

Innovation Decision Path for Counties

The following are key decisions counties need to make, through their community program planning, regarding their Innovation component of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Counties won't necessarily consider the decision points in a prescribed order.

Issue for County	Barrier	Essential Purpose for Innovation (MHSA)	County's Learning/ Change Goal	Innovative Mental Health Practice/ Approach to Test
What significant, local challenge (consistent with the one or more of the four MHSA purposes) does the county want to address by piloting and evaluating a new/ changed mental health approach?	What (besides funding) has prevented the county from meeting this challenge? Why are existing (in the field of mental health) approaches lacking, insufficient, or inappropriate?	Which of the four MHSA Innovation purposes for Innovation is the primary area of intended change and learning? (Note that all four are likely to be the focus of improved service if Innovation is successful)	What will the county and the field of mental health learn by piloting this new or changed practice? How will the county measure the impact (mental health outcomes) of the Innovation and the key elements that contributed to successful outcomes?	What specific new, adapted, or adopted mental health practice or approach does the county want to try out as its vehicle for learning? If the Innovation is successful, what practice will the county continue (without Innovation funding)? How is the practice consistent with applicable MHSA General Standards?

Issue for County

- Issue to be addressed by Innovation funding, to be selected by community planning that focuses on priorities for piloting new/adapted mental health practices. Ideas for relevant Innovations can be generated from various sources, including previous community program planning.
- Writing Work Plan: Describe basis for selection of Innovation in *Community Program Planning* section of Work Plan.
- Guidelines: "INN projects may address issues faced by children, transition-age youth, adults, older adults, families (self-defined), neighborhoods, tribal and other communities, counties, multiple counties, or region."
- Issue can be any element of mental health, not just direct services

Barrier: Why aren't we doing this already?

- The Innovation should address a community mental health challenge for which there are no existing approaches (in the field of mental health) or existing mental health approaches are not relevant to the county's need for some specific reason
- Community program planning analyzes barriers (why we need to try out a new/changed approach) from perspectives of diverse, representative participants, informed by data and previous community planning discussions.

- If the county already knows, based on research or other evidence, that the proposed approach is likely to be successful and the main/only barrier is lack of funding, then Innovation is not an appropriate source of funds.
- Writing Work Plan: Addressing why existing mental health approaches don't exist or aren't relevant to county's goals can be relevant to several Work Plan sections: e.g. *Community Program Planning*, *Contribution to Learning*
- Guidelines: "As long as the INN project contributes to learning and maintains alignment with the MHSA General Standards...it may affect virtually any aspect of mental health practices or assessment of a new application of a promising approach to solving persistent, seemingly intractable mental health challenges."

Essential Purpose for Innovation

- Typically learning goals cluster around a *single* Essential Purpose. It is useful to select one priority Essential Purpose even if, from a service perspective, the proposed mental health practice/approach will affect all four Essential Purposes.
- Writing Work Plan: Selected Essential Purpose is relevant to most sections of work plan, including *Project Measurement*.
- Guidelines: "Counties must select one or more of these purposes for each INN project. The selected purpose(s) will be the key focus for learning and change."

County's Learning/Practice Change Goal

- Useful questions: What will the county learn about new/changed mental health practice and how will the learning be applied? What will be different (in the county and in the field of mental health) if the Innovation is successful?
- How will the county determine if the Innovation should be replicated? What aspects of the Innovation should be replicated? What are the best ways/areas to apply this Innovation?
- How will community members expected to benefit from the Innovation contribute to refining and answering learning questions?
- Learning/change goals and outcomes should be consistent with the selected Essential Purpose for Innovation.
- Writing Work Plan: County should include: a) brief statement of learning/practice change goal in *Project Description*; b) discussion of expected learning/change in *Contribution to Learning*; c) timeframe for learning and communicating results in *Timeline*; d) proposed outcomes and measurement of learning goals in *Project Measurement*.
- Guidelines: "An Innovation project is defined, for purposes of these guidelines, as one that contributes to learning rather than a primary focus on providing a service."

Mental Health Practices/Approaches County Wants to Try Out

- Selected mental health practice/approach must be consistent with Essential Purpose and learning/change goals.
- Selected mental health practice/approach must meet all applicable MHSA General Standards. (Standards that could apply, apply).

- Writing Work Plan: In *Project Description*, explain how mental health practice/approach meets definition of Innovation (see below), including which element of definition applies. If County is proposing an adapted mental health practice, specify which specific elements are new/changed and contribute to learning.
- In *Project Measurement*, include a discussion of how the County plans to measure the impact of the new practice (new/changed elements of an adapted practice). Describe participants and other stakeholders will participate in the review and assessment.
- Guidelines: “INN projects are novel, creative and/or ingenious mental health practices/approaches that contribute to learning and that are developed within communities through a process that is inclusive and representative, especially of unserved, underserved and inappropriately served individuals.” “By providing the opportunity to ‘try out’ new approaches that can inform current and future practices/approaches in communities, an Innovation contributes to learning....”
- Guidelines: “Selected mental health practice/approach must contribute to learning in one of three ways: 1) Introduces new mental health practices/approaches including prevention and early intervention that have never been done before, or 2) makes a change to an existing mental health practice/approach, including adaptation for a new setting or community, or 3) introduces a new application to the mental health system of a promising community-driven practice/approach or a practice/approach that has been successful in non-mental health contexts or settings.”
- Guidelines: “An established practice that is new to the County and otherwise unchanged cannot be funded under the Innovation component.”