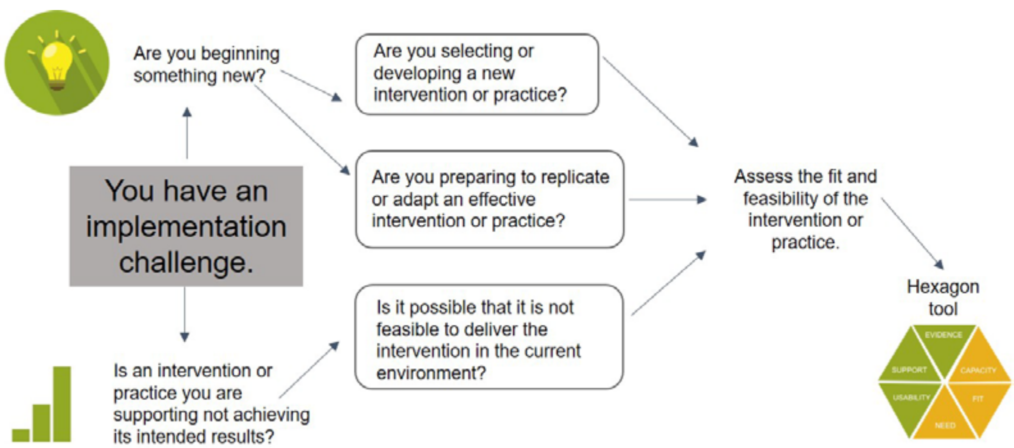
assess fit and feasibility

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION GUIDE #1

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

When Would You Use This Action Guide?

This action guide provides information on important considerations when selecting, developing, replicating and/or adapting a new program or practice. It may also be helpful if a program or practice you are supporting is not achieving its intended results, or if the environment in which the program or practice is being implemented poses a challenge.



Why Would You Use This Action Guide?

When selecting, developing, replicating and/or adapting a new program or practice, it is critical to understand the context in which it will be implemented. Using programs or practices with a base of evidence, such as evidence-based practices (EBPs) or evidence-informed practices (EIPs), is important. But simply choosing a model with a strong evidence base is not enough to ensure a good fit with population needs, quality implementation, program results or sustainability. Research indicates the program or practice selected must also be well aligned with the organization, the community and the systems in which it is situated — the local implementation context. Additionally, you might also want to explore or reassess the implementation context when a program or practice is not achieving its intended results. There are six broad factors to consider, which can be divided into two categories:

- **Program indicators** are used to assess new or existing programs or practices that will be implemented along the following domains: *evidence*, *support* and *usability*. These indicators specify the extent to which the identified program or practice demonstrates evidence of effectiveness, available sources of support for implementation and usability across a range of contexts.

- **Implementing site indicators** are used to assess the extent to which a new or existing program or practice matches the place where it is being implemented (the implementing site) along the following domains: *population need*, *fit* and *capacity*. The assessment specifies suggested conditions and requirements for a strong match to need, fit and capacity for the identified program or practice.

What Are the Best Practices for Assessing Fit and Feasibility?

Programs being considered for implementation are assessed for fit and feasibility within the context where they will be implemented. Fit and feasibility assessment should include the collection and analysis of data from multiple sources, including administrative data, interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and program observations. This process allows for a well-informed decision to be made about the use and/or adaptation of a program or practice. The assessment should allow for a collaborative process and deliberation among individuals with diverse perspectives (e.g., families, practitioners, leaders, community partners). A diverse team is an effective structure for completing the assessment, allowing for a broad range of viewpoints and additional engagement from other stakeholder groups, when other viewpoints are necessary. As part of the decision-making process, teams should seek a shared understanding of the issues so that consensus can be reached when scoring each of the domains.

Best practices for assessing program indicators (evidence, support, usability)

1. Conduct a literature review to:
   a. assess evidence documented in peer-reviewed literature and rigorous research studies; and
   b. determine outcomes associated with implementation of the program or practice.
2. Review registries or clearinghouses (e.g., Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, What Works Clearinghouse) that catalog evidence-based programs and practices.
3. Conduct a document review (logic models, theories of change, program information, program communications or marketing materials, trainings, contracts, websites) to understand:
   a. underlying assumptions for change and inclusion/exclusion criteria;
   b. whether the program has articulated guiding principles, core practice components and day-to-day activities of practitioners;
   c. needs addressed and not addressed by the program; and
   d. support available from the program developer(s) or purveyor.
4. Conduct interviews with program developer(s). Interviews should include questions about the following:
   a. Research studies, evaluation reports or synthesis documents
   b. Level of support provided in the following areas:

        i. Staff selection, training and coaching
        ii. Fidelity assessment
        iii. Data systems and approaches for continuous quality improvement
        iv. Administrative procedures and policies
        v. Communication strategies
        vi. Collaborative partnerships
    c. Core practice components and whether any of the core practice components can be modified or adapted
    d. Needs addressed by the program or practice
    e. Contextual issues that will facilitate or hinder implementation of the program or practice in local settings
    f. Program-specific capacity and general capacity needed to use the program or practice, including the following:
        i. Staff
        ii. Technological
        iii. Fiscal
        iv. Administrative
        v. Partnership
5. Conduct interviews with agency leaders and practitioners with experience using the program or practice. Interviews should ask about the following:
    a. How supported they felt during program implementation; key questions include:
        i. Was the support useful and feasible for program implementation?
        ii. How costly was the support?
        iii. How sustainable is the support?
        iv. Was the support tailored to the local context?
        v. What additional support was needed?
    b. Whether any core practices are unclear and whether there are barriers to and/or facilitators for using the program or practice as intended
    c. Needs addressed by the program or practice
    d. Contextual issues that might facilitate or hinder implementation of the program or practice in local settings
    e. Program-specific capacity and general capacity needed to use the program or practice, including the following:
        i. Staff
        ii. Technological
        iii. Fiscal
        iv. Administrative
        v. Partnership
6. Identify whether a fidelity assessment or measure of staff performance exists.
7. Conduct focus groups with parents who experienced the program or practice to determine their perceptions of how well-defined the programs were.

Best practices for assessing implementing site indicators (need, fit, capacity)

1. Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment using multiple methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups, review of census data, document or literature review) and multiple data sources (e.g., administrative data systems, program developers, agency leaders, practitioners and families to be served by the program or practice.)
2. Conduct a root cause analysis by defining and describing the problem and differentiating between causal factors and root causes.
3. Map initiatives to produce a clear picture of existing programs, mandates and resource commitments.
4. Assess the site's workforce readiness and capacity by identifying available staff to implement the program and their relevant skills and knowledge.
5. Conduct focus groups and interviews with families and other members of the population to be served to:
    a. better understand the families' and the community's perceptions of the need to be addressed;
    b. assess the acceptability of the program or practice with the community and families, taking into account diverse perspectives, cultures, values and history; and
    c. determine what resources are available at the implementing site related to technological, fiscal, administrative and partnership capacities.

What Tools or Resources Are Available to Help Me With This?

The **Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool** is designed to assess the fit and feasibility of new and existing practices across six domains: evidence, support, usability, need, fit and capacity.

Resources that can support the use of the Hexagon Tool include the following:

1. An **Initiative Inventory** tool to gather information on current initiatives and implementation efforts

2. A **Developer Interview Guide** to gather information from developers on resources and supports available for implementation of a practice or program

3. A **Stakeholder Engagement Guide** to ensure representative stakeholders are engaged on the implementation team

4. **Root Cause Analysis Resources** for defining and describing the problem and differentiating between causal factors and root cause