NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

Variation in Measure Specifications: CSAC Update

July 13, 2016

Project Objectives

- Identify where, how, and why variation is happening
- Develop a standard language to talk about variation, harmonization, alignment as well as other related terms
- Develop a tool or framework to identify and assess measure variation, and to help prevent or mitigate unnecessary variation

Expert Panel

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- Blackford Middleton, MD, MPH, MSc (co-chair)
- Matt Austin, PhD
- Mary Barton, MD, MPP
- Beverly Court, PhD
- Hazel Crews, PT, MHA, MHS, CPHQ
- Tricia Elliot, MBA, CPHQ
- Charles Gallia, PhD
- Jeff Geppert, PMP, EdM, JD
- Matt Gigot, MPH
- Kendra Hanley, MS
- Amy Moyer, MS, PMP
- Allison Peel, DC, MHA, MPH, PMP
- Peter Robertson, MPA
- Patrick Romano, MD, MPH

Measure Variation

- Modification or ‘tweaking’ specifications of existing established measures
- Inadvertent duplication of measures with minor differences in specifications
- Our goal:
  - *Identify standards for variation/substantial change*
  - *Define parameters for allowable variation*

Understanding the Issue: Variation

- **Competing measures**: Measures intended to address both the same focus and the same target population
- **Related measures**: Measures intended to address either the same measure focus or the same target population

  - *Measure focus: Target process, condition, event, outcome (e.g., numerator).*
  - *Target population: The population (age, setting, time frame) being measured (e.g., denominator).*

References: National Quality Forum (NQF), Guidance for Measure Harmonization: A Consensus Report, Washington, DC: NQF; 2010.

National Quality Forum (NQF), Guidance on Competing Measures, Washington, DC: NQF; 2011.

Key Definitions

- **Alignment**: the degree to which the components of a system work together to achieve desired goals.

- **Harmonization**: adjustments of differences and inconsistencies among different measurements, methods, or specifications to make them uniform or mutually compatible.

Variation: Emerging Principles

- Promotion of comparability
- Reduction of unnecessary burden
- Protecting innovation
- Meeting end-user needs
- Transparency of differences

Framework for Assessing Variation: Potential Elements

- Types of variation
- Reasons for variation
- Impact of variation
- Parameters of variation

Where is Variation Occurring?

- Selection of measures
  - *New vs. existing measures*
- Measure development
  - *Development of new measures when similar measures already exist*
- Implementation and Use
  - *Modification to suit end-user needs*
  - *Reporting needs*

Examples of Measure Variation

Measure specification element	Example of variation
Numerator/measure focus	• Differences in definitions, coding, or documentation of clinical concepts (e.g., 'encounter', 'adherence', etc.) • Differences in performance thresholds or criteria
Denominator/target population	• Differences in definitions, coding, or documentation of clinical concepts • Measure intended for adults applied to pediatric population
Exclusions from denominator/target population	• Differences in acceptable exclusions (e.g., specific medical conditions vs. unspecified "medical reasons")
Risk adjustment	• Differences in variables included in risk adjustment models • Adjustment for clinical factors only vs. adjustment for clinical plus sociodemographic factors • Differences in risk-adjustment strategy (e.g., logistic vs. hierarchical modeling)
Data source or collection instrument	• Use of administrative claims vs. registry reporting
Care setting	• Measure intended to be applied to hospitals is applied to ambulatory care facilities
Level of analysis or attribution strategy	• Measure intended to evaluate health plan performance is used to evaluate individual clinician performance

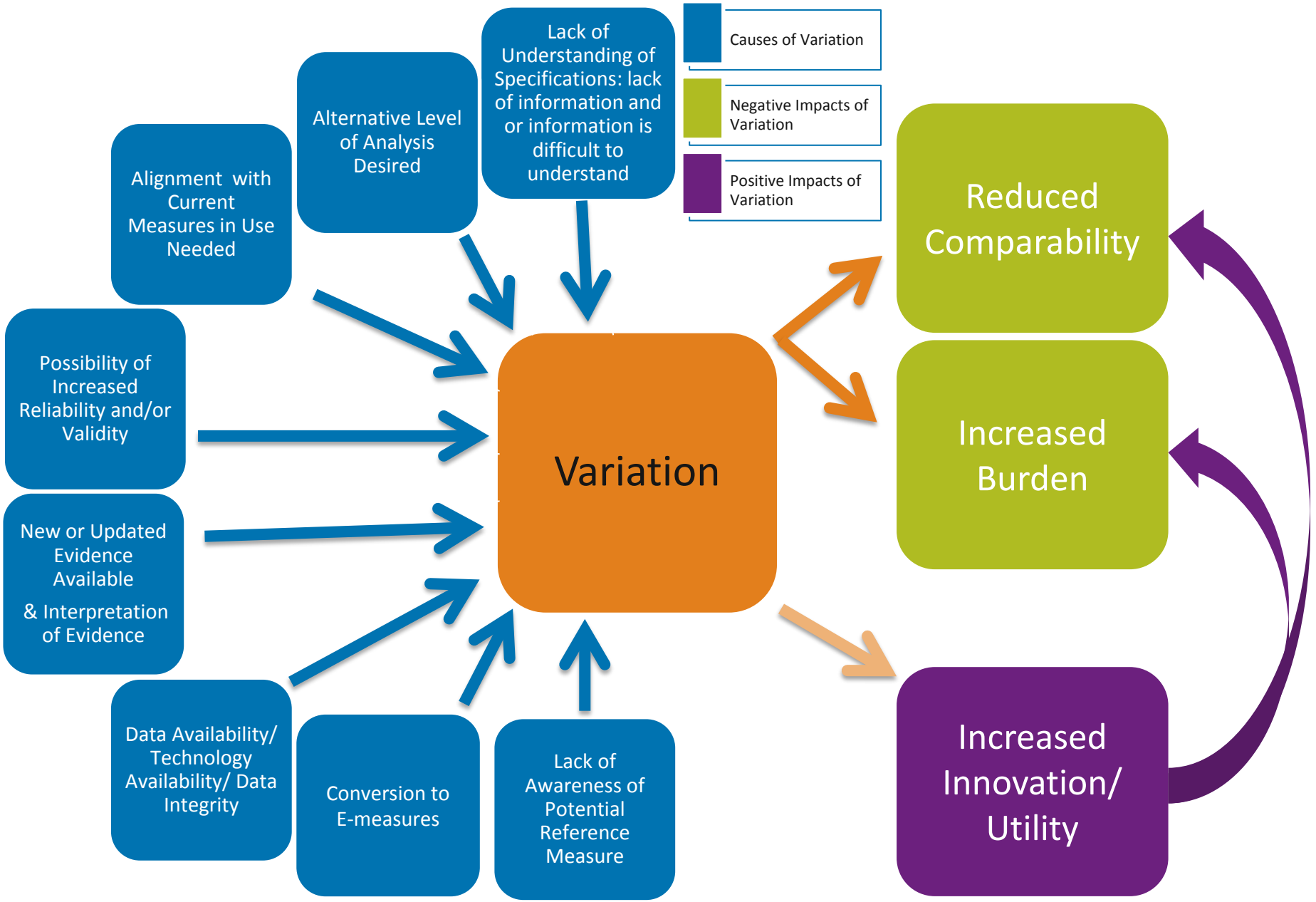
Definition of Variation

- The Expert Panel defines **measure variation as *any deviation from a fixed set of reference measure specifications*.**

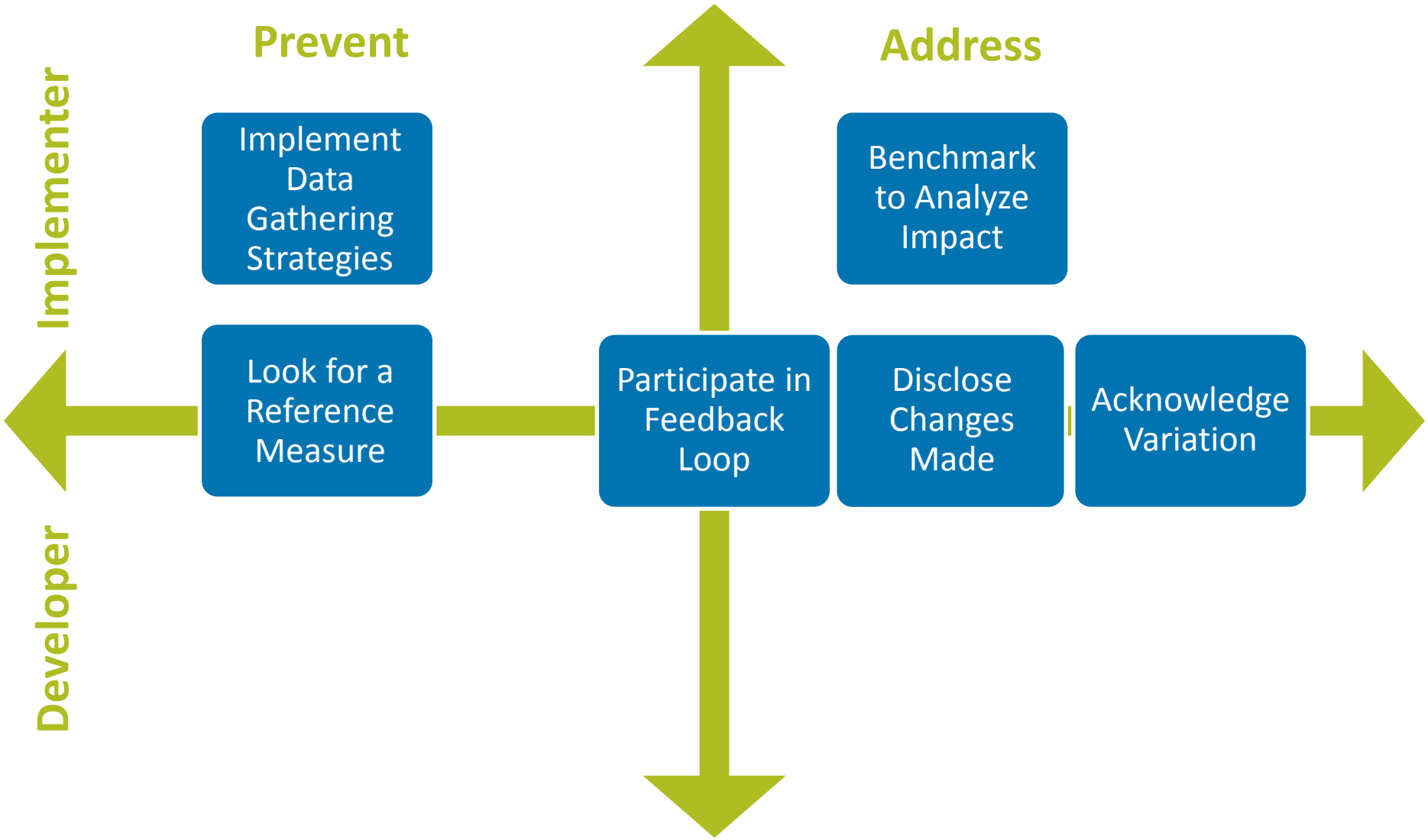
- This definition recognizes that, for practical purposes, measure variation cannot be identified or assessed without first identifying an **accepted point of reference** serving as a 'reference' set of specifications from which other specifications are deviating.

Definition of Reference Measure

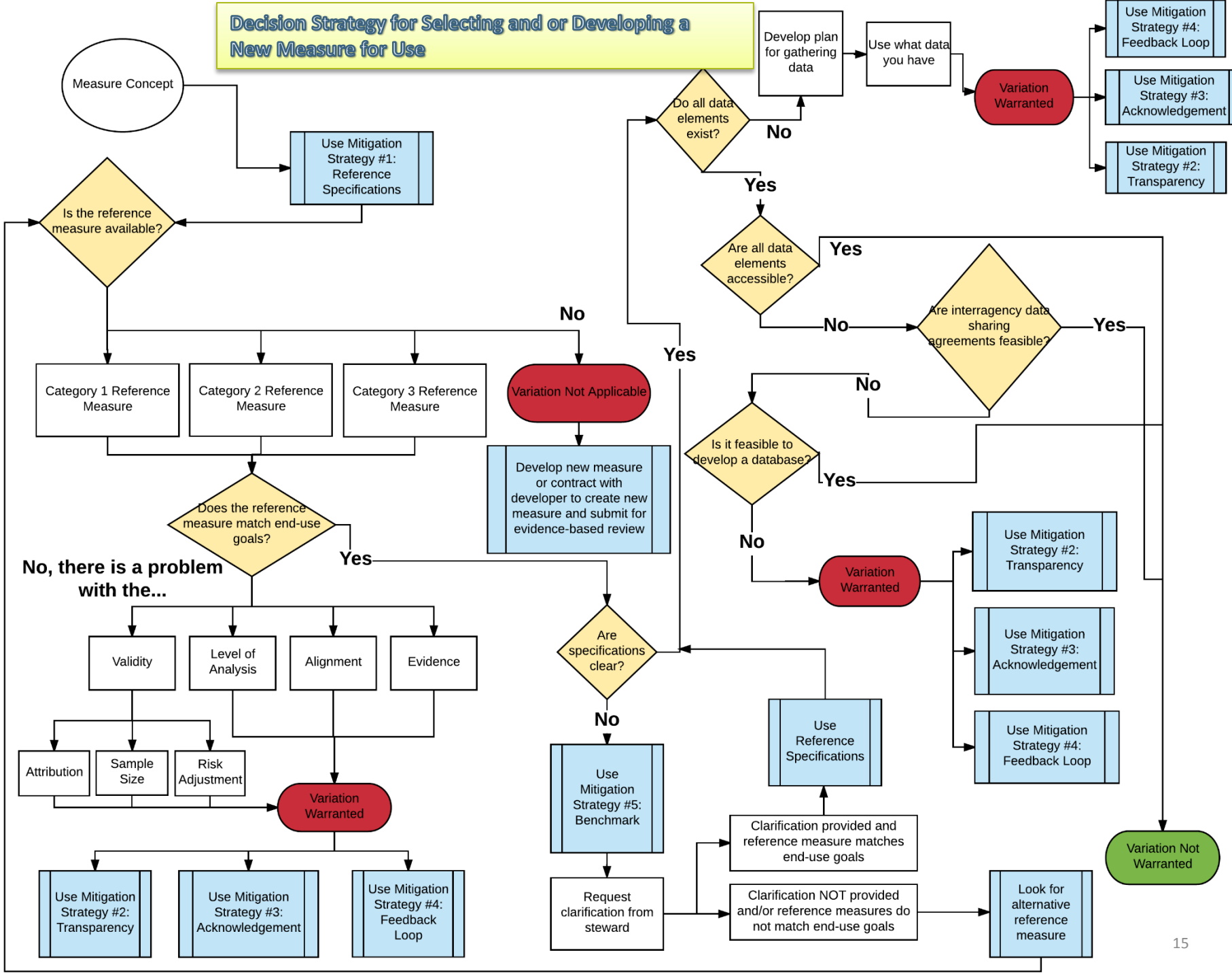
- The source and/or original measure used ***at a fixed point in time*** for comparison in order to determine if a variant is created
- Does not indicate the selected measure is the best measure for use


Causes of Variation
Negative Impacts of Variation
Positive Impacts of Variation
Lack of Understanding of Specifications: lack of information and or information is difficult to understand
Alternative Level of Analysis Desired
Alignment with Current Measures in Use Needed
Possibility of Increased Reliability and/or Validity
New or Updated Evidence Available
& Interpretation of Evidence
Data Availability/ Technology Availability/ Data Integrity
Conversion to E-measures
Lack of Awareness of Potential Reference Measure
Variation
Reduced Comparability
Increased Burden
Increased Innovation/ Utility

Strategies to Mitigate Variation



Decision Strategy for Selecting and or Developing a New Measure for Use



Timeline

Activity	Date/Time
Expert Panel Web Meeting #1 (2 hours)	**3/31/2016 at 2:00PM-4:00PM ET**
Expert Panel Web Meeting #2 (2 hours)	**5/25/2016 at 2:00PM-4:00PM ET**
First Draft Report Due to CMS	5/30/2016
Expert Panel In-Person Meeting #2	**6/29/2016**
Expert Panel Web Meeting #3 (2 hours)	**9/8/2016 at 2:00PM-4:00PM ET**
Second Draft Report Due to CMS	9/30/2016
Expert Panel Web Meeting #4 (2 hours)	**11/3/2016 at 2:00PM-4:00PM ET**
CSAC Review	11/9/16-11/10/16
Final Report	12/21/2016