



SISEP

State Implementation and Scaling-up
of Evidence-based Practices

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Adaptive Leadership



Systemic change initiatives are always a mix of *technical* and *adaptive* challenges. *Technical* challenges may be very complex and important to solve, but can be addressed by present day knowledge and current organization structures and processes. In contrast, *adaptive* challenges lack clear agreement on what the problem is and solutions are unlikely to be found in the present ways of work.

Adaptive Leadership Strategies by Heifetz & Laurie (1997) include:

- Getting on the Balcony
- Identifying the Adaptive Challenge
- Regulating Distress
- Maintaining Disciplined Attention
- Giving the Work Back to the People
- Protecting All Voices

Active Implementation Frameworks

The Active Implementation Frameworks (AIF) can help address or, in some cases, aggravate adaptive challenges. Use of the AIF keeps the change process moving forward while surfacing and dealing with difficult issues.

An illustration of this can be seen in the use of AIF practices, tools, and process to ensure selected innovations are 'usable' so that they are teachable, learnable, doable, and assessable. Collective work by a team to further define the innovation using the practice profile development process makes use of several adaptive leadership strategies.

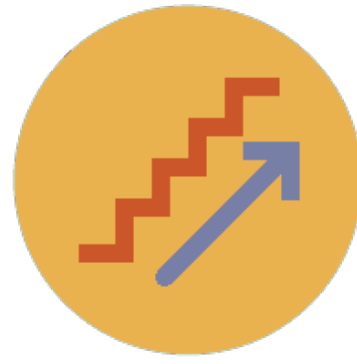
The practice profile development process...



Gives the work back to the people by supporting meaningful engagement and participation by individuals with diversity of perspectives.



Protects all voices during the process by allowing concerns to be surfaced and be discussed and/or addressed.



Maintains disciplined attention during the process as the team redirects the work back to the process of creating a 'usable' intervention, increasing ownership of the innovation, and reducing feelings of incompetence, loss, and disloyalty.



Recently, the Michigan Department of Education went through the process of creating a practice profile for Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). A leader of the process states:

“Use of the practice profile process facilitated us in building common understanding and shared practices within the department and among our local education agencies. The MDE MTSS team provided an avenue for various stakeholders to provide feedback and input, and to lift concerns. As a result, we are taking steps towards developing coherence and ultimately producing high quality instruction and supports in Michigan.”

-Elizabeth Newell, State Transformation Assistant Administrator

These key adaptive leadership strategies address the challenges regarding pedagogy, philosophy, beliefs, and values that often occur during the selection and operationalization of the innovation.

As Heifetz and Laurie (1997) noted, one of the biggest mistakes is to treat an adaptive challenge with a technical approach.



To Learn More

[Click here to learn about Leadership on the AI Hub](#)

Lesson: Practice Profiles

Practice profiles enable a program to be teachable, learnable, and doable in typical human service settings. This two-part lesson on Developing Practice Profiles offers an overview of practice profiles, including their purpose, benefits, and criteria. In part two, we jump into making practice profiles happen. We outline the development process, as well as steps in facilitating their design with your team.

- [View Streaming Lesson Part 1 \(8 min. 26 sec.\)](#)
- [View Streaming Lesson Part 2 \(4 min. 38 sec.\)](#)
- [Download White Paper: "Practice Profiles: A Process for Capturing Evidence and Operationalizing Innovations"](#)
- [Download Planning Tool: Practice Profile Planning Tool](#)
- [Download Handout: Practice Profile Examples](#)

Other Resources

- Blase, K., Fixsen, D., Sims, B., & Ward, C. (2015). [Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes](#). Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Heifetz, R. A., & Laurie, D. L. (1997). [The work of leadership](#). Harvard Business Review, 75(1), 124-134.



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