Scale & Spread of Innovations in Healthcare

The terms "scale" & "spread" are sometimes used interchangeably. They can mean different things to different stakeholders. Common definitions include:

Scale

Increasing the impact of an innovation to benefit more people.
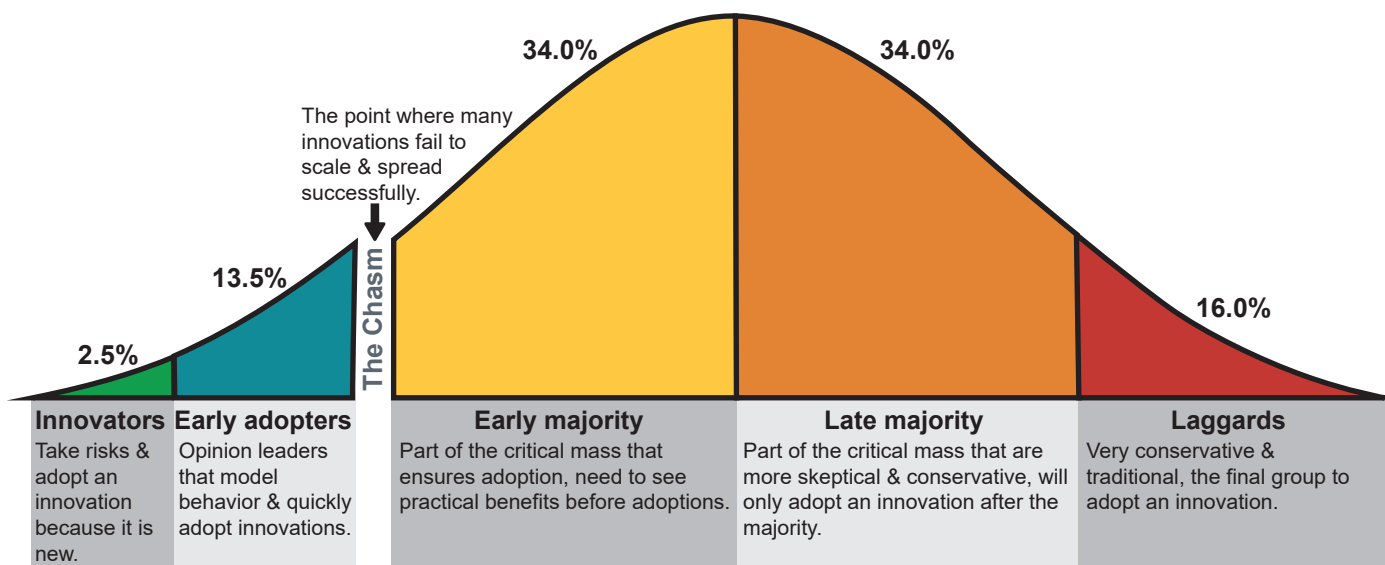
Spread

Extending an innovation widely & consistently over an area.

The scale & spread concept includes the acceptance or rejection of an innovation by an organization or individuals. Many healthcare initiatives are abandoned or not adopted due to failure in scale & spread. Failure to adopt an innovation is not usually a result of content or poor planning, but the proposed changes do not connect with & engage people.

There are 5 adopter groups that vary in their level of motivation to adopt new innovations:

34.0%

34.0%

The point where many innovations fail to scale & spread successfully.

13.5%

The Chasm

2.5%

16.0%

Innovators
Take risks & adopt an innovation because it is new.

Early adopters
Opinion leaders that model behavior & quickly adopt innovations.

Early majority
Part of the critical mass that ensures adoption, need to see practical benefits before adoptions.

Late majority
Part of the critical mass that are more skeptical & conservative, will only adopt an innovation after the majority.

Laggards
Very conservative & traditional, the final group to adopt an innovation.

Key factors for successful scale & spread

• An increasing amount of literature has focused on why innovations succeed in one place & then fail to have the same impact when scaled & spread.

• There is no universal approach, but there are several key factors that can help facilitate successful scale & spread.

1 Evidence-based innovation

✓ The innovation should present obvious benefits compared to existing practices & address an identified problem.

✓ Define & preserve the core features of the innovation.

Tip:
Ensure benefits are applicable & strongly stated to each stakekholders group.

2 Innovation champions & spread agents

✓ Innovations require encouragement, guidance & support to scale & spread. Initiatives are more successful with:

- Leadership – provide accountability, increase influence & impact
- Organizational innovation champions – help to overcome barriers
- Spread agents – carry out the spread plan & communicate barriers to leadership.

Tip:
Outline the people in each category:
- Leadership
- Organizational innovation champions
- Spread agents

3 Multistakeholder infrastructure

✓ Identify & engage stakeholders affected by the innovation, such as leadership, service providers, patients, families & communities.

✓ Plan & secure sufficient resources (staffing, time, space, funding).

✓ Adapt the innovation to local environments & stakeholders.

Tip:
Create a collaborative network where collaborators can share lessons learned, challenges & successes.

4 Evaluation

✓ Evaluation shows the innovation has had meaningful impact.

✓ Start with a small scale pilot program & remove barriers before implementing on a larger scale. This will also provide a template for spreading the innovation to other areas.

Tip:
Develop an evaluation framework early to help guide the project & meet goals.

5 Communication

✓ Communication is a critical component in each step of implementing the innovation & should be considered in each of the above steps.

✓ Create a process for open communication among those involved.

✓ Ensure the innovation's advantages, need for change & benefits of change are easily understood.

Tip:
Before spreading, make a communication plan to connect implementers & stakeholders.

Alberta Health Services