BUILDING DIGITAL TESTING SERVICES

A How-To Guide for Implementing Digital Testing Services for Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI)

The GetCheckedOnline Team
BC Centre for Disease Control British Columbia, Canada

Authors
Janice Duddy, Hsiu-Ju Chang, Ihoghosa Iyamu, Mark Bondyra, Heather Pedersen, Devon Haag, Rayka Kumru, Mark Gilbert.

BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

DIGITAL & SEXUAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of Health Research | Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Date: July 2025

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

We developed this workbook as a team based on the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We recognize their traditional territories with gratitude and give thanks for their stewardship of these lands.

We would like to thank:

- All the people who helped implement the GetCheckedOnline program for their dedication,
- Regional and provincial organizations for supporting the basis of this guide,
- Rayka Kumru for her knowledge translation and information design expertise,
- Oya Çitçi and Emir Suat Darman for designing this report,
- Oralia Gómez-Ramirez and Shannon Kopp for informing this guide with their past work on GetCheckedOnline, and
- Alexandra Musten for giving feedback on this guide as a fellow implementer at Ontario's GetaKit Project.

This workbook was made possible by research grants from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR Team grant in Implementation Science CTW-1553878; CIHR Applied Public Health Chair PP6-170676).

Suggested citation:
Duddy J, et al. Workbook, Building Digital Testing Services: A How-To Guide for Implementing Digital Testing Services for Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI). Vancouver, BC: Digital & Sexual Health Initiative; 2025.

Overview

We designed this guide to support digital health innovators and organizations that want to implement digital sexually transmitted and bloodborne infection (STBBI) testing services.

This guide draws from lessons learned in implementing GetCheckedOnline, an award-winning digital STBBI testing service in British Columbia (BC), Canada. Our decade of experience has taught us that program implementation is a dynamic, ongoing process. Implementation activities and decisions continually build off on what came before. Being proactive in planning, adaptable and collaborative are important to overcome challenges and maximize benefits for both users and healthcare providers.

Key components and practical recommendations for implementation

As a structured approach, we described the key components of building a digital STBBI program that apply both initially in developing a program and at all stages of implementation and scale-up. We also offer practical recommendations for each component to help you implement such a program successfully.

Component 1: Understand and Evaluate

It is important to evaluate and get information at all stages of implementation. This allows digital STBBI testing programs to address real needs and focus on equity, sustainability, and costs.

Practical recommendations:

- Identify Health Equity Gaps and Priority Populations
- Identify Teams, Implementation Partners and Skill Sets
- Build in Evaluation and Cost Assessment Mechanisms

Component 2: Secure and Maintain Partnerships

Digital innovations depend on support from many groups. Engage early and continuously with a diverse group of partners that have various expertise, resources, and perspectives. This will help you get the support you need from start to finish.

Practical recommendations:
- Build Trust and Create a Shared Vision
- Show the Service's Value
- Address Concerns and Barriers

Component 3: Build a Flexible and Scalable Program

Digital health programs should be able to grow and adapt over time to be able to respond to changing needs. Building a program that can change and grow makes it more likely to succeed in the long run. To achieve this, it is important to design user-friendly platforms, ensure compatible digital programs with other systems, and improve the tool based on real feedback.

Practical recommendations:
- Focus on Community and Clinical Needs
- Build and Improve in Steps
- Make Sure Systems Work Together
- Design for Long-Term Success

Component 4: Plan for Long-Term Success

It is important to think for the long term to make sure your program lasts. While it is helpful to start small and go step by step, start the long-term planning early and continue planning throughout implementation.

Practical recommendations:
- Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaborations
- Have Dedicated Long-Term Staff and Teams
- Create a Long-Term Strategy for Funding
- Integrate with Existing Systems and Policies

Final thoughts

We recognize we implemented GetCheckedOnline within a specific health system context. Still, we hope the lessons learned from our experience will support you and your work. While we created this guide specifically for digital STBBI testing services implementation, it may also be helpful in other digital sexual health innovation contexts. Lastly, no matter how well you plan, you are likely going to face unexpected challenges or barriers. Embrace uncertainty and make room for creative problem solving. Most importantly, persevere and do not give up!

Learn more

Read the full guide and accompanying workbook for more details. Visit www.dishiresearch.ca to download the workbook.

Introduction

The Purpose of This Guide

We designed this guide to support digital health innovators and organizations that want to implement digital sexually transmitted and bloodborne infection (STBBI) testing services.

This guide draws from lessons learned from GetCheckedOnline to help you implement such programs successfully, including:

- Components of building a digital STBBI program,
- Practical recommendations,
- Guiding questions and workbook,
- Case study examples from GetCheckedOnline.

There are many different ways to implement digital STBBI testing services, but they all let users get tested without seeing a healthcare provider first.

GetCheckedOnline is one example. Online postal self-sampling programs are another example. We realize we created and applied GetCheckedOnline within its own specific health system context. We have described this context below so that you can consider how it compares to your specific context and program goals.

Still, we hope the lessons learned from our experience will support you and your work.

While we created this guide specifically for digital STBBI testing services implementation, it may also be helpful in other digital sexual health innovation contexts.

Duddy J, et al. Lessons Learned in Sustaining GetCheckedOnline, BC's Digital STBBI Testing Program: Perspectives of Implementers across Multiple Sectors. Vancouver, BC: Digital & Sexual Health Initiative; 2025.
Link

How we developed this guide

We partnered with an external consultant to document key lessons learned from GetChecked-Online's more than ten-year timeline.* We interviewed 45 staff from agencies and organizations connected to GetCheckedOnline to identify key areas to focus on. We then structured them into what we believe are four key components of implementing digital STBBI testing programs.

We have provided recommendations and examples from GetCheckedOnline implementation for each component.

How this guide can help

This guide offers practical tips from a real-world, scaled-up and sustained implementation program. We also include a list of tips and types of tools and resources that may be helpful for each component. We have not recommended specific tools, recognizing that needs may vary depending on the specific health system context and goals of your program.

At the end of each component section, we have highlighted specific recommendations for earlier and later phases of implementation:

Planning and piloting phase:

This phase includes:

- Planning and development,
- Feasibility and acceptability assessment,
- Early implementation and testing (proof of concept or pilot),
- Adaptations or changes prior to full implementation.

Implementation and scaling phase:

This phase includes activities after the initial implementation (or pilot) like:

- Maintenance,
- Adaptation,
- Integrating into existing systems,
- Ongoing sustainability,
- Expanding the service (if planned).

About GetCheckedOnline

GetCheckedOnline is BC's digital STBBI testing program. In its first year, GetCheckedOnline was available in one community with 240 completed test visits. Ten years later, it is now available in nine communities across all health regions of BC including large urban, small urban and rural communities. With more than 3,000 test visits a month, there is continued interest from both public and community partners to continue to scale-up GetCheckedOnline across BC.

Evidence has shown that GetCheckedOnline:

- Increases the uptake of STBBI testing and treatment.
- Reduces barriers people face to getting tested.
- Engages and empowers people in testing.
- Reaches people who are more likely to have an infection.
- Leads to more frequent testing, helping reduce the spread of STBBI.
- Improves the capacity and use of sexual health services.
- Reduces demands on primary care for testing.
- Improves health equity in the population.
- Avoids costs to the health system and improves sustainability.

To learn more the outcomes of GetCheckedOnline, check out *Ten years later: The impacts of GetCheckedOnline*.*

*Gilbert M, et al. *Ten years later: The impacts of GetCheckedOnline.* Vancouver, BC: Digital & Sexual Health Initiative; 2024. **Link**

How GetCheckedOnline works

GetCheckedOnline is a free digital testing service which allows people to test for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis C without having to see a healthcare provider first.

GetCheckedOnline partners with private laboratories that are already operating within the BC system for specimen collection.

There are five easy steps to using GetCheckedOnline:

Step 1: Create an account
Users need an email to create an account. They will need to give some personal information, including name (or pseudonyms), date of birth, gender, city and phone number.

Step 2: Get a lab form
Users answer questions online, select tests and create a lab form.

Step 3: Find a participating lab
Users can get tested with their GetCheckedOnline lab form at participating lab locations. This information is available on the GetCheckedOnline website.

Step 4: Go to the lab to get tested
Users go to a participating lab location to get tested. They need to show their lab form at their lab visit. They can either bring a printed lab form or show it on a mobile device. Users can give blood, a urine sample and swabs depending on the information on their lab form.

Step 5: Check your results online
Users can check their results online by signing in to their account. Their account will show results as they become available. Users get an email only when all results are ready. If any of the results is positive or requires follow-up, a nurse will contact them.

The health system context for GetCheckedOnline

GetCheckedOnline is a publicly funded and delivered program. This context is important to note for our program's implementation and long-term success.

Health authorities in BC

The BC health system is publicly funded. BC residents have access to a provincial health insurance plan, and do not pay for many healthcare services. The province manages its healthcare service delivery through health authorities:

- Regional health authorities are responsible for delivering most healthcare services, including hospitals, community care, and public health programs.
- The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) manages specialized services such as cancer care, mental health,

and infectious disease control. The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) is the provincial public health program of the PHSA.
- The First Nations Health Authority supports culturally safe healthcare services for First Nations communities across BC.

Testing services in BC

In BC, public and private laboratories do STBBI testing. The provincial government funds most testing. It is possible to get tested without using official personal information when samples are processed through the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory. To get samples to the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory, GetCheckedOnline partners with a private lab which has locations in communities across BC where people can submit their specimens. The BCCDC, the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory and regional health authorities partner to operate GetCheckedOnline.

Operated within BC health system

There are many ways to operate an innovative testing program, including:

- Within the healthcare system,
- As a research study,
- As a community-based program,
- In partnership with industry.

GetCheckedOnline is a virtual extension of an existing provincial STBBI clinic at BCCDC which offers testing and other related services. The program is integrated with existing laboratory, clinical, and surveillance systems in BC.

While not a research project, research and evaluation has been embedded since the program started and supports data-driven planning, implementation and decision-making.

Key Components to Consider When Implementing

The four components of this guide provide a structured approach to implementing a digital STBBI testing program that is:

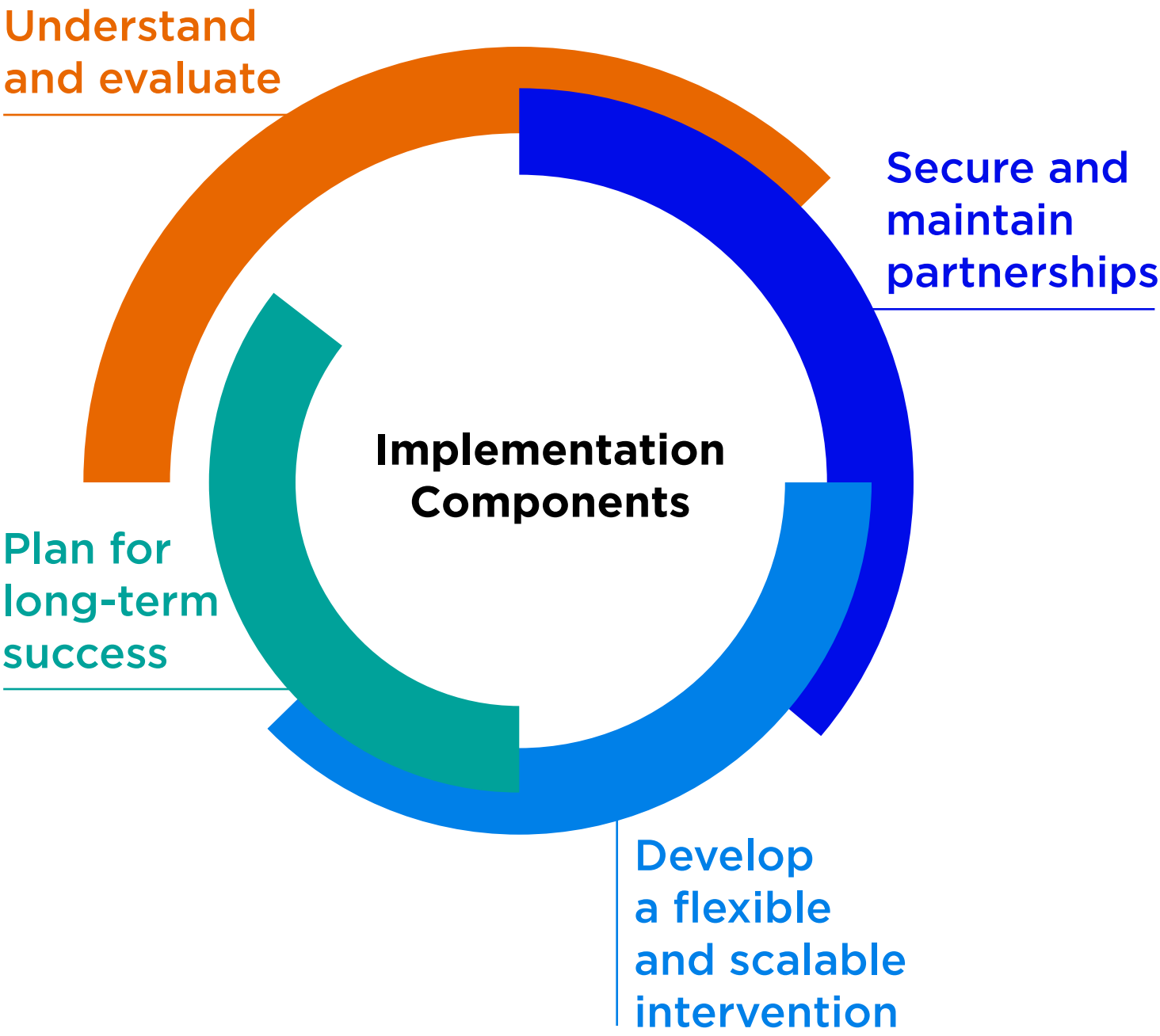
- **User-centered,**
- **Focused on health equity,**
- **Integrated with existing healthcare systems,**
- **Scalable, and**
- **Designed for long-term impact.**

We considered each of the components at every phase of implementing GetCheckedOnline. These components do not make up a linear sequence of steps but rather a cycle.

We have learned from GetCheckedOnline's experience that being proactive in planning, adaptable and collaborative are important to overcome challenges and maximize benefits for both users and healthcare providers.

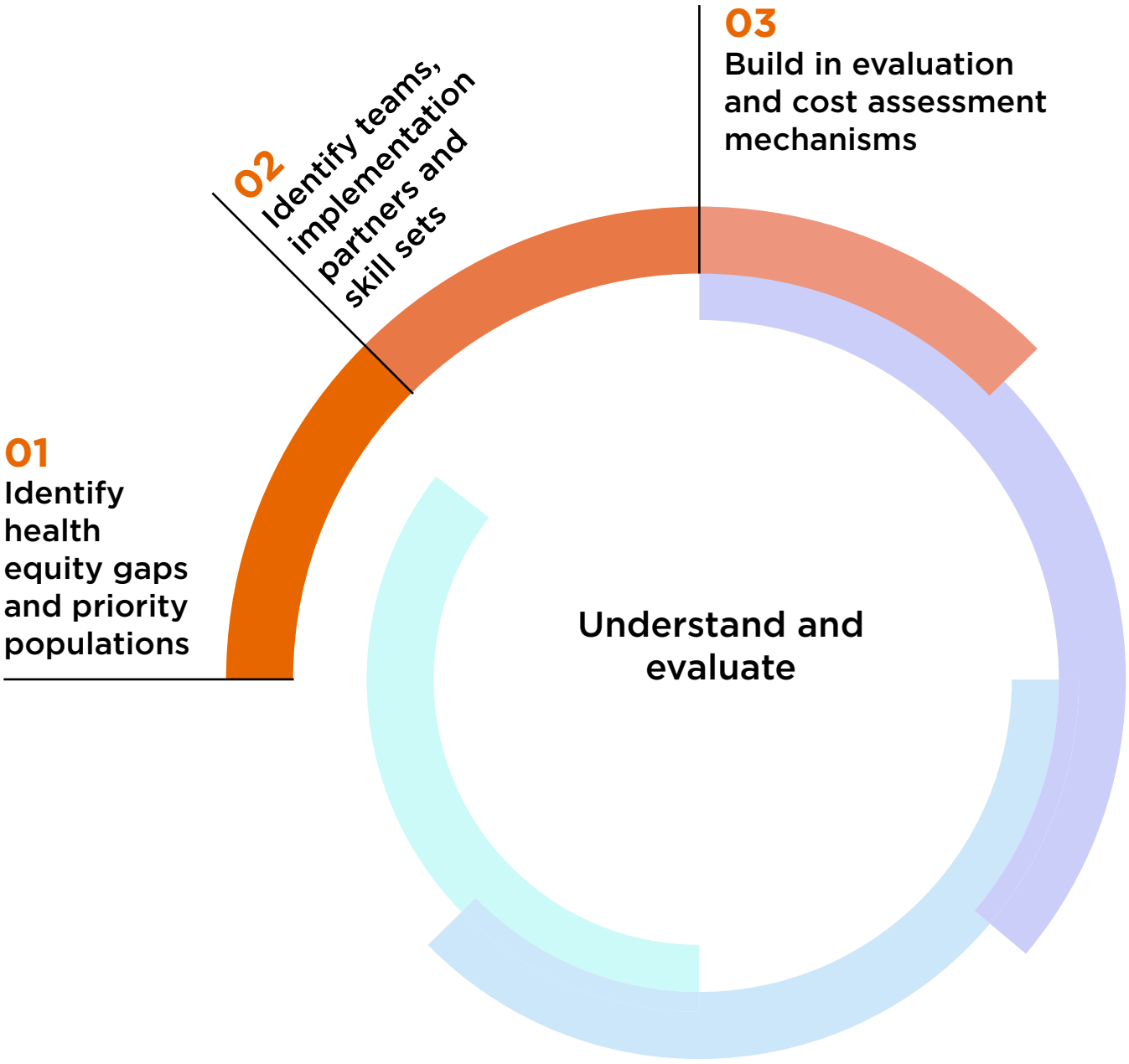
We have described each component in more detail in the next part of this guide.

How to implement a digital STBBI testing program



Component 1: Understand and Evaluate

It is important to evaluate and get information at all stages of implementation. This allows digital STBBI testing programs to address real needs and focus on equity, sustainability, and costs.



Recommendation 1: Identify Health Equity Gaps and Priority Populations

Define the problem

It is important to identify who you hope the program will reach. Once you know your audience, you can better understand the program's specific needs and challenges.

Use data to understand the context of your goal. This can include epidemiology, clinical or service use data. For STBBI testing, consider barriers such as geographic inaccessibility, systemic inequities, language, or cultural safety concerns.

Assess health equity impact

Health equity impact assessments can be helpful in the planning and post-implementation phases to help you:

- Identify populations most affected by inequities,
- Evaluate how interventions can reduce barriers,
- Analyse how implementation impacts populations affected by inequity, and
- Identify possible tensions early to prevent problems later.

What is health equity?

Health equity means everyone has a fair opportunity to meet their health potential. Health equity strives for the highest possible standard of health for all people and gives attention to those at greatest risk of poor health, based on social conditions. This means fairness in:

- How resources needed for health (food, housing, clean water, etc.) are distributed,
- Accessing opportunities (e.g., work, education, etc.) and,
- The types of support people get when they are ill or trying to prevent illness.

To achieve health equity, we need to recognize that not everyone begins from the same place. We need tailored strategies and resources to address the imbalance and health disparities resulting from social and structural factors.

National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. Let's Talk: Health equity (2nd edition). Antigonish, NS: NCCDH, St. Francis Xavier University; 2023. ISBN: 978-1-998022-08-3. **Link**

Inequity in STBBI testing

Some people who need STBBI testing the most are not able to get tested because of inequity. This can look like:

- Difficulty getting to clinics (long distances, lack of transportation, inaccessibility, etc.)
- Long wait times for services,
- Not having access to sex-positive clinicians,
- Not having access to culturally safe services,
- Not being able to get tested anonymously,
- Insurance and cost concerns,
- Discrimination and stigma.

Recommendation 2: Identify Teams, Implementation Partners and Skill Sets

Learn from others

You do not need to start from scratch. That is part of the reason why we've created this guide to begin with. You can build on the knowledge and experience of others. Consult with and learn from other implementers. Draw on relevant research to build a strong case for the program's design, intended impact, and resource allocation.

Map expertise and skills you will need

Having a good understanding of what you are building will help you decide who you will need on the team. Conduct a mapping exercise to identify critical skills and expertise your team will need. Then, compare your existing teams' skills with those you will need. It is important to think "outside the box" about people and teams who may not be your usual partners. This can include people inside and outside your organization.

Communicate with partners early in the process

Communicate early and often with key organizations, teams and people that can contribute to the program's success. This will help you collect important information about needs. Partners can include:

- Laboratories,
- Community-based organizations,
- User groups,
- Healthcare providers, and,
- Groups or people who can identify other teams you may need to engage with.

Communicating with partners early can also shape evaluation questions, by identifying potential impacts and knowledge gaps.

Recommendation 3: Build in Evaluation and Cost Assessment Mechanisms

Define goals and metrics

Create a clear evaluation framework. Use measurable outcomes that will help you measure progress and effectiveness over time and across the different phases of work.

Build budget metrics

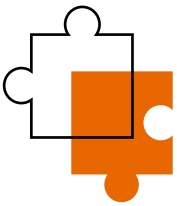
Having clear budget metrics (e.g., cost per test) will allow you to have clear project costs. This is important to make sure the project stays affordable while it's being put into action. Unexpected costs will probably come up, so it is a good idea to plan for them ahead of time.

Evaluate regularly and track costs

It's important to keep checking and improving your work regularly, not just once. Using tools for real-time feedback, tracking quality, and reviewing costs often will help you stay on budget and be ready when new funding opportunities come up.

Build relationships with researchers

Build relationships with researchers early to create strong partnerships. Look for researchers who can help you answer specific questions about your program. Doing research is important to show that the program works well, which helps get more partners, grow the program, and keep it going over time.



Practical Tips, Tools and Resources

Expertise or skills mapping templates

Use these tools to document the skills you need and identify gaps.

Health equity impact assessment toolkits

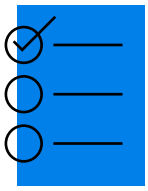
Use these to systematically analyze how your program affects different populations.

Partner analysis or mapping

Organize a collaborative session with partners to outline other potential partners to engage, gaps in skills, and potential people or teams who can fill those gaps.

Evaluation and budget planning frameworks

Refer to these for guidance on defining metrics, collecting data, estimating costs, and reporting results.



Planning and Piloting Phase

First assessments

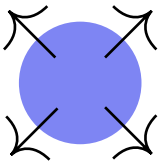
Use rapid-cycle assessments or evaluations during early planning processes to quickly identify critical gaps or needed re-focusing.

Small-scale mapping

Do a small-scale skills check with your pilot team to see what skills you already have and what is missing. It can be hard to know what you do not know, so ask key partners if there are other people who should be involved.

Baseline evaluation

Set a starting point to measure how the pilot is doing so you can track progress and plan for future growth. Ask research questions that fit this early stage and help improve the program.



Implementation and Scaling Phase

Ongoing assessments

Grow your quick check-ins and health equity reviews to include more places, different communities, or new issues as the program gets bigger.

Extended partnerships

Include more partners and experts from across larger geographic settings and systems.

Long-term evaluation

Get ready to track your program over the long term. Use what you learn from the pilot to improve the program and make sure it has a strong impact. Update your research questions to include what you need to grow and keep the program going in the future.

Summary

Gathering the necessary information is one of the first steps to make sure your program is aligned with community needs and positioned for success. Gathering information is an ongoing activity during all phases of implementation. To deliver meaningful, long-term, and financially viable outcomes, it is important to:

- Identify and document equity gaps,
- Engage with the right teams and partners,
- Include research and evaluation early on, and consider cost implications.

Example: Understand and Evaluate

Recommendation 1 Example

Identify Health Equity Gaps and Priority Populations
- Define the problem
- Assess health equity impact

What is the goal of the program?

GetCheckedOnline's main goal is to increase testing in British Columbia (BC), Canada to reduce sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBI).

What specific issues will your program (or project, initiative…) address?

Testing is not only important for one's sexual health but also for preventing spread of STBBI. However, many people face barriers in getting tested, such as long wait time, challenges with getting to a clinic and privacy concerns. GetCheckedOnline reduces these barriers by allowing people to get tested for STBBI without seeing a provider.

Who will your program address those issues for?

GetCheckedOnline addresses these issues for populations more likely to experience STBBI in BC and face barriers to testing. These populations include Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and additional gender and sexual identity (2S/LGBTQ+) communities, Indigenous communities, African, Caribbean, Black, and other racialized communities, people who use drugs, sex workers and their clients, new comers, migrants and immigrants to Canada from STBBI high-prevalent areas, women and youth.

What are the top factors that contribute to testing inequity in your context?

We identified three key factors that contributed to testing inequity in BC:

1. Discrimination and stigma,
2. Geographic location,
3. Need for confidentiality.

What are some ways you can specifically address, reduce or completely remove these factors?

We focused on the ways that the design of GetCheckedOnline could help overcome these barriers. We knew that the service needed to use non-judgemental language and images that would avoid perpetuating stigma, and be promoted in culturally appropriate ways for underserved populations facing discrimination and stigma. When the service expanded from its original location in Vancouver, BC, our partners prioritized rural communities for improving access. We also made sure that GetCheckedOnline could be used without requiring real names to enhance the confidentiality of the service. Most importantly, we used a user-centered approach to designing the service to make sure we heard directly from underserved populations about what would work for them.

Recommendation 2 Example

Are there similar or relevant STBBI testing programs in your context? Try to think about various contexts like smaller municipality-based programs to regional ones.

Identify Teams, Implementation Partners and Skill Sets

- Learn from others
- Map expertise and skills you will need
- Communicate with partners early in the process

When we were in the planning stages of the project, digital STBBI testing services were just being introduced. We spoke with people who had implemented other digital STBBI testing programs in San Francisco, United States of America and Amsterdam, Netherlands. Their experience helped us to determine the best ways to recommend tests and design a testing process that worked.

What kinds of research evidence will help inform your program? What are some tools and resources you can refer to for the research evidence you need?

We reviewed the literature to understand more about the kinds of testing barriers that people face in Canada and designed GetCheckedOnline to overcome these barriers. We also looked for research that looked at the implementation and impacts of digital health services generally to see what we could learn and apply to GetCheckedOnline.

What are some specific skills you will need to build your program?

We needed specific skills to build our program, including but not limited to:

- Clinical and laboratory knowledge: Specimen collection, laboratory testing, linkage to care.
- Information technology (IT) capabilities: Building the online testing platform, refining the program
- Privacy and security: Data security, safety risks mitigation
- User-centered design: User experience design, knowledge translation and plain language communication, visual design
- Project management skills
- Evaluation and research skills

Who are team members you can rely on for some of the skills you've identified in the first question?

Our core team has a project manager, a public health physician and research staff and trainees.

What are the skills you will need support from non-team members?

For clinical and laboratory experts, we partner with the Provincial STBBI Clinic within the BCCDC, the BC Public Health Laboratory, LifeLabs and regional health authorities. We hired a Business Analyst with user experince (UX) design expertise and a knowledge translation professional with expertise in plain language and sexual health. We started building meaningful relationships with community-based organizations representing our intended audience.

Who are the partners you will need to consult with to build your program?

At the start of the planning phase we identified three key groups of partners that we engaged with through ad hoc meetings or working groups:

- Internal partners to BCCDC (Clinical, Education, Communications, Executive leads)
- Partners within the larger health authority where BCCDC is located (Laboratory, Privacy, Legal, IT, Executive leads)
- External partners with perspectives relevant to or future roles with GetCheckedOnline (health care providers, community organizations, public health programs, Ministry of Health, and regulatory bodies).

Recommendation 3 Example

Build in Evaluation and Cost Assessment Mechanisms

- Define goals and metrics
- Build budget metrics
- Evaluate regularly and track costs
- Build relationships with researchers

What measurable outcomes can help you monitor progress and effectiveness of your program?

We use routinely collected program data to evaluate the program effectiveness. For example, we report the number of monthly GetCheckedOnline test visits to monitor program uptake. We also conduct research to collect supplementary information. For example, we conducted surveys with GetCheckedOnline clients to assess satisfaction with and use of this service in relation to provider-based testing.

What budget metrics can help you monitor and project costs of your program?

We project program costs based on the cost per GetCheckedOnline tests and trends in use of the program. We do this assessment on an ongoing basis.

What methods and measures will you use to evaluate and track?

We used a number of real-time methods for evaluating the quality of the program and tracking costs:

- Monitoring of program metrics such as numbers of accounts created and completed tests and positivity rates
- Regular review of expenditures against projected costs
- Receiving real-time feedback from users having challenges using the service

Engaging this data allowed us to react to issues and make adjustments.

Who are researchers or evaluators that you could partner with to help you answer specific questions about your program?

Partnering with researchers and integrating evaluation into GetCheckedOnline from the onset and throughout all phases of implementation allowed us to refine the program continuously and demonstrate its effectiveness to our partners.

For example, early in the process we worked with a research team at UBC, who conducted interviews and focus groups with potential users of GetCheckedOnline, and with health care providers that helped inform the design of the service. Later, we built relationships with researchers specialized in economic analyses, mathematical modeling, and social sciences to help evaluate the impacts of the service.

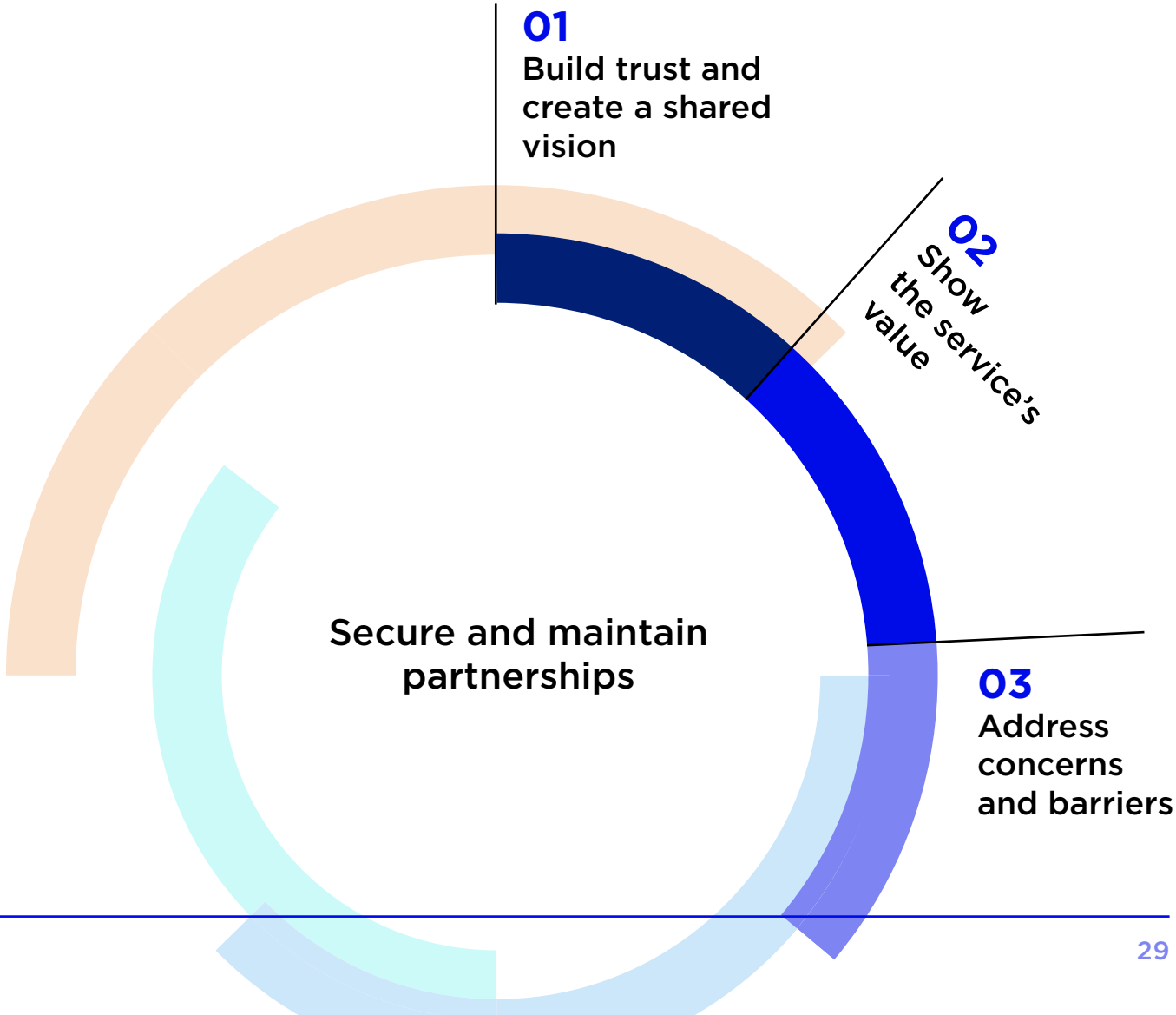
Component 2: Secure and Maintain Partnerships

Digital innovations depend on support from many groups.

These can include:

- Internal partners (people within the same organization or agency like operational leads, service providers or program managers),
- External partners (like end users, community-based organizations and health agencies), and,
- Partners at various levels of influence (front-line providers, like nurses and physicians, to decision-makers and executive leaders, like ministries of health, health authority leaderships who determine funding allocation).

Engage with a diverse group of partners that have various expertise, resources, and perspectives. This will allow you to get the support you need from start to finish.



Recommendation 1: Build Trust and Create a Shared Vision

Invest in relationship-building skills

Program staff build and maintain relationships across multidisciplinary teams. This requires a high level of social and emotional skills, dedicated resources, and time.

Understand the technology environment

Understand the technical environment or system within which you will build your program. This will help you engage with and get support from technical partners.

Develop common understanding and shared goals

Involve partners early on to define a shared vision and goals for the program. Teams may have not worked together. Develop and document a common understanding, shared goals, group guidelines and other engagement tools. This way, each partner group can contribute equitably.

Build awareness with audiences and community organizations

Build awareness about and promote your program early and often. Build on existing relationships with community organizations. Develop engagement tools for people from the program's target audience. By building awareness, you can in turn build support and trust with community partners, user groups and people to facilitate adoption of the technology.

Establish open communication

Maintain transparent, ongoing dialogue to build trust and understanding. Tailor your communication and engagement approaches to each partner group, for instance, communicating with a community-based user group will look differently than communicating with an executive team of a health authority.

Ideas:

- Work with partners to collaboratively identify shared goals and values. Support cross-disciplinary discussion and document outcomes.
- Build knowledge about your digital STBBI testing initiative with communities you serve by using consultations, public engagement opportunities, social media and other communication methods accompanied by accessible promotional materials.

Pitfalls:

Not involving partners early on in the process can make it more difficult to get support for your program later on. This can also create misunderstandings about goals, resources, and other important factors you need to implement your program.

Recommendation 2: Show the Service's Value

Highlight evidence-based benefits

Being transparent can help your partners support your program. Use metrics, research and case studies to show the program's potential impact. Focus on factors that are important for your context like community health and improved health services.

Tailor messages

Tailor your messages to each external partner's priorities to make the benefits of the program clear and convincing. Use common language that will make sense to your partner.

Ideas:

Share results from the pilot program to build trust and show that the program is scalable.

Pitfalls:

Underestimating the importance of evidence-sharing can result in waning support.

Recommendation 3: Address Concerns and Barriers

Spot concerns early

Talk with partner groups to find out what problems they're facing, like privacy, safety, not enough resources, or too much work. Different groups may have different worries, and sometimes they may even disagree on the importance of these worries. But if you talk about these concerns early and solve them together, you can build trust and make the program stronger.

Offer custom solutions

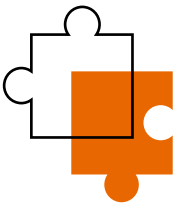
Give partners clear plans and steps to follow. Keep in touch often to talk about what needs to get better. Work together to fix problems as they come up, and later, show proof that the changes worked.

Ideas:

Hold regular and targeted meetings with partners to explore and address their priorities and apprehensions.

Pitfalls:

Ignoring concerns or providing generic solutions can erode trust and derail partnerships.



Practical Tips, Tools and Resources

Know your organization's requirements

Decide what requirements your program needs to meet within your organization (e.g. are there specific processes required for assessing privacy impacts or data security).

Use partner engagement frameworks

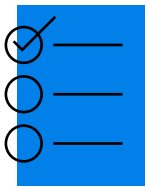
Partner engagement frameworks can help you identify, engage with, and sustain partnerships in a more structured way.

Use value proposition guides for communication

These guides can look like templates and tips and will help you write clear and convincing messages.

Use risk checklists

These tools can help you spot and solve common problems so your partners feel confident.



Planning and Piloting Phase

Local champions

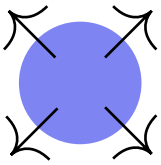
Find and form long-term relationships with champions within key communities who can advocate for the program. Form relationships early on for more meaningful engagement for both your team and the champions.

Governance and partner agreements

Decide on the decision making structures and responsibilities of people who will work on the pilot project. Work on short-term and pilot-specific agreements with local health agencies and partners.

Custom solutions

Create and test communication materials on a small group made up of team members, community partners and representatives from your audience. This will make sure your methods and messages are culturally relevant, effective and helps promote your program.



Implementation and Scaling Phase

Decision-making structure

Have a formal decision-making structure which also includes partners.

Wider engagement

Engage with senior leaders at regional or national levels to advocate for the program.

Integrated communication

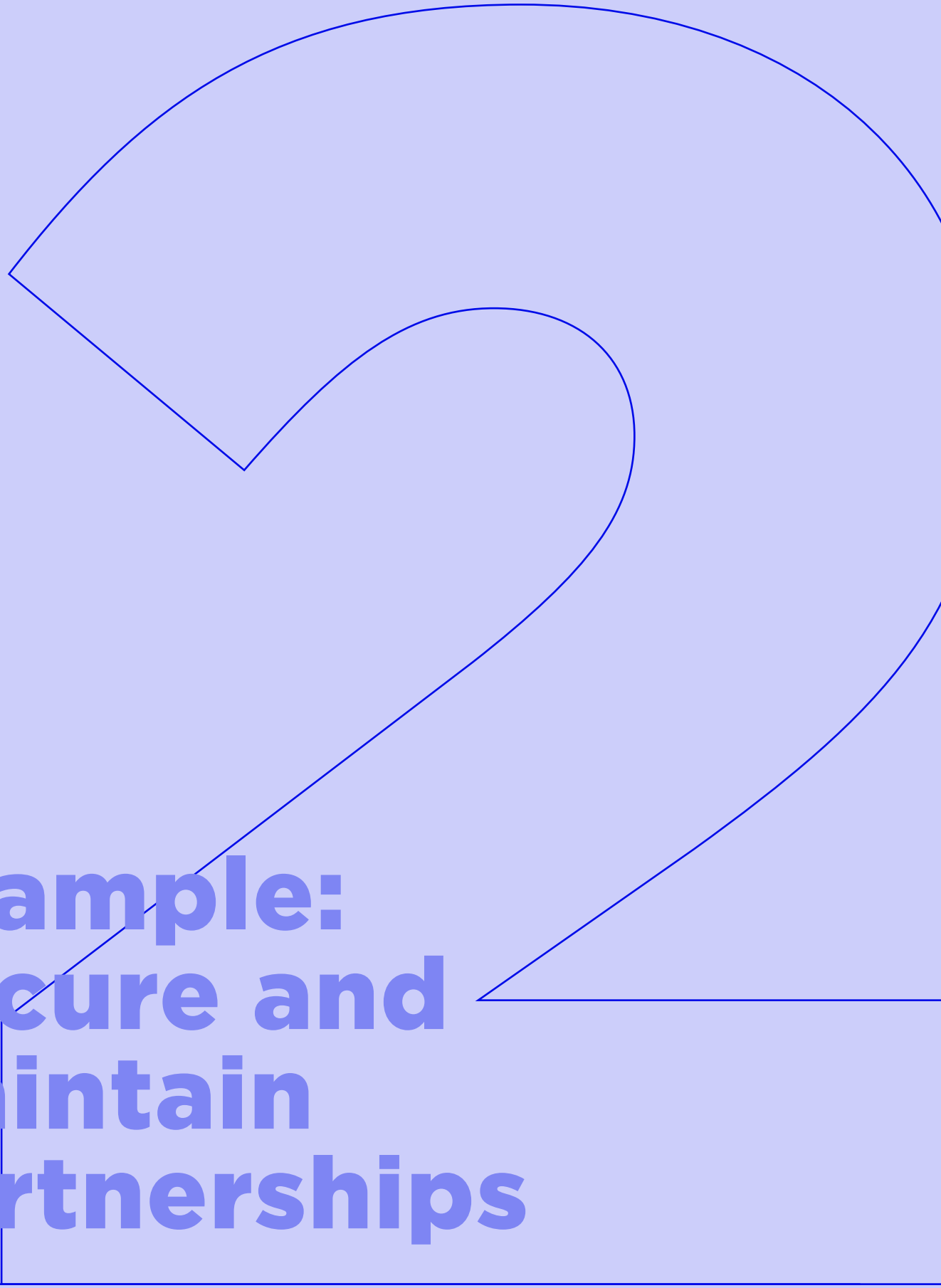
Use consistent messages across all promotional materials.

Summary

Getting partners on board takes time and effort. This can be possible if you:

- Build trust,
- Communicate clearly, and
- Show the value of the program.

By listening to concerns, and using the right strategies and tools, you can create strong, long-lasting partnerships that help your program be successful.



Example: Secure and Maintain Partnerships

Recommendation 1 Example

Build Trust and Create a Shared Vision

- Invest in relationship-building skills
- Understand the technology environment
- Develop common understanding and shared goals
- Establish open communication

Who will develop and maintain relationships with partners?

Our program leads and manager have strong inter-personal skills, intentionally building and maintaining relationships across diverse partners. In speaking with our partners, the trusted relationships and responsiveness of our program staff were recognized as key factors contributing to the successful implementation of GetCheckedOnline.

In your organization, are there any requirements or standards you need to meet when developing a digital program?

The GetCheckedOnline website platform was built by an external contractor, with the website backend supported by the IT team of our organization. Finding the right vendor was important so the platform could meet the privacy and security requirements of our organization and clinical and community needs. Having IT team members who were willing to co-develop solutions together with project team members was a key element to success. This was especially important as IT systems, software, hardware and procedures changed over the course of the program.

How will you work with your partners to develop a common understanding and shared goals for your program?

We established working groups to engage with different groups of partners, including a Clinical Advisory Committee (nurses, physicians, educators at BCCDC) and a Community Advisory Committee (with representatives from local community-based organizations representing people living with HIV, youth, sex workers, and gay and bisexual men). We shared the evolving vision and goals iteratively with these and other partners over time allowing for their refining.

Keeping in mind your specific audience, what are some activities you could easily do to promote your program?

When we launched GetCheckedOnline in Vancouver, we partnered with a local gay men's health community organization to develop a social marketing campaign to promote awareness of the service.

What are some activities you could aim for in the future?

Over time, we have relied on partnerships with community organizations to share information about our program at various events.

What are some of your existing partners you can collaborate with to promote your program? What kind o resources/skills do you have for promotion?

When expanding into additional geographic locations, GetCheckedOnline conducted early consultations with regional health authorities and community organizations to align objectives and secure collaboration. Regional health authorities and community organizations have helped with local promotion.

Recommendation 2 Example

Show the Service's Value

- Highlight evidence-based benefits
- Tailor messages

What evidence do you need to build support for your program?

We shared pilot data with partners that showcased increased testing uptake and reduced barriers to care. This evidence supported subsequent scale-up of the GetCheckedOnline program.

What are some ways you can inform and engage with partners throughout the program implementation?

We created a dashboard and provided regular reports on program metrics to key partners, which was helpful particularly for Health Authorities who were contributing funding to the program. Annually, we gave a presentation as part of an established public health webinar series in BC on the current state of the program as well as summarizing new evidence of impact. We also developed summary reports at 5 and 10 years after implementation which were shared with a wider audience.

How can you make sure your program remains aligned with institutional priorities and public health strategies?

We developed indicators for the program that were incorporated into our organization's regular quality and safety reporting. We also aligned our messaging with current provincial strategies and action plans for STBBI testing in British Columbia.

Recommendation 3 Example

Address Concerns and Barriers

- Spot concerns early
- Offer custom solutions

Think about the different components of the program you want to develop and what is required. Are there specific approval or documentation processes for these within your organization?

Developing GetCheckedOnline required us to complete a privacy impact assessment to ensure proper use, access, and storage of the personal information GetCheckedOnline collects. We worked closely with IT and privacy experts to make sure our program met data protection standards. This helped us address our partners' concerns about whether data would be safe.

How can you make sure your program addresses partners' needs?

We consistently engage with community organizations and service users to seek feedback, and act on the needed changes to improve the program.

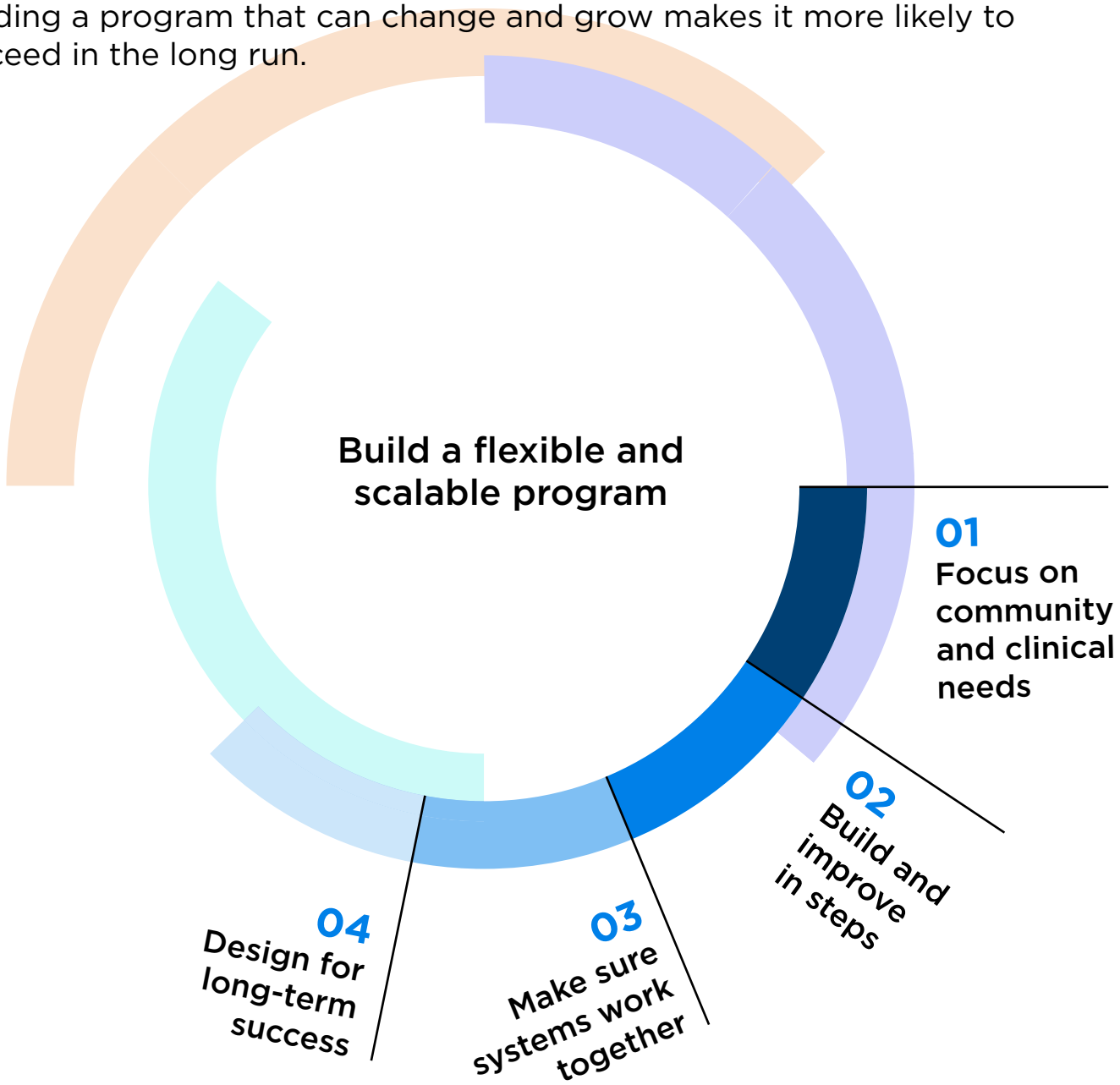
Component 3: Build a Flexible and Scalable Program

Digital health programs should be able to grow and adapt over time to be able to respond to changing needs.

The experience of implementing GetCheckedOnline program has shown how important it is to:

- Design platforms that are easy for users to understand and use,
- Make sure digital programs can work with other systems, and,
- Improve the tool based on real feedback.

Building a program that can change and grow makes it more likely to succeed in the long run.



Recommendation 1: Focus on Community and Clinical Needs

Be clear about what you need

Develop a clear picture of what the program will need before you start building anything (the program requirements). In addition to the organization's requirements such as privacy and security, prioritize the community and clinical needs in your program design. Make sure every step of your program connects back to what your program is trying to achieve.

Apply user-centred design approaches

Design your program with the users in mind. This means involving them at every step and improving the program based on feedback. The goal is to understand what users need and build those needs into your program, and to help your program to be user-friendly.

Design digital programs that are easy to use and safe

Make sure the program is easy to use and meets clinical, privacy and security needs.

Train frontline providers

Support and actively train healthcare providers who will interact with program users (e.g., clinicians who give results or arrange treatment).

Offer different ways to give specimens

Letting users choose when, where, and how they give a specimen can make testing easier and more appealing. Users are more likely to get tested if they are offered different types of tests and specimen options. Keep adapting as new testing technologies become available.

Ideas:

Create processes that help move users from testing to care and treatment and that fit into existing healthcare systems more smoothly.

Pitfalls:

If digital programs do not fit into the way healthcare teams already work, it can cause delays and create extra work. Make sure your program aligns with real-world clinical workflows.

Recommendation 2: Build and Improve in Steps

Build flexibility into the design

Make sure the program is adaptable to new clinical guidelines, policy changes, and user feedback.

Test before you launch

Start small and go step by step. Use pilot projects or phased rollouts to test how the program works in real life. This helps you fix issues early and improve how it's used based on feedback.

Use real-time data to keep adapting

Review analytics, feedback, and system performance on an ongoing basis. This will allow you to refine your program and enhance user experience in a timely fashion.

Plan for growth

Create new partnerships in locations and with populations your program would like to support. Understand their goals, context and what systems they already use.

Ideas:

Even though it's good to start small, it helps to plan for scaling up from the start. That way you may identify ways to design the program to make it easier to scale later (for example, to fit into care and treatment systems in different areas).

Pitfalls:

If your program is too rigid and can not be changed, it may become outdated or ineffective.

Recommendation 3: Make Sure Systems Work Together

Fit the program into existing healthcare systems

Try to connect your digital tool with systems that already exist—like lab reporting programs, electronic medical records (EMRs), and surveillance systems. This can save time and reduce extra work.

Ideas:

The more your program works within existing systems, the more efficient and easier to scale up it will be. If full integration isn't possible at the start, plan for it later.

Pitfalls:

If a digital program does not connect with existing healthcare systems, it can be hard and costly to scale it up.

Recommendation 4: Design for Long-Term Success

Plan ahead for growth

Think early about how the program might grow. Make sure the system can handle more users, more data, and new features later on. Use real data to decide when, where and how to expand.

Follow privacy and IT policies

Talk to your organization's privacy and IT teams early. Make sure your program and its features meet data security and privacy rules to avoid future problems.

Balance automation and manual processes

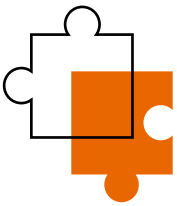
The automation in digital testing programs helps things move faster. But some tasks like entering test results may still need to be done manually. When possible, connect your program to existing tools that can help automate tasks.

Ideas:

Talk early about your ideas for the program with people who will be future partners. This way you can identify any "red flags" that you need to take into account when designing.

Pitfalls:

If you do not plan for growth from the start, it can be costly and hard to fix later.



Practical Tips, Tools and Resources

Information security and risk assessments

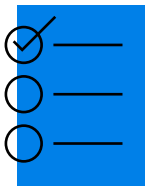
Assessments like the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) and the Security Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) are important assessments since STBBI-related data is sensitive. Do them even if your organization does not ask you to.

Technology integration needs

Understand what other systems your program will need to interact with or should link to. These can be lab and health records systems.

Usability testing frameworks

Test your tool with real users before a full launch. Usability guidelines can help you get and implement feedback.



Planning and Piloting Phase

Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

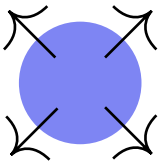
An MVP is a basic version of a product for early users to test and give feedback on. Develop an MVP to test core functionalities and user interactions during the pilot phase.

Fast changes

Use agile methods to make small, quick improvements based on early user feedback.

Basic integration

Connect your MVP with key systems like data collecting and reporting tools. Remember to keep things simple at first.



Implementation and Scaling Phase

Maintenance and upgrades

Digital technologies and standards change. Upgrade your program's capabilities with new functionalities such as advances in analytics, new privacy and security measures, and changing connections with clinical and lab systems. Set aside time and resources for this.

Thorough testing

As your program grows, test it to make sure it works well in different settings.

Full integration

Over time, aim to connect your program to larger healthcare systems, including real-time monitoring and data sharing.

Summary

To build flexible, scalable digital health programs:

- Focus on both clinical and user needs,
- Test and improve continuously,
- Connect with existing systems, and,
- Plan ahead for growth.

Doing this will help make your digital health program more accessible, effective, and sustainable.

Example: Build a Flexible and Scalable Program

Recommendation 1 Example

Focus on Community and Clinical Needs

- Be clear about what you need
- Apply user-centred design approaches (UCD)
- Design digital programs that are easy to use and safe
- Train frontline providers
- Offer different ways to give specimens

What communities does your program aim to serve?

GetCheckedOnline wants to increase testing uptake among populations more likely to face STBBI in BC and facing barriers to testing.

How do you know what the communities want and other requirements your program needs to meet?

We established different working groups to provide input into these design aspects of GetCheckedOnline:

1. A clinical and laboratory working group, which ensured clinical and laboratory requirements were met,
2. A technical working group with different Information Technology program areas (eg, databases, servers, network security) to develop the architecture, hosting, and other technical requirements for the app, and,
3. A community working group that helped identify ways to meet the community's testing needs and make the program more user-friendly (as well as a deliberate user experience testing step later in the development process).

How can you design your program to meet these requirements?

We wanted our program to help reduce testing barriers, and a common barrier is privacy concerns. To address this, we worked with specific labs who could collect specimens without requiring identification or official names. This helped people with privacy concerns feel safer getting tested. But this had tradeoffs as it meant we had to enter results manually into GetCheckedOnline. We have identified this as a challenge that we will need to find a solution for as the program grows.

At which points would you consult users?

In the planning phase, we held focus groups and interviews with potential users including gay and bisexual men and youth, to see what kind of digital program would best meet their testing needs and what features it should have. In development, we conduct testing with potential end-users, evaluating how users interacted with a basic prototype (using wireframes). We then tested a functional prototype with users to test the overall functioning and content. Finally, we beta tested a fully functional version of the website to see how people responded to different options for presenting information. Each of these steps led to design changes and a more user-centred, easier to use program.

What training will healthcare providers need? What is the best way to train frontline providers?

We held multiple training sessions to familiarize clinic and lab staff with GetCheckedOnline procedures and the application prior to the program launch and each site expansion. These trainings were provided in person or virtually.

How will your program make tests available?

With what GetCheckedOnline offers, people can get tested for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C (through blood samples), and chlamydia and gonorrhea (through urine and swabs). The GetCheckedOnline website recommends testing options based on the user's response to risk assessment questions, and users can decide whether or not they get the recommended tests.

What flexibility can you build into the system to adapt new testing option?

We were able to include swabs for chlamydia and gonorrhea as additional testing options in response to clinicians' concerns.

Recommendation 2 Example

Focus on Community and Clinical Needs

- Build flexibility into the design
- Test before you launch
- Use real-time data to keep adapting
- Plan for growth

What can you put in place to make sure you are adapting your program to changing needs over time?

When GetCheckedOnline launched, we didn't include swabs for chlamydia and gonorrhea testing. We heard strongly from clinicians that this was a gap and that we weren't providing all the tests people needed. Adding these options for swabs were one of the first changes we made to the program.

What would a phased roll-out look like for your program?

We started slowly, focusing first on clients of two clinics operated by BCCDC. This helped us to test the process and make any changes needed. At the time, people needed an access code to use the program which was another way we could control access to the service if this was needed.

After six months we started promoting the service to gay and bisexual men in the Vancouver area, and a year later we began promoting the service in other parts of the province.

GetCheckedOnline also scaled up to different regions in BC in stages. This way we were able to manage growth and be responsive to partners' needs.

What metrics will you use to monitor program performance?

We use routinely collected program data to evaluate the program effectiveness.

What methods can you use to collect feedback from users for the program?

We also have a program contact email where clients can give feedback. We make regular service improvements based on these inputs.

Recommendation 3 Example

Make Sure Systems Work Together

- Fit the program into existing healthcare systems

Think about all the steps of your program. What are all the different healthcare systems that your program will be connected to when you launch or expand? Are there partners already working within these systems that you can work with? What existing infrastructures, procedures and data pipelines can you use for your program?

GetCheckedOnline worked with private labs already in the BC system. This made specimen collection and data sharing smooth because they were integrated into existing collection procedures and data systems. We are now looking at ways to include test results in lab result information systems available to healthcare providers in BC (for example, for a user who wants their primary care provider to know about their test results).

Recommendation 4 Example

Make Sure Systems Work Together

- Plan ahead for growth
- Follow privacy and IT policies
- Balance automation and manual processes

How will you know when you will need to make changes?

We knew that we needed to be as flexible and adaptive as possible to stay relevant. A key factor allowing us to do this was to have an ongoing contract with a user experience designer who has helped us design, test, and introduce new features to the program over time.

How will you meet these requirements?

GetCheckedOnline involved privacy and security experts early so the program followed changes to BC's data and security rules. In the initial planning phase, we established a technical working group including the core development team and representatives from different Information Technology program areas (eg, databases, servers, network security). The group met every 2 weeks to develop the architecture, hosting, and other technical requirements for the app. We also regularly met with our agency's Privacy lead who also helped us consult with privacy leads in other parts of the province. These processes helped us learn about what privacy and security requirements we needed to meet.

Does your organization have privacy and security requirements for digital programs? If not, what are the standards that are relevant for your program to be successful? How will you meet these requirements?

During the development stage we completed a privacy impact assessment and assessed and reported security risks of the information structure of the program. We also conducted penetration testing of the program, which simulates cyber-attacks, to identify any vulnerabilities that needed to be fixed before launch.

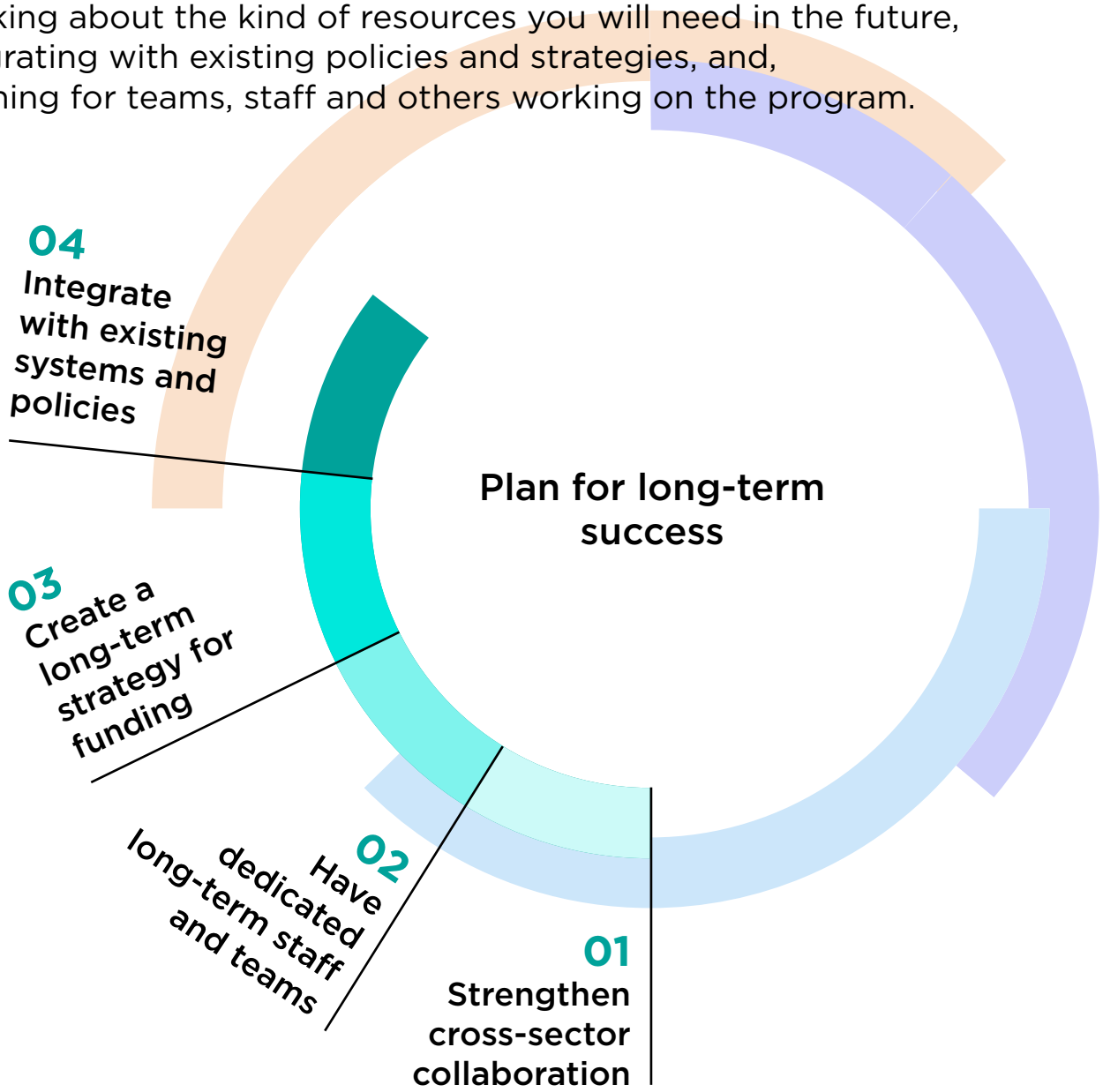
Component 4: Plan for Long-Term Success

To make sure your program is successful in the long-run, you need to:

- **Be intentional with long-term planning,**
- **Start the planning phase early,**
- **Continue planning throughout implementation.**

This also includes a focus on the systems for implementing the program, including:

- Strengthening collaborations with implementation partners,
- Thinking about the kind of resources you will need in the future,
- Integrating with existing policies and strategies, and,
- Planning for teams, staff and others working on the program.



Recommendation 1: Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaborations

Maintain partnerships and build formal collaborations

Create formal collaborations with partners you have built relationships with. These can be implementing partners such as:

- Health agencies,
- Laboratories,
- Surveillance teams,
- IT teams, and
- Clinical providers.

Formal collaborations help everyone work toward the same goals, makes processes easier, and ensures the right supports are in place.

Create clear agreements and management structures

Define who is responsible for what, and who makes decisions. This helps keep things running smoothly and makes sure everyone is accountable.

Be transparent and build trust

Stay in regular contact and communicate clearly with all partners. This helps manage different priorities and builds strong, long-term relationships.

Ideas:

Have clear agreements to avoid confusion, clashes in priorities, and delays in implementation.

Pitfalls:

Not having a regular communication process for partners and team members may make it more difficult to stay on the same page.

Recommendation 2: Have Dedicated Long-Term Staff and Teams

Assess and plan for staffing needs

Think about what skills you need, including technical, clinical, and project management expertise. Invest in diverse skills on your team like relationship building, communication and project management.

Have dedicated staff

Have resourced positions rather than having team members work on the program when they have capacity.

Train and build capacity

Train all staff so that they can support digital health and implementation workflows. Include frontline providers and IT teams.

Make long-term staffing plans

Keep important knowledge in one place using clear processes and written instructions, so work doesn't stop when someone leaves. Don't rely on just one person to know everything. Create a plan to make sure leadership stays strong and projects keep moving during staff changes.

Ideas:

Have enough staff and training to support efficient and meaningful work, and to prevent burnout and service disruptions.

Pitfalls:

Program operations may be disrupted if roles and workforce planning are not clear.

Recommendation 3: Create a long-term strategy for funding

Clearly define phases

Clearly define when you will end the pilot, start full implementation, and plan for scale-up.

Advocate to include the program into existing healthcare budgets

Position the program as important and complementary to public health services and strategies. This can help you secure long-term funding. You can do this by using evaluation data and research to build a data-driven business case.

Explore multiple funding streams

Explore diverse and multiple funding approaches like government health funding, public-private partnerships, and grants. This will be helpful for long-term funding. Weigh these carefully in relation to your program goals and values. Public-private partnerships or commercializing aspects of the program may provide additional revenue sources.

Measure cost savings and impact

Show how the program supports cost-saving and improves efficiency. Some people see public health innovations as expensive because it focuses on prevention and it may take time to show results. To change this view, we need to study how public health programs help in the long run and how they can save the healthcare system money over time.

Ideas:

Focus on equity, access and the related pros and cons when engaging in different funding models.

Pitfalls:

Do not depend on short-term grants without a transition plan. This can lead to instability until you find permanent funding.

Recommendation 4: Integrate with Existing Systems and Policies

Align with health policies and strategies

Connecting digital health tools to the right health policies and plans helps the program get more support, last longer, and face fewer regulation barriers (e.g., policies about STBBI testing or digital health).

Plan for growing infrastructure

Design digital health tools to fit with surveillance and laboratory systems such that they can scale with increased demand (e.g., due to geographic or population-based expansion).

Make the program compatible with healthcare infrastructure

Focus on technical and administrative needs for a seamless integration into existing systems. Have mechanisms in place so that public health agencies take on long-term ownership.

Adapt to changing priorities

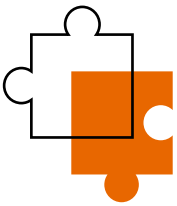
Be flexible in responding to shifts in healthcare priorities, policies, budget constraints, and factors outside of the program's control (e.g., public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic).

Ideas:

Integrate your program with existing health systems while building in flexibility can be beneficial for long-term success.

Pitfalls:

Delayed alignment with policies and strategies can create administrative hurdles that slow or prevent full adoption.



Practical Tips, Tools and Resources

Partnership agreement templates

Standardized documents to define roles and responsibilities across sectors.

Workforce and succession planning guides

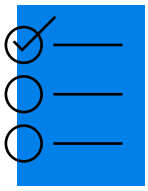
Tools for supporting leadership continuity, assessing staffing needs and developing long-term human resource strategies.

Sustainability planning frameworks

Structured tools to assess financial, operational, and policy integration needs.

Business case development guides

Templates for making the financial case for continued program investment.



Planning and Piloting Phase

Focused training

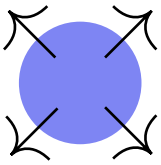
Train teams working on the pilot project to make sure they are prepared for quick implementation and troubleshooting.

Business model testing:

Explore different funding models and partnerships during the pilot phase to have an idea about what sustainability can look like.

First evaluation:

Create a pilot-specific evaluation plan to measure cost-savings, impact, and feasibility indicators. This will inform future funding strategies.



Implementation and Scaling Phase

Long-term agreements

Transition pilot partnerships into long-term, formalized agreements that support sustainability, and bring on new partners as needed (e.g., federal agencies, funding bodies).

Long-term funding

Evaluate what resources you need for long term success. Align the program with national, provincial or regional healthcare funding streams to make sure the program is long lasting.

Workforce development

Train staff and plan so that your program's systems are ready and operations are successful long-term.

Summary

For long-term success of your program, focus on:

- Strengthening collaborations,
- Having dedicated long-term staff,
- Creating a long-term funding strategy, and
- Integrating your program with existing systems and policies

It is important to start planning these early and continue planning throughout implementation.

Example: Plan for Long-Term Success

Recommendation 1 Example

Are there teams, organizations or departments you have built good relationships with? What kind of procedures would you need to create a formal collaboration?

We have built good relationships with the provincial STBBI clinic, BC public health lab, private labs and community organizations. We have agreements with private labs. This allows us to integrate our program with existing health systems. It also helps us address privacy and regulatory concerns.

Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaborations

- Maintain partnerships and build formal collaborations
- Create clear agreements and management structures
- Be transparent and build trust

How can you stay in regular contact with partners?

We check in regularly with each health authority partner via virtual meeting to communicate project implementation plans and troubleshoot operation procedures if any. We also share with them a dashboard of testing updates within each region.

Recommendation 2 Example

Have Dedicated Long-Term Staff and Teams

- Assess and plan for staffing needs
- Have dedicated staff
- Train and build capacity
- Make long-term staffing plans

What skills would you need to maintain your program? Think about both technical and soft skills.

Our core team staff has strong project management, responsible for tracking program activities and deliverables. Our staff also has strong communication and interpersonal skills and a broad understanding of diverse fields related to GetCheckedOnline implementation. These skill sets allow effective engagement with partners to bring clinical, IT, privacy, laboratory and community knowledge into the program.

What resourced positions do you need to maintain the program?

Our core team includes a public health physician and a project manager, and the leadership and staff has been very stable. This allows for consistent and long-term relationships with partners, as many program activities rely on their support. We have identified a need for more resources to support dedicated staff as the program grows.

What procedures should training cover? Who should get the training and when?

We held multiple training sessions on GetCheckedOnline testing and treatment procedures with clinical and clerical staff before the program launch and with each major change that would impact the procedures. We also held training sessions on specimen collection procedures with labs before a location was added as well as periodically to re-familiarize staff.

Think about staffing your program needs over time. What procedures and processes do you need to onboard new staff? What information can help newer team members contextualize the programs?

The GetCheckedOnline core team has retained the same leadership and key staff since the initial planning. While the program benefits from stable staffing with deep institutional knowledge, we had some concerns about potential disruptions if key staff left.

Recommendation 3 Example

Create a long-term strategy for funding

- Clearly define phases
- Advocate to include the program into existing healthcare budgets
- Explore multiple funding streams
- Measure cost savings and impact

If the pilot is successful, what is your plan to secure resources needed for full implementation or scale-up?

GetCheckedOnline initially relied on targeted pilot funding, which posed sustainability challenges as utilization increased. Business cases were required to secure ongoing financial support.

How can you position your program within the health system and advocate for support from existing healthcare budgets?

GetCheckedOnline was developed as an innovative public health strategy for STBBI management, and supported by provincial targeted pilot funding. This allowed the program to test out new approaches and supported the initial scale-ups. However, as the targeted funding is outside of the regular provincial funding for laboratory testing, it also creates challenges for further expansion. Finding permanent funding mechanisms for this remains a challenge.

What could the funding model look like for your program?

GetCheckedOnline is fully public funded. However, some early implementers suggested commercializing its products could have been a possibility to bring in funding and support its sustainability.

How can you show the economic impacts of your program?

Our research showed that GetCheckedOnline helped to shift STBBI testing demand away from primary care. This reduced the burden on the healthcare system. The cost per test was also less for GetCheckedOnline than provider-based testing. However, we needed clearer economic modeling to show the economic impacts more effectively.

Recommendation 4 Example

Integrate with Existing Systems and Policies

- Align with health policies and strategies
- Plan for growing infrastructure
- Make the program compatible with healthcare infrastructure
- Adapt to changing priorities

What health policies and guidelines does your program need to align with?

We aligned GetCheckedOnline testing with the clinical guidelines for STBBI testing in British Columbia. We also aligned our messaging with current provincial strategies and action plans for STBBI testing.

What technical and administrative aspects does your program need to fit into your organization and the larger health system?

GetCheckedOnline is aligned with BCCDC programs and services to facilitate feasibility and long-term sustainability. Deciding how we would integrate the program into regional health authorities' systems is still challenging.

How can you make your program flexible so it can adjust when health priorities or policies change?

The COVID-19 pandemic had shifted the public's perspective on healthcare. People are more accepting of digital health services, accessing test results online, and self-collected samples. GetCheckedOnline used to only show negative results online, but has adapted to include full test results (including positive ones). We are also exploring self-collected samples as another testing option for the future.

Final Reflections

In this guide we have described the key components that have been central to our success and ongoing work of scaling-up the program in BC. We hope the lessons we have learned will help you develop digital sexual health services.

Implementing digital STBBI testing services like GetCheckedOnline is hard work. We realize the the intervention, health systems and population contexts will likely be different for you. We hope this guide can help your work of implementation be easier.

One last piece of advice:

People are more used to digital health services now compared to 15 years ago when we first started planning GetCheckedOnline. Still, you are likely going to face unexpected challenges or barriers no matter how well you plan. These can delay your work. You may need to backtrack and develop new work-arounds. Plan for uncertainty and make room for creative problem solving. But most importantly, persevere and do not give up!

Read our published article for a deeper dive: Gilbert M, et al. Get Checked... Where? The Development of a Comprehensive, Integrated Internet-Based Testing Program for Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections in British Columbia, Canada. JMIR Res Protoc; 2016 Sep 20;5(3):e186

Link

Contact us

We would welcome your feedback on this guide and whether you found it useful. You can reach us by email at dishiresearch@bccdc.ca. We look forward to hearing from you!

You can find out more information about our research team and work related to GetCheckedOnline on our Digital & Sexual Health Initiative Website (www.dishiresearch.ca)