



Leadership Support in Implementation

Who are “leaders” in implementation?

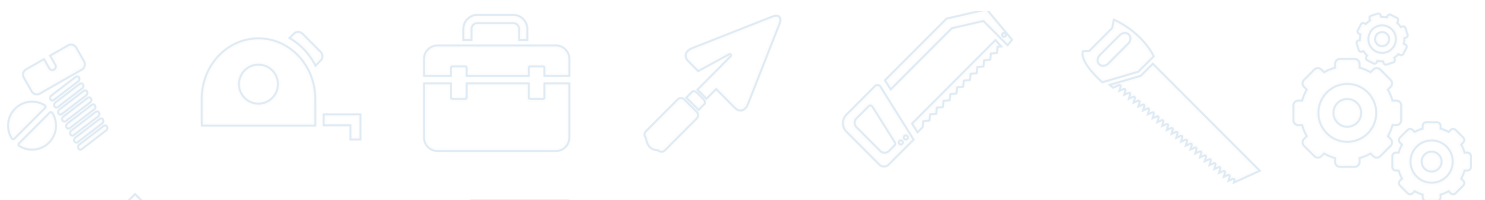
Implementation leaders may be people in leadership roles, such as administrators, directors, or supervisors, and/or they may be change leaders, also sometimes referred to as “[champions](#)” in the implementation field. You don’t need to have an official leadership title or job role to effect change and lead implementation efforts within your organization.

What does the research tell us about the role of leadership in implementation?

Employee attitudes play an important role in implementation, and an important precursor to that is transformational leadership. Leaders’ behaviors are more important than their own attitudes towards the new practice being implemented (1). What can leaders do to help the implementation process be successful?

Transformational Leaders identify the need for change and motivate their team members to work together for the good of the team/organization and to improve overall outcomes (e.g., implementation success). The four components of a transformation leader are (2):

- **Inspirational Motivation:** Role model for future goals and aspirations for the organization, and demonstrates commitment to working toward goals
- **Individualized Consideration:** Help each employee with their own professional development, strengths, and mentoring consistent with each persons’ unique needs
- **Idealized Influence:** Celebrates team members, provides vision, shows commitment to team and organization
- **Intellectual Stimulation:** Gather input and ideas from employees and value varying perspectives, while encouraging group members to consider new ideas



Organizational Culture

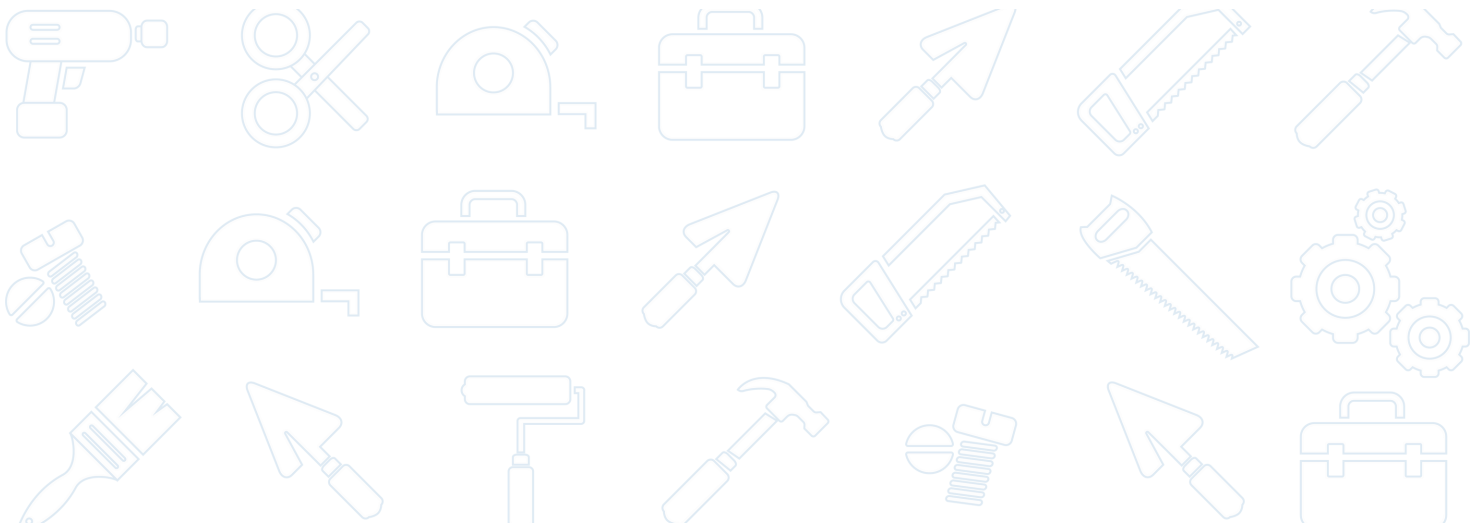
Tips for Minimizing Resistance to Change from [The Change Book](#)

- Directly address ambivalence
- Discuss pros and cons openly
- Provide incentives and rewards
- Actively involve as many people as possible from the beginning
- Listen to fears and concerns
- Educate and communicate
- Develop realistic goals
- Emphasize that feedback will shape the change process
- Actively listen to all involved (advocates for change and those voicing concerns)
- Celebrate small victories
- Use opinion leaders (champions) and early adopters for training and promotion

Logistics of buy-in and moving forward: “an executive director can send emails to each team member emphasizing the importance of EBP implementation to the mission of the organization and in assuring effective client or patient outcomes. Organizations may bolster fidelity processes or provide recognition or incentives for excellence in EBP delivery. Similarly, middle managers may attend team meetings and support the first-level team leader’s emphasis on utilizing EBP.” (3, LOCI)

Experiencing tension between implementation leaders and organizational leadership?

If you are an implementation leader and need to get buy-in from leadership, explain how making a change can save time, enhance skills, and benefit clients ([The Change Book](#)).



Research on Implementation

A study on the role of leaders in the implementation process has identified a few ways leaders can support the implementation process: (1).

1

Focus on transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is related to employees' attitudes of evidence-based practices, and research has demonstrated these attitudes are related to implementation success. Therefore, developing support and training for leaders to build their transformational leadership skills may be beneficial.

2

Support employees in the implementation process

Providing training and resources about the new intervention/practice and having a contact person as a "go-to" for employees/champions to ask questions and learn about the implementation process can be helpful.

3

Engage employees and leaders

Regularly discuss the implementation plan with employees and include them in the process. Understanding their ideas and barriers may impact the overall motivation for organizational change and implementation process.

Are you interested in maximizing the role of leadership in your organizations' change efforts?

Consider looking into additional resources to guide your next steps.

- The Leadership and Organizational Change for Implementation ([LOCI](#)) model, a data-driven model including leadership development and strategies to enhance organizational climate to support the implementation process within your organization (3).
- The [Community Toolbox](#) has several resources, including Best Change Processes for working with community change and improvement more broadly, including developing leadership for community initiatives.
- Need additional support? Reach out for TTA [support!](#)

Additional References and Resources:

(1) Farahnak, L. R., Ehrhart, M. G., Torres, E. M., & Aarons, G. A. (2020). The Influence of Transformational Leadership and Leader Attitudes on Subordinate Attitudes and Implementation Success. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 27(1), 98-111.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051818824529>

(2) Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.

(3) Aarons, G. A., Ehrhart, M. G., Farahnak, L. R., & Hurlburt, M. S. (2015). Leadership and organizational change for implementation (LOCI): a randomized mixed method pilot study of a leadership and organization development intervention for evidence-based practice implementation. *Implementation science*: 10, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-014-0192-y>



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