

Heptagon Tool

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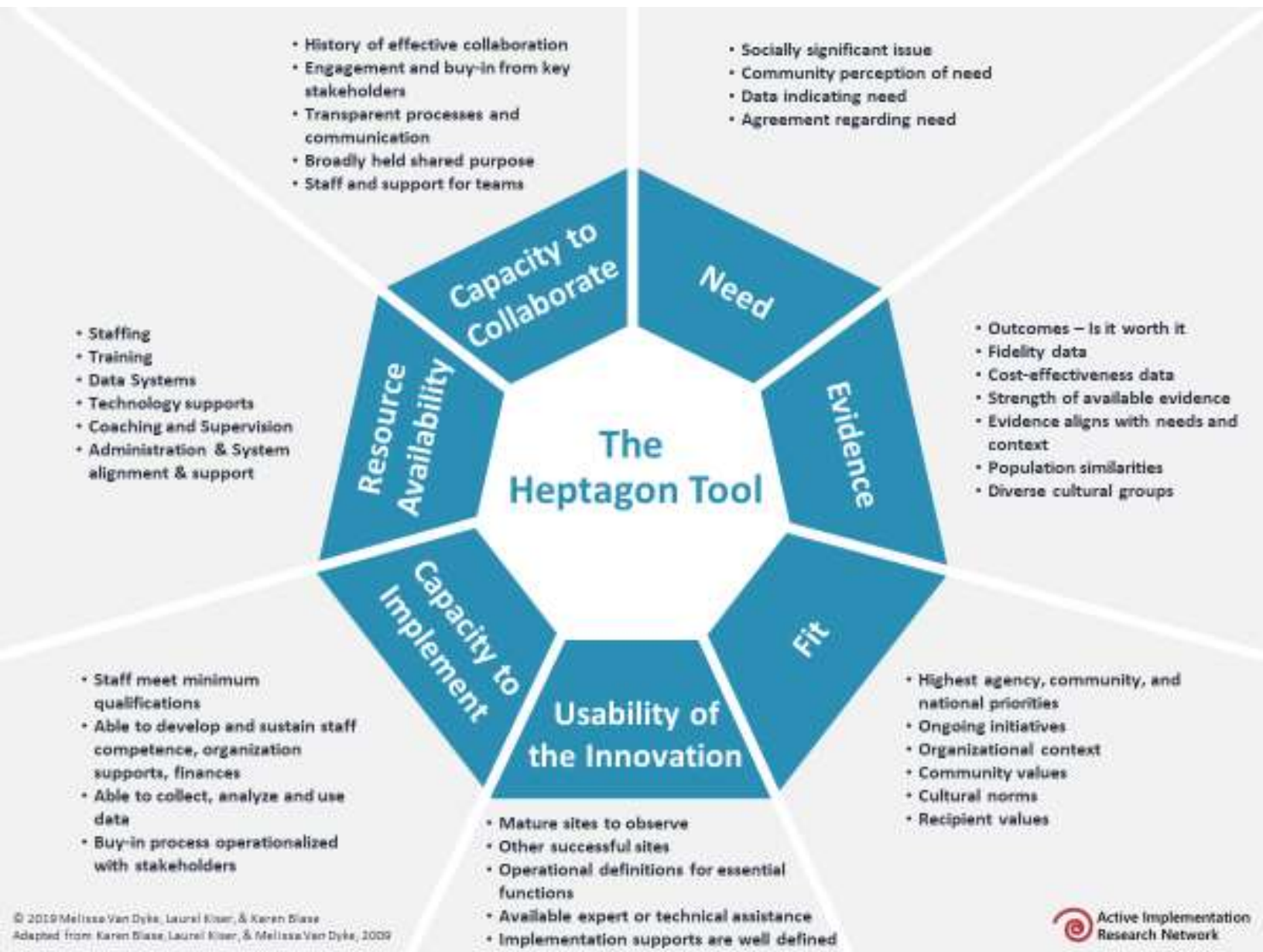
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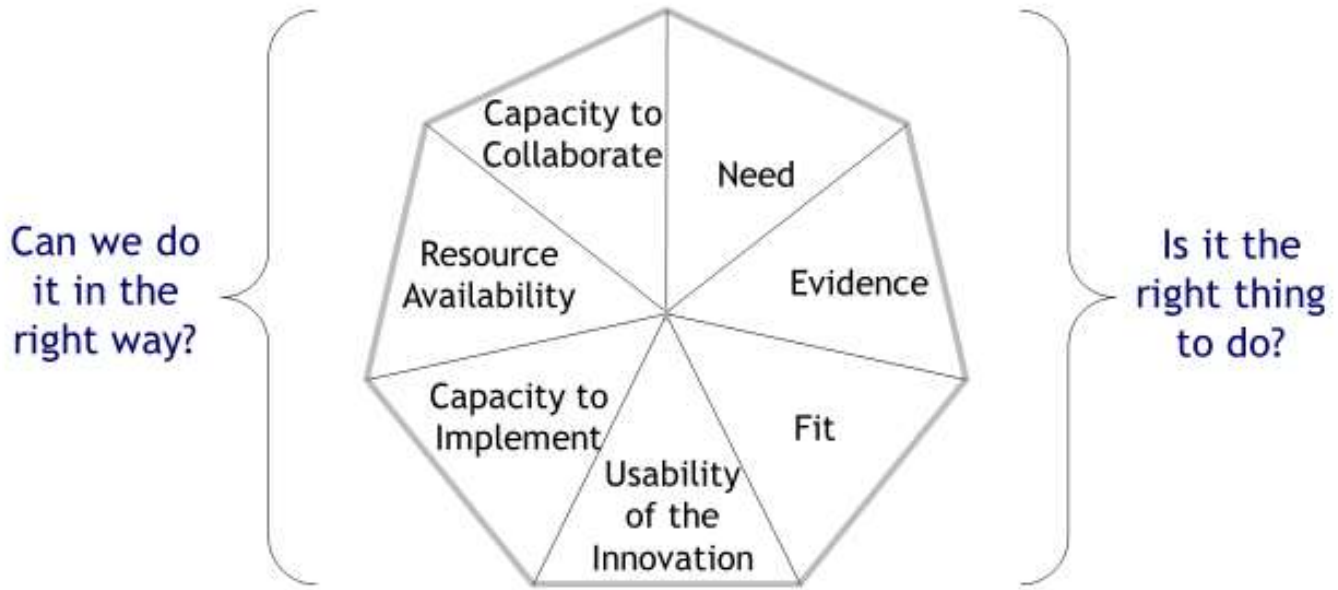
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The Heptagon Analysis Tool

A Guide for Exploration Discussions

Assessing Innovations or Improvement Efforts



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The Heptagon Tool provides a useful guide for discussions during exploration (Van Dyke, Kiser, & Blase, 2019; adapted from Blase, Kiser, & Van Dyke, 2009). The tool helps to operationalize many of the “pre-conditions” specified by Kilbourne, Neumann, Pincus, Bauer, and Stall (2007): the “identification of the need for a new intervention for a target population; identification of an effective intervention that fits local settings (e.g., mission of organization and benefits to the organization) and the intended target population (e.g., behavioural risks and culture); identifying implementation barriers; and drafting a user-friendly manual of the intervention.” The Heptagon Tool also supports the analysis of the critical system factors described by Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, and Zins (2005) to be considered during the pre-planning stage: (a) need for change; (b) readiness for change; (c) capacity to effect change; (d) awareness of the need for change; (e) commitment or engagement in the change process; (f) incentive for change; and (g) history of successful change.

For heptagon discussions, information gathering is focused on the community, relevant governance, workforce, structure and programs, infrastructure and technology as well as resources. Key stakeholders generally are individuals who could have a positive or negative effect on the implementation of the intervention. Many of these key stakeholders may be affected by the intervention through training, changes in practice or additional responsibilities.

The Heptagon Tool can be used by a staff group in an organization in a self-guided discussion or a discussion led by an Implementation Team. The dimensions and items for discussion draw attention to the factors that often are cited as facilitators and barriers to using innovations and producing intended benefits. During the Exploration Stage sub-committees can be formed to focus on one or two dimensions and develop information for decision making by the group.

As demonstrated by the Heptagon Tool, need, fit, resource availability, evidence, usability of the innovation, capacity to collaborate, and capacity to implement are key dimensions to consider. As the discussion proceeds to answer questions about the dimensions outlined in the Heptagon Tool, it is likely that the composition of the organization and stakeholder group will change to include people who have knowledge of relevant factors. The literature emphasizes securing “buy-in” and support from relevant stakeholders for the proposed new ways of work (e.g. effective innovations). Buy-in begins to be developed by the Implementation Team and local leaders during the Exploration Stage, as key stakeholders and other members of the broader community are engaged in the analysis of the identified problem or concern and have the opportunity to hear about the growing interest in identifying an effective and sustainable solution to be implemented.

Heptagon Categories and Questions to Guide Exploration Discussions	
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Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What data demonstrate the need for an innovation or improvement? ● What data demonstrate the social significance of this issue? ● What do the data tell us about the underlying needs of the population to be served? ● How do young people, parents, and the community members understand the issue or underlying needs of the population to be served?
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outcomes – Is it worth it? Will the innovation or improvement effort make a big enough difference to be worth the effort? ● What is the strength of the available evidence? ● Is there cost-effectiveness data? ● Does the available evidence align with the needs and context for this innovation or improvement effort?
Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent does this innovation or improvement effort align with one of the highest agency, community, or national priorities? ● To what extent does this innovation or improvement effort align with the organisational structures? ● To what extent does this innovation or improvement effort align with community values?
Usability of the Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is expert or technical assistance available? ● Are there any mature sites to observe? ● How many other sites have successfully implemented and sustained this approach? ● Does the approach have operational definitions of the essential functions? ● How well-defined are the necessary implementation drivers?

Capacity to Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the existing workforce meet the minimum qualifications for this innovation or improvement effort? • Will it be possible to sustain the necessary support to maintain staff competence, to maintain organisation supports, to financially maintain this innovation or improvement effort? • Can sufficient attention be given to developing buy-in with practitioners, young people, and families?
Resource Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the following resources and supports available to meet the programmatic requirements for the innovation or improvement effort? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staffing? - Training? - Data systems? - Technology supports? - Coaching and supervision? - Administration (internal policy and procedures)? - System alignment or to address barriers?
Capacity to Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a history of effective collaboration in this sector, across related partners, and in this geographic region? • Have key stakeholders been engaged in the exploration of this innovation or improvement effort? • Have transparent decision-making processes and communication methods been established? • Is there a broadly held shared purpose that aligns with this innovation or improvement effort?

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