Innovation, a Small County perspective

Challenges with identifying, researching, writing and implementing
In order to identify a project, you need to be familiar with the requirements and expectations...
Regulations Highlights

- **Definition:**
  - “Innovation Project” means a project that the County designs and implements for a defined time period and evaluates to develop new best practices in mental health services and supports.

- **General Requirements** – County shall design and implement a project to do one of the following:
  - Introduce a MH practice that is new to overall MH System
  - Make a change to an existing practice
  - Apply a promising community-driven practice to the MH system

- **Primary Purpose** - County shall select one of four primary purposes:
  - Increase access to MH services to underserved groups
  - Increase quality of MH services
  - Promote interagency and community collaboration
  - Increase access to MH services
Regulations cont...

- **Required approval:** Counties shall only spend innovation funding on innovation projects approved by the Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC)

- **Project Reports:**
  - Annual Report due to Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) no later than Dec 31st following the end of the FY for which the County is reporting
    - Name of project
    - Changes made during the reporting period
    - Evaluation data
    - Demographics of people served
  - Final Report at conclusion of Project – can be part of 3-year Program

- **Time-limited to not more than five years from start date**
So, you’ve familiarized yourself with the requirements...Now What?

You have to:
- research *innovative* strategies,
- identify one of the general requirements
- identify a primary purpose
- write the project
- complete a budget
- present to the OAC
- implement
- evaluate
- report
In a small county,

How do we manage that?!

and continue with our regular workloads
Small County challenges

- Many MHSA programs in small counties are limited to one or two staff to run ALL programs
- Don’t usually have the capacity to go through all the necessary steps as mentioned above
- Current staffing levels make it difficult for Departments to keep up with local and state mandates, let alone research or implement new and innovative processes or services
- Don’t have dedicated resources to interpret or study regulations as they are introduced, therefore we are often behind the curve when new opportunities arise
Challenges continued...

• Particularly difficult when talking about Innovation
• Because we are often “late to the party”, identifying strategies that haven’t already been tried is not easy
• Many new programs require collaboration between other County agencies/departments who are also in the same staffing situations.
• Adding ‘new’ programs often means adding ‘new’ tasks and responsibilities to someone’s caseload which can be overwhelming and difficult to sell
So what do we do?

- Reach out for assistance and support
  - Local government (Dept Admin, BOS, CAO, other Counties)
  - State government (OAC, CBHDA)
  - Other Agencies/Departments
- Be creative with project funding
  - Request to add additional staff
  - Contract out services when possible
- Be patient and flexible
  - Expect delays
  - Be open to new strategies as the project moves forward
- Keep lines of communication open with State for continued support
What we learned in Siskiyou...

- Special relationships already exist in many small counties and Innovation Projects can help strengthen those relationships (ER, Law Enforcement, Clinics)
- Staff at the Oversight and Accountability Commission were very supportive in helping us develop our project and getting it through the approval process
- Identifying and contracting with the right consultant is key to a successful implementation and evaluation process
Questions