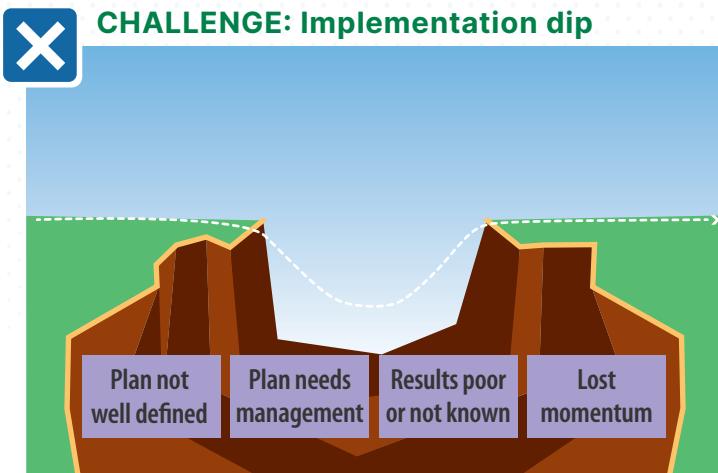


Managing the Implementation Dip

Guiding Questions & Strategies to Support Change

[The Implementation Dip is] a dip in performance and confidence as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings.”

—MICHAEL FULLAN, *LEADING IN CULTURE OF CHANGE* (2007)



An implementation dip may occur at any point during a change process but particularly when something new is introduced. This may include changes to the general supervision system, infrastructure changes, implementation of a new system to support instructional coaching, or the implementation of a new evidence-based practice or framework. Anything that requires different skills and understanding is NEW to those who will implement it.

A dip may occur when the plan for change is too loosely defined or not implemented well, implementation results are poor or unknown, or momentum slows (e.g., less leadership support, competing initiatives). 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. This resource provides guiding questions and strategies to help address implementation dips.

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

- 1** Implementation Plan
- 2** Implementation Management
- 3** Progress Data
- 4** Implementation Momentum

Instructions

Use the guiding questions in each critical area to help you, your team, and key stakeholders determine specific challenges that may be responsible for an implementation dip. When a challenge is identified, the group can use the recommended practices to discuss additions to your implementation plan and identify strategies or technical assistance needs to support implementation.

1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
Does your implementation plan include specific details?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the plan includes both what is planned and when and how and by whom the work is being carried out.• Adopt shared leadership approaches.• Create consistent “decision rules” for data-based problem solving and solution finding.• Ensure there are feedback loops built into the plan to inform continuous improvement efforts.
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.
Do you have the infrastructure to support the change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximize existing resources by aligning with existing initiatives.• Ensure your plan is commensurate with the resources you have available.• Build fiscal alignment and monitoring into the implementation plan.
Were staff included and engaged in the design of the plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather input during initial development.• Build feedback loops into the plan to ensure engagement throughout the implementation process.
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.• Plan for staff turnover and changes.
Are the identified 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 and contexts.• Gather feedback from local implementers during initial planning stages.

2 IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
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.
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.
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.
Are implementation data and feedback used to revise the plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide time for implementers to practice, review, reevaluate, and possibly adapt strategies to the local context.• Listen to individuals who are resisting. Often, they have something important to share and may provide alternatives not considered before.

3 PROGRESS DATA

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
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.
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.
Do you have fidelity checks for implementation of infrastructure strategies and evidence-based practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and monitor data on fidelity of implementation.• Engage in frequent Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles.
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.
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.

Guiding Questions	Recommended Practices
Has the implementation slowed down or lost momentum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipate, appreciate, and accept the dip/setback.
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.
Have there been changes in key leadership?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that new leaders within the organization review your plan and be prepared to answer questions and clarify the urgency of the plan. Connect the plan to initiatives and actions that the leader finds valuable. Develop plans to support changes to key staff and leaders.
Is there loss of enthusiasm from stakeholders and/or state staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a break between “roll-outs.” Replicate what is working. Use data to celebrate success. Acknowledge incremental successes along the way.

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Reference

Fullan, M. (2007). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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