



# ACUA

## Webinar

### **The New Era of Fraud in Higher Education**

02/27/2025



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# The New Era of Fraud in Higher Education

Integrating audit & ERM to navigate and mitigate unique risks for colleges & universities

Katja Freeman, Solution Sales Director - Public Sector

Chris Trepte, Solution Sales Director - Public Sector

# The New Era of Fraud in Higher Education

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Fraud in higher education presents significant financial, reputational, and operational risks. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of fraud risks unique to colleges and universities such as student aid fraud, financial fraud, and cybersecurity threats, and options to mitigate those risks.

## **Today we will:**

Discuss how internal audit and an ERM program can work together to proactively detect, prevent, and respond to fraud in higher education, and understand strategies for integrating fraud risk management into audit planning, leveraging data analytics for fraud detection, and aligning and collaborating with enterprise risk management programs.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify unique fraud risks in higher education
2. Evaluate and align how audit and an ERM program can collaborate for a risk-based approach
3. Understand technology options for continuous monitoring and continuous risk assessments

# Bio

## Katja Freeman, Solutions Sales Director, Audit, Risk & Compliance

- Since 2022, Katja has worked as a domain expert for Public Sector, Audit, Risk & Compliance at Diligent (formerly Galvanize and ACL). She previously spent 10 years at the City and County of Denver's Auditor's Office, rising from Senior Auditor to Audit Director, and nearly three years as a Performance Evaluator for Wyoming's Legislative Service Office.
- Katja holds master's degrees in Political Science and Environmental Policy, along with an audit analytics certificate from Rutgers University. She has led performance, IT, financial, and audit analytics teams, earning multiple awards from the Association of Local Government Auditors (ALGA). She also chaired ALGA's Professional Issues Committee on auditing standards.



# Bio

## Chris Trepte, Solutions Sales Director

- With an IT background, Chris has held consulting roles managing client engagements focused on IT General Controls, SOC 2 Readiness, ICFR, SOX, NIST Compliance, and IT Security reviews.
- In March 2022, he transitioned to Diligent, first as a Client Partner in Customer Success, then managing implementations in Professional Services, and now as a Solutions Sales Director. Across these roles, he has driven client success, GRC technology adoption, and growth.

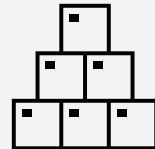


# Learning Objectives

1. Identify unique fraud risks in higher education



2. Evaluate and align how audit and an ERM program can collaborate for a risk-based approach



3. Understand technology options for continuous monitoring and continuous risk assessments



# Agenda

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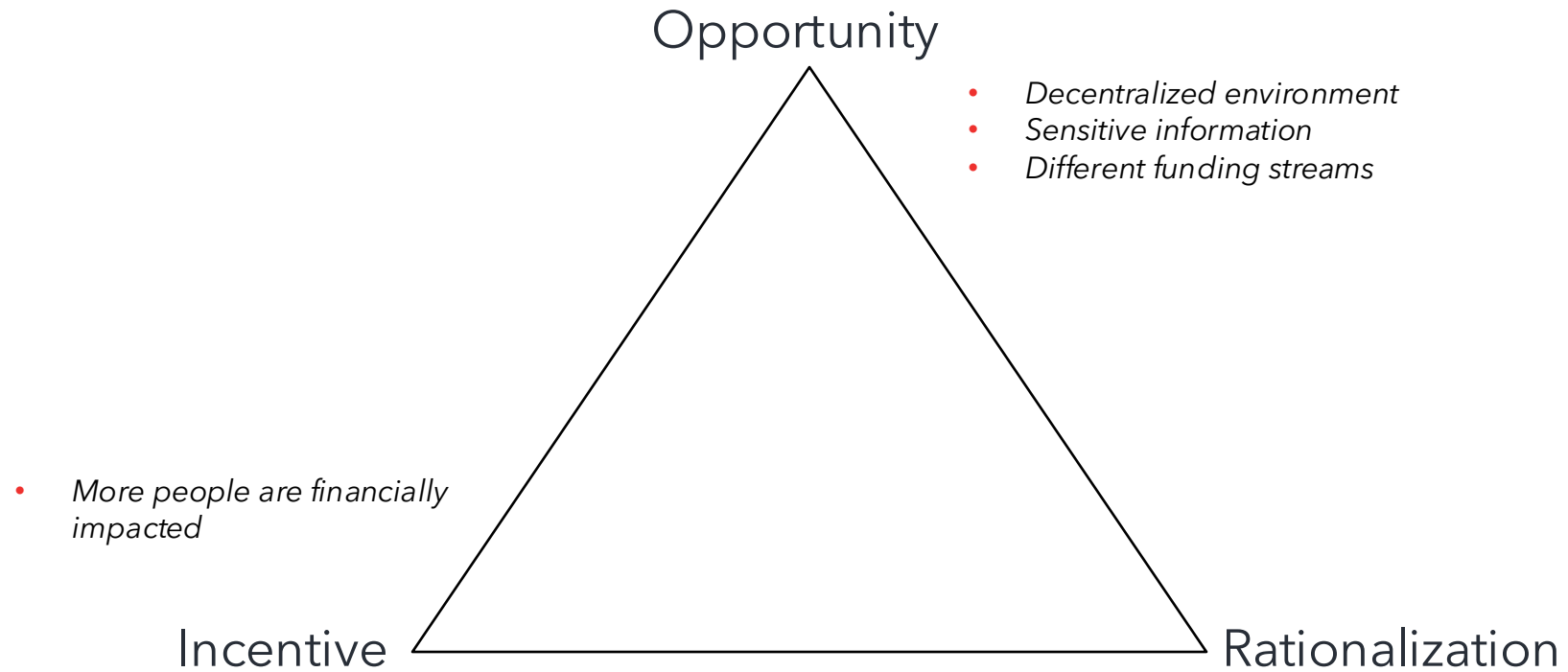
1. Introductions
2. Fraud vs. improper payments
3. How can auditors and risk managers collaborate in alignment with standards?
4. Unique fraud risks in Higher Education
5. Example: Vendor fraud
6. Continuous risk assessment and internal controls monitoring
7. How can technology tools help?
8. Analytics , automation, visualization



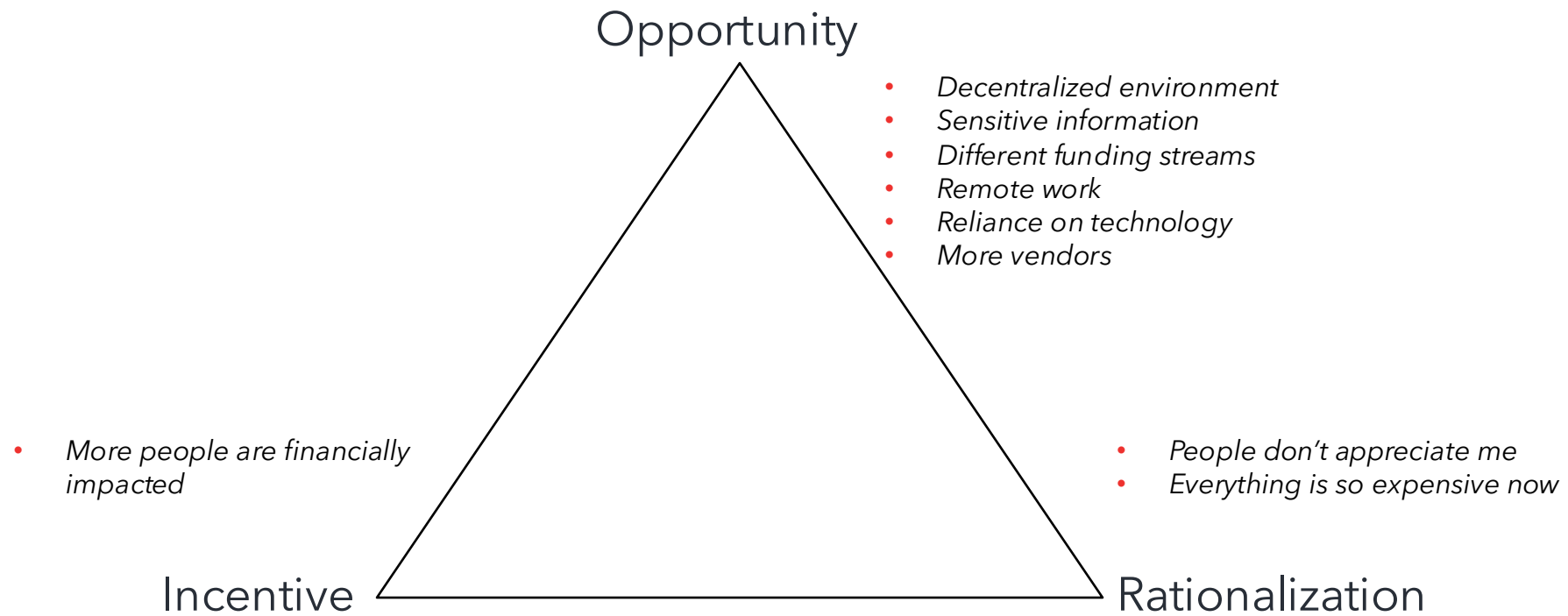
# What is Fraud?

How is it different from improper payments?

# Fraud Triangle



# Fraud Triangle



# Polling Question #1

**Does your institution conduct regular fraud training for all employees?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know



“The typical amount of revenue lost to fraud is reported at 5%” (in reference to occupational fraud)

ACFE 2024, Report to the Nations

->This number has not changed from previous years.

# Improper Payments

## What is it?

**Definition:** Funds that are disbursed which are either incorrect in amount or made to the wrong recipient

## Examples:

- Federal student aid misallocation
- Funds disbursed to ineligible individuals, overpayments, underpayments
- Misuse of institutional funds: unauthorized expenses, use of P-Card instead of master purchase agreement, unauthorized use of T&E card



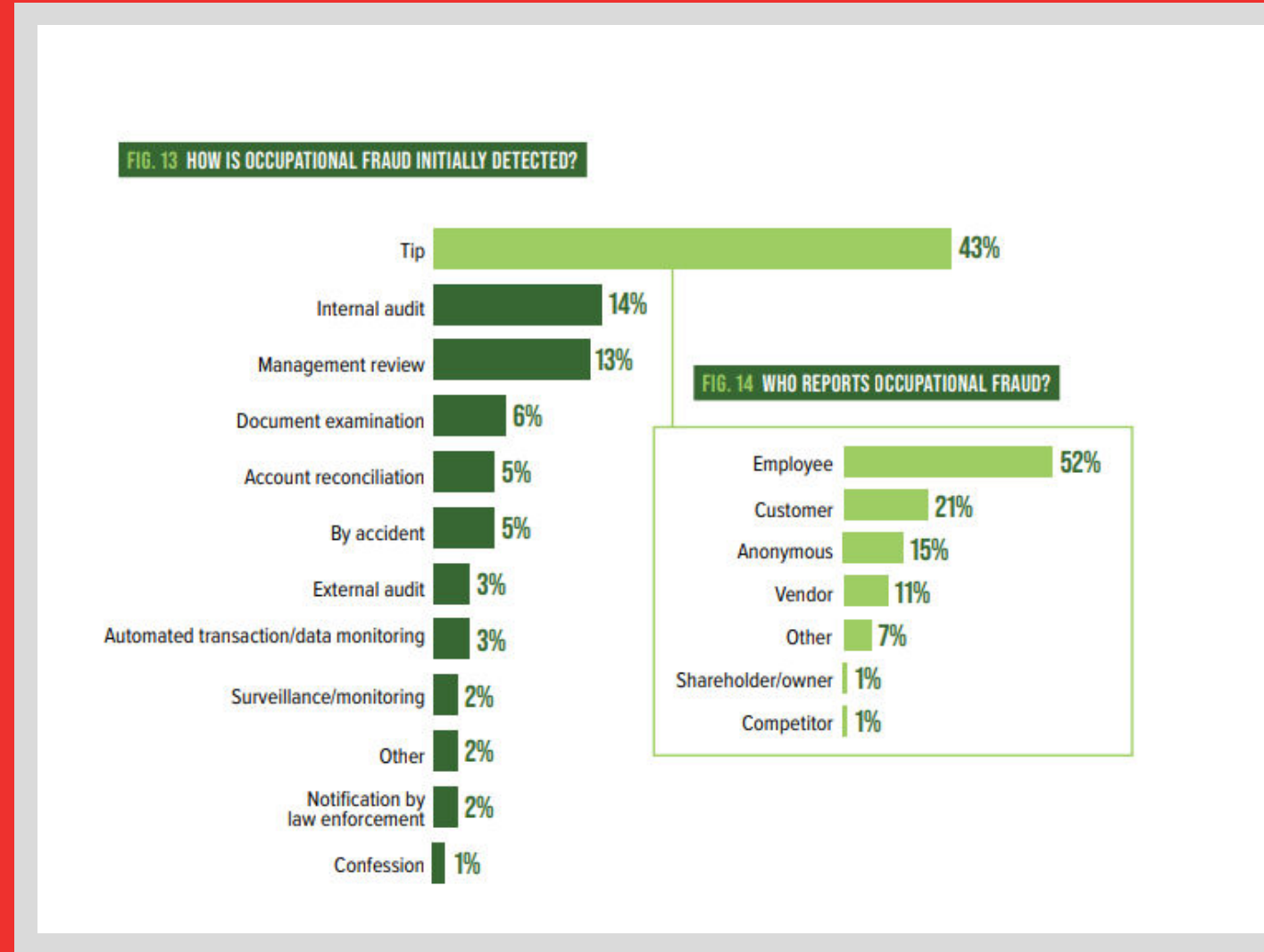
# Occupational Fraud

## ACFE Report to the Nations 2024

### What do we learn from this graph?

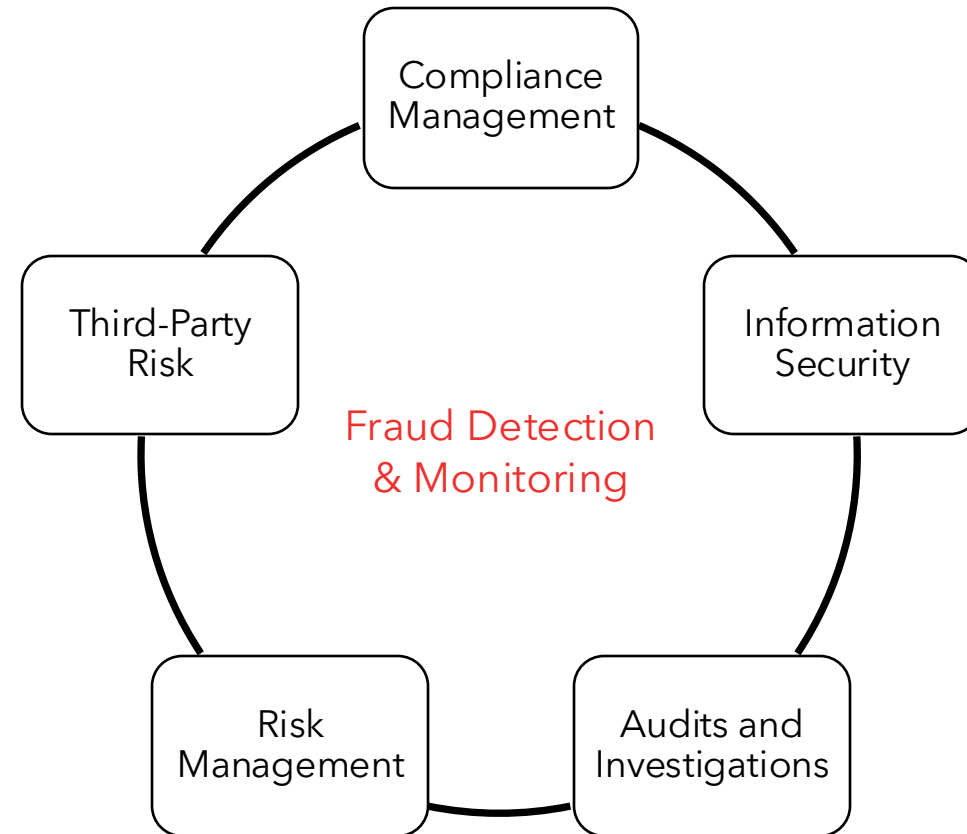
- Web-submitted or emailed tips (rather than telephone) are most effective
- Data shows need for stronger use of preventive controls

Source: ACFE, Report to the Nations 2024, p. 24.



# Organization-Wide Effort

- Prevention
- Detection
- Improvements





# General Challenges for Organizations

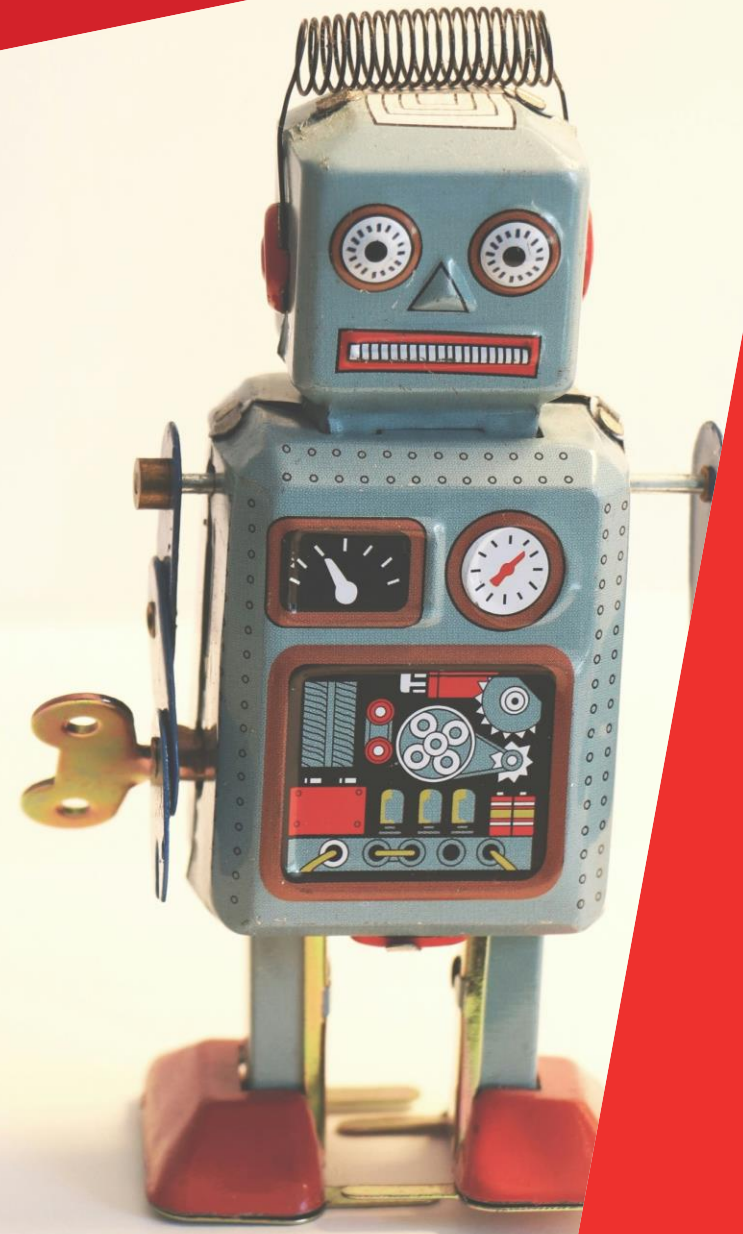
## Disparate Data Sources

### Challenges

- Increased data siloes
- Difficulties in accessing reliable and consistent information
- Makes effective decision-making difficult
- Hinders effective collaboration between different departments, educators, and staff members
- Disparate reporting

### Potential Solutions

- Improve data integration and quality
- Create data dictionaries
- Consolidate solutions



# What Do the Standards Say?

## IIA IPPF

# Updated IIA IPPF Standards

## What changed?

- New IIA IPPF standards emphasize the importance of a continuous risk assessment in internal audit functions.
- Standards see risk not only as barriers but opportunities to achieve objectives.
- Updated standards emphasize greater reliance on technology integration in auditing processes.
- Encourages auditors to use technology for risk assessments, data analysis, and continuous monitoring to enhance audit efficiency and effectiveness.



# Key Areas for Collaboration

## ERM and Audit

# Key Areas where Auditors and ERM can Collaborate

## Governance and Independence

- **Independence:** Auditors offer objective assurance while ERM managers are responsible to facilitate risk ownership in the business units of an organization
- **Risk Alignment:** Risk based auditing allows auditors to align their audit plans to ERM risk assessments and prioritize the highest risks affecting an institution
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Use real-time dashboards for fraud, cybersecurity, and compliance risks
- **Integrate Information:** Share risk data across the institution to prevent data siloes between audit and ERM
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure adherence to IIA standards and the COSO framework (or other risk frameworks)



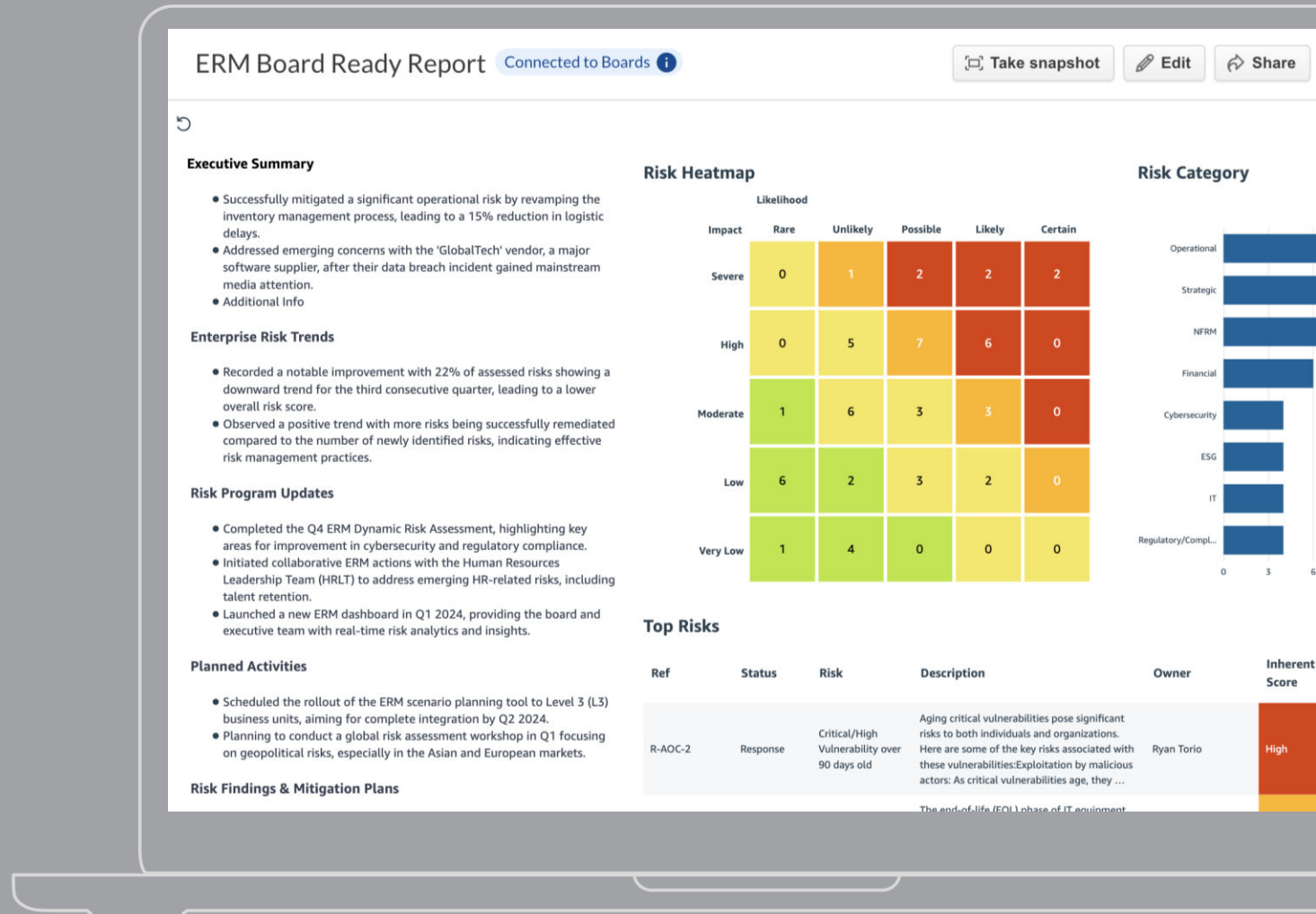
# Real-Time Dashboards

Example

## ERM Reporting

Dashboards allow for the consolidation of risk data from different parts of the organization, providing both risk and audit teams with a centralized view of emerging threats, control effectiveness, and mitigation strategies. This transparency:

- Helps the risk team identify and assess evolving risks
- Enables the audit team to evaluate whether internal controls are effectively managing those risks



# Polling Question #2

Have you increased your efforts in collaborating with risk owners to detect fraud?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know
- d. We don't have problems with fraud



# Changes in Higher Ed

More data leading to informed decisions

## How Can a Continuous Risk Assessment Help?

- Early detection of fraud patterns
- Pro-active risk mitigation
- Continuous monitoring and alerts
- Strengthens internal controls
- Supports data-driven fraud prevention strategies
- Establishes employee awareness and ethical culture
- Auditors can conduct a continuous risk assessment to inform their Annual Audit Plan
- Risk Managers conduct continuous risk assessment to inform their 2nd line of defense duties and the strategic risks of an organization.
- Both can collaborate on these tasks



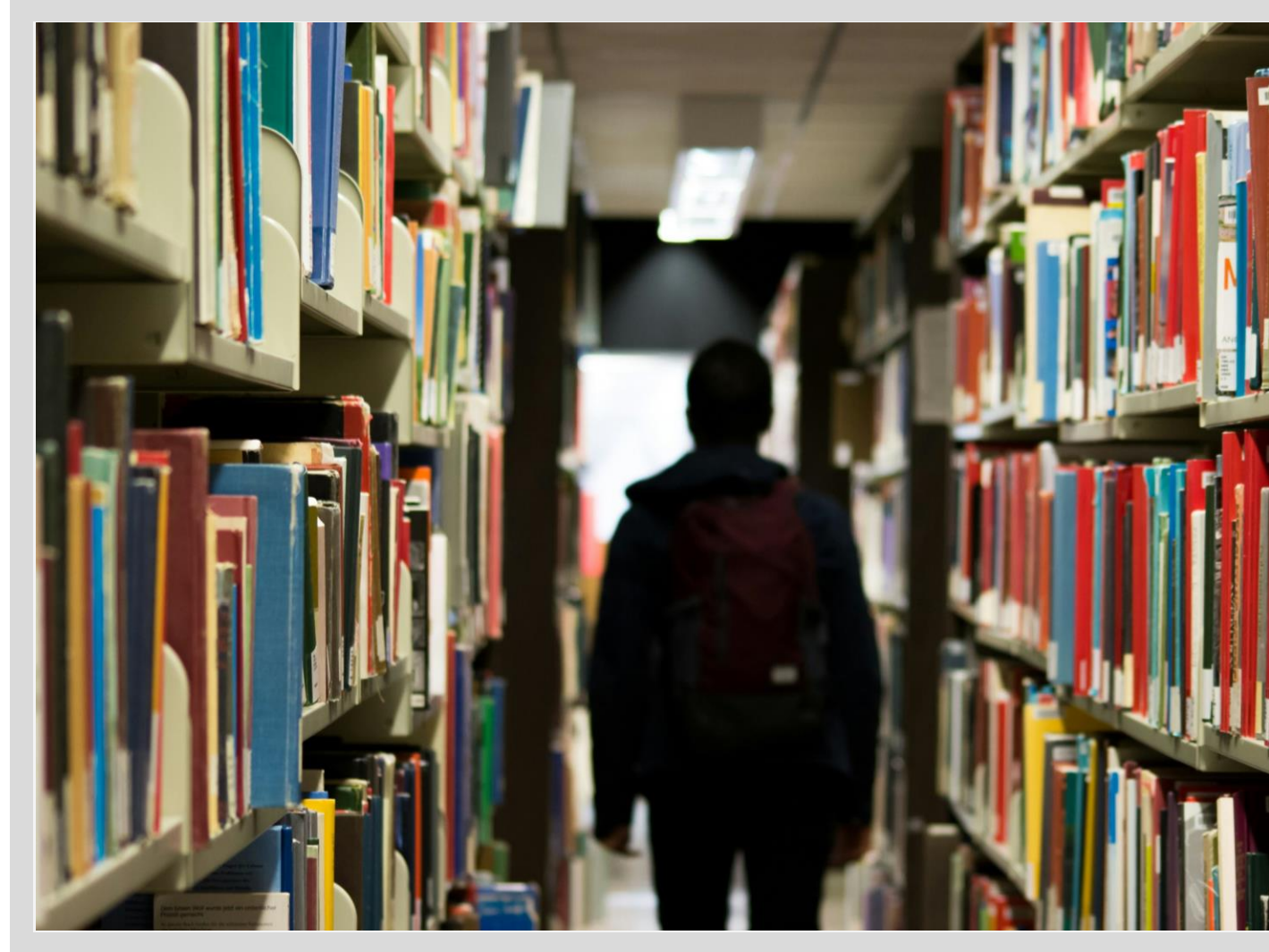


# Integrating a Continuous Risk Assessment with Internal Controls Monitoring

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Line of Defense

### What can be done?

- Ongoing review of controls to monitor design and functioning of the controls
- Monitoring becomes more targeted when integrated with a continuous risk assessment
  - Real-time detection of control deficiencies
  - Prompt remediation
  - Use tools to automate processes
  - Quick feedback enabling continuous improvement



# Combined Assurance for Organizational Governance

Not mandated but Encouraged

## Advantages:

- Assurance mapping
- Enhanced governance and monitoring
- Reduced duplication of efforts

## Disadvantages:

- Auditors may observe variations of quality in the work of different assurance providers
- Different assessments/ interpretations of severity of risks
- Lack of objectivity among assurance providers
- Perception of lack of independence of internal audit

In alignment to IIA IPPF 2024



# Research and Grant Fraud Indicators

Example

# Research & Grant Fraud Indicators

Reputational and Financial Damage to the Institution

**Conflict of Interest:** Use funds for personal expenses or non-research related expenses

- Analyze detailed expenditure data for patterns of non-research related spending
- Unusual spending categories
- High personal expense amounts
- Geographically inconsistent spending
- Discrepancy between expense justification and actual spending



# Research & Grant Fraud Indicators

Reputational and Financial Damage to the Institution

- **Data Fabrication:** Researchers submit false or plagiarized information
- **Misuse of Research Funds:** Undisclosed relationships between researchers and external people or organizations



# Procurement and Vendor Fraud Example

# Example

Hacking Into Vendor's Computer

## Thieves steal \$107,000 from UCF in sophisticated hacking scheme

WUFT | By Kai Johnsen | Fresh Take Florida  
Published December 17, 2024 at 3:15 PM EST



Fresh Take Florida / State University System

Source: Thieves steal \$107,000 from UCF in sophisticated hacking scheme | WLRN

# Procurement & Vendor Fraud

Cause: Lack of oversight of vendor contracts

## Examples:

- **False or inflated invoices:** Making payments to nonexistent vendors or overpaying for services; fake invoices.
- **Conflicts of interest:** Higher Ed staff awarding contracts to relatives or friends or accepting bribes from vendors.
- **Kickbacks:** Vendor and employee working together on fraud. Not receiving agreed-upon number of goods/overbilling.
- **Unauthorized spending:** Purchase of non-educational items with grant or institutional funds (Could be improper payment or fraud)





# What Can Be Done From the Audit Side?

- Conduct surprise audits
- Continuous auditing
- Review policies and procedures related to vendor management
  - Regularly review vendor information and contracts
  - Review contract requirements
- Assess if segregation of duties is working



# Procurement & Vendor Fraud

## Auditors

### Conduct Vendor Audits: Include a right-to-audit clause in vendor contracts

- Use analytics to detect unusual patterns around transaction volumes, payment frequencies, and vendor information.
- **Example:** Use cross-referencing of information to identify fake vendors submitting fictitious invoices
- **Example:** Identify irregularities associated with employee vendor collusion where a legitimate vendor submits inflated or duplicate invoices. Such as identical purchase numbers, descriptions, amounts, dates etc.
- **Red Flag:** Unusual close association with a vendor



# What Can Be Done from the Risk Side?

- Continuously monitor internal controls and check for control failures
- Establish tone at the top that drives all risk owners to feel responsible for the process
- Conduct a continuous risk assessment
  - A regular evaluation of potential risks of an organization
  - Understanding the risk landscape for the entire organization and the emergence of new risks
  - Periodic fraud risk assessments
- **Integrate continuous risk assessment information into ERM program**



# Polling Question #3

Are you conducting a continuous risk assessment?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know



# Leveraging Data to Stay Informed

## Proactive Approach

“Proactive data monitoring was associated with 52% lower losses and frauds detected in half the time.”

Association of Certified Fraud Examiners

# What Can Data Do for You?

- Review 100% of data for indicators of fraud
- Automate tasks to increase resource capacity
- Quickly respond to identified fraud real time



# Types of Analysis

## Ad Hoc/Sampling:

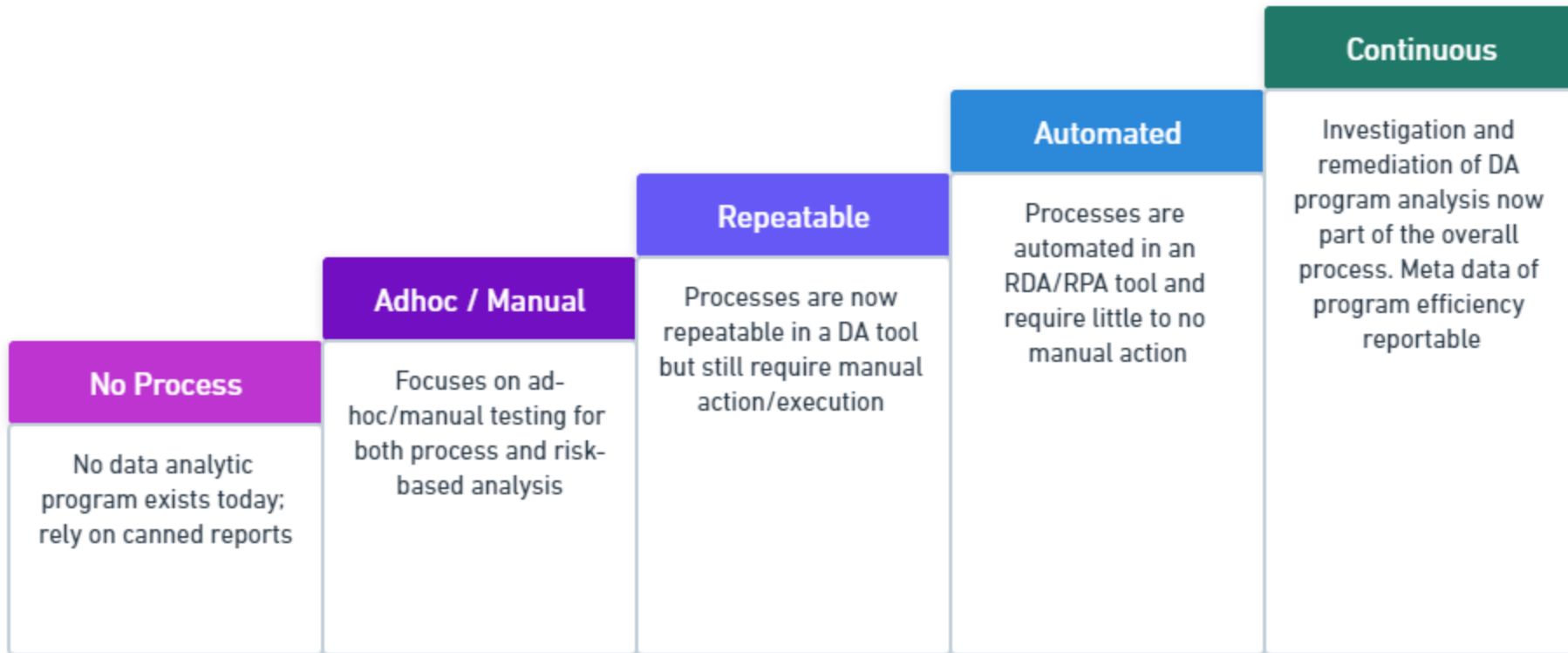
- Manual
- Time Consuming
- Element of Human Error

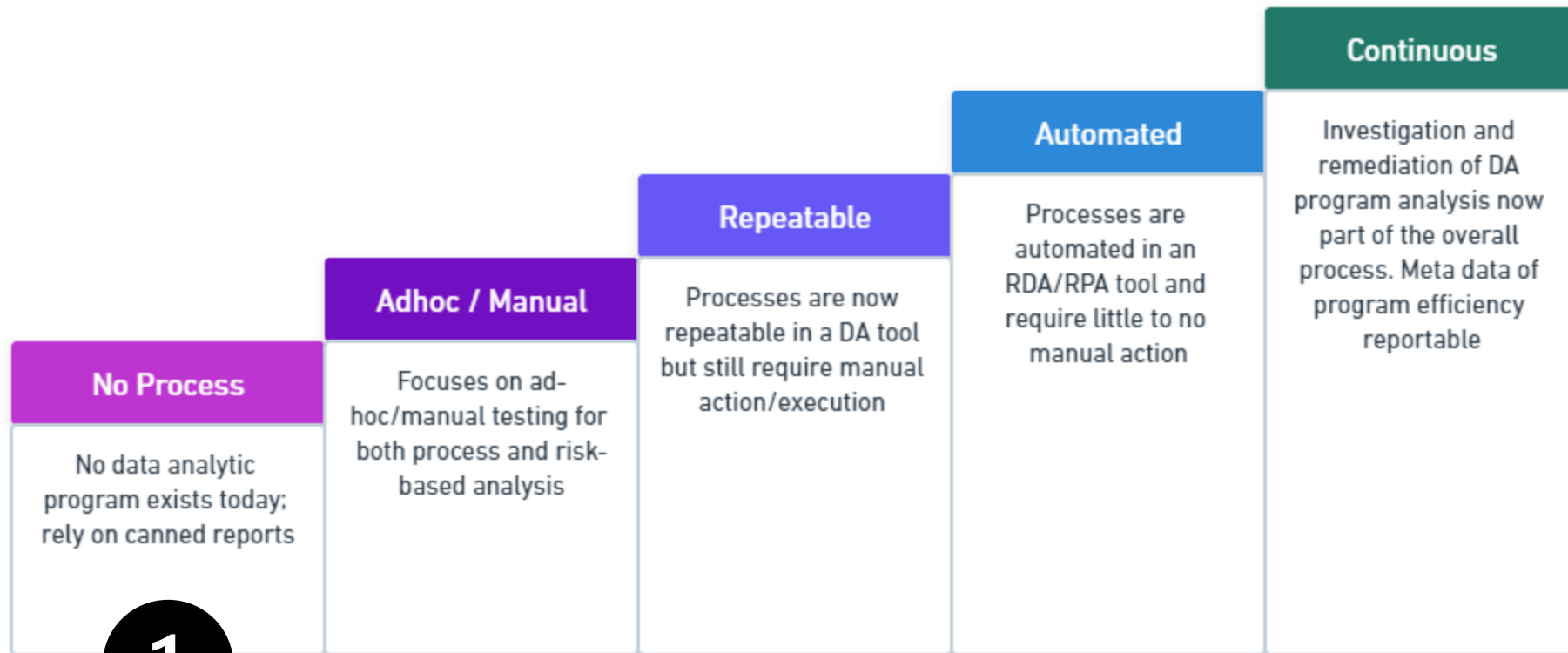
## Continuous:

- 100% Coverage
- Real time notifications
- Quickly covers large volumes of data

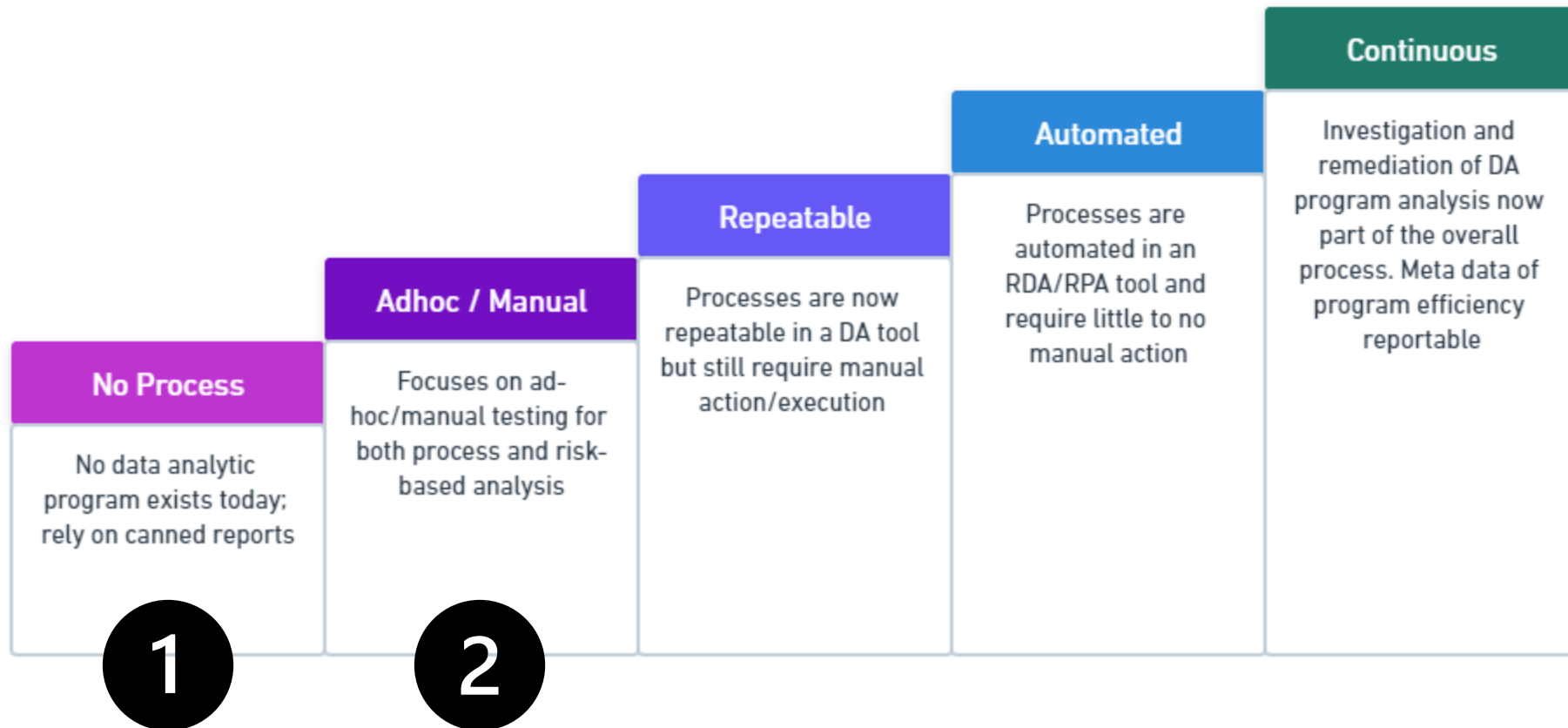


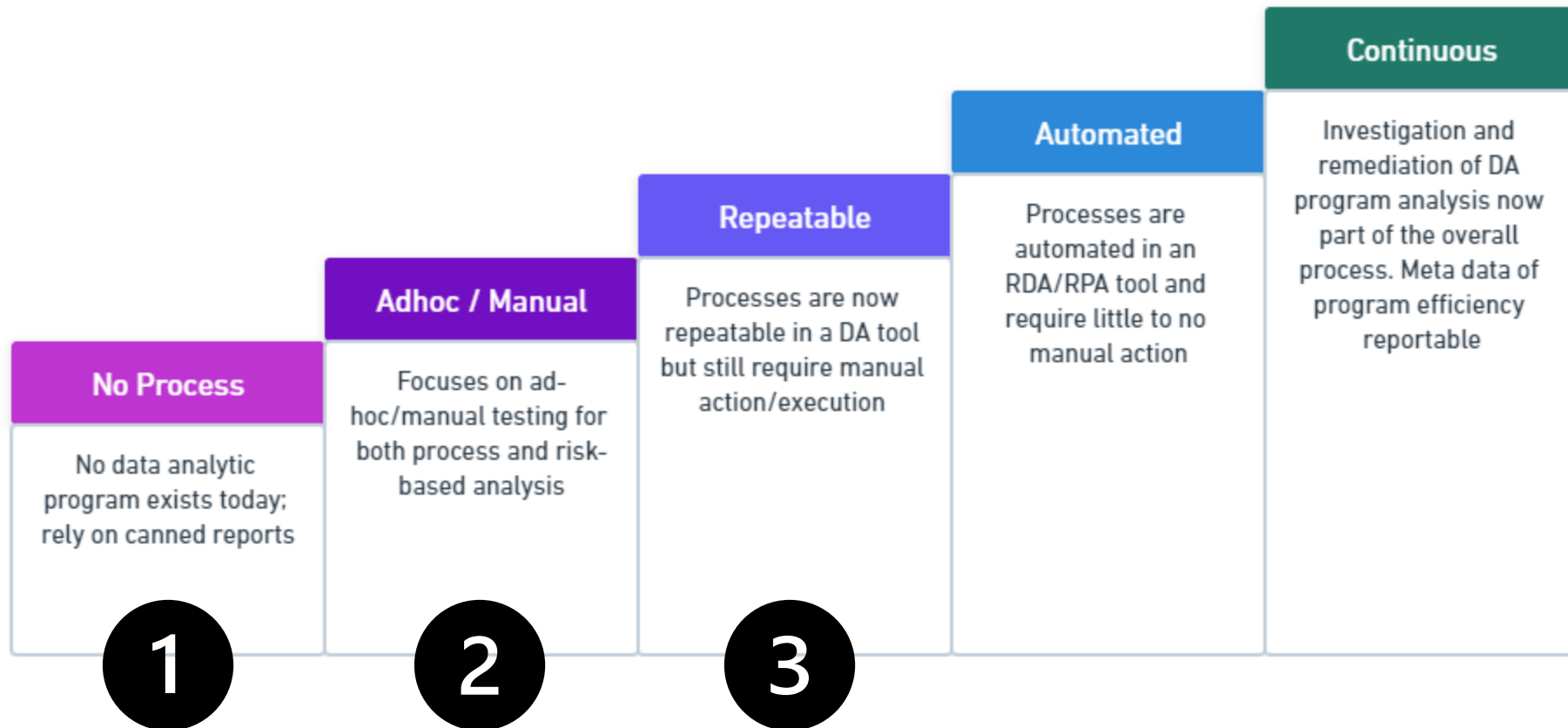


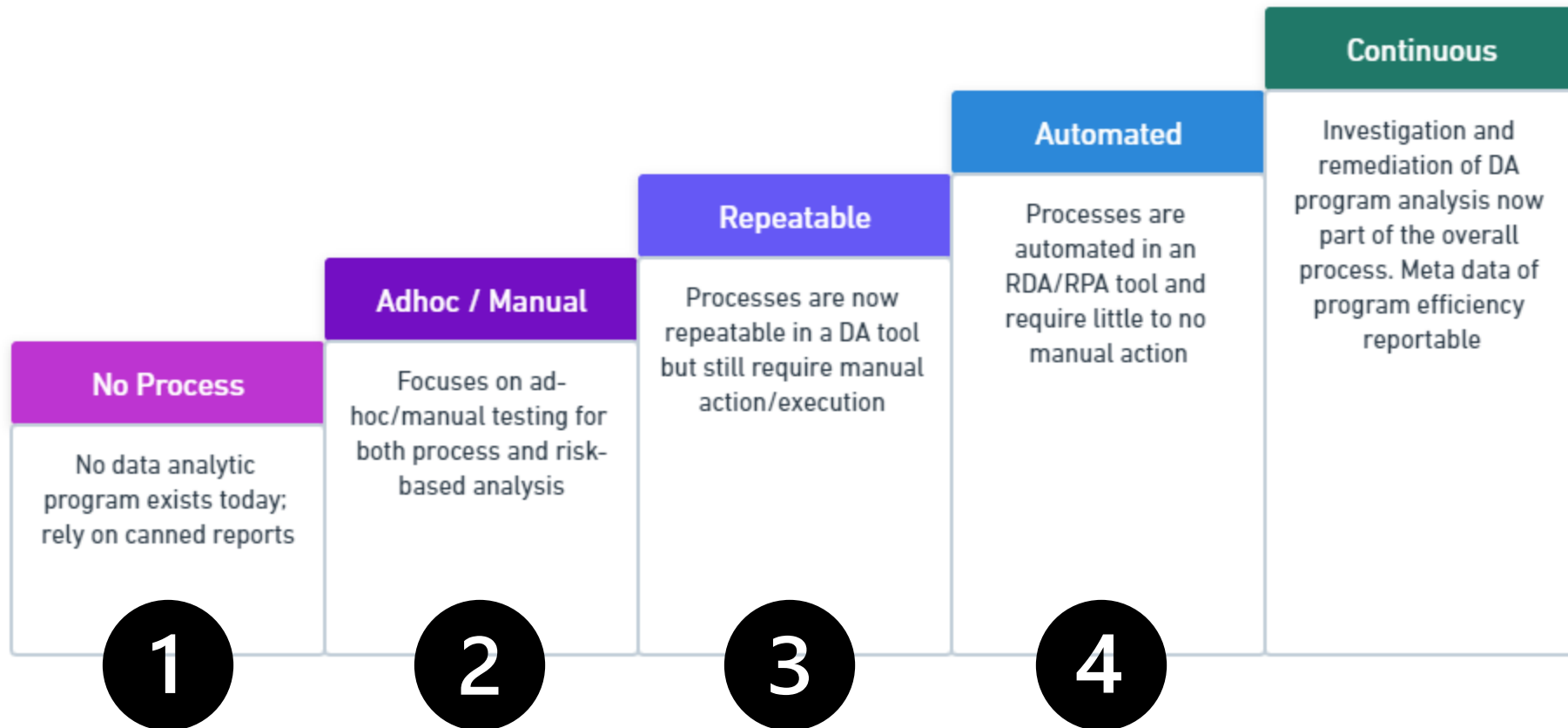


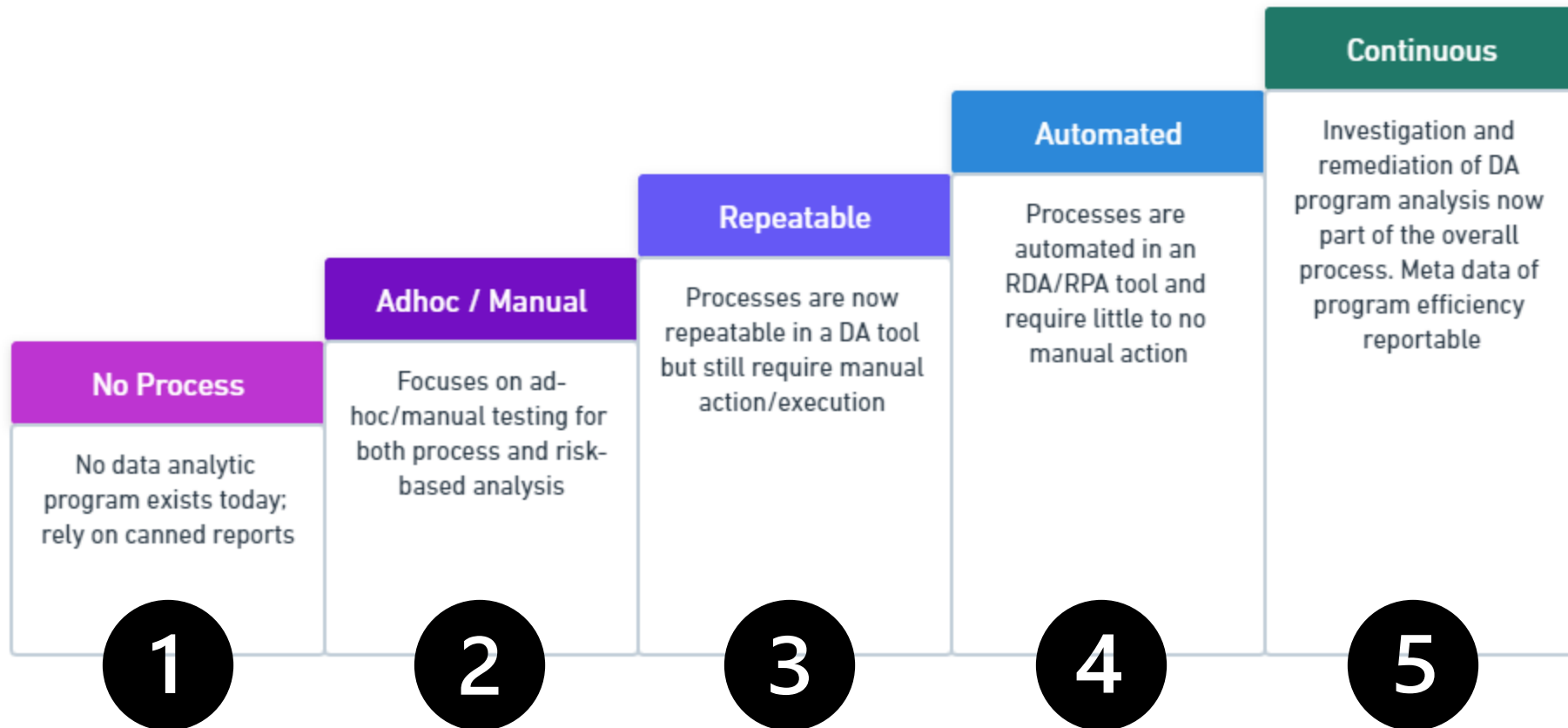


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# Introduction to Continuous Monitoring

## New Era of Risk Monitoring and Mitigation

The ongoing process of monitoring and assessing internal controls within an organization to ensure compliance, efficiency, and risk mitigation

Definition of CCM



# Significance of CCM

## Active Fraud Mitigation

### 1. Early Detection of Fraudulent Activities

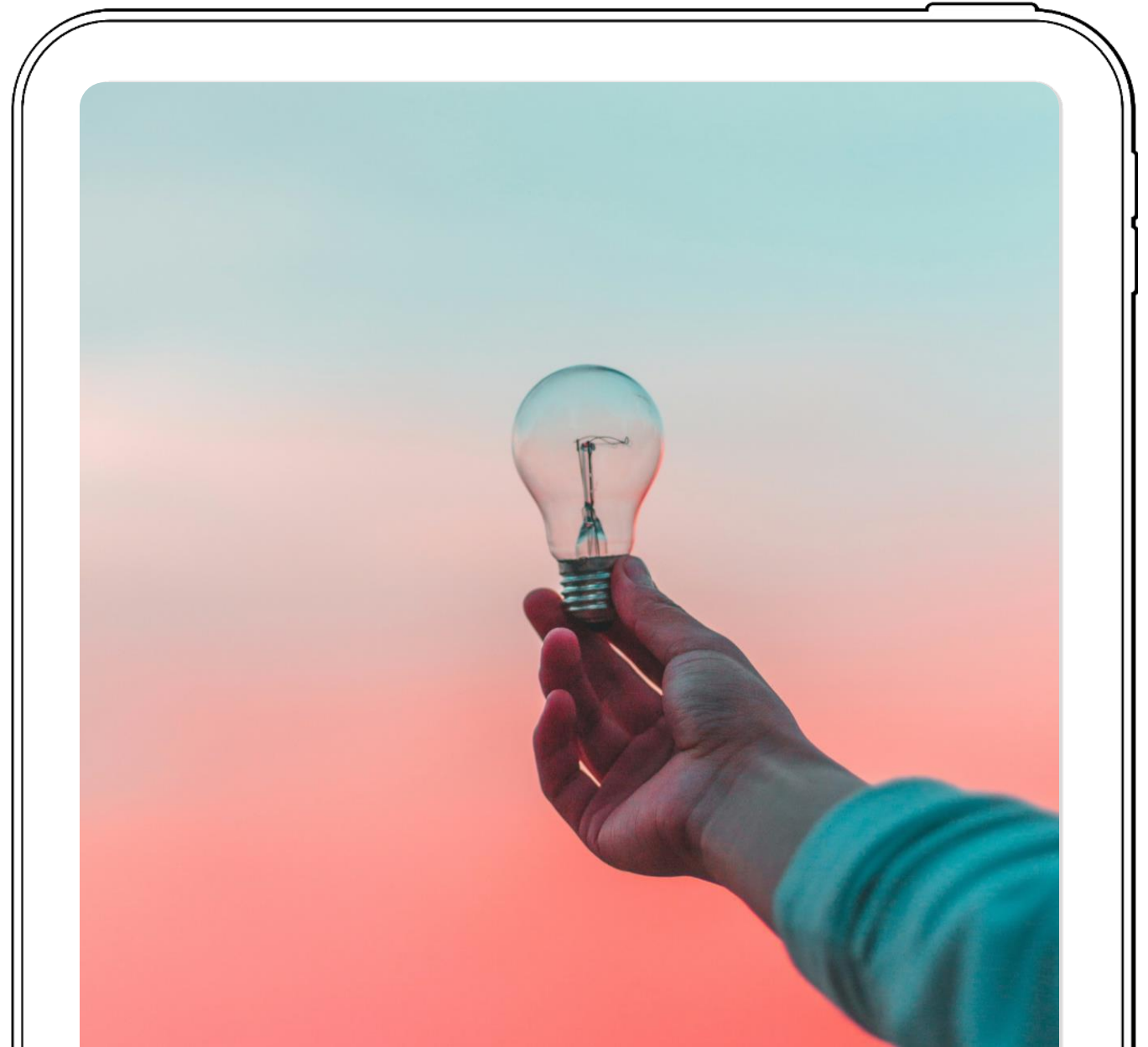
- CCM continuously analyzes transactions, user behavior, and control effectiveness, allowing organizations to identify suspicious patterns and anomalies before they escalate into significant fraud incidents.

### 2. Reducing the Fraud Triangle (Opportunity, Rationalization, Pressure)

- By minimizing opportunities for fraud through automated controls, CCM discourages fraudulent behavior. If employees know that controls are actively monitored, the risk of detection increases, reducing the likelihood of misconduct.

### 3. Strengthening Internal Controls

- Traditional audits and periodic reviews may miss real-time fraud, but CCM ensures that internal controls are enforced consistently, preventing gaps where fraud can occur.



# Significance of CCM

## Active Fraud Mitigation Continued

### 4. Compliance with Regulations and Standards

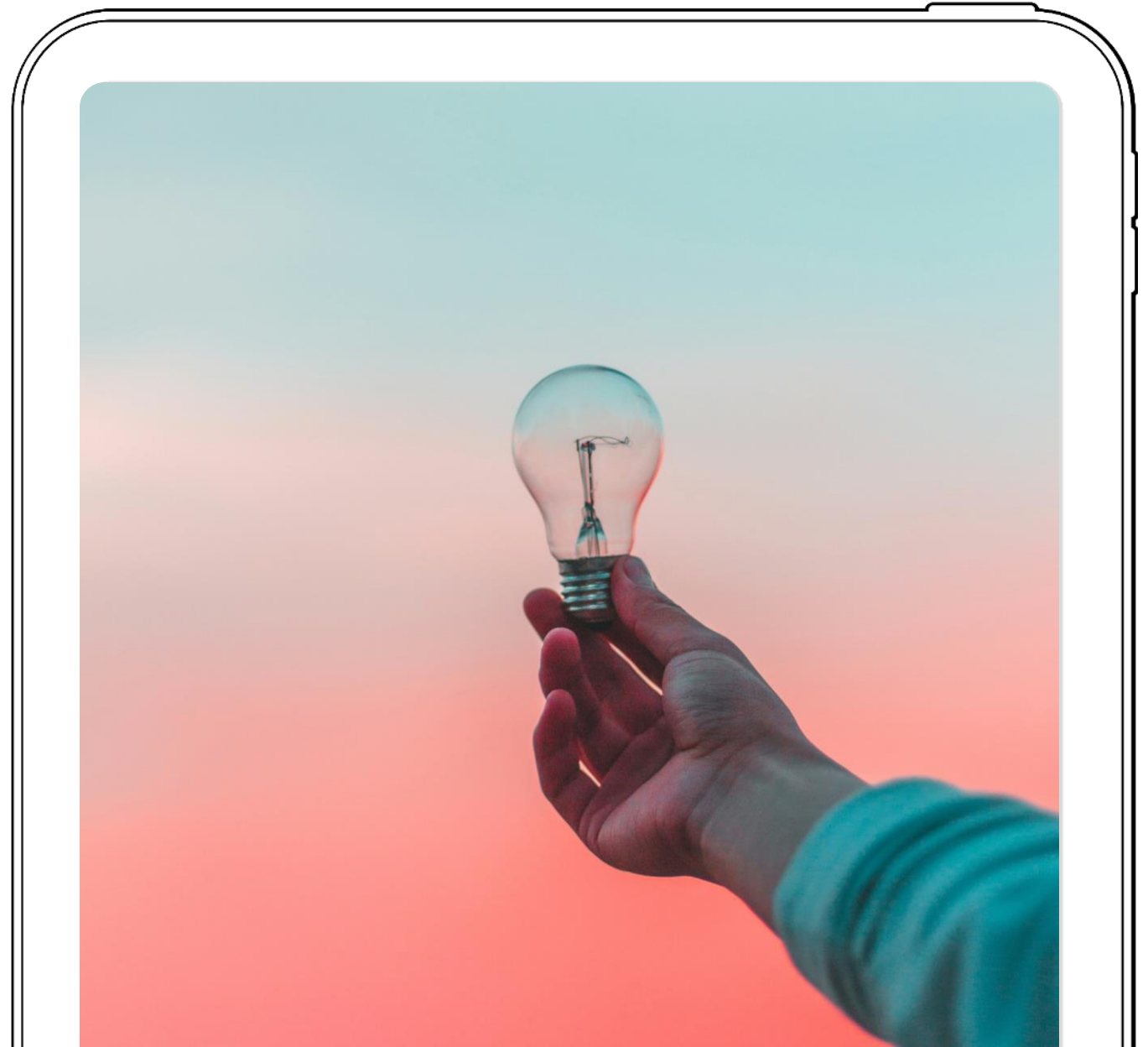
- Many industries require strict compliance with financial regulations (e.g., SOX, GDPR, COSO). CCM helps ensure compliance by continuously verifying adherence to policies, reducing regulatory risks.

### 5. Cost Savings and Efficiency

- Proactively preventing fraud through CCM reduces the need for costly forensic investigations and legal proceedings after fraud has already occurred. It also optimizes internal audit efforts by automating control testing.

### 6. Data-Driven Fraud Prevention

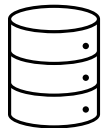
- By leveraging machine learning, AI, and analytics, CCM can predict potential fraud risks and flag irregularities based on trends, allowing organizations to address vulnerabilities proactively.



# Key Components

## Automated Data Collection

- Collect data from various sources, such as ERP systems, databases, logs, assets, and IT security solutions in an automated and real-time manner.



## Rule Engine

- Define specific rules and thresholds that indicate control violations or anomalies.
- Immediate notification and action of potential issues.



## Analytics and Reporting

- Analyze large datasets, detect patterns, and generate insightful reports.



## Remediation Workflow

- Establish a process for addressing and remediating control deficiencies once identified.
- Ensuring that issues are addressed systematically and in a timely manner.



## Continuous Improvement

Ongoing assessment and enhancement of CCM processes to adapt to evolving risks and business needs.

# Polling Question #4

Are you performing any continuous monitoring activities?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know



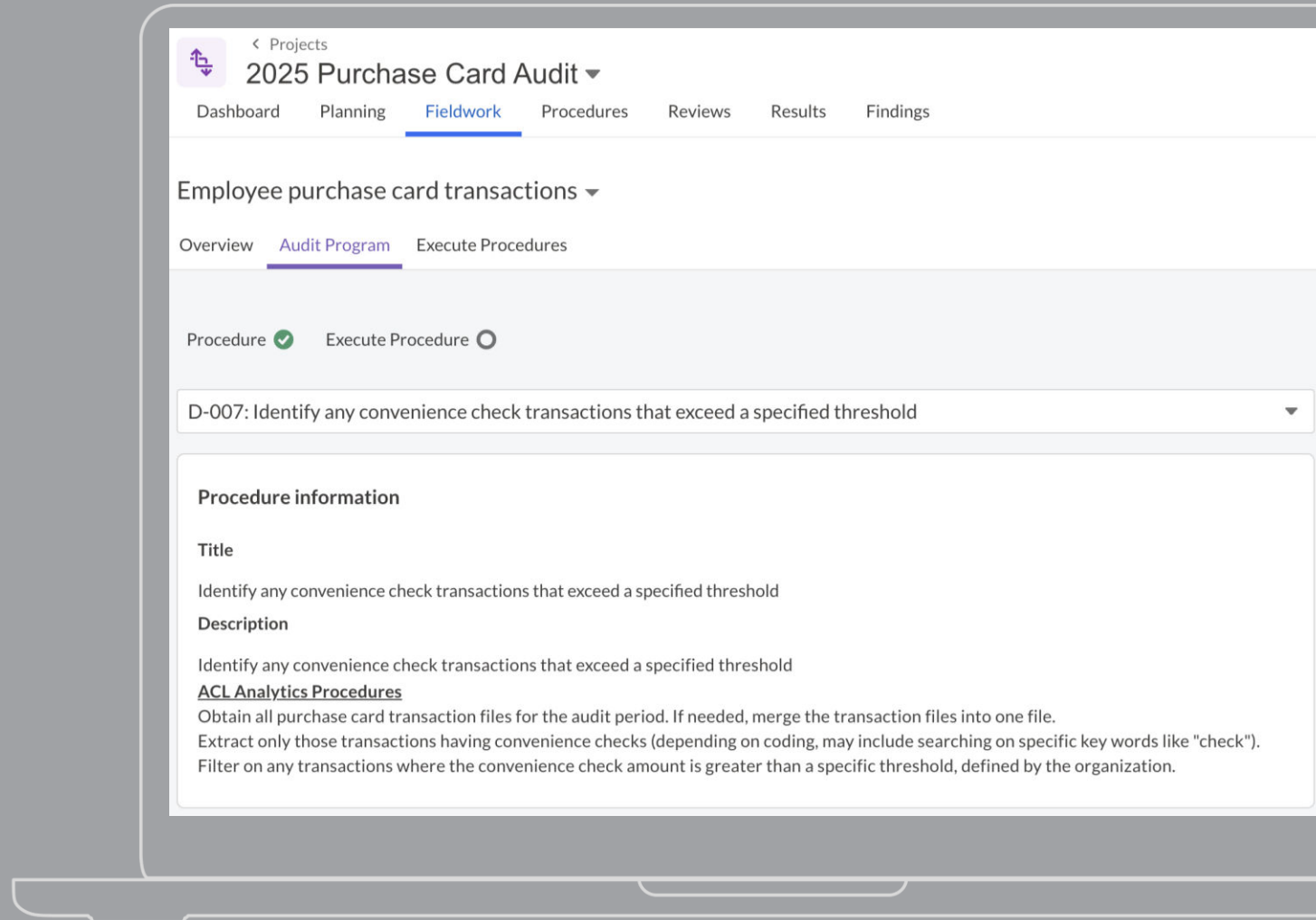
# Continuous Audit Analytics

Example

## Purchase Card Audit

Leverage analysis of purchase card data to continuously monitor against fraud related procedures / controls

1. Perform analysis on purchase card data to determine instances where transactions exceeded a pre-defined threshold



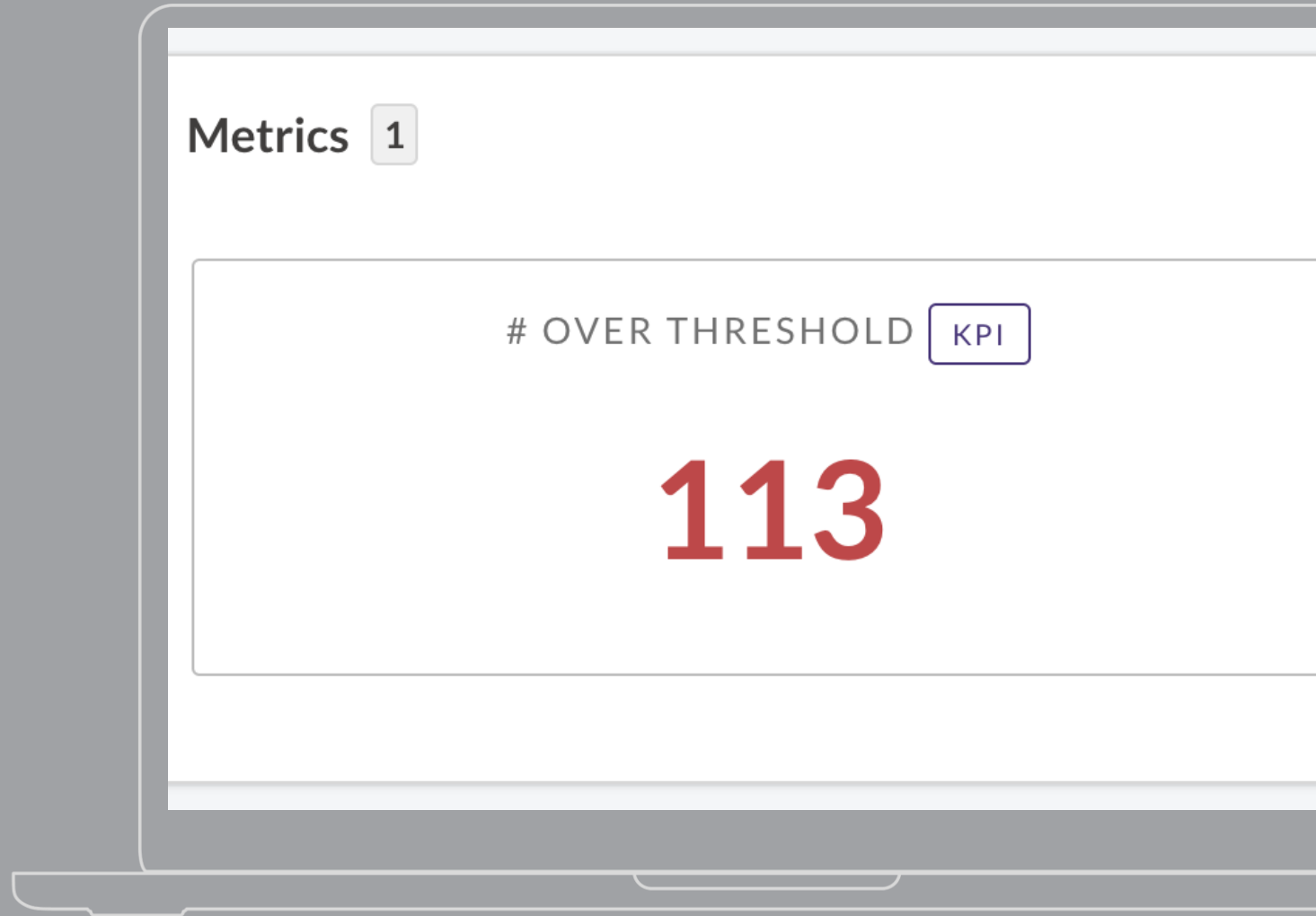
# Continuous Audit Analytics

Example

## Purchase Card Audit

Leverage analysis of purchase card data to continuously monitor against fraud related procedures / controls

1. Perform analysis on purchase card data to determine instances where transactions exceeded a pre-defined threshold
2. Define a metric (key performance / key risk indicator) based on the outcomes of the analysis



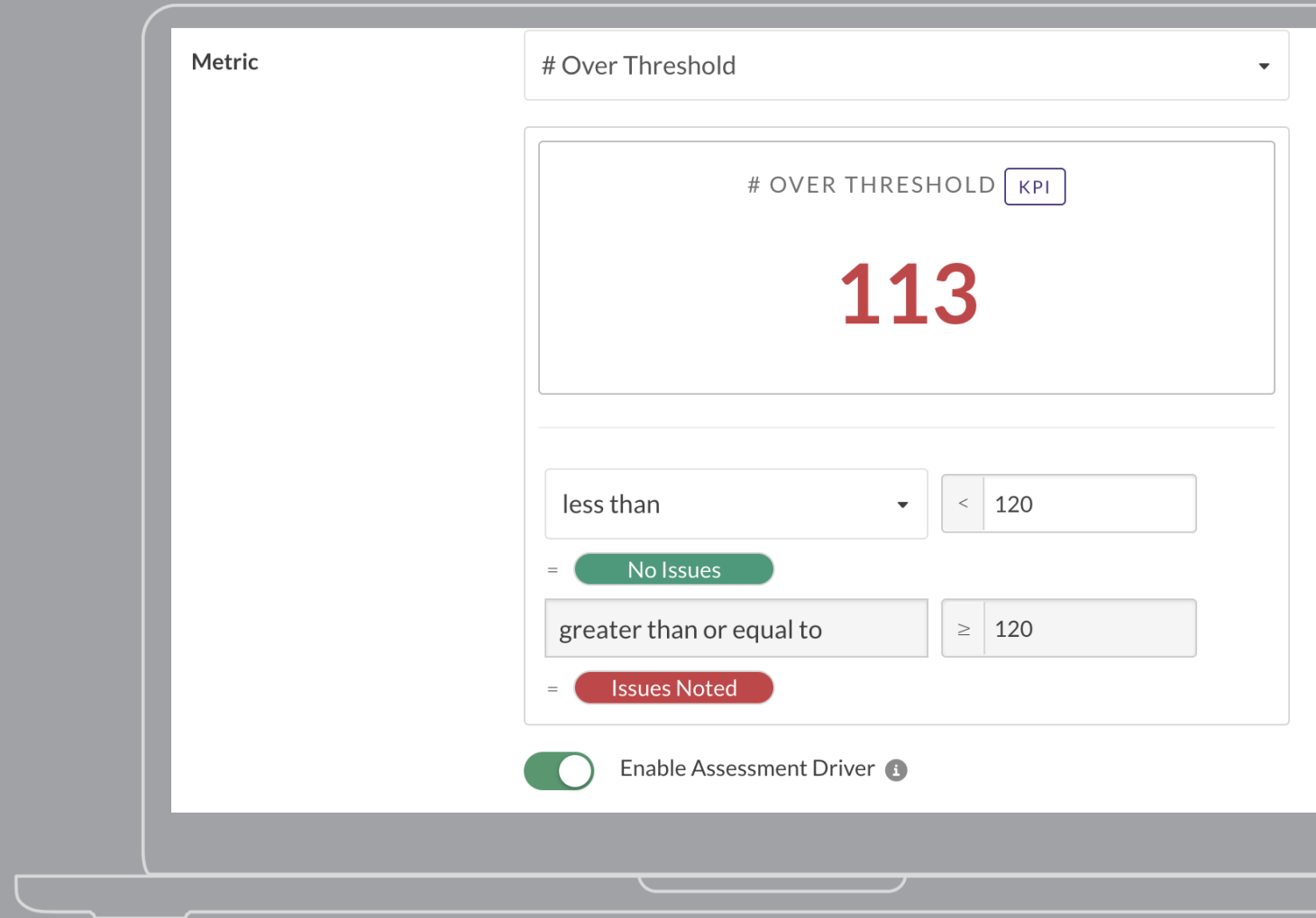
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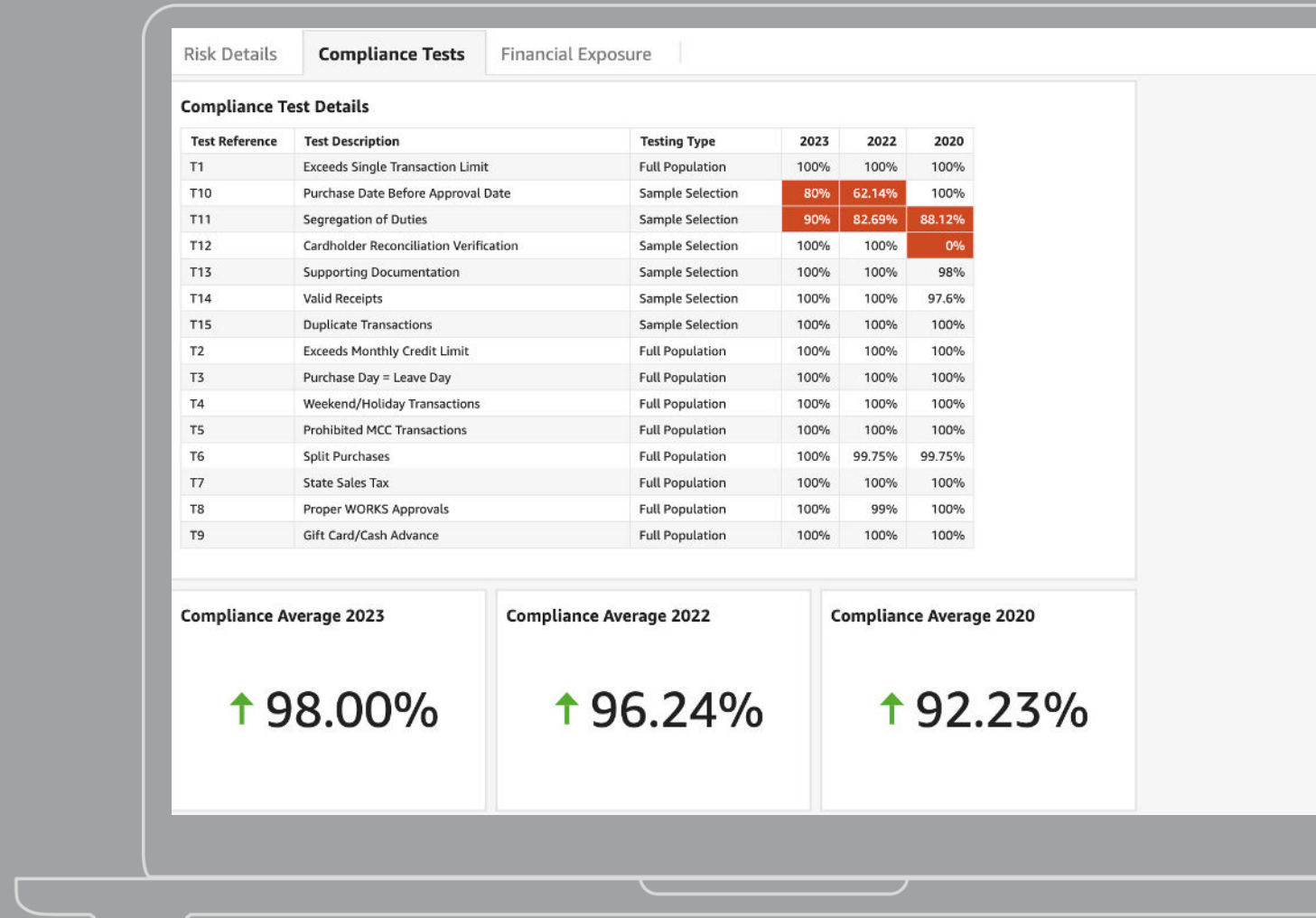
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3. Set thresholds that define control success / failure criteria based on the defined metric
4. Inform real-time dashboards on control monitoring outcomes





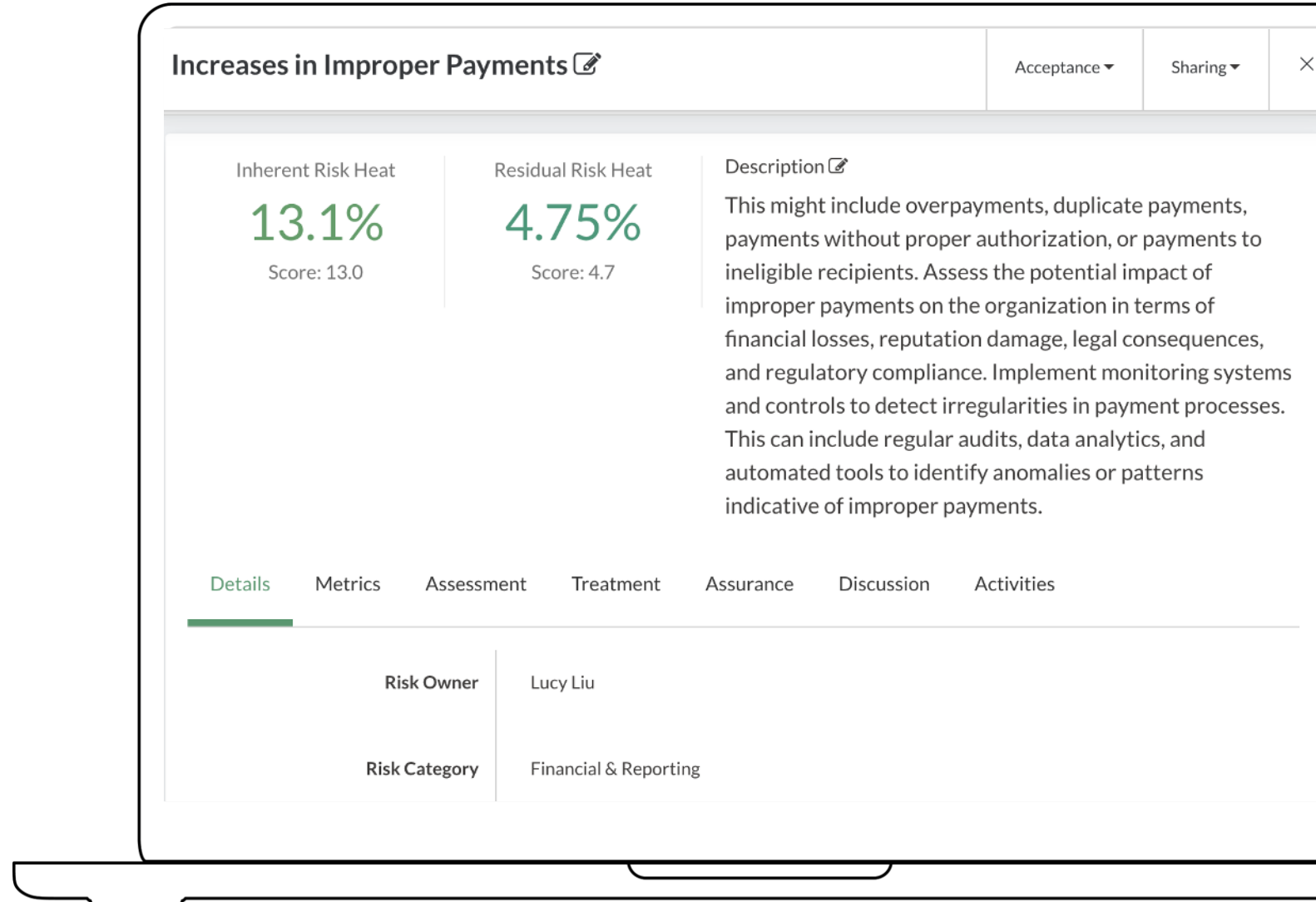
# Continuous Risk Assessment Analytics

Example

## Increases in Improper Payments

Leverage analysis of financial ERP data to continuously monitor against fraud related risks

1. Perform analysis on financial ERP data to surface insights that can be used as input into risk assessment activities



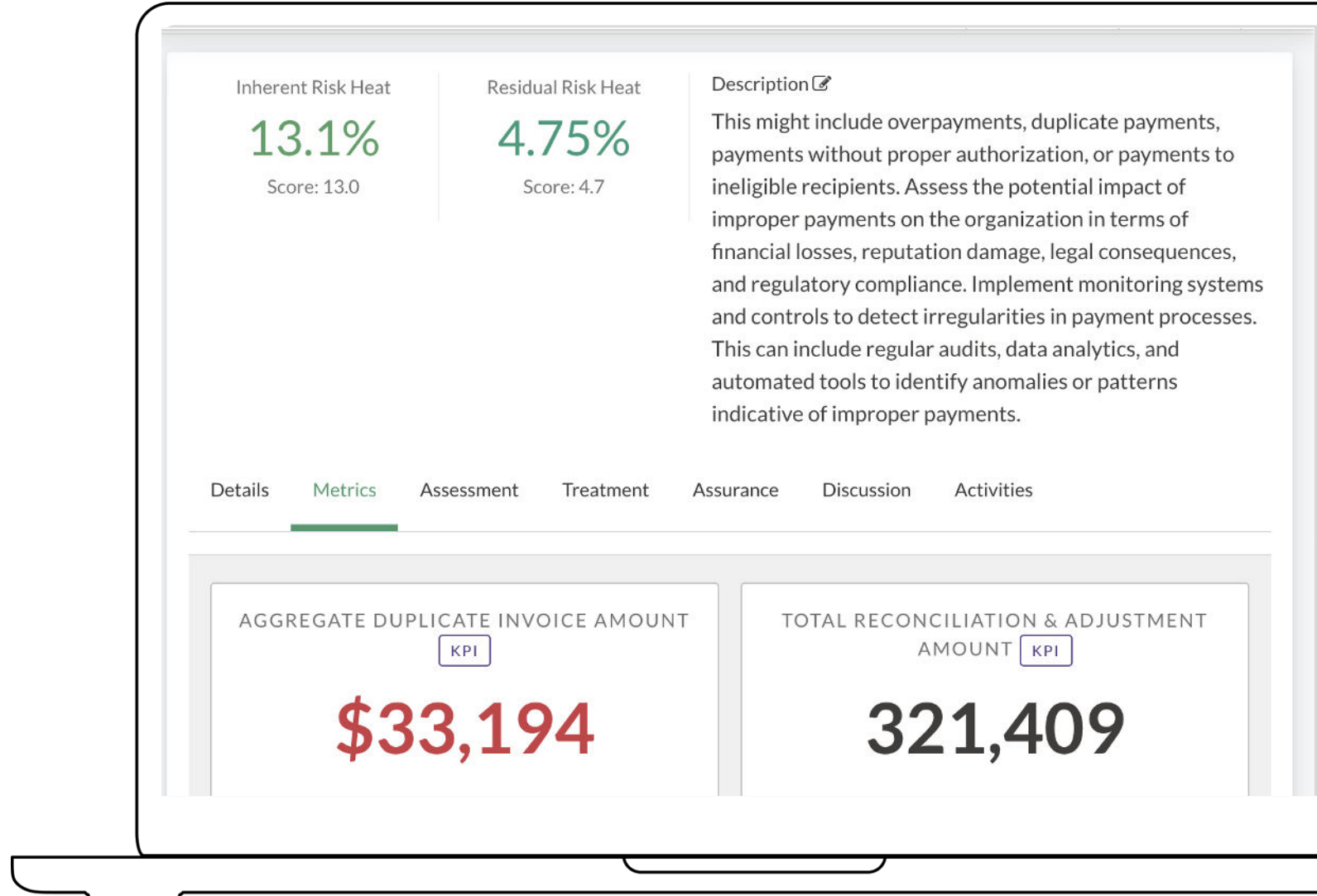
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### Increases in Improper Payments

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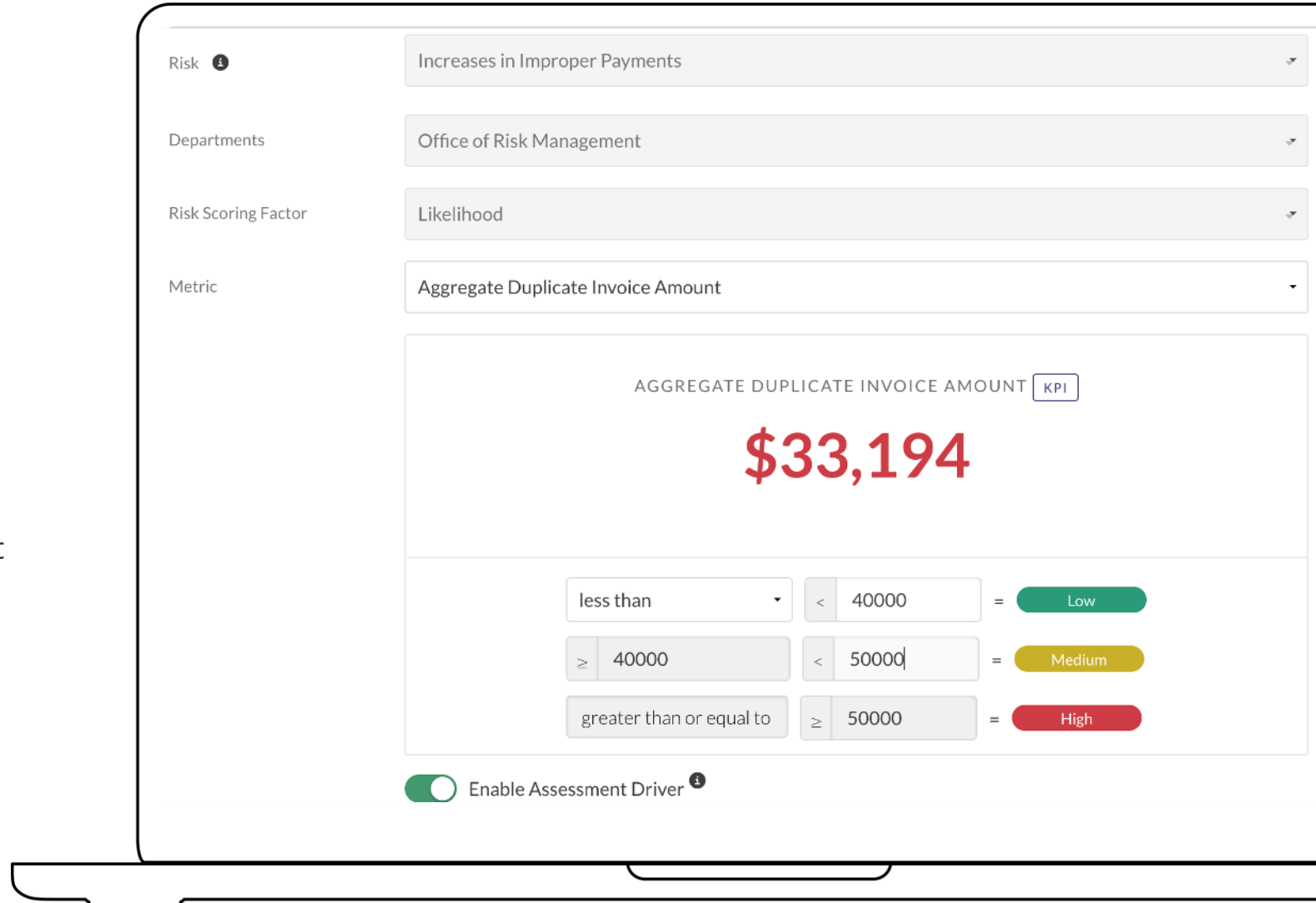
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3. Set thresholds that define risk scoring based on the defined metric



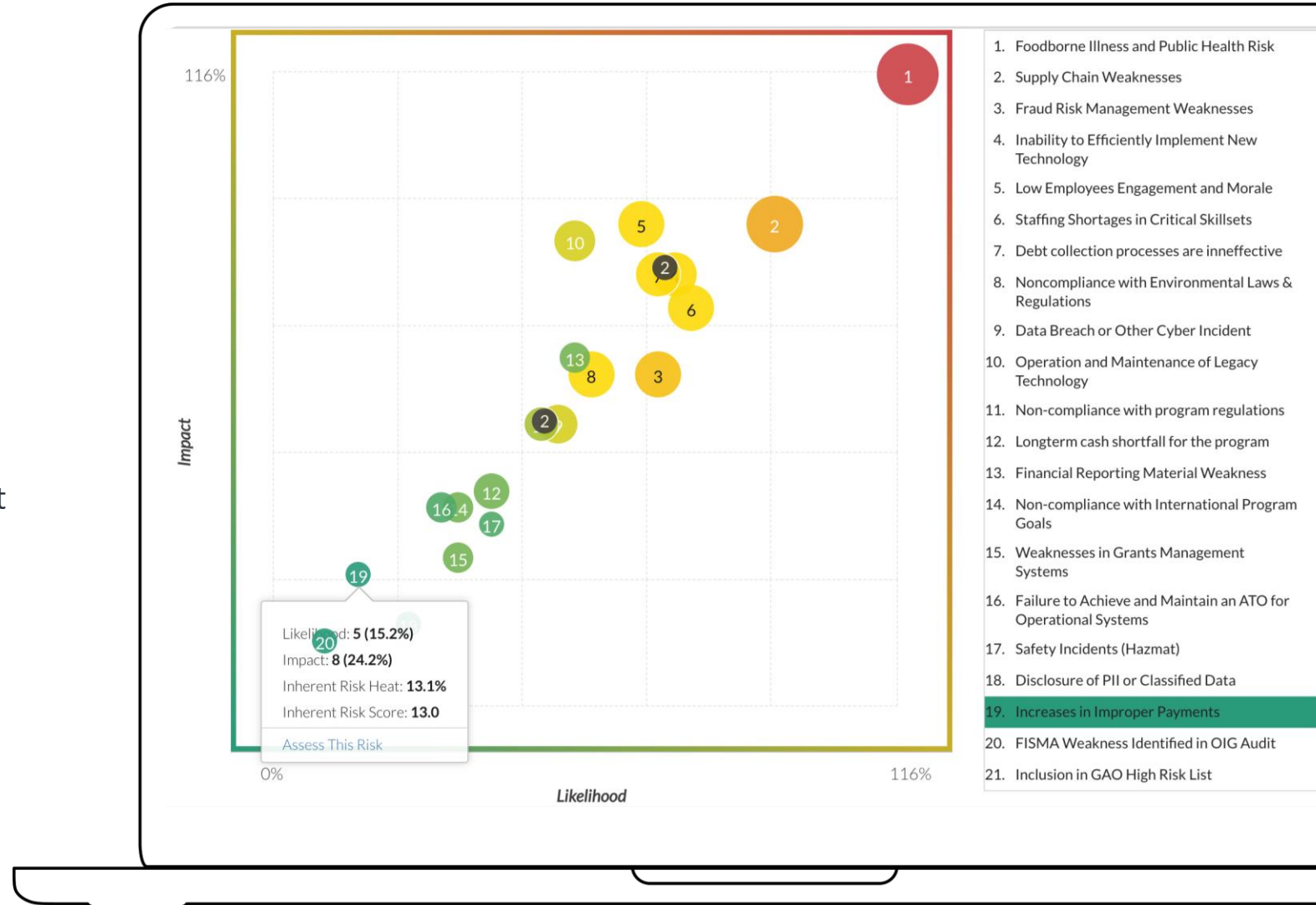
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3. Set thresholds that define risk scoring based on the defined metric
4. Inform real-time dashboards on risk assessment monitoring outcomes



# Q&A

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## Diligent Audit



Katja Freeman



Chris Trepte



# Thank You

# Announcements



Upcoming ACUA Webinars – Save the Date!

Month	Date & Time	Presenter	Topic
March 2025	3/27/25 - 1:00pm EST	Baker Tilly	Sponsored Programs Risk Assessments
April 2025	4/24/25 - 1:00pm EST	Sarah MacCarthy	Navigating Policy Changes in Academia
May 2025	5/22/25 - 1:00pm EST (90-minute webinar)	Nik Henegar	Audit Bots: Revolutionizing Audits with RPA and Macros

Do you have an idea for a webinar? Contact the VLC director at [wshinsato@calstate.edu](mailto:wshinsato@calstate.edu)







**ACUA**  
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# Recently Released December Kick Starter!

## Information Technology – Third Party Risk Management

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Available in the members-only Audit Tools  
section of [www.ACUA.org](http://www.ACUA.org)





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Write an Article  
for the College  
& University  
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