



SISEP

State Implementation and Scaling-up
of Evidence-based Practices

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SISEP eNote

Equity in Exploration: From Understanding Need to Promoting Positive Change

There are five key outcomes of an equitable exploration process. They include:

-  the formation of a diverse team that is representative of the organization and the community and understands the root causes of needs and opportunities,
-  a specific need or opportunity is prioritized as one step in building a more equitable system,
-  a program or practice is selected to address the prioritized need or opportunity,
-  the fit and feasibility of the selected practice is assessed for a match to the need or opportunity,
-  stakeholders, community leaders, and importantly, the intended beneficiaries find the practice acceptable and appropriate to address the need or opportunity.

Meaningful change in states, districts, regions and schools begins with a period of Exploration. Exploration stage activities provide organizations with a valuable opportunity to set the course for deeply understanding the experiences and hopes of the populations served. Based on this understanding, diverse, collaborative teams can identify and co-design the implementation and alignment of policy, processes, and practices to ensure equitable access, opportunities and outcomes for all.

How we engage in the process, starting with exploration, can either reinforce systemic inequities and biases or support the work of the organization to be intentionally anti-discriminatory.

Equity in Exploration



Need Is Identified.

Exploration begins when a need for change has been identified. While states, districts, and schools know what their needs are (as evidenced by historically disproportionate opportunities and outcomes for certain populations), the root causes of these inequities are not always scrutinized. Analyzing root causes or contributing factors requires that we “see” the systems in which we work and identify the barriers to equity. Patterns are identified, such as, what practices and programs are successful and for whom, what identities are prioritized for access to opportunities, which groups have the information and power, and who is traditionally successful and by whose definition.



For one tool to analyze root causes see [Root Cause Analysis Resources](#)



For more information on equity audits see information from the [IDRA Equity Assistance Center](#) or from the [Great Lakes Equity Assistance Center](#)



Diverse teams are formed.

Implementation teams build and work to sustain capacity in order to realize the goals identified through community and student collaboration. The teams should be diverse and representative of the population served and the intended beneficiaries of the proposed changes. Team members should have the voice and power to make the needed recommendations.



To learn more about teaming see [Module 3: Implementation Teams on the Active Implementation hub](#) (AI Hub)



Program or Practice is selected.

To get a clear picture of past and current programs, successful strategies, and challenges, along with existing mandates and resource commitments, teams can complete an initiative inventory. Initiative inventories are one strategy to select, align or de-select practices in order to choose those that support the success of students. Centering equity in the analysis of an initiative inventory, teams can ask themselves for whom current programs or practices working and for whom they are not? And, are resources being allocated equitably?



To learn more, see [Lesson 10: Initiative Inventory on the Alhub](#)

Practices selected to address need or opportunity should be culturally responsive and sustaining.



This article from the REL Midwest is one resources that discusses [culturally responsive practices and instruction](#)



Fit and Feasibility is assessed.

Once potential practices have been selected, it is critical that teams assess how possible it would be to implement, sustain and scale the practice. It is also important for teams to discuss whether the proposed practice is a 'fit' for the current need or the practice is not a fit but is needed in order to disrupt existing systemic inequities within the current system.

NIRN has recently revised the Hexagon Tool to ensure a focus on equitable selection. Using the Hexagon Tool with a race equity lens can prompt teams to consider potential impacts of the program or practice on the focus population and whether or not implementation of the program or practice could advance equitable outcomes for all individuals and families.



To learn more about the Hexagon tool, see <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool>



Stakeholders find the practice acceptable.

When stakeholders are authentically engaged on teams as co-designers and decision makers, the values, desires, and ideas of the stakeholders can be centered in the change process. This helps ensure the practice is acceptable to bridge the distance between current realities and desired outcomes.



For some ideas on authentically engaging stakeholders see [Leading by convening: A blueprint for authentic engagement](#) from the IDEA partnership

“That's at the core of equity: understanding who your kids are and how to meet their needs. You are still focused on outcomes, but the path to get there may not be the same for each one.”

- Pedro Noguera



The Exploration Stage is a critical starting place when organizations and their stakeholders are considering change. Taking the time to explore what to do, how to do it, and who will do it saves time and money (Fixsen et al., 2001; Romney, 2014) and improves the chances for success (Saldana, Chamberlain, Wang, & Brown, 2011; Slavin, Madden, Chamberlain, & Cheung, 2010).

Centering equity within the exploration process requires understanding or awareness of the system, stakeholders and their experiences including the wishes of students and teachers.

Check out next month's e-Note for resources to center equity within the Installation Stage.

To Learn More:

- SISEP Scaling-up Brief: Exploration Stage
 - Implementation Stages Planning Tool
 - Lesson 7: Implementation Stages Planning Tool
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Other News from SISEP:

- New Implementation Stages Lesson is now available to accompany the new Implementation Stages Planning Tool.
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