

Meera Kumanan ([00:00](#)):

First, welcome to Will Aldridge from the Impact Center who offers implementation support to ensure that programs are scaled up optimally. Will, can you tell us a little bit more about your role?

Will Aldridge ([00:12](#)):

I provide leadership for the implementation capacity for Triple P projects. We're one of several projects that's a part of the Impact Center at FPG, which does a lot of implementation science and practice work.

Meera Kumanan ([00:27](#)):

You mentioned implementation practice. To our listeners, could you explain the difference between implementation, research and practice and how they all tie into the field of implementation science?

Will Aldridge ([00:38](#)):

Yeah. Implementation practice is a really evolving part of the broader implementation science field, not unlike other fields that have developed practice components. I think there's both been a recognition as implementation research has developed that we've gotta make use of it. And it's really ironic I think, and particularly in implementation research, because the whole purpose of that work is really to bring science into practice. So implementation practice is really about using what we know from research studies, from case studies, and actively putting that in the hands of leaders, managers funders, policy makers so that they can transform their structures their organizations, their systems, as well as a lot of their practices, how long they fund things the type of leadership that they provide how they support frontline practitioners, all in the effort to really make sure that the benefits of a program or a practice can get to children and families and create the kind of impacts that we know it can, that can happen. From the research trials

Meera Kumanan ([01:56](#)):

Within implementation practice, what does community engagement look like and why is it so important to the field?

Will Aldridge ([02:04](#)):

We really know from practice that unless the people for whom these programs and practices were designed and that we'll be receiving them, unless they are involved, we are much less likely to get the kind of impact that we're looking for. In particular, we really have got to listen to family voices, to youth voices and selecting programs and adapting them for local context, for designing the types of implementation strategies that are needed in their local communities. That means where to put the programs how to roll them out how they need to be involved and others need to be involved to make them more accessible, usable, and so that they can see themselves in these programs and practices and in the service systems that are providing them. When we do that, we are finding out time and again that it's leading to more impact, broader impact, and more sustainable impact

Meera Kumanan ([03:09](#)):

When it comes to involving the community and hearing community voices like Will mentioned. One great example of how this was successfully done is a partnership between Dr. Lori Carter Edwards and Pastor James D Galliard, who have held a successful research partnership and leveraged faith-based spaces to improve health in Eastern North Carolina. Welcome. As I learned more about your partnership

and work, I'm reminded that authentic community engagement is not only possible, but it's the only real way to sustainable success, and I really do look up to your approach. Can you tell me more about your partnership, how it's been grounded in community engagement and how that has built a larger relationship between the research and faith based communities in North Carolina?

Pastor Galliard ([03:56](#)):

You know, we've been working together for so long and I, and I think just to start the conversation and let me just say, you know, Meera, I appreciate the conversation because, you know, the ability to create these trusted partnerships whether it's with academia and research rural communities, faith communities, I really operate from a lens of the faith community as a senior pastor. But I think the principles can be replicated in other environments as well.

Lori Carter Edwards ([04:23](#)):

Pastor Galliard and I have been working together for probably about almost three years, but we have worked very closely together to do the work that we do in Eastern North Carolina as he is not only my community partner, but my friend and we do work literally together. What

Meera Kumanan ([04:42](#)):

Do you think makes your relationship such a success? What is that magic ingredient?

Lori Carter Edwards ([04:48](#)):

Our relationship has worked because he knows that my agenda is his agenda, not my agenda. We have an agenda together to try to push the push things forward, and that's where the success has been.

Meera Kumanan ([05:03](#)):

What does success look like and what did success look like early on in your partnership?

Lori Carter Edwards ([05:08](#)):

I wanna take a quick step back and just explain to those of you that the pastor and I have just completed a pilot project where we were the only community-based project funded through our, the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, Gills Innovation Labs grants. They had the most grant submitted during covid, over 40 grants submitted through the school. We were one of the seven grants that were, that was accepted and it was built on what pastor mentioned the relationship that had been built prior to that. The relationship was so strong and it was, I asked before I applied for the funding, could we have a co-PI-ship with my community partner? I was told by the review committee, yes.

Meera Kumanan ([05:57](#)):

What they both described was the need to have a strong foundational relationship before they even began working on these projects, especially when a crisis like the pandemic hit, the relational infrastructure already existed for them to mobilize quickly and meet their community's needs. And they described their constant give and take and how it's only possible because they've acknowledged the shared agenda.

Pastor Galliard ([06:21](#)):

So I may not be an expert on COVID, but I'm certainly an expert in rural faith communities. And so you need both areas of expertise in order to get across the finish line. And I think what's been helpful for Lori and I is that we have really approached this work really as co-laborers, you know, and so there's been moments where she's had to pull back and there's moments where we've had to pull back. There's times where we can share context and then she can say, Well, we need to massage that a little bit because this content needs to get communicated. A little bit less diluted than that. And there are times when we're saying to her, Well, hold up. We don't wanna kind of share from that perspective. Let us share from this lens.

Lori Carter Edwards ([07:01](#)):

I love that shared approach,

Meera Kumanan ([07:03](#)):

That distinction and explicit focus on striking the right balance between content and context really gets to the heart of why community engagement is so important in implementation practice. And I think Will said it best,

Will Aldridge ([07:18](#)):

We like to say all implementation is local,

Meera Kumanan ([07:21](#)):

And it brings us to one of the driving questions of implementation practice.

Will Aldridge ([07:26](#)):

How do we really, you know, engineer a local process? And, and that's a term I use intentionally engineering, where we have a set of partners, we have a set of tools, and we have a task that we've got to try to achieve and we have to figure out hopefully using implementation, best practices and research and guidance, but we have to figure out how to build that boat to get across the river together out of these parts. That's where the, the art and the practice really comes in to, to implementation science in general and where implementation practice in particular finds its charge its call to action.