

MINDING THE GAP

Bridging the Gap

Moving Implementation Science Knowledge into Community Practice Settings

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THE PROBLEM

Proven programs don’t arrive intact

Billions invested. Evidence-based programs (EBPs) for children, youth, and families exist, and the need for them is enormous.

Uneven arrival. Too often they never reach communities, or they arrive without the quality and fidelity that produced results.

Fidelity drives outcomes. Better fidelity means better outcomes, so how a program is implemented matters as much as which one is chosen.

ASK THE ROOM

What happens to a program’s effectiveness when implementation supports are missing?



WHEN PROGRAMS GO TO SCALE

Promising pilots, disappointing scale-ups

CONTEXT MISMATCH

Rikers Island ABLE

Social impact bond, 2012–2015

Therapy with real evidence, but never tested inside a jail. No reduction in teens returning to Rikers.

DELIVERY AGENT DIFFERENCES

California Class-Size Reduction

Tennessee pilot 1985–89; California 1996

25,000 teachers hired almost overnight. Inexperience offset the gains of smaller classes.

SELECTION EFFECTS

Job Training Partnership Act

Local demos 1980s; national 1982–2000

Pilots ran in favorable sites. Nationally, effects shrank and were largely null for out-of-school youth.

FIDELITY DRIFT

Reading First

Federal initiative, 2002–2008

High compliance on paper, wide variation in practice. No significant effect on reading comprehension.

Each is an implementation failure, not an evidence failure.

OUR QUESTION

The gap we studied



Do EBP developers give adopters the fidelity and pre-implementation supports that implementation science says they need?

Data source: California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)



WHAT WE DID

Coding what developers provide

SAMPLE

Cross-sectional sample of programs rated 1, 2, or 3 by the CEBC, coded by multiple independent coders

FIDELITY

Coding tool derived from treatment adherence measurement methods (Schoenwald & Garland, 2013)

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORTS

Coded by purpose of the tool and level of readiness addressed, using the Readiness Thinking Tool (Scaccia, Cook & Wandersman, 2020)

$$R = MC^2$$

Readiness = Motivation X Capacity^2 (General + Innovation-Specific)

FINDING 1

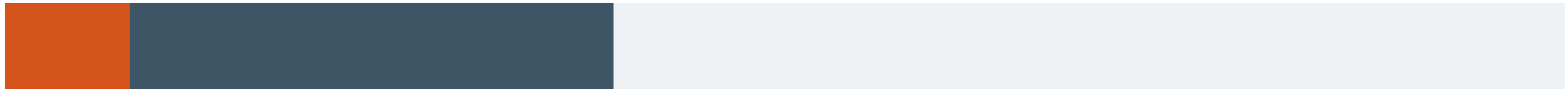
The fidelity gap

39%

of EBPs on the CEBC have a fidelity measure

8%

require that it be used



All EBPs on the CEBC

And most are impractical in real-world settings. Many require live observation or coding of video recordings.



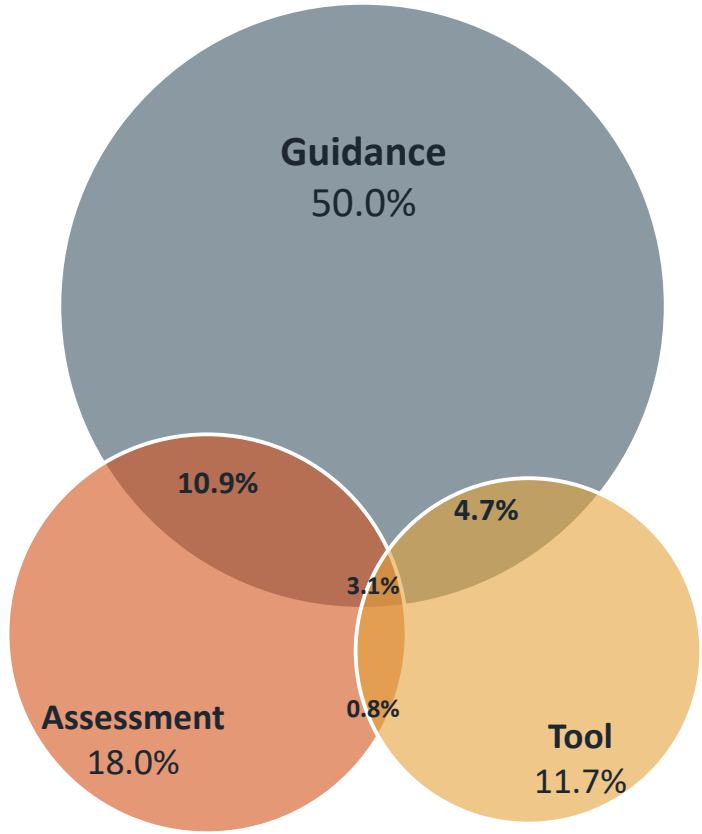
FINDING 2

The pre-implementation supports gap

24%

of EBPs on the CEBC offer any pre-implementation supports

Half of what's offered is general guidance and information sheets, not tools or assessments an agency can act on.



Type of support, among EBPs that offer any

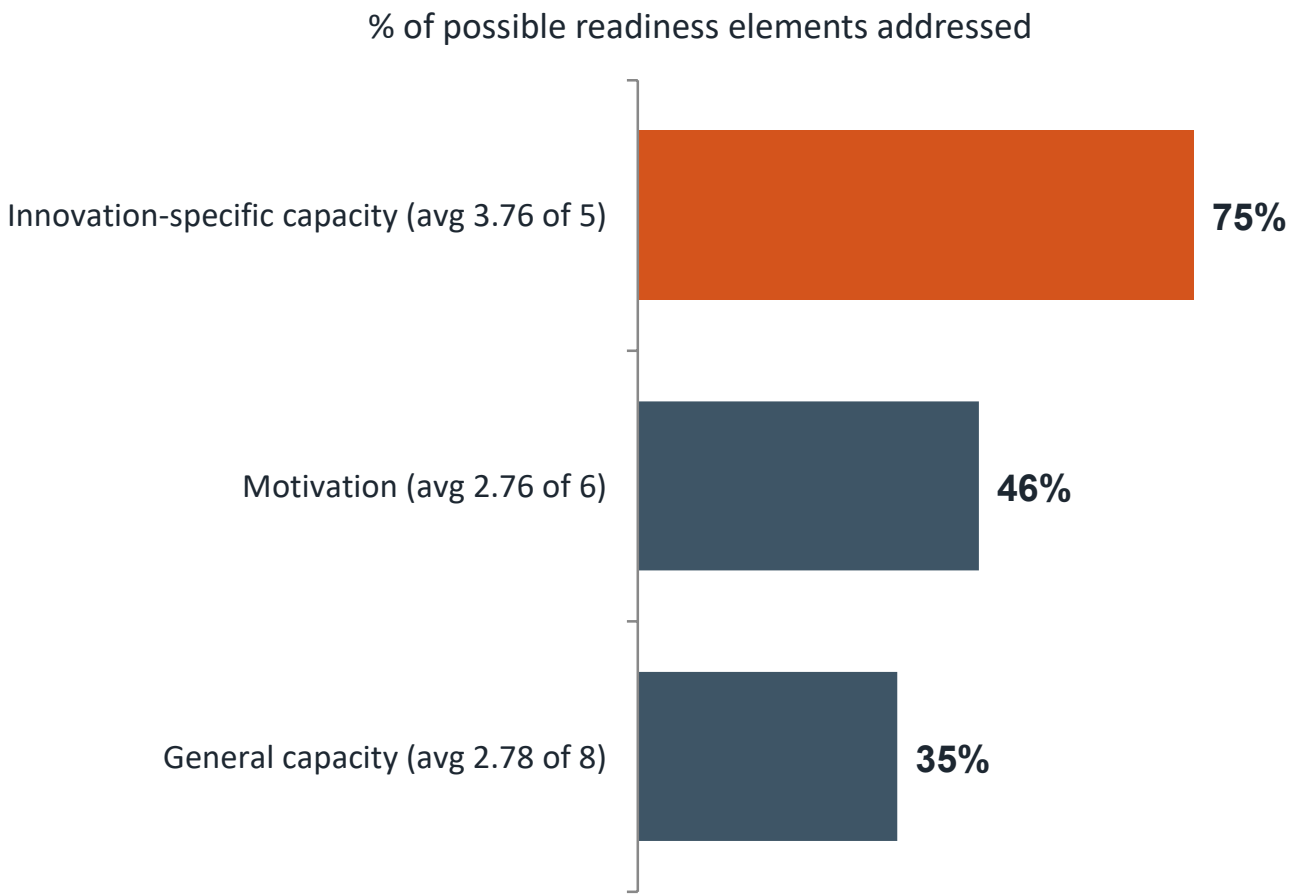
FINDING 3

The readiness gap

9.3

of 19 readiness elements addressed, on average (range 2–16)

Supports focus on the program itself, and far less on whether the organization is motivated and able to take it on.



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

What it adds up to

12%

of EBPs offer both a fidelity measure and pre-implementation supports



Rating ≠ readiness

No relationship between CEBC rating level and either the availability of a fidelity measure or the number of readiness elements.



Logistics over readiness

Supports center on guidance and innovation-specific capacity (room set-ups, tech needs), not on assessing overall motivation and capacity.



IMPLICATIONS

Stop minding the gap. Start bridging it.

Developers

Provide pragmatic, assessment-based tools, not just informational reading.

Adopters

Prioritize overall organizational readiness before adopting a specific innovation.

Researchers

Translate and simplify what we know so it can be applied.

OUR NEXT STEP

Simplifying implementation strategies for practice

73

discrete implementation strategies

ERIC taxonomy (Powell et al., 2015)

→

PTE

Participatory Theme Elicitation

Best, Badham, McConnell & Hunter, 2022

→

5

areas of activity that matter most in practice

Children's behavioral health programs

Why: ERIC is widely used, but too detailed for coding what EBP developers report. A simpler scheme better matches practitioners' mental models and workflow.

Next: Test whether it improves usability, decision-making, and communication in real-world settings.

THE STREAMLINED TAXONOMY

Five areas of activity

1

Systems Change

Aligning laws, mandates, and structures

2

Funding & Fiscal Sustainability

Making the math work

3

Community Engagement

Building local coalitions and boards

4

Purveyor Support

Training and technical assistance

5

Monitoring & Evaluation

Audits, feedback, fidelity, CQI

We need to keep building the bridge

Implementation is not just the destination; it's the infrastructure we build to get there.

POSTER SESSION

Tonight, 6:30 PM

F-128

More on the streamlined taxonomy

Scan for citations

