Identifying and Testing Program Components

Using case examples from teen SRAE and HMRE programs

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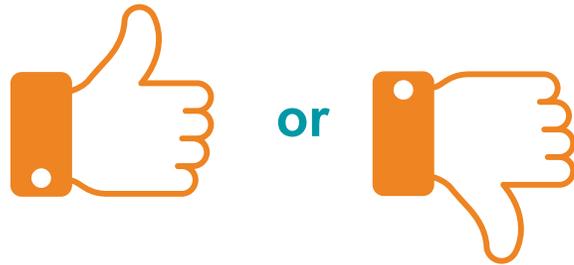
Studying the black box

Federal and grantee led effectiveness evaluations have traditionally focused on the impacts of an entire Program or Curriculum

We call this "the black box"

As a result of the evaluation, we either get

or

What happened? Did any one "piece" of the box drive results?

These "pieces" are increasingly being described as PROGRAM COMPONENTS and they are increasingly important to consider for program evaluations.

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Session objectives

- Participants will learn how to identify program components using an SRAE program as an example

- Participants will identify the components of their program

- Participants will learn about the process used to refine a program component, using two HMRE grantees as examples

- Participants will sketch out a plan for refining a program component of their program

- Participants will understand how the SRAE National Evaluation will conduct program components research

What are program components?

ACF defines program components as "essential, irreducible parts of programs"

Depending on the program, there may be numerous CATEGORIES of components to consider. For example:

- Primary messages
- Content
- Activities
- Facilitation
- Setting
- Target population

Exercise

How would you categorize your program components?

1. Identify the <u>categories</u> of your program components

Healthy Visions: Overview

- Focus on increasing risk avoidance attitudes and skills, self-response, healthy relationships, sexual delay, and academic performance

- Uses Choosing the Best (CTB) and TYRO Rites of Passage (ROP)

- Serves 6th – 12th grade youth in schools, youth with special needs in a community setting, and adjudicated youth in a detention center

- Works in and around Cincinnati, OH

- Long-standing youth-serving organization with small leadership team and six program facilitators

Program "messengers"

Purposeful hiring of dynamic program facilitators

- Young, college educated professionals
- Dedication to helping youth succeed
- Experience leading trainings and facilitating groups
- Ability to act as motivational speakers and role models

Extensive preparation to learn and internalize program messages

- SRAE and curricula training certifications
- Two-month job-shadowing and co-facilitating period
- Supplemental trainings and ongoing support

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Engaging youth with "Real Talk"

- Develop respectful connections with youth

- Promote trusted adult and mentoring relationships

- Respect youth perspective and engage in open, non-judgmental conversations about what is relevant to them

- Connect themes from the curricula to youth's lives

- Inspire youth to understand their worth
  - "You are lovable, you are valuable, you matter"

- Foster healthy decision making, personal responsibility, self-regulation, and a focus on future goals
  - "Change your story"

Application to diverse settings

- Flexible program options—from school assemblies to ongoing group mentoring—to address unique needs and interests of organizations

- Same fundamental methods used across settings and populations

- Experiences youth and facilitators draw on to engage with the content vary, but core content is consistent

- Fidelity promoted through regular monitoring of staff performance and partnership with local evaluator

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Healthy Visions program components

Program Messages

- Risk avoidance skills
- Self-respect
- Goal setting
- Communication skills
- Healthy relationships
- Sexual delay
- Academic performance

Program Content

- Choosing the Best (CTB)
- TYRO Rites of Passage modules (ROP)
- Choosing the Best + TYRO Rites of Passage modules

Program Activities

- School assemblies
- Group classes
- Group mentoring
- One-on-one mentoring

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Healthy Visions program components

Program structure

- One-hour overview of CTB

- 5-days of CTB during school

- 5-days of CTB during school plus ongoing weekly TYRO ROP during school

- 5-days or more TYRO ROP after school

- 5-days TYRO ROP at juvenile justice

Program facilitation

- Purposeful hiring of dynamic program facilitators

- Extensive preparation to learn content and internalize HV messages

- Use of "Real Talk" approach

Healthy Visions program components

Populations served

- Middle school youth

- High school youth

- Adjudicated youth

- Youth with special education needs

Program settings

- In-school, during school

- At school, after school

- Juvenile detention center

- Child special education center

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How does Healthy Visions bring together program components for their specific offerings?

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Flagship school program

Program content
5-days of CTB followed by weekly TYRO ROP

Target populations
Middle school and high school youth

Program messages and facilitation

Program activities
Group classes

Program setting
In-school, during school

Adjudicated youth program

Program content
TYRO ROP

Target populations
Adjudicated youth

Program messages and facilitation

Program activities
Group mentoring

Program setting
Detention Center

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Exercise

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What are the components of your program?

✓ Identify the <u>categories</u> of your program components

1. Identify all of the <u>components</u> under each category

2. Use the "puzzle" to identify the components for one program that you operate

3. Identify the program component(s) that you currently do not collect data on

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Summary and next steps

- Programs can be broken into component parts

- Program components can be useful in thinking about where you could use more data about implementation

- Program components research is increasingly being integrated into program improvement processes and program effectiveness research

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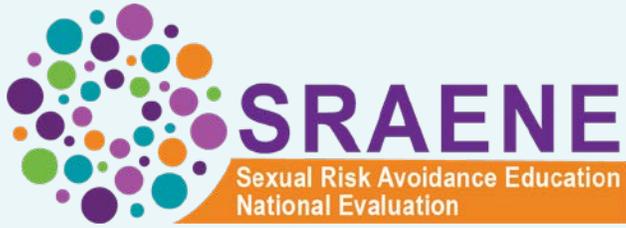
Case Study: Refining a program component

Program component – facilitation training

Enhanced facilitation training is the program component

- Staff often trained in curriculum and other topics (e.g. trauma-informed care or cultural competency), and do not get training on core facilitation skills
- Improved facilitation skills hypothetically can translate to improved youth outcomes

Small project with two HMRE grantees

- Develop and refine training curriculum modules on key facilitation techniques
- Improve facilitation skills of youth program educators who pilot the training curriculum
- Disseminate the training curriculum to the field

Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI^2)
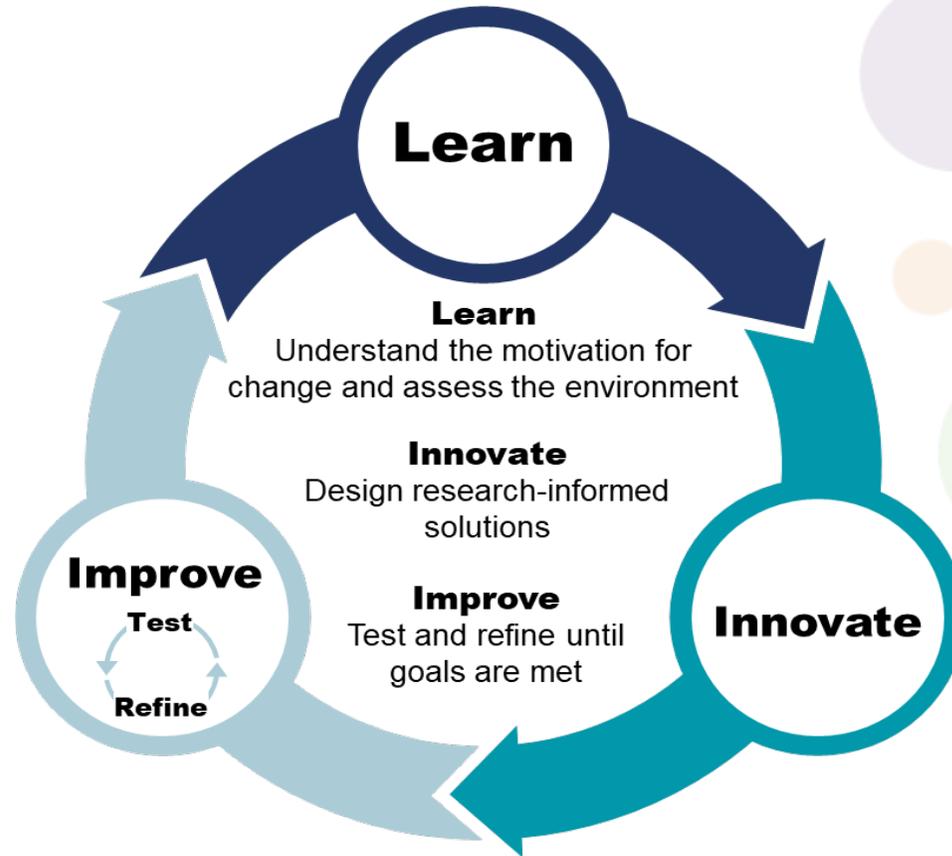
The road test

A small number of facilitators

providing workshops to

A few groups of youth

trying out

Some new strategies and tools

providing

Targeted feedback about implementation

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Goal for this part of the workshop

1. Teach the Learn, Innovate, Improve process

2. Help you think about how to use a similar approach to refine program components

3. Exercise: Sketch out a rough plan to refine a component of your program

Who was involved?

Two youth serving organizations (Catholic Charities of Wayne County, NY and Youth and Family Services in Rapid City, SD)

- Each was providing Relationship Smarts Plus to youth as part of their HMRE grant
- Identified challenges and solutions
- Received facilitator training and provided feedback on training and strategies

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- Designed the training curriculum
- Provided training, conducted observations, and provided feedback to facilitators

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- Facilitated the LI^2 process
- Collected and analyzed data
- Summarized the recommended improvements to the curriculum

Step 1: Learn

Identify challenges of facilitating with youth

- Held an in-person meeting with facilitators, supervisors and program leadership
- Used interactive exercises to make sure everyone had a voice
- Both organizations chose "Managing energy" as their top priority

Topics	Strengths	Challenges
Classroom activities	Engaging curriculum activities and content; safe environment	Managing energy; youth engagement; building trust
Individual interaction with youth	Build genuine connections; positive peer to peer interaction	Developing trust and connection in limited time available
Co-facilitation	Learning from each other's strengths; offering constructive feedback	Managing roles and responsibilities
Supervision and feedback	Open communication and regular debriefing	Limited formal training and tools

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Step 2: Innovate – identify solutions

Co-creation process

- Initial training drawn from best practices, incorporating experience and research
- Listened to specific challenges and potential solutions at each site
    - Used interactive exercises to make sure everyone had a voice
- Revisited training module to incorporate suggested strategies and deal with challenges. Added content on:
    - Managing energy across co-facilitators
    - Managing high energy
    - Engaging peer leaders

Innovate: Create training and tools

Module content
- Increase knowledge about the energy cycle and how it directly affects students' ability to engage and learn
- Learn practical tips and techniques for managing and re-setting energy
  - Start with high energy
  - Using movement and changing volume
  - Using energizer activities before critical content
  - How to read the room: monitor energy and share responsibility with co-facilitator
  - How to integrate with primary curriculum content (in this case, Relationship Smarts Plus)

Handout
- Checklist – things to remember to do before, during and after class

Supervisor observation form
- Structured tool to allow the supervisor to assess whether the facilitator is using the strategies (well)

Innovate: Identify measures of success

As a group, identified measures of success

- Measures of usage
  - Did facilitator use each strategy and/or the tip sheet?
  - Did supervisor use observation form?
- Measures of satisfaction
  - Did you feel confident using strategies?
  - Did you feel youth responded appropriately to them?
- Youth engagement and connection
  - Did youth participate in meaningful way?
  - Did youth engage positively with their peers?
  - Was attendance (more) evenly distributed?

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Step 3: Improve – begin road test

Train facilitators and supervisors

- Half day training on strategies and using tools

Collect data

- Periodic surveys about how facilitation went that day
- Guided supervisor observations
  - Public Strategies did a parallel observation to supervisor
  - Jointly provided feedback to facilitators
  - Public Strategies coached supervisor on what to look for and how to frame suggestions
- Interviews with facilitators and supervisors about training, experience using the strategies and observation feedback

Improve – review data and refine approach

Right after training – used training feedback

- Improve handout to include written list of energizer activities to use
- Future trainings should include teach backs to practice activities and strategies
  - Bigger time commitment
  - Potentially bigger payoff

After collecting data

- Provide more strategies and link to appropriate time to use them in curriculum
- Refine supervisor observation form
  - Less about overall skill level; focus on specific skills facilitators have mastered or should work on
  - Provide takeaway sheet for facilitators so they have written feedback

Debrief as a group to plan improvements

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Improve – repeat road test

Repeat for Managing Energy
- Three cycles, with improvements each time
- Think about how these tips might extend to adult learners

Fewer cycles for additional topics
- Debriefing Strategies – two cycles
- Building Trust – one cycle

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Lessons learned

As a program component, enhanced facilitation training:
- Was enjoyable for facilitators
- Made facilitators more confident and feel they have a larger toolkit to draw on in their work
- Made facilitators perceive greater youth engagement
- Made supervisors feel more confident providing feedback and what to look for during facilitation

For grantees, developing training modules helped tackle multiple issues
- Module focused on managing energy but also provided guidance on co-facilitation and engagement
- Grantees identified other ways to improve programming
  - Meetings to brainstorm and share tips
  - Engage in more deliberate planning

For the process, do not need to collect a lot of data
- Be thoughtful about the data you are collecting and when you collect it
  - Actively use that data to improve the process
  - Don't need to wait until all data is collected

Exercise

Your challenge for today

How might you refine a component of your program using a process like this?

- Design a rough sketch of this process for a component of your program
- Pair up with others from your organization or brainstorm with someone near you
  - Take 15 minutes to plan using the handout
- Choose someone to share

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Questions to address?

Planning

- What is the component to refine?
- What is the desired goal of the component/improvement?
- Who will be involved in planning? Creating the solution? Testing the solution? Collecting data? Analyzing data? Who will oversee the process?
- What activities will you use to identify ways to refine the component?

Road testing

- What data will you collect? How many rounds of data collection? When will you collect and review the data?
- How will you determine success?
- How much time do you need for this process?

Studying the effectiveness of program components requires different approaches to impact evaluation

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Traditional approach to impact evaluation

Pretest Posttest Control Group Design

Program group	O	R	X	O
Control group	O	R		O

- O = survey
- R = randomization
- X = program

SRAENE will dive into the "black box"

We will identify program components of greatest interest to the field

- Examples could include facilitator preparation, parental engagement, supplementary lessons or activities, modes of program delivery

We will identify research questions and evaluation designs to test those research questions

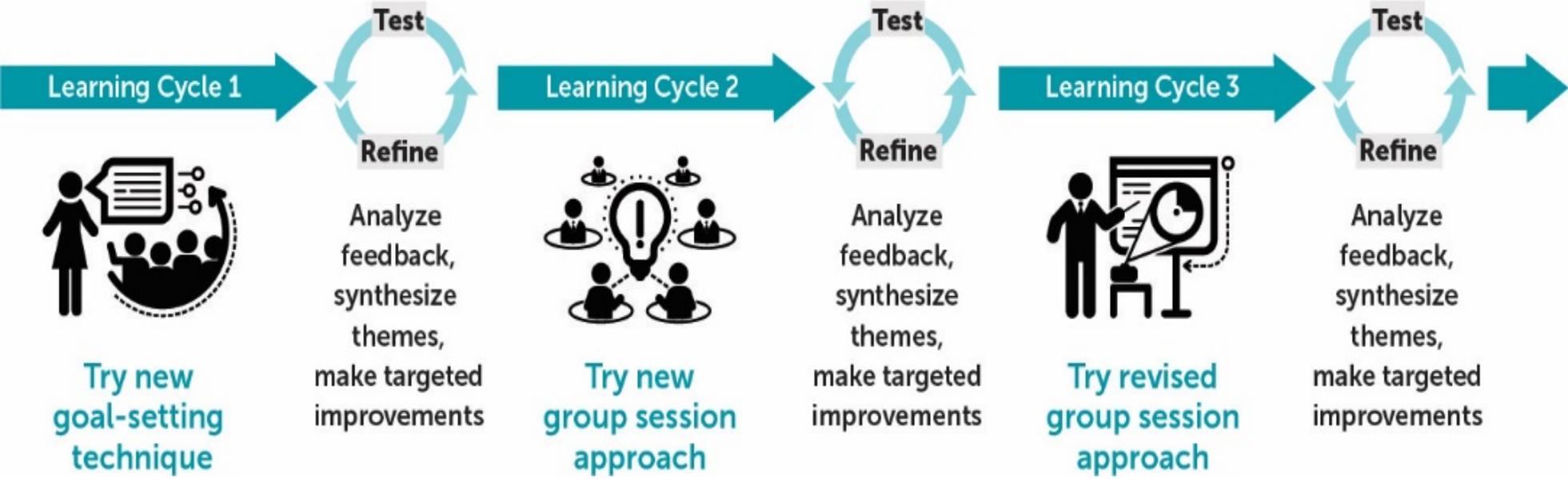- Designs will examine relative effectiveness. Everyone gets something.
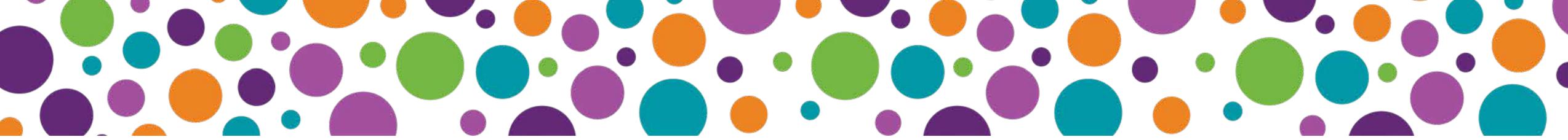
Alternative approach: factorial design

	Supplemental sessions on healthy relationships	Supplemental sessions on positive youth development	Supplemental sessions on both healthy relationships and positive youth development
Parent homework assignments	▲▲▲▲ ▲▲▲	▲▲▲▲ ▲▲▲	▲▲▲▲ ▲▲▲
After-school or evening parent sessions	●●●● ●●●	●●●● ●●●	●●●● ●●●
No parent engagement	■■■■ ■■■	■■■■ ■■■	■■■■ ■■■

Note: Each shape represents a classroom of 25 or 26 students

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Alternative approach: formative design

Learning Cycle 1 → Test / Refine: Try new goal-setting technique — Analyze feedback, synthesize themes, make targeted improvements

Learning Cycle 2 → Test / Refine: Try new group session approach — Analyze feedback, synthesize themes, make targeted improvements

Learning Cycle 3 → Test / Refine: Try revised group session approach — Analyze feedback, synthesize themes, make targeted improvements

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