Innovative Solutions Support

Project Guide - Guided Practice

What is Guided Practice?

Guided Practice projects support services to implement changes to their practice through a combination of content delivery and practical support to implement new approaches. Guided Practice projects typically involve professional development sessions to provide information to educators followed by coaching and/or mentoring support to assist educators to incorporate the information provided into their practice.

Guided Practice projects are defined by this methodology rather than by the specific focus of the project. That is, Guided Practice projects can address a wide range of inclusion barriers, including, for example, those related to challenging behaviour, trauma, speech and language development or specific conditions such as autism.

Guided Practice and the Strategic Inclusion Plan

In order to access Innovative Solutions Support it is expected that a service will have an up-to-date Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP), with current Barriers to inclusion identified and Strategies and Actions developed to address the Barriers.

Where a service is applying for a Guided Practice project there should be a clear alignment between the barriers and strategies identified in the SIP and the proposed project.

How does Guided Practice work?

Guided Practice projects reflect current understandings of effective professional development that emphasize the importance of practical learning delivered over a period of time. In the context of Innovative Solutions Support this means the provision of direct coaching and/or mentoring support for educators in addition to content delivery.

While each Guided Practice project will be different, they should all incorporate the following elements:

- **Clear, evidence-based content.** That is, the content that will be delivered through the project should be able to be clearly described and should be reputable, based on accepted theory or evidence and align with the principles of inclusive practice.

- Delivery by a support provider with sufficient knowledge, expertise and experience to provide effective support to educators

- **A combination of content delivery and practical support** (i.e.: professional development supported by coaching and/or mentoring)

- **Multiple opportunities for educators to engage with content** and receive direct feedback on their implementation of the content into their practice

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- **Multiple coaching opportunities for each content session** to allow for practice and improvement and the incorporation of feedback. The exact ratio of coaching:content will vary depending on the complexity of the content and the level of change required. Simple or small-scale changes will generally require less coaching support that complex or larger scale changes. As a general rule however, there should be more coaching than content delivery in a Guided Practice project.

- **Opportunities for Reflection.** Successful coaching and mentoring require uninterrupted time for educators to talk with the coach/mentor. Projects should demonstrate how time will be provided for this to occur (e.g.: how will educators be released to participate in mentoring sessions/reflective discussions?)

Can Guided Practice projects include professional development?

- Yes, professional development is an important part of Guided Practice. Professional development sessions provide educators with the content knowledge that will underpin changes to practice. However, professional development alone is unlikely to be effective in supporting ongoing or sustained changes. Projects that only (or predominantly) focus on professional development will not be approved. The Guided Practice model is dependent on professional development supported by coaching and/or mentoring to guide educators as they implement new approaches.

What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

There are many definitions of coaching and mentoring.

For the purposes of Guided Practice projects:

Coaching describes direct "on-the-floor" support whereby the coach provides practical guidance to help educators to implement new practices. Such support may range from "passive" (e.g.: observing the educator's practice and providing feedback) to "active" engagement by the coach (e.g.: direct modelling of specific techniques, providing real time directions or guidance to an educator as they work).

In general, the purpose of such coaching is to develop the educator's skills to a point where they are able to implement the new techniques on their own. As such, the coach should aim to "taper" their support, moving from an active to passive role over the course of a project.

Coaching can occur at an individual or team level depending on the nature of the strategies to be implemented.

Coaching may also involve "off-the-floor" reflection about what happened during a coaching session.

Coaching is most effective when it is carried out in-person. Remote coaching sessions may be offered in exceptional circumstances where the coach is unable to attend the service in person, however face-to-face support is preferred whenever possible.

Mentoring describes advice, support and guidance that is provided in an "off-the-floor" capacity. A mentoring session may provide an opportunity for an educator/s to debrief or reflect on a specific experience and seek advice from the mentor. Mentoring sessions may also provide opportunities for broader reflection and discussion about the progress and future direction of a project.

Mentoring sessions may be for individuals and/or for teams.

Mentoring sessions may allow educators in leadership roles to discuss and plan with the mentor regarding the next steps in implementing a project effectively. They may also provide opportunities for team reflection on progress.

Mentoring may also be an appropriate way to "taper" support after a period of more intensive coaching.

Unlike coaching, mentoring sessions are less dependent on in-person contact. Effective mentoring can often be carried out remotely, by phone, video-call or even email.

In general, coaching is most likely to support changes in educator practice, while mentoring is more likely to support reflection, either by individual educators about their practice, or about the progress of a project as a whole. Both are important but coaching will typically make up a greater proportion of a project in order to most effectively guide and support changes to practice.

In most cases the ratio of content: mentoring: coaching will look like:

Some Content: Some Mentoring: Mostly Coaching

What is the role of the support provider in a Guided Practice project?

The support provider's role is to guide and support changes to practice within the service that address the identified barriers to inclusion. This will be through a combination of professional development sessions, coaching and mentoring.

The support provider should have demonstrated knowledge and expertise in relation to the specific barriers to be addressed. They also need to have the ability to work effectively with adults to guide and support changes to practice.

Because the aim of Innovative Solutions Support is to increase the inclusion capacity of services the support provider's role is to support the development of educator capacity in a way that leads to sustainable and ongoing change.

When planning a project, the service, support provider and IP should discuss how the planned changes will be sustained once the project ends.

In general, it is not the role of the support provider to work directly with children – however, in the context of providing coaching to educators, support providers may, when appropriate, demonstrate or role-model specific techniques. Such direct support should be scaled back as the project progresses to allow educators the opportunity to practice using such techniques themselves.

Support providers should also aim to "taper" their support over the course of a project so that educators are able to implement new approaches with increasing independence. For example, support provider involvement may become less frequent as a project progress and/or direct coaching may transition to mentoring as educators become more skilled and confident in using new approaches.

Ultimately educators should be able to implement the new approaches without the support provider's support.

Incursions and curriculum-based interventions

For the reasons outlined above, projects that primarily focus on support provider "incursions" for children or support provider delivery of experiences for children are not able to be funded under Innovative Solutions Support.

Where a project focuses on new approaches to curriculum or the delivery of particular experiences this must be done in such a way that it develops the educator's ability to present such experiences independently. Support providers should focus on how they can upskill educators in this regard, rather than on presenting such experiences themselves.

Projects involving support provider delivered experiences for children will only be considered where such experiences form a limited part of a project, and it can be clearly seen that they are part of a sequence of learning that will enable educators to observe an experience before implementing it themselves.