# The Implementation & Sustainment Facilitation (ISF) Strategy: Guiding theory, framework, principles, and empirical support

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**Background :** Facilitation (i.e., the process of interactive problem solving and support that occurs in a context of a recognized need for improvement and a supportive interpersonal relationship) has been identified as one of 73 discrete implementation strategies (Powell et al., 2015). The Implementation and Sustainment Facilitation (ISF) Strategy is a facilitation-based strategy that has experimental evidence supporting its effectiveness (Garner et al., 2020). This poster highlights the ISF Strategy's guiding theory, framework, principles, and empirical support.

**Setting/Population:** The ISF Strategy was originally developed to help improve the integration of a motivational interviewing-based brief intervention for substance use within HIV service settings. The ISF Strategy is currently being used to help improve the implementation of contingency management with opioid treatment settings.

**Guiding Theory and Framework:** Grounded in the **Theory of Implementation Effectiveness** (Helfrich et al., 2007; Klein et al., 2001; Klein & Sorra, 1996; Weiner et al., 2009), the ISF strategy seeks to improve implementation effectiveness (the consistency and the quality of implementation of the clinical intervention) and intervention effectiveness (the clinical intervention's effectiveness in terms of improving client outcomes) through improving implementation climate (the extent to which implementation is expected, supported, and rewarded). Guided by the **Exploration-Preparation-Implementation-Sustainment (EPIS) framework** (Aarons et al., 2011), we expand the theory of implementation effectiveness by examining the extent to which the ISF strategy would help decrease staff time-to-proficiency (i.e., preparation phase outcome) and increase staff level-of-sustainment (i.e., sustainment phase outcome).

**Guiding Principles:** Consistent with the four principles of **motivational interviewing** (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2012) as part of each ISF strategy meeting, the ISF Strategy facilitator attempts to do at least three of the following four principles:
(1) **engage** the implementation team, (2) help **focus** the implementation team on the project's key goal(s), (3) help **evoke** from the implementation team's pros and cons related to the project's key goal(s), and (4) help the implementation team **plan** how best to achieve the project's key goals and sustain those achievements over time.

**Empirical Support:** Thirty-nine HIV organizations were randomized to either the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Strategy (n = 19) or the ATTC+ISF Strategy (n = 20). Each HIV organization identified two staff members to be prepared to implement the project's motivational interviewing-based brief intervention (MIBI) for substance use disorders (N = 78). Subsequently, during the implementation phase, HIV organizations in each condition randomized client participants (N = 824) to one of the two intervention conditions: usual care (UC; n = 415) or UC + MIBI (n = 409).

As detailed by Garner et al. (2020), the ISF Strategy **improved implementation effectiveness (i.e., the consistency and the quality of implementation; β = .65, p = .01), as well as intervention effectiveness (i.e., the effectiveness of the MIBI),** at least in terms of significantly decreasing the odds (odds ratio = 0.11, p = .02) of clients using their primary substance daily during follow-up.

**Conclusion:** The ISF Strategy is a well-grounded facilitation-based strategy with experimental evidence supporting its effectiveness.
Use of the ISF Strategy as part of future implementation research and/or implementation practice is warranted. Please visit www.ISFstrategy.org for more information.

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