Practically speaking, the most important component of hardwiring and optimizing hospital-wide patient flow is to implement a successful short-term planning and execution process and a system-wide outlook on patient flow.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) provides detailed information on the development and implementation of a real-time demand capacity process, with its attendant plans and adjustments.

When using this process, take steps in this order: predict capacity, predict demand, develop a plan for when demand exceeds capacity, and then evaluate the success or failure of predictions and plans. The figure below shows the process in a flow chart that simplifies these ideas.