



## Incorporating evidence-supported practices into your CQI efforts

When Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) programs encounter a challenge, research can yield valuable insights that guide the continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts used to address the issue. For example, research findings can inform a program's understanding of a challenge by shedding light on the challenge's underlying root causes. After learning more about the root causes of the challenge, research findings can also serve as source for possible strategies other programs have implemented, which can be road tested to address the challenge. Additionally, research on a new strategy can provide details about how it was implemented in other programs, including focal population, timing, location, and staffing, which can inform how a team wants to try out the strategy as part of its road test.

This tip sheet highlights how HMRF programs implement and test evidence-supported practices as part of their CQI efforts. This is the second in a series of two tips sheet on using research for CQI: see [Identifying Research for CQI](#) for tips on how to find research that can be useful for CQI activities. Also, explore the CQI office hours for [August](#) and [September](#) 2024 to find additional information on using research in CQI.

### How to implement and test evidence-supported practices in your program

Once you find an evidence-supported practice that is relevant to your program, consider whether and how to implement it. First, your team should determine whether the practice fits your program by considering:

- **Will the strategy described in the research work well for your staff and clients?** Are there variations in staff expertise, technical abilities, or client demographics between what was studied and your program?
- **Do you have the resources to support it?** Does your team have sufficient funds, staffing, technology, space, time, and other resources?
- **What can be modified?** Can your team modify content, how the intervention is delivered (length, order), and the implementation supports, such as the training or tools needed?

**Then, identify the components of the strategy and what to adapt.** Use the 4Ps (**P**eople, **P**ractices, **P**inciples, and **P**roducts) to document the components of the strategy, as shown in Figure 1. Consider which components appear to support success and which can be adapted without jeopardizing success. OPRE has also used the [Precision Paradigm Framework](#) to identify what works, for whom, under what circumstances. [Map2Adapt](#) is another useful framework for considering how a research-based intervention fits within your program and planning adaptations.

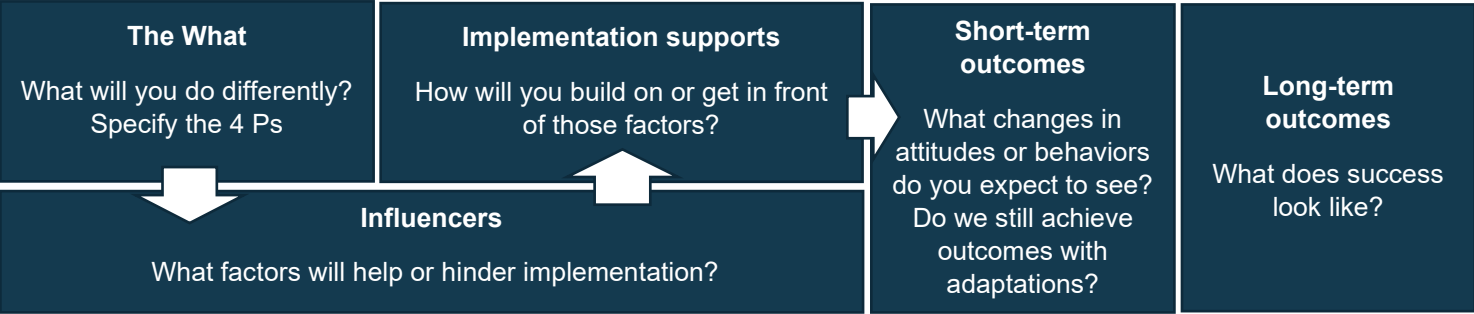
Figure 1: Documenting the 4P strategy components

People (staff)	• <b>Case managers</b> will deliver Motivational Interviewing script, <b>participants</b> will engage during case management sessions, and <b>program director</b> will ensure staff are trained and will supervise
Practices	• Case managers will meet with newly-enrolled participants to draw out their motivation to attend and encourage them to participate
Principles	• Participant-led conversations
Products (tools)	• Case managers will have an initial training on Motivational Interviewing; • Program director will develop a script for case managers

**Consider how much evidence and specificity you have for the strategy.** Generally, the more evidence behind the strategy, the more confident you can be about the strategy if it is implemented with fidelity. However, if you want to apply only specific components or there is insufficient detail in the research, you will need to engage in more intensive planning to determine how best to implement the strategy with success.

**Develop an implementation plan and create learning questions for your road test.** Developing your implementation plan is a critical step for identifying which components of the strategy to adapt, which you are unsure about, and learning questions for your road test. As you plan for strategy implementation and develop learning questions, be sure to consider the 4Ps (or whichever framework you choose to use!)—do you have the right staff, and adequate training and tools? The roadmap for improvement (Figure 2) is a useful tool for specifying your implementation plan.

**Figure 2: Using the roadmap for change to develop an implementation plan**



**Implement road test, monitor improvement, and document adaptations.** Conduct your road test and monitor the strategy as you would for any CQI effort. Be sure to document adaptations and assess how they worked. The most straightforward approach is to document your initial strategy, subsequent adaptations, resulting outcomes, and the corresponding action plan, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Documenting adaptations**

Original strategy	Adaptation	Result and plan
Simple text messages encourage attendance at the first workshop.	We don't have consistent cell phone information, so we will try email reminders.	Participants saw the reminders and said they were helpful. Keep adaptation.

**Prepare staff for change**

Make a proactive, concerted effort to prepare staff for change when implementing new strategies or practices—particularly when staff will be directly involved, and when the strategy is based on an external source. Staff may be more skeptical about a strategy if they did not have a role in designing it. To help prepare staff for change:

- **Set a foundation.** Normalize the practice of consulting research and use CQI meetings to review promising or evidence-based practices from the research that relate to your challenge. Help your team become **discerning consumers of research** as discussed at the beginning of this tip sheet.
- **Engage staff early.** Include staff in conversations about practices found in research and their relevance to your challenge. Give staff opportunities to help shape or sign off on the strategy, to improve the strategy and boost buy-in.
- **Anticipate challenges.** Identify potential barriers to implementation in advance and be proactive in developing solutions. For example, staff training and consistent communication on the new strategy can help promote successful implementation. Consider each of your 4P strategy components and use the road testing to work out any kinks in the strategy before implementing it fully.

- **Share success stories** as you test and implement solutions. This, and engagement in general, should help build staff trust in using research to inform the CQI process.

## References

<sup>i</sup> Gonzalez, Katie and Brian Goesling (2022). Relationship Dynamics Among Unmarried Couples: Findings from a Study of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programs. OPRE Report #2022-318, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>ii</sup> Marano, Emily, Dina Israel, and Diego Quezada (2022). What Strategies Can Programs Use to Help More Dads Participate in Fatherhood Services? OPRE Report # 2022-65. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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