## Navigating the Tension of Change

Human service systems are dynamic, often chaotic, and constantly adapting to changing contextual factors. Turnover, changes in leadership, current priority initiatives, policy and funding changes, and other factors create natural tensions in these systems. These tensions can be exacerbated by systematic efforts to create implementation practice changes—such as those facilitated by ICTP ISPs—at individual/team and organizational/system levels. For example, these efforts can cause

* confusion in response to new and unclear terminology and role expectations;
* frustration when new tasks don’t yet align with existing timelines, activities, or incentives; and
* challenges with the feasibility and appropriateness of adapting generally effective implementation practices, often identified through research or other practice environments, for the unique community and state Triple P service systems and environments in North Carolina and South Carolina.

The nature of these challenges can influence regional Triple P partners’ willingness and ability to engage in ICTP implementation support practice. When readiness for change diminishes, regional Triple P partners may return to practices that are more familiar, comfortable, and aligned with historical system approaches and incentives for program implementation and scale-up. Often, these practices are not well suited to the outcomes the systems hope to change through new program implementation and scale-up. Thus, central to the role of ICTP ISPs is helping support participants navigate the tensions inherent in complex systems while (1) facilitating their movement toward more effective implementation practices and (2) managing the tensions inherent in the change process.

**Complex, multifaceted practice environments**

**Effective implementation practices**

A silhouette of two people pulling a rope

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When navigating system complexity and the tension of change, ICTP ISPs need to understand system factors that can affect implementation and program outcomes, whether for whole populations or individual community groups. These factors include

* structural determinants (e.g., awareness, accessibility, resources, institutional racism);
* historical and present political and policy environments;
* leadership commitment and skill; and
* ongoing engagement with the full array of co-creation partners, including those with lived experience.

Additionally, support participants need a strong understanding of

* the individual, team, and system resources and abilities to facilitate change and positively impact outcomes;
* well-paced, iterative, stage-based approaches to implementation that make use of small tests of change;
* methods for collecting and using well-sourced data and feedback for ongoing learning and communication loops; and
* effective practices for recruiting, training, and supporting a community-wide Triple P delivery workforce.

With these elements in place, ICTP ISPs and support participants can utilize strategies to mitigate the tension between system change and the tendency to remain as is. Some of these strategies include

* establishing common ground by leaning on the power of collaborative working relationships;

PRACTICE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

Refer to the section [Practice Principles in Action](https://ictp.fpg.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/principles.docx) for more information:

* Adaptive Leadership
* Co-Creation
* Iterative, Stage-based Approach
* ensuring that change processes are equitable, broad system partners are engaged, and power differentials are identified and appropriately addressed;
* modeling and reinforcing adaptive leadership strategies;
* co-designing implementation support activities;
* ensuring that community Triple P processes and outcomes are co-created with regional and state partners;
* utilizing iterative, stage-based support approaches reflecting well-paced and repeated inquiries, actions, and adjustments within the support process; and
* collecting and using mixed-methods data to
* better define local needs and system challenges,
* plan tailored support strategies,
* monitor the progress and outcomes of community Triple P implementation efforts,
* monitor the effectiveness and acceptability of ICTP implementation support,
* make data-driven quality improvements, and
* enable system learning.