

## Tool: Change Idea Checklist

“A set of general principles guide the approach: (1) wherever possible, learn quickly and cheaply; (2) be minimally intrusive—some changes will fail and we want to limit the negative consequences on individuals’ time and personal lives; and (3) develop empirical evidence at every step to guide subsequent improvement cycles.” (*Learning to Improve*, page 120)

**In order to proceed with a change idea, you need to have a check in all/most boxes.**

Change Idea:	Notes
<b>1. Can we learn quickly and cheaply?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Can we see impact within a week?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Does <i>not</i> require additional money?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Does <i>not</i> require additional resources?	
<b>2. Can the change be minimally intrusive?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Can the change take place within our own team?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is not reliant on external stakeholders?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not require additional time to develop (e.g., a new meeting)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Will not slow progress of current work?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not drastically change our current processes?	
<b>3. Does the change idea avoid the common pitfalls? (see next page)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pitfall #1: Concepts, not changes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pitfall #2: More of the same	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pitfall #3: Has to be invented here	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pitfall #4: Utopia syndrome	

*continued on next page*

## Common Pitfalls of Change Idea Selection

### Pitfall #1: Concepts, Not Changes.

Change ideas are at a conceptual level, not articulating specific ways to make changes that lead to people doing things differently in each context and limiting learning. Concepts are helpful first steps in arriving at change ideas, but they need to get more specific before they are ready to be tested. For example:

- Help students manage their own learning (**concept**)
  - Have students engage in goal setting
    - 1:1 conversation between a student and the teacher about goal setting
      - 1:1 conversation where the teacher helps the student to: (1) identify a goal for the week; (2) anticipate potential barriers and obstacles; and (3) plan how to overcome the obstacles (**change idea**)

### Pitfall #2: More of the Same.

This issue would not be a problem if we had *more*—more people, more resources, etc. This approach does not solve the problem or bring about improvement because it leaves the structure of the system unchanged. These kinds of changes are reactive (like a patch), instead of a fundamental change to the way work is done. Sometimes, money and resources are a legitimate problem, but more often than not, inefficient use of these things is leading to the problems we see. Removing these inefficiencies first can help us understand the real need for more if it exists.

### Pitfall #3: “Has to Be Invented Here” Syndrome.

Brainstorming and creativity exercises are an important way to develop change ideas; however, an overreliance on these methods can result in change ideas that have not been vetted and do not have true merit when it comes to research or what’s already known or been done. Inventing new approaches from scratch is also a lot of work that can often be avoided by seeking others to learn from. Now that you know what kind of change you plan to make, you may be able to quickly find existing resources to work from.

### Pitfall #4: Utopia Syndrome.

Many teams suffer from paralysis of action because change ideas tend to become very large and overwhelming. The team will then slip into planning then implementing, instead of testing to learn about how to implement well. It’s important to start small. Ask, “What can we do by next Tuesday?”