OASH | Office of Population Affairs

Executive Summary: Building Networks to Develop Innovative Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TPP20 INNOVATION AND IMPACT NETWORK GRANTS

September 2024

PURPOSE STATEMENT

In this executive summary, we present the key findings from an implementation evaluation of the 13 grantees awarded Innovation and Impact Network (Innovation Network) Grants under the Office of Population Affairs' 2020 Cohort of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs (OPA) sought to understand how grantees implemented the TPP Tier 2 Innovation Network grant strategy. This included documenting the factors that influenced implementation, what challenges grantees encountered, and what factors facilitated their success in developing and maintaining a multidisciplinary network to explore, develop, test, refine, and evaluate innovative new interventions to prevent teen pregnancy and reduce rates of sexually transmitted infection among their selected priority area population. For more information, please see the final report located on the OPA website.

Background

The Office of Population Affairs (OPA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funded 13 organizations through the 2020 cohort of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Tier 2: Innovation and Impact Network (Innovation Network) grants.[1] The grant tasked projects to form a multidisciplinary network, use innovation design steps to develop and test new interventions to prevent unintended teen pregnancy and reduce rates of STIs within their priority area, and then to refine and evaluate those interventions over a three-year grant period from July 2020 to June 2023. When they applied for the funding, each grantee chose to focus their activities on one of seven key priority areas:

- Caregivers
- Foster care and child welfare
- Youth engagement
- Youth access to and experience with sexual healthcare
- Expectant and parenting youth
- Juvenile justice
- Youth with disabilities

Implementation of the Tier 2 Innovation Network grants varied, but all projects were required to include the following elements:

- **Priority Area**. Focus on one priority area and engage interested parties to develop innovative interventions that could contribute to reduced rates of teen pregnancy and STIs.

- **Innovation and Impact Strategy.** Develop a strategy to authentically and proactively engage key partners to guide the project.

- **Innovation Network.** Establish, coordinate, and support a collaborative, multidisciplinary network of core partners to explore, develop, test, refine, evaluate, and disseminate interventions.

- **Explore, Develop, Test, Refine, and Evaluate Interventions.** Explore and develop innovative interventions for the priority area based on identified needs. Test, refine, and evaluate interventions and move promising interventions into summative evaluation. (Exhibit ES-1 summarizes this five-phase "innovation pipeline.")

- **Disseminate Innovations and Lessons Learned.** Consistently learn and disseminate findings from their innovation processes. When appropriate, evaluate which innovations are effective, disseminate effective innovations, and disseminate information about them.

The TPP20 Evaluation

In 2021, Abt Global (formerly Abt Associates) and its partners Decision Information Resources and Data Soapbox (the study team) were awarded a contract by OPA to understand how
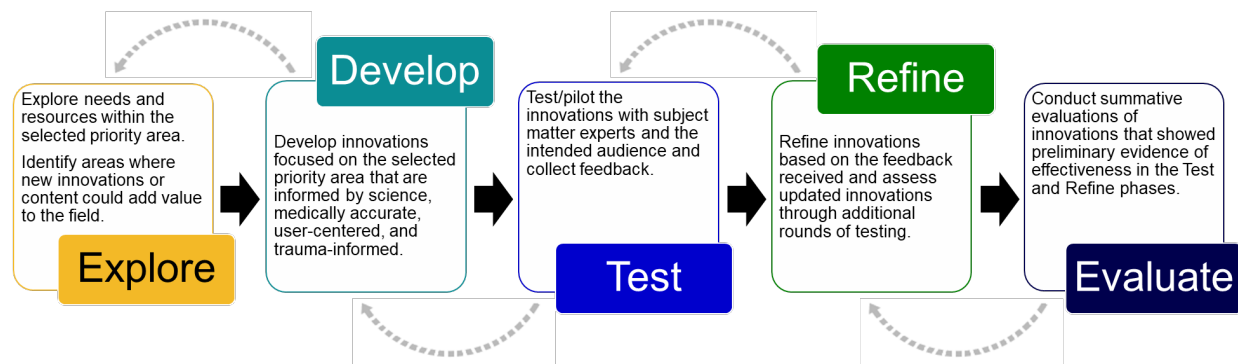
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[1] See Section 2 for information about the organizations awarded the TPP Tier 2 Innovation Network grants.

grantees implemented the TPP Tier 2 Innovation Network grant strategy (the TPP20 Evaluation). The purpose of the TPP20 Evaluation was to understand the factors that influenced implementation, challenges grantees encountered, and factors that facilitated their success in developing and maintaining a multidisciplinary network with the goal to explore, develop, test, refine, and evaluate innovative new interventions to prevent unintended teen pregnancy and reduce rates of STIs. Findings reflect progress made over the first two-and-a-half years of the three-year grant (July 2020-January 2023).

Developing Networks and Their Innovation Pipeline

To support the goals of the Tier 2 Innovation Network grant program, each grantee formed an innovation and impact network, a collaborative, multidisciplinary network of core partners, to progress interventions along their unique innovation pipeline. The innovation pipeline includes five phases: Explore, Develop, Test, Refine, and Evaluate, as shown in Exhibit ES-1.

Exhibit ES-1. The Innovation Pipeline

Explore
Explore needs and resources within the selected priority area.

Identify areas where new innovations or content could add value to the field.

Develop
Develop innovations focused on the selected priority area that are informed by science, medically accurate, user-centered, and trauma-informed.

Test
Test/pilot the innovations with subject matter experts and the intended audience and collect feedback.

Refine
Refine innovations based on the feedback received and assess updated innovations through additional rounds of testing.

Evaluate
Conduct summative evaluations of innovations that showed preliminary evidence of effectiveness in the Test and Refine phases.

Source: Office of Population Affairs (2020).

Key Takeaways

These are the key takeaways and lessons learned from grantees developing their Innovation Networks and completing the innovation pipeline.

Developing and Coordinating the Network

- Grantees developed complex partnerships including a diverse set of organizations and individuals to ensure they had the skills and perspectives needed to complete the intervention development process.

- Network meetings that explicitly focused on cross-collaboration were essential to learning and moving through the innovation pipeline.

- Many projects engaged youth and community advisory groups or action councils in the exploration and intervention development process.

The Explore Phase

- Projects built on available data and research with specific and in-depth assessments to identify relevant needs for their selected priority area.

The Develop Phase

- Grantees and their formal partners largely spearheaded the development process, but youth, caregivers, and other partners also played a major role in informing it.

- During the Develop phase, grantees created a total of 91 innovative interventions, 76% of which were entirely new interventions. The remaining 24 percent used existing curricula and tools as inspiration or source materials.

The Test and Refine Phases

- Once an intervention moved into the Test phase, projects mostly relied on their formal network partners to help with testing by recruiting participants and hosting interventions.

- Projects designed testing protocols to capture participants' experiences using or receiving the intervention, the facilitation of the intervention (if applicable), their impression of the content, and feedback on the format of the intervention.

- Projects often completed multiple rounds of testing and refining for each intervention.

The Evaluate Phase

- Five out of the thirteen projects moved interventions to the Evaluate phase. The startup time to recruit and train an Innovation Network was often longer than anticipated, often exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Dissemination Phase

- Projects disseminated information about their interventions, lessons learned, or their network approach through a variety approaches, including online resources, trainings, published curricula or tools, publications, and presentations in public forms such as conferences, summits, and showcases.

Overall Lessons Learned

- Innovation work is hard, can be messy, and requires commitment and capacity for change. Grantees and their network partners needed to complete foundation work first to understand and adapt their concept or model of innovation, and partner capacity for innovation work was an essential factor in successful efforts.

- Networks need a strong leadership team and varied expertise to coordinate and complete the work. Defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations, early and developing shared terms to speak about each step was essential to the networks in moving through the innovation stages and maintaining clear communication internally.

- Networks could have benefitted from receiving technical assistance earlier on key innovation, network, and design concepts. Projects that did not have significant prior experience with human-centered design and the innovation process noted they did not fully understand these topics until midway through the project.

- Adjusting the network structure, partners, and approaches is necessary over time. Network composition, communication styles, and frequency of communication had to change as interventions moved into different phases of the development process or as projects explored and developed new interventions that required different skill sets.

- Treating youth and priority area members as part of the team, and, often demonstrating respect and the importance of their work in these roles by paying them for their time, helped promote trust and honest feedback. Meaningful involvement of people with lived experience at each stage of innovation helped projects ensure that they understood their needs and what aspects of the innovation resonated with them.

Authors

Tanya de Sousa, Eleanor Elmudesi, Lesley Freiman, and Kimberly Francis, *Abt Global*

Submitted to:

Alexandra Osberg, Public Health Analyst, Office of Population Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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