



Leadership and Implementation Teams

How Are Implementation Teams “Different?”

Typical teams at work tend to function in a top-down manner; executive leadership gives direction (problem + solution) to middle managers and middle managers execute the change with staff. Teams also tend to be homogenous -- organized by service line, discipline, etc.

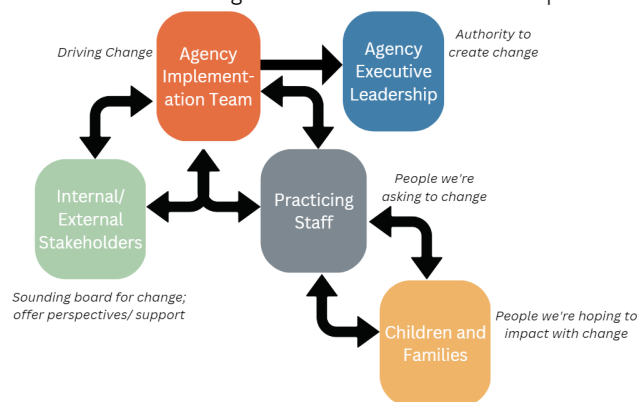
Implementation teams (ITs) are given a directive from leadership, but are often tasked with creatively thinking about how to design the solution (vs just executing it). ITs tend to be diverse -- comprised of cross-agency staff who represent different departments, service lines, etc. and have varied expertise and titles.

Who Is On An Implementation Team?

ITs typically consist of 3-5 FTE from your agency who represent the following perspectives:

- o **Leader:** leadership on ITs can come from a formal leader (e.g., middle manager) or informal leader (e.g., well-respected staff member others look to for advice, mentorship). Although leadership skills are beneficial to an IT, executive leaders likely won't be a member of your IT. They support the team in other ways (see blue box, below).

Where ITs sit in the organization and roles of various parties



- o **Representative of those you are asking to change:** Identify which staff at your organization will be most impacted by the change and identify representative(s) to be the “voice” of that group. Including them on the IT ensures they have an active role in decision-making, which ultimately improves buy-in. This person can be frontline staff or a supervisor/manager.

- o **Cross-department perspective:** in addition to a representative from the group you are asking to change, you also want someone who carries a broader view *across* various departments/service lines of the organization (quality/performance improvement, education/training, etc.). This person can help ensure solutions are aligned with other organizational initiatives, policies, and procedures.

- o **Expert:** Depending on the current work of the IT, an expert may be valuable to add technical knowledge/perspective. Experts may “float” on and off the IT, depending on the current priorities of the work.

Ideally, each IT member has formally allocated time (FTE) for their role on the team.

Other skills that are valuable for IT members to have include prior experience with organizational change, knowledge of the intervention, adaptive leadership skills, compassion, social modeling, collective problem-solving.

Roles & Activities of the Implementation Team

ITs meet regularly (e.g., monthly, bi-weekly, weekly) and engage in a range of activities to assess current capacity, design the work, facilitate execution of the work, and use data to adjust course. Key activities include:

- o Assess how staff feel about the change and take action to create ongoing buy-in and readiness. In concert with executive leaders, build a vision for the work that specifies what the work is and each staff member’s role in the work. Communicate the vision clearly and consistently.
- o Work to build staff capacity by assessing current strengths and areas for development – what do staff already know/do, what else do they need to learn to be able to deliver the intervention. Then, use that information to action plan how you will recruit, train, and coach staff to high-fidelity use of the intervention.
- o Use data to monitor progress of changes and engage in continuous improvement.
- o Engage key stakeholders (leadership, staff, youth/families) in decision-making.
- o Create clear communication loops to identify barriers to change and enlist help from leadership and partners to address them

Role of Executive Leadership and other Partners in Supporting the IT

The IT will carry out the day-to-day work of designing and managing change, but they still need support from executive leaders and other partners. Although executive leaders and other stakeholders won’t attend every IT meeting, intentional *linking* to these other partners is key. Defining formal communication loops (processes for regular “FYI” updates, regular check-in meetings for getting feedback and engaging in collective problem-solving).

Executive leaders can support the IT by:

- o Showing visible and active commitment – communicating and modelling the vision, mission, and expected new behaviors.
- o Helping clear obstacles in the path to change when barriers are raised by the IT
- o Nurture a positive culture and climate for change by talking to staff at all levels and hearing all voices

The IT can meaningfully engage other stakeholders (family/youth, other staff, other support system partners) by seeking their input about how things are going and enlisting them to help co-design solutions. It is critical to make sure stakeholders feel they have an active role in decision-making – not just that they are informed of changes or asked for their input without having it incorporated into the solution.