



Evidence and
Implementation
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Melbourne, Australia & Online



Behavioural and Implementation
Science Interventions
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



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#140 - Scaling *smalltalk*

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Objectives/aims

This presentation will describe the work we undertook planning for the scaling of an evidence-based service enhancement called 'smalltalk' into new locations and jurisdictions. Our aim is to extend its impact beyond its original location in Victoria, Australia.

'smalltalk' is a light-touch, low-intensity innovation designed as a service enhancement and built on a solid foundation of empirical evidence. It has demonstrated significant positive outcomes in both the short and long term.

Through careful planning, collaboration, and adaptation, the intent of this project was to assess what would be required to replicate and implement 'smalltalk' in diverse contexts. We considered the unique characteristics and needs of each new location and jurisdiction, with the goal of achieving outcomes like those we have achieved in Victoria over the past 10 years.

Methods

We employed various methods to inform our spread and scaling plan. In addition to a review of the literature to identify the different types of scaling (scaling-out, scaling-up and scaling-deep), we reviewed the initial, successful scale-up of *smalltalk* in its original jurisdiction to identify facilitators and barriers encountered. We conducted interviews and focus groups with the program's funders, providers, and recipients to gather their perspectives, feedback, and suggestions for improvement. We then completed in-depth interviews with potential program beneficiaries in other jurisdictions to identify alternative methods and delivery modalities (adaptations) to ensure applicability and fit in the new locations. We also met with potential partners in the new locations to assess opportunities, potential facilitators and barriers and other constraints.



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Main findings

Spreading and scaling an innovation poses significant challenges for various reasons, even when the innovation is evidence-based, designed to fit an established delivery platform, and relatively easy to implement.

The process of spreading and scaling is inherently complex and influenced by numerous factors. Local regulations, policies, funding arrangements, stakeholder relationships, and other requirements all play a role in either facilitating or impeding the adoption of new interventions or innovations in different locations. Due to the intricate networks in which innovations are embedded, there is no universally accepted approach to achieving successful spread and scaling. Furthermore, contextual factors present a challenge, as many intervention and evaluation designs aim to eliminate contextual confounders, despite the fact that these represent the normal conditions in which interventions must be integrated for practical feasibility.

Through our analysis, we have gained valuable insights into the factors that contributed to or hindered the initial successful expansion of our innovation. Moreover, our consultations have confirmed that replicating the scaling approach taken in Victoria is unlikely, given the differences and complexities in policy and funding across other states in Australia.