**Text box 3: Five foundation stones for Quality Improvement applied to laboratory practice**

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| 1. Focus on the client
 | * View the service that you provide from the patient’s perspective
* Engage patient representatives as key members of your QI team
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| 1. Focus on team work
 | * Efficient and effective services require team work
* What can each member of your existing staff contribute?
* Who might require additional in-service training?
* Could staff be better organized to improve the service delivered?
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| 1. Focus on data
 | * Rather than anecdotal reports, what information is available about your service?
* Undertake audit to obtain data about specific aspects of the service
* Qualitative information from service-users (patients, clinical staff) is essential
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| 1. Focus on systems and processes
 | * Take a comprehensive view of the whole service from the patient’s perspective
* Consider systems such as patient waiting times, the environment where samples are collected and the reporting of results as well as processes such as laboratory protocols
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| 1. Communication and feedback
 | * Critically important throughout
* Starts with engaging key stakeholders to identify areas for service improvement
* Regular feedback of performance should encourage staff and identify areas for further improvement
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Adapted from The Five steps to Quality Improvement: A facility based guide to improving clinical outcomes and quality mentorship. Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Department of Health, University of KZN/20,000+