

# Active Implementation Practitioner

## Practice Profile

Active Implementation Practitioners know and apply the science and practice of implementation. More importantly, Active Implementation Practitioners have the skills to build the capacity of others to effectively use the science and practice of implementation. By investing in the development of implementation capacity in others, organizations, communities, and systems become equipped to successfully lead and sustain their change efforts, continue to improve their systems, and generalize the learning to future change efforts. To achieve this outcome, Active Implementation Practitioners become competent in four domains and ten competencies

- Engagement and Collaboration
  - Relationship Development
  - Leadership Engagement and Guidance
- Building Effective Teams
  - Team Development
  - Team-Based Project Management
- Facilitating Change
  - Implementation Instruction
  - Implementation Facilitation
  - Intervention Operationalization
  - Coaching
- Diagnosis and Analysis
  - Strategic Analysis to Support Change
  - Data-Informed Decision Making



This document was prepared by Melissa Van Dyke, PhD (the Center for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), University of Strathclyde, Glasgow) with assistance from Laura Louison and Oscar Fleming at the National Implementation Research Network, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Thanks to Karen Blase and Allison Metz for ideas and edits. And, thanks to the implementation specialists at NIRN and around the globe who generously participated in providing lists of skills and descriptions of their activities when developing implementation capacity in a variety of human service domains.

**Van Dyke, M. (2015). Active implementation practitioner: Practice Profile. Chapel Hill, NC: Active Implementation Research Network.**

# Active Implementation Practitioner

## Practice Profile

### The work and role of an Active Implementation Practitioner

Active Implementation Practitioners know the science and practice of implementation. More importantly, Active Implementation Practitioners have the skills to ***build the capacity of others*** to effectively use the science and practice of implementation. Active Implementation Practitioners work with leadership and implementation teams. By investing in the development of implementation capacity, individuals, organizations, and communities become equipped to **successfully initiate, guide, and sustain** their change efforts, continue to improve their system, and generalize the learning to future change efforts.

### Background

The work of Active Implementation Practitioners, as defined above, has been going on for years; however, the designation of an ‘implementation specialist’ position or an ‘Active Implementation Practitioner’ is relatively new, and the clarification of the core competencies of the position is still in development. This practice profile reflects the core competencies found to be critical across numerous projects, all of which have been informed and guided by the use of Active Implementation Frameworks. It is expected that as the practice profile is used in an array of contexts, the definition of core competencies and the measurement of core supports for Active Implementation Practitioners, will be improved.

### Purpose of a Practice Profile

This practice profile guides practitioners and supervisors in building the competencies of Active Implementation Practitioners by providing a detailed description of the core components of Active Implementation Practice. The ten core competencies of Active Implementation Practice are relationship development, leadership engagement and guidance, implementation instruction, implementation facilitation, intervention operationalization, team development, data-informed decision making, strategic analysis to support change, team-based project management, and

coaching. In any one situation, an Active Implementation Practitioner is likely to draw upon multiple core competencies simultaneously to analyze and respond; for example, using data for decision-making (data-informed decision making) may occur while facilitating an implementation drivers' analysis (implementation facilitation).

Operational definitions are available for each of the competencies are described at three levels of competence: expected, developmental, and unacceptable. These can be accessed via email to [dean.fixsen@unc.edu](mailto:dean.fixsen@unc.edu).

### **Expected Practice**

This practice level includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are able to generalize required skills and abilities to a wide range of settings and contexts. Practitioners use these skills consistently and independently, and sustain them over time while continuing to grow and improve in their position. Words used to describe the use of implementation activities may include “consistently,” “all the time,” and “in a broad range of contexts.”

### **Developmental Practice**

This practice level includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are able to use required skills and abilities, but in a more limited range of settings and contexts. Practitioners use these skills inconsistently or need supervisor/coach consultation to successfully apply and generalize skills. Practitioners demonstrating practice at this level would benefit from a coaching agenda that targets particular skills for improvement in order to move the practitioner into the expected practice category. Words used to describe developmental activities may include “some of the time,” “somewhat inconsistently,” and “in a limited range of contexts.”

### **Unacceptable Practice**

This practice level includes activities that exemplify practitioners who are not yet able to use required skills or abilities with good results in any context. Often times, if practitioners' practice reflects the unacceptable category, there may be challenges related to the overall implementation infrastructure. For example, there may be issues related to how practitioners are selected and trained, how the Active Implementation Practitioners are managed and supervised, or how data are used to inform continuous improvement. Words used to describe unacceptable activities may include “none of the time” or “inconsistently.” The unacceptable practice level includes unacceptable activity that is beyond the absence of or opposite of activity articulated in the developmental or expected categories.

*Practice level descriptions were modified from content available on NIRN's Active Implementation Hub:*

<https://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/resources/handout-2-practice-profile-examples>

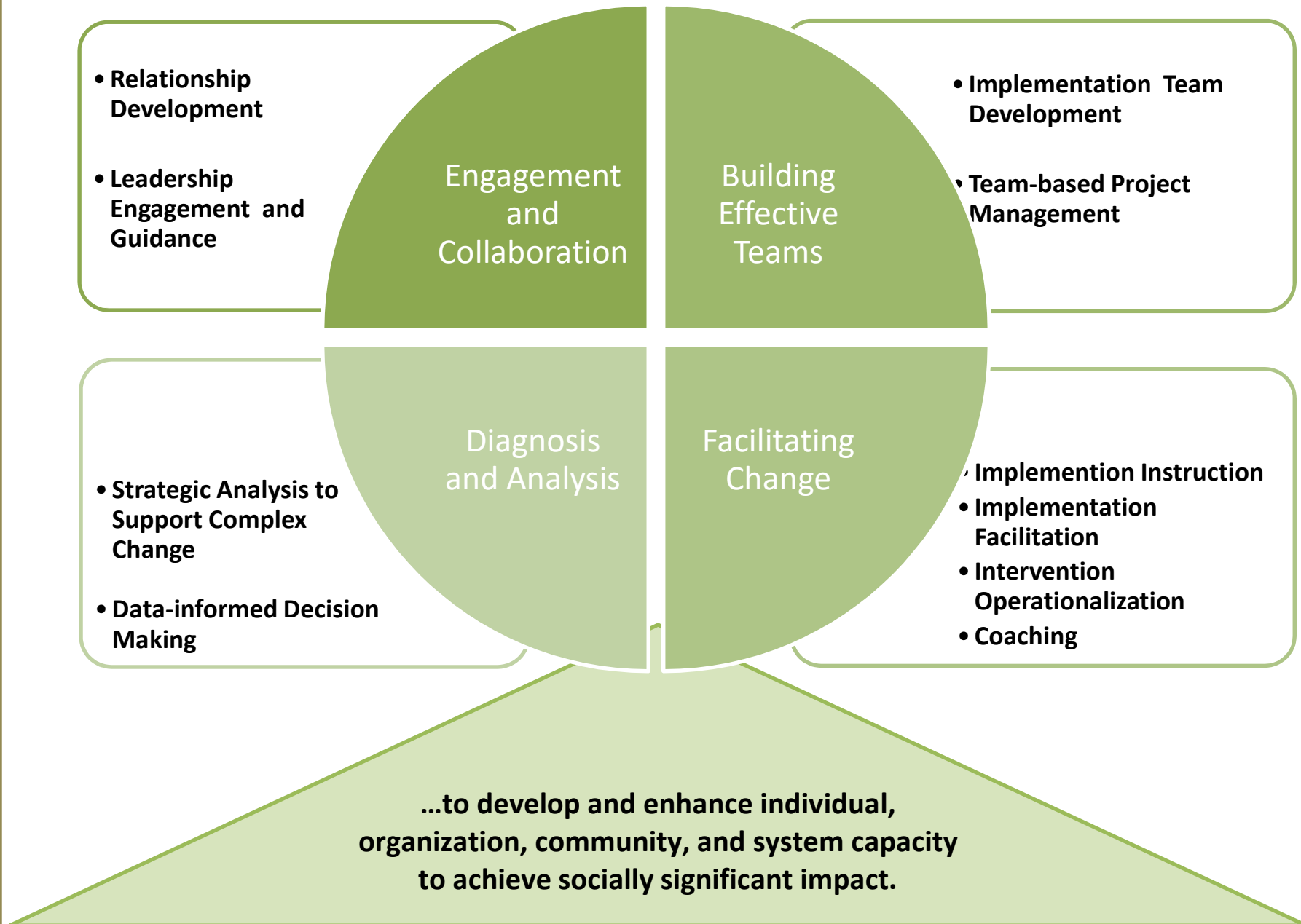
## Active Implementation Practice Profile

### Active Implementation Practice Guidance

*the philosophy, values, principles, knowledge, and skills that serve as the foundation for job performance*

<b><i>Philosophy</i></b>	Active Implementation Practitioners know the science and practice of implementation. More importantly, Active Implementation Practitioners have the skills to <i>build the capacity of others</i> to effectively use the science and practice of implementation. Active Implementation Practitioners work with leadership and implementation teams. By investing in the development of implementation capacity, individuals, organizations, and communities become equipped to successfully initiate, guide, and sustain their change efforts, continue to improve their system, and generalize the learning to future change efforts.	
<b><i>Guiding Principles</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Be intentional to enhance learning (PDSA)</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Work collaboratively (with each other and with our partners); the result will be better if multiple perspectives are engaged</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Lead with FUNCTION; ensure that FORM supports FUNCTION</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Actively support the capacity of others to provide active implementation support</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Be proactive; attend to and enhance readiness and provide anticipatory guidance</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Lean into the hard (and often adaptive) work of systems and culture change</i></li> </ul>	
<b><i>Active Implementation Domains and Competencies</i></b>	<b>DOMAINS:</b>  Engagement and Collaboration  Building Effective Teams  Facilitating Change  Diagnosis and Analysis	<b>COMPETENCIES:</b>  Relationship Development and Leadership Engagement and Guidance  Implementation Team Development and Team-based Project Management  Implementation Instruction, Implementation Facilitation, Intervention Operationalization, and Coaching  Diagnosis and Strategic Analysis to Support Change and Data-Informed Decision Making

## Active Implementation Practice Competencies



## Core Components

### Engagement and Collaboration

#### Relationship Development

Active Implementation Practitioners must be skilled in developing and maintaining relationships. The change work in which Active Implementation Practitioners engage requires supporting behavior changes in people. The Active Implementation Practitioners' ability to build relationships, listen carefully, understand perspectives, affirm strengths, build trust, manage distress, and resolve conflicts is central to the accomplishment of any change effort.

#### Leadership Engagement and Guidance

Active Implementation Practitioners must engage and motivate leaders to guide and support the work of others to accomplish the desired change. Active Implementation Practitioners must develop persuasive rationales relevant to leaders to encourage their active involvement in the development of the organizational, community, or state infrastructure to progress and sustain the change effort. Active Implementation Practitioners support the institutionalization of policy-practice feedback loops between levels of the system, by guiding leaders to establish transparent and regular communication and feedback protocols with their implementation teams, in order to align policies, procedures, regulations, and funding to achieve full and effective use of the desired change. Active Implementation Practitioners garner support of multiple state and community level 'champions' for building and sustaining capacity and infrastructure, so that leadership transition can be tolerated without significant loss of momentum and progress.

### Effective Team Development

#### Implementation Team Development

Active Implementation Practitioners must be skilled in developing functional teams. In the most generic sense, a functional team is a group of people who are able to work together to accomplish an agreed upon set of tasks related to a common goal. In addition, Active Implementation Practitioners support the development of a specific type of team, Implementation Teams. Active Implementation Practitioners assist teams in developing clarity related to their purpose, authority, membership, decision-making process, communication protocols, core values, and commitments. Active Implementation Practitioners assess each team's general and implementation capacity, strengths and weaknesses, and design and implement plans to support and bolster critical team development areas as well as active implementation fluency and competence.

<b>Team-Based Project Management</b>	Project management skills are essential to accomplish any complex change effort. However, with a focus on building the capacity of others, Active Implementation Practitioners approach project management as a team-based activity. A team-based project management approach ensures that tasks are articulated and accomplished, based on a shared decision-making process, whenever possible, while maximizing opportunities for others to learn and develop critical skills related to key team tasks.
<b>Facilitating Change</b>	
<b>Implementation Instruction</b>	Active Implementation Practitioners must be knowledgeable about applied implementation. They must be skilled at directly teaching and informally sharing implementation content. They must be able to adjust their content and approach to meet the needs of their audience and comfortably manage questions and illustrate concepts with concrete, real-world examples.
<b>Implementation Facilitation</b>	Active Implementation Practitioners must have the skills to plan and actively support an array of implementation processes using Active Implementation approaches and tools in different contexts. They must be well-versed in using an implementation stage-based approach to assess and plan for next steps. Specialists must demonstrate competence in facilitating meetings, dialogue, decision making, and other implementation-related activities.
<b>Intervention Operationalization</b>	Using the Usable Intervention criteria, Active Implementation Practitioners must have the knowledge and skills needed to assess a practice, intervention, process, or policy that is being considered for implementation or is currently being implemented. The Active Implementation Practitioner must have the knowledge and skills needed to identify and strengthen key implementation components of the practice, intervention, process, or policy.
<b>Coaching</b>	Active Implementation Practitioners build the capacity of others to use the science and practice of implementation by coaching for competence. With any new skill, feedback is essential. And use of Active Implementation Frameworks will involve a new skill set for individuals being supported in their change effort. However, it is challenging to know how, when, and why feedback is given so that the feedback supports the desired behavior change. Key coaching skills, such as pointed praise, incidental teaching, first and second hand observation skills, giving and receiving feedback, providing conceptual feedback, and active modeling provide Active Implementation Practitioners with a valuable set of coaching processes to support the change process of others.



## Diagnosis and Analysis

<b>Data-Informed Decision Making</b>	Active Implementation Practitioners must be skilled in the use of intentional problem-solving and improvement process methods to support implementation and achieve system, organization, and client-level outcomes. Active Implementation Practitioners integrate the use of data for problem identification and decision-making into the typical ‘way of work’ in order to assess and improve the implementation infrastructure, organizational processes, negotiable aspects of the change effort, and address broader system barriers.
<b>Strategic Analysis to Support Change</b>	Active Implementation Practitioners must be skilled in strategic analysis, such as testing theories of change, exploring underlying needs of the target population, reviewing evidence related to the intended change effort, and assessing inner and outer context and general capacities. In addition to strategic analysis, Active Implementation Practitioners must be skilled in diagnosing critical situations and supporting the development of appropriate interventions to address the critical situations.