The Role of Implementation Practice in Advancing Equity

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Collaborative for Implementation Practice
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Implementation Science

Implementation science is the study of the factors that lead to uptake, scale and sustainability of practices, programs and policies with evidence behind them.

The purpose of implementation science is to create a bridge between research evidence and the real-world settings of service delivery to improve outcomes for those being served.

(Estabrooks et al., 2018)

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Theories, models and Frameworks

- Implementation research often focuses on theories, models and frameworks that identify the relations between context, innovation components, implementation strategies, and desired outcomes
- They serve as structuring and sensemaking tools to achieve implementation activities such as designing programs, selecting strategies, and planning for implementation and sustainability

(Kahn and Metz, under review)

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Theories provide understanding and/or explanation of aspects of implementation.

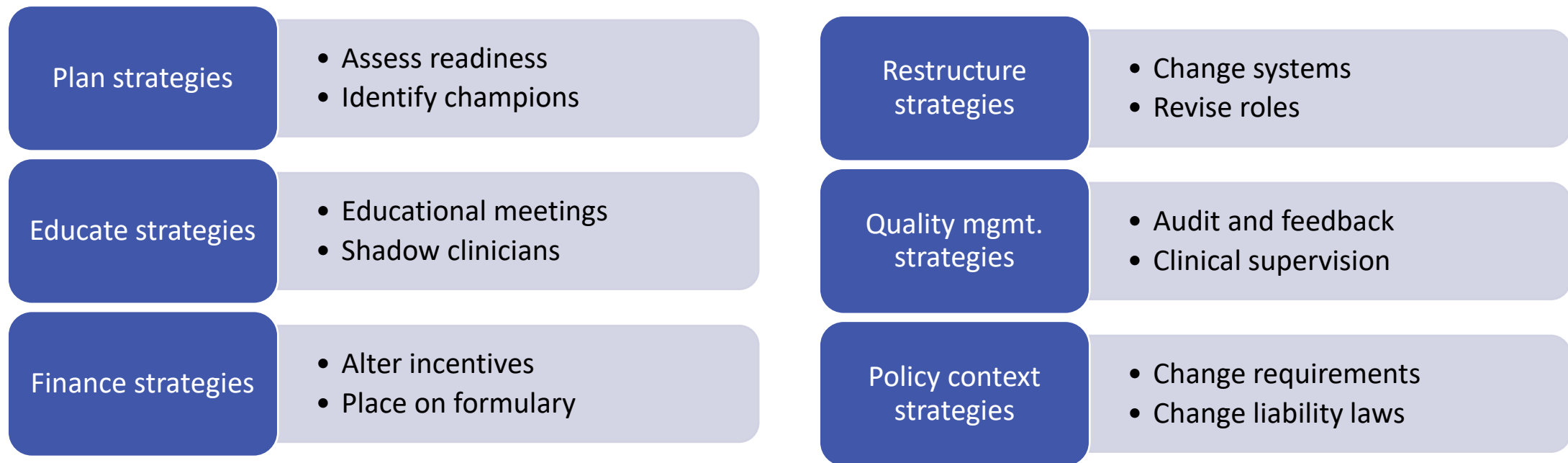**Process models** are steps and stages of translating research into practice.

Frameworks describe factors that are believed or found to influence implementation outcomes.

(Nilsen, 2015)

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies can be defined as methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of a clinical program or practice.

Plan strategies	• Assess readiness • Identify champions

Educate strategies	• Educational meetings • Shadow clinicians

Finance strategies	• Alter incentives • Place on formulary

Restructure strategies	• Change systems • Revise roles

Quality mgmt. strategies	• Audit and feedback • Clinical supervision

Policy context strategies	• Change requirements • Change liability laws

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(Powell et al, 2017)

Implementation Outcomes

Acceptability

Adoption

Appropriateness

Cost

Feasibility

Fidelity

Reach

Sustainability

(Proctor et al., 2011)

Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) 2.0

✳ **Outer Setting**

- Critical incidents
- Values and beliefs
- Systemic conditions
- Policies and laws
- Partnerships and connections
- Financing
- External pressure

🏢 **Inner Setting**

- Structural characteristics
- Relational connections
- Communications
- Culture
- Tension for change
- Compatibility
- Relative priority
- Incentive systems
- Mission alignment
- Available resources
- Access to knowledge about the Innovation

Individuals

Implementation Process

- Teaming
- Assessing Needs
- Assessing Context
- Planning
- Tailoring Strategies
- Engaging
- Doing
- Reflecting & Evaluating
- Adapting

↻ Process

The WHAT (Innovation)

- Source
- Evidence-Base
- Relative Advantage
- Adaptability
- Trialability
- Complexity
- Design
- Cost

Roles

- High-level leaders
- Mid-level leaders
- Opinion leaders
- Innovation recipients
- Implementation facilitators
- Implementation leads
- Innovation deliverers
- Innovation beneficiaries
- Implementation team members
- Other implementation support

Barriers and Facilitators

- Need   • Capability   • Opportunity   • Motivation

The Center for Implementation   Figure adapted by The Center for Implementation
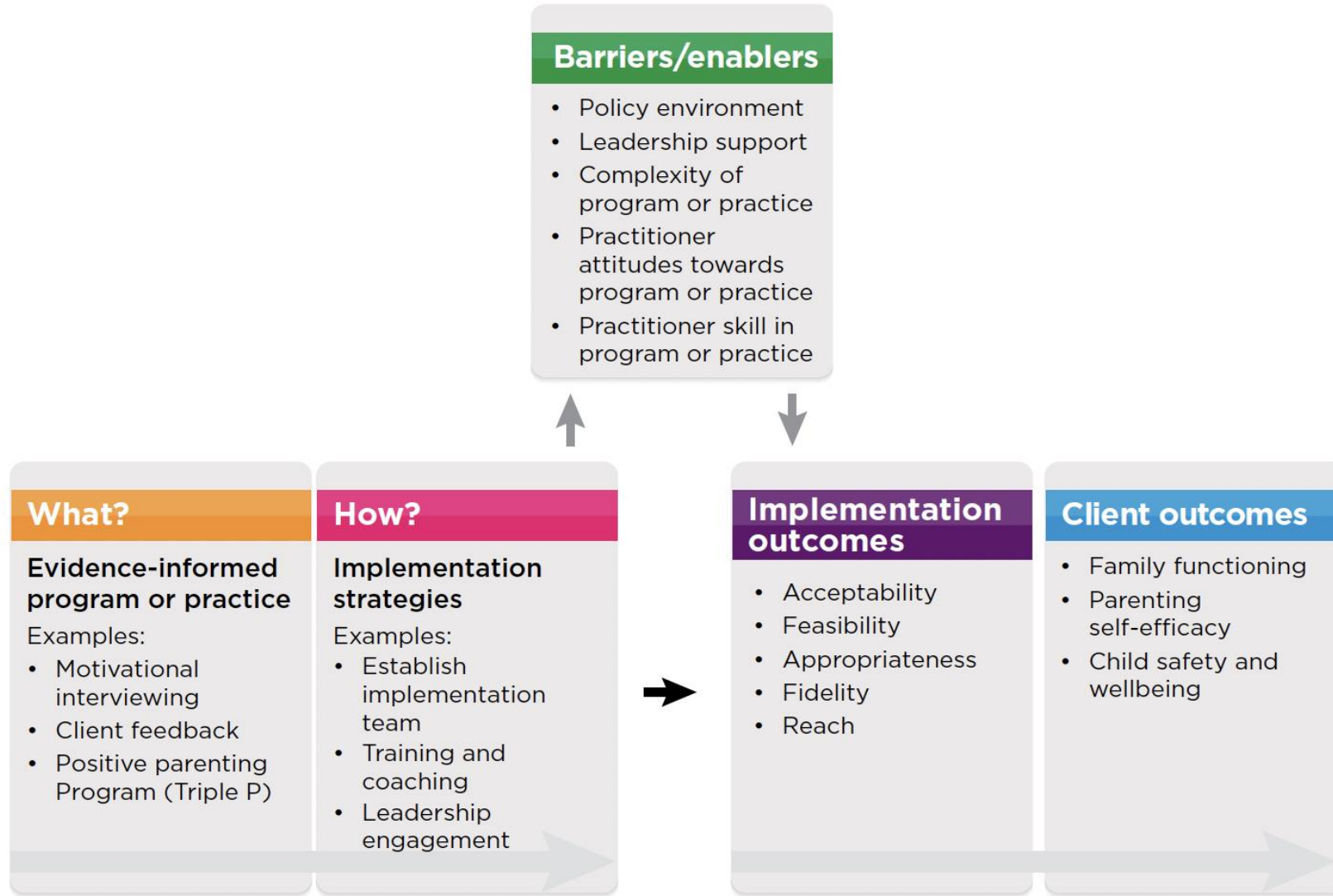
Damschroder, L.J., Reardon, C.M., Widerquist, M.A.O. et al. The updated Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research based on user feedback. *Implementation Sci* 17, 75 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-022-01245-0

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Matching Strategies to Determinants

*Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) 2.0*

- **Innovation** – e.g., complexity, evidence base

- **Outer setting** – e.g., local attitudes, policies, financing

- **Inner setting** – e.g., culture, resources, tension for change

- **Individuals involved** – e.g., capability, opportunity, motivation

- **Process** – e.g., needs assessment, planning, reflecting

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(Damschroder et al., 2022)

Barriers/enablers
- Policy environment
- Leadership support
- Complexity of program or practice
- Practitioner attitudes towards program or practice
- Practitioner skill in program or practice

What?

Evidence-informed program or practice

Examples:
- Motivational interviewing
- Client feedback
- Positive parenting Program (Triple P)

How?

Implementation strategies

Examples:
- Establish implementation team
- Training and coaching
- Leadership engagement

Implementation outcomes
- Acceptability
- Feasibility
- Appropriateness
- Fidelity
- Reach

Client outcomes
- Family functioning
- Parenting self-efficacy
- Child safety and wellbeing

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Source: Adapted from Lewis (2017), Lyon and Bruns (2019), Proctor et al. (2011)

Implementation Science

Leveraging what we learn from both implementation research and implementation practice builds a more relevant and useful science of implementation.

Implementation Research

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Implementation Science

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Implementation Practice
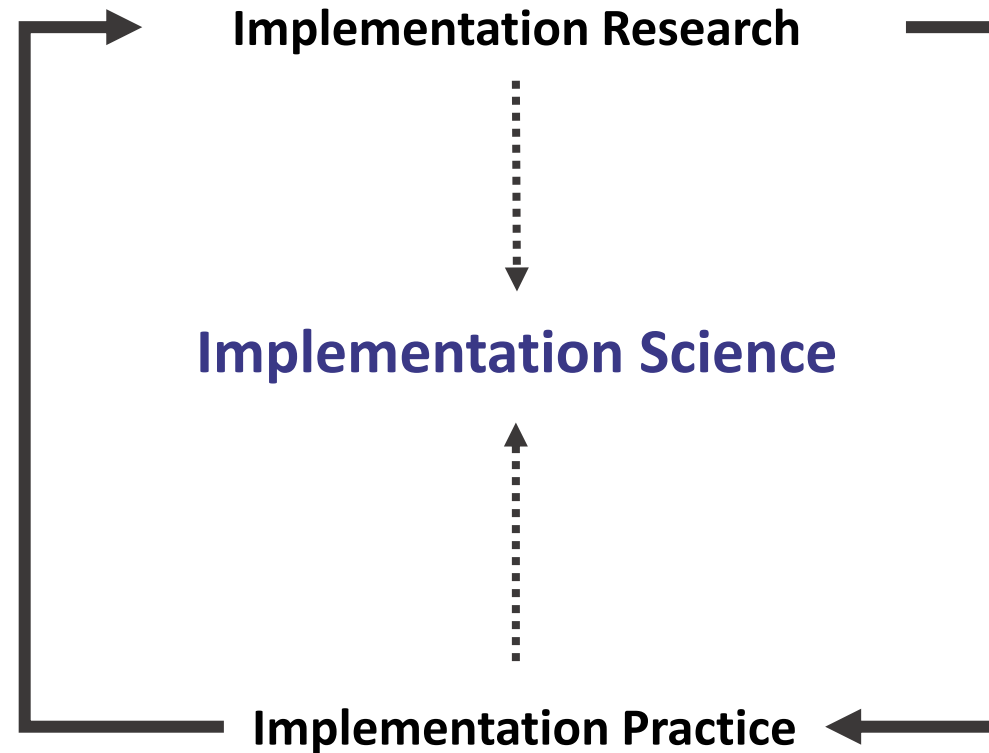
Implementation Research-Practice Gap

In the field of implementation science, increasing attention is being placed on the "ironic gap" or "secondary" research-to-practice gap.

This gap reflects a general lag or disconnect between implementation research and implementation practice, often stemming from knowledge generated by implementation research not being accessible to or applied by implementers or implementation support practitioners (ISPs).

(Jensen, Metz, Disbennet, & Farley, 2023)

Future of Implementation Science

The use of specific theories, frameworks, models and strategies with evidence that can support effective, equitable and sustainable implementation;

The use of 'practical implementation science' which refers to the translation of theories, models, and frameworks into user friendly tools and resources.

The development of specific competencies that support the relational work of implementation, which requires trust, psychological safety and co-creation.

Who are Implementation Support Practitioners?

- Implementation support practitioners are **professionals** who support organizations, leaders and staff in their implementation of evidence-informed practices and policies. They **identify, contextualize and improve** the use of evidenced implementation strategies in a range of settings. They also **build implementation capacity** among teams, organizations and systems.

- Understanding what it takes to provide implementation support from the perspective of those hired or contracted to take on this role will help us close the gap between implementation science knowledge and its application in human services.

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Why study the competencies needed for ISPs?

We can continue to research and develop evidence-informed practices, programs and policies, and implementation theories, frameworks, strategies and tools, but until we get better at applying them in practice, equitable outcomes will not be achieved.

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Implementation Support Practitioner Competencies

Co-learning

Brokering

Address power differentials

Co-design

Tailor support

CO-CREATION AND ENGAGEMENT

ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

Be empathetic

Be curious

Be committed

Embrace cross-disciplinary approaches

Advance equity

Use critical thinking

Assess needs and assets

Understand context

Apply and integrate implementation frameworks, strategies, and approaches

Facilitation

Communication

Conduct improvement cycles

Grow and sustain relationships

Develop teams

Build capacity

Cultivate leaders and champions

SUSTAINING CHANGE

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Inspire Implement Improve

CES CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES

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(Metz et al., 2020)

Equitable Implementation

The purpose of implementation science is to integrate research and practice in ways that will improve outcomes for people and communities. However, implementation frameworks, theories, and models have not explicitly focused on how implementation can and should advance equity.

(Metz, Woo, & Loper, 2021)

Implementation scientists must engage in critical reflection on the gaps between the intentions and the impact of their work.

(Metz, Woo, & Loper, 2021)

Equitable Implementation

Equitable implementation occurs when strong equity components—including explicit attention to the culture, history, values, assets, and needs of the community—are integrated into the principles, strategies, frameworks, and tools of implementation science.

(Metz, Woo, & Loper, 2021)

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Why Is There Inequity In Implementation?

- Community members are not routinely engaged in developing or selecting interventions that are intended for them.

- Power dynamics between funders and community members hamper authentic engagement with residents.

- Historical and structural racism are not explicitly acknowledged as part of the context in which interventions are being implemented.
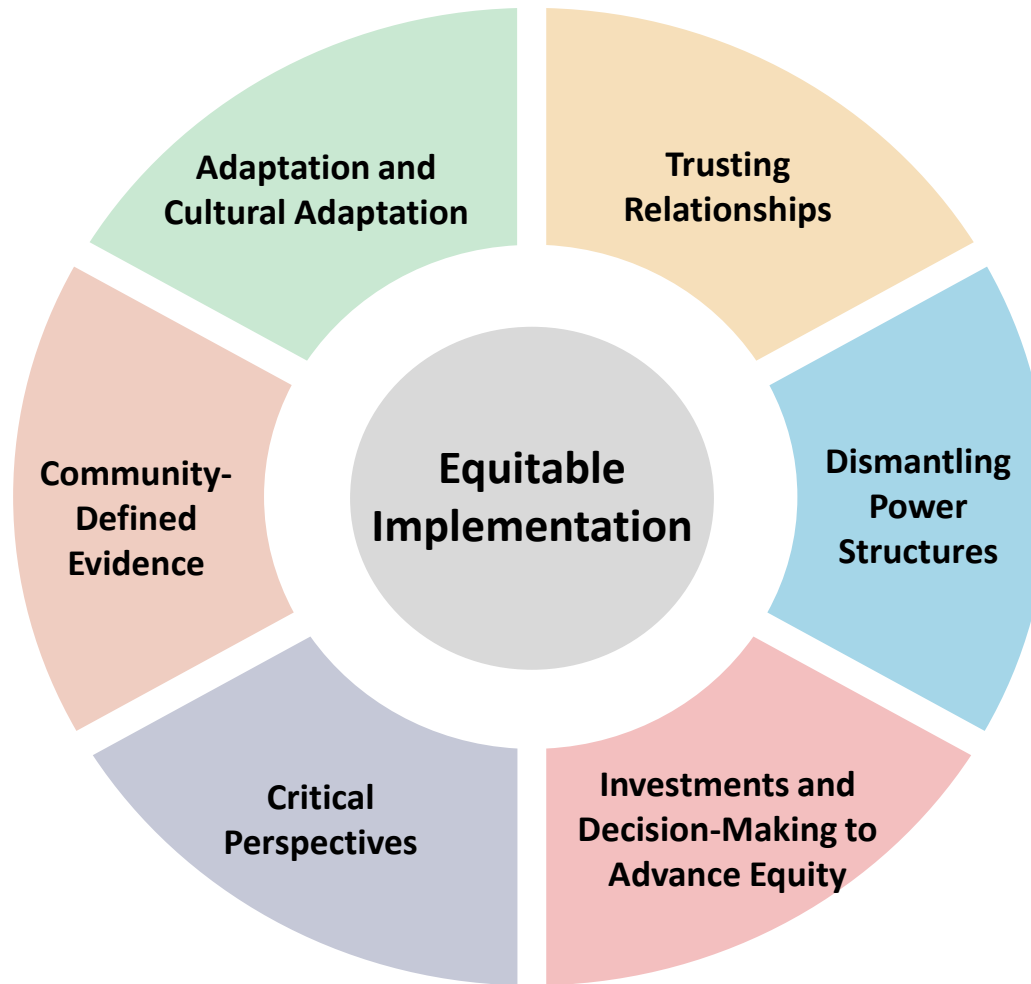
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Stanford Social Innovation Review: Bringing Equity to Implementation
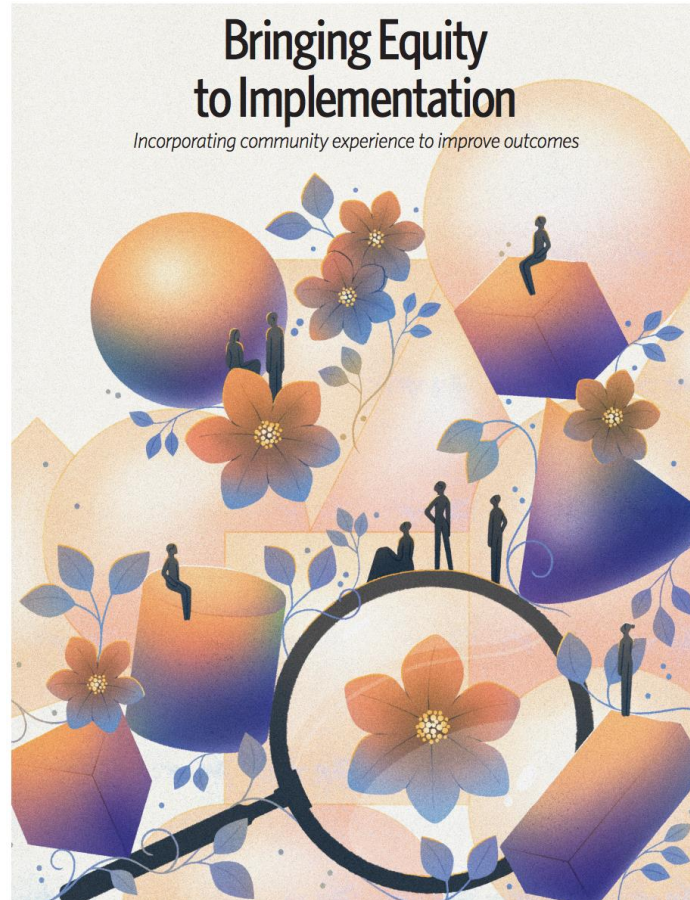
Equitable Implementation Guide

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Six Core Elements to Support Equitable Implementation and Outcomes

- Adaptation and Cultural Adaptation
- Trusting Relationships
- Dismantling Power Structures
- Investments and Decision-Making to Advance Equity
- Critical Perspectives
- Community-Defined Evidence
- Equitable Implementation

Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Build Trusting Relationships

- Take the time to build trust through small, frequent interactions.

  - Trust is not built through sweeping gestures, but through everyday interactions where people feel seen and heard.

  - Trust requires long-term commitment, clear and comprehensive communication, and time.

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Trust building intervention

- Fostered environment to increase **empathy** and share **emotional responses** to the work

- Created **psychological safety**

- Promoted a **culture of learning**

- Energized and **motivated** team members

- Increased sense of **commitment** and **capability** to move implementation forward

Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Dismantle Power Structures

- Shed the solo leader model of implementation.

    ▪ Leaders and community members develop a shared understanding of problems and potential solutions, develop strategies that address community needs and assets, and create a sense of mutual accountability for building the system of supports needed to sustain change and advance equitable outcomes.

- Distribute decision-making authority and information to those whose lives are most affected by the implementation.

    ▪ By recognizing the knowledge and experience that community stakeholders have and using that expertise to make decisions, public officials, funders, and practitioners create an environment of mutual comfort and respect.

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Spectrum of Engagement

THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	IGNORE 0	INFORM 1	CONSULT 2	INVOLVE 3	COLLABORATE 4	DEFER TO 5
IMPACT	Marginalization	Placation	Tokenization	Voice	Delegated Power	Community Ownership
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide the community with relevant information	Gather input from the community	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process & inform planning	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions	Foster democratic participation and equity through community-driven decision-making; Bridge divide between community & governance

(https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/)

Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Invest and Make Decisions to Advance Equity

- Engage in deliberate and transparent decision-making.

  - By taking the time to reflect, we can make course corrections for decisions that yield any unexpected results. Decision-making should also be transparently communicated with stakeholders at all levels of implementation.

- Engage community members in interpreting and using data to support implementation.

  - The success and sustainability of implementation is related to the alignment with and deep understanding of the needs of a community as defined by the community members themselves.

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Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Develop Community-Defined Evidence

- Consider geographical, racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and access diversity, and do this through the involvement of local communities.

- Co-design interventions with community members to interventions are relevant and desirable by communities and feasible to implement within communities.

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Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Make Adaptations and Cultural Adaptations

- Seek locally based service delivery platforms.

  - Important to adapt service delivery mechanisms to trusted community organizations to increase access for and uptake by local residents.

- Address issues of social justice.

  - Specific groups of people face significant stressors and barriers to care that are rooted in systemic and structural racism; it is important to adapt programs to address issues related to these stressors.

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Recommendations for Equitable Implementation

Consider Critical Perspectives in Implementation Science

- Develop implementation strategies that impact the contextual factors that contribute to disparities in outcomes.

  - Advocacy and policy implementation strategies focused on the macro context are more likely to advance equity than implementation strategies at organizational or local levels.

- Seek long-term outcomes that advance equity.

  - Selecting programs that have the potential of a spillover effect in outcomes is a mechanism for equitable implementation.

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