



PHF's Approach to Implementing AI

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing how we work, create, live, and interact. AI is constantly impacting our personal and work lives. But, is this for the better?

Implementing AI in your organization is a complex process with many potential obstacles. The implementation needs to be a very carefully thought-out process with a clear adoption strategy to navigate potential problems and disruptions. Without a clear adoption strategy, AI may not deliver what you want and have a negative return on investment.

"If you make where you are going more important than where you are, there may be no point in going." --Alan Watts¹. Do not jump into AI because everyone else is doing it. Instead, you should have a clear, well-developed strategy and realistic goals to be achieved by adopting AI.

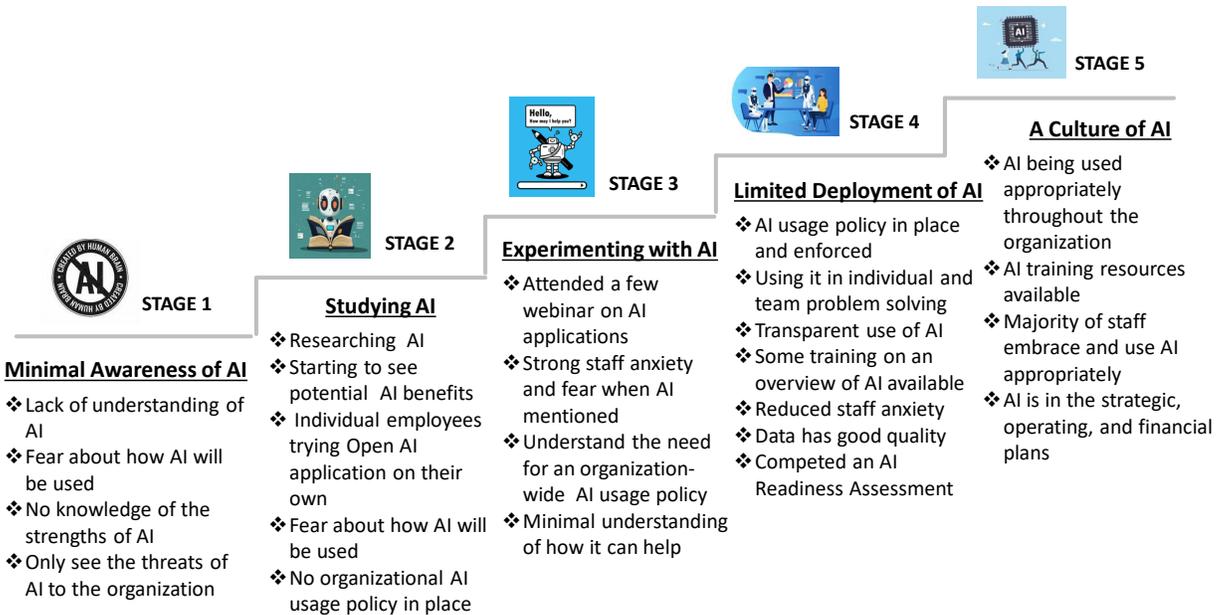
To help organizations develop a clearly thought-out adoption and operational strategy, PHF has developed the following approach to minimize disruptions and implement AI safely within your organization.

AI Implementation Approach for Minimal Disruption

- 1. Determine Your Current AI Position** – Where are you starting from? It is important to understand how AI is being used in your organization – positively or negatively. **Figure 1** shows the five stages of AI adoption to determine where you are as an organization. Different parts of the organization may be at different stages. It is important to get a complete picture of the organization's starting point. Each stage describes the general characteristics of that stage. These stage progressions can be used to help a health department to understand

¹https://www.reddit.com/r/quotes/comments/g91fc8/if_you_make_where_you_are_going_more_important/,
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where they are starting from and develop transition strategies to move to the next stage.



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Figure 1: Stages of AI Adoption

- 2. Develop AI Governance** – Developing an AI governance policy is important because it should balance innovation with its associated risk. The policy should ensure AI is developed and used ethically and securely in your organization. It should establish clear guidelines on AI usage, define what type of AI will be used, where it will be used, and define who is accountable for AI. The governance should define the ethical guidelines that all employees should follow when using AI.
- 3. Develop AI Strategic Goals** – AI strategic goals need to be developed for your organization and should define a clear AI vision that aligns with your business objectives and sets the stage for building a well-defined AI culture within the organization. The organization should adopt a formal AI policy outlining acceptable uses, responsibilities, and a process for reporting when an AI tool is suspected of bias, inaccuracy, or malfunction. AI usage should be regularly monitored for compliance to the policy.

4. **Establish an AI Adoption Team** – An AI adoption team is an internal group of experts that helps an organization implement and integrate AI technologies by providing strategic guidance, training, and support. Their goal is to ensure the responsible and effective use of AI to improve business processes, enhance productivity, and align with the organization’s overall goals. They may use various quality improvement tools to guide this effort. Membership should be rotated as AI evolves within the organization to ensure the right team members are in place, supporting the safe and continuous application of AI.

5. **Determine and Minimize Potential AI Disruptions** – AI can be a disruptive force when introduced into any organization. It has many positives and negatives that will impact workflow and culture, and cause short term disruptions. PHF developed a book called *Modular kaizen*² to help address the need for continuous improvement within public health’s highly interruptive environment. Before an organization starts the process to introduce AI into its daily work, it should use the *Modular kaizen* model shown in **Figure 2**. It starts with “check” to investigate and understand what the current position of AI is in an organization.

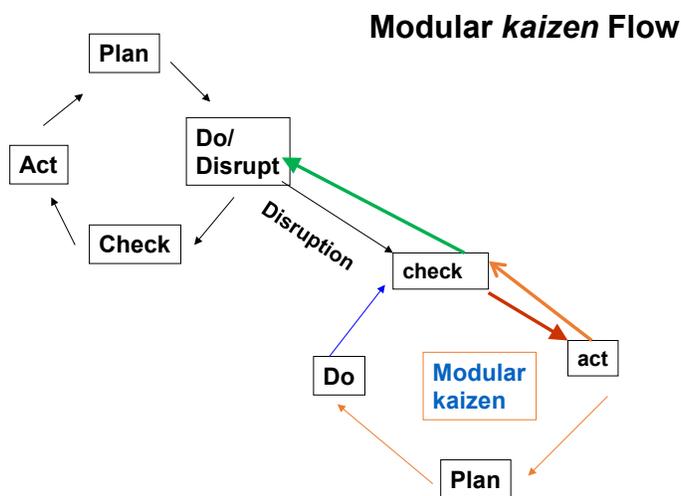


Figure 2: Modular *kaizen* improvement cycle flow

² https://phf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Modular_kaizen.pdf, Accessed 11/01/2025

- 6. Develop the AI Message** – Communicate clearly with staff about how AI will be used and implemented. Organizations must have consistent and clear communications both internally and externally about how they are using AI. A solid and ongoing strategic communications plan sets the foundation for staff to develop and execute how AI will be used and not used in the organization. This AI communication takes leadership, teamwork, internal collaboration and sharing, as well as continuous improvement. Implementing this effectively will coordinate the adoption team's activities, allow for adept reaction and response to current AI events or crises, help guide employees to produce results, and maximize all AI usages and outcomes.

- 7. Improve AI Quality Improvement (QI) Problem Solving Skills** – AI, just like QI, runs on data. It needs an accurate problem statement that identifies a measurable problem, links it to the outcomes you are trying to achieve, and shows how it will impact your strategic goals. PHF recommends that you do the normal QI approach to a problem and after you complete a QI tool in the problem-solving process, use AI to obtain new insights. You should compare AI's output to the team's output and see if any further insights should be added.

Sometimes AI can help an improvement team to develop more in-depth root cause analysis and more robust solutions. Sometimes, it does not. Remember AI is not a subject matter expert but a subject matter *helper*. AI can be misleading or wrong at times!

- 8. Prepare Your Workforce** – Invest in AI overview literacy and training programs for all employees. Implement a training program that educates employees about AI usage and its implications. We do not recommend mass in-depth trainings since knowledge retention does not last unless trainees can put the knowledge to work with practical AI application in their job. These programs should be regularly updated to reflect evolving technologies and regulations.

- 9. Monitor the AI Implementation through your Performance Management System** – Develop a series of measures that will help you track the impact of AI on your organization which should be a mixture of operational gains, technical performance, and organizational transformation.

Summary

Set up a process in your performance management system to monitor the AI implementation progress and evaluate how well it is accomplishing the goals you have set for it, so you can make timely corrections. Remember AI is not a **Tool** but a **System** that evolves with your organization. Ensure that the **System** remains aligned with your organization's goals.