Meera Kumanan (00:01):

It sounds like we need to approach community engagement with real humility, partnering with community so that they can be entirely self sustainable. So as implementation researchers or practitioners, what is the mindset we should be approaching this work with? How do we ensure that it is shared power and that we are real partners achieving authentic community buy-in, that that is mutually beneficial?

Pastor Galliard (00:27):

I think that if organizations are really serious about bringing community engagement into the fold, I think you have to get community partners to the table quickly. And I mean, and this is an expression you've heard me say a lot of times before. You have to get us to the table before you set the table. So if you bring me to a set table, a prayer table, I don't think you're serious about community engagement. I think you think that we're struggling and will barely make it without your help and support. So you're doing us a favor by bringing in whatever you're gonna bring in, and then you're gonna basically leave us with whatever state we were already in while you take away everything you needed for the benefit of what you were trying to accomplish. And so I do think there should be a conversation here about how quickly stakeholders are brought to the table and asking themselves who's not at the table, Like who's not represented at the table.

Lori Carter Edwards (01:21):

Pastor mentioned about being at the table is a paradigm shift. And so what's really important about what you've mentioned pastor, is this approach cannot just be a pedantic approach that basically is, okay, let me give them what they want so that I can get what I need.

Pastor Galliard (01:40):

Proud to be more relational and less transactional.

Meera Kumanan (01:43):

Right? And that relational aspect is such an intimate thing. It hinges entirely on a deep trust that I think can only come out of an authenticity on everyone's parts.

Pastor Galliard (01:54):

This is difficult work in the sense that it requires vulnerability. It requires a level of trust

Lori Carter Edwards (02:00):

And the speed of trust. It, it may take a long time to build the trust, but you can lose it overnight.

Meera Kumanan (02:06):

I'm going back to this because I really loved that analogy of the set table. So how does one set a table with the stakeholders and the community partners

Pastor Galliard (02:16):

Inviting me to the table or inviting stakeholders to the table is saying, Tell me what your goal is. Tell me what you want to see accomplished out of this.

Meera Kumanan (02:25):

Are there existing frameworks on how to exactly do that?

Lori Carter Edwards (02:29):

The Give Get Grid, which is by Sutherland and colleagues, tries to capture the interest of the community partner, like what they are willing to bring to the table and what they're expecting from the academic partnership. And then the academic partners, what the academic partners are willing to give, and what the academic partners want to get. And doing that exercise with your partners opens a myriad of opportunities for discussions, for planning. And what, what you'll find often is that they will have joint interests and joint expectations that then can be the low hanging fruit for moving forward, even if you're engaging in an implementation practice or implementation research. So think about tools, think about community engagement, think about adaptive leadership.

Meera Kumanan (03:20):

Once that funding is secured, we have to decide where we direct those resources to. And that brings me to think about it from an equity perspective. Sometimes in implementation practice, we focus our efforts on the larger organizations, those that have the funds to support the work, and we sometimes leave out those that may not be as well resourced. How do we be sure not to reinforce structures that already marginalized certain communities?

Pastor Galliard (03:46):

I, you know, you make a great point about smaller churches or community-based organizations that may not quite have the capacity yet, right? But they, they're doing the work. You know, one of the things that I would say for when you see organizations like this, if you're in research or academia, you see a really good potential partner. It, it could be that what the academic side brings to the table is to say to them, Listen, we love to work with you. Few things are missing here. Let's help develop your capacity.

Meera Kumanan (04:18):

It brings us back to the earlier discussion that implementation practice is not only scaling up a program immediately, but it also requires capacity building, building up that infrastructure within the community so that we can take on the next challenge, whether that be in terms of forming relationships or working with the smaller organizations to get them to the stage that they can then adopt the program. Thank you for joining us. Any last words of advice to those who may be beginning community engagement work on where they can get started and the mindset that they should be adopting

Pastor Galliard (04:53):

As you enter into this work? Ask yourself, what resources, what information, what networks are we leaving the community with? I wanna see the communities protected. I wanna see them empowered, but I wanna see them well resourced

Lori Carter Edwards (05:12):

In terms of words of wisdom. For those of you who are new in this approach, work with people who actually have experience in community engagement and identify tools for engaging.

Pastor Galliard (05:26):

We are a richer church in terms of the exposures that our leadership got to a broader understanding of research and a broader exposure of implementation science. Our community is richer because of the research that has come to bear our ability to create infrastructure for the future. One of the things we talk about is this is really preparation for the next public health issue, for the next crisis. Or it's preparation to say, we have this built infrastructure. Let's go attack childhood obesity. Let's go attack maternal morbidity. Let's go attack whatever crisis we have in the rural communities around health because we're building in these networks and systems. So we're richer because of what was left. The networks, the information, and the resources, and I would ask that the academicians missions keep that focus.