

OPEN Quick Guide: Implement

This quick guide is part of a suite of technical resources developed by OPEN on behalf of The Centre.

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OPEN Quick Guide - Implement - provides an overview of the Implement stage of the Outcomes Journey.

At the end of working through this Quick Guide you will understand the importance of implementation, with early planning and ongoing review of your progress and learnings. You will understand key factors and steps which underpin implementation success.

What is it?

Key to successful design and delivery of any program or activity is careful planning of your implementation process.

You have already worked through identifying and selecting your program response (including implementation feasibility). (See [Quick Guide – Identify](#) if you have not undertaken this step or want a refresh). You have also undertaken key steps in the process of designing your program and outcomes. (See [Quick Guides – Design – Step 1 and 2.](#)) Now in the Implement stage you will consider key steps in the implementation process, developing your implementation plan and your approach to assessing and improving it. This stage requires you to plan for how you will deliver your program activities to your targeted participants, as documented in your program logic. Once you have planned your key implementation steps, you can include these in your program logic. They then become a focus for monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation refers to the process that turns strategies and plans into actions to accomplish strategic objectives and goals. A range of critical actions move a strategic plan from a document that sits on the shelf to actions that drive program delivery and effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes.

Evidence has shown the importance of how you approach, plan for and deliver your program to its effectiveness and sustainability. This evidence highlights that 'how' a program is implemented, the context in which it is being delivered, its planning, methods and processes, is fundamental to program effectiveness and sustainability. There is a growing evidence base about the context, factors and processes that contribute to successful implementation¹.

Implementation factors are important for any program, however they are crucial for evidence based programs or large scale, high profile evidence informed programs. For

these large programs you may have a very formally designed implementation and improvement processes.

There are many approaches to supporting strong implementation practice. One detailed approach used extensively across the child and family sector is Implementation Science.

Implementation Science is the study of methods and strategies that promote the uptake of evidence-based and informed programs and practices into 'business as usual' service delivery, with the aim of improving service quality.¹ The processes involved assist community organisations to bridge the gap between evidence and practice.

This Quick Guide draws from this broad method to provide a high level overview of key implementation considerations. Take a look at the Further tools section below for Implementation Guides and handy tools to use throughout your implementation process.ⁱ

Key components of quality implementation

Evidence has shown that successful implementation requires the presence or generation of the following features – or organisational readiness factors. Assessment of the presence of these features can inform your assessment of your readiness for the identified program, areas you need to work on to ensure success and areas to monitor and improve as you go. Key factors which are seen as necessary for successful implementation include:

- **Committed leadership and governance**, strong and active involvement and motivation which works to build a change oriented culture to ensure the preconditions for successful implementation are in place.
- **Commitment and capability of staffing resources** including appropriate number of staff, with appropriate competencies, for the proposed program and access to training and coaching, and consideration of how staff turnover may be dealt with
- **Organisational factors** which support environments which enable implementation such as internal administrative and data systems, culture favourable to evidence

ⁱ Note that the methodology provided by Implementation Science embeds implementation across each step of the outcome journey. For simplicity, OPEN has chosen to locate Implementation planning, delivery and review in the Implement stage of the Outcome Journey. In reality this is a simplification, the steps are not that rigid with implementation thinking occurring throughout as does design considerations and evaluation. Don't be thrown off by this and just draw on the resources at the point you need them.

informed practice, learning and innovation, and active engagement of clients and stakeholders.²⁻⁵

The Readiness Assessment tool developed by Capacity Building Centre for States⁴ can help you examine your organisations readiness to implement your identified program. You may have used this tool when you selected your program in the **Identify** phase. If you have not done this, it would be important to do this now to understand both the enablers and barriers you will need to address through your implementation stage. (See below)

Key stages of the implementation process

Develop an Implementation Team

- Identify the leader and members of the Implementation Team. This can include staff in your or other organisational areas.

Develop an Implementation Plan

- To establish a step-by-step process to roll out implementation, address barriers and review and improve throughout. Identify implementation strategies and how to put them into place.
- Implementation strategies need to be identified to address each '**barriers**' you have identified to successful implementation. Resources to support identification of strategies to address common implementation barriers are provided in Implementation in Action⁵ Each strategy will include an action, staff member responsible, a timeline, measure of success and next steps for improvement. (See Implementation Plan template below).
- Strategies can include:
 - **Quality training and deliberative coaching strategies** embedded into practice development to build staff capability and motivation and support
 - **Building supportive organisational structures and champions** through growing the culture of, and capacity in, implementation
 - **Continuous improvement strategies** – Including reviewing staff performance, clinical auditing and review processes, supporting data collection to assess implementation progress, support needs and outcomes.
 - **Data collection mechanisms** – implementation processes should also be a focus of your evaluative activities. In monitoring and evaluation activities you should consider the program's reach to the intended participants, program fidelity, and outcomes from the implementation process.²
- Tools to assess whether your implementations strategies are acceptable, appropriate and feasible are helpful for this process. They are listed in the Tools box below.

To get you started, find:

Further resources are forthcoming on the topics below

- **OPEN Quick Guides – Design – Step 1 Design your programs and outcomes and Step 2 – Design your outcome measurement approach** can be found **here**. This provides key steps in designing for outcomes and measurement.
- **OPEN Quick Guide – Evaluate** can be found **here**. This provides a more detailed overview of the process of Evaluation across the lifecycle of the outcome journey includes planning for data collection, timelines, roles and responsibilities.

What are some other tools that could help?

Help with Implementation planning	
<p>Implementation in Action https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/implementation-action</p>	<p>Handy tools and checklists for planning and monitoring your implementation which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation stages • Implementation progress checklist • Implementation considerations checklist • Readiness Thinking Tool • Implementation Plan Template
<p>National Implementation Research Network - The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool Instructions</p>	<p>The Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool helps organizations assess new and existing programs and practices. This tool is designed to be used by a team to ensure diverse perspectives are represented in a discussion of the six contextual fit and feasibility factors.</p>
Additional Guides on Implementation Science	
<p>Child Welfare projects and resources – National Implementation Research Network</p>	<p>NIRN has provided examples of child welfare projects which use implementation science and a range of resources to support implementation practice. They model a co-creative approach with system leaders, practitioners, community members, and families to support the implementation of services that are a strong contextual fit and will advance equitable outcomes.</p>

References

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