Applying Implementation Science to **State System Change**

An Example of Improving the Finance System Component: Implementation of a Family Cost Participation Program in a Hypothetical State

Anne Lucas, Joicey Hurth, & Grace Kelley
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In this example, a state decided they want to implement a family cost participation (FCP) program to improve the fiscal component of their service system. The example state has 9 state agencies participating in the administrative structure of Part C. There is a State Directors' Management Team representing these 9 state agencies that oversees the implementation of Part C in the state in collaboration with the Lead Agency. Five of the 9 state agencies provide direct services through their local counterparts.

After conducting the Framework Self-Assessment (available for download from: http://ectacenter.org/sysframe/selfassessment.asp), the state self-assessment team, comprised of Part C staff, decided that improving the Finance system was a priority for the state. They explored Quality Indicator 1, and based on fiscal mapping that had previously occurred, the state identified that family cost participation (FCP) might be a feasible additional revenue source. A cost benefit analysis of FCP would also be needed.

Exploration Stage

The goals of the exploration stage are to identify the need for change using the Framework Self-Assessment and explore what innovation(s) are likely to meet those needs. A State Leadership Team (SLT) guides this stage, and all following stages. The State Leadership Team is comprised of people to guide the change process and best able to address the components to be changed. The membership of the team is flexible and designed by each state to fit their circumstances and desired changes. Exploration can include selecting an innovation. If the innovation has already been selected, exploration would focus on an analysis of the "fit" with needs, structures and resources, potential adaptations and system supports needed for successfully implementation.

Key Activities:

- Establish a state team to lead implementation

- Involve a representative Stakeholder Group

- Analyze the current system and document the need for change

- Explore potential innovations that could address needs

- Select the option(s) that fit the mission, and resources of system stakeholders.

- Secure commitment from agency (or cross agency) leadership

Example Exploration Activities

1. The Part C coordinator, state fiscal manager and data manager, who were on the self-assessment team, committed to continuing as the State Leadership Team (SLT) and added the following new members:

   a. public and private Insurance representative,

   b. technical Assistance/professional development representative,

   c. local administrator, and

   d. local fiscal manager.

2. The SLT explored other states' FCP models to determine the components and features that may fit their state need, system resources and values.

   a. The SLT reviewed ITCA survey data and other sources to identify all states that have implemented FCP and its cost benefit impact.

   b. The SLT explored 3 other states procedures for implementing FCP and held conference calls with them.

   c. The SLT identified pros and cons of the different approaches.

   d. The SLT summarized data from the self-assessment and information from other states to substantiate that FCP would address the need to increase revenue.

   e. The SLT conducted a preliminary cost benefit analysis of FCP.

3. The SLT determined that stakeholder input was needed to determine which FCP procedures and approaches would be feasible for the state.

   a. The SLT summarized the options to take the information to a stakeholder group for them to provide recommendations as to which approach would be most practical and fit with the state system (see step 5).

4. The SLT determined the cross agency and community leadership whose support or approval must be assured before bringing in a stakeholder group.

   a. The SLT prepared a proposal outlining the needs and cost-benefits of implementing FCP in the state and shares with Lead Agency administrators/decision makers.

   b. The SLT presented the proposal to state agency leaders participating in Part C, state level parent groups, and ICC. The state leaders approved that the SLC should pull together a stakeholder group to provide feedback.

   c. The SLT prepared information for the state and parent leaders to share with their constituents.

   d. The SLT received commitment from interested individuals to serve on stakeholder group.

5. The SLT invited and convened a Stakeholder group to understand the need for change and provide feedback on potential approaches to FCP.

   a. The SLT invited volunteers from Step 4, including the state Director's Management Team, state parent leaders, Lead Agency administrators, and ICC who were interested in the initiative. In addition, representatives from Local Lead Agencies, EI programs (including administrators, fiscal managers, and direct service providers), local parent organizations, and legislators were invited.

   b. The SLT convened a stakeholder meeting that included the following activities:

      • Data was presented from the self-assessment that documented the needed improvement to the finance system to access all funding sources.

      • Information from other states on FCP was shared along with the cost benefit analysis of implementing FCP. Pros and cons of each approach to FCP were highlighted.

      • A facilitated discussion was held with stakeholders identifying overall strengths and concerns about implementing FCP in the state.

      • Stakeholders worked in small groups to develop recommendations about which aspects of different states' approaches would best meet their needs and potential implementation activities to support this change.

6. The SLT used input from stakeholder group to plan the process of designing FCP in the state.

   a. The SLT analyzed information from stakeholder group and decided which FCP approach/components would be developed for the state.

   b. The SLT determined strategies for designing a FCP program for the state, including developing policies and procedures and forms.

   c. The SLT identified the need for an advisory group would be needed throughout the process to incorporate various perspectives from the field.

Development Stage: "The new way of working"

In system improvement work, the innovation or "new way of working" is rarely available and ready to be adopted "as is." An innovation will usually need to be adapted or developed, in order to fit the existing structures, needs and resources of the state and local system. The exploration of components and features of similar innovations from other states or locales can provide options and choices. In this stage, the innovation must be functionally described and operationalized so that it can be implemented and evaluated according to clearly articulated indicators of fidelity. The work of this stage is to answer this question… "What" will be implemented and how will people know when it implemented as intended?

Key Activities:

- Determine who needs to be involved in developing, or adapting the innovation.

- Clarify the components and features of the innovation

- Define what is needed to put the innovation into practice by the people who will use it.

Example Development Activities

1. The SLT convened an advisory group to help design how FCP would be implemented.

   a. The SLT invited a subgroup of stakeholders to serve as an advisory group to help design how FCP could be implemented statewide. The advisory group included parents, providers, local fiscal staff, local administrators, state agency representatives. The group included those who were supportive of FCP and those who had concerns.

   b. The advisory group reviewed the recommendations of the larger stakeholder group helped the SLT to:
      - clarify components and features of a FCP model,
      - use state data to decide the parameters (base, top and increments) of the sliding fee scale, and
      - determine what content should be included in policies and procedures to ensure implementation of FCP.

2. The SLT continually communicated with leadership to obtain input and approval.

   a. The SLT designated the Part C Coordinator and Fiscal Manager as the 2 members of the SLT to engage the State Management Team and Lead Agency Commissioner at key decision points.

   b. The Part C Coordinator and Fiscal Manager shared input and decisions from the State Management Team and Lead Agency Commissioner with the SLT and the advisory group in order to continue work.

3. The SLT developed policies, procedures and forms with assistance from the advisory group.

   a. As policies and procedures were considered the advisory group provided input on the content needed to implement FCP at the local level.

   b. The advisory group helped draft forms (e.g., fee agreement form, sliding fee scale, procedural safeguards statement, appeal form, fee reduction form)

   c. The advisory group helped develop informational materials for parents, providers, leadership and others.

4. The SLT conducted, compiled and analyzed public input.

   a. Identified the date/time and sites for public hearings.

   b. Developed and published the announcement for obtaining statewide public comment, including public hearings.

   c. Disseminated proposed FCP policies, procedures and forms statewide to broad stakeholder groups (parents, providers, leadership, others) for public comment.

   d. Conducted public hearings and obtained written input from various sources.

   e. Compiled and analyzed the input.

   f. Reported input to State Management Team, Lead Agency Commissioner and the advisory group.

5. The SLT made final revisions and submitted policies, procedures and forms for approval.

   a. The SLT made final revisions to policies, procedures and forms based on public comment, leadership and advisory group input.

   b. The SLT submitted the FCP to State Management Team, Lead Agency Commissioner, and OSEP.

Installation Stage: Getting the System Ready

The goal of the installation stage is to build system capacity to support the improvements in the selected component/subcomponent(s). Specific elements of quality identified that need improvement are identified. Existing organizational structures, policy/guidance and resources are aligned or developed to support the desired improvements. . A written implementation plan describes all activities, including plans for communication, TA & training, organizational changes and evaluation. When appropriate, local implementation teams are formed to oversee the implementation process, build communication mechanisms and feedback loops, prepare trainers or coaches and develop a site implementation plan.

Key Activities:

- Develop an implementation plan

- Use multiple communication structure to inform stakeholders and build public support

- Align organizational structures, policies and resources to support the innovation

- Develop TA and training capacity, including materials and personnel

Example Installation Activities

1. The SLT and the advisory group developed a written plan to guide state-wide implementation of FCP.

    a. The SLT wrote an implementation plan to address the roll out of FCP statewide including:

      - A communication plan for building awareness and buy in,

      - A training and TA plan that described an approach to training, materials and resources needed,

      - A plan to implement FCP statewide on a trial basis for one year,

      - A plan for analyzing and modifying other system components to support the use of FCP, and

      - A plan for evaluating the implementation process and outcomes of the FCP program.

    b. The SLT communicated planned activities and timelines to various stakeholder groups at statewide, regional and local meetings.

2. The SLT used the communication plan to inform and engage multiple stakeholders about the plans for implementing FCP.

    a. The SLT continued to involve their larger stakeholder group, making sure they were aware of decisions about and directions for implementing FCP.

    b. The SLT expanded informational materials developed in Stage 2, including a detailed description of specific components and features of the FCP to be implemented by the state.

    c. The SLT Disseminated information to various audiences to build public support.

    d. The SLT engaged the advisory group, the larger stakeholder group and leadership as champions to get the message to various constituents.

    e. The SLT revised informational materials to address confusion and concerns that surfaced from various constituency group feedback.

3. The SLT determined that Family Cost Participation needed to be implemented all across the state at the same time to ensure fairness to all families.

    a. The SLT decided to have a one-year trial period before modifying the FCP policies and procedures and sliding scale.

    b. The SLT explained the statewide roll-out, including the yearlong trial period to leadership, the stakeholder groups, the advisory group and the field in general.

4. Based on the Framework self-assessment and information gathered during the Exploration Stage, the SLT determined changes needed in state and local structures to support FCP.

    a. The SLT modified local contracts to reflect required implementation of FCP policies, procedures and forms.

    b. The SLT developed guidance on FCP including detailed procedural steps and staff responsibilities to support implementation.

    c. The SLT provided guidance to local administrators on estimating and managing the cost of implementing FCP.

    d. The SLT identified the fiscal resources that were needed for training and TA.

    e. The SLT identified how FCP implementation would be monitored or evaluated and developed the necessary data collection activities.

5. The SLT built the capacity to train and provide TA to local implementation teams, who were to serve as trainers and to support implementation at their programs.

    a. The SLT made decisions about the methods and resources needed for training and TA statewide.

    b. The SLT supported the identification of an implementation team in each local program to be trained on FCP, oversee the implementation process at their program, and provide feedback to the state.

    c. The SLT developed training and TA materials.

    d. The LST trained key members of the advisory group and state TA people to "train the trainers", (e.g. the local implementation teams).

Initial Implementation Stage

The goal of initial implementation is to put in place the innovation and changes necessary to support the innovation. Site or local level Implementation Teams guide the implementation process, review data, and provide feedback to the State Leadership Team on successes and challenges. Personnel in the sites are trained and begin to use the innovation and the process and outcomes are evaluated. As barriers or concerns arise, established feedback loops among state and local teams quickly problem-solve and take action to resolve the issues. Some system improvements can be piloted or field-tested in a limited number of sites (e.g., adding a coaching program to the personnel development system). However, other system changes must be implemented statewide (e.g., adding a family cost participation program). When implementing statewide, the focus of initial and full implementation becomes continuous improvement.

Key Activities:

- Provide on-going training and TA to participating personnel

- Personnel implement new ways of working

- Implementation teams support and evaluate implementation activities

- State and local implementation teams regularly use feedback loops to quickly identify and resolve problems

- State and local teams continually monitor implementation process, fidelity and results for continuous improvement

Example Initial Implementation Activities

1. The SLT and key members of the advisory group provided training and TA on FCP statewide.

   a. The SLT trained the local implementation teams via a train-the-trainer model to support the implementation of FCP at each program.
   b. The local implementation teams trained program staff.
   c. The local implementation team members developed procedures to coach staff on explaining FCP to families, completing forms, and implementing internal fiscal processes.
   d. The SLT used feedback from training to develop supplemental materials and TA.

2. Local implementation teams support and monitor the initial implementation of FCP to all families.

   a. The local implementation teams observed and supported staff when explaining FCP to families and completing forms
   b. The local implementation teams facilitated staff meetings to discuss what's working/what's not working.
   c. The local implementation teams reviewed FCP paperwork completed by program staff to ensure accuracy and completeness.
   d. The local implementation teams analyzed local feedback and data to make suggestions to the SLT about refining or clarifying FCP guidance, organizational structures and training as needed.

3. The State Leadership team and the local implementation teams engaged in established feedback loops to share progress, quickly resolve problems and adjust organizational structures and supports as needed.

    a. The SLT and the local implementation team at each program used established feedback loops to resolve problems encountered as they began implementing FCP (e.g. challenges staff reported in explaining FCP to families, inaccuracies in completing forms, issues in fee collection and accounting, etc.)

    b. The SLT compiled feedback, challenges and solutions from implementation teams across the state take to adjust state FCP guidance, organizational supports, and training and technical assistance.

    c. The SLT compiled suggestions for potential changes to policies and procedures so that revisions could be made at the end of the one-year field test.

4. The SLT, in collaboration with local implementation teams, continually evaluated the implementation process, effectiveness and accuracy of FCP procedures, costs, benefits and impacts of initial efforts.

    a. The SLT engaged with local implementation teams in continuous improvement cycles, using evaluation data to more consistently implement FCP as intended and make adaptations in procedures as necessary.

    b. SLT conducted a cost-benefit analysis of FCP implementation during the one-year field testing period.

    c. The SLT incorporated aspects of the FCP evaluation into state monitoring, including process effectiveness, accuracy, fiscal outcomes and impacts on programs, staff and families.

Full Implementation Stage	Example Full Implementation Activities

Full Implementation Stage

The goals of full implementation are to assure the innovation is used with fidelity to its design and that desired outcomes and benefits are being achieved. The State Leadership Team and Implementation Site Teams focus on both use and sustainability. All technical assistance and organizational supports should be fully functioning. Newly hired staff are trained and supported. Changes in leadership, funding and program requirements are monitored for potential impact on the use of the innovation. If initial implementation included field test or pilot sites, full implementation assures sustainability while spreading the use of the innovation across the state. If initial roll-out was state wide, the focus of full implementation should be on continuous improvement, achieving fidelity and sustainability.

Key Activities:

- Incorporate "lessons learned" in initial implementation into the new way of working, aligning policy, procedures, funding, and organizational supports as necessary.

- On-going training and TA is functioning for continuous improvement of personnel performance

- System infrastructure supports the use of the innovation

- The State and local teams focus on sustaining fidelity in use of the innovation

- State-wide monitoring, evaluation and targeted TA assure continuous improvement and increasing fidelity in statewide implementation

Example Full Implementation Activities

1. After the first year of initial implementation, the SLT determined FCP was effective and through continuous improvement could achieve all desired outcomes statewide.

   a. The SLT made changes to policy and procedure based on feedback from initial implementation.
   b. The SLT implemented a public comment period.
   c. The SLT obtained OSEP review and approval.
   d. The SLT promulgated final policies and procedures for implementation statewide.
   e. The SLT updated guidance, forms, and training and technical assistance resources.

2. On-going training, TA, coaching, supervision were used for continuous improvement of staff performance in implementing the FCP program.

   a. Local programs hired additional fiscal staff, as needed, to manage billing and collection of family fees.
   b. Local programs included staff responsibilities for implementing the FCP program into position descriptions and competencies.
   c. Local programs used established protocols for observation, monitoring of FCP paperwork, and staff meeting discussions for continuous improvement of staff performance.
   d. Local programs provided regular supervision, including feedback on responsibilities for implementation of the FCP program.

3. The SLT ensured that a fully functional infrastructure is in place to support ongoing implementation of FCP.

   a. The SLT monitored the accuracy and reliability of data and used data for improvements.

   b. The SLT engaged in ongoing analysis of the cost and benefits of FCP locally and statewide.

   c. The SLT and local programs adjusted budgets to support ongoing implementation of FCP.

   d. The SLT monitored the implementation of FCP policies and procedures.

4. The SLT and local implementation teams took necessary actions to sustain effective FCP practices.

   e. The SLT regularly communicated with staff, leadership advisory and stakeholder groups about the costs and benefits of FCP to ensure ongoing public support.

   f. The SLT used established communication structures to address any organizational barriers that arose.

   g. The SLT celebrated successful state-wide implementation and sustainability by sharing successes at various stakeholder meetings.

5. Statewide monitoring and evaluation procedures resulted in targeted TA to specific sites and development of additional training and guidance to assure continuous improvement in efficiency, quality and benefits.

   a. The SLT provided targeted TA to specific sites based on monitoring results.

   b. The SLT gathered information from family and staff through monitoring, focus groups and surveys was used for continuous improvement.

   c. The SLT implemented and evaluated Improvements, continuing the system improvement cycle.