

The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool  
Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool Instructions  
*Kentucky Department of Education Adaptation*



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Metz, A. & Louison, L. (2019) The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Based on Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and Blase, Kiser & Van Dyke (2013).

## Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool Instructions

The Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool helps organizations evaluate new and existing innovations (programs, practices, curriculum, strategies, initiatives, etc.). This tool is designed to be used by a team to ensure diverse perspectives are represented in a discussion of the six contextual fit and feasibility factors.

### INNOVATION INDICATORS

Innovation indicators assess new or existing innovations that will be implemented along the following domains: evidence, supports, and usability. These indicators specify the extent to which the identified innovation demonstrates evidence, supports for implementation, and usability across a range of contexts.

### SYSTEM INDICATORS

System indicators assess the extent to which a new or existing innovation is a match for the organization along the following domains: population need, fit, and capacity. The assessment specifies suggested conditions and requirements for a strong match to need, fit, and capacity for the identified innovation.

### WHEN TO USE

The Hexagon Tool can be used at any stage (e.g., choosing a new innovation or strengthening one already in use) in an innovation's implementation to determine its fit with the local context (e.g., size of district, location [rural or urban], funding structure). It is most commonly used during the Exploration stage: the period when an organization is identifying possible new innovations to implement. This tool also helps to identify gaps in Initial Implementation when beginning to rethink the use of an innovation.

### HOW TO USE

#### PRIOR TO USING

1. Identify broadly the need to be addressed by potential innovation.
2. Identify the innovation to be assessed.
3. Identify a team with diverse perspectives and roles to participate in the discussion. Suggested team members include leaders, managers, direct practitioners and consumers or community members.
4. Review the discussion questions prior to meeting to ensure any data or resources that need to be reviewed for this discussion are available. If appropriate, an organization may prioritize components for deeper exploration based on the organization's context and innovations under analysis.

#### DURING USE

1. The team should review and discuss the questions for each indicator and document relevant considerations. The team may modify or add questions in the blank spaces provided when considering evidence for use of an innovation in a specific content area (e.g., math, literacy). Notes can be added in the available space to address unique needs and contexts.
2. The team should determine which Hexagon factor to begin with based on their local context.
3. After discussing each component, the team rates the component using the 5-point Likert scale in each section.
4. Using the discussion notes and ratings, the team makes recommendations about whether to adopt, replicate, or de-implement the innovation. While ratings should be taken into account during the decision-making process, the ratings alone should not be used to determine final recommendations.

# The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool

The Hexagon can be used as a planning tool to guide selection and evaluate potential innovations for use.

## IMPLEMENTATION INDICATORS

### SYSTEM INDICATORS

#### CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT

- Staff meet minimum qualifications
- Able to sustain staffing, coaching, training, data systems, performance assessment, and administration
  - Financial capacity
  - Structural capacity
  - Cultural responsiveness capacity
- Buy-in process operationalized
  - Practitioners
  - Families

#### FIT WITH CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Alignment with community, regional, state priorities
- Fit with family and community values, culture and history
- Impact on other interventions & initiatives
- Alignment with organizational structure

#### NEED

- Target population identified
- Disaggregated data indicating population needs
- Parent & community perceptions of need
- Addresses service or system gaps

### INNOVATION INDICATORS

#### EVIDENCE

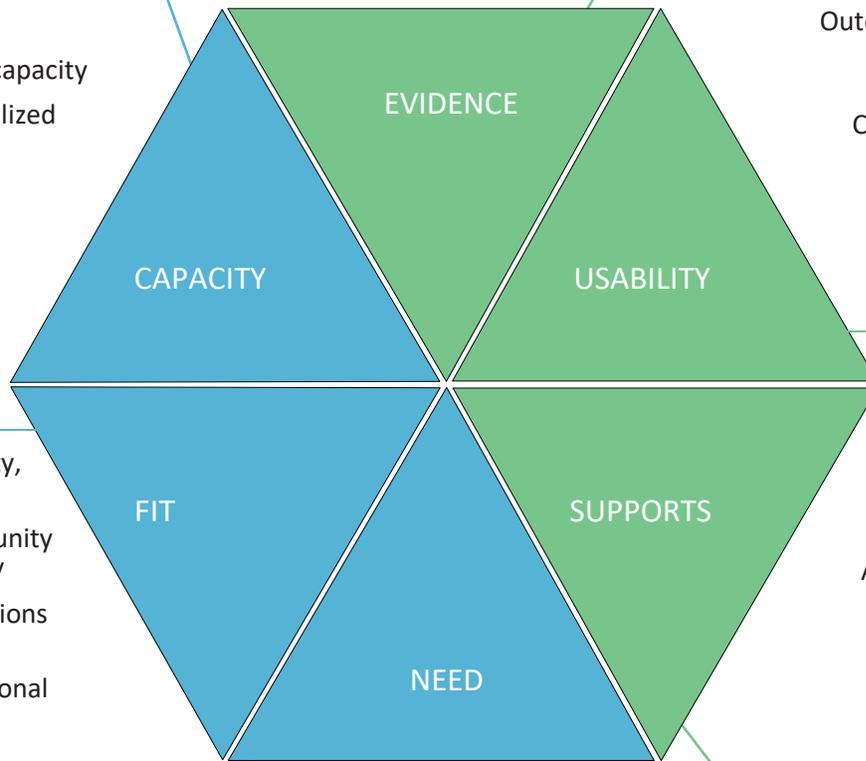
- Strength of evidence—for whom in what conditions:
  - Number of studies
  - Population similarities
  - Diverse cultural groups
  - Efficacy or Effectiveness
- Outcomes – Is it worth it?
  - Fidelity data
  - Cost-effectiveness data

#### USABILITY

- Well-defined innovation
- Mature examples to observe
- Several replications
- Adaptations for context

#### SUPPORTS

- Expert Assistance
- Staffing
- Training
- Coaching & Supervision
- Racial equity impact assessment
- Data Systems Technology Supports (IT)
- Administration & System



Facilitator(s):

Today's Date:

Individuals Participating in the Assessment:

Innovation Being Assessed:

Identified Need to be Addressed:

Identify the innovation to be assessed. Write the numerical rating that best describes each component below.

		INNOVATION 1	INNOVATION 2	INNOVATION 3
INNOVATION INDICATORS	EVIDENCE			
	USABILITY			
	SUPPORTS			
SYSTEM INDICATORS	NEED			
	FIT			
	CAPACITY			

1. Are there research data available to demonstrate the effectiveness (e.g. randomized trials, quasi-experimental designs) of the innovation? If yes, provide citations or links to reports or publications.
2. What is the strength of the evidence? Under what conditions was the evidence developed?
3. What outcomes are expected when the innovation is implemented as intended? How much of a change can be expected?
4. If research data are not available, are there evaluation data to indicate effectiveness (e.g. pre/post data, testing results, action research)? If yes, provide citations or links to evaluation reports.
5. Is there practice-based evidence or community-defined evidence to indicate effectiveness? If yes, provide citations or links.
6. Is there a well-developed theory of change or logic model that demonstrates how the innovation is expected to contribute to short term and long-term outcomes?
7. Do the studies (research and/or evaluation) provide data specific to the setting in which it will be implemented (e.g., has the innovation been researched or evaluated in a similar context)?  
If yes, provide citations or links to evaluation reports.
8. Do the studies (research and/or evaluation) provide data specific to effectiveness for culturally and linguistically specific populations? If yes, provide citations or links specific to effectiveness for families or communities from diverse cultural groups
9. Add additional question

**Ratings** - Does the Innovation demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving outcomes?

5 Strong Evidence from experimental study; or

4 Moderate Evidence from quasi-experimental study; or

3 Promising Evidence from correlational study; or

2 Demonstrates a Rationale *based on high-quality research findings (evidence informed)* and it is likely to improve outcomes. *Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects (PDSA-Cycles).*

1 No Evidence

Additional Questions/ Notes

1. Is the innovation clearly defined (e.g. what it is, for whom it is intended)?
2. Are core features of the innovation identified, listed, named (e.g. key components of the innovation that are required in order to be effective)?
3. Is each core feature well operationalized (e.g., staff know what to do and say, how to prepare, how to assess progress)?
4. Is there guidance on core features that can be modified or adapted to increase contextual fit?
5. Is there a fidelity assessment that measures practitioner behavior (i.e., assessment of whether staff use the innovation as intended)? If yes, provide citations, documents, or links to fidelity assessment information.
6. Has the innovation been adapted for use within culturally and linguistically specific populations and/or is there a recommended process for gathering community input into culturally specific enhancements?
7. What do we know about the key reasons for previous successful replications?
8. What do we know about the key problems that led to unsuccessful replication efforts previously?
9. Are there mature examples with successful histories of implementing the innovation who are willing to be observed?
10. Add Additional questions
11. Add Additional questions

**Ratings**

**5 Highly Usable**

The innovation has operationalized principles and values, core components that are measurable and observable, and a validated fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations

**4 Usable**

The innovation has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are identified to support contextualization for new settings or populations

**3 Somewhat Usable**

The innovation has operationalized principles and values and core components that are measurable and observable but does not have a fidelity assessment; modifiable components are not identified

**2 Minimally Usable**

The innovation has identified principles and values and core components; however, the principles and core components are not defined in measurable or observable terms; modifiable components are not identified

**1 Not Usable**

The innovation does not identify principles and values or core components

Additional Questions/ Notes

1. Is there a qualified “expert” (e.g., consultant, innovation developer, intermediary, technical assistance provider) who can help with implementation over time? If yes, list names and/or organization (e.g. Center, University) and contacts.
2. Are there start-up costs for implementation of the innovation (e.g., fees to the innovation developer)? If yes, itemize in notes section. What does the organization receive for these costs?
3. Are there curricula and other resources related to the innovation readily available? If so, list publisher or links. What is the cost of these materials? Enter in notes section.
4. Is training and professional development related to this innovation readily available? Is training culturally sensitive? Does it address issues of race equity, cultural responsiveness or implicit bias? Include the source of training and professional development. What is the cost of these materials? Enter in notes section.
5. Is coaching available for this innovation? Is coaching culturally sensitive? If so, list coaching resources and cost in notes section.
6. Are sample job descriptions and interview protocols available for hiring or selecting new staff for this innovation? If so, identify here and any costs associated.
7. Is guidance on administrative policies and procedures available? If so, identify resources and any costs associated.
8. Are there resources to develop a data management plan for this innovation (including data system and monitoring tools) available? If so, identify resources and any costs associated.
9. Is there a recommended orientation to facilitate “buy-in” for staff, key stakeholders and collaborative partners? If so, explain/describe briefly in notes section.
10. Add additional question
11. Add additional question

**Ratings**

**5 Well Supported**

Comprehensive resources are available from an expert (a innovation developer or intermediary) to support implementation, including resources for building the competency of staff (staff selection, training, coaching, fidelity) and organizational practice (data system and data use support, policies and procedures, stakeholder and partner engagement.)

**4 Supported**

Some resources are available to support implementation, such as resources to support staff competency but not organizational practice

**3 Somewhat Supported**

Limited resources are available, such as a curriculum available for purchase

**2 Minimally Supported**

General guidance provided (such as suggestion to use strengths-based approaches with staff) but no specific resources

**1 Not Supported**

Few to no resources to support implementation

**Additional Questions/ Notes**



1. Who is the identified population of concern?
2. What is/are the identified needs of this population?
3. Was an analysis of data conducted to identify specific area(s) of need relevant to the innovation? If yes, what data were analyzed? Were these data disaggregated by race, ethnicity and language?
4. How do affected individuals and community members perceive their need? What do they believe will be helpful? How were community members engaged to assess their perception of need?
5. Is there evidence that the innovation addresses the specific area(s) of need identified? If so, how was this evidence generated (e.g., experimental research design, quasi- experimental research design, pre-post, descriptive)?
6. If the innovation is implemented, what can potentially change for this population?
7. Add additional questions if needed
8. Add additional questions if needed

### Ratings

#### 5 Strongly Meets Need

The innovation has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., experimental design) with comparable population; disaggregated data have been analyzed to demonstrate innovation meets need of specific subpopulations

#### 4 Meets Need

The innovation has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through rigorous research (e.g., experimental design) with comparable population; disaggregated data have not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

#### 3 Somewhat Meets Need

The innovation has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through less rigorous research design (e.g., quasi-experimental, pre-post) with comparable population; disaggregated data have not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

#### 2 Minimally Meets Need

The innovation has demonstrated meeting need for identified population through practice experience; disaggregated data have not been analyzed for specific subpopulation

#### 1 Does Not Meet Need

The innovation has not demonstrated meeting need for identified population

### Additional Questions/ Notes

1. How does the innovation fit with priorities of the organization?
2. How does the innovation fit with family and community values in the impacted community, including the values of culturally and linguistically specific populations?
3. What other initiatives currently being implemented will intersect with the innovation?
4. How does the innovation fit with other existing initiatives?
5. Will the other initiatives make it easier or more difficult to implement the proposed innovation and achieve the desired outcomes?
6. How does the innovation fit with the community's history?
7. Add additional questions if needed
8. Add additional questions if needed

### Ratings

#### 5 Strong Fit

The innovation fits with the priorities of the organization; community values, including the values of culturally and linguistically specific populations; and other existing initiatives

#### 4 Fit

The innovation fits with the priorities of the organization and community values; however, the values of culturally and linguistically specific population have not been assessed for fit

#### 3 Somewhat Fit

The innovation fits with the priorities of the organization, but it is unclear whether it aligns with community values and other existing initiatives

#### 2 Minimal Fit

The innovation fits with some of the priorities of the organization, but it is unclear whether it aligns with community values and other existing initiatives

#### 1 Does Not Fit

The innovation does not fit with the priorities of the organization or community values

### Additional Questions/ Notes

1. Typically, how much does it cost to run the innovation each year? Are there resources to support this cost? If the current budget cannot support this format, outline a resource development strategy.
2. What are the staffing requirements for the innovation? (Number and type of staff, e.g., education, credentials, content knowledge)
3. Does the organization currently employ or have access to staff that meet these requirements?
4. If so, do those staff have a cultural and language match with the population they serve, as well as relationships in community?
5. What administrative practices must be developed or refined to support the use of this innovation?
6. Is leadership knowledgeable about and in support of this innovation? Do leaders have the diverse skills and perspectives representative of the community being served?
7. Do staff have the capacity to collect and use data to inform ongoing monitoring and improvement of the innovation?
8. What administrative policies or procedures must be adjusted to support the work of practitioners and others to implement the innovation?
9. Will the current communication system facilitate effective internal and external communication with stakeholders, including impacted families and the community?
10. Will the innovation require use of or changes to building facilities? Use notes section to explain. List required uses of and/or changes. Include costs if known.
11. Does the innovation require new technology (hardware or software, such as a data system)? Use notes section to explain. List required hardware and/or software. Include costs if known.
12. Does the innovation require use of or changes to the monitoring and reporting system? Use notes section to explain. List required uses of and/or changes. Include costs if known.
13. Add additional questions if needed

## **Ratings**

### **5 Strong Capacity**

The organization adopting this innovation has all of the capacity necessary, including a qualified workforce, financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the innovation with integrity

### **4 Adequate Capacity**

The organization adopting this innovation has most of the capacity necessary, including a qualified workforce, financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the innovation with integrity

### **3 Some Capacity**

The organization adopting this innovation has some of the capacity necessary, including a qualified workforce, financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the innovation with integrity

### **2 Minimal Capacity**

The organization adopting this innovation has minimal capacity necessary, including a qualified workforce, financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the innovation with integrity

### **1 No Capacity**

The organization adopting this innovation does not have the capacity necessary, including a qualified workforce, financial supports, technology supports, and administrative supports required to implement and sustain the innovation with integrity

Additional Questions/ Notes