

COACHING THAT EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

A Case Study of The Challenge Initiative Nigeria
Coaching Model

Foreword

This document, entitled “Coaching that Exceeds Expectations: A Case Study of The Challenge Initiative Nigeria Coaching Model,” captures the nuanced aspects of the day-to-day experience of implementing The Challenge Initiative (TCI) Nigeria coaching model that may not be fully described in the existing TCI Nigeria program documents. This case study can be used before, during and after coaching program implementation.

The objective of this document is to improve understanding of the on-the-ground realities of implementing a coaching model and the overarching themes that contribute to the program's success. This document is NOT an implementation guide or assessment tool. Instead, it is intended to serve as a narrative companion to the existing programmatic documents.

We would like to recognize the immense contributions made by state leadership in the respective ministries of health and primary health care development agencies from the 10 TCI Nigeria states: Ogun, Kano, Bauchi, Anambra, Taraba, Rivers, Plateau, Niger, Delta and Abia.

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The TCI Nigeria coaching and mentorship model described in this document is being implemented by TCI counterparts in the state governments, the reproductive health technical working group, social and behavior change committees, youth civil society organizations and TCI Nigeria staff, including the state program coordinators and technical support leads.

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COVER PAGE PHOTO CAPTION: The FP service provider and State M&E officer, reviewing the FP run Chart at the family planning unit in Dogon Agogo PHC, Plateau State. TCI coaches Service Providers on benefits of run charts for tracking FP uptake. Photo by Precious Eboigbe, RM&E TSL Plateau State

PHOTO CREDITS: Sola Solanke

Executive Summary

The Challenge Initiative (TCI) Nigeria is a novel capacity strengthening program focused on increasing the sustainability and feasibility of long-term state investment in family planning (FP) and adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH). TCI takes a demand-driven approach. States self-select to participate and commit to provide financial and political investment in high-impact initiatives to improve FP/AYSRH services and outcomes. In return, participating states receive technical assistance and coaching from TCI staff to design and implement high-impact programs.

This case study reviews the coaching model from the perspectives of three state program coordinators and identifies key lessons learned and best practices for coaching implementation. This case study applied a funnel approach. It started with a broad conversation in a brainstorming session that was followed by individual interviews, and it ended with coding and analysis of themes. Five best practices are outlined: fidelity to the TCI model, demand-driven coaching, flexibility, soft skills and managing work plans and outcomes. Each of these best practices includes subthemes that inform the successful implementation of a coaching model. Selected excerpts from the interviews are included throughout the document to highlight the nuanced aspects of implementation. This case study is intended to serve as a companion document to existing frameworks, and it adds to the knowledge base by providing a qualitative understanding of a successful coaching model.

We encourage readers to consider how these themes can be used to improve the future offerings of coaching programs. As evidenced by these conversations by the State Program Coordinators (SPCs), engaging stakeholders, ensuring flexibility, emphasizing soft skills and following a demand-driven approach may enhance coaching. These lessons should be reviewed alongside existing programmatic documents to ensure program success.

To gain a complete picture of TCI's Approach to Coaching, please review the following documents (available at <https://tciurbanhealth.org/topic-category/tci-essentials/>) in addition to, [*The Challenge Initiative Nigeria Coaching and Technical Assistance Framework*](#) and [*The Transformational Power of TCI Coaching: Lessons from the Nigeria Experience*](#) case study.

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Definitions

Coaching is the act of providing teaching or transferring capacity to a coachee. A coach is a trained or skilled FP/AYSRH expert who teaches or transfers skills to a coachee to help them acquire the required capacity to provide high-quality FP/AYSRH information and services.

Demand-Driven Coaching is a coachee-led process in which the coachees identify the priorities for coaching. This approach emphasizes local ownership and decision making while building the capacity of coachees.

Fidelity to The Challenge Initiative (TCI) Nigeria Model refers to applying aspects of the TCI approach and does not indicate a strict adherence to all of the steps or processes. Fidelity to the TCI model encompasses the five best practices of the program highlighted in the document and the experience of each state program coordinator in applying them to their state program.

Flexibility in the TCI model encompasses the ownership that coaches have over the program. The various TCI tools and frameworks create a structure that coaches are encouraged to adapt to meet the diverse needs of their specific situations and coachees.

Soft Skills refer to personal attributes that improve interpersonal connection, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and clear communication. Soft skills are as important to coaching as technical skills and know-how.

State Program Coordinators (SPCs) are the TCI program management staff responsible for the overall management and coordination of the TCI Business Unusual Model, including coaching at the state level. SPCs provide mentoring and coaching support to policy makers and FP/AYSRH program managers while also coordinating the technical leads who provide coaching for FP/AYSRH program implementers.

Technical Assistance is the collection of technical mentoring and coaching received by state implementers and managers to facilitate the design, delivery and tracking of health programs.

Work Planning is a structured process in which staff set key outcomes and objectives and identify milestones to achieve those outcomes. TCI staff create annual work plans as well as individual coaching work plans for proactive coaching.

Background

This case study provides important themes and lessons learned from implementing The Challenge Initiative (TCI) Nigeria's coaching model and highlights the nuances of coaching that are not covered in the general program implementation guides and materials. It is intended to provide complementary information about the experiences of running a TCI coaching program by covering broad themes and individual perspectives on the best practices underlying the coaching model framework. The best practices were identified based on experiences shared from current state program coordinators (SPCs).

Who Should Use This Case Study?

This case study is designed to inform program managers, implementers and quality improvement officers interested in the best practices of TCI's Coaching Model. Program managers and implementers are encouraged to apply these best practices in the design or review of high-level capacity-building coaching programs. This case study also serves as a knowledge-sharing tool for the current TCI hubs.

How to Use This Case Study

This case study is intended to provide additional information about the experiences of running a TCI coaching program by covering broad themes and nuanced perspectives on the best practices underlying TCI learning based on [TCI Nigeria Coaching and Technical Assistance Framework](#) (Figure 1).

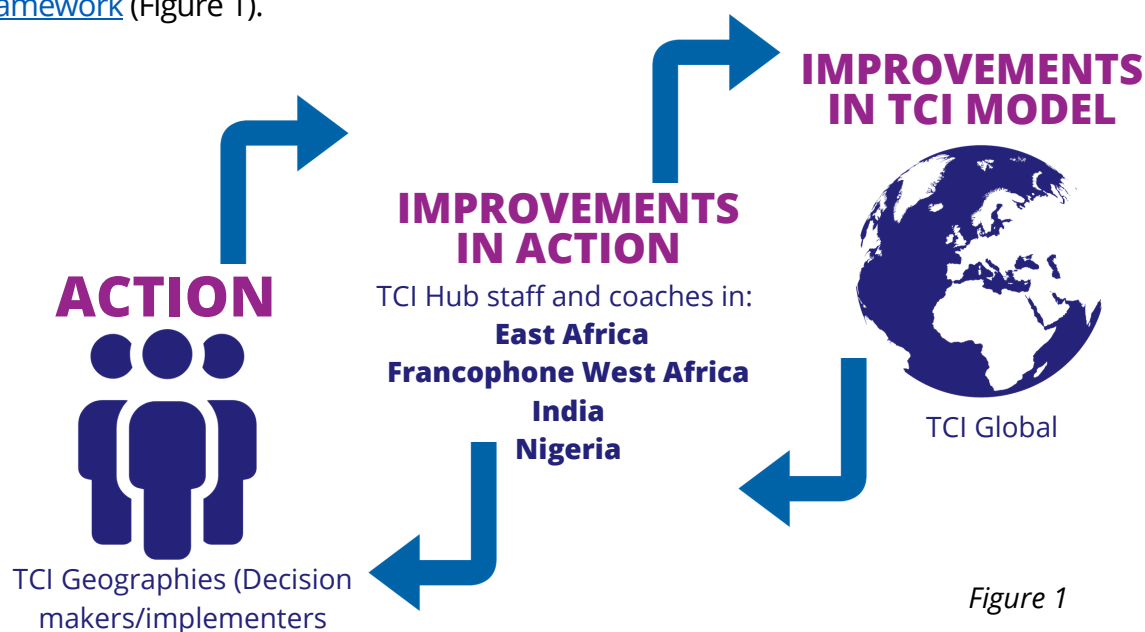


Figure 1

When to Use This Case Study

This case study can be used before, during and after coaching program implementation. We recommend that readers keep the following considerations in mind, depending on the stage in the coaching process.

Before Program Implementation

For readers considering implementing a coaching model program, we recommend reviewing this case study to identify the core values and skillsets to build into their coaching program. The themes highlighted in this case study will be particularly useful when considering how to develop an implementation plan, what skills to look for in potential coaches, how to approach program partners and how to frame the coaching model.

During Program Implementation

For readers who are actively managing coaching programs, we recommend that they use this case study as an opportunity to reflect on how their program is succeeding and how it can be improved. We suggest that they consider how their program aligns with the key themes outlined in the case study and how the best practices may or may not apply to their unique program situation.

After Program Implementation

TCI values adaptive learning and continuous growth. For readers in the evaluation phase of a coaching program, we recommend that they consider the themes outlined in this case study as points of reflection. How is their program similar to or different from the narratives included in this case study? Consider the key takeaways from this experience and identify the best practices that could be shared with other coaching programs.

The Challenge Initiative Nigeria Coaching Model

To address the gaps in leadership and technical capacity to govern and manage FP/AYSRH programs effectively, TCI applies a capacity-development approach consisting of coaching and technical assistance methods. TCI Nigeria's coaching and technical assistance approach blends facilitation and demonstration techniques, onsite and virtual technical coaching and mentoring and leadership and coordination support. The aim of the blended methodology is to

- Galvanize learning and experience sharing related to the adaptation of what works;
- Facilitate the evidence-driven implementation and decision making;
- Enable community engagement, participation and ownership;
- Ensure better coordination of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health and FP/AYSRH programs through relevant mechanisms; and
- Leverage and mobilize resources for effective and sustainable scale-up of High Impact Interventions (HIIs).



Kontagora Community Theatre crew, with Niger Demand Generation Technical Support Leads and Social Mobilisers in Kontagora LGA

Mode of Coaching

To meet the diverse needs of the various coachees and partners, the TCI Nigeria coaching model includes multiple modes and recommended methodologies. Coaching may be proactive or on demand, in person or virtual and individual or in groups. For more information, see Table 1.

Mode/ Methodology	Description
Individual	Coaching is provided proactively or based on individual need. Individual coaching focuses on areas the individual has identified as problematic.
Group	Group coaching targets groups of people with similar needs, including persons working in the same department or undertaking similar tasks. This form of coaching allows for more interactions and shared learning. Examples include coaching during periodic updates, training and so on.
Proactive	Coaching is initiated by coaches who identify key gaps or areas for improvement and actively reach out to potential coachees to develop a coaching plan. Proactive coaching typically occurs in the early phases of the TCI process as partners become more familiar with the TCI approach.
On Demand	Coaching is led by coachee requests and can occur at any time in the TCI process, though it is more frequently employed in later stages.
Face to Face	The coach and coachee plan together and meet for coaching services. This method usually works for FP/AYSRH providers through supportive supervision or mentoring and coaching visits to the facilities.
Virtual	The coach provides coaching to coachees via different platforms, including WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, Blue Jeans and TCI University. This method is particularly useful for coaches and coachees who are far apart from each other.

Table 1: Modes of coaching, adapted from TCI Nigeria Coaching and Technical Assistance Framework.

The 9-Step Process for Coaching Success

TCI also created a [nine-step process for coaching](#) success to guide the coaching process and provide structure for the coachee/coach relationship. These steps are based on coaching best practices and tailored to the TCI approach. For an outline of the 9-Step Process, refer to Annex 1. Other materials to support coaching of FP program managers and implementers can be found at [TCI University](#).

Case Study Process

This case study was informed by the daily experiences of the TCI SPCs to understand their daily processes, challenges and successes and to provide recommendations. Through these conversations, the following themes for the coaching model best practices were identified:

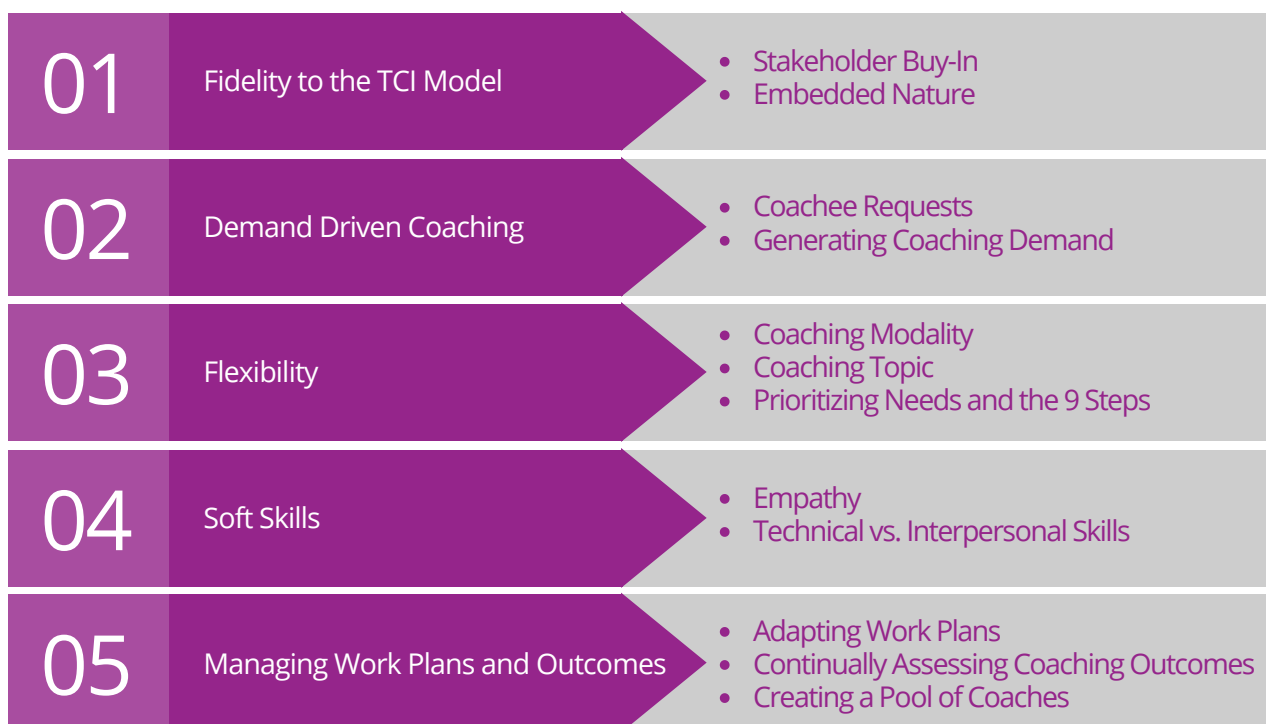


Figure 2

Fidelity to The Challenge Initiative Nigeria Model

The TCI Business Unusual Model is central to the program's success. A key benefit is its unique approach to program implementation and partnership. For the purposes of this case study, fidelity to the TCI model refers to applying aspects of the TCI approach and does not indicate a strict adherence to all of the steps or processes. Rather, fidelity to the TCI model encompasses the five best practices identified in this case study, as highlighted in Figure 2 above and in each SPC's experience in applying them to his/her state program.

Stakeholder Buy-In

As a demand-driven model, stakeholder buy-in is essential to TCI program success. For more information on specific stakeholders to target and networking strategies, please refer to [The Challenge Initiative Nigeria Coaching and Technical Assistance Framework](#) and [The Transformational Power of TCI Coaching: Lessons from the Nigeria Experience](#). Successful stakeholder buy-in for TCI Nigeria coaches is a two-fold process, beginning with engaging in proactive identification of key stakeholders and followed by maintaining an openness to engage with a broad range of individuals as potential stakeholders.

In some circumstances, strong allies are easy to identify. These allies quickly recognize the value of the TCI model, as noted in the case of Ogun State.

The team lead from the state, the secretary [Dr. Elijah Ogunsola], is a very good man, and he is observant and if he observes something lacking, he will call on us and ask us to help someone and create time, because he believes in our team. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Not all programs will encounter eager and willing stakeholders when creating a coaching program. Therefore, proactively identifying stakeholders at the onset of implementing a coaching model is especially important. In Rivers State, the SPC and fellow TCI Nigeria staff proactively advocated for the TCI Business Unusual Model among key state leaders, leading to the formation of a strong relationship with the deputy governor. The SPC noted that the state had a regular quarterly meeting of program heads and requested to be added to the agenda to meet in person with decision-makers. She then strategically and intentionally sent information about TCI to select participants in advance of the meeting.



TCI team on a visit to Dr. Elijah Ogunsola Executive Secretary Ogun State Primary Healthcare Management Board

During the meeting, I quickly identified some key persons we were engaging with that had been on that platform long before TCI came on board, so I sent messages to them to talk about the TCI Business Unusual Model and how that has helped. During the meeting, they started talking about TCI, and Her Excellency [the state deputy governor], requested to hear more about TCI and what we are doing ... we had a meeting with her where we talked more about the TCI program. By the next meeting, she had made some commitments to engage TCI [to serve in a committee aimed at improved antenatal care and traditional birth attendant service provision]. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

This excerpt captures the importance of proactive efforts to build stakeholder buy-in. The team in Rivers State recognized the quarterly meeting as an opportunity to spread awareness about the TCI model, and in doing so, created an ally in the state deputy governor. That buy-in has increased the credibility of TCI within Rivers State and has expanded their scope of work beyond FP to support the state in improving the skilled birth attendant and antenatal care indices within the state.

Embedded Nature

Across the board, coaches mentioned the value of the embedded nature of the TCI model. Having a physical presence in the state government offices increases the visibility of the TCI program and the availability of on-demand coaching. It also strengthens the credibility of the initiative, as SPCs build rapport with their state counterparts.

Basically what ... is most important is the fact that TCI consultants and staff in this state are embedded in the state structure, so they see us as a part of them. —A. Adefila, personal communication, February 14, 2020



SPC Rivers, Mrs. Uduak Ananaba decorates Deputy Governor, Rivers State Dr. Mrs. Ipalibo Harry as an FP Advocate following a courtesy visit by the TCI Team

They have that trust in us because we are embedded in the ministry, our office is not outside. We are here, and they see us day today, and that barrier of looking at your coachee, as they know all and you know nothing, that barrier is broken, and that is helpful too. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

The embedded program model builds trust between coaches and coachees, thereby increasing effectiveness and mutual sharing. In addition, all three SPCs noted that a significant amount of on-demand coaching takes place during the regular and informal conversations occurring within the government offices. Thus, this model enables coaches to interact with coachees in an informal setting, take note of ongoing challenges, and take advantage of opportunities to discuss the coaching plan.

Key Takeaways: Fidelity to the TCI Model

Stakeholder Buy-In

Proactively identify potential and relevant stakeholders.

- Identify key decision-makers.
- Make efforts to join planning bodies or working groups.

Make the case for the coaching model.

- Prepare success stories to share with stakeholders.
- Highlight the Business Unusual Model.

Be open to different possibilities.

- Show a willingness to expand the scope of coaching.
- Understand that anyone can be an ally.

Embedded Nature

Make good use of physical locations.

- Aim to have an office space in the same location as the target audience.
- Be a regular presence in the office and be ready to show up when a coachee needs additional support.

Interact with stakeholders.

- Aim to be seen as an equal partner, not an outsider.
- Lead by listening and empowering others.

Demand-Driven Coaching

Demand-driven coaching refers to coaching that promotes and empowers the coachees to lead the process and identify the most critical areas for improvement. The demand-driven approach is a hallmark of TCI's effectiveness and requires both an eagerness to learn on the part of the coachees and a responsiveness to diverse requests among coaches.

Coachee Requests

Fielding requests for coaching depends on both the nature of the individuals one is working with and the effectiveness of the programs' communications in expressing the value of that coaching. In some cases, as in Ogun State, the value of coaching is understood right away, and the coachees are eager to get started:

We just realized we are lucky to be working with a group of people who were ready to learn. Even before TCI came with coaching, they had requested that. You know, it is Business Unusual, so sometimes they would come to us and ask, "Can we look at it this way?" and by the time they ended, they had gone back to the leaders. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Generating Coaching Demand

The demand-driven nature was more evident once the program had established its value among the state counterparts and partners. Most programs rely on proactive coaching in the early stages of the process to generate this demand and demonstrate program value. As previously described, the Rivers SPC proactively identified a key opportunity to connect with stakeholders, which eventually generated ongoing demand. Having an in-depth knowledge of the state health system, the TCI team identified potential areas for improvement and then proactively reached out to potential coachees to identify opportunities for coaching and mentoring.



Yanke Yanke Sensitization Program at Tilden Fulani Community, Bauchi State

Because we understood the situation and we had the desire to catalyze changes, we were eager to showcase a system that works, so that made us proactive in our coaching. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

Building a strong reputation is key to a demand-driven approach, as coaching requests will increase as more coachees successfully gain skills and provide an example to other potential coachees.

At a certain point, we started getting requests from the state counterparts and the local government for immediate coaching in a particular area. I think that is an indicator of success. They are seeing the changes that are happening. They are requesting more support or coaching in a particular area. If they didn't see these changes or appreciate the whole strategy, they wouldn't reach out to TCI. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

This idea of the coachee as demanding is fantastic. TCI is a platform unlike the normal coaching where you have to apply and do this, strictly formal. The way we work is giving these coachees the trust, the confidence, so that they come out themselves and lead, that is fantastic. That is the joy, as a coach you feel fulfilled ... the action that the coachee is displaying is unlike when you apply, and someone just sent you for a particular skill, and you just have to do it because you are told. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Managing a demand-driven approach requires flexibility and responsiveness to the coachee's unique needs and circumstances. The SPCs noted they regularly assess coachee progress and adapt the coaching plan to allow the coachee to direct their learning. Flexibility, coupled with ongoing monitoring and reevaluation, is central to the TCI Nigeria coaching model, as discussed in the next section.

Key Takeaways: Demand-Driven Coaching

Coachee Requests

- The coaching process should be led by coachee requests and needs.

Generating Coaching Demand

- Coaches may need to establish the value of the program to drive demand.
- Providing excellent coaching to even a small number of coachees will build a coach's reputation and increase demand.
- Give coachees the opportunity to demonstrate their success to build coachee confidence and increase awareness of the coaching model.

Flexibility

As noted in *The Transformational Power of TCI Coaching: Lessons from the Nigeria Experience* TCI defines coaching as *“a structured, yet flexible process by which coachees are empowered to make positive changes in their internal motivation, knowledge, skills and ability to address needs; solve problems; take on new challenges; improve individual performance; and achieve individual, team and organizational objectives.”*

Flexibility should not be confused with vague or happenstance programming. Rather, flexibility within TCI's coaching model is possible because of the clear structure and intention of the program. The coaches can be responsive and flexible to meet their coachees' needs because of the deep understanding of the goals and objectives of the overall program. SPCs noted the value of flexibility as it related to three core areas: coaching modality, coaching topic and prioritizing needs and the nine steps.

Coaching Modality

TCI's coaching model includes modality flexibility in terms of choosing between virtual or in-person, on-demand or proactive and group or one-on-one coaching options. Beyond this, the SPCs highlighted the importance of flexibility in coaching in terms of methods, resources and levels of ability. As noted by the SPCs of Niger and Ogun States, different coachees have different learning styles, and it is up to the coach to meet those needs:



TCI staff coaching LGA FP Coordinators on the use and application of TCI University toolkits

Coachees don't assimilate things the same ways. The level of understanding of coachees is different. With some, with just talking alone, they will grasp what you are talking about. Some people, you have to put pen to paper and graphs and charts. Some might take it immediately; some might take weeks. —A. Adefila, personal communication, February 14, 2020

It's not just one cap fits all. I realized because of our different backgrounds and different experiences, people interpret things differently. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Recognizing each coachee's learning needs and capacities is a vital skill for impactful coaching. Whereas one coachee may benefit from lecture-style instruction, another may learn best through practice activities. It is the coach's responsibility to work with the coachee to identify the most effective modality for that coachee. Furthermore, the approach that works for one coachee may not work for another. Effective coaches take advantage of the flexibility of TCI's coaching model and adapt various resources for each coachee.

Coaching Topic

As a demand-driven program, the topics for coaching sessions are decided by the initial needs assessment and requests from the coachees. TCI focuses specifically on FP/AYSRH development and implementation. Table 2 shows the three core aspects of TCI: advocacy, demand generation and service delivery and supply, with research, monitoring and evaluation as a cross-cutting program.

Advocacy	Demand Generation	Service Delivery and Supply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Family Planning and Child Birth Spacing Champions Working with Religious Leaders Working with the Media Resource Mobilization Multisectoral Collaboration Youth Participation and Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and Behavior Change Communication Social Mobilization Community Theater and Drama Mass Media Youth Audience Segmentation Intergenerational Dialogues Comprehensive Sexuality Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider Training Quality Improvement and Assurance Whole-Site Orientation Commodity Security Family Planning Integration In-Reaches Integrated Outreaches 72-Hour Clinic Makeover Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Services Working with Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigation and Hands-on Practice on the DHIS2 Data Analysis and Visualization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Review and Data Quality Assurance Data for Decision Making 	

Table 2

However, to be responsive to coachee needs, some coaches may find themselves receiving requests for coaching on other topics. For example, in Rivers State, the deputy governor requested that TCI serve in a committee aimed at improving the Antenatal Care and Skilled Birth Attendants Program. Although this request does not fall within the typical scope of topics for TCI, the Rivers team quickly developed a plan to meet this need. As mentioned previously, this willingness to adapt to the state's needs increased the trust in TCI overall. Similarly, the Ogun SPC noted that the topic of coaching may change depending on the coachee's level of experience.

We realize for some of our youth, it goes beyond. They require more coaching than just on family planning issues. Most of them are fresh out of school. They need communication skills in public speaking, expressing yourself. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

The goal of TCI is firmly rooted in improving FP/AYSRH programs. The core values of long-term sustainability and demand-driven partnership require some flexibility in terms of coaching topic. TCI coaches are often recognized for their exceptional coaching abilities and should feel empowered to respond to stakeholder requests whenever possible. Coaching has increasingly resulted in better program management skills, such as program planning, coordination, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.



State Family Planning Workplan Development Workshop in Niger State

Prioritizing Needs and the Nine Steps

To manage the varying coaching topic requests, coaches must have strong problem-solving and prioritization skills. The SPCs noted that responsiveness does not mean addressing any request immediately. Rather, they emphasize the importance of conducting needs assessments to create coaching plans that accommodate ad hoc requests.

Spontaneous requests don't necessarily need spontaneous intervention. How does it contribute to the objective of what you need? Do you have an immediate need for that? We attend to all the requests, but it may not be spontaneous. We will prioritize based on what is attainable at that time. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Flexibility also includes knowing how to prioritize the [9-Step Process for Coaching Success](#). TCI encourages all coaches to use the 9-Step Process; however, in some cases, a coachee may be farther along in the process and may not need to go through each of the nine steps. Coaches must be carefully attuned to the needs of coachees and should feel comfortable adjusting the process as they see fit.

We follow [the nine steps], but sometimes not sequentially. Sometimes, we dive right into problem identification, especially if it is not a first-time coachee. If I am a coach and I am using the model for a coachee I have met a few times, we don't need to make an enabling environment. Sometimes, they come to the office, open the door, and say, "I have a challenge" and "There is an issue I need you to help me on." So at that point, you don't need to go back to setting the tone and all of that. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

Key Takeaways: Flexibility

Flexibility

- TCI coaching flexibility is possible because of the clear structure and intention of the program.
- Coaches should be well-versed in the structure and objectives of the program to effectively identify opportunities for flexibility.

Coaching Modality

- Coaches should be prepared to offer different coaching approaches to meet the needs of different coachees.
- Coaches should take note of their coachees' progress and responses to different coaching styles and regularly check in with them to ensure the selected approach is effective.

Coaching Topic

- Stay open to offering coaching on a variety of topics to increase stakeholders' trust.
- Be respectful of a coachee's level of authority and experience when selecting coaching topics.

Prioritizing Needs and the Nine Steps

- Create coaching plans based on needs assessments to identify priority areas for improvement.
- Use the 9-Step Process as a guide, but recognize some coachees may not need to follow all nine steps sequentially.

Soft Skills

TCI prioritizes hiring experienced coaches and providing in-depth training on the TCI coaching model. However, the SPCs noted that to be an effective coach, one needs more than technical experience. They frequently cited the importance of soft skills and emotional intelligence in connecting with their coachees and making impactful coaching plans.

Soft skills include attributes that improve one's ability to engage with and understand another person. Similarly, emotional intelligence is an awareness of another person's emotional state and needs and an ability to relate to that person in a respectful and flexible manner. When asked what qualities have been important to their success as coaches, the SPCs cited key soft skills, including patience, consistency, humility and passion. Soft skills improve rapport building and can strengthen the connection between coaches and coachees.

Apart from the technical aspects of coaching, as a coach, there are some emotional attributes. We should ensure that the coach has at least 70% of these attributes and skills. Emotional intelligence is key ... You need to be able to reach your coachee. It goes beyond the [technical assistance] that you are providing. You need to reach beyond. So you should be able to put yourself in the position of the coachee and know what is happening any time. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Similarly, the SPC of Rivers State emphasized the importance of maintaining patience and focus when working with coachees:

It has helped me to be more focused and more patient, because when you deal with coachees, there are some you will see results within a short period of time and certain persons that will take a while, and it depends on the plan you have with the coachee. Sometimes, it is reflected in the system, so it has helped me to be more patient and more consistent in what I do. Personally, those are the skills I have observed since we have started. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020



Mokwa LGA Coordinator demonstrating how to mark a client before insertion of implant during OJT in Mokwa

Soft skills are essential to coaches' success in the flexible, demand-driven model that TCI Nigeria employs. To meet the diverse needs of coachees from various backgrounds and with different levels of experience, coaches must be able to lead with empathy and emotional intelligence. Successful coaches adapt their mode and topic of coaching, and they connect with coachees to create a sense of trust that strengthens their relationship.

Soft skills are especially important when working with coachees from higher levels of government. Some of these coachees may be hesitant about being considered in need of coaching. It is important that the coaches have the soft skills to manage those relationships in a respectful and productive way. TCI SPCs noted that often the best way to engage in coaching with high-level staff is to prove the value of the coaching model with midlevel officials and emphasize the flexibility of the demand-driven model.

Key Takeaways: Soft Skills

Empathy and Technical

- Soft skills are as important as technical expertise in coaching.
- Coaches should be able to empathize with a coachee to understand their position and effectively mentor them.

Interpersonal

- Coaches should invest time in building rapport with stakeholders and potential coachees.

Managing Work Plans and Outcomes

The TCI Coaching Model Implementation Guide includes clear instructions for planning work, monitoring progress, and conducting follow-up, including the activities outlined in the 9-Step Process for Coaching Success.

Adapting Coaching Work Plans

The SPCs interviewed noted the coaching work-planning and objective-setting processes vary depending on the circumstances. In some cases, as noted in Rivers State, the SPCs have regular planning meetings with their state counterparts to assess coaching needs and relevant goals and objectives:

Sometimes, we have meetings that can be monthly or bi-monthly, so we formally sit down and review the work plan together. As a team, we can decide what still needs to be done, what we need to hold on to and what has changed. So for the State counterparts that are program officers, we relate to them on a day-to-day basis. During this relationship, some of them actually request support in a particular area. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

The coaching work plan creates a useful guide for the coach and the coachee to ensure that the initial objectives are addressed. However, flexibility is again a key aspect of the plan. As the Ogun State SPC noted, the work plans are not rigid; an effective coach will recognize difficulties, revisit the work plan and change strategies to achieve the desired results.

Here, we try to stick to [the work plan], but if there are challenges, you know, we revisit the plan and we replan. It doesn't change the goal. It doesn't change the objectives, but we can learn and can change. That is a key thing that helps us get results. —SPC, Ogun State

The coaches also noted the value of regularly conducting coaching needs assessments and coordinating with state counterparts to meet the demand-driven needs. Conducting a needs assessment can go beyond the evaluation of an individual coachee's capabilities to assess the needs of the state program as a whole. As the Niger SPC noted, the needs assessment process included evaluating the state coaching systems and identifying areas of improvement to address during individual coaching sessions:

We have assessed the state coaching mechanism ... so we look at the cascade, how information flows through the system, and we look at where the bottlenecks are and do a bottleneck analysis and look at how we can support the state and making things better to address those bottlenecks, especially with policymakers and top officials. —SPC, Niger State

Continually Assessing Coaching Outcomes

The TCI coaching model emphasizes sustainable knowledge transfer and capacity strengthening. Therefore, to ensure effectiveness, coaches must regularly and accurately assess the progress of their coachees and adjust their coaching plans accordingly. The Lead, Assist, Observe Framework (see Annex 2) guides the balance between coach and coachee leadership. The SPCs noted that giving coachees the opportunity to showcase their acquired skills is critical to that process.

If we see that there is an opportunity for you to showcase what you have learned, we will put you to the test on that. The way we do it, you won't feel that you are under any evaluation. We just build that rapport, so that the person will be willing to take that on. They think, "You have coached me, and I want to showcase that I have the stuff." So, we observe you, and if we find you are still lacking in some skills, we get that communicated to that person, in a subtle way. — A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Similarly, the coaches noted that coachee initiative and interest in spreading the TCI model in other areas of their work is a clear indication of progress. As the Rivers SPC noted, coachee ownership of the model and programs is a central indicator of success.

When you begin to see a coachee identify similar issues or gaps in other areas or other locations and try to solve it using the coaching strategy, that is an indicator of success and we have seen it. ... So you are beginning to build a group of coachees who are ready to take on the responsibilities of a coach. —U. Ananaba, personal communication, February 17, 2020

The Ogun SPC noted that progress is seen when coachees have the capacity and interest to identify and resolve problems on their own:

For some of them, we have realized that they are becoming gurus now ... they are coming up, and they do a lot of things with minimal supervision on the things they have been coached on, so it is an indication that the coaching works. —A. Oyeyemi, personal communication, February 12, 2020

Coachees taking ownership of the model is an indicator of individual progress and signifies a key step in the process towards sustainable capacity strengthening and knowledge transfer. As explained further below, the TCI coaching model is committed to building a pool of local coaches who will continue to share the TCI approach to capacity building. TCI uses the Reflection in Action to Improve Self Reliance and Effectiveness (RAISE) tool to help the coaches assess the quality and sustainability of FP/AYSRRH high-impact interventions in each implementing geographies. Since TCI provides technical coaching to governments as they implement the high-impact approaches the tool is meant to be used directly by government staff, in partnership with TCI.



Exchange of Letters of Commitment with Abia State Commissioner for Health

Creating a Pool of Coaches

Sustainability and long-term impact are core values of the TCI coaching model, as evidenced by the Lead, Assist, Observe coaching framework (see Annex 2). As part of this framework, coaches strive to strengthen the capacity of their coachees and ensure that the states have ongoing access to capacity strengthening through the transition of the coachee to coach status. Therefore, creating a pool of available coaches is critical to the success of the program and a key focus of the SPC coaches.

The various success stories captured in the interviews with the SPCs share the common outcome of building a long-term resource for knowledge sharing through the progress of the individual coachees.

Now, we have a pool of coachees in the state, so if someone is calling in from a particular zone of the state, I can say, "OK, in that area, we have so and so person who can help attend to this person and all that."—A. Adefila, personal communication, February 14, 2020

This pool of coachees will ensure the ongoing sustainability of the TCI Nigeria program as each coachee becomes a coach to their respective communities and coworkers. An effective coach must, therefore, build the confidence and skills of their coachees to ensure the creation of a cadre of local capacity strengthening experts.

Key Takeaways: Managing Work Plans and Outcomes

Adapting Work Plans

- Consider implementing regular planning meetings with state counterparts to assess coaching needs and progress.
- Revise the work plan as needed to achieve the same ultimate objectives.
- Consider conducting an organizational needs assessment, as well as individual needs assessments, to identify areas for systematic change.

Continually Assessing Coaching Outcomes

- Give coachees the opportunity to showcase their skills to assess progress and build confidence.
- Coachees showing ownership of the model and initiative is a sign of progress, and coaches should encourage coachees to take on responsibility.
- Coachees should progress to a level where they can complete activities with minimal to no supervision.

Creating a Pool of Coaches

- Coaching should be conducted with the goal of sustainable capacity building.
- As coachees progress, they should become coaches in their respective workplaces and communities.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The themes and best practices outlined in this case study are intended to inform the design and implementation of similar coaching programs. The TCI coaching model includes a framework for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Follow-up is central to the program's success. Knowing how to apply the framework and having the necessary program management and soft skills to adapt the model to different circumstances are also critical to success.

We encourage readers to consider how these themes can be used to improve the future offerings of coaching programs. As evidenced by these conversations with the SPCs, engaging stakeholders, following a demand-driven approach, ensuring flexibility, emphasizing soft skills managing work plans and outcomes may enhance coaching.

TCI Nigeria values adaptive learning and continuous growth. For readers in the evaluation phase of a coaching program, we recommend considering the themes outlined in this case study as a point of reflection. For example, they might consider how their program was similar to or different from the narratives included in this case study. We also recommend that they consider the takeaways that they have gained from this experience and what best practices they would share with other coaching programs.



Happy health workers pose in front of their newly renovated health facility following 72-Hour Clinic Makeover

References

The Challenge Initiative. (2018). [The Transformational Power of TCI Coaching: Lessons from the Nigeria Experience](#)

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Annex 1. Outline of the 9-Step Process

Steps to Coaching Session

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Step 1 | Initiating a communicated plan for meeting either by coach or coachee |
| Step 2 | Using active listening and probing and guiding questions to help the coachee |
| Step 3 | Identifying needs problems, and context by coachee with active listening, using probing and guiding questions to further identify the need, problem and context |
| Step 4 | Setting objectives |
| Step 5 | Discussing potential solutions and interventions such as using TCI-University website to identify and discuss approaches and tools in the TCI toolkits |
| Step 6 | Planning |
| Step 7 | Identifying measures of progress and/or success |
| Step 8 | Identifying any additional learning needs (and associated resources) the coachee may require to implement the selected approach, tool or solution |
| Step 9 | Wrapping up <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reiterating next steps for a coachee to implement solutions, TCI approaches and tools• Agreeing on specific follow-up between the coach and coachee• Documenting of the coaching session by the coach |

Annex 2. Lead, Assist, and Observe Process

LEAD	ASSIST	OBSERVE
<p>Hands-on technical assistance (TA) approach of demonstrating feasibility of the model while building the capacity of managers and implementers</p> <p>Attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed by states with support from TCI; driven by TCI • TCI as primary funding source, with government exploring other leveraged funding source • Family planning (FP) strategic plans (CIP) developed and/or renewed • Establish and/or strengthen (existing) platforms • Establish and strengthen accountability mechanism 	<p>State leads implementation, while TCI supports through coaching, mentoring and supporting from behind</p> <p>Attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-led coordination mechanisms like Technical Working Groups • FP program integration within the reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition continuum • Systems strengthening through coordination platforms, FP strategic plans (CIP) and harmonized FP workplans • Increased government funding (allocated and released) and leveraged funding 	<p>Demonstrate state's transformation and commitment to lead coordinated, results-oriented and cost-effective implementation</p> <p>Attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability platforms autonomous • Most funding from states, with remaining mobilized from various sources • Minimal stock-outs and zero out-of-pocket for consumables by clients • FP openly discussed by religious, traditional and political leaders, as well as media, community and social groups