## Principles of Implementation Support Practice

Like other projects within The Impact Center at FPG, the ICTP projects promote the use of eight practice principles to guide the provision of implementation support to communities, organizations, and partners. We seek to incorporate these practice principles within all implementation support practice activities.

1. Co‐creation:

The development of implementation capacity is recognized as an outcome of co-creation. Co-creation joins scientific resources, governance capabilities, and practice capabilities into a shared body of usable knowledge and involves collaborative leadership at multiple and whole system levels [20, 21]. Authentic, equitable partnerships must be developed and nurtured among all partners for co-creation success and sustainability. ISPs fully participate in and seek to reinforce the co-creation process, including equitable power sharing and the inclusion of historically marginalized voices [22]. The following essential functions support the principle of co-creation:

* *co-learning* – multiple system partners share knowledge and experiences to inform system processes and learning
* *brokering* – connecting system partners or bringing in external partners to meet system needs
* *facilitation* – thoughtful and intentional leading of partners through development and/or implementation of a process or problem solving
* *addressing power differentials* – identifying how power is showing up and finding strategies to share or redistribute power
* *co-design* – working alongside multiple system partners to develop and design approaches that blend content and experiential knowledge
* *tailored support* – providing support that aligns with the needs of the context, system, and system partners and is proactive and responsive to changing needs or context

1. Implementation scientist-practitioner model:

ISPs’ activities are grounded in the transdisciplinary science of implementation, including the dual roles of implementation research and practice [23]. Implementation research informs the exchange of ideas among all co-creation partners, within varied specific contexts, engaged in implementation practice. Conversely, lessons and learning from implementation practice inform the advancement of implementation research.

1. Proactive support:

Proactive implementation support involves anticipating needs and incorporating strategic approaches to bring new knowledge, skills, and opportunities for support participants to apply and test new learning—with reinforcement and supportive feedback—in their own organizational and system environments.

1. Contextualized and responsive support:

Implementation strategies need to be considered and tailored according to key features of local context, such as history (including historical trauma and inequities), size, resources, culture, population density, and political and social complexities [22]. Ongoing implementation support needs to be responsive to local progress, setbacks, feedback, and key events.

1. Adaptive leadership:

Adaptive leadership recognizes that implementation and scale-up typically present adaptive challenges (i.e., situations wherein deeply held beliefs are challenged, the values that made us successful become less relevant, and legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge; see [24]). ISPs must develop an appreciation for, and comfort with, the diverse perspectives held within community and system environments and recognize these as clues to the presence of adaptive challenges embedded within the context and its people. Heifetz and Laurie [25] put forward six principles of adaptive leadership that can be used to manage adaptive challenges:

* *Get on the balcony*: Step back from daily system operations to see larger patterns of individual and collective behavior and local history that may be either facilitating or hindering the system’s willingness or ability to change.
* *Identify the adaptive challenge*: Take time to clearly define adaptive challenges, taking into account an understanding of the people within the community, the community and system history, larger system pressures, and identified sources of conflict.
* *Regulate distress*: Balance the stress in the system by using conflict as an opportunity for learning and creativity, sequencing and pacing work, and preventing stakeholders from feeling overwhelmed by change.
* *Maintain disciplined attention*: Maintain focus on tough questions and prevent the avoidance of adaptive work by recognizing when people slide back into familiar routines or engage in distractive behaviors.
* *Give the work back to people*: Build the collective problem-solving confidence of system stakeholders rather than providing expert solutions or letting the burden of adaptive work fall on the few identified vocal leaders.
* *Protect voices of leadership from below*: Ensure that the people often marginalized in change initiatives, including frontline staff and community members, are able to voice their experiences and ideas and play an equitable role in generating solutions so that they will be the most successful and sustainable.

1. Iterative, stage-based approach:

Implementation and scale-up require iterative, or repetitive, series of inquiries, actions, and adjustments, often across long-term engagements. Dynamic stage-based approaches to implementation have been widely utilized to address these demands, and ISPs must be mindful of this to pace and modify support activities across such stages.

1. Data-driven progress monitoring and improvement:

ISPs collect and use mixed-methods (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) data to identify local needs and plan tailored support strategies, monitor the progress and outcomes of implementation efforts, monitor the effectiveness of their own support, and make data-driven quality improvements. Improvement science methods, such as the model for improvement [19], may greatly benefit ISPs’ activities.

1. Local ownership of progress:

ISPs promote local partners’ ownership of implementation processes and successes and do not perceive ongoing success to be due to, or dependent on, external implementation support. ISPs can demonstrate this principle by developing and continually reinforcing local partners’ self-regulation, meaning, in this context, their ability to effectively implement practices within their community.