

Defining the Innovation

Appendix A to Guide for Monitoring Scale-up of Health Practices and Interventions

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APPENDIX A: DEFINING THE INNOVATION

The implementation and scale-up of best practices requires careful documentation of the evolution of the practice as well as lessons learned along the way. Often, however, practitioners get so invested in scale-up projects that they lose sight of the basics. Moreover, they struggle with scaling up because they are unable to articulate essential elements for expansion. Thus, theoretical concepts from ExpandNet, WHO, and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) as well as practice in real-life settings show that defining the innovation and its key components is an essential component of scale-up success.

With this understanding, you can follow a process to thoroughly define the components of the scaled-up practice or innovation you have chosen to focus monitoring efforts on. To do this, it is necessary to assess the body of data on successful implementation of the innovation collected during the pilot phase or in another setting and identify the key components, including the methodology, users, implementers, policy environment, and dissemination strategy. Useful resources to review include reports, operations research, and program evaluations, as well as documentation and tools from previous experiences with the innovation, such as monitoring instruments, supervision checklists, training manuals, budgets, and work plans.

The engine behind scaling up is comprised of six processes: staff recruitment and selection, pre-service or in-service training, coaching/mentoring and supervision, internal management support, systems level partnership, and staff and program evaluation. These processes enable implementation of evidence-based practices at scale by improving the organizational and systems environment.¹⁵ Without attention to these drivers, the scale-up process breaks down. The Defining the Innovation Work Sheet in this section combines understanding of systems thinking to guide practitioners through a process to define the human, financial, and time processes and resources required for scaling up an innovation. Ultimately, this exercise will help practitioners define their evidence-based programs or interventions and ascend to the next level of program scale.

Defining the Innovation Work Sheet

The work sheet consists of a multi-page table with basic principles and guiding questions. Items shaded in blue are the main steps, which serve as a checklist to assure all bases are covered in the definition while those shaded in grey are the probing questions that help drill down the necessary level of detail in each step of the definition process. Note that additional, customized questions may be inserted into the work sheet and participants should also be encouraged to expand the number of rows under each step, as needed.

To ensure a well-operationalized definition, the work sheet should not be used by program managers in isolation, but within the context of a participatory process involving a set of multi-disciplinary stakeholders who are part of or will be affected by implementation of the innovation. Although the total number of people involved in the exercise will depend on the organizational context and the innovation itself, it may be useful to assure representation from both the resource team and the users, as well as from each of the angles of the intervention. Once the group is

convened, the format of the exercise should also be tailored and involve some combination of verbal and written forms, that is, one-on-one interviews as well as facilitated group discussions.

Defining the Innovation Work Sheet

1. Document the philosophy, values and principles that underlie the program, provide guidance for all decisions and evaluations, and promote consistency, integrity and sustainable effort across all organizational units

What are the underlying principles of the selected practice?	
What are the elements related to equity?	
What are the elements related to gender?	
What are the underlying human rights angles?	
What are the elements related to [ADDITIONAL THEME]?	
How does informed choice factor into this practice?	

2. Determine the inclusion and exclusion criteria that define the population for which the program is intended and who is most likely to benefit when the program is implemented as intended

Who does the innovation benefit?	
Who is the primary audience?	
What other audiences are involved?	
Who is not the intended audience?	

3. Enumerate the features or the essential ingredients (also known as core intervention components, active ingredients, or practice elements which may not be well known or understood) that must be present to say that a program exists in a given location

Service Delivery (effective, efficient, and accessible services)	
Human Resources (sufficient, well-trained staff)	

Medical Products, Vaccines, Technologies (equitably accessible)	
Information Systems (useful data on health determinants & health system performance)	
Governance (leadership with effective oversight, regulation & accountability)	
Finance (adequate funds for affordable services)	
4. Capture the components related to developing staff competency, organizational supports, and technical and adaptive leadership supports as well as the responsible party for each	
Staff Competency/People (List individual or group responsible for managing staff competency)	
Who will be involved in implementing this innovation?	
How will they be selected?	
What skills do they need?	
How will they be trained to introduce/maintain the innovation?	
Who provides the training?	
How is the training or coaching received, processed, and applied by the recipient practitioners?	
What type of ongoing coaching, monitoring, and/or supervision are required?	
Who will provide the coaching and support?	
What tools, if any, are needed?	
How will the processes & tools be integrated into systems for sustainability?	

What other resources are needed?	
Where will the resources come from?	
Organizational Supports/ Systems (List individual or group responsible for managing organizational supports/systems)	
What are our monitoring & evaluation capacities?	
What level of support can our HMIS provide?	
Is there administrative support for this innovation?	
What kind of administrative support do we have?	
What is the buy-in of management?	
Which organizational norms and policies facilitate the innovation?	
Which organizational norms and policies hinder/serve as obstacles to the innovation?	
What further systems support is required?	
Where will the additional support come from?	
What are the supervision and/or quality assurance capacities?	
What activities are needed to integrate this innovation into existing systems?	
Environmental/Other Elements (List individual or group responsible for managing environmental/ other elements)	
What national norms and policies facilitate this innovation?	
What national norms and policies hinder/serve as obstacles to the innovation?	

5. Describe how all core elements of the innovation interact with other sub-systems	
Sub-system	
Kind of interaction	
What are the system-wide effects?	
6. Define the adaptations needed for expansion/scale-up sites	
Adaptation	
Is this adaptation practical for the field context?	
If it is not practical, should we adjust or drop it? If adjust, how?	
What core elements of the intervention would the field application of the adaptation compromise?	
Where has this been successfully field tested before?	

Reference

- Blase, KA, Fixsen, DL, Van Dyke M, Duda M. Implementation drivers – best practices for coaching [unpublished]. National Implementation Research Network; 2009.

Acronyms

NIRN	National Implementation Research Network
WHO	World Health Organization