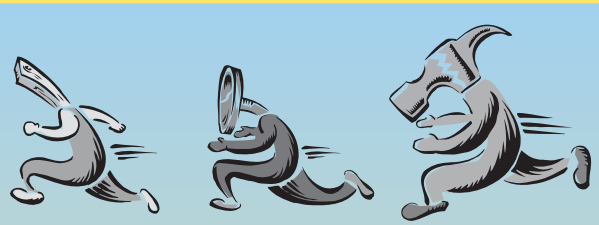
CSAP's Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies



Toolkit

Selecting the Program That's Right for You

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
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CSAP's Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies is located in Health and Human Development Programs at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), Newton, Massachusetts. Serving the six New England states and five mid-Atlantic states, they work with states to effectively transfer knowledge to the local level and strengthen local capacity to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug use in youth ages 12–17.

Key features of CSAP's Northeast CAPT:

- *Science-based prevention:* translating the research on prevention and applying this knowledge to product development, trainings, and technical assistance
- *Collaboration:* supporting collaboration among state agencies and among state partners and national organizations
- *Systems development:* increasing states' capacity to support and sustain the application of effective practices
- *Technology:* increasing access to and use of effective and appropriate prevention approaches by maintaining a strong, user-friendly website, creating interesting and accessible online courses, and providing informative videoconferencing events

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Using Feasibility Assessment

Feasibility assessment is a process designed to help prevention practitioners assess the ease of implementing a single program or to choose the most appropriate program from among several possibilities.

Why was this tool created?

In our work with local practitioners, we receive a substantial number of inquiries from preventionists about program adaptation, replication, and fidelity. Many of these requests are answered by working with these prevention organizations to make sure that they have selected the appropriate program in the first place.

All too often, program adaptation is considered the only solution to a bad fit between organizational capacity and model program requirements.[1] When we looked for a comparable tool in the literature, we were unable to find one that was appropriate to the needs of our specific audiences.

We also hear anecdotes about how practitioners sometimes choose programs based chiefly on their experience with the methods used (e.g., role-plays) or on what they personally enjoy doing. This tool creates a systematic process whereby you can select the program that fits best and not necessarily fall back on what you prefer to do.

How can this tool help me?

You can use this tool to assess the degree of fit between the specific implementation requirements of a science-based program on the one hand, and the needs of your target population, your organizational capacity, and your current community conditions on the other hand.

This tool can help you identify areas where you can increase your capacity to meet the demands of the program you have chosen. If it is not possible to change your capacity, the Feasibility Tool can also help you identify areas where you may want to consider adapting your program.

How should I use this tool?

Selecting appropriate programs for your community ideally involves a collaborative process where you bring to the table people from your agency, the target population you wish to serve, and the community or setting where the program will be implemented. This process can be time intensive, but in the end, hopefully you can avoid pitfalls down the road if you do this step right from the beginning.

If you can't bring multiple perspectives to the table, try to talk to these different people ahead of time to gather as much information as possible before you attempt to complete the tool.

Oftentimes we tell people to focus first on the sections of the tool called program requirements and capacity. Once these are complete, then move on to assigning a scale score to each category.

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[1] Harding, W. Goddard, C., and Rosati, M. (September 23, 2000). *Conducting a Feasibility Assessment for the Implementation of A.T.O.D. Prevention Programs.* Paper presented at Addictions 2000—Prevention of Substance Use Problems: Directions for the Next Millennium, Hyannis, MA.

How can I get further assistance from the Northeast CAPT?

The Northeast CAPT provides training and technical assistance in the program selection and the application of the Feasibility Tool. Please contact us at 888-EDC-CAPT or send an email to capt@edc.org for more information. Also, visit our website at http://www.csapnortheastcapt.org for more information on using effective prevention programs and strategies.

Feasibility Tool Instructions

Purpose of the Tool

The primary purpose of this tool is to assess the feasibility of implementing either a specific science-based prevention program or to compare the feasibility of implementing two or more programs and help a practitioner select one that best fits their capacity to implement it. The tool includes six worksheets.

When to Use the Tool

We assume that before people use this tool, they should have completed a needs assessment that included:

1) identifying a target population and the need(s) they plan to address,
2) specifying goals and outcomes they would like to achieve that are logically linked to the needs they will address, and
3) identifying one or more science-based prevention programs appropriate for meeting their needs and goals and objectives.

To complete the worksheet, the practitioner also needs to have collected detailed descriptive information about the program.

How to Complete the Worksheets

Step 1. Resources.

Using a description of the prevention program(s) being considered, fill in the blank cells under the column labeled "Program Requirements" for the Resources page. For example, in the sample worksheet, in the row under "Program Requirements" corresponding to the subcategory labeled "Availability of space," the following information was entered: "3 meeting rooms: 1 for parents; 1 for kids; 1 for daycare."

Step 2. Resources.

For the Resources page, fill in the blank cells under the column labeled "Capacity." This information should reflect the organization's current capacity to meet the related program requirement in the same row. For example, does the organization have 3 meeting rooms available, or would 3 rooms be readily available when the program is implemented? In the sample worksheet, the following information was entered: "2 meeting rooms."

Step 3. Resources.

In the column labeled "Scale Score," enter a number from 0 to 1.0 (don't forget the decimal point) that reflects how feasible it would be to implement the program, given the degree of fit between the program's requirements and the organization's current capacity. A score of zero means it would not be feasible to implement the program; a score of 1.0 means it would be extremely feasible. In the sample worksheet a scale score of .6 was entered, reflecting a marginal fit between the program's space requirements and the space available at the organization.

Step 4. Resources.
Compute a "Feasibility Score" for each cell. This score is computed by multiplying the Scale Score by the Point Value in the same row. In the sample worksheet, the Scale Score of .6 was multiplied by the Point Value of 14, for a "Feasibility Score" of 8.4.

Step 5. Target Population, Organizational Climate, Community Climate, Evaluability, and Future Sustainability.
The pages of the worksheet labeled Target Population, Organizational Climate, Community Climate, Evaluability, and Future Sustainability do not contain a column for Program Requirements. The reason for this is that programs do not impose specific, clear requirements for these domains in the way they do for resources. Therefore, the instructions for completing these pages of the worksheet differ somewhat from the page on Resources. For these pages, fill in the "Capacity" column, with brief descriptions of the organization's capabilities, or conditions in the community. Next, in the column labeled "Scale Score," enter a number from 0 to 1.0 (don't forget the decimal point) in each cell that reflects how feasible it would be for a practitioner to implement the program given the characteristics of the program. Then compute a "feasibility score" as described in Step 4.

Step 6. Total the "Feasibility Score" for each major category (Resources, Target Population, Organizational Climate, Community Climate, Evaluability and Future Sustainability) and then for all the categories combined. The minimum possible score is zero; the maximum is 1000.

Cultural Relevance

Although this category exists under target population, it is important to recognize that cultural relevance can be considered as a part of many other major categories (e.g., resources). For example, linguistically appropriate program materials might be considered under access to appropriate materials (resources) as well as under access to appropriate evaluation instruments (evaluability).

How to Use the Feasibility Score

A low total feasibility score indicates that it would be difficult to implement the program unless the organization's capacity and/or local conditions improve, and/or the program is changed/adapted.

A high feasibility score indicates that it would be relatively easy to implement the program with fidelity (as designed).

Examining the score for individual items may point to issues/areas in which the capacity is particularly low (or high) with respect to at least the specific program being considered. If a practitioner examines the same item across worksheets, each completed for different programs, and find that the same item receives low scores, this may suggest that the lack of capacity (or inhospitable local conditions) is more generic than program specific.

Similar to the above, examining groups of items (by Resources, Target Population, Organizational Climate, Community Climate, Evaluability, and Future Sustainability) may point to high or low capacity in broad areas. Again, these capacity scores may vary depending on the program being considered, or it may be constant across several programs, suggesting that few programs can be implemented well until capacity or local conditions are improved.

Adapting the Worksheet to Better Fit Practitioner'sViews and Assumptions

As reflected in the "Point Value" column, we weighted each of the six major categories (Resources, Target Population, Organizational Climate, Community Climate, Evaluability, Future Sustainability) equally. Working from a total possible score of 1000 we divided the points for each major category equally—resulting in 167 points for each. Each organization may change this weighting system to better reflect their beliefs about the relative importance of the five major categories. The same is true for the items under each major category. We weighted each item equally. These point values, however, can be adjusted based again on a practitioner's beliefs about the relative importance of each item.

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Resources

Point Value	Categories	Program Requirements	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
14	Costs				
14	Staff training				
14	Access to qualified staff				
14	Availability of space	3 rooms: parents (1); kids (1), and daycare (1)	2 rooms	.6	(.6 × 14 = 8.4)
14	Availability of space				
14	Access to program materials				
14	Access to equipment				
14	Access to science-based information				
14	Time requirements				
14	Training for community members and other key leaders				
14	Access to the target population				
14	Availability of other program services (e.g., transportation)				
14	Incentives for program participants				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Resources

Point Value	Categories	Program Requirements	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	**RESOURCES**				
14	Costs				
14	Staff training				
14	Access to qualified staff				
14	Availability of space				
14	Access to program materials				
14	Access to equipment				
14	Access to science-based information				
14	Time requirements				
14	Training for community members and other key leaders				
14	Access to the target population				
14	Availability of other program services (e.g., transportation)				
14	Incentives for program participants				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Target Population

Point Value	Categories	Program Requirements	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	**TARGET POPULATION**				
24	Cultural relevance (e.g., language, norms)				
24	Demographics (e.g., age, gender, SES)				
24	Willingness to accept a new program				
24	Fit with existing prevention efforts				
24	Buy-in of key leaders				
24	Favorable history (e.g., critical incidents, previous success)				
24	Permission (e.g., to collect data)				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Organizational Climate

Point Value	Categories	Program Circumstances and/or Conditions	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	**ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE**				
33	Willingness to accept a new program				
33	Fit with existing prevention efforts				
33	Buy-in of key leaders				
33	Buy-in of staff				
33	Favorable history (e.g., critical incidents, previous program success)				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Community Climate

Point Value	Categories	Program Circumstances and/or Conditions	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	**COMMUNITY CLIMATE**				
28	Willingness to accept a new program				
28	Fit with existing prevention efforts				
28	Buy-in of key leaders and community members				
28	Favorable history (e.g., critical incidents, previous program success)				
28	Permission (e.g., to collect data)				
28	Access to referral network for program participants				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Evaluability

Point Value	Categories	Program Circumstances and/or Conditions	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	EVALUABILITY				
33	Availability of baseline data				
33	Access to participants over time				
33	Simple program design				
33	Access to appropriate evaluation skills				
33	Availability of financial resources for evaluation				

Feasibility Tool for the Implementation of Prevention Programs: Future Sustainability

Point Value	Categories	Program Circumstances and/or Conditions	Capacity	Scale Score 0 .1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 not feasible — extremely feasible	Feasibility Score (scale score × category point value)
~167 points	**FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY**				
24	Collaboration between community and your organization				
24	Community ownership				
24	Renewable financial support				
24	Continuous leadership				
24	Positive image in the community				
24	Strong host organization				
24	Strong program advocate(s) or spokesperson(s)				
Total ~1000					**Total Feasibility Score**

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