

## Implementation Capacities: *Co-Creation Partners & Processes*

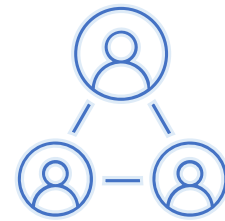
### Background

#### *What is Co-Creation?*

Co-creation involves key partners working together to develop local resources and capacities to support effective implementation across communities.

The full range of partners includes [1]:

- 1) leadership and staff from service delivery agencies;
- 2) state/local funders and policymakers;
- 3) intermediary and purveyor organizations that provide general implementation and program-specific support;
- 4) community parents, families, and other partners; and
- 5) researchers and evaluators



Partners may be involved at different levels and different stages of implementation. Together, co-creation partners contribute valuable perspectives, resources, and expertise to ensure the conditions needed to lead, manage, support, problem-solve, and sustain change.

#### *What does Co-Creation look like when it is working well?*

When co-creation is strong:

- Partners are actively engaged across activities that build and align implementation infrastructure (e.g., readiness conversations, coaching supports, fidelity processes).
- Local agencies network and share strategies for managing shared challenges.
- Funders and policymakers maintain ongoing, two-way communication with state and local leaders.
- Program/purveyor organizations enhance resources to be locally and culturally responsive.
- Community members guide support strategies and help spread learning to others.

Involvement can range from being informed or consulted to collaborating and co-leading decision-making. Strong co-creation does not happen by chance; it requires intentional, transparent, and actively supported engagement.

#### *Why is Co-Creation important?*

No one organization is responsible for “what it takes” for effective implementation and scaling. Co-creation leverages the lived experience into developing and supporting culturally relevant and appropriate services. Community partnering helps to ensure that the leadership and management, delivery support, and problem-solving functions necessary to support change are happening. Such collaboration has been shown to lead to knowledge and evidence that are more implementable and

attentive to local needs with increased relevance and impact of implementation activity. Expecting collaboration to occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most common reasons it fails. Deliberate and resourced attention to co-creation helps ensure “what it takes” for effective implementation.

## Co-Creation Best Practices

The following best practices are drawn from current research and practice applying the concept of co-creation to developing local capacities for effective implementation:



### **Co-Creation Partners are Actively Engaged**

- All five co-creation partner groups are actively involved in building local implementation capacities.
- Partners contribute resources (time, effort, relationships, funding).
- All co-creation partner voices are invited, empowered, and supported to share their perspectives, experiences, and to generate new shared learning.

### **Engagement is Intentional and Documented**

- A written partnership engagement plan is created to identify co-creation partners, clarify roles and responsibilities, and specify who is responsible for engagement and how engagement will occur.
- The importance of cultivating relationships and centering belonging, dignity, and fair opportunities for co-creation partner voice is centered and supported by meaningful co-creation structures [2].

### **Learning and Adaptation are Ongoing**

- Data and feedback loops are used to assess and improve co-creation processes
- Partners are supported to self-organize into meaningful roles.

## Important Knowledge & Skills

- Organizational assessment
- Collaborative, shared facilitation
- Adaptive leadership
- Partner engagement strategies
- Understanding the priority of belonging, dignity, and fair opportunities in creating change
- Understanding and managing power dynamics
- Understanding and designing teaming structures that integrate co-creation partners (also see Leadership and Implementation Teams)
- Understanding the interface and linkages with other implementation capacity domains, and how they support co-creation partners and processes

## Resources & Tools

Build Up Web Hub > Learn Implementation: <https://buildup.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/>

## References

1. Metz, A. (2015). Implementation brief: The potential of co-creation in implementation science. National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resource/brief-2-the-potential-of-co-creation-in-implementation-science/>
2. Aldridge, W. A., II, DiSalvo, C. I., Lawrence, S. C., Minch, D. R., Banks, C. R., & the members of the ICTP Projects Team (2024, May). ICTP integrated theory of change (ICTP Implementation Support Practice Action Guide Series, Action Guide No. 3). University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The Impact Center at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

## What Does Capacity-Building for Co-Creation Look Like Across Implementation Stages?

The co-creation aspects described above take place across stages of implementation. Below, we use three functional stages of implementation to outline some questions that can guide the work of building co-creation capacity. *Please know* - each stage of implementation does not discreetly end as another begins. As we engage in the work of a certain stage (and learn), we might find the need to go back to address an issue that we missed previously or delve deeper into another issue that needs more attention.

<b>Assessment, Exploration, &amp; Readiness</b> <i>From where are we starting? What are our strengths and areas of development?</i>	<b>Installation</b> <i>How can we develop, acquire, repurpose, and strengthen resources for “what it takes” to effectively support this program?</i>	<b>Initial Implementation</b> <i>How are we doing now that the program is being delivered? What are we seeing, what are we learning?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other programs have been implemented and scaled well in the community?</li> <li>• Who has been involved? In what? How?</li> <li>• To what extent do we have clear goals for engaging a range of partners in developing “what it takes” for effective implementation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are goals, roles, and responsibilities for partners in this implementation work documented and shared?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for engaging co-creation partners and strategies for engagement?</li> <li>• Are partnership agreements in place and understood?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are various co-creation partners involved in supporting “what it takes” for effective implementation?</li> <li>• How are we using data and feedback loops to understand and improve co-creation processes (in the plan and actively, in real-time)?</li> <li>• What opportunities are available for partners to self-organize into meaningful roles?</li> </ul>