

Guidelines for Choosing and Adapting Programs

With the permission of the developer, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) makes this RTIPs program and its products available for your use. As with all RTIPs programs, it has been reviewed and found to have sufficient information on relevance and effectiveness for you to make an informed choice about its use in your setting. It is important to understand that this program's effectiveness was evaluated within a research study, which is a highly controlled situation. It is expected that you may need to adapt the program for your own audience and setting. This fact sheet tells you how to do this.

The NCI's Cancer Information Service Partners Program (<http://cis.nci.nih.gov/community/community.html>) can help you find appropriate cancer control research staff in your area should you need help with any stage of the adaptation process.

Adaptation Guidelines

If you plan to adapt this program for use with your population, consider these nine recommended guidelines:

1. Determine the needs of your audience and whether this program addresses those needs.
2. Review the program and its materials with your intended audience for feedback on its appropriateness (see Program Adaptation Checklist).
3. Define the extent of adaptation needed and potential ways to implement the new program.
4. Develop "mock-up" versions of the adapted products.
5. Work with expert advisors to ensure that the adapted products maintain the accuracy of the originals.
6. Pilot test the adaptation with representatives from your audience (see Pilot Testing).
7. Modify or revise the adapted program and products based on pilot test feedback.
8. Implement the program.
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of your adapted program and products.

Program Adaptation Checklist

When reviewing the program and associated products (see guideline 2), pay attention to the following aspects and consider the appropriateness of them to your audience:

Objectives

The program's content is built to meet its overall objectives. Be certain that these objectives fit the needs of your audience.

Approach used (premises, concepts, theory)

Good programs make assumptions about what factors or concepts are associated with getting the audience to take a desired action. These assumptions are generally drawn from theories about how people behave or act. If you are unsure about the approaches or theories used, consider working with health education specialists or behavior change researchers as you review the program.

Content (education level, depth of coverage, and comprehensibility)

Examine the level of complexity, the reading level, and the level of detail to ensure that the information provided is appropriate for your audience. Have individuals from your audience review the materials and give you their feedback.

Level of understanding or acceptance

Beliefs or values may cause people to either reject or accept the information that the program provides. Personal experiences, historical events, myths and misinformation, or cultural backgrounds can shape people's beliefs and values. Representatives of your intended audience can help to assess whether the program suits your audience.

Fit with community resources

Review the program to see if it includes activities that are realistic and achievable, given the resources in your community. For example, access to specific services may not be as readily available for your population as it was for the participants in the original program.

Media and channels used to transmit the information

Many of the RTIPs programs are designed to be delivered in a specific way – for example, some are intended for small-group settings while others are intended for entire communities. Their effectiveness may be dependent on that mode of delivery. If you intend to offer programs or products through a different delivery channel, you will need to consider how the effectiveness of the message(s) might be affected by the change.

Terminology used

Terms might convey different things to different audiences. For some groups the term “physical activity” is associated with work or labor, when often it is meant to refer to “leisure time activity” or “exercise.” Pilot testing will help you understand how your audience interprets the key terms used in the program.

Fit with your audience’s culture

The best way to determine the fit of a product or program is to pilot test it with your audience. Asking questions like “Does this seem to have been developed with people like you in mind?” or “Is this relevant to your experiences?” will help you determine the cultural appropriateness of the program and product.

Intended Actions

If participants are being asked to act on information, be sure that the desired or expected behaviors are consistent with your objectives and the needs of the audience.

Pilot Testing

If you are considering adapting this program and its products, NCI recommends that you pilot test it with your audience. Pilot testing is particularly recommended if:

1. Your audience differs from the audience with which the product was tested. If the audience is significantly different, you should consider working with cancer control researchers in your area to replicate the findings from the original study before fully implementing the program. Regional cancer control experts in your state can help you find these researchers (<http://cancercontrolplanet.org/partners/>).
2. You intend to deliver the product to your audience using a different mode of delivery (for example, using it in groups when it was tested for use in one-on-one situations).
3. You do not intend to use the entire program and all its recommended products as implemented in the original setting – that is, you will choose some but not all of the program components or products to modify and use.
4. Your resources prevent you from implementing the program as it was intended.
5. You intend to translate the product into another language. In general, language translation does not guarantee that the program’s content will be culturally relevant.

