

BUILDING DIGITAL TESTING SERVICES



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

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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.