

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

