The Frontiers of Innovation Approach to Program Development and Evaluation

Decades of early childhood research have illuminated many of the causes and correlations of negative outcomes for children, but when it comes to concrete solutions, the field has produced relatively modest and inconsistent impacts. In order to achieve breakthrough outcomes that can be scaled for population-level impact, a new approach is needed which requires a structured but flexible model that facilitates program development, implementation, testing, evaluation, and fast-cycle iteration. Frontiers of Innovation’s approach expands on existing research and development methods to set a new bar for program development and evaluation.

The Frontiers of Innovation approach is a rigorous process for translating science into practice that allows us to learn more about how an intervention works, for whom, and in what contexts. Instead of simply asking whether an intervention works on average, it asks a series of questions that require much greater precision in program design, implementation, and measurement:

1) **What about it works?** If we understand the active ingredients, we are better able to replicate and scale them.
2) **How does it work?** Being specific about the underlying mechanisms can help us increase the impact.
3) **For whom does it work, and for whom does it not work?** When we know the defining characteristics of who is and isn’t responding, we can scale what works for the former and make targeted adaptations for the latter.
4) **Where does it work?** If we specify the context in which it was implemented, then we are better able to adapt the intervention for other settings.

Each of these inquiries points us toward the ultimate pursuit of the approach: How can we develop new interventions that achieve better outcomes than current best practice for young children and their families?
Science-Based Innovation
A one-day training on the FOI approach to program development and evaluation

May 16, 2017. This one-day training in Eugene, OR will provide participants with an overview of a promising new approach for innovation in program development and evaluation, and implications of this approach for early childhood programs. This includes a set of tools that support translating science into practice in order to learn more about how an intervention works, for whom, and in what contexts. This model is designed to help teams develop stronger programs, optimize evaluation efforts, and engage in rapid-cycle learning.

Participants will have an opportunity to learn more about developing a precise theory of change, program materials that support effective implementation, and evaluation methods that facilitate continuous learning. In addition to presentations—including Dr. Phil Fisher on “A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families”—participants will have opportunities to reflect on and discuss the content in small groups.

Participants from a broad range of settings are encouraged to attend, including program developers and anyone who works with (or is in a position to support) young children or their families. The cost of the workshop is $450 for the day. The program will run from 9am to 5pm and lunch and snacks will be provided. Participants are responsible for their own travel and lodging.

To register for the training or to learn more, please visit the registration site.