

National Implementation Research Network



National Implementation Research Network Capabilities Statement

Who is the NIRN team?

The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) uses the science and practice of implementation to help solve real-world problems. We are a multidisciplinary team with the mission to contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services. NIRN is located within the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Our greatest strength is our team of implementation specialists, researchers, and consultants, with in-depth expertise in implementation science, implementation practice and coaching, and research and evaluation methodologies. Their experience allows for delivering innovative, practical, data-driven solutions for improvement, optimization of interventions, and documentation of effectiveness.

Our team members are recognized leaders in implementation science in their respective fields of study; have advanced degrees in education, public health, psychology, research methodologies, and child development; are published in peer-reviewed journals; and have extensive experience working on projects with a diversity of frontline practitioners, leaders, and beneficiaries. They are uniquely positioned to bridge the research-to-practice gap, having worked in academia, the private sector, and governmental organizations.

Key to our success is our commitment to excellence, our ability to be responsive and pivot based on changing project needs, our dedication to building positive relationships and engaging our field partners and stakeholders, and our commitment to equity.

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Our approach to implementation research and practice

Aligned with the NIRN and FPG Child Development Institute missions, our team aims to support and investigate implementation efforts to solve real-world problems and improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services. Our implementation specialists empower practitioners, organizations, and communities to build a generalizable skill set for current and future strategic efforts through coaching, training, and other types of support. Using these real-world applications, our researchers create actionable yet rigorous evidence and new knowledge through pragmatic investigative approaches to advance and improve implementation practice and research. Our implementation practice and research are guided and anchored in a co-creative approach or simply stated, nothing about you without you.

Our approach to meeting your needs



Our capabilities

Implementation Practice

- Implementation Partner Engagement – we can support organizations and teams in identifying and engaging diverse groups of individuals to gain their perspective in developing implementation processes.
- Implementation Strategies Design – we can help organizations use implementation science to select and design strategies and processes to effectively adopt, implement, sustain, and scale their selected program or practice.
- Development of Implementation Teams – we can guide organizations in identifying the individuals needed to participate in an implementation team and in the creation and strengthening of meeting processes that will support implementation (e.g., working agreements and communication protocols).
- Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building – we can administer assessment tools to gauge an agency or organization's readiness for implementation and help teams use them to strengthen their implementation processes.
- Coaching, Technical Assistance, and Co-Facilitation – we can provide targeted support to aid organizations in developing skills and knowledge to implement their selected program or practice effectively.
- Training and Professional Learning – we have expertise in designing and delivering implementation science training sessions and materials to fit the needs of various organizations.

Implementation Practice



Implementation Research

Our capabilities

Implementation Research and Evaluation

- Literature reviews and environmental scans – we can help identify appropriate databases, systematic searches and screening of resources and published manuscripts, evaluate the quality of the literature, and synthesize and translate findings.
- Research designs, planning, and methodologies – our capabilities include identification of the most appropriate study and design for your project, selection of relevant theories and frameworks, co-design of research and evaluation questions, identification of the most appropriate methodologies, development of measures and instruments, and creation and implementation of data collection plans. Approaches include research, program evaluation, and improvement studies.
- Assessments, survey development, and test construction – we have expertise in survey development methodology and reliability and validity studies.
- Qualitative methods – we have a range of capabilities that include identifying the most appropriate analysis technique, developing interviews and focus group protocols, training interviewers, creating coding schemes, and conducting diverse types of qualitative analysis (e.g., content analysis, grounded theory, network analysis).
- Quantitative methods – using a diversity of software (e.g., SPSS, SAS, R), we can assist with your statistical needs, from basic statistics to multilevel modeling.
- IRB preparation, grant writing, and other research administration – we can help with any research administration needs, including IRB preparation, informed consent, research coordination, and grant and proposal writing.
- Writing for scientific and non-scientific audiences – Evaluation and research findings should be translated for and disseminated to various audiences. Our experience includes writing peer-reviewed manuscripts, reports, briefs, and presentations.



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Example Projects



State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP; <https://sisep.fpg.unc.edu>) is a national technical assistance (TA) center funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

The center's mission is to use the science and practice of implementation to strengthen equity in our education systems, support our educators, and improve outcomes for students with disabilities and their families. The center's objectives are to (1) develop the competency of leaders and educators as implementation specialists; (2) develop the implementation capacity of state, regional, and local education agencies; (3) integrate implementation and improvement science practices into TA delivery and leader preparation programs; and (4) increase awareness and knowledge of effective implementation. These objectives are being achieved through the strategies of the development of a micro-credentialing program, continued creation and access to the NIRN Active Implementation Hub and dissemination activities, use of communities of practice (CoPs); and provision of intensive TA to 8 State Education Agencies (SEAs) and their respective regional Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and schools.



Effective Implementation Cohort (EIC; <https://eic.fpg.unc.edu>) is a project designed to help school districts implement an instructional system that supports using a high-quality middle school math curriculum.

The EIC aims to increase districts' capacity to implement a high-quality middle-grade math curriculum to accelerate learning for students experiencing poverty and Black, Latino/a, and/or English Learner (EL)-Designated students. Participants include ten (10) technical assistant or professional learning providers and 19 school districts in the United States. This project will allow us to learn and share with others outside of the project what districts need in place for effective implementation, what aspects of implementation at the district and school level most benefit priority students, and the work involved in making site-wide implementation successful.

MECK Pre-K Evaluation Study is a longitudinal evaluation of the MECK Pre-K program in three areas: 1) Program Characteristics, 2) Program Implementation and Quality, and 3) Student Outcomes. Language and literacy, math, executive functioning, and social skills will be examined in three cohorts of students in preschool through grade 5. Spanish-speaking children are assessed in both English and Spanish. In addition, we support Classroom Coach training and tools for administrators of all facilities to continue to track fidelity to best practices and institute strategies for improvement for years to come, thus increasing sustainability and continuity in assessment and quality control.

Example Projects

Virginia's Children & Youth Behavioral Health Evidence-Based Practices Initiative – Multiple agencies within the state of Virginia are collaborating in their efforts to foster and facilitate the use of evidence for children and youth behavioral health within their local communities. The collaborating state agencies include the Office of Children Services (OCS), Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Education (VDOE), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services (DBHDS), and Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS). A state leadership team, comprised of representation from these various state agencies, has been formed to design and lead the initiative. The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN; <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>) and partners within the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG; <https://fpg.unc.edu>) will be providing a blended model of training, coaching, and consultation support to support the implementation of the Virginia Evidence-Based Practice Initiative through a Transformation Zone approach. A Transformation Zone is a purposeful approach of working with a small number of local community teams (n = 3-4) within one or two regions that represent the diversity of perspectives across the state. Transformation Zones use the sciences of implementation and improvement to simultaneously establish the use of selected evidence-based practices and develop an implementation infrastructure for sustainability and scalability.

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