

Feedback Loop Protocol

Goal

The goal of the feedback loop is to develop an ongoing and consistent interpersonal relationship with beneficiaries and providers of state programs, services, and initiatives to consider the insights gained from lived experience in the design of policies and the implementation of state- and federally-funded programs and services.

Key Areas of Inquiry

1. Learn how individuals with different backgrounds and identities experience programs, services, policies, and investments designed to benefit young children and their families within the state early childhood system.
2. Develop experiences with populations and groups that experience racial inequities and disparities.
3. Consider how implementation of policies and programs can focus on removing institutional and structural barriers to achieve more equitable outcomes for children and their families.
4. Explore how individuals and communities have fought back, resisted, and organized for self-determination, inclusion, and fairness.

Feedback Loop is a Process

The feedback loop systemizes the process by which state leaders from multiple systems come together to engage with communities with the explicit aim to:

Feedback Loop, for Project HOPE, means a systematized process of listening to, responding to, and co-creating solutions with beneficiaries in communities over time. The goal is to modify universal strategies by changing or creating policy, investments, or program implementation strategies that are targeted to a specific group or population to increase access and improve outcomes.

- ▶ Build trust and long-term relationships through two-way communication with communities to gain deeper and nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities they face.
- ▶ Investigate the root cause of the challenges being experienced. State leaders will not be responsible for all challenges, but the purpose of this process is to identify where state leaders have a responsibility, authority, or influence to address challenges.
- ▶ Determine with the communities which strategic actions the state will use to shift policies, programs, and investments to reduce disparities in access to opportunities for targeted populations.

Feedback loops provide an opportunity to hear how challenges and opportunities evolve over time and whether targeted shifts in state policies, practices, and investments are having the intended impacts on young children, their families, and communities.

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Steps to the Feedback Loop Process

1. Define a team for each visit comprised of state leaders with different expertise, roles, responsibilities, authority, and influence who together can tackle problems communities raise and draft possible solutions.
2. Identify a local partner who has a relationship with beneficiaries.
3. Share with the community what was heard on previous visits. Ask the participants to refine the opportunities and challenges seen and heard during the visit. Provide community participants time to deepen feedback and clarify meaning.
4. Share with the community initial ideas about ways state leaders could shift policy, practice, or investments to address selected challenges.
5. Seek recommendations from the community on how to shape and select priorities, move selected actions forward, and solicit new ideas.
6. Share timelines and next steps with the communities.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes of the feedback loop include:

- Solutions are designed with input of the community or communities.
- The solutions are intended to reduce inequities by increasing access to opportunities and improving outcomes.
- More than one leader at the state level is making a shift in policy, practice, and/or investment that can be linked to specific qualitative and quantitative data.

Principles

1. Intentionally seek input directly from beneficiaries—the families of young children who are intended to benefit from the programs and services offered. Providers and community-based organizations can also provide worthwhile information and connection to families, but make sure you hear directly from beneficiaries.
2. Engage in a cycle of improvement over time. A key strategy is listening and getting a more accurate, deeper understanding each time you present back to the community what the team heard and saw at the last visit.
3. Share the challenges that your leadership team could not respond to and why, such as funding, eligibility, timeframes for change, area of responsibility, e.g., local vs. state, etc.
4. Be honest about timelines and the pace at which government moves.

Building Relationships With Communities

In implementing feedback loops, consider these strategies when building relationships with communities.

Being Transparent

Consider the components of the site visit: target population, location, local partner, length, and structure. Participants will shift over time. Consider the goal of your beneficiary voice visits and always seek to be inclusive. Consider inclusion as a way to reduce the risk of excluding other voices. Be transparent about your decisions regarding whom you listen to at each visit and the goals of the visit. Maintain focus on regular communication. It is important that the community sees the team of state leaders returning on a predictable basis.

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Sustaining Beneficiary's Hope to Keep Participating

The goal is not to meet with the exact same group in the exact same structure visit to visit. Engaging a community does not mean a large group input session or focus group every time. One strategy may be to select family leaders for deeper interviews after a large group session. However, be careful not to “ordain” a few, specific leaders. Feedback loops should grow. Consider mixing up the feedback loop structure to encourage a variety of participation, e.g., conduct surveys, hold regular meetings, distribute information ahead of the meeting, conduct interviews, etc.

Avoiding Perpetuation of Exclusive Practices

Be clear about your decisions to target and seek input from specific populations. Be transparent with the

information. The intention is to target strategies to increase access and benefit for key populations that are not currently benefiting from state programs, services, or policies.

Messaging on How the Work is Becoming Connected

Most likely the work by state leaders representing different sectors is disconnected. Community members experience that disconnect every day. Do not make it look better than it is. To start making the work connect, show up in communities with a cross-sector team that is willing to work together, figure out what can be connected, and ensure those connections happen.



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