

A Systems Approach

to Substance Use Services in Canada



Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et les toxicomanies

Systems Approach Workbook

Change Management Module: **Preparation**

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Who should use the change management modules?

- Leaders and decision makers in the substance abuse and mental health services field, such as regional directors and program managers
- Anyone interested in learning more about a system-change approach to improving substance use and mental health services and supports

Why use the change management modules?

- Many people have difficulty accessing and navigating the current system
- The system is constantly evolving and is influenced by many factors
- The Tiered Model presented in *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada: Recommendations for a National Treatment Strategy* provides an evidence-based framework to guide system change
- Taking a change management approach increases the efficiency and sustainability of system development

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Taking a Systems Approach: Preparation

Scenario:

The following example is provided to illustrate the context in which the Systems Approach Workbook might be helpful. The example develops throughout the change modules to help readers situate themselves in the process.

After reviewing the rationale for change, senior decision makers agree that changes to the current organization would help fill existing gaps in service, and the Tiered Model presented in the Systems Approach report appears to be a useful framework to guide those changes. Although staff members support service improvements, there are a lot of questions about the extent of change required and its impact on time and resources.

The regional director now faces the challenge of translating the high-level guidance provided by the Systems Approach report into a concrete implementation plan. Fortunately, with the leadership and communication components developed in the background stage, the foundation for a collaborative team approach is already in place.

The following section outlines key considerations for preparing to implement [A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada](#). The preparation stage of the process builds on the *rationale for change*¹ developed in the background stage. The focus is now on developing a detailed *implementation plan* and generating support and [leadership](#) for the plan at all levels.

Preparation is likely the most complex and resource-intensive stage. However, dedicating adequate time and attention to preparation results in much easier implementation of both small- and large-scale change. Good preparation allows the identification of potential challenges in advance rather than reacting to them as unexpected crises.

The change modules provide guidance according to five *change management* categories leaders should consider throughout any change process: Context, Leadership, Communication, Outcomes and Benefits, and Individual Considerations.

¹ Please see the Glossary for an explanation of italicized terms.

Context

A detailed *context analysis* will inform the development of the implementation plan, and illustrate where the proposed changes fit with other organization² and service-level considerations. The high-level considerations previously identified in the rationale for change provide a starting point for the detailed context analysis. Different analytical approaches and tools may also be helpful in identifying and clarifying issues that may impact the change process. For example:

- An analysis of internal organizational mandates, strategic plans, objectives and workplans will illustrate where there is already a good fit with the Systems Approach's *core principles, guiding concepts* and recommendations.
- An analysis of external organizations, including mandates, objectives, clientele, and past or current collaborations, will identify existing relationships and common ground on which to build new partnerships.
- Evaluating the complexity of the current system in which the organization operates will help guide strategic approaches to leadership and the change process.
- Consultations and communications with stakeholders are key early in the process. Consider the guiding concepts, principles and values of current and potential partners. What are their priorities and considerations? What is the history of change and relationships between partners?
- SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses identify organizational, political and resource considerations.

Workbook Toolbox

- [Context Analysis Template](#)
- [Implementation Plan Template](#)
- Collaboration in Substance Use Systems

Leadership

The *leadership* goal at the preparation stage is two-fold: to develop a detailed implementation plan and to foster leadership for the change process throughout the organization. Leadership also remains responsible for ensuring the other four key areas of consideration (context, communication, outcomes/benefits and individual considerations) are adequately addressed.

The extent and *complexity* of change will vary based on organizational needs and resources. For example, the Systems Approach could simply be used as a guide for partnership development or it could be used to guide a comprehensive organizational restructuring. Regardless of the extent of change, key considerations and components in the implementation plan will include:

- Context analysis;
- Structural and operational alignment with Systems Approach and its guiding concepts;

² Implementation may be taking place at the system, regional or service level. In the interest of brevity, "organization" is being used inclusively to refer to whichever level is most appropriate.

- Communication, education and training;
- Resource implications;
- Anticipated challenges and strategies;
- Goals, benefits and outcomes;
- *Knowledge exchange* (KE); and
- Evaluation.

There are a number of strategic supports leadership can put in place to facilitate the development of the implementation plan and to build support for moving it ahead. These supports include:

- **Develop a team to support the change:** Bringing a broad range of considerations and perspectives to the process, this team will work with leadership on the development of the implementation plan, acting as liaisons through which the full organization can be engaged in the plan's development.
- **Adopting a change management strategy:** Evidence from across private industry and public health sectors clearly indicates that taking an evidence-based approach to *change management* is essential in ensuring the end goal is both achieved and sustained. Although the Systems Approach Workbook was developed to align with change management considerations and provide a sample approach, there are many other approaches that can be adopted based on organizational needs and preferences.
- **Developing a KE strategy:** There are a number of KE mechanisms and approaches that can be used to support change management, ensuring information is being exchanged in a meaningful way throughout the change process and can be applied to later initiatives as appropriate.
- **Integrating evaluation:** Integrating an evaluation component throughout the implementation of the project provides a means of tracking progress, staying focused on objectives and demonstrating success.

Finally, leadership will provide a contact point with *senior decision makers* and will be responsible for seeking approval of the completed implementation plan. Senior decision makers do not have to be involved in the detailed planning process; however, they do have an important role to play in demonstrating organizational commitment, clarifying the resources available and confirming prioritization of the implementation process with respect to other organizational initiatives.

Workbook Toolbox

- [Effective Leadership](#)
- [Working with Teams to Support Change](#)

Leadership should also recognize there will be informal leaders such as senior staff outside the immediate team whose support will also be important.

Communication

The communication mechanisms initiated in the background stage will be invaluable at this point for keeping staff and senior decision makers engaged in developing the implementation plan. The focus at this stage of the process is on fostering organizational engagement.

Consistency, transparency and timeliness of information remain key factors in developing trust. As the planning process progresses, staff should be kept apprised of major developments and their implications—for example, if a funding source is identified to move the process ahead or if a change in political priorities may cause a delay. A communications strategy should also be a core component of the implementation plan.

An *implementation team* or other liaison team is an ideal communications support that can serve as a direct contact point between staff members and leadership. Depending on organizational dynamics and the scope of change, additional communication mechanisms may include town hall meetings, staff surveys or individual meetings.

Key communications activities at this stage include:

- Presenting the rationale for change;
- Promoting organization-wide understanding of the Systems Approach's guiding concepts or other models or frameworks being used to guide change;
- Building on organizational strengths by highlighting existing areas of consistency between existing practice, mandates and objectives, and the changes taking place;
- Promoting multidirectional communication of information, feedback and ideas throughout the organization; and
- Contextualizing the current change within other priorities and initiatives, and recognizing that change is an ongoing, cyclical process.

Communication throughout the development of the implementation plan will help ensure a good fit with broad organizational direction. It will also help avoid surprises for both staff and senior decision makers when seeking final approvals and moving to implementation.

Workbook Toolbox

- [Developing a Communications Plan](#)
- [Communications Tools](#)

Outcomes and Benefits

In the preparation stage, a review of the long-term outcomes and benefits identified in the rationale for change will be useful to guide the implementation plan. The contextual information being gathered during this stage will allow for the identification of additional short-term and interim goals and outcomes tailored more specifically to the organization. These may include:

- Expanding an effective community partnership program to other areas of the jurisdiction;
- Addressing particular gaps in service provision and access;

- Improving program information available to potential clients; and
- Developing mechanisms for client involvement in decision-making processes.

Outcomes and benefits can also be identified from a process perspective. The benefit of a detailed implementation plan at the preparation stage is to minimize obstacles at the implementation stage. Adopting a change management strategy at this point contributes to the outcomes of sustainability.

Clear, measurable and achievable benefits at the organizational and individual levels are important means of providing motivation. At the organizational level, senior management needs to know that resource allocations are justified. At the individual level, staff members need to know that the extra energy needed to learn new skills or take on new challenges will improve the service they are able to offer clients. Key steps to prepare for outcome measurement include:

- Defining outcome *indicators*;
- Determining the frequency of *data collection* and reporting; and
- Identifying sources and mechanisms for data collection.

Finally, using clearly operationalized, measurable outcomes to guide the implementation plan provides a means of tracking progress and guides the development of the evaluation. *Logic models* are extremely useful for illustrating how the various components of the process lead to achieving outcomes and for establishing project timelines. Using the context analysis as a reference will help to illustrate the complexity of the organizational environment and ensure timelines are realistic.

Individual Considerations

Integrating individual considerations into the implementation plan during the preparation stage is an important way of engaging staff members. As more people learn about the Systems Approach and the changes that its implementation may bring, ideas, questions and concerns at the individual level can be anticipated. Leadership and communication work together toward two primary goals: ensuring individual strengths and innovative ideas are reflected in the implementation plan, and ensuring concerns are identified and addressed as proactively as possible.

Some of the individual considerations the implementation plan might address include:

- What does the change mean for me? What are the benefits and outcomes that are relevant at the individual level?
- What will the expectations be? Where is there room for negotiation and flexibility?
- What do the Systems Approach's guiding concepts mean to the way I do my day-to-day work?
- Will the good work I'm already doing be recognized?
- How will this be different from previous changes?

Strategies for building on individual strengths and identifying and addressing individual concerns include:

- Ensuring multidirectional communication mechanisms are in place;
- Incorporating outcomes and benefits into the implementation plan that are relevant to individuals in all areas of the organization;
- Providing clarity regarding the process, expectations and individual implications;
- Providing clarity on negotiable and non-negotiable components (e.g., although increased collaboration with partners is a mandatory component of the guiding concepts, the timeline for partnership development may be flexible based on immediate workload demands);
- Incorporating training and skill development into the implementation plan;
- Acknowledging previous change processes and highlighting lessons learned;
- Scheduling time for leadership to speak individually with staff members; and
- Where applicable, keeping unions informed of changes that may impact members or agreements.

The Systems Approach's core principles and guiding concepts also provide useful guidance for promoting responsiveness at the organizational level, not just for clientele. An implementation plan that is evidence-based, person-centred, and informed by *gender and cultural diversity* demonstrates respect for staff and consistency between rhetoric and action.

Workbook Toolbox

- [Working with Teams to Support Change](#)

Discussion Questions

The following list of discussion questions is intended as a tool to promote dialogue on key components of the implementation process; there are no right or wrong answers.

Question	Considerations
1. What tools or approaches to mapping have you or will you use to inform your context analysis?	The Mapping Substance Use Systems and Client Journeys Tool provides examples of resources and explains their application.
2. What external organizations do you plan to work with? What are common areas between their mandates or objectives and the Systems Approach and its guiding concepts?	Recognizing and consulting with external partners throughout the change process is an important component of a collaborative approach. Consult the Collaboration in Substance Use Systems Tool for assistance.
3. What type of team approach may be useful throughout the change process? Who will lead this team?	The Working with Teams to Support Change brief provides guidance on the use of various team approaches.

Question	Considerations
4. How are you using change management to structure the implementation process?	Taking a change management approach is important in ensuring sustainability.
5. How will you monitor progress? For example, will you use embedded or external evaluators?	There are a number of evaluation resources available to learn more about different options and what might work best for you. See the references section for some examples.
6. What are the most critical indicators to collect baseline data for prior to implementation? What data sources will you use?	Measuring change relies on identifying important <i>indicators</i> . Evaluation resources can help with ideas and examples.

Question	Considerations
7. How will evaluation results be used to ensure opportunities for course correction are taken and quality improvement is achieved?	Learning from evaluation results can be an ongoing process—it doesn't have to wait until project completion.
8. What are the key existing organizational strengths that the change will build on?	Change should build on what's working, not reinvent the wheel.
9. What ongoing communication mechanisms are in place or planned to promote understanding of the proposed change and its alignment with a Systems Approach?	The Communications Plan and Tools provide a number of different resources that can be used to support communication.

Question	Considerations
10. Who are the different audiences (e.g., senior decision makers, management, staff, partners, clients, etc.) for communications about the change process?	Each of the various groups will have different perspectives on the change process, including roles, concerns, objectives and communication needs.
11. What are the key messages about the change that you would communicate to each group at this stage? (Three key messages should be manageable.)	Pulling out key messages provides focus and consistency. Ensure communications address the “what’s in it for me” question.
12. What communication mechanisms are in place or planned to provide staff with a means of providing feedback or raising concerns?	Multidirectional communication is important throughout the implementation process. The Working with Teams to Support Change brief discusses how to use teams to support multidirectional communication.

Question	Considerations
13. Name one short-term, one mid-term and one long-term benefit or outcome you plan to achieve.	Long-term outcomes provide direction while short-term outcomes provide immediate motivation and benefits.
14. How are the benefits and outcomes listed above being operationalized and measured?	Measuring change relies on identifying important indicators. Evaluation resources can help with ideas and examples.
15. What component of the proposed change do you think will resonate most strongly with staff? Explain why.	Consider individual benefits by asking “what’s in it for me” from the staff perspective.

Question	Considerations
16. What existing skills (e.g., specific practice skills, management skills, partnership skills) will be built on during the proposed change?	The opportunity to develop existing skills and learn new skills can be a selling point for change. It also demonstrates leadership commitment.
17. What training or mentorship opportunities does the proposed change provide?	Training and mentorship supports both development and sustainability of new skills and practice.

Summary Checklist

This checklist is intended as an opportunity to “check in” and ensure that key considerations and activities appropriate to the preparation stage have been accounted for. The list below is intended to be comprehensive but flexible; that is, not all items will apply in all situations. However, ensuring that as many of the boxes below are checked off as possible will make moving on to the implementation stage easier.

- ☐ Evidence to support the proposed change has been gathered and is available to participants and stakeholders.
- ☐ The rationale for change has been approved.
- ☐ Approaches to system mapping have been reviewed and completed as appropriate using the Systems Approach and guiding concepts.
- ☐ A detailed context analysis has been conducted to provide an understanding of the system and factors that may influence change.
- ☐ Change leaders have been identified (e.g., an implementation team has been established).
- ☐ An implementation plan has been developed.
- ☐ A knowledge exchange strategy has been developed.
- ☐ An evaluation process has been developed and indicators defined.
- ☐ An evidence-informed change management approach has been adopted to guide the process.
- ☐ A communication plan has been developed.
- ☐ Multidirectional communication mechanisms have been established.
- ☐ Key partners have been identified and engaged in supporting change.
- ☐ A project logic model has been developed.
- ☐ Individual benefits have been identified.
- ☐ Organizational benefits have been identified.
- ☐ Senior management has been briefed and approved the implementation plan.
- ☐ Staff members have been briefed on the implementation plan.
- ☐ Unions have been briefed and are engaged with the process, if appropriate.

References³

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National Treatment Strategy Working Group. (2008). A systems approach to substance use in Canada: Recommendations for a national treatment strategy. Ottawa: National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada. Retrieved from http://www.nationalframework-cadrenational.ca/uploads/files/TWS_Treatment/nts-report-eng.pdf.

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³ The purpose of this reference list is to provide a range of options for additional information and ideas. References have been identified by both CCSA and project partners. Some of the references listed are proprietary. Inclusion in this list does not indicate CCSA endorsement. Categories are for ease of reference and are not mutually exclusive; for example, most references under Leadership are also relevant to Change Management.

Context

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Leadership

- The Ivey Business Journal (www.iveybusinessjournal.com) provides a number of full-text articles on leadership, management, organizational and other relevant issues, primarily from a private business perspective but presenting concepts that apply in the non-profit sector as well. Examples include [Transformational performance-based leadership: Addressing non-routine adaptive challenges](#) (Granger & Hanover, 2012) and [Developing leadership character](#) (Crossan, Gandz & Seijts, 2012).
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Individual Considerations

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Knowledge Exchange

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Evaluation

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The Canadian Evaluation Society website (www.evaluationcanada.ca) contains links to a range of evaluation resources, including program evaluation standards and searchable databases for evaluation-related publications and grey literature.

Daschuk, M., Dell, C.A., & Duncan, C.R. (2012). *First steps first: A community-based workbook for evaluating substance abuse and mental health programs in Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Department of Sociology & School of Public Health.

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The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) website (http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/about_apropos/evaluation/resources-eng.php) provides access to a program evaluation toolkit and a guide to project evaluation, as well as information about PHAC's own data collection and evaluation initiatives.

Suggestions?

We'd like to add to this list to provide a more diverse list of resource materials. If there are any information sources that you have found particularly useful, please let us know!

Send your suggestions to systems@ccsa.ca.