the organization engage in authentic dialogue with funders to share a comprehensive view of their efforts to provide quality programs?			
Expand Arts Learning in the School: Does the organization engage in relationships across the school hierarchy to sustain the partnership beyond the duration of each school year?			
Expand Arts Learning in the Community: Does the organization expand relationships beyond the school into the community itself, including fellow arts and non-arts organizations?			
TOTAL			

09

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

DEVELOPING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VISION OF QUALITY

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09

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this tool is to help you articulate a vision for quality that flows from your organization's values for quality. A good vision for quality will be specific, observable, and actionable. It should *describe* what your values for quality *look like* when enacted *in practice*. The chart on the right will help you brainstorm how your organization's values for quality look in practice. Each member of your Quality Team should fill it out.

List your organization's values for quality.

What does this value look like in practice in the classroom? What would you observe taking place?

What does this value look like in practice in the management and operations of your organization?

What would a teaching artist do—in concrete and tangible terms—to act according to this value?

What would your organization's program staff do to act according to this value?

What would your organization's executive staff do to act according to this value?

What would your organization's board and strategic decision-makers do to act according to this value?

What would it look like for your organization to express this value in its relationships with parents, families, and community members?

What would it look like for your organization to express this value in its relationship with schools?

How would your organization need to work with its funders to best support and invest in this value? (Think beyond "more funding"; What would that funding actually support?)

ONCE EACH MEMBER OF YOUR QUALITY TEAM HAS COMPLETED THIS BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE, RECONVENE FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING:

Review each other's notes. What themes do you notice—within each person's chart, and across charts? What about differences in perspective? Work with each other to come to a consensus about what goes in each box on the chart.

Where can your vision be made more concrete? For each box on the chart, ask whether you have described the practice of this value in terms that are specific enough that you could easily assess your organization's current practice against the definition you provided. Revise as necessary.

Work together to write concise, clear, and tangible vision statements for each of the visions on the following page. Though you do not need to call out your organization's values by name if it doesn't make sense for your writing, try to be as specific as possible in your descriptions, and make sure you are capturing the themes and insights developed during your brainstorming process. Write your vision in whatever way makes sense to you and others in your organization—from paragraphs to bullet points. You may also choose to create new categories of vision statements as applicable to your work. For example, you may wish to draft vision statements for specific programs you run.

Our vision for quality in practice in the classroom setting is:

_____

_____

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Our vision for quality practice in field trips is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in the operations and management of our organization is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in our organization's relationship to parents, families, and community members is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in our organization's relationship to schools is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in the work of the teaching artists in our organization is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in the work of the administrative and program staff in our organization is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in the work of the executive staff in our organization is:

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Our vision for quality in practice in the work of our organization's board and/or other strategic decision-makers is:

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Our vision for working with our funders to support all of the above practices of quality is:

_____

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After you have finished these vision statements, you may wish to reach out to stakeholders in each category for their feedback—especially if you have not yet had a chance to engage those individuals in the Quality Toolkit process. For example, does your description of quality relationships with parents, families, and community members resonate with parents after they've had a chance to read it? Make any revisions as necessary in response to the feedback you receive.

10

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

FRAMING A PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

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This protocol is designed to help groups think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma.

THE OBJECTIVES FOR THIS ACTIVITY ARE TO:
- Develop the organization's capacity to see and describe the dilemmas that are effecting quality,
- To help each other and the organization's staff understand, support, and address them.

A dilemma is a puzzle: an issue that raises questions, an idea that seems to have conceptual gaps, or something about process or product that you just can't figure out. All dilemmas have some sort of identifiable tension in them. Sometimes the dilemma will live squarely in the educational programs, but often the dilemma crosses over many parts of the organization.

1. Think About Your Dilemma

Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling or that you are unsure about. Some questions for helping you select a dilemma might include:
- Is it something that is bothering you/the organization enough that your thoughts regularly return to it?
- Is it something that is not already on its way to being resolved?
- Is it something that does not depend on getting other people to change - in other words, can you/the organization affect the dilemma by changing your practice?
- Is it something that is important to you/the organization, and is it something you are willing to work on?

2. Do Some Reflective Writing About Your Dilemma

Some questions that might help are:
- Why is this a dilemma for you/the organization? Why is this dilemma important to you/the organization?
- What (or where) is the tension in your dilemma?
- If you could take a snapshot of this dilemma, what would you/we see?
- What have you done already to try to remedy or manage the dilemma?
- What have been the results of those attempts?
- Who needs to change? Who needs to take action to resolve this dilemma? If your answer is not you/your organization, you need to change your focus. You will want to present a dilemma that is about your practice, actions, behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions, and not someone else's.
- What do you assume to be true about this dilemma, and how have these assumptions influenced your thinking about the dilemma?
- What is your focus question? A focus question summarizes your dilemma and helps focus the feedback.

Adapted from School Reform Initiative (www.schoolreforminitiative.org)

3. Frame a Focus Question for Your Group
- Try to pose a question around the dilemma that seems to you to get to the heart of the matter.
- Remember that the question you pose will guide you and your staff in the discussion of the dilemma.

4. Critique Your Focus Question
- Is this question important to my organization/practice?
- Is this question important to student learning?
- Is this question important to others in the field?

11

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

FINALIZING YOUR PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

11

ingenuity

After completing your critical reflection on the draft Problem of Practice, it's time to finalize the problem.

Meet as a Quality Team to revise your Problem of Practice in response to your process of critical reflection.

Our revised Problem of Practice:

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12

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ORGANIZATION'S PEDAGOGICAL GOALS

12

ingenuity

What are your organization's specific pedagogical goals? Please input these goals below.

13

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

THE TEACHING ARTIST AS ARTISTIC PRACTITIONER

13

ingenuity

Which artistic skills and competencies would your teaching artists need to have in order to successfully help students to achieve your organization's stated pedagogical goals? Please list these skills and competencies below, in essence describing your teaching artists (or yourself, if you are a teaching artist) as artistic practitioners.

It may help you to review your organization's pedagogical goals and think point-by-point about what a teaching artist would need to be able to model for students with respect to each goal.

14

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

COMPARING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VISION OF QUALITY TO THE FRAMEWORK

ingenuity

COMPARING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S VISION OF QUALITY TO THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Now that you have completed your organizational vision of quality and your Quality Framework Diagnostic (Tool 8), do you have any new insights into quality practice?

Please convene your organization's team, and access copies of your Organizational Vision of Quality and your Framework Diagnostic for reference.

PLEASE DISCUSS AND TAKE NOTES ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. **Compare and contrast your organization's vision for quality with the best practices described in the Quality Framework. Where do you notice areas of similarity? What about areas of difference? (Your organization does not need to have the same vision of quality as the one described in the Quality Framework—but it may be good to understand how and why you have chosen a unique path, where applicable.)**

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2. **After completing your Framework Diagnostic, are you inspired to make any changes to your organization's vision of quality?**

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3. Take a look at the areas of need you identified in your Diagnostic. How do they align with your vision for quality? Based on your Diagnostic, what may you have forgotten to include or now realize is important to prioritize in your vision?

_____

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4. Where do you feel the Quality Framework most resonates with your organization's practice?

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

CREATING A PROBLEM-OF-PRACTICE-SPECIFIC VISION OF QUALITY

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As a Quality Team, meet to develop a vision of quality that is specific to your Problem of Practice. You'll need your finalized Problem of Practice, as well as the Vision for Quality that you developed earlier in the Quality Toolkit process.

IMAGINING A SOLUTION

Brainstorm how your organization's work would change, and ideally improve, if you could find a solution to your Problem of Practice. Though your Problem may be targeted at one particular aspect of your organization's work, how would solving this problem affect other areas? Which individuals in your organization would be affected, and how? Who would need to collaborate to address this Problem of Practice?

PLEASE TAKE NOTES TO CAPTURE THIS BRAINSTORM:

1. Describe how your organization would change and improve if the Problem of Practice were to be solved.

_____

_____

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_____

2. List the other areas and individuals within your organization that would be affected and/or involved as collaborators, and how.

_____

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_____

After this brainstorm, have you identified any roadblocks to solving your Problem of Practice? Sometimes, implementing solutions to Problems of Practice is not so much about figuring out what to do, as cultivating the political will to actually do so. Are there any individuals or groups of stakeholders whose buy-in you would need in order to solve this Problem of Practice—and/or who may not like how the organization is likely to change if the Problem is solved? If so, what do you think would be the best way to gain their buy-in?

ALIGNING TO VISION AND VALUES

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AMONG YOUR QUALITY TEAM, AND TAKE NOTES REFLECTING YOUR DISCUSSION:

1. How does your Problem of Practice align with one or more of your organization's core values, as identified earlier in the Quality Toolkit process?

2. How would addressing your Problem of Practice advance your organization's mission?

3. How do the values held by your organization, your colleagues, and yourselves give you insight as to how to approach this Problem of Practice—both in the methods you'll use to investigate the question, and in the ultimate solution to the problem?

Revisit the Vision for Quality you created earlier in this process. Which elements of this vision apply to your Problem of Practice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In one paragraph, describe, in concrete, tangible, and observable terms, what your organization and/or classroom practice would look like if you were to solve your Problem of Practice.

_____

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_____

_____

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_____

In one paragraph, describe, in concrete, tangible, and observable terms, how your organization would need to function in order to implement the solution to your Problem of Practice—for example, who would need to collaborate? Would your values inform a change to management practices?

_____

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16

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

PLANNING WITH THE END IN MIND

16

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> "To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction."
>
> —Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

This is the first tool in the Auditing Quality portion of the Quality Toolkit. In the Visioning Quality portion of the Toolkit, you developed a careful statement of your desired results. Now, you will investigate what counts as evidence of such a vision. What does it look like to achieve this vision—and how will you know?

AS A QUALITY TEAM, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, AND CAPTURE YOUR NOTES BELOW.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS

You've come most of the way on this step already—your Problem of Practice, and the vision of quality you created in response to that Problem, articulate your desired results.

What do you need and want to know in order to answer the questions you posed in your Problem of Practice?

Consider your organization's values. How might these values inform the methods you use to investigate your Problem of Practice? For example, if your organization highly values community engagement, it would be useful to find a way to dialogue with community members to see what they think about your Problem.

STEP TWO: DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

Look at your Problem-of-Practice-specific vision for quality.

How will you know if you have achieved your desired results in solving your Problem of Practice?

_____

_____

_____

What will you accept as evidence?

_____

_____

_____

What does your organization's practice look like right now, and what changes might you be able to observe or measure between your current state, and the state of your practice by the time you have solved your Problem?

_____

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_____

STEP THREE: IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW AND DON'T KNOW

What preexisting, concrete knowledge do you have about how to solve your Problem of Practice? For example, you may know that one piece of the solution is to hire a new staff person to do X, or to increase professional development opportunities for teaching artists, etc. Do not put "more funding" as a solution here in and of itself—specify what, precisely, you would use that funding for.

_____

_____

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_____

What hypotheses do you have about how to solve your Problem of Practice? You may have some good guesses—for example, about the cause of your problem—yet still need more information to confirm these guesses.

_____

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_____

What are your "known unknowns"—things you know you'll need to answer or investigate, even though you may not be sure at this time of what that investigation will reveal? For example, you may know that you need to understand the student perspective on your Problem, though you may not know exactly what that perspective is.

_____

_____

_____

What preexisting knowledge do you have about how to investigate these "known unknowns"? That is, can you find the answers you need by talking to people, reviewing internal organizational documents, researching best practices on curriculum, etc.?

_____

_____

_____

17

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT ASSESSMENT

17

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ASSESSMENT ENCOMPASSES TWO AREAS:
PROGRAM EVALUATION AND STUDENT–BASED ASSESSMENT.

	Student-Based Assessment	Program Evaluation
What is the purpose?		
Who requests it?		
Who performs it?		
Who observes the performance?		
Who sets criteria?		
Who uses the information?		
When can feedback occur?		
On what is feedback based?		
What is included in the report?		
Who receives the report?		
How is the report used?		

ASSESSMENT TERMS QUIZ

_____ 1. Empirically-developed standards or criteria against which actual results can be measured.

_____ 2. Uses the results of assessment to evaluate and grade the individual student.

_____ 3. Systematic collection of information about student learning across programs. Its purpose is determine how well students as a whole are meeting expected learning goals, and inform decisions about how to improve program content, delivery and pedagogy.

_____ 4. A communication tool that visually aligns learning outcomes with the content of individual courses or experiences in the program.

_____ 5. What the program hopes to achieve. These are broad statements that provide a framework for more specific objectives.

_____ 6. What the student will know or be able to do upon completion of a learning experience.

_____ 7. Quantitative measures of student achievement.

_____ 8. Asks students to demonstrate learning in real-life tasks.

_____ 9. A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the program.

_____ 10. A set of criteria used to assess student work products or performance accompanied by a rating scale or descriptors of various levels of student performance.

KEY

A. AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT
B. BENCHMARKS
C. CURRICULUM MAP
D. EMBEDDED ASSESSMENT
E. GOALS

F. LEARNING OUTCOMES
G. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
H. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
I. RUBRIC
J. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Answers: 1. B | 2. J | 3. H | 4. C | 5. E | 6. F | 7. G | 8. A | 9. D | 10. I

18

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT DATA

18

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THE AUDITING QUALITY PORTION OF THE TOOLKIT IS ALL ABOUT DATA. IN THIS SECTION, YOU'LL GATHER DATA—INFORMATION—THAT WILL HELP YOU TO DO TWO THINGS:

● 1. Investigate the questions you posed in your Problem of Practice

● 2. Understand how well your organization is currently living up to its vision for quality

Before you go out to gather and then analyze this data, it's important to put the whole notion of data into context.

AS A QUALITY TEAM, THINK THROUGH THE BELOW QUESTIONS, AND TAKE NOTES:

1. **What kinds of information do you think you need to gather in order to answer the questions you posed in your Problem of Practice? Why do you think this kind of information will be effective in helping you to answer these questions?**

2. **What kinds of information do you think you need in order to assess your organization's work as compared with your vision for quality? Why do you think this kind of information will help you to understand the quality of your organization's work?**

3. **What are you hoping to accomplish by gathering data?**

4. **To the extent that your Problem of Practice involves making strategic decisions, on what grounds would you make these decisions?**

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_____

_____

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_____

5. **Are you hoping that the data will make the decision for you?**

_____

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_____

For example, if you feel you need program data so that you can get more funding, you should get specific about what exactly you need to fund, which funders you are targeting, and what outcome or change they would need to see in order to fund you—then you can think about how to gather information accordingly.

WHAT ROLE SHOULD DATA PLAY IN THIS PROCESS?

The kinds of questions you'll be asking, either to answer your Problem of Practice or to assess your organization's current work, can be divided into two types: empirical questions and normative questions.

- **EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS** are questions that can be answered by evidence. Fundamentally, they ask "what's going on here?" Questions seeking description, explanation, and to some extent interpretation are usually empirical questions. Empirical questions can typically be answered using data alone—the results of the data analysis answer the question. (For example, the question "How many students participated in our programs last year?" is a question that will ultimately be answered by gathering attendance data, and analyzing that data will lead you to answer the question with a single number.)

- **NORMATIVE QUESTIONS** are questions that ask "what should we be doing?" or "what do we want to be doing?" Questions involving value judgments, principles and beliefs, or strategic decisions are usually normative questions. Normative questions cannot typically be answered using data alone—they require judgment calls. However, you may wish to incorporate data into the decision-making process.

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ARTICULATING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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ARTICULATING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It's time to get curious about your Problem of Practice. What information do you need in order to answer the questions that your Problem of Practice poses? The information you'll gather in what we call "organizational research" is *different from* the information you might gather in the course of assessing student learning and doing program evaluation in several ways:

- This information is for your eyes and your eyes alone. There is no need to share it beyond your organization or even beyond your Quality Cohort team unless you choose to do so (i.e., this isn't a report for funders). So there's no pressure to show perfection here. Nothing is riding on this information beyond your own learning and striving for quality.

- Depending on your Problem of Practice, this information might not necessarily be about student learning or program quality at all—it might be about areas in which you've never previously gathered information. You might need to learn about the different people who make up your organization, or about communication between different job roles, or about what members of the community you serve really want and need to see from your organization. The list varies widely—the only common denominator is what you really need to know to solve your Problem of Practice.

The organization research you'll do here doesn't need to be of academic quality, publishable, or rely on a statistically significant sample. You simply need to gather enough information, and the right kind of information, to move forward with confidence in untangling your Problem of Practice.

Take a look at your Problem of Practice. You may have framed it as one question, or as multiple questions. Either way, break down your Problem of Practice into its component questions. Even if you have written it as one question, there may be a "question behind the question" and you may still choose to break it up into component parts for this purpose.

For example, the National Museum of Mexican Art wanted to build out bilingual program offerings that were responsive to its community's needs around language. To do so, it needed to get curious about what the community really thought, felt, wanted, and needed with regard to bilingual programming. And to do that, it needed to define who its community really was. Therefore, the first layer of information it needed was who and what constituted its target community. Then, it needed to figure out the range of perspectives on language within that community.

Think about what exactly you need to know in order to solve this Problem of Practice. Write those questions here:

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Do you need to break down any of these research questions into multiple sub-questions? Rewrite your research questions here:

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Do you need to answer certain questions before you can begin to investigate others? Write down your research questions in the order in which it makes most sense to investigate them.

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ARE YOUR QUESTIONS EMPIRICAL OR NORMATIVE?

Reflecting on the "Thinking Critically About Data" tool, which of your research questions are empirical—requiring evidence to answer? Which ones are normative—where your organization has to make a judgment call? Please complete the below chart.

Sometimes questions have both elements. *Returning to the example of the National Museum of Mexican Art: One of their questions was "How many Spanish speakers are we serving now and how many more should we be serving?" The first part is an empirical question—they could gather information about current numbers of Spanish speakers in their programs. The second part, the question of "should", is a normative question. They could gather information about various stakeholders' opinions, but the final answer would have to be a judgment call, not an objective fact.*

Research Question	Empirical or Normative?	Notes

QUALITY TOOLKIT:

MOVING FROM QUESTION TO METHOD

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HOW ARE YOU GOING TO INVESTIGATE EACH QUESTION?

FIRST, CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE(S). Who needs to know this information? What kinds of information do they view as trustworthy, meaningful, and relevant? Reference page 80 for help. *For example, some people want to see statistics, whereas others prefer to see photos and stories. How will you communicate your results to this audience?*

Research Question	Target audience	Type of information	Method of communication

For your empirical questions, are quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods most appropriate? Both kinds of methods can be used for any type of question (i.e., descriptive/explanatory/interpretive); there are more and less rigorous approaches in both domains.

- **QUALITATIVE METHODS** help you describe and interpret. When working with qualitative methods, it is important to manage your subjectivity. With any research method, it is not possible to totally erase your subjective point of view as the researcher—but it's important to be aware of your subjectivity and to plan ways to be conscious of and reflective upon it as your work proceeds.

  Examples of qualitative methods include participant-observation, ethnography, archival research, focus groups, interviews, and textual or artistic criticism. The goal of qualitative methods is to capture the **qualities** *of a person, thing, interaction, or situation.*

- **QUANTITATIVE METHODS** help you to describe and explain. Though many people believe quantitative methods are objective, it is important to recognize and manage subjectivity in quantitative research as well. (Just think about how the "objective" categories of race—used as the basis for many quantitative studies—have changed over the past 100 years!)

  Examples of quantitative methods include statistical research, surveys, and experimentation. The goal of quantitative research is to **quantify** *and* **infer** *relationships and processes.*

Are you seeking to show or tell? Both types of methods can do both things, but qualitative methods are often more suited to showing, whereas quantitative methods are often more suited to telling.

At what scale are you working—how much information will you be managing? Qualitative work is usually best suited to a smaller scale, whereas quantitative work is more effective at a larger scale.

For example, the National Museum of Mexican Art was focused on what its community really thought, felt, wanted, and needed with regard to bilingual programming. They decided that the qualitative methods of interviews and focus groups would allow them to reach deeper answers to their questions than a more quantitative survey.

THINK ABOUT YOUR EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS. Who in your organization is best positioned to answer each question? What processes feel appropriate and useful? Which stakeholders do you need to engage?

Empirical Question	Who is best positioned to answer this question?	Qualitative or quantitative, and why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?

THINK ABOUT YOUR NORMATIVE QUESTIONS. Who in your organization is best positioned to answer each question? What processes feel appropriate and useful? Which stakeholders do you need to engage?

Normative Question	Who is best positioned to answer this question?	Qualitative or quantitative, and why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?
		☐ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative Why?

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

THINKING ABOUT DATA COLLECTION

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Thinking about data collection should be a cyclical process in dialogue with your consideration of methods and capacity. Don't be afraid to revisit this section several times.

What kinds of data do you already have available to you that might help you to answer each research question (either empirical or normative)? *For example, your organization may already collect certain types of data for purposes of assessing student achievement, evaluating program success, etc.*

Research Question	Type of data that might be available

Consider whether the data you have on hand is structured, unstructured, or semi-structured.

- **STRUCTURED DATA** is data that comes to you in a defined format: for example, multiple-choice survey data will always come to you in the form of defined answers to defined questions.

- **UNSTRUCTURED DATA** is information that was not necessarily designed to serve as research data: this could be anything from observations of your programming in the classroom, to pre-existing organizational documents, to your organization's artistic practice.

- **SEMI-STRUCTURED** data combines aspects of both: for example, an interview where you define the questions, but your interviewee can respond to those questions in undefined ways.

Structured data generally lends itself better to quantitative analysis, whereas unstructured data generally lends itself better to qualitative analysis. However, it's also possible to do vice versa with careful planning. Semi-structured data can go either way depending on the kind of question you are trying to answer.

Is the preexisting data that you have available structured, unstructured, or semi-structured?

Type of Data	Level of Structure
	☐ Structured ☐ Unstructured ☐ Semi-Structured
	☐ Structured ☐ Unstructured ☐ Semi-Structured
	☐ Structured ☐ Unstructured ☐ Semi-Structured

EVALUATE YOUR CAPACITY TO COLLECT DATA

Who do you have available to collect data? How much time and energy do they have to devote to this project?

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Do you have sufficient capacity to collect _enough_ data and the right _kind_ of data to pursue the research methods you're considering? If not, what can you reasonably do with the capacity you have available?

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For example, the National Museum of Mexican Art identified three important types of stakeholder who they wanted to interview: Visitors/families, community-based organizations, and NMMA personnel. After deciding the interview questions to ask each group, they needed to figure out who would recruit participants, who would carry out the interviews or focus groups, and who would take notes or record and transcribe the interviews.

Research Question	Amount and type of data needed and method	Capacity	Any changes you'd like to make based on your capacity?

What materials would you need to collect this data? Do you have them on hand or could you reasonably acquire them?

Do you have, or could you reasonably get, access and buy-in from the right stakeholders to collect this data? (For example, if you are considering interviewing teachers, do they have the time and willingness to participate?)

How long would it take to collect enough data? How would you know when you have enough?

DATA MANAGEMENT

How do you currently organize, store, and secure any data you currently have on hand?

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What human and material resources could you devote to managing incoming data?

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ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF YOUR DATA

Does your team have any initial thoughts about what kinds of data analysis, evaluation, and interpretation might be most appropriate, relevant, and/or useful? Are there approaches to analysis, evaluation, and interpretation that you have already used within your organization to investigate this or other questions?

TAKING ACTION

What will you do within your organization once you have interpreted the data and are ready to move forward with making decisions to solve your problem of practice?

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Do you have the right stakeholders on board? Or do you need to bring new or different people into the conversation?

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What are you going to do if the data—whether with respect to your Problem of Practice, or with respect to the current quality of your organization's practice—shows something unexpected? Something uncomfortable? Something that doesn't make sense?

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Who will be interpreting this data? Will their work be credible in the eyes of the relevant decision makers? What steps would you need to take to establish credibility?

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Are you and/or the relevant decision makers willing to make substantive changes to your organization's work based on your interpretation of the data?

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How relevant is this data to the ultimate decisions you'll have to make to solve the Problem of Practice and move toward your vision for quality? Consider how the answers to your empirical questions will intersect with the answers to your normative questions.

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

RESEARCH AND DATA CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

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AS A QUALITY TEAM, fill out the below organizer to assess what your team/organization's current capacity is for each research task, and what capacity-building steps you might need to take in order to fully carry out the research plan you began to create in the Articulating Your Research Questions.

Research Task	Current Capacity	Capacity-Building Needed
Identifying the role of research and data/assessment and evaluation		
Clarifying your research questions		
Selecting and developing appropriate methods		
Collecting data		
Managing the data (i.e., organizing it, storing it securely, etc.)		
Analyzing the data		
Evaluating and interpreting the data		
Taking action for change based on your *interpretation* of the data		

If you have identified significant gaps between your current and ideal levels of capacity, evaluate whether you can tweak your research plan to be a better fit with your current level of capacity. Discuss your capacity needs and create a strategy to meet them.

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

ANALYZING AND INTERPRETING YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

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Analyzing your organizational research does not have to be an onerous task. As mentioned in the research planning tools, the goal of this process is to help you understand and solve your Problem of Practice—so as long as your analysis and interpretation advances that goal, you're on the right track.

The range of organizational research plans that Quality Teams might pursue is as diverse as the organizations and Problems of Practice involved. Therefore, we're not able to provide a comprehensive analysis tool here—but we can walk you through how to create your own. If you have chosen to follow a specific, established research method, you should modify these steps accordingly in order to comport with the method you have chosen.

Your Quality Team should keep several key principles in mind regardless of how you analyze your data:

- **LOOK AT YOUR DATA WITH YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION IN MIND.** How does this information connect to the original question? You are likely to find some answers, as well as many new questions that open up.

- **BE SYSTEMATIC.** More important than choosing any one method of analysis is being thorough and disciplined in reviewing the information you've gathered, making sure you're taking account of everything.

- **ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE SURPRISED BY YOUR DATA.** The organizational research process is about open-minded investigation—your Problem of Practice wouldn't be a problem if the answer were simple. Ideally, your Problem of Practice is something about which you're genuinely curious—a question to which you didn't originally have an answer in mind. So let the information you've gathered take you where it leads.

- **STAY ORGANIZED!** The ways in which you organize your data and conclusions do not need to be complex, but they should be clear, straightforward, and accessible to all members of your Quality Team. And don't forget to back up your information in multiple locations.

STEP 1
Go back to the Articulating Your Research Questions tool and list your empirical (fact–based) research questions here.

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STEP 2

Arrange and inventory the information you have gathered with respect to each research question.

If your data needs any processing in order to be more manageable, go through that processing at this time. *For example, if you recorded interviews with parents, it may be useful to your team's collaborative process to transcribe the interviews in full or in part, or at least take notes summarizing the interview's content, and store them in a central location.*

STEP 3

For each research question, think about how you might best review the information you have on hand.

Does it make sense to sort it into different categories? Does it make sense to count the frequencies with which certain data points appear? Does it make sense to develop case studies representing different phenomena you observed? There are many right ways to go about this—what is most important is that the method you choose is a good fit for the data you have at hand, for the research question you are trying to investigate, and for your capacity. This is an opportunity to be thorough in your process and logical in your thinking— consider how you can best review the information to explore your research question from all angles.

STEP 4

For each research question, proceed with the review process you identified in Step 3.

Consider how you would like to divide this work among your team and/or individuals outside your team. Which kinds of analysis play to the strengths of different team members—do certain people have a head for numbers whereas others are excellent critical readers? Which processes can be undertaken individually, and which are better suited to the whole team? Would it be helpful to seek assistance from a consultant to outsource, or train you on, certain types of analysis?

STEP 5

For each research question, identify both your preliminary conclusions, and additional questions that have been opened up by your project.

STEP 6

Now take those preliminary conclusions and open questions, and review your collected information again.

Is there anything you missed the first time? Any new connections you are able to draw? New questions you'd like to ask?

STEP 7
List the open questions you still have.

ARE ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL TO INVESTIGATING AND/OR SOLVING YOUR PROBLEM OF PRACTICE? You may need to pursue additional research tasks to obtain the information before you continue. *For example, you may have realized that you need to interview members of one key group of stakeholders, or that you need additional months' worth of student data to draw conclusions that feel trustworthy and meaningful.* List these questions and plan out your research agenda (which will, ideally, be far less extensive than your original research agenda).

MAKE NOTE OF THE REMAINING, NON-CRITICAL OPEN QUESTIONS. Some of these may be nice, but not essential, to know; others might be better suited for your next Problem of Practice. Find a way to organize these for easy reference the next time around.

STEP 8
Review your work from Steps 6 and 7.

Write out the answers you've developed to the empirical questions within your Problems of Practice, and connect them to the open questions you still have. Find a way of annotating these answers to refer to the supporting data you used in your analysis.

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STEP 9
Go back to the normative questions stemming from your Problem of Practice that you listed in the Research Thinking tool.

Do the results from Step 8 help to illuminate any judgment calls that your team will need to make?

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

REFLECTING ON YOUR RESEARCH

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CONGRATULATIONS! Your Quality Team has done the hard work of Visioning and Auditing Quality. At this stage of the process, you know as much as you possibly can about the answers to your research questions. This section of the Toolkit will help you organize all of the data you have collected and analysis you have done into crisp, actionable, and implementable research insights.

Revisit the research questions you developed at the beginning of the Auditing Quality portion of the process. Fill in the left-most column with these questions, then fill in the remaining boxes on the chart as you reflect on the information you gathered and analyzed during Auditing Quality.

Research Question	Concise and Specific Answer to this Question	How do you know that this is the right answer? (What evidence supports your answer and why is it trustworthy?)	Are there any aspects of the question still to be answered, and/or do you have follow-up questions as a result of this answer?	What are you going to do to enhance your practice of quality now that you know this information?

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PROGRESS ON YOUR PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

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Revisit your revised Problem of Practice, and insert it here for your reference:

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DISCUSS THE BELOW QUESTIONS AS A QUALITY TEAM, AND CAPTURE YOUR NOTES IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. **Do you feel you've made progress in solving this Problem? Why or why not? Where do you feel you've made good progress, and where do you still feel stuck?**

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2. In two paragraphs or less, describe the solution to your Problem of Practice that you've developed through your Auditing Quality investigation.

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3. What new questions and problems of practice have arisen based on your work in the Auditing Quality process?

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY

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This tool will help you to develop a big-picture Strategy for Quality to which your organization can continue to refer over time. This Strategy for Quality is intended to be ambitious—it's not something that you'll necessarily be able to achieve quickly, but rather will serve as a way of organizing the different goals you have for quality over the short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

Please convene your team and gather your notes and materials from the earlier stages of the Toolkit process. In particular, you will need your Organizational Vision of Quality, your Framework Diagnostic, and your notes comparing your Vision to your Diagnostic. You may find it helpful to complete this exercise individually then come together to compare notes, or you may prefer to complete the whole exercise as a group. This exercise will take some time to complete, so you may want to plan for multiple sessions.

Step 1:

Based on your Diagnostic, which aspects of your Vision for Quality are you currently succeeding in achieving? How do you know you are succeeding—what is your evidence of success? Please list how you plan to continue these activities and behaviors that are leading to success—how can you continue to support this success?

Elements of Vision that are currently successful	Evidence of success	Plan for continuing the successful activity/behavior

Step 2:

Based on your Diagnostic, which elements of your Vision for Quality are you currently not succeeding in achieving? How do you know you are not succeeding? (Please be honest— this list does not need to be shared with funders, school partners, or anyone beyond your team or organization. It is merely a tool to help you plan.) Why do you think you are not succeeding in achieving these elements? Please identify reasons that are within your sphere of influence—things you can control—as well as reasons that may be beyond your sphere of influence. Do you have any preliminary thoughts about how you might improve in this area? (If not, that's okay—you'll investigate this later in the process.) If you do not have thoughts about improvement, what questions do you have about the challenge you are facing?

Elements of Vision that are currently less successful	Evidence of challenges	Potential reasons for challenges	Preliminary thoughts or questions about solutions

Step 3:
Check your answers to the above two questions. Are all elements of your Vision of Quality represented in at least one of the above categories?

Step 4:
Refer to your Framework Diagnostic. Are there any areas of strength you identified that are not represented in your Vision for Quality? Please complete the following tool to help you identify areas of success and how to continue to support this success.

Areas of strength in Framework Diagnostic	Evidence of success	Plan for continuing the successful activity/behavior

Step 5:

Refer to your Framework Diagnostic. Are there any areas of challenge or weakness you identified that are not represented in your Vision for Quality? Some of these areas may not be applicable to your practice. Based on the areas that are applicable to your practice, please complete the following tool to help you identify quality challenges you may be facing.

Elements of quality practice that are currently less successful	Evidence of challenges	Potential reasons for challenges	Preliminary thoughts or questions about solutions

Step 6:

Check your answers to the above two questions. Are all remaining elements of your Framework Diagnostic represented in at least one of the above categories?

Step 7:

Refer to Step 1 and Step 4 for all of the areas in which you are currently succeeding in achieving quality practice. (Congratulations!) Please list these below and brainstorm ways in which you plan to continue to support these successful activities and behaviors in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term. The chart below contains various timelines to help you structure your thinking; not all time periods will necessarily be applicable to each aspect of your success. Feel free to only fill in the spaces that are relevant.

Area of quality practice	Plan to support this practice in the next 6 months	Plan to support this practice in the next year	Plan to support and develop this practice in the next 2 years	Plan to address this challenge in the next 5 years

Step 8:

Refer to Step 2 and Step 5 for all of the areas in which you are currently facing challenges in achieving quality practice. (Don't worry—the rest of the Toolkit will help you to tackle these challenges.) For each area of challenge, it will be important to identify the changes that you can realistically make, and the changes that are realistically outside of your control or "sphere of influence."

Area of challenge	Describe any aspects of or approaches to this challenge that are within your organization's control or "sphere of influence." Can you identify specific people, roles, or groups within the organization that may be particularly helpful in addressing these aspects of this challenge?	Describe any aspects of or approaches to this challenge that are outside of your organization's control or "sphere of influence."

Step 9:

Reflect on the list you created in Step 8. Please list below the areas of challenge that are most within your organization's sphere of influence.

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Step 10:

How do these areas of challenge from Step 9 relate to each other? For example, does addressing challenge C need to wait until you have made good progress on challenges A and B? Are there any ways you could group challenges—do challenges D, E, and F all need to be addressed together? You may wish to use creative, visual ways to map out the relationships among the various issues you have identified. Please make sure that your map somehow incorporates all of the challenges on your list—they don't all have to relate neatly, but all should be accounted for.

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Step 11:

There are a number of different ways in which you may choose to prioritize addressing these challenges. In your team, discuss the following questions to get the conversation going: Which challenges feel most urgent to you, and why? Which challenges are most closely related to your organization's core values—are there any core values or aspects of your vision that you are not currently able to achieve? From Step 10, did you identify any common threads or key challenges which, if they were solved, would unlock your ability to address other challenges?

After having this conversation, list your challenges below in order of priority and list your rationale for ordering them in this way. Then, consider how close you are to understanding the roots of and possible solutions to each challenge—do you essentially understand what needs to be done to address this issue, or do you need to think further about the answer?

Challenges ranked in order of priority	Rationale for this prioritization	How "problematic" is this challenge? What do you know about the causes of and possible solutions to this problem?

Step 12:

Refer to Step 11 for all of the areas of challenge for which you have a good sense of the cause of and possible solutions to the problem. Please list these below and brainstorm ways in which you plan to address these issues and implement solutions in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term. The chart below contains various timelines to help you structure your thinking; not all time periods will necessarily be applicable to each aspect of your success. Feel free to only fill in the spaces that are relevant.

For each plan, list the resources or supports that you would need to achieve the solution. Note: This is not a commitment of what you necessarily *will* or *can* do on this timeline—it's intended to help you think about what you *could* do or what you *might need* to do if you decided to address the particular issue.

Area of quality practice	Plan to support this practice in the next 6 months	Plan to support this practice in the next year	Plan to support and develop this practice in the next 2 years	Plan to address this challenge in the next 5 years

Step 13:

Refer to Step 11 for all of the areas of challenge for which you do not have a good sense of the cause of or possible solutions to the problem. List these areas below and describe any questions you have about the issue, or additional information you would need to investigate the issue. These areas are good candidates for your Problem of Practice in the subsequent steps of this Toolkit.

Area of quality challenge	Questions about the issue and/or additional information needed

Step 14:

Reflecting on all of your above work, map out a plan for quality over the short-term, medium-term, and long-term. What do you need to keep doing to achieve quality? What do you need to *stop* doing to achieve quality? What do you need to *start* doing to achieve quality? (The answers to some of these questions, especially with respect to areas of quality challenge identified in Step 13, may simply be to investigate the issue.)

	6 months	1 year	2 years	5 years
Things we will *keep* **doing**				
Things we will *stop* **doing**				
Things we will *start* **doing**				

Reflecting on your prioritization in Step 11, which theme and/or core question feels most relevant and urgent for you to address at this time? Highlight one item from each box in the chart above that is relevant to this theme/core question and which you will particularly focus on for the time being. This may be the foundation of your Problem of Practice.

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

MAPPING YOUR STRATEGY FOR QUALITY TO THE FRAMEWORK

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This tool will help your team to communicate why each element of your Strategy for Quality is important, using the language of the Quality Framework. You can share this tool with stakeholders including colleagues within your organization, board members, funders, school partners, and community members. Please refer to your Strategy for Quality, your Vision for Quality, and the Quality Framework in completing this tool.

Area of strength/challenge in quality practice	Plan for continuing/enhancing this practice, and responsible parties	Timeline for implementation	Rationale: how this plan aligns to organization's Vision for Quality—cite specific aspects of vision as relevant	Rationale: how this plan aligns to Quality Framework—cite focus areas/components as relevant	Stakeholders who are affected/need to be involved

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

BRIDGING THE CAPACITY GAP

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Having a clear vision for quality and a clear understanding of the gap between this vision and reality lays the foundation for concrete planning to close this gap.

FACILITATE A DISCUSSION AMONG YOUR QUALITY TEAM, AND OTHER COLLEAGUES IF DESIRED, AROUND THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. TAKE NOTES IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. **Where does our organization need to be in order to support turning our identified solution to the Problem of Practice into reality?**

2. **What does each stakeholder in the organization need to do to support this vision of quality and solution to the Problem of Practice? Consider the following types of stakeholders: teaching artists; organization administrative and program staff; organization executive staff and board members; students; parents and families; teachers; staff and administrators; funders; and other community partners.**

3. **How does your organization's current situation compare to the ideal you have identified?**

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4. **What do you need to do to get each area up to par?**

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The Bridging the Capacity Gap worksheet asks you to come up with priority actions—key steps that you'll need to take in order to achieve the solution you've developed to your Problem of Practice. The worksheet will help you move from reality to your vision.

	NOW					
					Priority Action — REALITY
					Capacity Requirements Needed to Achieve Priority Action
					Summary of Actions Needed to Achieve Priority Action
					People Responsible for this Priority Action
					Resources Needed to Carry out the Priority Action
	MOVING AHEAD	MOVING AHEAD	MOVING AHEAD	MOVING AHEAD		**Priority Action — VISION (Outcomes of Achieving the Priority Action)**

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING: A PROCESS FOR REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

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This protocol is designed to help groups analyze how a new understanding has developed and the factors that helped the understanding to develop. "Understanding" is defined as being able to use what you know flexibly in unfamiliar situations or to address new problems.

1. IDENTIFYING AN UNDERSTANDING

Each individual on the Quality Team should reflect on and discuss one new understanding that your team has developed or deepened as a result of going through this process. Focus on what processes, experiences, and activities/work led to that understanding. Think about these questions:

- What about the process took us beyond what we already knew?
- What confusions emerged and how did we overcome them?
- Was this experience different from other learning experiences we've had – and if so, how?

2. SHARE-OUT TO THE GROUP

3. WHOLE GROUP REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING

Think about:

- What was interesting to you about the processes your teammates described?
- What probing question might you want to pose to your teammates?
- Did you notice any interesting similarities or differences in the insights each person developed?

4. TAKING THE UNDERSTANDING HOME

Talk about the strategies you can use to continue to nurture the development of these new understandings once the Quality Toolkit process concludes.

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

COMMUNICATING TO STAKEHOLDERS

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This tool is designed to help you analyze how to share any new understandings with stakeholders that have developed throughout the quality process. The major goal in sharing your results is to paint a clear picture of your meaningful and actionable results.

1. **List your stakeholder audience(s). Audiences may include: schools/teachers/ principals,teaching artists, staff, board, patrons, funders, community members, and/or others.**

2. **Educate your stakeholders on the investigation of your problem of practice by reviewing your Toolkit work. What context and background will you need to share? Which of your methods will me most important? What were your results?**

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:	
METHODS:	
RESULTS:	

3. **What will you involve stakeholders in? Why are you involving various stakeholders? Ways you may involve stakeholders include: making sense of the results and identifying solutions or next steps.**

4. Target communication.

To communicate the results of your work, determine your stakeholders and target communication directly to them.

What information is most relevant to each stakeholder? What information do they need to make decisions or take action? Most stakeholders will have similar questions: What did you do? Why did you do it? How did you do it? What did you learn? What will you change?

What format is most effective? Communication formations may include written reports, posters or fliers, presentations, newsletters, websites, infographics, and/or an annual report.

Stakeholders	What Information Do They Need?	Most Effective Communication Format?

5. Articulate needs. What are your true needs?

Stakeholders	What do you need from them?	What are you asking for?

The next set of questions asks you to think specifically about communicating with funder audiences.

6. **When communicating with funders, what claims do you make about what your program can accomplish?**

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7. **How do you think about aligning these claims or program objectives with funders' strategies?**

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8. **What feedback have you gotten from funders about these claims or objectives?**

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9. **What kind of data or evidence have you offered funders to support your claims or assess whether your program is meeting the stated objectives?**

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10. **What kind of feedback have you gotten from funders on this data or evidence— either at the planning stage, or once you have the program up and running?**

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

CREATING A TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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Reflect on your Bridging the Capacity Gap tool, your plan for communicating to stakeholders, and the research insights you developed during the Auditing Quality process.

Input each step you'll need to take to implement the solution to your Problem of Practice and enhance your organization's practice of quality down the left-hand column. Then, set a realistic but ambitious date by which you plan to achieve that step.

Action Needed	Implementation Plan	Stakeholders Required	Timeline

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QUALITY TOOLKIT:

REFLECTION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

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CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING YOUR QUALITY TOOLKIT PROCESS!

The pursuit of quality is a practice to be woven into your organization's ongoing work, not a one-and-done experience. Your team has made great strides in investigating and solving a challenging Problem of Practice, and in figuring out how to implement that solution.

So what's next?

Revisit the strategy for quality that you developed at the end of the Visioning Quality portion of the Toolkit. Now that you've addressed your first Problem of Practice, what's next on the list?

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Are there any changes you'd like to make to your strategy given your increased insight at this stage of the process?

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What feels most critical to your team to pursue next in order to continue to enhance your organization's practice of quality? When, and how, do you plan to pursue this question?

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