



## Key points





## A deliberate and structured approach to implementation

There are some common concepts in implementation research, but there is no one comprehensive, widely accepted model for the implementation of evidence-based practices (Birken et al., 2017; Moullin et al., 2020). In light of this, AERO has identified and operationalised key evidence-based concepts from implementation research that support the use of a deliberate and structured approach to implementation for schools.

refers to intentionally committing to and planning for the implementation process, while means using reliable components systematically to inform the process of implementation.

The key elements of a deliberate and structured approach to implementation are connected and reinforce one another. These elements are:

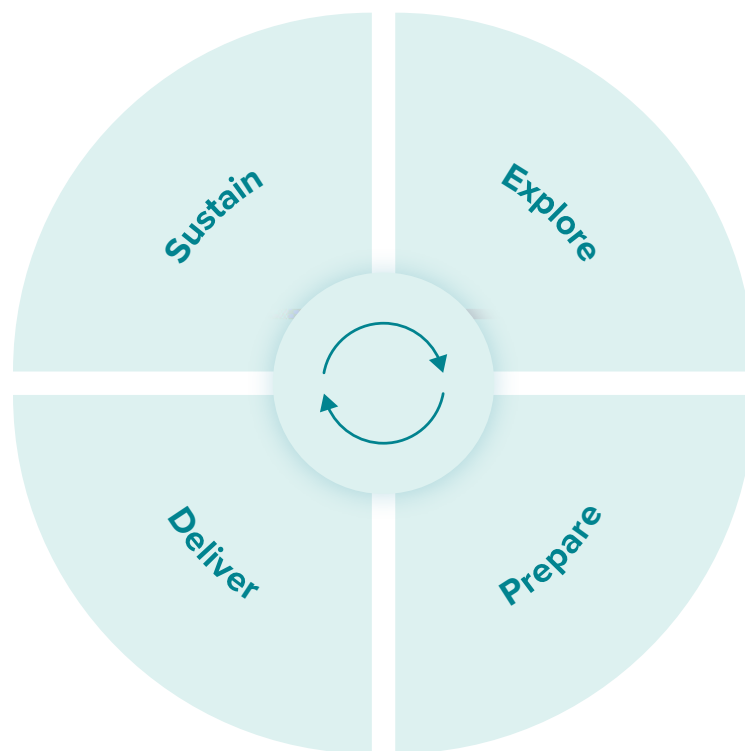
1. Consider school context (where)
2. Select an evidence-based practice (what)
3. Use implementation components (how) – use a staged approach, identify and respond to enablers and barriers, select key implementation strategies, and monitor implementation outcomes.

[Figure 1](#) shows a bottom-up approach to the ‘where’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ of implementation.







**Figure 2:** Stages of implementation

Source: 'Figure 1' in [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#) by E4L (2019, p. 8), licensed under a [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) licence. Adapted with permission, including recreating in AERO branding and simplifying content.



## Address enablers and barriers

Every implementation effort will experience enablers and barriers that can help or hinder the process. Understanding exactly what's acting as an enabler or barrier within a school context is useful, but being prepared to  to this information is key to effective implementation.

Each school has implementation enablers and barriers that are specific to their own setting, and these will likely change for each evidence-based practice that's implemented and over time. In implementation research, enablers and barriers are sometimes referred to as 'determinants'. There are frameworks that collate common implementation determinants that can be used by schools to help consider their own key enablers and barriers. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) is one of the most used determinant frameworks (Damschroder et al., 2022). It includes 5 different areas or 'domains' that determinants sit within, recognising that implementation is influenced by different people, processes and contexts.



## Use key implementation strategies

Implementation strategies are the 'how to' component of turning research into practice (Proctor et al., 2013). They're the activities that shift evidence-based practices from theory into everyday use (Cook et al., 2019). Schools will likely be familiar with often-used implementation strategies such as professional learning and coaching. However, effective use of implementation strategies isn't just about choosing the right strategies for a school's context but also how they're combined and sequenced. For example, when considering sequencing, professional learning strategies to develop teachers' knowledge about specific elements of an evidence-based practice would likely precede any strategies related to teaching observations and coaching.

There's a wide range of implementation strategies a school can choose from. The most comprehensive taxonomy is the School Implementation Strategies, Translating ERIC Resources (SISTER) project<sup>2</sup> (Waltz et al., 2019). SISTER highlights 75 strategies (e.g., develop a detailed implementation plan or blueprint) across 9 domains (e.g., adapt and tailor to context, train and educate stakeholders) to support implementation (Cook et al., 2019). Starting with a taxonomy such as SISTER is useful for schools to see the breadth of strategies available to support implementation.



## Monitor implementation outcomes

Implementation outcomes are used to monitor the strength of implementation throughout each stage. These outcomes are the \_\_\_\_\_ of implementation and help to guide the implementation process.

Implementation outcomes are distinct from (but connected to) effectiveness outcomes, which concern the impact on student learning. Strong implementation outcomes are a good indicator of future impact on student learning outcomes.

Monitoring implementation outcomes enables schools to adapt implementation to meet their needs and respond to contextual factors. For example, if acceptability of the evidence-based practice is low, a school may decide to target acceptability as an implementation outcome or spend more time in the Prepare stage to deliver specific professional learning on the practice.

There are 8 outcomes that can be used to evaluate the success of implementation, outlined in [Table 1](#) (Proctor et al., 2011).

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**Table 1:** Definitions for implementation outcomes

Outcome	Definition for schools
Acceptability	The perception among stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, families, community) that a given evidence-based practice is agreeable, palatable or satisfactory.
Adoption	The intention, initial decision or action to try an evidence-based practice.
Appropriateness	The perceived fit, relevance or compatibility of the evidence-based practice for a specific school (including staff, students, families and community).
Feasibility	The extent to which an evidence-based practice can be successfully used or carried out within a given school.
Fidelity	The degree to which an intervention or practice is implemented as intended, especially in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• adherence to the description of the practice</li><li>• dosage – the frequency and amount of use</li><li>• quality of use of the practice.</li></ul>
Implementation cost	The extent of the cost of implementation based on the particular evidence-based practice, the implementation strategy and school context.
Penetration	The degree to which the evidence-based practice has been integrated within a school.
Sustainability	The extent to which an evidence-based practice is maintained and embedded within a school's ongoing operations.

Source: Based on [Outcomes for Implementation Research: Conceptual Distinctions, Measurement Challenges, and Research Agenda](#) by Enola Proctor, Hiie Silmere, Ramesh Raghavan, Peter Hovmand, Greg Aarons, Alicia Bunger, Richard Griffey and Melissa Hensley (2011), licensed under a [CC BY-NC 2.0](#) licence.

Different implementation outcomes can be monitored during different stages of implementation.



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