Change and Implementation in Practice

Implementation Planning and Capacity Building

Capacity Building CENTER FOR STATES

Implementation science makes clear that planning, capacity building, and thoughtful implementation are as important to achieving desired outcomes as the selection of the right intervention (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). An implementation plan with clear steps for preparing an agency, building capacity, and rolling out the intervention lays the groundwork for implementation success.

This brief can help child welfare agency leaders, managers, and teams set a strong foundation for a new program, practice, or other intervention. The brief begins with background information and definitions and then describes a step-by-step process for developing a comprehensive implementation plan and identifying capacity building strategies.

Change and Implementation in Practice Series

Child welfare agencies continually undertake efforts to implement new programs and practices to produce better outcomes for children, youth, and families. Effectively implementing new approaches and achieving sustainable change can be challenging. The Capacity Building Center for States (Center) has developed the Change and Implementation in Practice series to support agencies in applying a structured approach to implementation and overcoming common challenges.

Briefs in this series provide user-friendly guidance on implementation concepts to strengthen the ability of child welfare systems to implement change. These "how to" guides explain key steps in the Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative's (the Collaborative's) Change and Implementation Process, a synthesis of several implementation and continuous quality improvement (CQI) frameworks and tools (Collaborative, 2015a). The Change and Implementation Process describes overlapping phases and steps that guide organizations from problem exploration through sustainable implementation. While the briefs align with the Collaborative's process, they can be used with similar implementation frameworks.

This brief discusses implementation planning and capacity building. Before beginning to develop an implementation plan and build capacity, your agency should have:
- A team to guide the change and implementation process
- A clearly identified and researched problem
- An analysis of the root cause(s) of the problem
- A theory of change that reflects a clear pathway from the problem to a desired outcome
- An appropriate intervention to address the root cause(s) of the problem
- A completed readiness assessment

If your team has not achieved these milestones yet, review the other related briefs in this series, available at
https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/
Implementation planning and capacity building will position an agency to proceed with intervention testing, piloting, and staging.

Key Considerations and Definitions

Taking a deliberate and structured approach to implementation planning and capacity building can help an agency achieve its goals for change and improvement. These two topics are presented together in this brief because planning for capacity building is closely tied to developing an implementation plan. While they do not have to be done simultaneously, they can be.

What Is an Implementation Plan, and Why Is It Important?

An **implementation plan** is a document that describes key steps and activities needed before and during implementation of a selected intervention. An implementation plan:

◆ Explains how an agency will prepare to implement an intervention and build needed capacity

◆ Identifies roles, responsibilities, timeframes, and milestones

◆ Coordinates and sequences activities

Developing an implementation plan helps an agency by (Children's Bureau [CB] & JBS International, 2015):

◆ Providing a roadmap for the implementation team

◆ Identifying needs and anticipating challenges

◆ Serving as a communication tool among team members, leadership, and stakeholders

◆ Supporting decision-making and monitoring by leadership

Careful and systematic planning also contributes to quality implementation (Durlak, 2013).

What Do We Mean by Capacity Building?

Organizational capacity refers to the potential of a child welfare system to be productive and effective (Collaborative, 2015b). An agency's organizational capacity influences its ability to implement programs and deliver services for children and families. Capacity is also essential to making changes aimed at improving outcomes.

Capacity building describes the process of developing the potential of a child welfare system. In simple terms, think of capacity building as similar to the work a farmer does to prepare a field. Before the seeds go into the ground, the farmer may purchase a new tractor and plow the field, assess soil conditions, and add supplements to produce missing nutrients. Each of these activities is intended to create conditions more favorable for a strong, healthy crop.

Agencies can develop capacity to enhance their organizational performance and improve their ability and motivation (or will) to implement a particular intervention effectively (Leeman et al., 2015; Wandersman et al., 2008). Capacity building for implementation

Definitions of Key Terms

◆ **Problem** – what needs to change to meet agency priorities. Problems may reflect identified needs or opportunities for building on successes to improve agency functioning or outcomes.

◆ **Intervention** – any specific practice, service, policy, strategy, program, practice model, or combination that is clearly defined, operationalized, and distinguishable.

◆ **Core components** – the essential building blocks and related activities of an intervention believed to lead to positive outcomes (sometimes referred to as "essential functions").

◆ **Implementation** – a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity, program, or intervention.

◆ **Implementation plan** – a document that describes key steps and activities for putting an intervention in place.

◆ **Readiness for implementation** – the extent to which an organization is willing and able to put in place and sustain a selected intervention.

◆ **Implementation supports** – key aspects of capacity and organizational infrastructure associated with successful implementation (also referred to as "implementation drivers" or "organization and competency drivers").

◆ **Organizational capacity** – a system's potential to be productive and effective.

◆ **Capacity building** – an ongoing, evidence-informed process used to develop a system's potential to be productive and effective.

◆ **General capacity (foundational capacity)** – aspects or attributes required to maintain a well-functioning organization and to adapt to achieve its goals.

◆ **Intervention-specific capacity** – human, technical, and physical conditions needed to effectively implement a particular program or practice (also referred to as "innovation-specific capacity").

◆ **Dimension of capacity** – aspects or categories of organizational capacity.
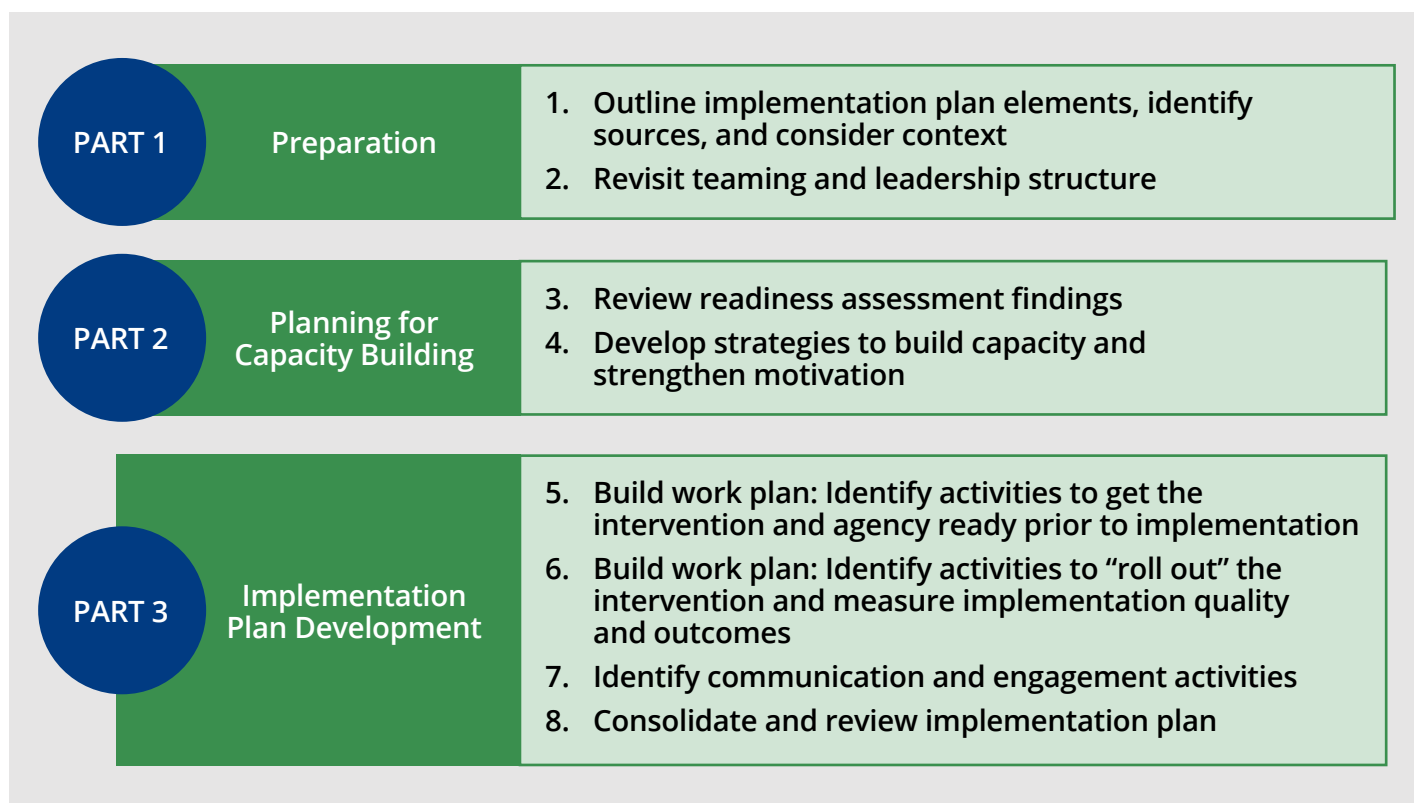
may involve one or a combination of strategies, including use of tools, training, technical assistance, and quality assurance or quality improvement (Wandersman et al., 2008).

Types of capacity and related factors that influence readiness are described in more detail in the companion brief, "Change and Implementation in Practice: Readiness Assessment," at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness.

How to Plan for Capacity Building and Develop an Implementation Plan

To set the groundwork for an intervention, teams should complete the interrelated **essential functions**[1] (tasks) shown in exhibit 1:

Exhibit 1. Essential Functions for Implementation Planning and Capacity Building

PART 1	Preparation	1. Outline implementation plan elements, identify sources, and consider context 2. Revisit teaming and leadership structure
PART 2	Planning for Capacity Building	3. Review readiness assessment findings 4. Develop strategies to build capacity and strengthen motivation
PART 3	Implementation Plan Development	5. Build work plan: Identify activities to get the intervention and agency ready prior to implementation 6. Build work plan: Identify activities to "roll out" the intervention and measure implementation quality and outcomes 7. Identify communication and engagement activities 8. Consolidate and review implementation plan

While presented above as distinct steps that occur sequentially in a linear fashion, in practice, these tasks may overlap, and teams may need to loop back and forth between them over time. Implementation planning and capacity building are iterative processes often informed by information obtained during other phases of the change and implementation process, including those described in companion briefs ("Intervention Testing, Piloting, and Staging" and "Monitoring, Evaluating, and Applying Findings").

The remainder of the brief discusses each of the three parts and related functions.

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[1] In this series, essential functions are tasks that lead to achieving key milestones in a change and implementation process.

Part 1: Preparation

As shown in exhibit 2, the implementation plan captures and builds on work that has already been done, including:

◆ Establishing an implementation **team**

◆ Selecting, designing, or adapting an **intervention** that addresses an identified problem and theory of change

◆ Assessing **readiness**

The implementation plan also lays out the team's thinking about what needs to happen next. It will serve as a guide for preparing, testing, piloting, staging, monitoring, and evaluating the intervention.

Exhibit 2. The Implementation Plan and Interrelationships
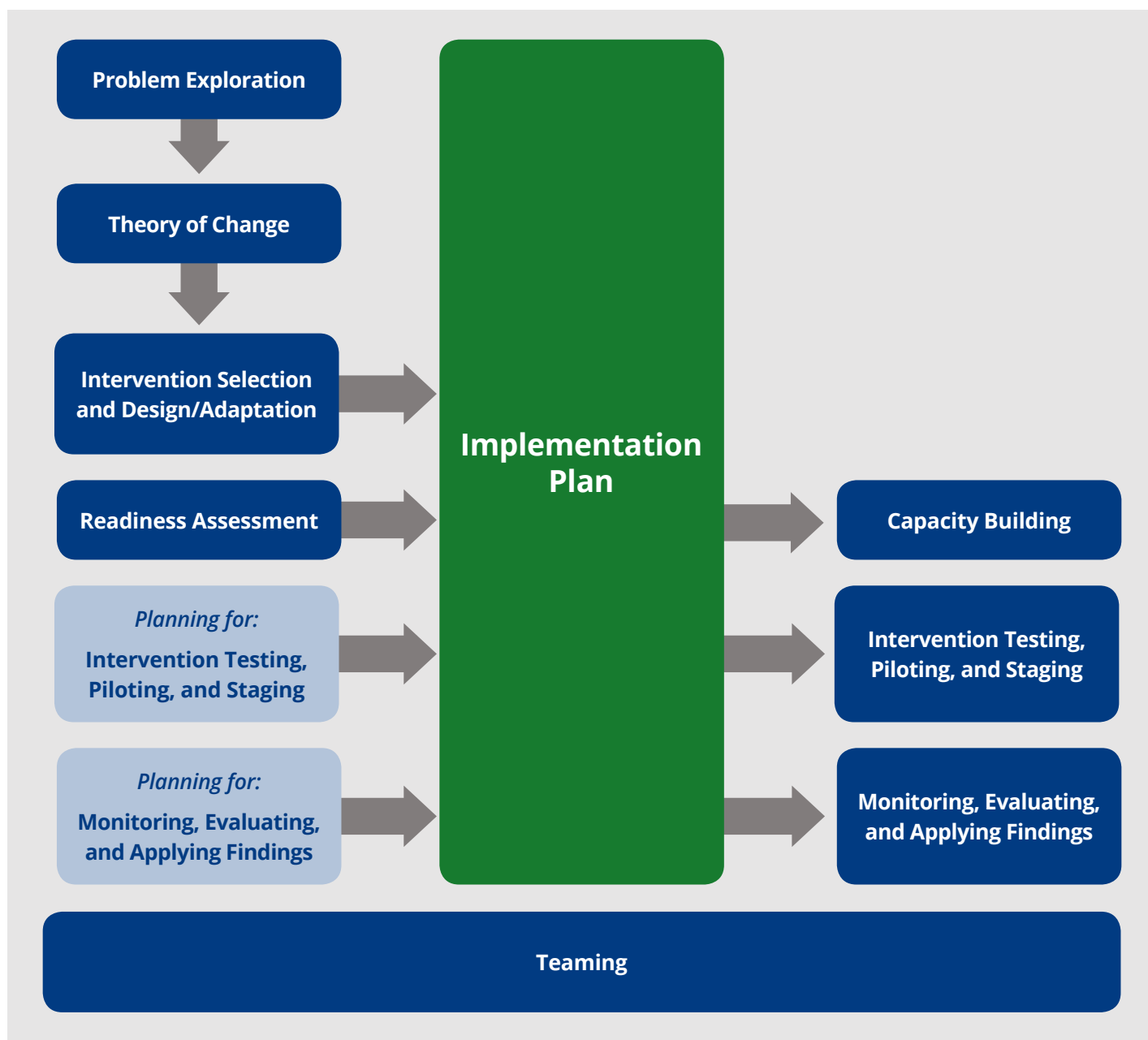
Before diving into the development of a comprehensive implementation plan, teams should begin by scoping out the plan elements and sources, reviewing relevant documents and work to date, and revisiting team membership needs.

1. Outline Implementation Plan Elements, Identify Sources, and Consider Context

The first step in preparing for an implementation plan is to outline the plan elements, identify information sources, and designate individual team members or groups responsible for each section. At the same time, teams should begin to consider contextual factors that will shape the plan.

Implementation Plan Elements and Sources

Exhibit 3 presents common implementation plan elements. The exhibit also highlights primary sources of information for those elements. The sources may reflect prior or ongoing activities discussed in this or other briefs in the Change and Implementation in Practice series. Teams may need to tailor plan contents and structure, as appropriate, for their particular change initiatives (e.g., to meet a funding agency's directions for implementation plans).

As shown in the exhibit, the implementation plan integrates information from various sources to "tell the story" of how implementation of the intervention is intended to go. The plan includes:

? Questions to Consider

◆ What are the key elements for your team to address in the implementation plan?

◆ What are the available sources of information for each element?

◆ Who will be responsible for developing the plan?

◆ How will stakeholders (including target population members and system partners) be involved in development and review of the plan?

◆ How might internal and external context (e.g., funding requirements, deadlines) affect implementation plans?

◆ **Background and contextual information.** To set the stage for implementation planning, plans typically include a problem statement, theory of change, and description of the target population. If teams do not have this information, they may need to return to earlier steps in the process before completing the implementation plan. In addition, teams may discuss relevant internal and external context, including timeframes and requirements that may affect implementation decisions (e.g., from settlement agreements, statutory deadlines, grant requirements, Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan timeframes, or other).

◆ **Intervention overview.** An important starting point for implementation is the description of the intervention, its purpose, underlying principles, core components, and evidence base.

◆ **Implementation team.** The plan should outline who is on the implementation team, their roles, and the teaming structure.

◆ **Readiness assessment.** Findings from the prior assessment of organizational readiness will serve as a springboard for developing capacity building strategies that leverage strengths and address identified needs.

◆ **Work plan.** The work plan outlines activities for before and during implementation. As the core of the implementation plan, the work plan lays out how the agency will operationalize the intervention and prepare for rolling it out.

◆ **Data collection, evaluation, and CQI plans.** The implementation plan should provide preliminary information on how implementation will be monitored and how data will be used to adjust implementation and make improvements. Subteams may be developing plans for data collection and CQI activities at the same time as the implementation planning.

◆ **Engagement and communication strategies.** This section of the plan describes how the team will keep leadership and stakeholders at all levels informed and engaged. These strategies will build on plans developed during earlier teaming activities and will evolve as planning continues.

◆ **Anticipated challenges and approaches to address them.** A proactive plan is able to anticipate potential challenges or barriers and recommend strategies to overcome them.

These elements may be in various stages of completion when implementation planning begins. The sections that follow describe their development in more detail.

Exhibit 3. Implementation Plan Elements

Implementation Plan Elements	Potential Sources (Where Topics Are Discussed Further)*
1. Background and contextual information	
◆ Statement of problem or need ◆ Desired outcomes and theory of change ◆ Target population ◆ Required implementation timeframes and requirements, when applicable	◆ Problem exploration (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Problem Exploration" webpage) ◆ Theory of change (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Theory of Change" webpage) ◆ Internal and external regulations and guidelines
2. Intervention overview	
◆ Intervention description ◆ Purpose and underlying principles ◆ Core components	◆ Intervention proposal (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Intervention Selection and Design/Adaptation" webpage) ◆ Intervention descriptive materials, such as a program manual, guide, or protocol, if available
3. Implementation team	
◆ Teaming structure ◆ Membership and roles	◆ Teaming structure and charter (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Teaming" webpage) ◆ Team discussions (see function 2)
4. Readiness assessment	
◆ Findings related to motivation ◆ Findings related to general capacity ◆ Findings related to intervention-specific capacity	◆ Readiness assessment (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Readiness" webpage) ◆ Team review (see function 3)
5. Work plan	
A. Plans for activities prior to implementation ◆ Activities to complete intervention adaptation or design ◆ Activities to develop or strengthen implementation supports ◆ Activities to strengthen motivation and build capacity	◆ Strategic planning on building capacity and strengthening motivation (see function 4) ◆ Strategic planning on activities to get the intervention and agency ready for implementation (see function 5)
B. Plans for testing and implementation ◆ Usability testing ◆ Piloting and/or staging approach ◆ Initial site selection ◆ Activities to support implementation	◆ Strategic planning on implementation activities (see function 6) ◆ Plans for piloting and/or staging the intervention and usability testing (see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Intervention Testing, Piloting, and Staging" webpage)
6. Data collection, evaluation, and CQI	
◆ Monitoring and adjustment processes ◆ Plan for measuring changes in readiness (motivation and organizational capacity) ◆ Overview of implementation evaluation ◆ Overview of outcome evaluation	◆ Plans for monitoring and evaluation (see function 6 and "Change and Implementation in Practice: Monitoring, Evaluating, and Applying Findings" webpage)
7. Engagement and communication strategies	
◆ Internal and external communication	◆ Communication plan (see function 7 and the "Change and Implementation in Practice: Teaming" webpage)
8. Anticipated challenges	
◆ Potential challenges and barriers ◆ Strategies to address challenges	◆ Strategic planning (see function 3 and function 8)

*All Change and Implementation in Practice briefs are (or will be) available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/

Contextual Issues

As teams begin to pull together the implementation plan, they should think through internal and external factors that may affect implementation and their implications. These may include:

◆ Relevant deadlines and timeframes based on state statutes or policies, federal regulations, annual plans, or grant requirements

◆ Whether the intervention is a replication, adaptation, or new design and its existing evidence base and what that means for testing and gathering feedback

◆ The level of risk to the agency and the target population if the intervention is not implemented well or does not produce expected outcomes

◆ Stakeholder expectations

◆ Other factors that might influence implementation, piloting, staging, and evaluation decisions

2. Revisit Teaming and Leadership Structure

As planning for the implementation plan and capacity building begins, agencies should take time to revisit their teaming structure and composition and consider whether to change or modify the team that initiated the change process.

Considerations related to teaming include:

◆ Is a new or modified leadership structure needed for the intervention's implementation?

◆ Is a new or modified implementation teaming structure required for the intervention's implementation?

? Questions to Consider
◆ Will the same team that worked on earlier change and implementation tasks continue?
◆ What new expertise or skills may be needed?
◆ Is a new or modified leadership structure needed?
◆ Are new subteams needed?

◆ Are new roles or expertise needed to effectively build capacity and carry out the implementation plan?

◆ How can staff with needed expertise be brought onto the team?

◆ Are new subteams desirable to carry out certain work plan tasks (e.g., develop capacity building strategies, design pilot approach, design fidelity assessment)? Who should be on those subteams?

◆ Who has the authority to make final decisions related to intervention implementation?

Changes to the implementation team, roles, and responsibilities should be updated in the team charter. In addition, team members or subteams should be identified to complete the essential functions related to implementation planning described in the remainder of this brief.

ℹ **For more information** on teaming and team charters, see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Teaming," available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/teaming/

Part 2: Planning for Capacity Building

Capacity building strengthens an agency's ability to implement a selected intervention. An agency's anticipated capacity building activities should inform its implementation plan. The following sections address reviewing readiness assessment findings and developing corresponding capacity strategies.

3. Review Readiness Assessment Findings

To inform planning, team members should review findings of prior readiness assessments. If teams have not yet assessed readiness, they should do so before continuing with implementation planning and capacity building tasks so they can target efforts where they are most needed. (For more information on readiness and readiness assessment tools, see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Readiness," available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness).

> **? Questions to Consider**
> ◆ Has the agency assessed readiness for implementation?
> ◆ What areas are strengths?
> ◆ What areas need to be developed? Which are priorities?

Based on readiness assessment findings, teams should identify:

◆ **General and intervention-specific capacity needs.** When prioritizing needs, teams should concentrate on those aspects of organizational capacity that are:

  ◆ Clearly linked to implementation success in the research

  ◆ Absent or insufficient in the organization or system

  ◆ Likely to severely limit the agency's ability to implement the new intervention if not strengthened

  Teams may identify general needs that affect the organization's overall health and functioning (e.g., needs for an effective human resources system to recruit staff) and intervention-specific needs that will affect its ability to implement a particular intervention (e.g., needs for processes to recruit staff with expertise in Family Group Decision-Making).

◆ **Gaps in motivation.** Teams should carefully consider any findings about the organization's motivation, like whether agency staff and other stakeholders have incentives (or disincentives) to adopt an intervention. An agency, for example, may find that frontline workers lack buy-in for the intervention, which could pose challenges to the initiative's success. This may reflect perceptions that the intervention does not fit with staff values or is difficult to implement.

◆ **Strengths to build on.** While most capacity building activities will focus on the organization's needs, it is also important to look at existing strengths that can be leveraged to further build capacity. For example, if the agency has strong project champions, they may be able to help build motivation where it is lacking.

When reviewing readiness assessments and planning for capacity building, teams should consider potential challenges and barriers that may directly affect implementation. In some cases, teams may need to address general capacity needs before they can start implementation. For example, an agency that lacks a functioning data collection and analysis system will have difficulties moving forward with implementation tasks that require data to inform decision-making, assess implementation fidelity, or monitor results. In this scenario, a team may need to put implementation of a new intervention on hold while the agency first builds data capabilities at the organizational level. In other instances, agencies may be able to start implementation activities while accessing external expertise and simultaneously building internal capacity. For instance, while an agency may lack a strong training system, it may be able to bring in external trainers to train staff on a particular program. Teams will need to identify "red flags," think through the implications of capacity gaps and barriers on a case-by-case basis, and address them through the implementation planning process.

As discussed earlier, capacity building is a dynamic process, and some areas may need to be developed over time. Given time and resource limitations, teams will need to be strategic when deciding which areas to prioritize to meet needs and gaps and how to stage capacity building over time.

4. Develop Strategies to Build Capacity and Strengthen Motivation

After teams review their readiness findings, they move on to developing strategies for building capacity and strengthening motivation. These strategies are expected to support effective implementation of the selected intervention, and teams will integrate them into their work plans (described in part 3).

Teams may identify strategies through a variety of sources, including:

◆ Team members and other stakeholders

◆ Peers who have addressed similar issues

◆ Literature on capacity building and implementation

◆ Requests for assistance from the Center for States (find contact information for your Tailored Services Liaison at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/map/ or email capacityinfo@icfi.com)

◆ Inquiries to other technical assistance providers, university partners, and capacity building or implementation experts

? Questions to Consider

◆ Does the agency have the necessary general (foundational) capacity?

◆ Are there sufficient resources to implement?

◆ Are necessary infrastructure and implementation supports in place to facilitate implementation?

◆ Do leaders, managers, and staff have needed knowledge and skills to implement the intervention?

◆ Do the agency culture and climate support the change?

◆ Are key stakeholders and partner systems engaged?

◆ Has the implementation team identified reasonable strategies to address capacity needs across dimensions?

◆ Has the team reached out to peers, capacity building experts, and stakeholders to identify or review possible strategies?

Decisions and plans for building capacity and strengthening motivation will be influenced by existing capacity as well as external factors (e.g., available timeframes) and where and how teams plan to introduce the intervention (e.g., through pilot testing).

Consider Capacity Through the Lens of Five Dimensions

The Collaborative has organized different aspects of organizational capacity into the five dimensions shown in exhibit 4 (CB, 2018; Collaborative, 2015b). These dimensions can be used as a frame for considering organizational needs and identifying strategies that respond to needs.

Exhibit 4. Five Dimensions of Organizational Capacity

◆ **Resources** – concrete materials and assets
  ◆ *Examples:* staff, facilities, training curricula
◆ **Infrastructure** – organizational structures, protocols, and processes
  ◆ *Examples:* structures for hiring and training staff, information systems, policies that guide intended behaviors
◆ **Knowledge and skills** – staff expertise and competencies
  ◆ *Examples:* leadership skills, change management expertise, knowledge of intervention-specific practices
◆ **Culture and climate** – shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that influence behavior
  ◆ *Examples:* leadership vision, shared commitment to initiatives
◆ **Engagement and partnership** – intraorganizational and interorganizational relationships and connections
  ◆ *Examples:* family involvement, collaboration with courts and service delivery partners

Source: CB, 2018; Collaborative, 2015b

i For more information on dimensions of organizational capacity, see:
  • Capacity Building Center for States' *A Guide to Five Dimensions of Organizational Capacity: Support for Realizing Your Agency's Potential*, available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/organizational-capacity-guide/

The following boxes provide examples and sample strategies that relate to each of these five dimensions of organizational capacity. Specific factors highlighted within each dimension draw from research on implementation and readiness (particularly Scaccia et al., 2015). See the appendix for more information on how different readiness factors map to the five dimensions of capacity.

Not every team will need strategies in every area, and not all strategies are appropriate for all circumstances. If teams completed the Center for States' *Change and Implementation Readiness Assessment Tool*, readiness factors that were rated as "not ready" or "partially ready to go" may require further attention. Selected strategies should be tailored to an agency's specific context and needs.

Organizational Resources

Organizational resources consist of the concrete materials and tangible assets that support programs, practice improvements, and service delivery. Sample strategies in this area are presented below.

Resources:	Sample Strategy:
Stable leadership	Building leadership "bench strength" among middle managers and cultivating ongoing leadership support
Sufficient and appropriate staff to manage and deliver intervention services	Developing recruitment strategies or reassigning existing staff
Appropriate facilities and materials	Making changes to physical workspace or working with program developers to access and adapt materials
Adequate funding	Identifying opportunities to braid or blend available funding streams
Program champions	Identifying strong advocates for the intervention and formalizing roles to empower them to lead efforts to move the intervention forward

Organizational Infrastructure

Organizational infrastructure refers to the systems, structures, policies, protocols, and processes that support key agency functions and guide practice. These include systems that facilitate agency operations on a daily basis (e.g., agency data and information systems) as well as structures specific to the intervention (e.g., tailored program evaluation). Teams will need to develop and refine agency infrastructure and systems to enable effective implementation.

In particular, teams should pay close attention to agency needs for **implementation supports** (or "drivers") associated with successful and sustainable implementation (Bertram, Blase, & Fixsen, 2015). Sample strategies in this area are presented below.

Drivers:	Sample Strategy:
Staff recruitment and selection	Developing job descriptions and interview tools that reflect needed competencies for the new intervention
Training, coaching, and supervision	Designing comprehensive training and coaching plans and materials to build needed knowledge and skills at all levels
Performance assessment	Identifying performance indicators and measurement tools aligned with intervention practice profiles
Data systems	Partnering with data experts to structure data systems that collect and report on data related to the intervention
Policies and procedures	Making procedural changes to address potential implementation barriers
Communication systems	Identifying communication channels for informing internal staff and external partners about intervention progress and achievements

Organizational Knowledge and Skills

Organizational knowledge and skills reflect the expertise and competencies needed to effectively perform and manage child welfare work. For managers and administrators, this includes knowledge and skills related to adaptive leadership, change management, program planning and delivery, evaluation, and CQI. For frontline workers, this includes understanding and applying the new intervention's practices. Some strategies to strengthen knowledge and skills may be accomplished through processes like training and coaching that are part of an organization's infrastructure.

Teams should consider strategies to build specific aspects of staff capacity and knowledge, skills, and abilities that are particularly important to being ready for implementation. Sample strategies in this area are presented below.

Aspect:	Sample Strategy:
Knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to the intervention	Adopting a "train-the-trainers" model that brings intervention purveyors to train managers, who then train frontline staff
Expertise to collect and analyze data	Arranging coaching partnerships between data leads and program staff
Intervention monitoring and evaluation	Forming partnerships with a local university for external evaluation support

Organizational Culture and Climate

Organizational culture and climate consist of shared values, norms, attitudes, and perceptions that influence how people in an organization behave. An agency's culture and climate may also affect how people accept and support change.

An agency's culture and climate will reflect factors at various levels of the organization that impact readiness for implementation. Acceptance of a new intervention is often set at the top of the organization. Leadership buy-in, support, and commitment are essential for setting the foundation for change, garnering broad-scale support for a new intervention, accessing needed resources, and staying the course over time. While change frequently begins at the top, frontline workers often are the "linchpins" to make change happen by applying new procedures and practices and, importantly, adopting new ways of thinking (National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care [NTAEC], 2011a). A strong, shared vision can help shape a favorable culture for a new intervention by setting the direction and inspiring actions toward common goals (NTAEC, 2011b). Engagement of diverse stakeholders in implementation planning—including frontline workers, supervisors, managers, leaders, and agency partners as well as youth, parents, and resource families—is also key to establishing widespread buy-in.

Sample strategies for strengthening readiness for implementation in this area are presented below.

Aspect:	Sample Strategy:
Leadership buy-in and support	Ensuring that leadership is knowledgeable about the intervention's benefits and timelines
Shared vision	Encouraging ongoing communication to explain and reinforce how the intervention supports the organization's vision, values, and goals
Receptivity to change	Encouraging and rewarding staff for innovating and trying new ways to solve problems
Meaningful work	Sharing stories and firsthand accounts from caseworkers, family members, and community members about experiences related to the new intervention
Manageable stress	Clearly communicating about upcoming changes and monitoring workloads of staff responsible for intervention service delivery

Additional examples related to culture and climate are discussed below as they relate to strengthening motivation.

🏳 Organizational Engagement and Partnership

Organizational engagement and partnership consist of collaborative relationships within the agency (e.g., across program areas) and with families, youth, resource parents, community and cultural groups, and partner agencies to support service integration and inform improved practices. Productive relationships involve building trust, seeking feedback, and actively collaborating toward shared objectives. Specific engagement and partnership needs will vary with the nature and scope of the intervention—some may require close coordination with courts or tribes, while others might need collaboration with community service providers.

Sample strategies in this area are presented below.

Aspect:	Sample Strategy:
Structures to support partnerships	Building networks that facilitate information sharing across systems with common objectives and creating interagency implementation teams
Engagement in planning and service delivery	Inviting diverse stakeholders to participate in implementation team workgroups in meaningful ways
Buy-in and support	Communicating how the intervention's expected outcomes support the particular goals of external stakeholder groups

Identify Strategies for Building Motivation

An agency may have the capacity to implement a program or practice, but without motivation, or willingness, the intervention will not get off the ground. As part of capacity building efforts, teams should identify and implement strategies for strengthening motivation.

Motivation reflects perceived incentives that make an intervention desirable (Scaccia et al., 2015). On the flip side, a lack of motivation reflects disincentives that make the intervention undesirable. To a frontline worker, an incentive might be that a program will help the worker support youth educational needs, while a disincentive might be that it will create extra data entry. Motivation may be influenced by individual or collective beliefs about the intervention and its perceived characteristics, pressures for change, emotional responses, and anticipated outcomes (Scaccia et al., 2015).

❓ Questions to Consider

◆ Is there strong motivation for change?

◆ Is there widespread buy-in and support for the intervention?

◆ What specific strategies can build or sustain motivation for the selected intervention?

◆ How can communication and messaging aid implementation?

◆ How does the intervention align with existing programs and initiatives? What changes might be needed for better alignment?

◆ How will the intervention add value to existing programs and services?

◆ How can leaders show that the intervention is a priority?

🏳 Motivation

Strategies to help teams strengthen motivation (as well as culture and climate) are presented below.

Factor:	Sample Strategy:
Compatibility	Showing how the intervention complements agency values and reinforces other programs and ongoing initiatives
Relative advantage	Sharing research on why the selected intervention is better than current practices or other alternatives
Manageability	Breaking the intervention down into clear, manageable parts in training and guidance to make it appear more doable
Visibility of outcomes	Communicating early indications of success in meetings and email announcements

Strategies for increasing motivation may be put into action at different times over the course of a change and implementation cycle and should reinforce each other. For example, while choosing an intervention, teams should look for programs and practices that are compatible with the agency's values and fit with target population needs. Preparing for implementation, teams should communicate how the new intervention complements existing practices and agency mandates and clearly set expectations for how it will help reach agency and program area goals. Messages should be reinforced in various forms of communication—such as training sessions, meeting discussions, email announcements, and supervision. As the intervention takes hold, teams can share information on milestones achieved, preliminary results, and early success stories to maintain momentum. Sustaining motivation over time will be vital as new issues and competing priorities emerge. Strategies for strengthening motivation should be integrated into the team's communication plan.

Part 3: Implementation Plan Development

Part 1 of this brief focused on the early preparation for developing the implementation plan and part 2 on capacity building strategies; part 3 describes how to complete the implementation plan, starting with the work plan.

It is important to remember that **implementation plans are dynamic and evolving documents**. Teams may need to develop their plans incrementally, adding sections as additional information becomes available (e.g., evaluation plan details). Teams also may need to modify plans over time to respond to new developments.

5. Build Work Plan: Identify Activities to Get the Intervention and Agency Ready Prior to Implementation

The work plan provides a detailed account of the necessary tasks and activities to support implementation. Team members should identify activities that ensure the intervention is ready to be implemented and tasks to prepare the agency to be ready for the intervention.

Develop Framework for the Work Plan

For each key task or activity, teams should document:

◆ Projected timeframes

◆ Notes on necessary preconditions, interdependencies between tasks, and sequencing

◆ Milestones (products or indications of completion)

◆ Individuals or groups responsible for completing the tasks or activities

Plan Activities to Finalize the Intervention

Teams should begin implementation with a well-defined and usable intervention that has (Van Dyke & Metz, 2014):

◆ A clear description of the intervention

◆ Core components or the key building blocks of the intervention that lead to positive outcomes

◆ Operational definitions of the core components that include specific actions and behaviors required to carry out the intervention

◆ Practical performance assessment processes to enable monitoring of the intervention's implementation

Teams may already meet these criteria and have related materials (e.g., practice profiles, program guidance, manuals) if they are replicating a well-defined, evidence-supported intervention or if they have done design work in a prior phase of the change process.[2]

If teams do not yet have a well-defined intervention or if their selected intervention needs to be adapted to meet the needs of the target population or setting, then teams should describe action steps and timelines in their implementation plans, such as:

◆ Adapting or refining core components to meet needs of the target population and setting

◆ Preparing, adapting, and/or finalizing program materials (e.g., practice profiles, program guidance) to operationalize the core components

◆ Reviewing program materials with key stakeholders, including target population members and system partners

Plan Activities to Develop or Strengthen Implementation Supports

Developing or strengthening needed implementation supports and structures is important to implementation

> **? Questions to Consider**
>
> ◆ What tasks are required to prepare the intervention for implementation?
>
> ◆ What tasks are required to prepare the agency to implement the intervention?
>
> ◆ What implementation supports need to be developed?
>
> ◆ What tasks are dependent on one another?
>
> ◆ What is the timeframe for each task?
>
> ◆ Who will be responsible for each task?
>
> ◆ What cultural and contextual issues should be considered?
>
> ◆ How will stakeholders (including target population members and system partners) be involved in planning?

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[2] For more information, see "Change and Implementation in Practice: Intervention Selection and Design/Adaptation" at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/intervention-selection-design-adaptation/

success. Teams should draw from their readiness assessment findings and capacity building strategies to identify action steps for developing implementation supports and structures.

Action steps may strengthen:

- Recruitment and selection of staff to manage and deliver the intervention
- Training for staff and supervisors
- Coaching for staff to practice and apply skills
- Assessment protocols to monitor whether implementation is happening as intended and support adjustments when needed

- Policies and procedures to guide the intervention and new ways of doing work
- Data collection and reporting systems to monitor implementation and inform decision-making
- Communication processes to engage system partners and stakeholders

These implementation supports reflect what the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) refers to as "implementation drivers," key aspects of capacity and infrastructure associated in research with successful implementation (Bertram et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2005). The first four drivers aid in strengthening workforce abilities to implement an intervention as intended, while the latter three help create favorable environments for the intervention (Bertram et al., 2015). (Leadership, another NIRN implementation driver, is discussed elsewhere.)

> **For more information** on addressing implementation supports/drivers, see:
> - NIRN's *Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices*, available at https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nirn.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/NIRN-ImplementationDriversAssessingBestPractices2015.pdf
> - PII-TTAP's "Section 7: Develop or Adapt Implementation Supports," in the Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation, available from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/guide_vol3_installation.pdf

Plan Other Strategies to Develop Needed Capacity and Build Motivation

Teams should enter action steps and timelines into their work plans for additional activities to build organizational capacity and motivation. These may relate to:

- Securing resources to support implementation
- Building relevant knowledge and skills
- Developing infrastructure and administrative supports
- Cultivating culture and climate to support implementation

- Strengthening engagement and partnership
- Building buy-in and motivation for the intervention among leadership, staff, partner agencies, and the community

> ### Example: Activities to Support Implementation in Washoe County
>
> Before implementing a new Family Search and Engagement (FSE) program, the Washoe County, NV, Department of Social Services identified several activities that needed to occur. Based on its organizational readiness needs, the agency's implementation team planned activities related to:
> - **Administrative and organizational support** – identifying new roles and responsibilities for caseworkers in the public agency and their community-based services partner agency
> - **Staffing** – focusing on the recruitment of existing staff to implement the new program (a strategy guided by assessment findings that showed some staff possessed the needed values, skills, and commitment to perform the permanency intervention)
> - **Training and coaching** – contracting for caseworker training, assistance with adapting a coaching protocol, and case consultation for agency supervisors
> - **Fidelity assessment** – working in partnership with the FSE program developer to develop a set of fidelity assessment measures and protocols
> - **Data systems and collection** – establishing a process for accessing and evaluating case data related to FSE outputs and outcomes
> - **Service array** – addressing a lack of support services for families by confirming the availability of existing services, extending service provider contracts, and developing protocols for coordinated referrals and service collaboration
>
> These activities supported the county's ongoing readiness for its new initiative.
>
> Source: Washoe County Department of Social Services' Permanency Innovations Initiative Project (2016)

6. Build Work Plan: Identify Activities to "Roll Out" the Intervention and Measure Implementation Quality and Outcomes

To continue creating their work plans, teams identify activities for initiating, enhancing, and sustaining implementation. Again, for each activity, teams should enter in the work plan a brief description of the activity, the expected timeframes, persons or subteams responsible, and milestones. Where plans are still under development (e.g., for piloting or evaluating the intervention), teams should enter the next steps in the planning process.

Plan Implementation Activities

Teams should consider implementation activities, strategies, and plans related to the following:

◆ Site selection and preparation
◆ Initiation of service delivery, including processes for:
  ◆ Referrals of the target population to receive services
  ◆ Rollout of new practices
  ◆ Coordination of services
◆ Ongoing training, coaching, and staff feedback and development
◆ Fidelity and quality assurance processes

> **? Questions to Consider**
>
> ◆ What is the purpose of implementation?
> ◆ What tasks are required for implementation? Who will be responsible?
> ◆ What is the timeframe for each task? What tasks are dependent on one another?
> ◆ What data will be collected?
> ◆ How will fidelity be measured?
> ◆ How will indicators of success be identified?
> ◆ How will data be shared?
> ◆ How will stakeholders be involved in implementation?

Consider Testing, Piloting, and Staging Needs

During the planning phase, teams need to decide where and with whom they will begin to implement the intervention. For example, will they start delivering services in one or a few selected sites? Stage and roll out implementation by regions? Launch statewide? Such decisions will need to take into account a variety of factors, including the purpose of implementation, related mandates and timeframes, the intervention's implementation history and established evidence base, and the agency's available capacity.

In addition, teams should consider whether the following approaches are desirable and feasible to test and make improvements prior to full scale implementation:

◆ **Usability testing.** This process helps teams try out critical components of the intervention and quickly assess their functionality. It may be particularly helpful to test tools, forms, and processes that are being used or adapted for the first time and then refine them as needed.

◆ **Pilot testing.** This "trial run" involves implementing the intervention on a small scale (in a selected area or with a portion of the target population). A pilot test provides a valuable opportunity to see if implementation works, identify and fix potential problems, and adapt the implementation plan or intervention, as needed.

These approaches and related considerations are discussed in more detail in "Change and Implementation in Practice: Intervention Testing, Piloting, and Staging" at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/intervention-testing-piloting-staging.

> ℹ️ **For more information** on testing approaches and improvement cycles, see:
> • PII-TTAP's "Section 8: Initial Implementation and Testing," in the Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation, available from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/guide_vol4_initial_implementation.pdf

Consider Data Collection, Monitoring, and Evaluation Needs

As part of implementation planning, teams also should identify necessary activities and processes related to:

◆ Collecting data to monitor fidelity
◆ Identifying and tracking indicators of short- and long-term success
◆ Planning for evaluation of outcomes
◆ Planning for sustainability

At this stage of developing the implementation plan, teams may not have finalized plans for evaluation and sustainability, but they can outline key tasks and timelines for developing those plans.

These items are discussed in more detail in "Change and Implementation in Practice: Monitoring, Evaluating, and Applying Findings" at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/cqi/change-implementation/monitoring-evaluating.

> **For more information** on monitoring and evaluating, see:
> - CB's *Framework to Design, Test, Spread, and Sustain Effective Practice in Child Welfare*, available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/framework-workgroup?utm_source=Framework_Workgroup&utm_medium=Crosslink&utm_campaign=Program_Evaluation

7. Identify Communication and Engagement Activities

Another important part of implementation planning is thinking through communication and engagement strategies. Communication and engagement will be vital to obtaining and sustaining needed buy-in, support, and motivation—all critical to implementation success.

Develop Communication Strategies

Teams should plan and document strategies for engagement and communication with:

- Agency leadership
- Agency staff
- Partner agencies (e.g., courts, community organizations) or individuals involved in referrals, service delivery, or implementation support
- Target population members (potential and actual service recipients)
- Other key stakeholders and the community

Communication strategies should align with and build from the team's communication plan and external communication strategy.[3]

Focus on Improving Motivation and Buy-In

When developing communication and engagement strategies, teams should try to strengthen motivation and build a receptive organizational culture and climate. Teams may need to think beyond keeping groups informed and consider how they can shift attitudes and build needed buy-in and support for the intervention. This may require working with communication specialists to develop targeted and engaging materials that clearly explain how the intervention supports and benefits various stakeholders and the target population and aligns with shared goals, values, and other agency initiatives.

> **? Questions to Consider**
> - What mechanisms or protocols are needed for team members and subteams to communicate with each other?
> - How will leadership receive information about implementation?
> - Who are the stakeholders and partner systems that require information about the intervention and its implementation? How will the team keep stakeholders informed?
> - How will the team cultivate stakeholder buy-in?
> - What are the best methods for communication?
> - How will the team solicit feedback from stakeholders?

> **⚑ Example: Communication Strategies**
>
> When Washington State adopted a new child welfare practice model, it followed a structured implementation framework that included creating an implementation plan with a detailed communication plan. The communication plan described the approach for communicating practice model changes to community stakeholders and staff at all levels. The plan outlined communication activities, frequency, individuals responsible, and communication tools intended to support consistent and targeted communication. To promote acceptance and understanding of the ongoing change, the communication plan included three components:
>
> - **Marketing** centered on key message themes delivered through a variety of channels
> - **Outreach** to share information on the benefits of the practice model changes, set realistic expectations, reduce anxiety caused by change, and encourage adoption of the model
> - **Monitoring** to assess changes in organizational awareness and acceptance levels
>
> Excerpted from Pipkin, Sterrett, Antle, and Christensen (2013)

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[3] For more information, see "Change and Implementation in Planning: Teaming," available at https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/teaming/

8. Consolidate and Review Implementation Plan

To complete the implementation plan, teams pull together information from various sources and integrate it into a cohesive document. Remember that this plan may be further refined and revised over time as new developments occur and related plans are developed.

Integrate Information and Review Sequencing

Teams should ensure that all necessary action steps planned for completion before and during implementation are documented along with timelines and milestones. This requires thoughtful consideration of the various elements that shape the implementation plan, including:

◆ Team problem statement and theory of change

◆ Selected intervention, its evidence base, and needs for further design or adaptation

◆ Levels of motivation and capacity as reflected in a readiness assessment

◆ Goals and approaches for implementation (e.g., pilot test and/or staging)

◆ Evaluation needs and plans

Check for consistency across sections and address gaps. Review the sequencing of activities to ensure that there is a logical and reasonable flow and that action steps reflect available resources. If there are multiple sites or multiple interventions, consider whether they are sequenced to build on and support each other and not overwhelm those providing or receiving services.

Identify Potential Barriers or Challenges

In collaboration with stakeholders, teams should identify potential barriers or challenges to implementation, associated risks, and strategies to address them. Teams and stakeholders may revisit barriers identified in the review of readiness findings and the capacity building strategies developed to address them.

Barriers might include such challenges as leadership turnover, changes in anticipated funding, competing staff priorities, objections from labor unions over new service requirements, or other obstacles that slow down intended plans. Risks may also arise from hasty or ambitious implementation choices and may be mitigated through pilot testing and other efforts to test and gather feedback on whether implementation is leading to intended results. While it is impossible to anticipate every potential obstacle, proactive planning for potential barriers will help reduce reactive or "knee jerk" responses and unnecessary interruptions to implementation.

Review Consolidated Implementation Plan With Stakeholders

Bringing stakeholders into the planning process can pay dividends later in the form of smoother implementation. Selected stakeholder groups (including external partner organizations and members of the target population) should have opportunities to review and provide input on the implementation plan.

Following completion of the plan draft, team members typically need to submit and discuss the plan with appropriate leadership groups. Teams should ensure that leaders understand and agree with planned activities, timeframes, and resources required for the new intervention.

> **ℹ** **For more information** on creating an implementation plan, see:
> - PII-TTAP's "Section 5: Initial Assessment and Implementation Plan" and "Online Implementation Plan Tool," in Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation, available from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/guide_vol2_exploration.pdf
> - CB and JBS International's "Unit 5, Module 4: Creating the Implementation Plan," in the CQI Training Academy, available through CapLEARN (registration required) at https://learn.childwelfare.gov/

Conclusion

Implementation planning and capacity building are time well spent. Child welfare agencies often face strong internal and external pressures to move quickly to implement solutions to identified problems. Despite the urgency to improve outcomes for children and families, taking time to carefully plan and intentionally build capacity can actually save time and avert wasted resources. While implementation is rarely perfect, planning and capacity building can help agencies anticipate and address challenges as they arise (Durlak, 2013). With a thoughtful implementation plan and strong capacity and motivation, agencies become well positioned to move on to intervention testing, piloting, and staging.

Key Milestones for Moving Ahead to Testing, Piloting, and Staging:

◆ An implementation plan has been created with tasks and timelines. The plan reflects:
 — Strategies to address readiness needs (in response to readiness assessment) and prepare for implementation
 — Next steps to test, pilot, or stage the intervention
 — Processes and plans to monitor implementation and outcomes

◆ Implementation leadership and teaming structure are established.

◆ Capacity has been developed (or capacity building activities planned) so that:
 — Sufficient resources to support implementation are (or will be) in place
 — Sufficient infrastructure is (or will be) in place
 — Sufficient knowledge and skills are (or will be) in place
 — Receptive culture and climate are (or will be) in place
 — Sufficient engagement and partnership are (or will be) in place

Related Resources and Tools

For related resources on intervention selection, adaptation, and design, as well as additional **Change and Implementation in Practice** briefs, visit: https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/cqi/change-implementation

Tools

◆ Permanency Innovations Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Project. (2016). Implementation plan tool. In *Guide to developing, implementing, and assessing an innovation: Volume 2* (pp. 62–70). Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/guide_vol2_exploration.pdf

◆ National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation. (2018). Implementation tools. [See Implementation Planning]. Available from https://qic-ag.org/imt/

Training Resources

◆ Capacity Building Center for States. (2019). *Implementation planning and capacity building resources.* Available from https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/cqi/change-implementation/implementation-capacity-building

◆ Permanency Innovations Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Project. (2016). Section 5: Initial assessment and implementation plan. In Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation, available from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/guide_vol2_exploration.pdf

◆ Children's Bureau, & JBS International. (2015). Unit 5, Implementing solutions (Modules 2–4). In *CQI training academy*. Available through CapLEARN (registration required) at https://learn.childwelfare.gov/

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◆ Metz, Bartley, & Maltry. (2017). *An implementation science and service provider-informed blueprint for integration of evidence-based/evidence-informed practices into New Jersey's child welfare system*. Retrieved from https://nirn.fpg.unc. edu/sites/nirn.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/Blueprint_Sept2017.pdf

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Appendix: Readiness Factors and Capacity Dimensions

This appendix maps readiness factors examined in the "Change and Implementation in Practice: Readiness" brief[1] and the Change and Implementation Readiness Tool to the five dimensions of capacity. The Capacity Building Center for States uses the five dimensions as a framework for exploring capacity building.[2]

Overview of Factors That Contribute to Readiness for Implementation

Readiness Factors	Capacity Dimension
Motivation ◆ Belief that change is needed and valuable ◆ Belief that the selected intervention is: 　◆ Compatible 　◆ Doable and manageable 　◆ Important (a priority) ◆ Recognition that the intervention has: 　◆ A relative advantage 　◆ Visible outcomes	◆ Culture and climate ◆ Culture and climate ◆ Culture and climate
General Capacity ◆ Leadership ◆ Organizational innovativeness and receptivity to change ◆ Culture (shared behaviors and norms) ◆ Climate (staff perceptions of work environment) ◆ Resource availability and use ◆ Supportive structures ◆ Staff capacity	◆ Knowledge and skills; culture and climate ◆ Culture and climate ◆ Culture and climate ◆ Culture and climate ◆ Resources ◆ Infrastructure ◆ Knowledge and skills
Intervention-Specific Capacity ◆ Leadership buy-in and support ◆ Program champions ◆ Intervention-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities ◆ Implementation supports and structures ◆ Relationships and networks	◆ Culture and climate ◆ Resources ◆ Knowledge and skills ◆ Infrastructure ◆ Engagement and partnership

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[1] To access the readiness brief and tool, visit https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness
[2] For more information on these five dimensions of capacity, see https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/organizational-capacity-guide/