

Adapting a Program: Stoplight Model for Adaptation

When implementing an existing program in a new context, you will likely need to make changes to the program to fit your specific setting. This tool will help you identify, reflect on, and then determine the potential impact of adaptations you are considering making.

What Is Adaptation?

Adaptation is a normal part of program implementation and is an iterative, ongoing process. It entails finding a balance between achieving fit with the needs/values/preferences of your community AND fidelity to maintaining the core elements of the program you're planning to implement.

In other words, "adaptation is the dynamic process of thoughtful and intentional changes to the design or delivery of a program with the intended goal of increasing its alignment and/or effectiveness within a given context."¹

Why Do We Adapt?

Just because a program has strong evidence demonstrating its effectiveness, doesn't mean we can implement it without considering how well it meets the needs of our community. The process of adaptation allows us to increase alignment between the needs/preferences/values of the community the program will be implemented in along with the core components, goals, and resources needed to implement the program.

Spotlight Model for Adaptation



The stoplight model for adaptations will help you identify, reflect on, and then determine the potential impact of possible adaptations you are planning to make. This tool was originally developed by the National MCH Workforce Development Center and has been modified below. There are three levels of adaptation: **green**, **yellow**, and **red**.

¹ Wiltsey Stirman, S., Baumann, A.A. & Miller, C.J. The FRAME: an expanded framework for reporting adaptations and modifications to evidence-based interventions. *Implementation Sci* 14, 58 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-019-0898-y>

Type of Adaptation	Green	Yellow	Red
	Things that likely <u>CAN</u> be modified	Things that can likely be change, with <u>CAUTION</u>	Things that likely <u>CANNOT</u> be changed
What is it?	Minor changes that increase fit, reach, receptivity, and participation in the program	Moderate changes to nonessential elements of the program that can be adapted cautiously such as the specified content or methods (e.g. # of sessions, etc.)	Big changes that alter the fundamental structure of the program and should be avoided. If these are made, you need to carefully document the changes. You're essentially creating a new program that is not yet evidence-based but could be evidence-informed.
What does it look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customizing program materials to fit the priority population. E.g., change names, pictures, wording, etc. • Changing ways to recruit and/or engage priority population 	<p>Examples Related to Program Content or Methods Include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altering the length of program activities • Changing the order of sessions or sequence of activities • Adding activities to address other risk factors or behaviors • Applying the program to a different population <p>Examples Related to Program Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing delivery format/process • Modifying who delivers the program • Changing setting of delivery • Substituting activities and/or materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing health topic/behavior addressed • Adding activities that contradict or detract from the original program's goals • Deleting whole entire program components of major activities • Reducing duration and dose
<p><i>What changes can be made that are aligned with the needs/preferences/values of the community and won't alter the core components of the program?</i></p>			

Stoplight Model Example

Based on the results of a needs assessment, you and community members determine that the [Perinatal Depression Screening and Referral Project](#) in AMCHP's Innovation Hub seems like a good fit for your intended goals. The purpose of the program is to improve the number of perinatal depression screens among OB/GYN providers. The core components of this program included a one-time virtual training by a nurse educator, provision of a referral sheet tailored to the local area for positive screened women, and bi-monthly virtual follow-ups with providers by our program manager.

You would like to replicate the OB/GYN provider perinatal depression screening program for providers in an area where many of the women providers serve are Latina mothers from Guatemala who speak a Mayan dialect.

You identify and reflect on the adaptations you're planning to make:

- Changing the content of the screening to focus on substance use among pregnant women. This would be a red light adaption since it is altering a fundamental part of the program (its content).
- Adding material to the training about perceptions of depression among this specific Latina community. This is a green light adaptation since it entails adding content that will ensure the program better meets the needs of your community and also increases its receptivity. It's not taking away from any existing content.
- Holding the trainings in-person rather than virtually. This is a yellow adaptation since it's changing the delivery mechanism for the training. That being said, as long as the implementer has the necessary resources to do this in person, since it's based on participant preference, this could potentially be a green light adaptation.

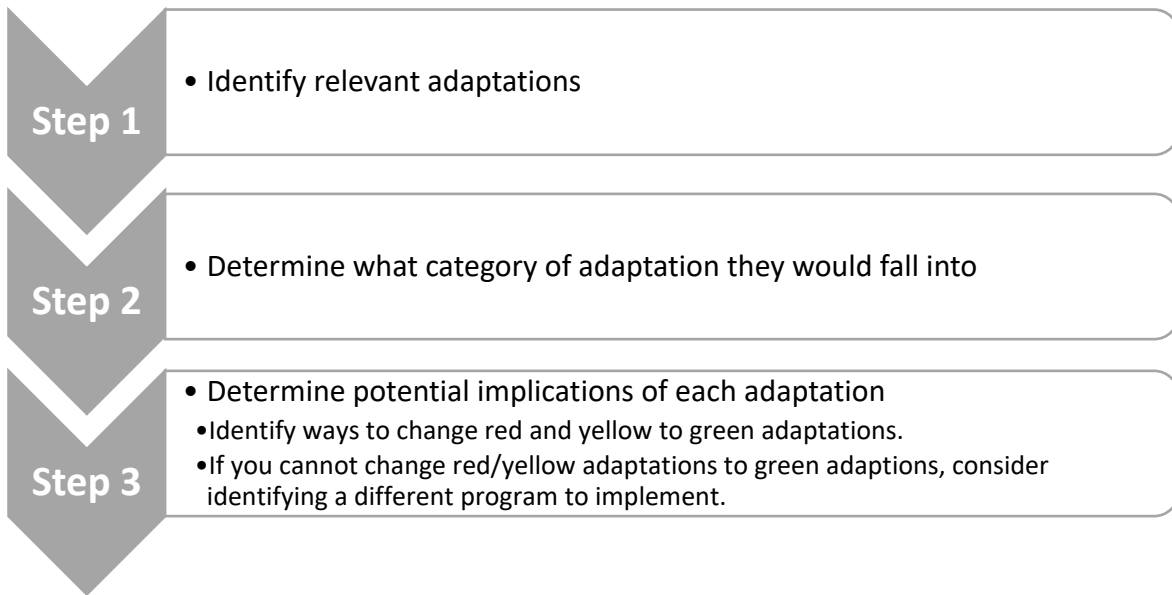
After this exercise, you determine that you will add in language/examples that focus on perceptions of depression among this specific community and will hold trainings in-person while also adding additional evaluation measures to determine how effective the in-person delivery method is.

Applying the Stoplight Model

When considering a potential adaptation, ask yourself:

- What am I trying to adapt?
- What do I hope to achieve by making this adaptation?
- Which category of adaptation will this fall into? (Red, yellow, green)
 - If what you're proposing to do falls into the red or yellow category, determine whether this program is best aligned with what you're hoping to accomplish by implementing it.

Follow these steps when applying the stoplight model to your work:



Use the table below to help you identify and categorize your intended adaptations:

What are you planning to adapt?	What will be achieved by making this adaptation?	Is this a green, yellow, or red adaptation?	If this is a red or yellow adaptation, how can you turn this into a green adaptation? <i>*If you can't, consider if this program is actually the best fit for your intended goals.</i>