

What Works? Part 2: Designing Systematic Variation in Program Components

Discussion

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Overview

- Some considerations & implications for
 - *whether & how* to conduct planned variation
 - *scaling up or learning from* planned variation
- Goal: help identify some key considerations
 - May differ by policy/program area
 - Considerations may interact
- Caveat: not necessarily unique to planned variation (but choices and implications seem more stark)

Some Considerations for *Whether & How to Conduct* Planned Variation

- Costs of components or combinations (CE, CB)
- Uncertainty about service technology (Arising from program theory, or prior empirical evidence)
 - In thresholds or decision points (what and where)
 - Time horizon of relevant outcomes (incl recidivism)
 - Focus on action theory and/or conceptual theory (proximal, intermediate, and/or distal outcomes)
 - Peer effects (e.g.) in service/treatment elements that might be affected by targeting
 - Costs of service/treatment options
- System- & organizational-level conditions & capacities
 - Data systems
 - Analytical capacities & proclivities of staff & organization
 - Discretion of frontline staff

Some Implications for *Scaling Up or Learning From* Planned Variation

- Dimensions
 - Within the tested context
 - Across similar tested contexts
 - Across different geographic or other relevant areas
 - Over time
- System- & organizational-level conditions & capacities
 - Data systems
 - Analytical capacities of staff
 - Discretion of & buy-in from frontline staff & managers

Some Implications for *Scaling Up or Learning From* Planned Variation

- * Unintended consequences from planned variation?
 - Performance measurement systems
 - Political support
 - Clients' perceptions (agency, stigma, opportunity, fairness)
 - Changes in service characteristics (e.g. peer effects)
- Processes for Updating Knowledge & Processes
 - Conducting retrospective checks
 - Adapting to new knowledge about program/processes from external sources