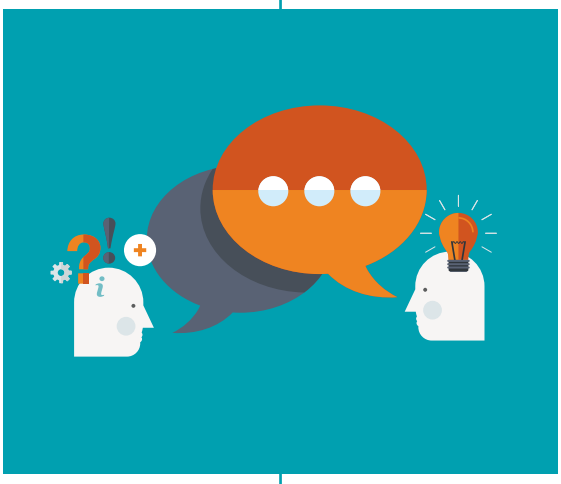
What Is Evidence-Based Technical Assistance (EBTA)?

1 Content

Effective TA is based on reliable evidence about what works. With EBTA, TA content is identified using a rigorous, systematic assessment of policy and program needs. After this content is identified, TA providers work with programs to determine their goals and areas for improvement. TA providers then review high quality research to provide evidence-based recommendations for program improvement. Together, the TA provider and programs develop a customized action plan for implementing program change.

2 Process

To be transformational, the content delivered by TA providers must be accessible and relevant to the recipients. EBTA is based on proven methods for how adults learn best. These methods increase how much the TA recipients learn, retain, and use the information. Adult learning methods include careful meeting design, participant engagement, clear objectives, a supportive learning environment, and recognition of and support for different learning styles. These methods enhance the quality of the TA provider's interactions with recipients, making trainings, telephone calls, peer-to-peer collaborations, and meetings more productive. Written TA products such as practice briefs and toolkits should also incorporate these methods, communicating the most relevant points to the audience in an accessible way.



3 Evaluation

The ultimate goal of EBTA is to inspire changes and innovations that improve programs. Using rigorous evaluation techniques such as rapid-cycle evaluation or implementation science can help TA providers gauge their success in meeting this goal. Rapid-cycle evaluation—including randomized controlled trials using existing administrative or other data—can be conducted relatively easily and quickly. Implementation science may be used to test program fidelity, or whether a change was implemented consistently and correctly. Data analytics can also be useful for informing and tracking program change. The findings from these types of evaluations can provide useful feedback to the program and build the knowledge base for the field.

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Six Evidence-based Adult Learning Principles[1]

Relevance

We are more likely to learn and remember content that we perceive is valuable for us in our life or work *now*. Learning designers need to know our worlds well enough to prioritize what is truly relevant.

Transparency

Learning will be most effective when everyone involved is equally clear about the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes. As designers and facilitators, it is wise to be transparent (never secretive) about the current situation as we see it, the data we are working with, and the process we have planned for moving forward.

Safety

Safety and challenge both contribute to learning. Safety allows us to say what we really believe, to offer our own experiences even if they don't fit the "recommendations," to share our own doubts or concerns about what is being presented. Safety is created – or destroyed - in a variety of ways. Watch for it.

Engagement

An engaging event is distinct from a participatory one. Engagement is about creating intentional opportunities for learners to interact with each other, and with the "trainers" or "moderators" around the content they are learning.

Productivity

When we produce something in the course of our learning, we internalize it - and enhance it. Our products go beyond what was "fed" to us by trainers or moderators, but are new creations based on our experiences, insights and (possibly) collaboration. This need

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[1] This subset of principles emerged from our analysis of recent adult learning research by E. Salas, S. Tannenbaum, K. Kraiger, and K. Smith-Jentsch (2012). *The Science of Training and Development in Organizations: What Matters in Practice. Psychological Science in the Public Interest,* DOI. GLP has "tested" these and other adult learning principles for decades across settings and sub-cultures. Visit us at www.globallearningpartners.com.

for productivity in the learning process is supported and explained by the brain-based research of Dr. James Zull[2].

Support

There are endless ways to support us, as learners, to be successful. Support may come in the form of a graphic to help us recall or process new content. It may take the form of structured tasks that challenge and reward us for our efforts. The key is to provide just enough to support – but not so much as to "steal the learning".

[2] James Zull. The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching the Practice of Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning. Stylus Publishing: 2002.

The 4-A Learning Sequence

When you're designing any kind of learning event – a workshop, seminar, class, meeting – one of the most important components of your design is your learning tasks, those elements of the event in which the learners do something with the content they've set out to learn. For learning that lasts, use the 4-A Model, a foolproof tool.

ANCHOR the content within the learner's experience:

ANCHOR—a task that has the learner access their own prior knowledge or experience with the topic/content/or similar experience.

ADD new information

ADD- a task that has the learner hear / see / experience a substantive new piece of content: information, research, theory, skill.

Invite the learner to APPLY the content in a new way or situation.

APPLY—a task that has the learner do something (there and then) with the new content.

Ask the learner to decide what she will take AWAY and how she will use this learning in the future.

AWAY—a task that connects the new learning back to the life of the learner and its future use.

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Excerpted from "Dialogue Education Step by Step: A Guide for Designing Exceptional Learning Events" by Darlene M. Goetzman.

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Transforming Technical Assistance:
Using Evidence to Enrich the Experience
Center for Improving Research Evidence Forum and Webinar
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Evidence-Based Technical Assistance (EBTA) in Action: Two Examples

Example 1: Len Finocchio, Dr.P.H., Mathematica Policy Research
Improving Access to Dental Services for Children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Dr. Finocchio is leading a multifaceted project to help the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and states efficiently meet the goals of CMS's Oral Health Initiative. This initiative seeks to increase by 10 percentage points (1) the share of Medicaid and CHIP children ages 1 to 20 who receive a preventive dental service and (2) the share of Medicaid and CHIP children ages 6 to 9 who receive a sealant on a permanent molar. Partnering with CMS, state Medicaid and CHIP programs, and other stakeholders, Dr. Finocchio and his team will provide EBTA to states to help them develop their oral health action plans. The team will develop and deliver web-based trainings, distribute oral health resources, and design analytic tools to track trends in the use of preventive dental services. The team will also develop a Medicaid dental contracting toolkit.

Example 2: LaDonna Pavetti, Ph.D., Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Using Executive Function Concepts and Principles to Develop New Approaches to Delivering Employment Services for Disadvantaged Adults

Much of the recent work Dr. Pavetti has done at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has focused on helping states to improve their employment programs for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Inspired by the Frontiers of Innovation Project (led by the Harvard Center on the Developing Child) and with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Dr. Pavetti has spent the last year and a half exploring whether and how the research on "executive function" emerging from many fields could be used to create new service delivery models that could enhance employment outcomes. This work is informed by a group of workforce and human service practitioners seeking to improve their programs and by academic researchers interested in having their research influence employment and other outcomes for disadvantaged families.