Backlog Health Checklist for PMO Leaders

🔍 Diagnose the Backlog

- Group items by age (e.g., <3 months, 3–6 months, etc.)
- Identify untouched "zombie" stories (no activity in 90+ days)
- Confirm strategic alignment with current OKRs or themes
- Ensure each item has a clear owner or advocate

🧹 Eliminate the Noise

- Hold a "Backlog Burn Day" to archive low-value work
- Use a Parking Lot/Icebox for low-priority ideas
- Apply tags like stale, legacy, or needs-review to aid filtering
- Enforce a "Three-Strike" rule for repeatedly deprioritized items

🧭 Embed Backlog Hygiene into Governance

- Include backlog health in QBRs and PI planning
- Review backlog age/size metrics in portfolio reports
- Partner with Product and Delivery leadership on cleanup cycles
- Train teams to build hygiene into retros, grooming, and planning

💬 Communicate the Value

- Reframe cleanup as strategic alignment, not scope reduction
- Share data on backlog age, refinement time, and delivery improvements
- Prepare responses for emotional or stakeholder pushback
- Position backlog health as part of delivery governance; not an isolated task