

Choosing Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies are the activities or techniques we use to support the uptake of an intervention, program, or change. Matching implementation strategies to identified barriers is a key part of translating research into practice.

Once the implementation phase of a TRIP project begins, attention shifts from planning to action. At this stage:

- ✓ the problem has been clearly defined
- ✓ an evidence-based intervention has been selected
- ✓ the local context and key stakeholders have been carefully considered.

The next step is to determine how the intervention will be implemented in practice. This involves selecting implementation strategies. Research has identified many possible implementation strategies, highlighting the complexity of this decision-making process. There is no single formula for selecting strategies, nor is there one strategy that is consistently effective across all settings.

Understand the local context

Implementation strategies should always be shaped by the setting in which the intervention will be delivered. A clear understanding of the environment helps ensure strategies are realistic and relevant.

Key steps include:

- Identifying barriers and enablers within the service (e.g. staffing, workflows, leadership support)
- Understanding patient needs and priorities
- Engaging clinicians, managers, and consumers early in the process

Co-design with stakeholders is particularly important. Involving those who will deliver or receive the intervention helps ensure strategies align with local practice and increases acceptance and feasibility.

Research evidence or local data related to your intervention or service context can provide a useful starting point. Reviewing previous implementation efforts, both locally and in similar services, can help identify which strategies have worked, which have not, and why.

Examples from other sites can also support strategy selection. Although strategies usually require adaptation to fit the local setting, these examples can help inform decisions about approaches that may be suitable in your context.

Use Implementation Frameworks

Implementation frameworks provide structured ways to plan, select, and evaluate strategies. They help teams move beyond ad hoc decisions and ensure key influences on implementation are considered.

Commonly used frameworks include:

- **Intervention frameworks**, which support planning, testing, and refinement of interventions
- **Determinant frameworks**, which help identify factors that may influence implementation success (e.g. organisational culture, resources, external policies)

Using a framework helps link identified barriers to appropriate strategies and supports transparency in decision-making.

Implementation theories, models and frameworks can help guide strategy selection. If you selected a behaviour change approach – such as COM-B or the Theoretical Domains Framework – the Behaviour Change Wheel can be applied to link identified barriers and enablers to suitable strategies. If you chose the i-PARIHS as the guiding framework, facilitation becomes a central implementation strategy. This is because i-PARIHS identifies facilitation as the key mechanism through which successful implementation is achieved.

Develop Targeted Implementation Strategies

Once the context and key influences are understood, strategies can be selected or designed to address identified needs. Most projects require a combination of strategies rather than a single approach.

Strategies may include:

- Education and training for staff
- Changes to workflows or environments
- Use of reminders, tools, or decision aids
- Leadership support and service-level planning
- Consumer or carer engagement

The ERIC study lists 73 different implementation strategies. It is not a checklist or a guide on which strategies to use or when. However, it can be a helpful reference when restarting an implementation project. Reviewing the list may help identify strategies not previously considered that may better suit the intervention, local context, or people involved.

Clinicians often rely on familiar implementation strategies, such as training and education (e.g. in-services or written materials) and evaluative approaches (e.g. audit and feedback). These strategies can be effective when used in the right context.

However, they are unlikely to work well if they do not match the setting. For example, education alone will not lead to change if staff lack the necessary equipment to implement the recommended changes. Similarly, audit and feedback are less effective when staff do not feel involved in, or have ownership of, the process being measured.

Monitor, Adapt, and Improve

Implementation is rarely a one-off process. Ongoing monitoring and feedback are essential to identify what is working and what needs adjustment. Being responsive to feedback allows teams to refine strategies and better manage emerging challenges.

Successful TRIP projects rely on choosing implementation strategies that are context-specific, theory-informed, and responsive to stakeholder input. By understanding the local setting, using implementation frameworks, selecting targeted strategies, and adapting over time, health professionals can increase the likelihood that evidence-based practices are adopted, sustained, and that they deliver meaningful benefits in routine care.

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