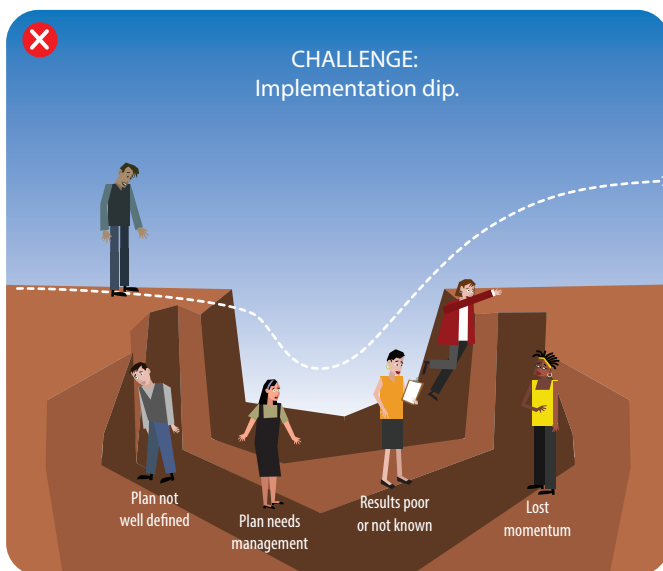


Managing the Implementation Dip

Guiding Questions & Strategies for the State Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation

Michael Fullan, in *Leading in Culture of Change* (2007), defines the Implementation Dip as

“ *...a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings.* ”



An implementation dip may occur at any point during a change process but particularly when something new is introduced. Anything that requires different skills and understandings is NEW to those who have to implement it. The plan may have been too loosely defined or need more management, results might be poor or unknown, and momentum may have been lost. What often happens after this blip or “failure” is the abandonment of the new initiatives or just pushing through rather than planning for and recognizing the implementation dip.

As states embark on the process of implementing their State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIPs) they should expect and proactively plan for an implementation dip to ensure continued or renewed progress.

An implementation dip might occur because of deficiencies in one or more of four critical areas:

Implementation Plan

Implementation Management

Progress Data

Implementation Momentum

Use the guiding questions in each critical area to help you, your SSIP team, and key stakeholders to unveil specific challenges that may be responsible for an implementation dip. When a challenge is surfaced, the group can use the recommended practices to discuss adjustments to the SSIP and identify strategies or technical assistance needed to spur implementation of your SSIP.

1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your SSIP implementation plan include specific details to know what is planned, when and how and by whom the work is being carried out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and design all efforts within an integrated continuous improvement process. Adopt shared leadership approaches. Create consistent “decision rules” for data-based problem solving and solution finding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the components of the plan aligned to ensure success? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit the plan regularly to gauge the impact of internal and external factors. Be prepared to make adjustments to the plan and clearly communicate these changes to stakeholders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have the infrastructure to support the change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize existing resources by aligning with existing initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were staff included and engaged in the design of the plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure engagement of staff when designing the plan. Build feedback loops into the plan to ensure engagement throughout the implementation process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your staff have the capacity to support the change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for building staff capacity during all phases of the plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the evidence-based practices a good fit for your local programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize strategies that are evidenced-based and previously implemented in similar populations/ contexts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your implementation plan commensurate with the resources available? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build fiscal alignment and monitoring into the implementation plan.

2 IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are all stakeholders engaged on a regular basis? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for regular two-way communication to inform stakeholders of challenges, seek input, and identify solutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are implementation teams’ roles and responsibilities well defined and linked? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate training and support are provided to teams throughout the system. Create an environment where individuals and groups can learn from one another and practice in context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are feedback and communication loops well defined and carried out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize multiple communication strategies and tailor messages to specific audiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are implementation and feedback loops data analyzed and used to make revisions to the plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide time for implementers to practice, review, reevaluate, and possibly adapt strategies to meet child needs in the local context. Listen to individuals who are resisting. Often, they have something important to share. People resist for what they view as good reasons and may provide alternatives not considered before.

3 PROGRESS DATA

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are your performance indicators specific enough to measure change in key areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the performance indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are results poor or not known? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify/create effective and efficient data systems and timely reporting mechanisms. Develop data tools that are easy to use and assist others to understand and use the data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have fidelity checks for implementation of infrastructure strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and monitor data on fidelity of implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have fidelity checks for the implementation of evidence-based practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in frequent PDSA cycles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the correct data being gathered, used, and communicated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand your data so you can use it for change and explain it to staff and stakeholders. Share your data with others in clear and understandable ways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the evaluation plan being implemented as planned? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow “decision rules” for data-based problem solving and solution finding.

4 IMPLEMENTATION MOMENTUM

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the implementation slowed down or lost momentum? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipate, appreciate, and accept the dip/setback.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any challenges to bring together or maintain stakeholder engagement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reengage existing stakeholders and alert new stakeholders in the urgency of action. Consider different approaches to engaging stakeholders and use the networks of stakeholder groups to get your message out.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have there been changes in key leadership positions that have compromised organizational support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that new leaders within the organization review your SSIP plan and be prepared to answer questions and clarify the urgency of the SSIP.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there loss of enthusiasm from stakeholders and/or state staff? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data to celebrate success. Take a break between “roll-outs.” Replicate what is working. Acknowledge incremental successes along the way.

Contact your NCSI TA Facilitator or your Cross-State Learning Collaborative lead for additional assistance.