

Change and Implementation in Practice



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

Readiness



Readiness is critical to effective change efforts. Agency leaders and staff at all levels must be both willing and able to put new programs and practices in place for such efforts to succeed. Assessing readiness involves taking a close look at factors that contribute to the organization's overall ability to change, those that help the organization prepare for specific interventions, and the motivation of individuals involved with change. Such assessments can identify where supports are needed and help agencies set a strong foundation for interventions that address identified problems.¹

This brief is intended to help child welfare agency leaders, managers, teams, and stakeholders understand and assess readiness. The brief begins with background information, definitions, and research on readiness and then provides step-by-step approaches to explore readiness as part of a change and implementation process.

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 (the 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, 2015). 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 readiness. Although assessing readiness is sometimes identified as a distinct step in the Change and Implementation Process, in practice, it is an ongoing and dynamic activity. While examining readiness should begin with the start of a change process, it is especially important after teams have identified an intervention to address a problem and before they begin implementation.

Before assessing readiness for a specific intervention, your agency should have:

- A team to guide the change and implementation process
- A clearly identified and researched problem
- A theory of change that reflects a clear pathway to move from the problem to a desired, long-term outcome
- A proposed intervention to address the root cause(s) of the identified problem

If your team needs support achieving these milestones, review related series resources, available at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/>

Following the assessment of readiness for a specific intervention, your team will be ready to plan for implementation and capacity building, discussed in a companion brief, "Change and Implementation in Practice: Implementation Planning and Capacity Building."

¹ This series uses the word "problem" to refer to what needs to change to meet agency priorities. Problems may reflect identified needs or opportunities to improve agency or system functioning and outcomes.

What Is Readiness and What Contributes to Being Ready for Implementation?

Imagine a child welfare agency has noted increases in repeat child maltreatment rates over recent years and formed an implementation team to focus on child safety. The team has thoroughly researched the underlying causes of poor safety outcomes and developed a sound theory of change. After researching various options and considering fit and feasibility, the team selects a well-defined practice model that has had positive results in similar states. The team is anxious to start rolling out the new model as soon as possible, but is the agency ready? Without stopping to consider readiness, the team may hit roadblocks and resistance. What happens if the new model conflicts with longstanding beliefs and routine practices? If leadership can't commit needed resources? If caseworkers don't see its value? Can the new model succeed if training and coaching systems aren't prepared to build knowledge and skills specific to the model? Or, performance systems continue to reward business as usual? These questions point to important issues that agencies can address by exploring readiness for implementation.

Organizational readiness for implementation refers to the extent to which an organization is both willing and able to implement and sustain a selected intervention (Dymnicki, Wandersman, Osher, Grigorescu, & Huang, 2014).

When organizational readiness is high, effective and sustained implementation of a new program or practice is more likely; when readiness is low, change and implementation efforts are more likely to fail (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Weiner, 2009). As such, assessing readiness is an important part of most change and implementation frameworks (Meyers, Durlak, & Wandersman, 2012).

Agencies can build, nurture, and sustain readiness. To do so, it is useful to understand the factors that contribute to being ready. The following sections describe components and factors that contribute to readiness.

Components of Readiness

A growing body of work points to three core components of readiness for implementation (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2015):

- ◆ **Motivation** – the willingness or desire of individuals in an organization to change and adopt an intervention. Motivation is often reflected in the beliefs, attitudes, and commitment of those involved with the change.
- ◆ **General capacity**² – aspects of an organization's healthy functioning. An agency with strong general capacity, for example, may have effective leadership, appropriate staff, and clear expectations and procedures for how to do things. To achieve change, an agency also must be adaptable and have structures in place that support a change process (e.g., strong data systems to explore needs and track changes and training systems to build new skills).

² General capacity is also referred to as "foundational capacity."

Readiness Key Terms

- ◆ **Readiness for implementation** – the extent to which an organization is willing and able to put in place and sustain a selected intervention.
- ◆ **Readiness for change** – the extent to which an organization is willing and able to pursue efforts directed at improving outcomes.
- ◆ **Readiness assessment** – the act of measuring how prepared an organization is for a major change and/or a new intervention.
- ◆ **Intervention** – any specific practice, service, policy, strategy, program, practice model, or combination that is clearly defined, operationalized, and distinguishable.
- ◆ **Implementation** – a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity, program, or intervention.
- ◆ **Motivation** – the willingness to change and adopt an intervention.
- ◆ **Organizational capacity** – 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 implement a particular program or practice effectively. Also referred to as "innovation-specific capacity."

◆ **Intervention-specific capacity** – human, technical, and physical conditions needed to implement a particular program or practice effectively. Areas of interest here may include the specific knowledge, skills, structures, and supports needed for a specific intervention.

One group of researchers (Scaccia et al., 2015) has presented these components of readiness for implementation in an easy-to-remember equation, $R=MC^2$ (see below). Each of the three components is important for agency readiness. If any one component is very low, then the organization is unlikely to be ready. As an agency becomes stronger in each area, its level of readiness for successful implementation grows.

$R=MC^2$
Readiness for Implementation = Motivation x General Capacity and Intervention-Specific Capacity
 Scaccia et al. (2015)

Overview of Factors That Contribute to Readiness

Multiple factors contribute to an agency being ready for implementation. Exhibit 1 highlights important factors in each of the three component areas, and the sections below describe them in more detail.

Exhibit 1. Overview of Factors That Contribute to Readiness for Implementation*

Motivation	General Capacity	Intervention-Specific Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Belief that change is needed/valuable** ◆ Belief that the selected intervention is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Compatible ◆ Doable/manageable ◆ Important (a priority) ◆ Recognition that the intervention has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A relative advantage ◆ Visible outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Leadership ◆ Organizational innovativeness/receptivity to change ◆ Culture (shared behaviors and norms) ◆ Climate (staff perceptions of work environment) ◆ Resource availability/use ◆ Supportive structures ◆ Staff capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Leadership buy-in and support** ◆ Program champions ◆ Intervention-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities ◆ Implementation supports and structures ◆ Relationships and networks

* This list was adapted from the work of Scaccia et al. (2015) on readiness for implementation. It presents commonly identified factors but is not exhaustive of all factors that may affect readiness.

** Item was added to the original conceptualization.

As agencies pursue change and implementation efforts, they should consider these contributing factors and assess whether they are present in their organization. Most agencies embarking on change will not be strong in all areas. Through assessment and planning efforts, agencies can pinpoint strengths to leverage and areas to develop, and then identify strategies to build and sustain readiness over time. (See also the companion brief, “Change and Implementation in Practice: Implementation Planning and Capacity Building.”)

Motivation and Readiness

For change to occur and take hold, agency leaders, managers, workers and other stakeholders must be motivated to make it happen. That is, they must see the value in change, and be willing to do what it takes, possibly abandoning established ways of doing things. In child welfare, the desire and incentives to change may come from many sources, including dedication to improving conditions for children and families, agency data that underscore a significant need to strengthen outcomes, internal processes (e.g., performance rewards), or external pressures (e.g., from a lawsuit, media scrutiny, state and federal monitoring requirements, or local advocacy groups).

Motivation reflects beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the individuals involved in change. Readiness research (Holt & Vardaman, 2013; Weiner, 2009) points to the need to consider motivation at both an individual level (e.g., an individual manager's inclination to take action or belief in her ability to perform a new practice) and at an organizational level (e.g., a shared commitment to a new course of action and belief in the collective abilities to make it happen).

Beliefs and perceptions may be influenced not only by the current proposed change, but also experiences with multiple changes that have recently been introduced in the agency (Caldwell, 2013). Other related initiatives can provide momentum for a new intervention, while prior changes that did not succeed or led to “change fatigue” can dampen enthusiasm for a new intervention.

Implementation success rests on broad-based motivation and support (Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Buy-in is important at all levels of the organization—from administrators to managers to supervisors and frontline staff—as well as from agency partners (e.g., courts, community service providers) and community and family members who receive services. Since interventions are often rolled out at county and local levels and sometimes carried out by contracted, private child welfare agencies, getting buy-in and support of leadership at these levels is vital. Widespread motivation plays a role not only when agencies introduce a new intervention but also when they have to overcome obstacles and setbacks to sustain the intervention over time.

Factors That Influence Motivation and Readiness for Implementation

Motivation generally begins with a shared recognition that change itself is needed to address a problem or need and is valuable to the agency and the children and families it serves (Holt & Vardaman, 2013).

Research and implementation literature suggest that multiple factors contribute to motivation for a specific intervention (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2015):

- ◆ **Compatibility.** Individuals are more likely to support an intervention if it is viewed as consistent with existing values, beliefs, experiences, and needs (Rogers, 2003; Scaccia et al., 2015).
- ◆ **Manageability.** Managers and staff also are more willing to implement an intervention if it is perceived as relatively easy to understand and seems “doable” (Fixsen et al., 2005; Scaccia et al., 2015).
- ◆ **Prioritization.** Prioritization reflects the extent to which change, in general, and the intervention, in particular, are regarded as important and as more important than other pressing activities. Motivation may be influenced by the degree to which the innovation is expected, supported, and rewarded (Damschroder et al., 2009; Scaccia et al., 2015).
- ◆ **Relative advantage.** Interventions should be perceived as better than what is currently being done, doing nothing, or turning to existing alternatives (Rogers, 2003; Scaccia et al., 2015; Weiner, 2009).
- ◆ **Visibility of outcomes.** The degree to which stakeholders can observe and recognize positive outcomes can help generate buy-in (Damschroder et al., 2009; Scaccia et al., 2015). Early indications of change may be noticeable within the agency if the intervention already is in place, or other agencies that have implemented the intervention may demonstrate evidence of positive outcomes. The ability to test and assess the outcomes as the intervention is piloted also may contribute to the willingness to implement.

Leaders and managers may be more willing to take “manageable risks” on new approaches if the proposed intervention meets the above characteristics (i.e., it appears doable, is easy to understand and apply, and is compatible with current practices and priorities) and sufficient resources are available (Panzano & Roth, 2006). As discussed in “Change and Implementation in Practice: Intervention Selection and Design/Adaption,” teams should consider these same characteristics when selecting an intervention that is readily usable.

Understanding the factors that contribute to or inhibit motivation for an intervention provides a useful foundation for developing strategies that increase readiness. For example, agencies can communicate about why a new program or practice is needed (prioritization); offer materials and training that break an intervention into easy-to-follow steps (manageability); embed interventions into existing structures or practices (compatibility); and share data and initial successes (visibility of outcomes) to build buy-in and encourage motivation.

General Capacity and Readiness

Strong general capacity is associated with successful change efforts and reflects an organization's ability to adapt and achieve its goals. This type of capacity will affect the agency's readiness to implement any program, practice, or change (Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008).

Factors Related to General Capacity and Readiness for Implementation

Research literature and practice experience suggest that multiple interrelated factors contribute to an agency's general capacity and its readiness for change and implementation (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2015):

- ◆ **Leadership.** Leadership is a key element in how an organization operates and supports change (Aarons, Farahnak, Ehrhart, & Sklar, 2014; Holt et al., 2007). Leaders may foster change through what they pay attention to, how they allocate resources, and what they reward. Facilitating change requires both technical and adaptive leadership skills (i.e., being able to work collaboratively to shift values, beliefs, and relationships) (Fixsen et al., 2005). Leadership to guide change is required not only from the agency head but at multiple levels.
- ◆ **Organizational innovativeness and receptivity to change.** Readiness for change is influenced by the extent to which leadership encourages innovation, the agency operates as a learning organization, and staff are receptive to trying out new ways to solve problems (Aarons, Hurlburt, & Horwitz, 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009). Research links effective innovation to the "psychological safety" of staff to critically examine the current ways of doing things (Glisson, 2015).
- ◆ **Culture.** Staff behaviors, deeply held beliefs, and shared expectations about how things are done will influence readiness for change (Glisson, 2007; Scaccia et al., 2015). Studies show that change is more successful when organizational cultures are less rigid (e.g., staff are engaged in decision-making, and workers have discretion in conducting their work) and more proficient (e.g., caseworkers are knowledgeable, skilled, and responsive to family needs) (Glisson, 2015).
- ◆ **Climate.** Readiness for change is also affected by how staff collectively perceive and feel about their working environment and how that environment affects their personal well-being (Glisson, 2007; Scaccia et al., 2015). Research suggests that, in climates favorable to change, workers are engaged, perceive their work as meaningful, receive needed levels of support from management and coworkers, and report low levels of stress from overload (Glisson, 2015).
- ◆ **Resource availability and effective use.** Resources—including funding, staff, facility space, equipment, and technical resources—will be needed in varying degrees to introduce and sustain new interventions. An agency's ability to allocate and leverage available resources effectively will support initial and ongoing readiness (Scaccia et al., 2015).
- ◆ **Supportive structures.** Organizational structures for day-to-day functioning can facilitate readiness for change and implementation, or serve as barriers if not operating effectively (Flaspohler et al., 2008; Scaccia et al., 2015; Simpson, 2009). These may include structures and systems for:
 - ◆ Collecting and using data to explore problems, support decision-making, monitor change, and implement quality assurance and CQI
 - ◆ Hiring, selecting, training, and coaching staff to ensure availability of appropriate competencies
 - ◆ Communicating within the agency and externally
 - ◆ Fostering partnerships and networking relationships
- ◆ **Staff capacity.** Worker skills, education, and expertise contribute to general capacity (Scaccia et al., 2015) and may be strengthened through supportive structures. Competencies related to understanding and applying change and implementation concepts will be especially important to a change process.

At any given time, agencies will vary in how many of and to what extent these factors are in place. An agency does not need to have all factors fully in place to begin an implementation process. Agencies can work toward building their general capacity and their readiness over time.

Capacity building approaches may differ to reflect individual agency needs. For example, an agency interested in strengthening cultural factors might introduce strategies that reward innovation, offer opportunities to engage caseworkers in planning processes, and promote peer-to-peer learning about the latest child welfare practice techniques. A different agency may pay greater attention to climate issues to reduce worker stress and overload.

Dimensions of Organizational Capacity

When looking at healthy functioning, the Center for States focuses on five broad aspects or “dimensions” of general (foundational) capacity:

- ◆ Organizational **resources** (concrete materials and assets)
- ◆ Organizational **infrastructure** (structures, protocols, and processes)
- ◆ Organizational **knowledge and skills** (staff expertise and competencies)
- ◆ Organizational **culture and climate** (shared beliefs and attitudes and leadership vision and commitment)
- ◆ Organizational **engagement and partnership** (intraorganizational and interorganizational connections and relationships)

The factors contributing to general capacity and readiness for change and implementation can be mapped to these five dimensions. (See Change and Implementation Readiness Assessment Tool.)

For more information on the dimensions of organizational capacity, visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/organizational-capacity-guide/>

Intervention-Specific Capacity and Readiness for Implementation

The second type of capacity in the $R=MC^2$ equation is intervention-specific capacity (or innovation-specific capacity) and relates to the ability to implement a particular practice or program of interest.

Exploring intervention-specific capacity recognizes that an agency’s needs for knowledge and skills, systems, and partnerships will differ when introducing different types of interventions. For example, an intervention for improving child well-being outcomes will require knowledge about the physical and mental health needs of children in child welfare, trauma-informed practice skills, and close partnerships with community service providers, whereas an intervention for improving child safety outcomes may require knowledge of risk and protective factors, case decision-making skills, and partnerships with the courts.

Factors Related to Intervention-Specific Capacity and Readiness for Implementation

Various interrelated factors contribute to intervention-specific capacity and readiness for implementation (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2015):

- ◆ **Leadership buy-in and support.** Leaders and managers play a key role in implementation, particularly by shaping a culture and climate favorable to the intervention (Aarons et al., 2014). They do this by communicating a shared vision for a new intervention, underscoring values, connecting new programs and practices to established goals, clarifying priorities, and allocating resources.
- ◆ **Program champions.** Highly visible and knowledgeable stakeholders that advocate for and support a selected intervention can help move the work forward and garner support throughout planning and implementation (Damschroder et al., 2009; Scaccia et al., 2015).
- ◆ **Intervention-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities.** The right staff with the right capabilities to do the work is important to implementation success (Fixsen et al., 2005).

◆ **Implementation supports.** These factors are referred to by different names, including “implementation climate supports,” “implementation keys,” and “implementation drivers.” In this brief, they are conceptualized to include the NIRN implementation drivers (competency and organization drivers) described in the box (Bertram, Blase, & Fixsen, 2015).

◆ **Relationships and networks.** Interagency relationships can provide ongoing channels for a child welfare agency to collaborate with related systems (e.g., courts, health/mental health agencies, juvenile justice agencies, and community organizations) in providing services to children and families. Valuable relationships also may include those between agencies and training and technical assistance providers that help the agencies prepare for implementation. Agencies also can learn from peers and system partners that already use similar interventions and serve as models of achievable change.

i **For more information** on readiness for implementation and contributing factors, see:

- The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation issue brief titled “Willing, Able, Ready: Basics and Policy Implications of Readiness as a Key Component for Implementation of Evidence-Based Interventions,” available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/14/IWW/ib_Readiness.pdf

Implementation Drivers

The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) describes key aspects of capacity and infrastructure associated with successful implementation, which overlap with the factors contributing to readiness for implementation. NIRN implementation drivers include the following (Bertram et al., 2015):

- ◆ Leadership drivers
- ◆ Competency drivers
 - ◆ Staff selection
 - ◆ Training
 - ◆ Coaching
 - ◆ Performance assessment (fidelity)
- ◆ Organization drivers
 - ◆ Decision-support data systems
 - ◆ Facilitative administration (policies and procedures)
 - ◆ Systems intervention (collaboration with external agencies)

For more information, see <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-drivers>

Research examining drivers and their importance to implementation in child welfare settings also includes (Armstrong et al., 2014; Children’s Bureau, 2015):

- ◆ Shared vision, values, and mission
- ◆ Stakeholder engagement

Readiness for Change as a Necessary Foundation for Readiness for Implementation

To be ready for implementation, an agency must first be ready for change. This aspect of readiness relates to the first two components of the $R=MC^2$ equation, motivation and general capacity.

Think of the two interrelated readiness concepts in the following way:

- ◆ **Readiness for change** – is the agency prepared to pursue a change effort directed at improving outcomes, regardless of the specific intervention?
- ◆ **Readiness for implementation** – is the agency prepared to put in place a specific program, practice, or other intervention to improve outcomes?

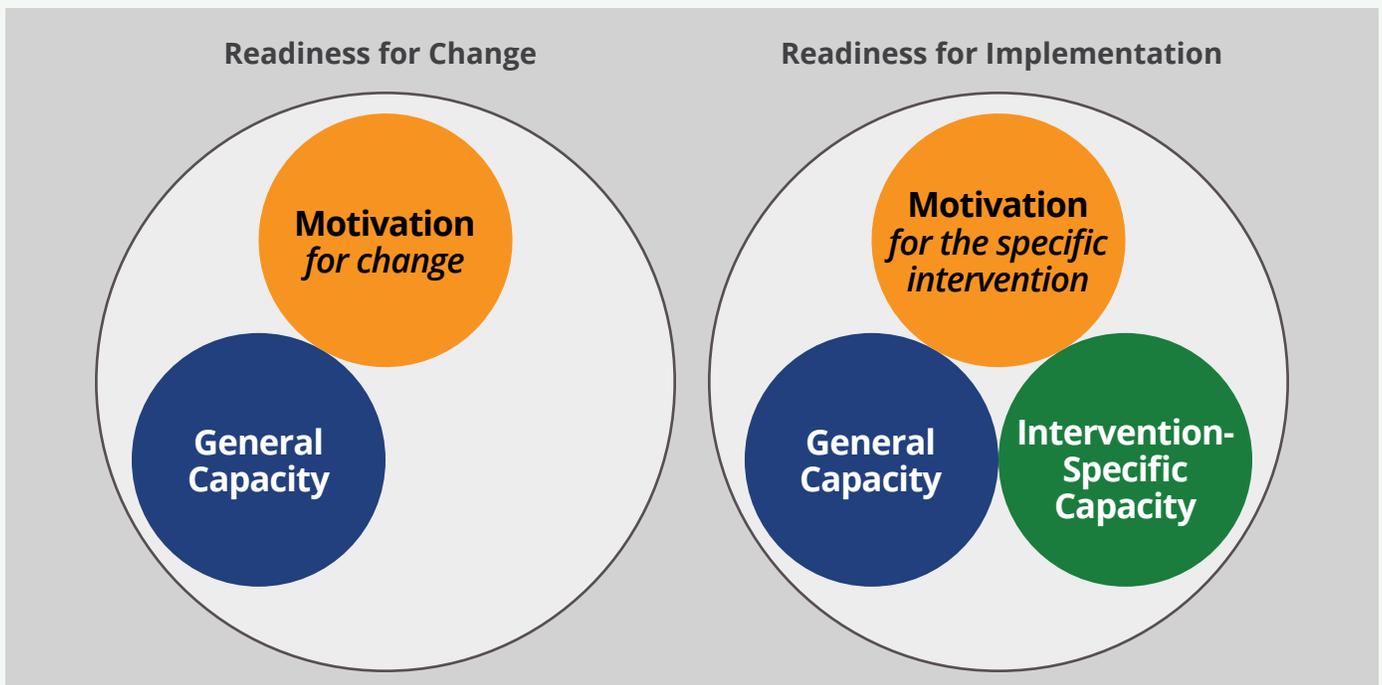
There is overlap between the two readiness concepts. For example, both readiness for change and readiness for implementation draw on motivation as a necessary force for moving forward. In the case of readiness for change, agency staff must believe that change from the current way of doing things is valuable and needed to address a problem and achieve desired outcomes. In the case of readiness for implementation, agency staff must believe that a specific intervention (e.g., Parent-Child Interaction Therapy or a program supporting kinship caregivers or a new set of practices) is the best approach to meet the desired outcomes.

In addition, several support structures are needed for change generally and then tailored specifically for intervention implementation. For example, an effective training system will be important to achieving change in general, and a training system that builds specific skills for the new intervention will advance readiness for implementation. Likewise, a robust data system can support a change process generally, while a system with intervention-specific elements will help monitor and inform a particular program.

The introduction of new programs and practices risks failure if an agency is not ready—or does not have the general capacity—for change. As such, thinking about readiness should ideally begin well before an agency has selected an intervention. As an implementation team begins to explore an identified problem or need, teams should begin to consider readiness for change more generally—i.e., does the agency have what it takes to achieve sustainable change?

Exhibit 2 illustrates the overlap between components of readiness for change and components of readiness for implementation. Note that the motivation for the specific intervention builds from the motivation for change.

Exhibit 2. Illustration of Readiness for Change and Readiness for Implementation



How to Assess Readiness

Most implementation frameworks suggest that organizations assess readiness before attempting to introduce a new program or practice (Meyers et al., 2012). Readiness assessments help teams consider strengths and gaps and identify areas for needed capacity building.

To assess readiness, implementation teams or their designated subgroups should conduct three essential functions (tasks):

1. Consider factors that contribute to readiness
2. Develop a readiness assessment approach
3. Conduct the readiness assessment and analyze findings

The readiness assessment findings will inform implementation planning and capacity building and also may contribute to intervention selection.

Because readiness is a dynamic concept and circumstances may shift over the course of a change and implementation process, teams may need to repeat these steps at various points.



1. Consider Factors That Contribute to Readiness

As a first step in assessing readiness, team members should become familiar with and consider key factors that contribute to readiness for change and implementation, presented in the first part of this brief. As discussed above, these factors fall into three groups:

- ◆ **Motivation** (e.g., belief in the need for and value of change, a shared commitment to change, compatibility and manageability of selected interventions, prioritization, and visibility of outcomes)
- ◆ **General capacity** (e.g., leadership, organizational innovativeness, culture and climate that support change, resource availability and use, supportive structures, and staff capacity)
- ◆ **Intervention-specific capacity** (e.g., leadership buy-in and support, program champions, intervention-specific knowledge and skills, implementation supports, and relationships and networks)

Ideally, teams will assess readiness for change early, when a problem is first recognized and the agency begins contemplating change. Initially, teams should review factors that can help them gauge the agency's level of motivation for change and its general capacity to undertake a change initiative (e.g., existence of strong data and training systems). Once a specific intervention has been selected, teams should also consider the agency's motivation and intervention-specific capacity to implement that particular intervention. For example, this might include assessing staff attitudes toward the new practice and whether the agency has the necessary training and coaching in place to support staff with learning it. Because agency readiness is dynamic, teams should continue to monitor it throughout intervention testing, piloting, and staging and while making decisions on sustainability and possible expansion of the intervention.

Teams should assess readiness as comprehensively as possible. Agencies with more information about their readiness are better able to take steps to ensure that they are well prepared for implementation. When comprehensive readiness assessment is not feasible, some teams will need to make strategic decisions about which factors appear to be the most relevant given their agency context, stage of change, and proposed intervention. Teams may need to strike a balance between gathering comprehensive information on all factors and keeping readiness assessments more focused and manageable.

To leverage existing data collection efforts, teams should consider whether their agency already has collected information on certain factors. For example, an agency's human resources department may have conducted an organizational health study to identify workforce strengths and gaps, which may point to culture and climate issues

that affect implementation. Or, the agency may have assessed general capacity issues for other change or program improvement initiatives that might be relevant.

2. Develop a Readiness Assessment Approach

To determine their agency's readiness for change and implementation, teams may use one or multiple methods that include surveys, interviews, discussion groups, and/or observation. At this point, teams need to make decisions about:

- ◆ The scope of data collection
- ◆ What format and which tool(s) to use to explore factors/questions of interest
- ◆ Who to ask to participate in the readiness assessment
- ◆ How to analyze and share findings

Teams may want to get help from agency data staff and/or research and evaluation partners to select appropriate approaches for data collection, sampling, and analysis.

Determine the Scope of Assessment and Select an Assessment Approach

There is no single, proven instrument available to measure readiness for implementation in child welfare, applicable to all situations. Readiness instruments that measure a broad array of factors can serve as diagnostic tools for identifying strengths and weaknesses in organizational capacity (Scott et al., 2017), while instruments that focus on a few factors can help explore an aspect more in depth.

The Center has developed the research-informed Change and Implementation Readiness Assessment Tool (see <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness>). Implementation teams or technical assistance providers working with teams may use this tool as a checklist for readiness. The tool is organized into five broad dimensions of organizational capacity, and items explore the factors contributing to readiness, described in this brief. The full tool is useful for assessing the agency's readiness for implementation of a selected intervention, while a subset of highlighted questions address the organization's readiness for change.

The appendix presents a list of other sample assessment tools that individuals or teams can use in child welfare settings to assess readiness. Some of these tools are specific to child welfare, while others were developed in other social service settings. The tools approach readiness from different perspectives and have varying levels of evidence of validity and reliability.³ The appendix provides a brief description of each tool and highlights key assessment areas addressed (e.g., leadership, motivation, culture and climate, support structures). Please be aware that some tools are copyrighted and may require users to obtain proper permissions from developers before proceeding with their use.

In recognition that readiness rarely emerges as "ready/not ready," many readiness tools use some type of scale. The tools may ask respondents about the status or extent of an item, with responses such as "not yet," "somewhat," and "completely," or use a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being "absent/not considered" and 5 being "fully in place." These scales allow teams to monitor changes in the extent of readiness over time.

Some tools are intended to be completed by individuals and then results are aggregated to view collective responses. Other tools (such as the Center's tool) work well for facilitated group discussion and completion.

Teams may opt to use multiple approaches. For example, they may complete the Center's readiness assessment tool and use one of the other tools listed in the appendix, or focus groups, to explore specific aspects of readiness more fully (e.g., culture and climate, staff motivation for a specific intervention).

To determine which tools to use, teams may consider:

- ◆ How comprehensively do they intend to assess readiness? What is feasible?
- ◆ What readiness domains are of greatest interest or importance?
- ◆ What tools are readily available?

³ Readiness assessment tools have limited but growing research in child welfare. For additional information on the evidence base of selected standardized instruments, see <https://www.gem-beta.org>



For more information on assessment tools, see:

- Casey Family Programs' "Transforming Child Welfare Systems: Are There Any Change Management Readiness Assessment Tools That Can Be Used in Child Welfare Settings?" available at <https://www.casey.org/change-management-readiness-tools/>
- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare's Implementation Measures webpage, available at <http://www.cebc4cw.org/implementing-programs/tools/measures/>
- Knowledge Translation Program's Ready, Set, Change!, an online decision support tool for selecting an assessment instrument, available at <http://readiness.knowledgetranslation.ca/>

Modify Questions or Tools or Develop New Ones (as needed)

To assess readiness in their agency, teams may decide to use one of the existing tools noted in the appendix as is, modify a tool (if appropriate), or develop a new one. Often teams will need to tailor questions to fit the characteristics and needs of the particular intervention. In customizing tools, teams should consider:

- ◆ Relevance (are the questions meaningful?)
- ◆ Clarity (are the instructions clear?)
- ◆ Specificity (are the questions too general or too specific?)

Teams should test new or modified tools before widespread use. If teams don't have members with expertise in assessment or survey development and administration, they may need to reach out for help from experts in the agency (e.g., CQI Leads or research staff) or outside the agency (technical assistance providers or university partners).

Sample Tailored Readiness Tool

To help prepare for implementation, some teams will develop a readiness assessment tool tailored specifically for their intervention. Find an example of a readiness assessment tool examining child welfare agency readiness for a parent partner program at:

- ◆ The Center's "Component 2: Assessing Readiness" (p. 9) in *Parent Partner Program Navigator: Designing and Implementing Parent Partner Programs in Child Welfare*, available at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/parent-partner-navigator/>

The tool's 34 readiness items reflect different aspects of motivation, general capacity, and intervention-specific capacity, and are rated to reflect the degree to which each is "in place" within the agency. These include items related to consistency of family empowerment with agency culture and values, engagement of family leaders in planning activities, resource availability, and established processes and systems that support a parent partner program. Child welfare administrators, family leaders, agency staff, and design team members can complete the tool individually or as a group to identify areas that need attention before moving forward with program implementation.

Identify Participant Groups

As part of the readiness assessment process, teams will need to decide from whom to collect information. Generally, teams will want a cross-section of the organization represented (e.g., administrators, managers, supervisors, and workers from different program and functional areas) as well as key stakeholder and partner representatives (e.g., courts and other systems, community service providers, family and youth representatives). Broad representation of different perspectives is important to all assessment approaches (e.g., collective completion of a single assessment tool, a series of individual surveys, focus groups). When conducting surveys, teams should pay attention to survey response rates to ensure that responses represent the population and also reflect a cross-section of the population.



For more information on collecting data through surveys, visit:

- The Center's Focused CQI Services Indepth Skill Building learning experience, module 4, available through CapLEARN (registration required) at <https://learn.childwelfare.gov>

Plan Analysis Approach

Next, teams will need to develop plans for how to analyze and present readiness assessment findings aligned with the assessment approach. Plans should include descriptions of how and with whom teams will share findings. Including diverse stakeholders with varied perspectives in the interpretation of the data can strengthen team understanding of readiness and the implications of assessment findings.

Levels of readiness and capacity may vary across an organization. If data are collected from a large enough sample through surveys, interviews, or other methods, teams may want to analyze responses of different groups (e.g., by role or program area) to provide insight into different perspectives. Aggregate assessment data can provide a broad view of organizational readiness while analysis by group may offer additional insights into where there is particularly strong support or resistance. For example, is there greater buy-in among managers than caseworkers? This information can help teams target strategies and craft tailored messages for groups that are less receptive to the new initiative or intervention.

3. Conduct Readiness Assessment and Analyze Findings

Following planning, teams or their designated leads will conduct the readiness assessment.

Clearly Communicate the Need for Readiness Assessment

It is important to build support before, during, and after the assessment period through effective communication that informs participants of the purpose of the readiness assessment and how the information will be used. In particular, team members leading the assessment should remind participants that readiness is not a “pass/fail” endeavor and the information will help in efforts to prepare them for the intervention. Following up on the assessment with a thank-you and an update on how the findings are being used can help build buy-in for later implementation efforts.

Identify Readiness Strengths and Capacity Needs

Once the assessment has been completed and data collected and organized, teams (or others helping with the process) will analyze and summarize findings. Teams should not expect that the agency will be fully ready in every area—in fact, it is more likely that some areas will need to be developed over time.

Teams can use the findings to:

- ◆ Assess the agency's readiness to embark on change or to implement the proposed intervention
- ◆ Identify particular areas of strength that can be leveraged (e.g., leadership support, program champions, connections to existing initiatives, established infrastructure)
- ◆ Identify areas where capacity needs to be built (e.g., relevant knowledge and skills, performance assessment systems, interagency relationships)
- ◆ Build a shared understanding of the agency's current status
- ◆ Prioritize activities that prepare the agency for change

Examples of Strategies to Strengthen Readiness

Find examples of readiness factors for one set of child welfare grantees and the strategies they used for enhancing them in “Overview and Examples of Ongoing Readiness” at: https://diatoolkit.childwelfare.gov/sites/default/files/Overview_Example_Ongoing_Readiness.pdf

Reassess Readiness Over Time

As noted earlier, readiness and capacity evolve over time and assessing readiness should not be a one-time occurrence. As part of implementation monitoring, teams should reassess their readiness and capacity at multiple points in the implementation process, particularly for multiyear change initiatives. Tracking factors over time can update teams on their progress and also identify emerging needs or potential barriers that might affect ongoing implementation or expansion of the intervention. Have changes in leadership or agency priorities affected

commitment to the intervention? Do new staff have the knowledge and skills needed for the intervention, or are changes to training and coaching systems needed? Do other aspects of readiness need to be addressed to sustain the intervention? Periodic reassessment of readiness factors can help alert implementation teams to specific areas that require attention and focus their next steps.

Conclusion

Exploring readiness is essential to preparing for change and implementation. Once teams assess readiness and discuss the implications of their findings, they can use that information to inform implementation planning and action steps. In particular, readiness findings will be the springboard for developing strategies to build capacity and foster successful change and implementation processes. Since readiness may rise or fall over time, it is important to continue monitoring readiness levels and respond as needed to maintain optimal readiness. An agency that is ready—both willing and able—is then well positioned to initiate and sustain new programs and practices aimed at improving outcomes.

For information on next steps, see the implementation planning and capacity building resources at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/>

Milestone for Moving Ahead to Implementation Planning and Capacity Building:

- ◆ Assessment of readiness and identification of strengths and needs for implementation



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/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/>

Publications/Websites

- ◆ Dymnicki, A., Wandersman, A., Osher, D., Grigorescu, V., & Huang, L. (2014). *Willing, able, ready: Basics and policy implications of readiness as a key component for implementation of evidence-based interventions* [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation issue brief]. Available from http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/14/IWW/ib_Readiness.pdf
- ◆ Casey Family Programs. (2017). *Transforming child welfare systems: Are there any change management readiness assessment tools that can be used in child welfare settings?* Retrieved from <https://www.casey.org/change-management-readiness-tools/>
- ◆ Permanency Innovations Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Project. (2016). Overview and examples of ongoing readiness. In *Development, implementation, and assessment toolkit*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from https://diatoolkit.childwelfare.gov/sites/default/files/Overview_Example_Ongoing_Readiness.pdf
- ◆ Children's Bureau. (2014). Step 6: Assess readiness to implement interventions. In *A guide for implementing improvement through the CFSP and CFSR* (pp. 12–15). Available from <https://training.cfsrportal.acf.hhs.gov/resources/3105#CFSR> [To locate, scroll down to "CFSR and PIP Instruments, Manuals, and Guides," "Program Improvement Planning."]

Tools

- ◆ Capacity Building Center for States. (2018). *Change and implementation readiness assessment tool*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available from <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness>
- ◆ See appendix.

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Appendix: Readiness Assessment Tools

The table below lists tools to assess organizational readiness or specific aspects of readiness. For each tool, the table presents focus and assessment areas, whether the tool explores readiness for change (C) and/or readiness for implementation of a specific intervention (I), and whether it is specific to child welfare. Please be aware that some tools may be proprietary and may require users to obtain proper permissions and/or licensing before proceeding with their use. Inclusion of these tools is intended for informational purposes only and does not indicate endorsement by the Children's Bureau or the Capacity Building Center for States. Child welfare agencies should consider their specific needs when deciding whether to use a particular assessment tool.

Title Author/Related Publication and Website	Focus (Number of items on the instrument)	Assessment Areas (Sample factors explored)	Motivation	Leadership	Culture and climate	Resource availability/use	Support structures	Knowledge and skills	Program fit	Change (C) or Implementation (I) ?	Child welfare specific
Change and Implementation Readiness Assessment Tool Capacity Building Center for States. (2018). <i>Change and implementation readiness assessment tool</i> . Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/readiness	Examines readiness for change and/or a new intervention and supports planning for implementation. (50 readiness items and milestones checklist)	Motivation (compatibility, manageability), general capacity (resource availability/use, infrastructure, staff capacity, culture, climate), and intervention-specific capacity (leadership support, implementation supports, relationships and networks)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C, I	X
Change Readiness Checklist Zolno, S. (n.d.). <i>Who's ready for whole system change? The whole field assessment and the change readiness checklist</i> . http://proactionassociates.com/site_ProAction/section_publications/PDFs/PRO_article_WhosReadyChangeReadinessChecklist.pdf	Helps determine staff readiness for change and identify conversations that managers might have with staff to help them support change. (11 items)	Employee perceptions of change (purpose, need, compatibility), involvement in planning, and views on organizational support and capacity for change	X		X					C	
Checklist to Assess Organizational Readiness Barwick, M. (2011). <i>Checklist to assess organizational readiness (CARI) for EIP implementation</i> . Toronto, ON: Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto. http://www.effectiveservices.org/downloads/Checklist_to_Assess_Organisational_Readiness_for_Implementation.pdf	Addresses the level of readiness for implementing evidence-informed practices within behavioral health service organizations. (35 items)	System capacity, organizational capacity, functional considerations, organizational culture and climate, leadership, staff capacity, implementation plan, and training		X	X	X	X			C,I	

Title Author/Related Publication and Website	Focus (Number of items on the instrument)	Assessment Areas (Sample factors explored)	Motivation	Leadership	Culture and climate	Resource availability/use	Support structures	Knowledge and skills	Program fit	Change (C) or Implementation (I) ?	Child welfare specific
Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment Butler Institute for Families. (n.d.). <i>Overview of the comprehensive organizational health assessment</i> . http://ncwwi.org/files/Org_Environment/Comprehensive_Organizational_Health_Assessment_COHA.pdf	Helps identify organizational strengths and gaps that affect overall functioning and the ability to implement change. (300 items on survey plus interview protocols)	Individual factors (self-efficacy, job satisfaction stress), unit factors (supervision, support, cohesion, shared vision), organizational factors (leadership, learning culture, climate, inclusivity), and community factors		X	X		X			C	X
Considerations for Assessing Readiness Worksheet McCarthy, J. (2012). <i>Guide for developing and implementing child welfare practice models</i> . University of Southern Maine, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. https://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/rcpdfs/WorksheetConsiderationsforAssessingReadiness.pdf	Explores readiness for implementing a child welfare practice model. (62 items)	Leadership, culture and climate, vision, principles, goals, resources, capacity, caseload, workload, implementation infrastructure, staffing, stakeholder involvement, cultural competence, and individual readiness		X	X	X	X			I	X
The Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale Aarons, G. A. (2004). Mental health provider attitudes toward adoption of evidence-based practice: The evidence-based practice attitude scale (EBPAS). <i>Mental Health Services Research</i> , 6(2), 61–74. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1564126/pdf/nihms10919.pdf (EBPAS Questionnaire included in Appendix A). See also Aarons, G. A., Glisson, C., Green, P. D., Hoagwood, K., Kelleher, K. J., & Landsverk, J. (2012). The organizational social context of mental health services and clinician attitudes toward evidence-based practice: A United States national study. <i>Implementation Science</i> , 7(56). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/57v8d1sg#page-2	Assesses service provider attitudes toward implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs). (15 items)	Attitudes toward adoption of EBPs, including: appeal of EBP, likelihood of adopting an EBP, openness to new practices, and perceived divergence of usual practice and EBP	X		X				X	C	

Title Author/Related Publication and Website	Focus (Number of items on the instrument)	Assessment Areas (Sample factors explored)	Motivation	Leadership	Culture and climate	Resource availability/use	Support structures	Knowledge and skills	Program fit	Change (C) or Implementation (I) ?	Child welfare specific
Hexagon Tool Metz, A., & Louison, L. (2018). <i>The hexagon tool: Exploring context</i> . Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool	Explores readiness of an intervention as well as readiness of the organization. (50 items)	Intervention evidence, usability, supports for implementation, match with population need, fit with current initiatives, and organizational capacity				X	X		X	I	
Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Naoom, S., & Duda, M. (2015). <i>Implementation drivers: Assessing best practices</i> . Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/NIRN-ImplementationDriversAssessingBestPractices.pdf	Assesses whether implementation supports (drivers) are in place in the organization and reflective of best practice. (79 items)	Implementation supports/drivers: staff recruitment and selection, training, coaching, performance assessment, decision-support data system, facilitative administration supports, systems intervention, and technical and adaptive leadership		X			X			I	
Implementation Supports: Assessing Best Practices Survey Permanency Innovations Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Project. (2016). <i>Development, implementation, and assessment (DIA) toolkit: Implementation supports: Assessing best practices survey</i> . Washington, DC: Children's Bureau. https://diatoolkit.childwelfare.gov/sites/default/files/resources/9.2_Implementation_Supports_Tool_Responders.pdf	Assesses whether implementation supports (drivers) are in place in a child welfare agency and reflective of best practice. (78 items)	Implementation supports/drivers: staff recruitment and selection, training, coaching, fidelity assessments, identification and use of data, leadership and stakeholder supports		X			X			I	X
Organizational Readiness for Change Institute of Behavioral Research. (2009). <i>Organizational readiness for change – Social agency staff version (TCU-ORC-SA)</i> . Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University. https://ibr.tcu.edu/forms/organizational-staff-assessments/	Explores organizational readiness and motivation for change. (115 items)	Motivation for change, program resources, staff attributes (e.g., efficacy, influence, satisfaction), and organizational climate (e.g., cohesion, stress, change environment, leadership)	X	X	X	X	X			C	

Title Author/Related Publication and Website	Focus (Number of items on the instrument)	Assessment Areas (Sample factors explored)	Motivation	Leadership	Culture and climate	Resource availability/use	Support structures	Knowledge and skills	Program fit	Change (C) or Implementation (I) ?	Child welfare specific
Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change Shea, C., Jacobs, S., Esserman, D., Bruce, K., & Weiner, B. (2014). Organizational readiness for implementing change: A psychometric assessment of a new measure. <i>Implementation Science</i> , 9(7). https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1748-5908-9-7 Tool can be accessed at https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/materials/organizational-readiness-implementing-change-oric	Assesses organizational readiness for change in healthcare settings. (12 items)	Change commitment, change efficacy, and culture and climate	X		X					C	
Organizational Readiness Self-Assessment Tool California Social Work Education Center. (n.d.). <i>Organizational readiness self-assessment tool</i> . http://calswec.berkeley.edu/toolkits/implementation-toolkits/assessment-tools (See also tools for specific initiatives.)	Explores agencies' strengths and challenges related to implementation of an intervention. (24 items)	Information gathering, data collection, shared values, common language, staff training and engagement, and family and youth engagement	X		X			X		I	X
Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment Tool National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. (2013). <i>Organizational readiness to change assessment (ORCA) tool</i> . Hamilton, ON: McMaster University. (Updated 2017). http://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/search/187	Helps identify organizational readiness to implement EBP in clinical settings. (77 items)	Strength of evidence for the proposed intervention, organizational context to support practice change (leadership, culture, resources), and organizational capacity to facilitate change (practices, roles, plans, resources)		X	X	X	X	X		I	
Organizational Social Context Glisson, C., Green, P., & Williams, N. J. (2012). Assessing the organizational social context (OSC) of child welfare systems: Implications for research and practice. <i>Child Abuse & Neglect</i> , 36(9), 621–632. (See also “Organizational Social Context Measure Overview” http://cbhr.utk.edu/osc/).	Measures the culture and climate of child welfare and mental health organizations. (105 items)	Organizational culture (proficiency, rigidity, and resistance), organizational climate (engagement, functionality, and stress), and worker attitudes			X					C	X

Title Author/Related Publication and Website	Focus (Number of items on the instrument)	Assessment Areas (Sample factors explored)	Motivation	Leadership	Culture and climate	Resource availability/use	Support structures	Knowledge and skills	Program fit	Change (C) or Implementation (I)?	Child welfare specific
Readiness for Integrated Care Questionnaire Scott, V. C., Kenworthy, T., Godly-Reynolds, E., Bastien, G., Scaccia, J., McMickens, C., . . . Wandersman, A. (2017). The readiness for integrated care questionnaire (RICQ): An instrument to assess readiness to integrate behavioral health and primary care. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i> , 87(5), 520–530. http://implementering-dk.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Scott-et-al-2017-RICQ.pdf	Assesses readiness for an integrated behavioral health and primary care intervention, drawing from R=MC ² heuristic. (82 items)	Motivation (relative advantage, compatibility, priority), general capacity (culture, climate, resource use, leadership, structures), and intervention-specific capacity (knowledge and skills, program champions, implementation supports)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	I	
Readiness for Organizational Change Holt, D. T., Armenakis, A. A., Feild, H. S., & Harris, S. G. (2007). Readiness for organizational change: The systematic development of a scale. <i>Journal of Applied Behavioral Science</i> , 43(2), 232–255. (Access summary at http://www.nccmt.ca/registry/resource/pdf/226.pdf)	Gauges readiness for organizational change at an individual level. (59 items)	Readiness factors: efficacy, organizational valence, management support, and personal valence		X	X		X			C	

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