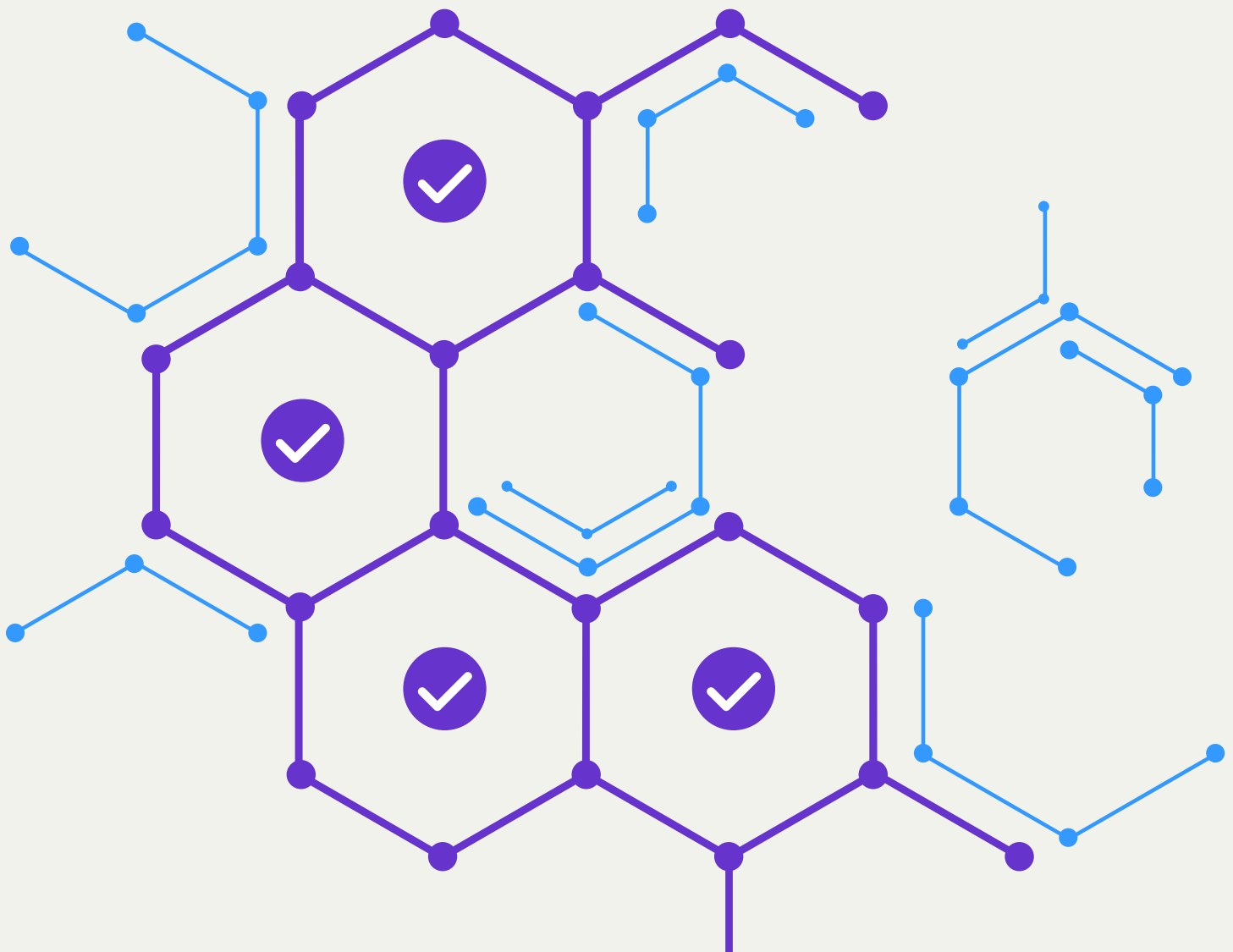


# Checklist: How to Build a Best-in-Class Reliability Program



# About this checklist:

Gremlin has worked with reliability program leaders at Fortune 100 companies to identify the traits of successful programs. Reliability programs built around these four pillars and 18 traits align organizations, get crucial buy-in, and achieve real, measurable improvements to the reliability of their systems.

Compare your current (and planned) efforts to this checklist to ensure your reliability program checks all the right boxes to make it successful.

Learn more about the [Four Pillars of a Best-in-Class Reliability Program](https://www.gremlin.com/blog/four-pillars-of-a-best-in-class-reliability-program) at [gremlin.com](https://www.gremlin.com).

## Pillar #1: Leadership & Strategy

### **Define clear, specific missions and goals**

Know what you're working towards, which services you're targeting, milestone timelines, and the reliability levels you aspire to.

### **Identify initial timelines or mission-critical dates**

Know how your timelines and resources are informed by business events. Set minimum reliability policies and target dates for compliance.

### **Focus on goals that are proactive, not reactive or chasing incident response**

Reliability programs are about getting ahead of incidents to prevent them, rather than react to them. The strategy should have a long-term, policy-based focus on desired reliability levels.

### **Define clear accountability stakes and secure visible interest from leadership**

Everyone involved should understand how they'll be held accountable for the part of the program where they're responsible. Everyone should see and feel leadership's interest in the program.

### **Establish milestone-based review and celebration**

Celebrate and perform retrospectives as the program achieves specific milestones, services hit improvement goals, and service reliability is reflected in the owner's performance. Milestones are defined as both a target date and a reliability target. Don't celebrate until you've met the reliability target.

# Pillar #2: Ownership & Handoffs

## **Identify your program owner**

Know who is taking responsibility for the program.

## **Centralize ownership for baselines, testing, and reporting**

Define who is measuring your progress and what you're being measured against.

## **Decentralize ownership for system improvements**

Know who is responsible for making improvements to each service.

## **Create ownership handoff processes**

Track ownership and continuously onboard new owners when service transfer events occur due to management changes or other factors.

# Pillar #3: Measurement & Metrics

## **Define the background behind the program**

Document why you're doing this and quantify the impact of downtime. All relevant parties should have access to this background and have reviewed it together.

## **Set up consistent and regular reliability measurement and normalized scoring**

Understand how reliability is measured and compare reliability fairly between all of your services.

## **Record your progress against your goals**

Build a well-known and regularly reviewed progress report with historical data in a reverse chronological journal in a well-known location for quick review.

## **Tie high-value golden signals to business metrics**

Specify golden signals that are mission critical for protecting your company and/or creating demonstrable value against business metrics.

# Pillar #4: Processes & Policies

## **Build a catalog of services, their owners, and the impact of disruption**

Make sure the program subjects are well-defined and their criticality well-understood.

## **Establish biweekly progress reviews**

Set regular meetings with program owners, leadership, and service owners to review recent changes and unexpected spikes or dips in progress toward reliability goals.

## **Document new service onboarding**

Build and regularly exercise new service onboarding processes and audit those processes.

## **Define response to services falling out of compliance**

Document how you detect, respond to, and correct services that fall out of compliance with your reliability policies. This definition includes when you review, how you reach out to service owners, what information you collect about the regression, and reasonable timelines for correction.

## **Define response to services coming into compliance**

Document how you recognize and celebrate services coming into compliance with your reliability policies.

Gremlin is the Enterprise Reliability Platform that helps teams proactively test their systems, build and enforce reliability and resiliency standards, and automate their reliability practices organization-wide.

Start a free trial or request a demo at [gremlin.com](https://gremlin.com).