Event Brief

Webinar: Hub Supports for Navigating Complexity

March 10, 2021

Purpose

This webinar was the first of a series that will inform the development of relevant, credible, and timely supports for the Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF) project community. The purpose of this webinar was to assist participants in understanding, navigating, and managing complexity within their projects, inspired by examples emerging from the Hub-led pandemic adaptations study. Recognizing that MHP-IF projects are currently completing Phase 1 and beginning planning and preparation for Phase 2, this webinar sought to share features of complexity and identify options for navigating various situations. This series of webinars ultimately aims to inform the delivery, form, and content of potential tools and supports that are most useful to MHP-IF projects as they move forward.

Participants

The webinar was hosted by the KDE Hub Secretariat with guest speaker, Jamie Gamble (Imprint Consulting). Participants included 20 MHP-IF project team members and 8 Hub team members (Secretariat and consultants).

Meeting structure

- The meeting began with a plenary presentation given by Jamie Gamble, who shared his expertise in complexity science, using MHP-IF project examples as a backdrop, and highlighting potential methods and tools helpful in navigating complex situations.
- After the presentation, participants took part in a poll to gauge what material and content was new to the group.
- Webinar participants were then split into two breakout rooms (led by Jamie Gamble and Barb Riley) where they were asked to consider how their projects have experienced complex situations ('Getting personal') and how they have navigated these situations ('Getting practical'). Webinar participants shared project specific examples related to three different features of complexity (unpredictability, unknowns and path dependency) and considered potential supports necessary to move forward. Google Jamboard was used to facilitate the discussion and collect participants' feedback.

What did we learn?

MHP-IF projects are currently experiencing complex conundrums which were evident from the preliminary results of the pandemic adaptations study as well as conversations during the KDE Hub Annual Symposium. It is important to understand that not all problems are 'complex' and being able to discern whether a problem is simple, complicated, and/or complex is an important skill. Understanding

and identifying the type of complexity helps determine how to effectively navigate the situation. Jamie Gamble provided three examples of conundrums: one simple (knowable, high confidence if instructions are followed, you will achieve the same result), one complicated (needs more expertise/analysis, it is repeatable/predictable, but with a longer timeline), and one complex (many interacting pieces and elements = unpredictable, changing every time).

Various implications for evaluation and other approaches were explored based on the type of problem; for instance, while developmental evaluation might be most useful to navigate complex situations, simple conundrums could be addressed through monitoring or best practice approaches. Additionally, multiple features of complexity were shared (see PDF handout) that might be useful to determine *what is complex and why?* Understanding these features may be helpful for projects currently navigating conundrums or 'forks in the road' to identify important next steps.

This webinar focused on three specific features of complexity that have recently challenged MHP-IF projects as they navigate pandemic adaptations, including: unpredictability, unknowns, and path dependency. During the breakout rooms, projects members were able to provide specific examples and identify complex situations in relation to pandemic adaptations that related to the three features of complexity highlighted in the session. While the need for more information on specific tools and supports were identified (e.g., developmental evaluation, appreciative inquiry, implementation science frameworks), some indicated the need for more information to better understand complexity itself as well as tools and supports that may be most useful to navigate complexity.

Polling results indicated that the webinar provided new information for participants specifically related to: the features of complexity; promising ways to navigate complex situations; prominent features of complexity in the MHP-IF project pandemic adaptations related to the three specific features explored and understanding how different features can make problems and situations complex. Case examples were offered as a potential means for digging in deeper on the features and responses to complexity.

How will learnings from this event be used?

➢ Learnings from this webinar will help shape tools and supports that might be most useful to MHP-IF projects as they navigate complex situations, particularly as they continue to navigate evolving pandemic conditions.

➢ This webinar also will help to inform upcoming Hub webinars including exploring additional supports as well as setting the stage for future group discussions.