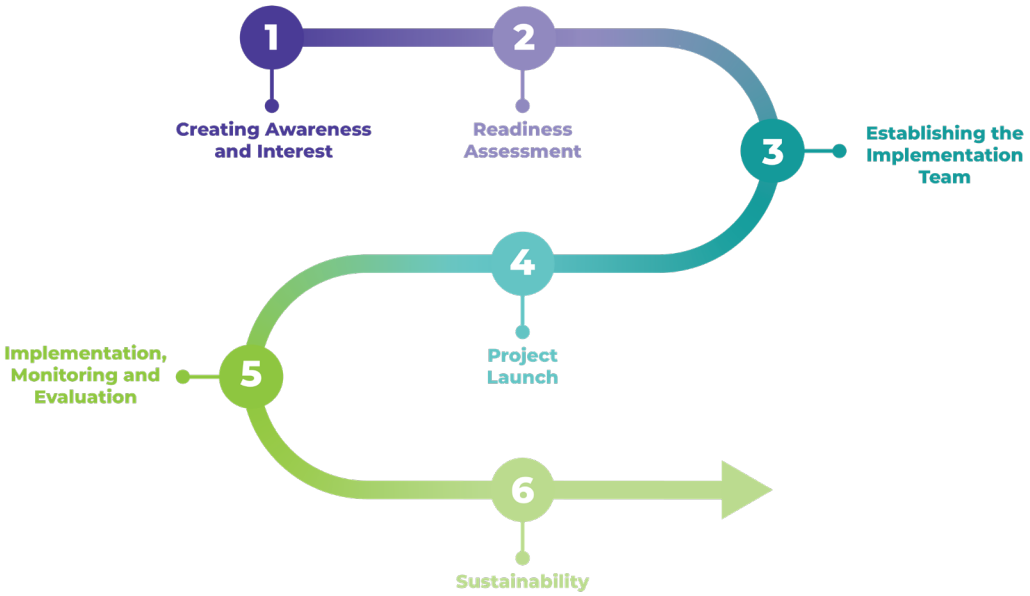
Pathway to Implementation
A Six-Step Guide for Implementing an Evidence-Based Health Intervention

The Pathway to Implementation is a guiding document for project teams to develop an implementation plan for a new context (program, health care setting, geographic location, or jurisdiction).

Teams can also use the Pathway to Implementation to determine the necessary documents and artefacts that could be handed over to support implementation of their project or intervention in another context (scale and spread of an intervention).

We have suggested a list of appropriate individuals required to complete certain steps, as well as supports needed to maintain momentum towards program launch and sustainability. The graphic below highlights the key steps along the Pathway to Implementation:

Using established process frameworks and models, the Can-SOLVE CKD KU/KT Committee has adapted and categorized the process of implementation into six stages or steps that any adopting site consider to effectively deliver the intervention.



The steps suggested in this pathway are neither meant to be sequential (especially Steps 1-3) nor prescriptive given the differences across projects. Rather, it informs a process and suggests documents or tools that might be required at specific steps in the implementation process. The implementation strategies and activities can help facilitate the transition from intervention selection, to preparation, to successful delivery, and sustainment.

Step 1 and **Step 2** are about pre-implementation (also referred to as exploration and preparation). This is where a team looks for a strong fit between the intervention and the site in which it will be delivered. Consider things like needs, resources, capacity, overall buy-in, and what adaptations are necessary.

Step 3 is where we create a structure for implementation (also part of preparation). Project teams plan for what and when implementation activities will occur and who will accomplish these activities.

Step 4 is the actual launch or implementation of the intervention/ program/ innovation.

Step 5 is about monitoring and evaluating the intervention – what ongoing services and strategies are needed to support maintenance and what improvements are necessary for replication as the intervention is implemented in another setting.

Step 6 is about sustainability, or the extent to which the intervention continues to be delivered and/or individual behaviour change (patient, clinician) is maintained. These can evolve or adapt while still producing benefits for the individual/the system but need to be monitored and documented.

The Center for Implementation (TCI) has **"Equity Guiding Questions"** to help you consider equity at every stage of the implementation process. These questions can then be mapped to various steps along the Pathway to Implementation.

Access the interactive tool

Step 1: Creating Awareness and Interest

1 2 3 4 5 6

The primary goal of implementation science is to speed up the translation of an evidence-based intervention into practice. An "intervention" or an "innovation" can take different forms, also referred to as the 7 Ps (programs, practices, procedures, policies, products, pills, principles).

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Step 1 is about using the materials and results developed by research teams to generate awareness and interest of intervention tested in one or more well-designed research studies and found to be effective at improving health-related outcomes for implementation in another context (program, jurisdiction, etc.). The following documents can be shared with key stakeholders to create awareness and interest in your intervention:

A project Value Proposition that speaks to the Quintuple Aim and includes the patient perspective

A Project Summary that provides additional details about the research rationale forthe development of an intervention

Questions to reflect on when building awareness and interest around the scale and spread of any intervention

1. Who will this intervention be of interest to?

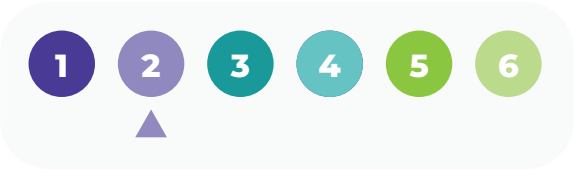
2. How does this intervention fit with the **Quintuple Aim**?

3. How will patients and communities be involved in implementation efforts?

4. Will a formal request for funding be required, or are funds already in place to support implementation in the new context?

5. Is a formal business plan required that aligns with the priorities of the context or program in which you want to implement your intervention?

Step 2: Readiness Assessment



Step 2 is about creating awareness, generating interest, and assessing the likelihood of successful implementation of an intervention in another context or program.

Context refers to all things external to the people involved in implementation. Assessing context helps distinguish between the immediate and peripheral context, and informs the approach to implementation. Here are some questions to reflect on when thinking about readiness:

1. Sponsorship is an important ingredient for successful implementation. Ideally, you want to seek a senior leader sponsor with authority over people, processes and budget. Do you have support (or sponsorship) at the senior leader level at the organization, program and site level?
2. Are the organizational benefits clearly and fully defined (what is gain by implementing your evidence)?
3. Has a clinician champion(s) been identified who has time to be actively engaged?
4. Is there a clear timeline for implementation?
5. Have you assessed enablers and barriers for successful adoption of this intervention? Have you discussed mitigation strategies? What are the potential risks to patients, healthcare providers, and the health system?

These resources, tools and documents can be used to assess the ability to implement your project successfully.

a. The **Readiness Thinking Tool** assesses an organization's readiness to successfully implement a program, policy, practice or project.

b. **Preparing for Implementation** – The Quality Implementation Self-Assessment Rating Scale

c. The **Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR)** is a commonly used framework to assess context. CFIR is a meta-framework informed by many other frameworks and is helpful when the immediate context is at the organization level.

d. The **COM-B** can be used with the Theoretical Domains Framework to describe both mechanisms and determinants of change. The **Theoretical Domains Framework** outlines 14 domains related to behaviour change.

Step 3: Establishing the Implementation Team

Step 3 is about establishing an implementation team and is an important step prior to implementation launch. Implementation requires people to do the work, so we have to understand who needs to be involved and how to work with people.

An implementation team comprises individuals who will work to improve readiness, select, plan, and implement an intervention on site. These individuals need to have a deep understanding of the context; some may be tasked to lead the implementation activity, while others may need to be informed of progress. Implementation teams "make it happen" rather than passively "let an intervention happen".

We suggest you consider the following when planning to establish an implementation team:

1. Team Membership

Below is a listing of all the potential stakeholders who might be part of the implementation team. However, this may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. This project may not require representation from all the stakeholders listed below.

- ☐ Senior Renal Program Sponsor(s)_____
- ☐ Organization Sponsor(s)_____
- ☐ Ministry Sponsor(s)_____
- ☐ Interdisciplinary Site Champions
  - Director/Manager/Team Leads_____
  - Clinician Lead(s)_____
  - Administrative Lead(s)_____
  - Other Allied HCP Lead(s)_____
  - Staff/Frontline Lead(s)_____
  - Patient/Family Advisor/Community Lead(s) _____
  - Project Manager_____
  - IT/IM and Analytics Support_____
  - Other (Advisors, Opinion Leaders, Learners, Clerical) _____

Step 3: Establishing the Implementation Team

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Governance
Many decisions have to be made along the implementation process. Who will be responsible for which aspects of implementation? Who is going to lead the implementation team? Who is going to be making decisions? What form of leadership and what form of decision-making is appropriate for your implementation initiative? These decisions impact implementation around how decisions are made and who's leading what.

It is important to think about the project sponsor, project leads at different sites, local implementation teams, and other collaborators who have clear roles and authority. Here are some resources to assist you in planning an implementation team:

a. The RACI Framework is a responsibility assignment matrix to help you organize your implementation team and map out who is Responsible, is Accountable, who must be Consulted with, and stay Informed.

b. The Relational Pathway is about (i) convening, (ii) partnering, (iii) governance, (iv) working as a team, and (v) working across a system. Refer to page 9 of the July 12, 2022 Implementation Science Foundations Training workbook.

3. Review Documentation
Is there a clear understanding of:

- ☐ Human resources (Is training required? How often? Who does the training?)
- ☐ Technology requirements (access to and understanding of IT/IM systems)
- ☐ Equipment needed (cost, training materials, maintenance) and budget (what will the project cost?)
- ☐ Support services (laboratory, diagnostics)
- ☐ Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and other policies
- ☐ Have data sources been identified? What is the plan for data sharing/collection?

4. Start the Project Charter
This should be done once the project is approved for implementation. Use the SMART method. The project charter could include:

a. Purpose and objectives
b. Requirements
c. Project description
d. Known high-level project constraints, assumptions, risks, and dependencies
e. Schedule of activities and major milestones (use a Gantt chart)
f. Budget
g. Organizational requirements for approval
h. Key individuals who will approve plans
i. Roles and responsibilities of sponsors, site champions, team members, patient partners
j. A communication plan

Step 4: Project Launch

1 2 3 4 5 6

Step 4 is the actual launch of the project in a new jurisdiction. The project launch should bring together all members of the implementation team to meet and discuss the project.

1. Review the Project Charter

    a. Roles, responsibilities of sponsors, site champions and implementation team members and patient partners, Gantt chart for key milestones and timelines, guiding principles and logistics for meetings, action items assigned, email etiquette, shared work space, etc

    b. Discuss workflow and clarify roles, responsibilities, frequency of meetings.

2. **Review core components** of the intervention being delivered and its intended health impact.

3. **Review key documents** developed by the research team and that are crucial to implementation of the intervention/program/innovation. How will the implementing site use all the important information gathered through the formative work conducted prior to implementation?

StrategEase Tool
The Center for Implementation (TCI) offers a free, online interactive tool called the **StrategEase Tool** that can be used to apply the right change strategies when implementing an intervention. The goal of this tool is to guide teams through the process of mapping barriers and facilitators to a list of change strategies.

Step 5: Active Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

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Active implementation includes launch and ongoing delivery of the intervention and setting up monitoring and ongoing evaluation and/or feedback systems.

It involves bringing the team together on a regular basis, or as needed to monitor progress and mitigate any delays or setbacks. Successful implementation is about effective program management, adaptive management, and iterative learning so teams can use results to inform which strategies are being done as planned and identify any surprises that may be emerging.

It is important that implementation teams identify when they will need to measure the process of implementation, including what is working or being done and what is not. Project Charter milestones can also be used to measure the process of implementation.

Monitoring: How will implementation teams know that implementation is happening as planned? Routine monitoring can help identify any adaptations to the intervention by end-users, or highlight unexpected challenges requiring modifications. We recommend quarterly monitoring to keep people engaged and on point.

Evaluation: How will implementation teams know if the desired outcomes are being reached, and why or why not? Evaluation questions will vary based upon the stage of implementation (pre-implementation, early or mid-implementation, and late implementation).

Use an evaluation framework to structure evaluation parameters and define the outcomes you want to measure.

a. The RE-AIM Framework is a planning and evaluation framework with an accompanying tool.

b. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research is used to assess existing or potential barriers and facilitators to successful implementation.

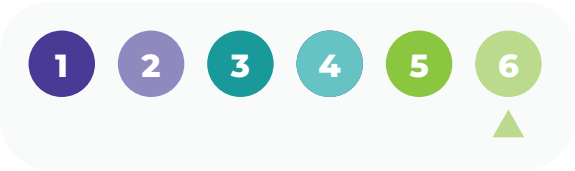
c. The EQUIP Tool (Evaluating Quality and Implementation) is an interactive tool that helps teams ask the right questions to evaluate implementation efforts.

Continuous **Quality Improvement (QI)** is an implementation strategy used to test iterative small changes to determine what changes improve implementation outcomes.

Questions to reflect on:

- What data will be used to monitor active implementation?
- When and how will this data be used to identify success for celebrating and sharing?

Step 6: Planning for Sustainability



Step 6 is the work that takes place during and after implementation to ensure that the program, intervention, or implementation strategy will continue and be delivered, be self-sustaining, and part of the standard operating of the organization and program.

Think about how you will balance **fidelity** (extent to which your intervention is delivered as intended by the intervention developers) to the **core components of the intervention** (essential functions/key ingredients necessary to produce desired outcomes).

We recommend creating a sustainability plan and using a sustainability framework.

Here are a few examples of Sustainability Strategies used by implementation teams:

a. Promoting capacity-building and community empowerment

b. Presence of (and sustained) clinical leadership

c. Ensuring sustained funding is acquired

d. Ability and willingness to adapt protocols to local circumstances and constraints

e. Developing collaborations with institutions and community elements

f. Organizing different elements of the implementation by considering the community

g. Including the intervention in the community, based on local policy

A sustainability plan ensures the implementing organization is prepared to own and sustain the initiative. Some commonly used sustainability assessment tools and resources include:

1. The Long-Term Success Tool (LTSL) supports implementing improvements to reflect on 12 factors to identify risks and prompt actions to enhance sustainability over time.

2. The Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT) is a self-assessment online tool used by program staff and stakeholders to evaluate the sustainability of an intervention in a community setting. The tool can help you rate the sustainability capacity of an intervention across eight domains. The tool also provides a Sustainability Summary Report of your results.

3. The NHS Sustainability Model consists of 10 factors relating to process, staff and organisational issues that play an important role in sustaining change in healthcare. It helps you identify strengths and weaknesses in an implementation plan and predicts the likelihood of sustainability.

In summary

Implementation is a process that requires thoughtful and concerted focus by a team before, during, and after to ensure successful, sustainable improvements.

It is crucial that implementing sites (a program, organization, or any context) have an implementation plan. It is important to map out the activities that are needed to implement the intervention. This includes a consideration of when and how the activities will be completed, who should be involved in activity completion, how much time should be spent on each activity, and the order in which the process should be expected to unfold.

In addition to determining appropriate implementation strategies, teams need to consider the resources required to do the strategy well (monetary costs, people, materials, physical space, etc.). Implementation takes place in a dynamic, ever-changing context and involves interactions between different individuals, systems and polices.

If we want to have an equitable and lasting impact on population health and make the best use of funding dollars and limited resources, we must invest in the most effective, cost-effective and sustainable interventions/programs/innovations. Proactively developing an implementation plan is vital.