Reviewer’s report

Title: Intervention Scalability Assessment Tool: A decision support tool for health policy makers and implementers

Version: 0 Date: 18 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Elizabeth Alvarez

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for allowing me to review this manuscript. Scalability and sustainability of interventions is an important topic for the use of resources, and context is a critical factor in this type of assessment. The paper is well written overall.

General comments:

I did find the use of only one database limited. Could you please explain why more databases were not included? This is a limitation.

Overall for the findings / tool, I was surprised the concepts of harms and monitoring and evaluation did not come through in this manuscript. I see the tool addresses unintended consequences, but harms found through evidence may be different.

Much of the discussion seems like results - what you found through the interviews. Please change as necessary.

You describe the strengths and limitations of the tool in the discussion, but please add strengths and limitations of this study.

I have several minor comments, including grammatical considerations:

Page 3, Line 14 - recommend to remove "the" between "in" and "low"

Page 3, Line 48 - recommend to remove "it" between "and" and "using"

Page 4, Line 13/15 - recommend to add () to group the Boolean ORs from the ANDs

Page 6, Line 34 - "This review was then used to identify the domains to be covered in the first version of the ISAT and informed its structure" How was this process done? Who was involved? You describe the literature search but not the development process. Was there one particular framework that was selected as the base and others were added on?

Page 7, Line 1 - recommend to add "of" between "total" and "34"
Page 8 - was member checking conducted - were any of the same interviewees contacted after the revisions or were they all new interviewees? Was this information presented back to the interviewees to ensure their ideas were captured?

Page 8, Line 45 - assuming the documents were excluded using exclusion criteria described in methods.

Page 8, Line 51 - here you use the term "Phase" whereas in other parts of the document there is "stage" - are these the same or are they referring to different things? Please clarify.

Page 9, Line 29 - remove "HIV" from the acronym "HIV/AIDS" as it is redundant

Page 9, Line 31 - Phase vs. Stage?

Page 10, Lines 23 and 27 - recommend to change "to" to "for"

Page 10 - there is a gap in how the literature review moved into the development of the tool (see comment above)

Page 11, Line 9 - missing the heading of "perception on the likely process required to complete the ISAT"

Page 11, Line 9 - recommend to change "addition" to "additions"

Page 11, Line 55 - recommend to add comma between "and" and "potentially"

Page 12, Line 2 - recommend to change "budget" to "budgets"

Page 12, Line 45 - recommend to remove comma between "process" and "would"

Page 12, Line 57 - Here you state "While not listed in detain in this paper, there were numerous suggestions for additions..." In the discussion, you state "...there were no major omissions identified in the ISAT" (page 17, Line 49) These seem inconsistent. Please rectify or provide the suggested additions in the paper or as an appendix to help interpret your findings.

Page 13, Line 21 - "The ability to view the strengths and weaknesses of interventions…” is this as determined by research evidence or by expert opinion or both?

Page 13, Line 56 - "There is a certain level of implied knowledge and skillset…” I would move your description of who is needed to fill these knowledge and skillset needs - methodological, policy, etc. you state it later.

Page 15, Line 18 - recommend to add "is" between "intervention" and "being"

Page 15 - Table 5 and general comment - are potential harms addressed?? Was this found to be important through your research?
Page 16 - Table 6 and general comment - the tool mentions monitoring and evaluation (M&E), but this doesn't seem to be part of the tool - planning for M&E. Was this found as an element for scaling up in your research?

Page 16, Line 23 - Remove "a." between "domains" and "Part C"

Page 16, Line 45 - recommend to add comma between "up" and "or"

Page 16 - how are questions weighted? Is there a cut off for decision making? This is described in the discussion section - I would recommend to move here.

Page 17, Line 1 - recommend to remove "that" between "checklist" and "was"

Page 17, Line 23 - "health need" - I don't see that as part of the domain listed in results.

Page 17, line 40 - Recommend to change "weakness" to "weaknesses"

Page 17, Line 49 - Same comment as above regarding no major omissions found and results page 12 were many additions were suggested.

Page 18, Lines 23-49 - This seems to go better under results - see comment above page 16

Page 19, Line 1 - who should be on the team?

Page 19, Line 1 - recommend to add "of" between "range" and "expertise"

Page 19, Line 39 - recommend to add "a" between "as" and "gap"

Page 19, Line 43 - it seems a bit of a stretch to suggest this tool should be used for policy decisions, such as funding, before it is tested.

Page 21, Line 34 - change "tuned" into "turned"

Page 22, line 3 - recommend to remove "the" between "encourage" and "research" and to change "research" into "researchers"

Page 23, List of abbreviations - remove HIV from HIV/AIDS

Page 23, Funding - write out acronyms, also what was their role in terms of contributions to the study design, data collection or analysis?

Page 29, Table - Does "Taking innovations to scale - Scalability checklist" have a methodology?

Great work!
Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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