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10 things to think about when...

Supporting interventions and organisations for replication

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Introduction

This document is aimed at those interested in commissioning and /or funding the replication of social interventions.

Replication means taking an existing intervention that has proven to work in one context and implementing it elsewhere, either with different target groups, in a different locality, or in a new organisational setting.

This might imply implementation is easy, but the learning from one of the UK's first and largest replication programmes, Big Lottery Fund's Realising Ambition programme, is that successful replication requires careful consideration of the nature of the intervention, organisational needs and preconditions, and the context into which the intervention is replicated.

Those funded or commissioned to replicate are likely to benefit from support with understanding the intervention, replicating it faithfully, collecting evidence, organisational or other aspects. This document therefore aims to help commissioners and funders think through some key aspects of support for replication.

A second document "10 things to think about when identifying interventions and organisations for replication" is designed help commissioners and funders make the best decisions about which intervention or organisation is going to be selected for replication.

> **A note on terminology:**
>
> We have used the term 'intervention' to mean a service or project that has been designed to achieve a particular aim.
>
> The term 'organisation' refers to the entire organisation that wants to replicate that intervention. For example, an organisation may wish to replicate an intervention that has been designed and delivered elsewhere (and by a different organisation).

10 things to think about when supporting replication

1. Why is support needed for replication?

It is easy to assume that replication holds a guarantee for success, as it is about 'copying' an intervention that has already been proven to work. However, organisations cannot simply take an intervention 'off the shelf' and deliver it. **Rather, an intervention will always need to be adapted to suit different contexts and / or target groups.**

For instance, if an intervention has its origins abroad, it may be necessary to change the language in manuals to make them culturally relevant. But depending on where the intervention is replicated, more significant changes may be needed: delivery techniques may need to be modified to respond to the characteristics of the individuals or groups who are participating in it. And interventions that have never been delivered in schools might need sessions adapting to school hours.

Equally, neither is it appropriate to adapt an intervention without a very clear understanding of what can be changed without fundamentally modifying the core elements that make the intervention successful.

Replication, however, is not only about the intervention and understanding what makes it work. The organisational challenges involved in replication should not be underestimated: it is a journey that can require changes and adaptations to be made to established ways of working (in terms of, for example: **internal resources** to support data collection across multiple sites; **structures and processes** to manage multiple projects or settings;

communication mechanisms across sites and/or with partner organisations to ensure that risks are monitored and managed).

What is more, where replication takes place in several locations and / or over several years, **the process of adaptation is likely to be ongoing.** The broad types of adaptation may become clearer as the intervention is delivered in more and more areas, but the detailed operationalisation of them will vary depending on context. Replication therefore requires continuous learning, as represented in the figure below.

Figure 1: The process of adaptation in replication
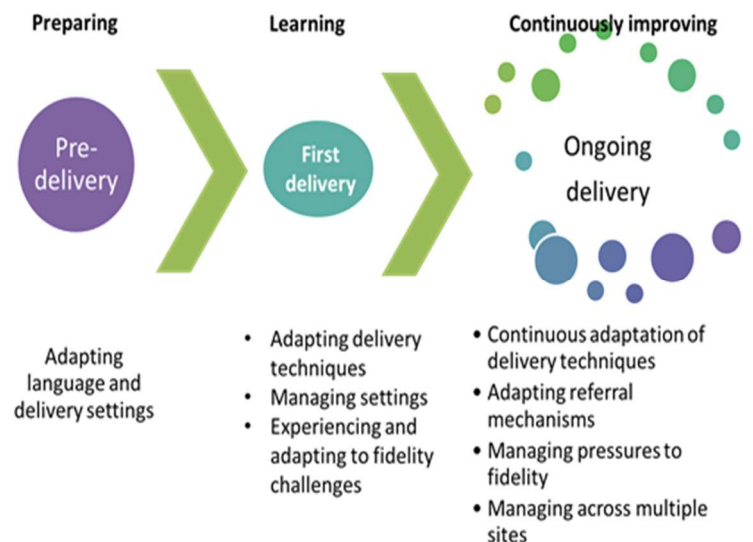
Therefore, many individuals and organisations will benefit from support in this complex task, which is ongoing throughout the replication process. The kind of support taken up will largely depend on whether the organisations selected have previously replicated or have experience in evidence-based

practice (e.g. of using interventions based on rigorously established objective evidence and in terms of the replication model chosen.

2. What does replication support look like for different interventions?

Interventions are replicated via a particular business model: licensing, franchising or wholly owned. While some replication challenges are universal, some are specific to the particular replication business model chosen.

> *Further reading:*
>
> **The Social Franchising Manual** includes definitions of the replication business models. http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/uploads/files/2011/11/social_franchising_manual.pdf
>
> **The final report of the Realising Ambition process evaluation** includes definitions and a discussion of learning on challenges associated with each business and model. https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/making-the-most-of-funding/replicating-success

Organising a support offer by bringing together projects by their model allows organisations to share learning on how to run different types of replication business models.

For projects replicating their own intervention for the first time, what is 'core' to an intervention's success is often unclear. Wholly

owned projects may therefore benefit from early support to tighten their intervention more than other types of replication model. The intervention manual and other tools should be focused on supporting the mechanisms for change. These are not self-evident and need to be worked through in detail to be implemented. Understanding the relevant theories and mechanisms that produce impact might require intense, bespoke support, particularly in the initial phases of replication.

Replicating a **licensed intervention** may require support on adapting rather than writing delivery manuals. **Less support is likely to be required initially on specifying the intervention and evaluating.** This is because relevant support and project tools, which ensure that the delivery of an intervention adheres to the model originally developed (and, hence is delivered to 'fidelity'), tend to be offered by the intervention owner. These include, for example, manuals and fidelity measures and tools (e.g. the critical components that make an intervention work and the sources of data for each; checklists that practitioners, supervisors, managers can use to ensure that the core elements are delivered as intended).
Social franchising may require legal support for franchising agreements before delivery begins.

Generally, an ability to deliver strong interventions requires being a strong organisation. A number of internal features are necessary in order to replicate effectively. For example, robust performance management systems help organisations to replicate, as they enable an organisation to implement, manage and evaluate its

intervention. Having these systems and supportive senior colleagues in place at the start of an intervention can facilitate effective delivery, but organisations might need help to develop and refine them.

3. What should the support focus on?

Support can be a costly component of funding replication. However, cutting down on support may not be cost effective in the long term. For Realising Ambition, the comprehensive support offer has been a key component in helping projects to not only deliver their targets but to thrive and spread proven interventions.

Key support categories are:

- **Understanding exactly how the intervention works.** Organisations often need support to develop a logic model (or theory of change), a literature review on how similar interventions have impact, and evidence of how and why the intervention leads to impact.

- **Implementing the intervention in chosen areas / target groups.** This requires support for organisations on: developing a delivery manual and staff training, and engaging with local gatekeepers and making arrangements with them to access target groups..

- **Maintaining the quality of the intervention.** At this stage organisations need support on: developing monitoring system protocols, fidelity measures, adaptations of the context; and expanding local networks.

- **Outcome measuring.** This allows organisations to further improve their evidence base on the effectiveness of their intervention.

Outcome evidence also lets projects know whether their intervention works as effectively as it has elsewhere. Realising Ambition developed and implemented outcome questionnaires for every project and has funded three randomised controlled trials.

- **Capacity building.** Continuous support to increase the capacity of organisations to effectively replicate an intervention. In Realising Ambition support was delivered on engaging boards / senior management, personal staff development and skills required to gain further funding amongst others.

Each organisation will have a different starting point. The organisations who have been through Realising Ambition, for instance, would require much less support in instituting these elements whilst those wishing to replicate their own intervention for the first time would require every component. Any support offer needs to be tailored to specific needs. Organisational support can often support the necessary functions of replication by creating conditions that will lower barriers to delivering the intervention. Indeed, investing in capacity building support may help save money in the long run by pre-empting the need for recovery actions.

If no money is available for support, then the selection of projects and organisations or replication is particularly crucial and should focus on those with prior experience of replication.

4. Is an external organisation required to deliver the support?

If a decision in favour of support is made, a key consideration is whether the funder or commissioner has the skills in house to deliver that support, whether external expertise is required or whether a combination of these two is best.

Understanding the different support functions needed and the scale of support should be decided

as early as possible. In the case of a portfolio of projects with variable evidence base, different replication models, and organisation size, the support package needs to be comprehensive and flexible to meet a variety of needs.

Outsourcing support to several external organisations requires consideration of how to manage and coordinate different support activities so that they are delivered in an integrated and streamlined manner. Realising Ambition developed an integrated approach, where all organisations delivering support are joining up to design a coherent support offer.

5. When should the support be offered?

Support for replication benefits from being staggered (graphically illustrated in Figure 2):

- **Support for intervention specificity benefits from being front-loaded, focusing on the initial weeks or months of the replication venture.** Rigorous mapping of the intervention enables the very important identification of the core and peripheral aspects of interventions.

- **Support for the 'organisational dimension' of replication (that is, for the development or strengthening of those internal features, described in Section 2, that are necessary to replicate effectively) becomes more relevant and beneficial at a later stage in the replication process** In the first year many organisations are concentrated on getting the intervention ready and are not able to engage fully in wider aspects

that will facilitate replication success (the organisational conditions required). This is especially the case for wholly-owned interventions which will spend the first year making intense preparations for intervention delivery. Organisational support should therefore start and finish later.

don't require much discussion. Using webinars as a method for peer learning needs careful design and skilled facilitation and a period of trust building (which may have to happen face to face).

Figure 2: **Timing of support**

Pre-delivery
- Operational dimension of replication
- Tightening the intervention
- Fidelity

First delivery
- Tightening the intervention
- Manualisation
- Outcome measurement and evaluation
- Organisational capacity building and sustainability

On-going delivery
- Organisational learning
- Sustainability
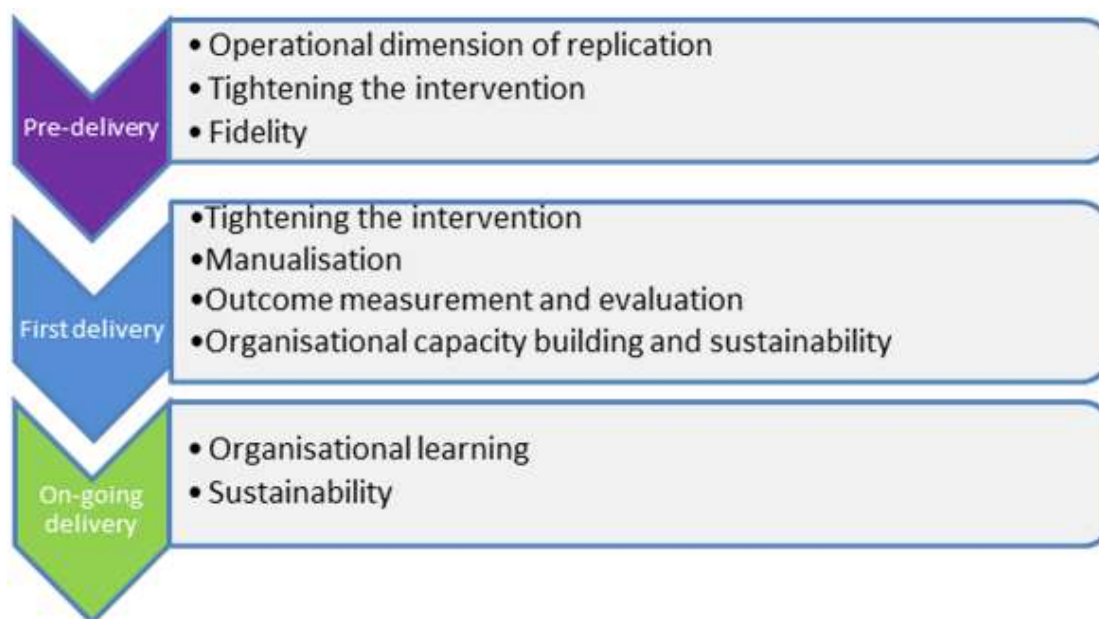
6. How should the support be delivered?

The method of support should be considered seriously, as support can become burdensome or unused if the delivery is unsuitable to the audience or topic. There is a variety of methods in which support can be delivered. The choice of method will depend on the available finances and the focus and purpose of support.

Online webcasting (webinars) is cost-effective as no travelling is involved, practical for when projects are widely dispersed, and re-playable for those who cannot attend the first date. Webinars are particularly useful on procedural topics that

Workshops are useful for dealing with complex topics and ideal for sharing replication experiences. Workshops can also hold the attention of staff longer than webinars. In Realising Ambition, workshops run over several days seem to have given longer-lasting benefits, including building inter-project trust and strengthening relationships.

Those engaged in a replication venture particularly value opportunities for face to face discussions and exchanges, for instance in the form of action learning sets. This is a strong method to support peer learning and discussions of complex topics.

Resources have to be allocated to fund travel for participants.

Bespoke support is tailored to the specific needs of those engaged in the replication venture. It can be delivered face to face, by telephone or by email. When used smartly, bespoke support can have the greatest benefits of all types. Replication tasks which require more attention and expertise suit bespoke support, including refining the intervention's rationale, selecting outcomes to measure, and tailoring monitoring systems. On the other hand, over-reliance on bespoke support can result in weaker inter-project ties and dependence on those delivering the support to deal with problems instead of using the 'wisdom of the group'. It is also the most costly support in terms of the time, energy and concentration it requires of those delivering it.

7. Why does support need to be negotiated?

Participation in support activities benefits from being negotiated with projects and organisations funded to replicate. Replication is time-intensive so projects and organisations may prioritise delivery over developmental activities. Offering a good quality support package may therefore not be enough to guarantee participation.

There are three main approaches to negotiating support packages.

- **Attendance at support events can be voluntary**, where organisations are given a 'menu' of events and then sign up to what they want to attend.

- **Signing up to support events can be compulsory**. Programme managers decide what support events staff go to, on the basis of their perceived needs.

- The final approach is **negotiated attendance** where discussions about support needs are held between organisations funded to replicate and the funder or commissioner staff. A non-binding agreement is then made over which they should attend.

Each approach has its own strengths and holds different assumptions. Compulsory support assumes that funders and commissioners know the funded organisation's requirements best, whilst voluntary attendance assumes organisations know their own needs. Negotiated support packages assume both sides have expertise on development needs. The negotiation approach is most time intensive to both parties but often lead to better matches and to better understanding of needs.

8. Is the support working?

Support systems work best when they are iterative and change according to the needs of organisations. So it is important to find out whether the support is working. A number of techniques have shown to be effective for this purpose:

- **Periodic discussions of an intervention's or organisation's support needs** and development of a support package for the upcoming period.

- **Feedback sheets** to gauge the reaction of attendees to support activities.

- **Anonymous evaluation surveys,** using a simple evaluation model such as, for example,

Kirkpatrick's 'four levels of learning evaluation', which is widely used for evaluations of training This would involve: asking replication staff several weeks after the training questions about how satisfied they were with the event; what they learnt; what impact the training had on their work; the results of the training, and their suggestions for improvement. The analysis of the results would allow the support package and session design to be improved and potentially have a bigger impact (for further information on the model: http://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/OurPhilosophy/TheKirkpatrickModel).

9. How do you support struggling organisations?

It is likely that some organisations will experience periods of difficulty with the replication process. This is often due to factors beyond their control, such as the sudden loss of a key staff member or a key delivery partner reneging on promises or changes in the political or economic landscape. When projects are struggling, 'emergency' support can be drawn up. This should then not be voluntary and be designed primarily to avoid replication failure.

In Realising Ambition, performance improvement plans (PIPs) are put in place if organisations struggle to meet their projected delivery levels. These are three-month plans that identify key issues and trigger additional support. If at the end there is insufficient improvement, either a new PIP is developed or the management investigate whether this project can continue or not.

10. How to measure replication success?

The more diverse a programme of replication, the greater the monitoring challenge. Yet, understanding reach through continuous monitoring and outcome assessment may be an important function of your replication programme.

There may be potential for misalignment between programme level monitoring needs and the reporting needs of interventions and organisations funded to replicate. For instance, even seemingly simple categories such as number of unique beneficiaries can have different meanings for different types of interventions. And funded organisations may need to use data from replication for purposes other than directly related to the funding received. In addition, introducing a programme level monitoring technology / system may create potential for duplication (e.g. entering monitoring data twice), as organisations will have their own monitoring systems.

To ensure programme-level data quality and ongoing buy-in into the data collection needs of a funded programme of replication:

- Agreement and clear communication about the categories to monitor from the very beginning will help in the long term to achieve both the programme and the project goals.

- Support organisations funded with overcoming challenges as they emerge will be required. For instance, devising sampling strategies if large volumes of beneficiaries make it unfeasible

to collect data on the whole population.

- Ensure tailored and easy to use electronic systems. Further support in tailoring any automated reporting to organisation's information needs will help in maintaining good will, especially by those who already run their own monitoring system and need to duplicate data entry.

Support may be also be needed to train staff in replicating organisations in analysing and interpreting the data they collect.

Further reading:

Further learning on replication features in the **Realising Ambition Programme Insights** series written by the Consortium managing the Realising Ambition programme.

www.catch-22.org.uk/realising-ambition/programme-insights