

Questions to Ask When Selecting Evidence-Based Programs

Program Quality

A first set of factors to consider when selecting a program are related to the quality of the program itself and the evidence of its effectiveness.

Questions to ask...

1. Has this program been shown to be effective?
2. What is the quality of this evidence?
3. Is there a sufficient level of evidence of effectiveness?
4. Is the program listed on any respected evidence based program registries? What rating has it received on those registries?
5. For what audiences has the program been found to work?
6. Does the program allow for adaptation? Is there information available about what adaptations are acceptable if I do not implement this program exactly as designed? Is adaptation assistance available from the program developer?
7. What is the extent and quality of training offered by the program developers?
8. Do the program's designers offer technical assistance? Is there a charge for this assistance?
9. What is the opinion and experience of others who have used the program?

Program Match

A second set of factors to consider is related to how well the program will fit with your purposes, your organization, the target audience, and the community where it will be implemented.

Questions to ask...

10. How well do the program's goals and objectives reflect what my organization hopes to achieve?
11. How well do the program's goals match those of my intended participants?
12. Is the program of sufficient length and intensity (i.e. "strong enough") to be effective with this particular group of participants?
13. Are potential participants willing and able to make the time commitment required by the program?
14. Has the program demonstrated effectiveness with a target population similar to mine?
15. To what extent might I need to adapt this program to fit the needs of your community?
16. How might such adaptations affect the effectiveness of the program?
17. How well does the program complement existing programs both in my organization and in the community?

Organizational Resources

A final set of factors to consider when selecting a program is related to the resources required for carrying out the program. Consider whether your organization has the expertise, staff, financial support and time available to implement the program.

Implementing evidence-based programs is usually fairly time- and resource-intensive. For example, an organization has the expertise, staff, financial support and time available to implement the program. If a program is a good fit for your community, if your organization doesn't have the human or financial resources to adequately implement the program, its chances of success are limited.

Questions to ask...

18. What are the costs for training, curriculum, and implementation?
19. Can my organization afford to implement this program now and in the long-term?
20. Do I have staff capable of implementing this program? Does my staff have the qualifications recommended or required to facilitate the program?
21. Would my staff be enthusiastic about a program of this kind and are they willing to make the necessary time commitment?
22. Can this program be implemented in the time available?
23. What's the likelihood that this program will be sustained in the future?
24. Are my community partners supportive of this program?