

An Interview Guide for Assessing Quality Improvement

This guide will walk you through conducting brief, informal interviews to get a real-world view of how QI functions in your organization. The goal is to compare what's said in the hallways with what's written in the official plans.

Part 1: Conducting the Interviews

Your first step is to gather the raw data through conversation. Frame these as "getting-to-know-you" chats, not formal evaluations.

Scheduling and Approach

- + **Keep it Brief:** When you reach out, specifically request a 15-minute informal chat. This respects their time and lowers the pressure.
- + **Set the Scene:** Use framing like, "As part of my new role, I'm trying to get to know the landscape of our quality improvement efforts. I'd love to hear your perspective."
- + **Listen More, Talk Less:** Your primary goal is to listen. Let them do most of the talking and use your questions as prompts to guide the conversation.
- + **Effective Note-Taking:** Don't try to transcribe everything. Instead, focus on capturing:
 - **Keywords and Phrases:** Note specific terms they use (e.g., "Lean," "PDSA," "A3," "root cause analysis").
 - **Themes:** Listen for recurring ideas, such as communication breakdowns, lack of resources, or strong teamwork.
 - **Key Quotes:** Write down any powerful or particularly insightful statements verbatim.

Part 2: Targeted Interview Questions

Use the appropriate set of open-ended questions for your audience. These are designed to start a conversation, so be prepared to ask follow-up questions like "Can you tell me more about that?" or "What did that look like in practice?"

For Hospital Leaders (CNO, CMO, CEO, etc.)

These questions probe the high-level, strategic view of quality improvement.

1. "When you think about quality improvement at our hospital, what's the first thing that comes to mind?"
2. "How do you see QI helping us achieve our strategic goals?"
3. "If a manager came to you with an idea for a QI project, what steps would you tell them to take?"
4. "How do you use the data from QI projects to make decisions?"

For Frontline Staff (Nurses, Techs, Therapists)

These questions explore the on-the-ground, practical experience with QI.

1. "Have you ever been part of a quality improvement team? If so, can you tell me about that experience?"
2. "If you found a problem on your unit that was affecting patient safety, what would you do? Who would you tell?"
3. "What training, if any, have you received on quality improvement?"

Part 3: Synthesize and Compare

After the interviews, it's time to analyze your notes. The goal is to spot the gaps between policy and practice. Use a simple table or matrix to organize your findings and compare perspectives.

Analysis Matrix

Review your notes and fill in the table below. This will help you quickly identify areas of alignment and disconnect.

Analysis Question	Leadership Perspective (Summary of Interviews)	Frontline Staff Perspective (Summary of Interviews)	Official Documents (QI Plan & Project Audits)	Analysis: Is there alignment? (Yes/No/Partial)
What is the QI process?	e.g., "Leaders described a formal, data-driven process starting with a charter."	e.g., "Staff described an informal process of telling their manager and hoping for the best."	e.g., "The QI plan outlines a 5-step PDSA cycle."	No
Who is responsible for QI?	e.g., "Leaders see managers and directors as primary owners."	e.g., "Staff feel it's 'someone else's job' or that they lack agency."	e.g., "The plan assigns responsibility to a QI steering committee."	Partial
How are projects initiated?	e.g., "Leaders expect a formal proposal to be submitted to a committee."	e.g., "Staff described raising issues in huddles but see little follow-up."	e.g., "Project charters are required for all official initiatives."	No
How is data used?	e.g., "Data is used for high-level dashboard reporting and strategic decisions."	e.g., "Staff rarely see data from QI projects or how it's used."	e.g., "Project audits show inconsistent data collection and reporting."	Partial

