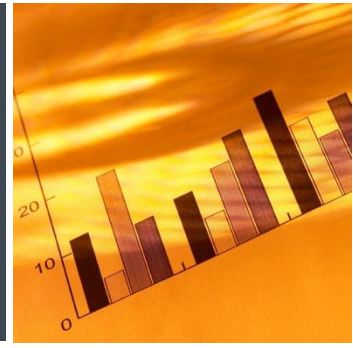


# Local Adaptations of Crime Prevention Programs: A Toolkit



2017-S019

BUILDING A SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA

Evidence-based crime prevention programs can be adapted to local circumstances, while remaining effective.

## Background

Evidence-based crime prevention programs can reduce risk factors and divert youth and young adults from crime. However, these programs are typically highly structured and prescriptive, with features and components that may not always fit well with the contextual realities of particular communities. In addition, some communities may simply lack the capacity to implement and sustain a given evidence-based program in its entirety. For these reasons, it is often necessary to adapt an intervention to ensure success of the program.

The Local Adaptations Toolkit is based on a broad, interdisciplinary literature review on approaches to modifying intervention programs to best suit local circumstances. The Toolkit integrates this information in order to give guidance to practitioners in answering the following question: How can evidence-based crime prevention initiatives be adapted from one successful program into new contexts with different people, cultures, and geographies, while remaining effective?

Of course, tailoring an intervention to particular community needs does not mean inventing a completely new program. Rather, a balance must be struck between ‘fidelity’ (i.e., the degree to which the implementation of a program adheres to the exact elements, components, activities and tools developed and tested by its original developers) and the ‘fit’ of the program to particular circumstances. Program adaptations must be carefully planned and intentional, where modifications are made through a series of assessments and devices among all stakeholders. The Toolkit has been developed to combat any chance of program drift (i.e., unplanned program modifications) and ensure a greater likelihood of program integration,

success and sustainability. The current summary provides a quick glance at the objectives and content of the Toolkit.

## Toolkit Overview

The Toolkit reflects a combination of current knowledge of good practices in program adaptation, and is designed for program funders, policy-makers, and those “on-the-ground.”

The overarching framework proposed in the Toolkit was built using the principles and best practices of other program adaptation models, including Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). The framework consists of the following general steps:

- Build a strong foundation through strong leadership and effective partnerships;
- Conduct program exploration and participatory assessment;
- Conduct staff training and pilot testing of adaptation;
- Refine program adaptation and begin implementation;
- Evaluate and maximize program quality;
- Evaluate and maximize program impact; and
- Disseminate information about your program and its results.

To guide practitioners in the application of these steps, the Toolkit provides two illustrative case examples that reflect current priority areas of crime prevention programming in Canada. The first case example is a local adaptation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model in a large Canadian city. The second case example is a local adaptation of the Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) program for Indigenous youth.



Above all, the Toolkit proposes an adapted traffic light analogy (O’Conner et al., 2007, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012) to consider when making key decisions on program adaption:

- ‘green light’ adaptations that are considered appropriate and are encouraged (e.g., changing language and terminology to resonate with the community);
- ‘yellow light’ adaptations that are to be made with caution (e.g., changing session order or sequence of activities); and
- ‘red light’ adaptations that are to be avoided because they remove or alter key aspects of the program required to produce positive results (e.g., shortening a program by reducing the number/length of sessions or overall duration).

To help teams assess their program and document decisions, a Program Fidelity and Adaptation Plan Template is provided in the Toolkit. The template captures the program goals, expected outcomes, program setting, staffing requirements, main strategies and practices, tools, dosage, and duration. Furthermore, the template asks whether a component has been changed from the original program, and if so, requests the date of the change, the rationale behind it, and whether any other modifications should be made to accommodate the change.

Additional resources provided in the toolkit include:

- The Values – Structures – Processes (VSP) Tool, a diagnostic and planning tool to support successful and sustainable initiatives;
- The Community Toolbox, which was developed to support community health and development;
- The Pentagon Tool, which assesses fit, available evidence, program readiness for replication, and organizational capacity;
- Experiential learning tips; and
- “Intelligent failure” and Learning Loops Worksheet, which helps practitioners to gain knowledge from failures.

## Implications

By engaging partners and community members in meaningful and equitable ways, program adaptation is considered to be: (1) a responsive approach that fosters

participation and retention; (2) an effective way of promoting capacity-building; (3) a facilitator of program integration into a community; and (4) a contributor to longer-term sustainability. However, program adaptation is challenging, requiring multiple stages that involve many stakeholders and some technical knowledge. The Toolkit provides a user-friendly approach for helping to streamline these processes, and thereby promote successful program adaptations: those meet the needs of a particular community while sustaining the proven benefits of the original evidence-based model.

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## Source

Bania, M., Roebuck, B., O’Halloran, B., & Chase, V. (2017). *Local Adaptations of Crime Prevention Programs: Finding the Optimal Balance Between Fidelity and Fit - A Toolkit*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada.

## Additional Sources

Bania, M., Roebuck, B., & Chase, V. (2017). *Local Adaptations of Crime Prevention Programs: Finding the Optimal Balance Between Fidelity and Fit - A Literature Review*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada. (Research Report 2017-R019)

Bania, M., Roebuck, B., O’Halloran, B., & Chase, V. (2017). *Local Adaptations of Crime Prevention Programs: Finding the Optimal Balance Between Fidelity and Fit - Key Effective Elements of Crime Prevention Programs*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada. (Research Report 2017-R019-A)

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