

Evaluating the Feasibility of Prevention and Intervention Approaches

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The Need to Evaluate the Feasibility of Prevention and Intervention Approaches

Much has been written in recent years about the importance of “evidence” in deciding which prevention and intervention programs should be implemented within an organization or community. An evaluation of evidence answers the question, “What should be done”? An equally important question is, “What can be done?”. Multiple aspects of the feasibility of implementing an approach should be considered regardless of the evidence justifying the approach. Attempting to implement an approach that is not feasible for an organization or community will lead to disaster. Many of the evidence-based approaches that are being promoted require a strict commitment to implementation in order to achieve positive results. Such a commitment will not be maintained if the approach is not feasible within a given context. A strategic approach to evaluating feasibility is presented below.

Sources of Information for Assessing Feasibility:

When evaluating the evidence behind a specific prevention or intervention approach, the only information necessary is information related to the approach itself. In order to assess feasibility, one must have considerable information about the approach/program being considered as well as the organization that is considering adoption.

Collect as much evidence as possible on the implementation demands of the program being considered. Data sources can include 1) written descriptions of implementation requirements provided by the developers of the program, 2) written descriptions of implementation demands summarized by others in program reviews, or 3) interviews with others who have implemented the program.

In addition to the data collected on the program in question, data on your organization’s capacity to implement the program must be collected. This information can be obtained through discussions with key stakeholders and administrators within the organization. Those who make decisions related to overall resources allocation must be included. In addition, those individuals who have a comprehensive understanding of the organization’s policies, procedures, and cultures should be included.

Using the aforementioned data, complete the following checklist and generate a feasibility characterization for the program in question.

Feasibility Checklist

- Detailed descriptions of implementation procedures are available and understandable.
- Training is available when described as a necessary component of the program.
- Curriculum materials are available when necessary for implementation.
- Any other support materials described as necessary for implementation are available.

If you are able to check off each of these items, the program should be described as **“Available.”**

- The total costs of program materials are affordable given our organization's budget.
- The total costs of training are affordable given our organization's budget.
- The training time commitment of new or existing personnel is affordable given our organization's budget.
- The implementation time commitment of new or existing personnel is affordable given our organization's budget.
- The time commitment of participants is feasible given our capacity.
- The time commitment for administering the program is feasible.

If you are able to check off ALL of these items, and the program was rated as “Available,” the program should be described as **“Affordable.”**

- The underlying principles of the program being evaluated are consistent with our organization’s approach to meeting the needs of high-risk youth.
- The approach used in the program being evaluated is consistent with existing policies and procedures currently in place within the organization.
- The implementation of this program will not create insurmountable internal political challenges.
- The implementation of this program is consistent with the current priorities of the organization.
- This program is sustainable given our organization’s structure and funding mechanisms.

If you are able to check off each of these items, and the program was rated both “Available” and “Affordable” the program should be described as **“Feasible.”**

The resulting categorization of programs as either available, affordable, or feasibility can be used in implementation decisions. Programs that are available, but are neither affordable, nor feasible within an organization are not realistic implementation targets. Those programs that are both available and affordable may have promise for implementation, but the organization may have to make some changes in order for them to be truly feasible. Sometimes, programs are not worthy of implementation because of feasibility barriers. Sometimes, organizations need to make adjustments in their infrastructure, policy, and/or culture in order to benefit from otherwise implementable approaches.