



Scaling Transformative Change

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership

Adoption and Adaptation

Evidence

Storytelling

Networks

Dissemination

Technology

Spread and Endurance

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Guiding Principle for Evidence: Scaling of transformative change will occur when evidence collected through ongoing and responsive evaluation is used strategically.

Transformative change in education is strengthened by the responsive use of evidence to foster improved processes and outcomes and support the growth and sustainability of these innovations. Evidence can take many forms (e.g., trend data, personal stories) and be used in many ways to illustrate the impact of an innovation, who it affects, and what has changed. Data are used to inform the decision making of transformative leaders, including supporting their key decisions on selecting innovations that have the potential to spread and endure.

Transformative leaders use evidence to demonstrate the value of innovations and to influence policy and practice changes necessary to spread innovations that improve students' lives. Additionally, transformative leaders use evidence to build trust and buy-in among stakeholder groups that they wish to engage, including administration, faculty, staff, students, employers, workforce, and community partners. Evidence strengthens storytelling by helping stakeholders to understand their role in implementing, sustaining, and scaling innovation. Gathering and analyzing evidence also builds organizational capacity for continuous improvement and expanded use of evaluation. Finally, evidence is critical to understanding who is being served and demonstrating that innovations are contributing to equity in access and outcomes for underserved populations of students.

Collection, analysis, and use of evidence are key to the spread and endurance of any transformative change innovation.

As innovations are scaled, they are adopted and adapted in new settings, impacting new populations of students. Over time, innovations are adapted in response to changes in systems, including changes in the knowledge of personnel and the resources and capacity of the systems to operate effectively. Therefore, the collection and analysis of evidence should be an ongoing process that is responsive to changes in the evolutionary adoption and adaptation of innovations within settings and in the impact of these innovations on the student populations served.

To facilitate transformative change, the intended outcomes need identified at the outset so that they can be used to drive development and implementation of the innovation. However, transformative leaders need to be prepared to allow the intended outcomes of the innovation to develop as the innovation is scaled and the context of the innovation changes. Additionally, the evaluation of transformative change in complex systems should include assessing unintended consequences, both positive and negative. This is necessary to capture evidence demonstrating the full scope of impact associated with the innovation.

Performance measures collected for the purpose of measuring accountability are needed but are insufficient to capture the impact of transformative change innovations. Leaders who focus on performance measures to the exclusion of other evaluative processes and data run the risk of failing to capture key information about implementation that is necessary to sustain or scale innovations. Performance data typically do not measure impact; rather, they demonstrate what is happening. As such, using performance data alone to tell the story of transformative change runs the risk of falsely attributing positive or negative impacts to the innovations themselves.

For this reason, it is important for leaders to understand the various forms of evaluation and how they inform the many evaluative questions that innovators need to address. Having said this, it is also important to note that all forms of evaluation have strengths and weaknesses that need to be carefully weighed. For example, quasi-experimental and experimental methods can be judged to be highly rigorous. However, if these studies do not provide sufficient understanding of the contextual and system changes that are occurring in relationship to implementation of the innovation (intervention), they run the risk of stagnating the innovation and reporting findings that, in comparison with current practices, are outdated and irrelevant (Patton, 2011).

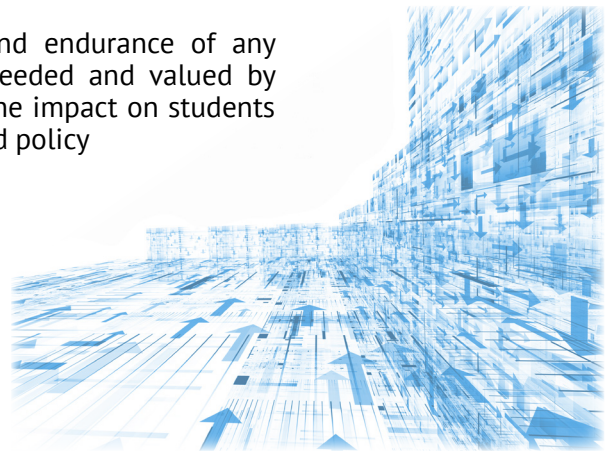
Similarly, leaders who focus on anecdotal cases risk making decisions that are not representative of the various populations that they serve. One option transformative leaders should consider is developmental evaluation. Developmental evaluation utilizes a wide range of methods in a dynamic design process that is both proactive and reactive, highly informative, and fully reflective of the changing context and adaptations that occur as the innovation matures. Developmental evaluation is described by Patton (2011) as follows

Developmental evaluation, conducted from a utilization-focused perspective, facilitates ongoing innovation by helping those engaged in innovation examine the effects of their actions, share and formulate hypotheses about what will result from their actions, and test their hypotheses about how to foment change in the face of uncertainty in situations characterized by complexity. (p. 14)

In the developmental evaluation approach, transformative leaders partner with evaluators to maximize the use of evidence to support the change process. They utilize developmental evaluation to facilitate short-term, responsive, targeted evaluations that inform the ongoing adoption, adaptation, and spread of the innovation (Patton, 2011). A central missive or purpose statement for the innovation in combination with principles, such as those proposed through the Transformative Change Initiative, serve concurrently as a framework for a) conducting the developmental evaluation, b) adapting and spreading the innovation, and c) inspiring and supporting new adopters of the innovation.

Collecting evidence on transformative change requires substantial investment, but the pay-off is invaluable. One strategy used to manage large-scale evaluations is to integrate evidence collection and analysis about the innovation into a continuous improvement process (Berke & Hamon, 2003). Continuous improvement processes encourage the development of an appreciation for the use of evidence and a skill set for collecting and analyzing data so that the many and varied stakeholders who engage in the process contribute in meaningful ways to improvement and sustainability (Bragg & Bennett, 2012).

Collection, analysis, and use of evidence are key to the spread and endurance of any transformative change innovation. A wide variety of evidence is needed and valued by transformative leaders. This includes evidence from stories relating the impact on students and descriptions and measures of process implementation, program and policy implementation, organizational performance, outcomes and equity, and continuous improvement. For transformative leaders, broad-based sources of evidence form the foundation for making ongoing decisions in complex and dynamic environments. Transformative leaders use what they learn to work towards the shared goal of maximizing the impact of innovation for all students.



References

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