



Healthy Teen Network

POSITION STATEMENT ON EVIDENCE & INNOVATION

Adopted by the Healthy Teen Network Board of Directors on June 8, 2018



Position

Healthy Teen Network believes that organizations and individuals that deliver client-focused programs and services should use evidence-based interventions and approaches, when they are available and appropriate to the people being supported.

Healthy Teen Network also believes that innovation is critical to addressing the holistic needs of all youth and to keeping interventions and approaches relevant and responsive. Innovations pursued must be based on evidence gathered through research, so the intervention or approach is determined to be appropriate and poised to lead to the desired outcomes before it is promoted.

We see value in undertaking intervention research as the effectiveness or pitfalls of interventions and approaches can be uncovered, and the feasibility of transferring the findings to other populations can be determined.

Issue

To meet the physical, social, and ecological needs of all people, we must employ a holistic approach to behavior, policy, and system change, and respond to ever-changing conditions under which people process and access information and/or services. This agility is imperative in the development and delivery of approaches, programs, and services.

Innovation is the adoption of a new product or service that is valuable and fills a gap.¹ Well-established programs and practices of today were once innovations, and today's innovative approaches, if proven effective, will likely become standards of practice.^{2,3} Thus the need for innovation never stops. Innovation can come in the form of new technologies to deliver information (such as digital media), new approaches to deliver programs and services (such as youth-friendly services), or a new frame to address an issue (such as [Youth 360⁰](#)).

Regardless of the shape it takes, innovation should follow these principles:

Be human-centered and population based: In order to be fully responsive, the innovation must be designed around the specific needs of the population and how the intended audience will interact physically with the innovation.¹

Be informed by evidence and experience: Evidence is the building block of any innovation,⁴ as it dictates what may or may not work and identifies gaps that the innovation can help fill. If built on evidence, the innovation is poised to have significant and long-standing effects. Evidence and research from many fields can be used to inspire, motivate change, and identify new solutions.

Be achieved through both incremental and disruptive approaches: Disruptive innovations are radical changes in current standards of practice.⁵ However, incremental innovations are progressive changes that arise from constant inquiry, testing, and iterating potential solutions to current standards of practice.⁶

Be tested to the extent of possibilities: In order to learn about the effectiveness of the innovation, it must be tested and evaluated.⁷ Not all innovations can be rigorously tested using randomized control trials, nor should they. However, data that reflect utilization, adoption, satisfaction, and benefits of the innovation will greatly increase its chances of becoming a standard of practice in the future.

Supporting Information

¹ Kelley, T. (2001). *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in creativity from IDEO, America's leading design firm*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

² Couros, G. (2018, April 13). Every "best practice" in education was once an innovation. *The Principal of Change*. Retrieved from <https://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/8189>

³ Drucker, P. F. (1985). The discipline of innovation. *Harvard business review*, 63(3), 67-72.

⁴ Blank, S. & Newell, S. (2017, September 11). What your innovation process should look like. *Harvard Business Publishing*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/09/what-your-innovation-process-should-look-like>

⁵ Christensen, C. M., Raynor, M. E., & McDonald, R. (2015). What is disruptive innovation. *Harvard Business Review*, 93(12), 44-53.

⁶ Ali, A. (1994). Pioneering versus incremental innovation: Review and research propositions. *Journal of Product Innovation Management: An International Publication of the Product Development & Management Association*, 11(1), 46-61.

⁷ Patton, M. Q. (2010). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Embracing innovation is not without its problems. Developing and implementing innovations is challenged by organizational cultures not responsive to change in their standards of practice,¹ or funders cautious about its potential in producing positive outcomes.⁸ A climate not conducive to innovation may also impose the same evaluation and performance metrics used for standards of practice, which may be inappropriate for the innovation being used. Innovation flourishes when there is a collaboration of partners from different backgrounds and expertise.^{9,10} Generating ideas within a group accustomed to the standard of practice may stifle creativity and is blind to the possibilities of new solutions.

Healthy Teen Network © 2018

1501 Saint Paul Street | Suite 114 | Baltimore, MD 21202 | 410.685.0410

www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org

⁸ Kasper, G., & Marcoux, J. (2014). The re-emerging art of funding innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 12(2), 28-35.

⁹ Dance, J. (2008, September 27). 5 reasons why collaboration contributes to innovation. *Fresh Consulting*. Retrieved from <https://www.freshconsulting.com/5-reasons-why-collaboration-contributes-to-innovation/>

¹⁰ Colin, P. (2016, April 25). How collaboration can foster creativity and innovative thinking. *Convergence*. Retrieved from <https://projectdelivery.autodesk.com/blog/how-collaboration-can-foster-creativity-innovation/>