

Laying the ground work for effective implementation: The role of government

Maree Walk's presentation

20 mins.

Government has a vital role in laying the groundwork for effective implementation of social policy and strategies to improve the lives of children and families.

By virtue of the multiple roles that Family and Community Services (FACS) plays; funder, co-designer and in the case of child protection – statutory authority, we are well placed to view the system as a whole and gauge the capacity and capability that will impact implementation.

Implementation is not an event but something that is now widely acknowledged as happening over time in distinct but overlapping phases. The first phase, often described as the Exploration Phase (Fixsen et al 2005), aims to examine the degree to which a particular innovation meets the community's needs and to determine the feasibility of implementation. The second phase, the Installation phase, focuses on the structural and instrumental changes, in a number of settings and systems, they must be made in order to initiate the new practices.

This presentation will discuss the ways in which government can contribute effectively to work done in these early, ground work, phases. We will use the context of current FACS initiatives.

This presentation will discuss the role and work of government in effectively establishing an innovative or co-design scope during the foundation setting, thereby creating the tone for implementation. This approach requires intensive cultural change within the organisation and with our service system partners, both government and non-government.

FACS is currently engaged in a range of initiatives that are actively applying implementation science principles. Some are state-wide (e.g. transition of children in statutory out of home care to the non-government sector), some are place based, but what they have in common is dedicating time and energy to project exploration phases.

This year FACS will commence implementation of a *Safe Home for Life*, a staged transformation of the child protection system to change legislation, policy and practice. A co-design approach to design and delivery will determine the structures, sequencing and the targets of the reform. Design decisions that leverage local resources and partnerships will be made as close to the delivery of services as possible. Setting this parameter early will drive a culture of shared accountability and a system that is fit for purpose.

We have decentralised, or localised, our government structures in the last year. To bring life to that new structure we will progressively implement new ways of working that are more local and less centrally planned. We would like to use our funding to bring in new forms of social investment and to better

account for the contributions that communities already bring to the table and support initiatives such as collective impact. This too is a significant cultural shift in the way government, non-governments and communities operate and we can't do that alone or without preparation.