

Demonstration Sites Q & A

The following addresses common questions related to the recruitment and development of demonstration sites. The term “implementation sites” is used to describe sites that are working to implement evidence-based practices (EBPs) program-wide within their agency, center, or with their practitioners. “Demonstration sites” will refer to a set of implementation sites used to showcase fidelity of implementation (e.g., promoting their program, hosting tours) and make public their data on implementation and outcomes.

Why Have Demonstration Sites?

One of the key ingredients to adopting, scaling-up, and sustaining EBPs is selecting sites throughout the state that agree to function as demonstration sites. These programs serve four vital functions, as described next.

1. Demonstration sites show all interested parties the potential for staff, children, families, and service systems. There always will be competing initiatives that vie for time, attention, and resources. If EBPs are to permeate a large system, there must be clear evidence that this initiative is value-added and that it yields fundamentally better results for providers, consumers, and systems as a whole. Demonstration sites are the best vehicles we know to advocate for an innovation. Specifically, demonstration sites provide comprehensive sets of data to show that: a) providers are implementing the EBPs to fidelity; b) providers judge the EBPs to be doable; c) children’s learning improves in response to the use of the EBPs; d) adult family members are highly satisfied with services and; e) the program as a whole has committed the resources needed to support providers’ use of the EBPs.
2. Demonstration sites help build the political will needed to scale-up and sustain an implementation initiative. It is a fair assumption that any state-wide effort to support EBPs will require changes, but not always additions, to budgets; to a professional-development and career-ladder system that directly encourages and promotes the use of EBPs; and to ongoing data systems to ensure quality control. Individually and collectively these system elements rely on the political will needed to make decisions that directly support EBPs. When utilized fully, demonstration sites can be of enormous help in this regard. In our prior work with states, the SLTs have used site visits to demonstration sites strategically to make certain that key funders, politicians, administrators, advocates, family members, and the general public have a clear understanding of what EBPs have to offer them.
3. Demonstration sites also serve the direct function of providing a “model” of EBPs use for other providers. It is said that “seeing is believing,” but there is more to this story. It is also true that seeing someone more like you is even more believable. This is why it is important to have a multiple demonstration sites that together represent a broad array of contexts, providers, and administrative arrangements. For consideration as a demonstration site each implementation site would need to generate a strategic plan to target specific audiences that they intend to reach via site visits and training events.

4. Demonstration sites also help “ground” the SLT in the realities, ongoing needs, successes and challenges faced by those implementing EBPs. It is easy, in our experience, for SLTs to get lost in the systems-level details of installing, scaling-up, and sustaining EBPs. That is, of course, the work of the SLT. However, the SLT also needs and greatly profits from regular contact with demonstration sites. In order to foster such contact, some SLTs have organized yearly celebration conferences to highlight demonstration sites, and they have invited focused presentations by demonstration leaders at regular SLT meetings. Some SLTs have invited demonstration programs to join the SLT.

How Are Demonstration Sites Selected?

The goal of the state EBP initiative is to plan, implement, and sustain a professional development system to enhance the knowledge and skills of the early childhood work force in meeting the educational needs for young children, particularly those with or at-risk for delays or disabilities, in inclusive and natural environments. State Leadership Teams will need to identify demonstration sites, from the programs that begin implementation of the statewide initiative. Demonstration sites might vary greatly in their organizational structure from early childhood centers that include multiple classrooms, to a district program that includes classrooms in multiple locations, or a Part C service program that provides family coaching and classroom consultation to families of infants and toddlers. Demonstration sites will serve to showcase the implementation of the initiative with fidelity. Additional information can be found in [Important Considerations in Becoming an Implementation and Demonstration Site](#).

1. The SLT will recruit and select implementation sites and select from them a smaller set of programs that will serve as demonstration sites. This might be conducted as part of the initial application, occur after a few months with a separate application and review process, or be a designation as sites begin to distinguish themselves by their implementation fidelity.
2. A critical component in the success of a demonstration site is the commitment of the administrative team from the selected programs. The SLT will need to confirm that administrators are willing to allocate resources necessary to sustain implementation (budget, time, staff, etc.). Administrators must exhibit a true commitment to implementing EBPs, ongoing professional development, and a data-based decision-making process program-wide. It might be necessary for a representative from the SLT to meet with potential administrators to describe the implementation process, the level of commitment expected, and the length of time required to reach fidelity. The administrator should leave this meeting with information and resources that can be taken back and shared with his or her staff.
3. The SLT might want to consider establishing sites in all parts of their state. They might want to make sure they include some urban and some rural sites, some small sites, and some very large sites. The sites should represent a variety of socio-economic classes, cultures, and geographic regions.

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