# Case Study: Trillium Health Partners

# Attending the IHI National Forum as a Leadership Team

Trillium Health Partners (THP), a leading health system in Ontario, Canada, with three hospital sites and a variety of community-based programs, has been sending groups of staff to the IHI National Forum for at least a decade.

Over the last two years, one of THP’s biggest learnings has been from former IHI CEO Maureen Bisognano, who called on health care providers in a keynote speech to make care more patient-centered by asking not, “What’s the matter?” but rather, [“What matters to you?”](http://www.ihi.org/Topics/WhatMatters/Pages/default.aspx) THP has also adopted the practice of encouraging the flow of ideas from the front line by creating a unit-based idea system.

## Why THP Invests in Sending Staff to the IHI National Forum

**THP leadership has found that the Forum helps break down traditional barriers between people and departments.** They’ve also found they can make more of the time at the Forum with a larger group — that can “divide and conquer” — because the conference is so large and the topics are so broad that it would be hard for an individual to fully appreciate it all. THP leadership likes that by approaching the conference as a team, they can help hold individuals accountable to one another to share information and follow up on the learning. ‎

## How THP Manages Staff Attendance

THP typically sends quality leadership as well as physician and administration representatives from one or two clinical programs. They try to ensure the delegation is aligned with big strategic opportunities, whether strategic or operational. In 2015, THP selected top-performing staff and physicians in the organization, as well as a small delegation from their research institute, to attend.

## Tips for Making the Most of the Investment

**The group meets prior to departure to talk about how they can make the most of their learning from the Forum.** **THP has a simple template for attendees to take notes in real time so they can harvest key learnings while the information is fresh. “We've had other attendees lean over and say, ‘how do I get one of those?!’” McCarville said.**

When the THP group returns home, they meet to reflect on key learnings. “This is traditionally a great way to maintain the enthusiasm for quality improvement (QI) culture infused at the Forum,” McCarville said. The group discusses both tangible learnings, such as initiatives and projects, as well as the intangibles related to culture change, leadership, and themes in the discourse. **The group creates a formal feedback loop to share learnings with the organization by making a presentation on the most salient learnings to senior leaders and the board quality committee.**

Over the years, THP has created a group of dozens of staff who are conversant in the language of QI. McCarville says this is essential to the success of quality work across THP. **“Building QI competency throughout the organization is the only way to build and sustain a culture of quality,” McCarville says.** “It’s a bonding experience for cross-functional groups within our organization to tackle issues or problems in another place and bring learnings back that are tangible and implementable.”