



Using Formative Evaluation to Develop a Facilitation Skills Training for Youth Program Educators

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About the study

- / Designed to formatively develop and refine a facilitation training for Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) program staff**
- / Conducted as part of the STREAMS evaluation for the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)**



Context: About HMRE programs for youth

- / Provide multiple services, including relationship skills education and support for positive socioemotional and identity development**
- / Offered in a variety of settings, including high schools and community settings**
- / Use a structured, classroom-based curriculum, generally 10 to 20 hours in duration**



Common challenges for HMRE providers

- / Keeping youth engaged in the program to maximize learning**
- / Reducing fatigue, classroom behavioral problems, and other distractions**
- / Needing strong facilitation skills to engage youth and deepen learning BUT**
 - Training provided to HMRE facilitators is mostly curriculum-specific
 - Training on building and strengthening general facilitation skills is rare



Study goals

- / Formatively co-create a facilitation training curriculum with HMRE supervisors and facilitators**
- / Refine the training curriculum using the Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI²) framework**
- / Share lessons on improving program quality through collaborative process**



Formative process: Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI²)





Explore phase





Explore phase: Research questions

/ Research questions

- What are the characteristics of their programs? (for example, size of program, setting, characteristics of youth they serve)
- What types of training do the facilitators receive?
- What types of supervision do they receive?
- What challenges have grantees faced related to facilitator training, and what additional supports do they need?



Explore phase: Lessons learned

/ We conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 grantees

/ Some of what we heard

- Nearly all grantees reported they had not yet provided targeted training to build skills for effective facilitation beyond a little classroom management training.
- The most common challenge was sustaining youth engagement.
- Grantees wanted training and support on managing youth interaction in the classroom.
- Especially in school-based settings, implementing with fidelity within short class sessions often made building strong connections with youth difficult.
- Several grantees expressed a need for support to create culturally safe spaces and build a climate of trust for youth from diverse communities.



Potential curriculum topics

- / **Essential Facilitation Skills: Authority, Adaptability, Safety, Dependability, Engagement, and Communication**
- / **Participant-Centered Facilitation**
- / **Debriefing/Drawing Out Teachable Moments**
- / **Managing Relationships With and Expectations of School Staff**
- / **Supervising and Coaching Facilitators**
- / **Building Trust and Safety**
- / **Climate-building in the Classroom**
- / **Trauma-Informed Facilitation**
- / **Addressing Personal Bias and Cultural Sensitivity**
- / **Managing Personal Disclosure**
- / **Managing Energy**



Selected training topics

Managing Energy	Increase knowledge regarding the energy cycle and how it directly effects students' abilities to engage and learn; learn tips and techniques for managing and re-setting energy in the classroom.
Debriefing: Drawing Out Teachable Moments	Effectively use debriefing skills to guide discussions, highlight insights, connections, and interpretations identified by the group; increase ability to effectively debrief activities, to draw out insights, and learning points from students.
Building Trust, Building Safety; Challenging the Comfort Zone	Intentionally build and maintain trust with individual students and within the group learning environment; leverage that trust and challenge students to begin exploring new skills and behaviors that might feel unnatural, silly, or unfamiliar at first; trust makes it safe for students to follow the facilitator outside of their comfort zone.

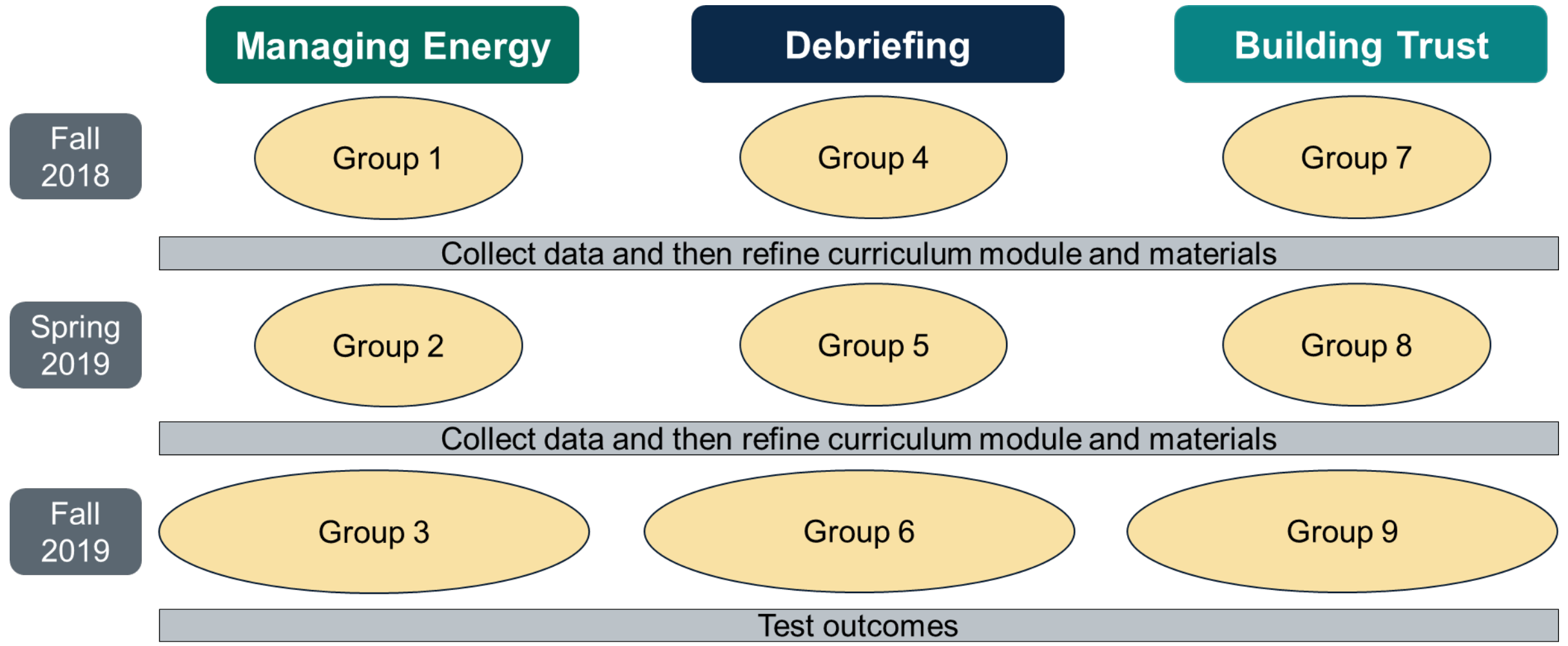


Develop and test and refine phases



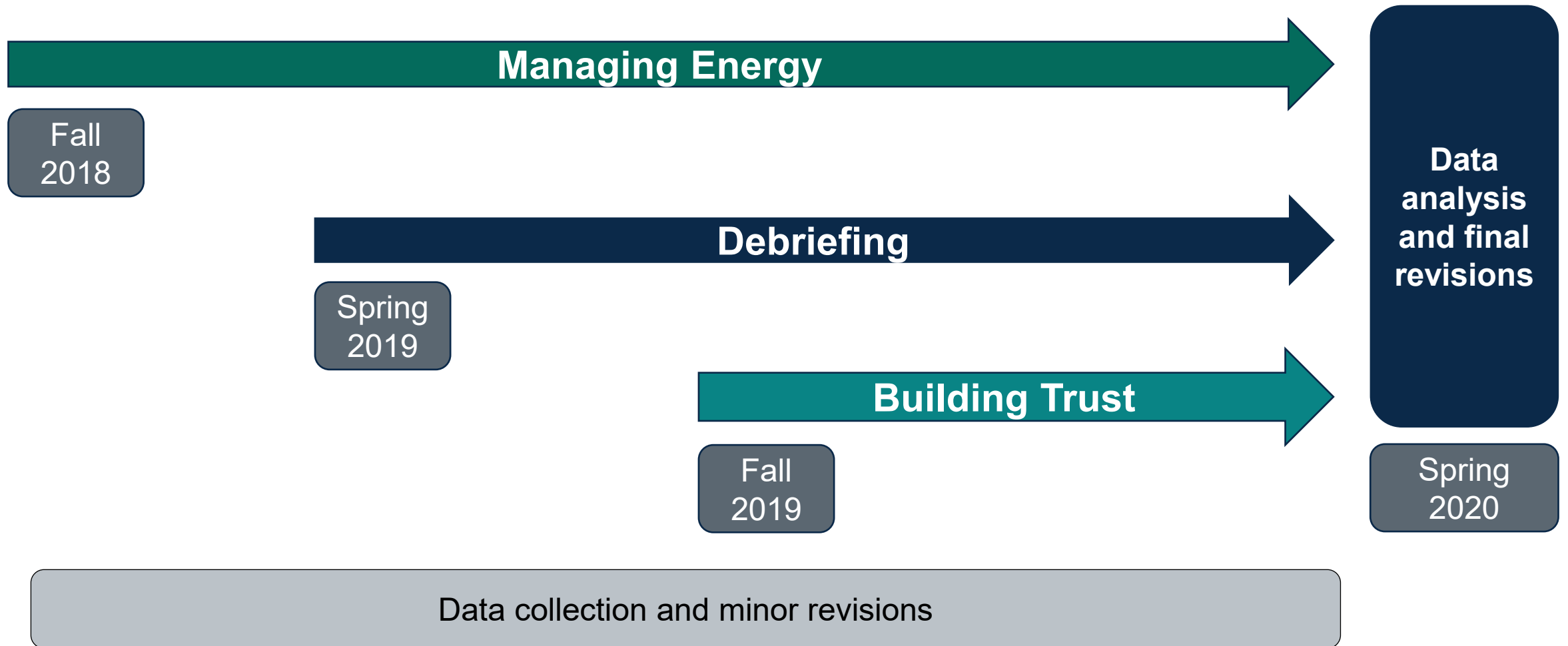


Ideal design





Actual design





Data sources

Data Source	Description	Frequency
Interviews with facilitators and supervisors	Discussions conducted at the start and end of each cycle	Two rounds of 30- to 45-minute interviews per cycle
Observations of facilitators	Trainer conducted in-person observations of facilitator use of strategies from each module	Two rounds of observations per cycle
Facilitator logs	Facilitators indicated whether they used the strategies, their impressions of youth response to the strategies and any challenges or suggestions for improvement	Approximately 10 times per cycle
End-of-cycle debriefing discussions	Reflective discussions relying on human centered design activities to elicit targeted feedback from facilitators and supervisors used to refine training curriculum	Once per cycle
Youth survey data	Entry and exit surveys completed by youth	Once per cycle



Partnerships to support program improvement – key roles

/ **Two youth serving organizations (Catholic Charities of Wayne County, NY and Youth and Family Services in Rapid City, SD)**

- Each was providing Relationship Smarts PLUS to youth as part of their HMRE grant
- Identified challenges and solutions
- Received facilitator training and provided feedback on training and strategies

/ **Mathematica**

- Facilitated the LI² process
- Collected and analyzed data
- Summarized the recommended improvements to the curriculum

/ **Public Strategies**

- Designed the training curriculum
- Provided training, conducted observations, and provided feedback to facilitators

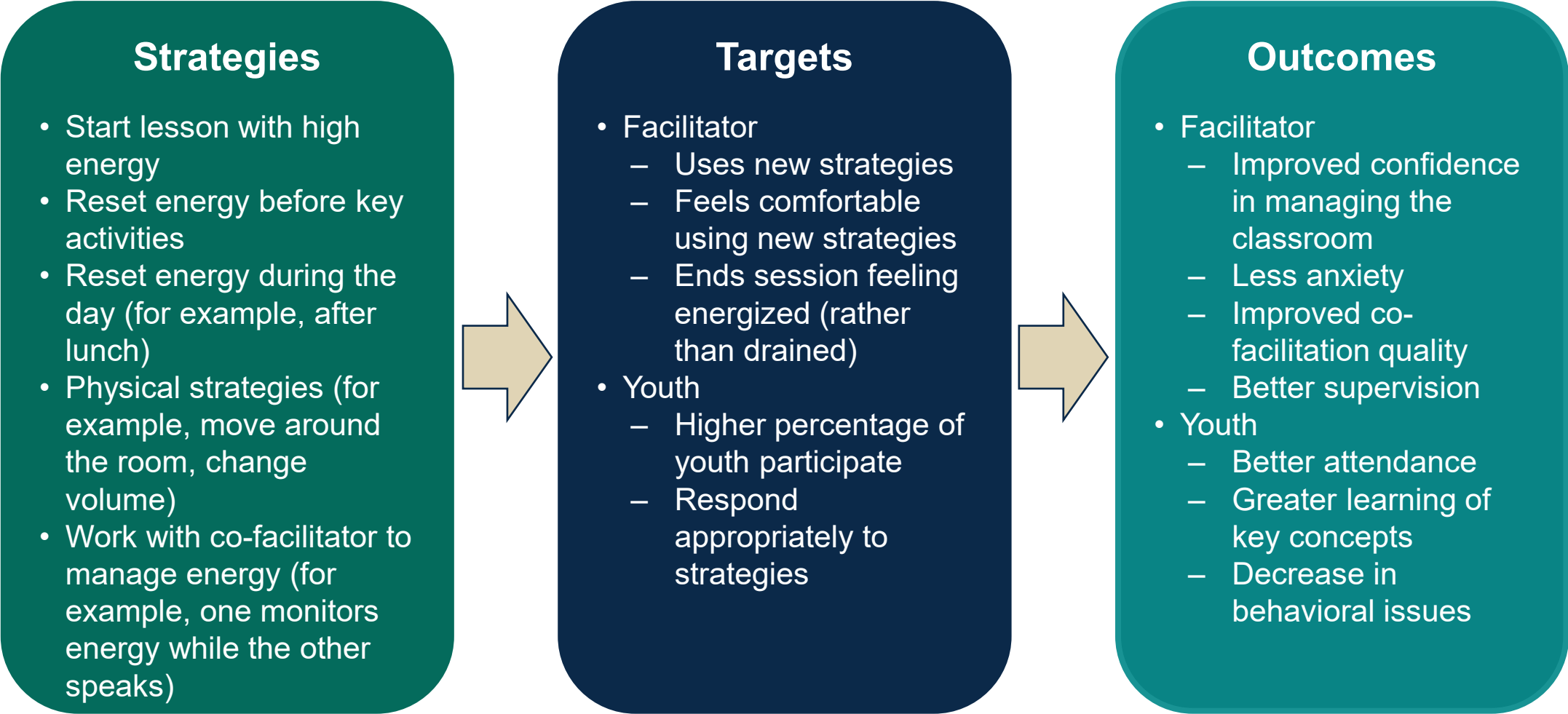


Strategic planning meetings

- / Held planning meetings with facilitators, supervisors, and program leadership**
- / Used human centered design activities to make sure everyone had a voice**
 - What are the challenges you face in the classroom?
- / Developed a Road Map for change or logic model to identify:**
 - The strategies the curriculum module could include (for instance, for managing the energy of youth and facilitators in the classroom)
 - The targeted behaviors that ideally would change as a result of those strategies
 - The longer-term outcomes that define success



Sample roadmap for change/logic model for Managing Energy





Curriculum components



Co-create training content

- Intended to increase knowledge about each topic and how it directly affects students' ability to engage and learn
 - Provide strategies and practical tips for use in planning and workshops
-



Tools for facilitators

- Checklists and back-pocket cards
 - Handouts with activity descriptions and instructions
-



Supervisor observation form

- Structured tool to allow the supervisor to assess whether the facilitator is using the strategies (well)
-



Refining the curriculum



/ Right after training

- Improve handouts to include written list of activities and resources for facilitators to use
- Add “teach backs” and practice opportunities
 - Bigger time commitment
 - Potentially bigger payoff



/ After collecting data

- Provide more strategies and link to appropriate time to use them in curriculum
- Refine supervisor observation form
 - Focus on specific skills facilitators have mastered or should work on
 - Provide takeaway sheet for facilitators so they have written feedback



/ Debrief as a group to plan improvements

- Emphasize importance and benefits of planning for each session



Lessons learned

/ **Strong partnerships were key**

- Organizations and staff open to piloting training and providing feedback

/ **Having a clearly defined improvement framework helped**

/ **Don't strive for perfection, strive for learning**

/ **Expert involvement**

- Experienced master facilitator grounded in the science of facilitation but also with years of experience to draft the curriculum and suggest improvements when the data suggested a need for them



Available resources

/ **Formative evaluation toolkit**

- [Formative evaluation and implementation toolkit](#) (use Chrome)

/ **Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI²)**

- [Learn, Innovate, Improve \(LI²\) | Mathematica](#)



Thank you!

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