The Center for Implementation

Understanding barriers and facilitators to change and selecting change strategies

Activity Guide for LEAs and schools

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Purpose

For each SEL approach are implementing, certain groups of people (i.e., the WHO) will need to do something differently (i.e., the WHAT). Whenever any person or group is asked to change, there are things that can act as barriers to that change or as facilitators to that change. When you know barriers and facilitators, you can better select strategies to support people through the change.

This activity aims to help you identify and understand barriers and facilitators to each of your selected SEL approaches. It also aims to help you identify potential change strategies that can be used to overcome barriers and leverage facilitators to the SEL approaches you are implementing.

Activity Considerations

1. This is a collaborative, conversation-based team activity.

2. The purpose of this activity is to brainstorm and categorize barriers and facilitators with your team.

3. This activity can take 3-6 hours to complete, depending on the number of prioritized SEL approaches you have identified. You may want to complete it at once or in a series of meetings.

4. Ensure you invite people to this meeting who are able to speak about barriers and facilitators from different perspectives.

5. Identify 1-2 facilitators to guide this activity. Make sure they are very comfortable with the materials or virtual platform you are using, and with facilitating discussion.

6. Identify a notetaker to record discussion items (e.g., insights, actions).

7. Ensure people can contribute in a variety of ways (e.g., by speaking up or by writing things down). One common way to do this is by incorporating independent brainstorming time into your group session and enabling people to write their thoughts anonymously on a whiteboard (virtually or in person), or by collecting opinions through a poll.

8. When you invite everyone, let them know the purpose of the meeting so they can begin to brainstorm before they arrive. Therefore, it can be helpful to have some time to think about this in advance of the meeting. **It may also be helpful to send the 'Background' section of this document to those who will be attending the meeting, or have them watch Module 6 videos on the SEL learning hub.**

Preamble

Note: Access the Module 6 training videos on the SEL Learning Hub to learn more about these concepts.

How the WHAT and the HOW are linked

There are two major components to any change initiative: the WHAT and the HOW:

› The **WHAT** refers to what we want people to do differently

› The **HOW** refers to how people will be supported to change their behavior. HOWs are commonly referred to as change strategies.

We select HOWs by understanding barriers and facilitators to the targeted behavior change. The HOWs support people to do the WHAT because they help people overcome their barriers and leverage their facilitators. For example, if people keep forgetting to do the 3 signature SEL practices, then a HOW that can get them to do the signature practices is to have a reminder system in place (e.g., post the practices on the door of the classroom so they are reminded to do them as soon as they walk in).
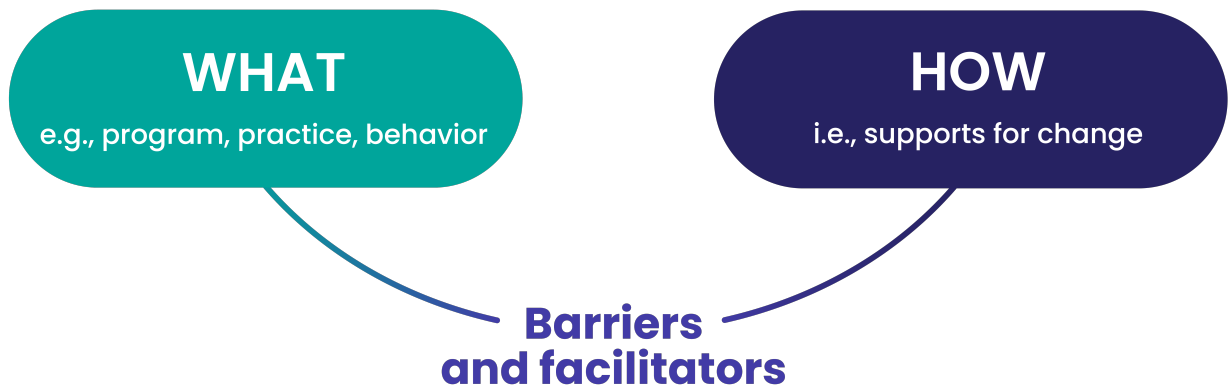
WHAT
e.g., program, practice, behavior

HOW
i.e., supports for change

Barriers and facilitators

The Center for Implementation

Figure developed by The Center for Implementation

Preamble

Barriers and facilitators can exist at multiple levels

Barriers and facilitators exist at:

› The individual level;

› The team level;

› The organization level (e.g., school, LEA); and

› The community or broader system level.

It is important to keep this in mind, because the strategies you select to support change may differ depending on the level at which barriers and facilitators are operating.

Community/
System

Organization/
school

Team

Individual
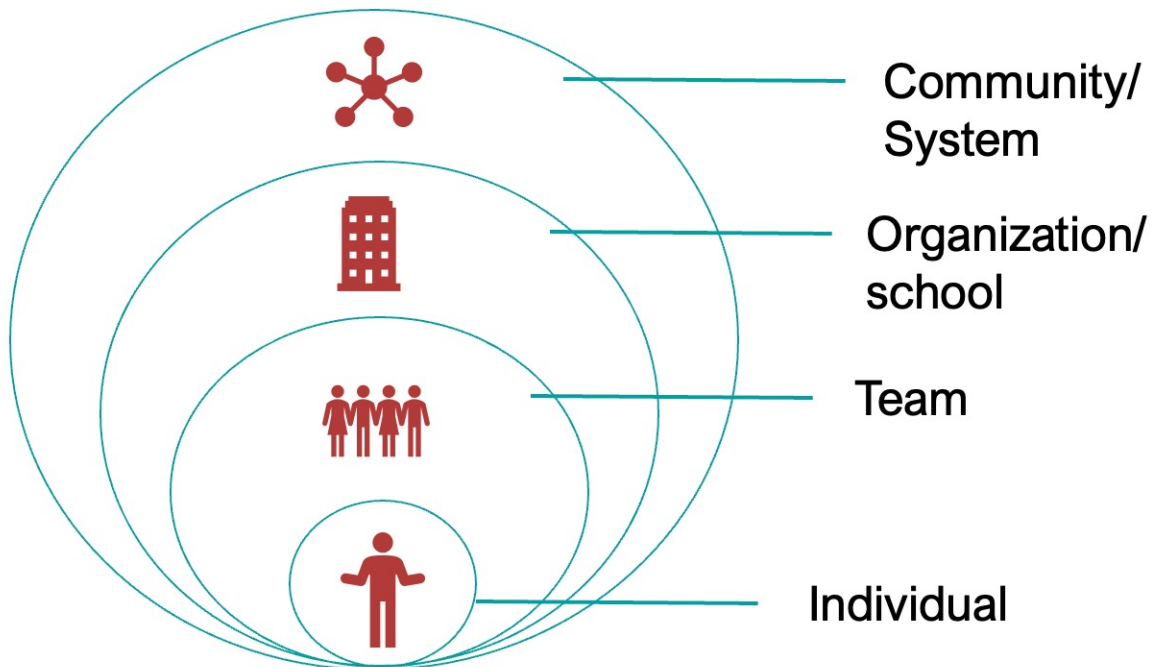
Preamble

Categorizing barriers and facilitators

In order for people to change their behaviour, they need to be capable of change, they need to be motivated to change, and they need to have the opportunity to change. When people have difficulty doing the WHAT, their barriers usually fall into these categories. Conversely, if it's easy for them to do the WHAT, then their facilitators would fall into these categories.
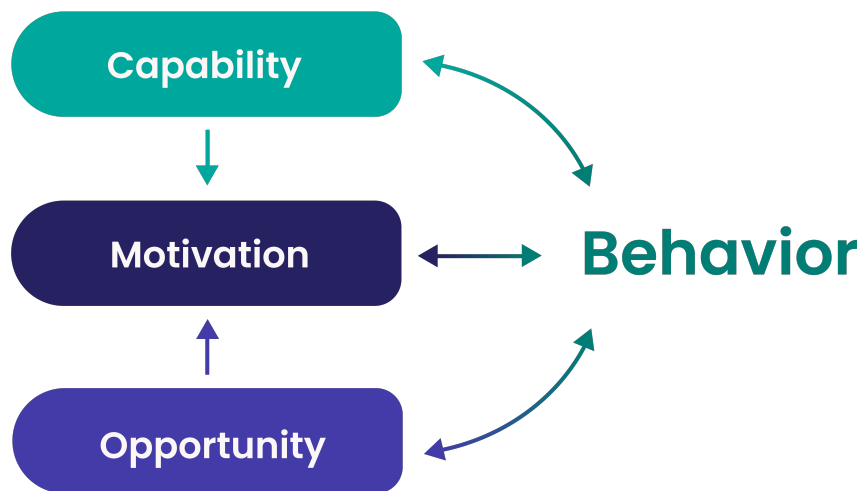
Michie, S., Atkins, L., & West, R. (2014). *The behaviour change wheel: A guide to designing interventions*. Silverback Publishing. www.behaviourchangewheel.com

Figure adapted by The Center for Implementation

Categorizing barriers and facilitators to understand whether they relate to capability, motivation, or opportunity helps you select effective change strategies. When you understand barriers and facilitators, you understand WHY people aren't doing the WHAT, which leads you to selecting more targeted and effective HOWs.

Preamble

Categorizing barriers and facilitators (cont.)

Here is an example of the importance of doing a barriers and facilitators assessment in each implementation setting.

School A and School B, are implementing the same SEL practice.

School A conducts a barriers and facilitators assessment and finds that the biggest barrier to behavior change in their school is related to motivation – teachers feel that what this new practice requires is not part of their role and they fear increased workload. The implementation team at School A knows that they will need to select change strategies that tap into motivation.

Teachers in *School B* feel they lack the training to execute the new practice and don't think the school has enough resources to support the new practice. These are barriers that relate to capability and opportunity.

If the implementation team at School B decides to use the same change strategies as School A just because School A is using them, without conducting their own barriers and facilitators assessment, they will be using time and resources to support change in a way that does not address the underlying barriers and facilitators that are specific to their school and their teachers.

This highlights the importance of linking the WHAT and the HOW through a barriers and facilitators assessment, which ultimately allows for your change strategies to be specific to your implementation context.

Activity Instructions

Step 1: Brainstorm barriers and facilitators

For each SEL approach you will be implementing, identify barriers and facilitators for each WHO and their WHAT. At this stage, it is important that your WHOs and WHATs be very clearly defined. If you have not completed the Module 5 activity, it may be helpful to revisit this on the SEL Learning Hub.

You want people to engage people who are able to speak about barriers and facilitators from different perspectives. Specifically, it is important to have representation from each group of WHOs your implementation activities are targeting.

Ways to collect information on barriers and facilitators

› If you are implementing more than one SEL approach, you may find it helpful to hold a series of brainstorming meetings dedicated to determining barriers and facilitators to each approach.

› Sometimes people develop surveys about barriers and facilitators to try to make it less on onerous on participants. It's still helpful to ultimately talk to some people from the groups in questions, whether formally or informally.

› If you don't have time or resources, try documenting key barriers and facilitators whenever you talk to people from different groups. There are natural opportunities to identify barriers and facilitators – at meetings, in emails, at desk side conversations. Keep an ongoing list of the things that people are talking about.

At the end of this step, you should have a list of barriers and facilitators for each WHO and WHAT.

Activity Instructions

Step 2: Categorize barriers and facilitators

What to consider when facilitating this activity

With your SEL implementation team, categorize barriers and facilitators. You can do this in a meeting either in person or virtually.

We have provided you with a worksheet to complete in order to conduct this step (see Appendix A). For each WHO and WHAT, complete a worksheet.

› You can complete a worksheet collectively in person in different ways. Each person can complete it independently, and then a facilitator can guide people through a discussion to identify where they may have been discrepancies and to come to a consensus. Alternatively, your team can also work on sorting the barriers and facilitators collectively from start to finish.

› If completing this virtually, you can post the worksheet as an image to Jamboard or Mural, and have people "sticky note" and sort barriers and facilitators to different sections. Note that someone will need to facilitate this process and stimulate discussion to come to a consensus on where the barriers and facilitators should be placed.

Figure 1 provides you with an example of what this might look like.

When categorizing barriers and facilitators

› It is possible that a barrier or facilitator falls into more than one category. If this happens, you can list it in each relevant domain.

› It can be helpful if you categorize what people say (i.e., quotes) rather than categorizing a summary of what someone has said.

› If you would like to go deeper and use the Theoretical Domains Framework (see Appendix B), you can also categorize your barriers and facilitators at this level.

Activity Instructions

Step 2: Categorize barriers and facilitators (cont.)

Figure 1

WHAT: Aligning discipline policies and practices with SEL

WHO: Teachers

	Capability *Knowledge/Skills*	Opportunity *Supportive environment*	Motivation *Want to change*
Barriers	"I'm not used to SEL-aligned disciplinary practices" "I don't know how to discipline students in a way that aligns with SEL"	"None of my colleagues have SEL-informed disciplinary practices" "Is this going to require more resources than we currently have?"	"Shouldn't these practices be the responsibility of guidance counsellors?" "If something happens that requires immediate disciplinary action, taking that in an SEL-informed way will take up a lot of time, and take time and attention away from other students"
Facilitators			"I really want to make this change happen in my classroom" "I'm confident that once I know how to do this, I'll be able to put these skills into practice."

Activity Instructions

Step 3: Select change strategies

How to facilitate a brainstorm change strategies

› Steps 2 and Step 3 be completed on different days to allow for reflection in between, or on the same day depending on what works in your SEL implementation team's schedules and how many barriers and facilitators have been identified /number of SEL approaches being implemented.

Why this step is important

› The purpose of meeting is to select change strategies – your HOWs.

› It will not be possible to address all barriers that were identified right away, so you will likely need to use some of your meeting time to prioritize barriers and facilitators. There are a number of ways to prioritize barriers and facilitators.

   › You can identify the top ones/themes that emerged in discussion.

   › You may want to tackle barriers that have been on your radar for a while.

   › You may decide on a different way to prioritize, depending on what is important to the group of people who are involved.

Activity Instructions

Step 3: Select change strategies (cont.)

To select change strategies

1. Reflect on the barriers and facilitators that emerged.

2. For each of the themes (capability, opportunity, motivation) that capture your major barriers/facilitators, review the example change strategies that are identified in **Table 1** (below).

3. You can select change strategies from the list of example strategies, and you can also use the example list to brainstorm additional change strategies that can help foster capability, opportunity and motivation. A space is provided for you to add change strategies that you have brainstormed.

It is possible that one change strategy can address multiple barriers and facilitators. This is very common and is quite helpful since it will allow you to address multiple barriers using one change strategy. You can streamline how many strategies you select by noting where there may be overlap in suggested strategies. **Ultimately, you don't want to select too many change strategies, just the ones that target the most barriers and facilitators and that your team thinks will make the biggest impact.**

When selecting change strategies, think about the fit of each of these in your own context, culture, and workflow. It may help to think about appropriateness, practicality, resources required, acceptability, sustainability, and effectiveness of each potential change strategy to decide which ones to select.

At the end of this step, you should have a list of HOWs for every WHO and WHAT.

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Capability Do individuals have the capacity to change? This includes things like: ❯ Knowledge ❯ Skills ❯ Memory ❯ Decision making processes ❯ Habit regulation	❑ Education sessions (e.g., workshops and webinars) ❑ Inviting experts, other implementers with local knowledge, and/or people with lived/living experience to educate others on lessons learned/areas of expertise/experience ❑ Education materials (e.g., pamphlets, manuals) ❑ Learning collaboratives (e.g., community of practice in SEL approaches) ❑ Hands on demonstration and training (simulation training embedded in orientation)	

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Capability (cont.) Do individuals have the capacity to change? This includes things like: › Knowledge › Skills › Memory › Decision making processes › Habit regulation	❑ Peer-to-peer outreach/buddy system to have people mentor/teach one another ❑ Train-the-trainer systems ❑ Shadow experts ❑ Mass media (e.g., stories in newspapers, social media) ❑ Reminder and/or prompts (e.g., signage) ❑ Decision aids (e.g., conversations or physical resources that help guide people through decision making processes) ❑ Action planning to identify habits, and strategize to make/break habits	

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Opportunity Do individuals have the opportunity to change? This includes things like: ❯ Is the environment supportive of change? ❯ Are there enough resources to support change? ❯ Are people influencing each other to change?	❑ Engaged and supportive leadership ❑ Champions that serve different functions e.g., advocacy, securing resources, working to dispel stigma and establish new norms ❑ Identify early adopters that are willing to "test out" ideas, speak about benefits of change, and establish credibility of change ❑ Building advocacy/coalition networks that can help push for progress in policy spaces ❑ Involving boards in advocacy roles	

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Opportunity (cont.) Do individuals have the opportunity to change? This includes things like: ❯ Is the environment supportive of change? ❯ Are there enough resources to support change? ❯ Are people influencing each other to change?	❑ Payment or reimbursement schemes for how people are involved in the change (e.g., teachers paid for training) ❑ Opinions leaders to relay important messages about change ❑ Mass media efforts used to change norms, spread messages, dispel stigma (e.g., involving the press, using signage, developing slogans, social media campaigns) ❑ Storytelling/ capturing and delivering narratives to help influence change (e.g., to champion equity, to talk about the benefit of change)	

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Motivation Are individuals motivated to change? This includes things like: ❯ Do people believe the change is important? ❯ What do people think the consequences of change are? ❯ Is the change part of their role? ❯ What kinds of emotions do they feel about the change? ❯ Do they want to or intend to change?	❑ Local leaders engaging in the practice or program activities ❑ Sharing experiences and stories that can uplift and convince others of the benefit of change ❑ Champions for each professional/social groups that can speak to the alignment of the change with roles/identity ❑ Having peers (e.g., staff-to-staff) lead support groups ❑ Visiting "inspiring" teams/schools that have already implemented the program/practice to see the change on the ground	

Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Motivation (cont.) Are individuals motivated to change? This includes things like: ❯ Do people believe the change is important? ❯ What do people think the consequences of change are? ❯ Is the change part of their role? ❯ What kinds of emotions do they feel about the change? ❯ Do they want to or intend to change?	❑ Creating practice profiles of key practice skills/competencies and tie these to supervision/performance appraisal ❑ Updating job descriptions ❑ Building review and reminders into weekly/monthly check-ins with teams and individuals ❑ Celebrating small and large wins and successes, either through formal audit and feedback or through anecdotes and personal experiences ❑ Helping people articulate collective or personal goals and develop action plans towards those goals	

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Table 1

Identifying Supports		
	Examples of Change Strategies Support	Other change strategies (brainstorm)
Motivation (cont.) Are individuals motivated to change? This includes things like: ❯ Do people believe the change is important? ❯ What do people think the consequences of change are? ❯ Is the change part of their role? ❯ What kinds of emotions do they feel about the change? ❯ Do they want to or intend to change?	❑ Creating space to discuss the change by restructuring meetings or other standing events ❑ Aligning change with higher level policy/mission, vision and values	

Activity Instructions

Equity Considerations

Some questions you can ask the group to reflect on whether you are completing this step equitably are listed below. We encourage you to use these in addition to the foundational equity questions in the Module 3 guide.

When assessing barriers and facilitators, are we considering:

- › Methods of engaging people that enable their participation?

- › Exploring the biological, environmental, political and societal factors that might affect populations as potential barriers and facilitators?

When analyzing barriers and facilitators, are we considering:

- › Whether the theoretical lens being used is appropriate for the initiative and the people who are impacted by the initiative?

- › Analyzing differences in barriers and facilitators by group (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) or by intersections of these constructs?

- › Whether suitable and equitable conclusions about the determinants of change are being drawn?

When selecting change strategies, are we considering:

- › The underlying assumptions of the strategies (i.e., how and why a strategy is supposed to work, and for whom)

- › What the potential sources of inequity in the strategies may be (e.g., who is delivering them, resources required, the process of enacting them, etc.)

- › How they can be designed or adapted to be more equitable

- › What the potential outcomes of the strategies are

- › How decisions will be made about which strategies are suitable for the people impacted by the initiative?

Activity Instructions

Step 4: Reflect on your next steps

Implementation is not a linear process and as such, requires reflection at every step and decision point.

Following the barriers and facilitators assessment and the selection of change strategies, set some time aside to reflect and debrief as a team. What did you learn from this process?

› It's possible that after seeing all of the barriers that emerged, you may feel you have selected too many SEL approaches for implementation. More does not equal better. It's okay to go back a few steps and re-examine the approaches you initially selected.

› Perhaps a new perspective you hadn't considered before emerged during your meetings or the WHOs are not on board with the WHATs you have selected. This may indicate that you need to spend some time on engagement activities before moving forward.

Ultimately, it is important to be responsive to the cues in your context instead of forging ahead to the next step.

Once you have the appropriate support and engagement with your implementation activities and you have selected change strategies, the next stage is to enact your selected change strategies.

Activity Instructions

Appendix A.
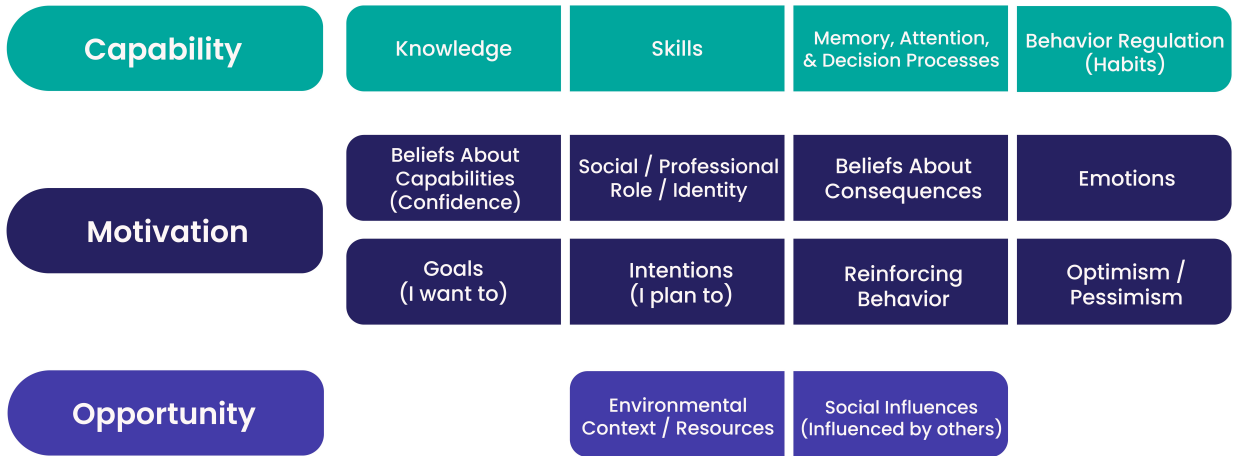
Barriers and facilitators assessment worksheet

Capability _Knowledge/Skills_	Opportunity _Supportive environment_	Motivation _Want to change_
Barriers		
Facilitators		

Activity Instructions

Appendix B.
COM-B / TDF Table

Capability	Knowledge	Skills	Memory, Attention, & Decision Processes	Behavior Regulation (Habits)
Motivation	Beliefs About Capabilities (Confidence)	Social / Professional Role / Identity	Beliefs About Consequences	Emotions
	Goals (I want to)	Intentions (I plan to)	Reinforcing Behavior	Optimism / Pessimism
Opportunity		Environmental Context / Resources	Social Influences (Influenced by others)	

Michie, S., Atkins, L., & West, R. (2014). *The behaviour change wheel: A guide to designing interventions.* Silverback Publishing. www.behaviourchangewheel.com

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Figure adapted by The Center for Implementation