THE CATALYST

Finding the Purpose in a Project

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So, you have a great idea, you think it can work! You just need to get people to put this great tool, course, or other resource into practice so that you can impart some amazing knowledge and make real positive change!

But where do you begin? How do you begin think about knowledge translation and starting to plan out how you will make it happen?

It all starts with purpose. We have all heard the term find your why, or maybe even read the book *Start with Why* by best selling author, Simon Sinek. Your purpose is your why, but many of us find defining the purpose of our knowledge translation projects to be the first major stumbling block in our plan. There are a few methods to help us define the purpose to get us over that first hurdle!

Purposes can be collaborative, or they can be decided solely by an organization or individual. There are different times and different situations where each would be the most effective.

Collaborative Purpose: This type of purpose determination is done by negotiating the purpose with key stakeholders including people with lived experience and caregivers of people with lived experience. This approach is best used when stakeholder investment of time and energy in the Knowledge Translation process is necessary to the success of a project.

Direct-Decision Purpose: This type of purpose is created without engaging stakeholders. It is most commonly used when there is a definitive need to provide a solution to a clear and proven issue, challenge or problem.

Once you determine whether your purpose will be created with input from others or if you and your organization will directly decide the purpose of your project, you should begin by asking some questions to help you zone in on a clear purpose that you can easily express.

What is the issue that you are trying to address?

· Whether you are creating your purpose collaboratively or directly it is important to clearly identify and articulate the issue, challenge or problem your idea/innovation/knowledge translation is trying to address.

What are your objectives? What practice or policy are you trying to improve?

- It is important to determine what your knowledge translation project trying to accomplish or achieve.
- Think about how your knowledge translation project might make a positive impact on a current practice or policy within the mental health and addictions system. Be as specific as possible. This may often be linked to the problem or issue you are trying to address.

What are the desired outcomes? What would be different if this knowledge were translated successfully?

- Look at how you expect or would like your knowledge translation project to impact the area in which you are working. Your outcomes are the measurable effects the project will accomplish through successful knowledge translation. Outcomes can be quantitative or qualitative but should be measurable.

When considering all of these questions, write out your ideas and the ideas of others who might be contributing to the development of the purpose. The more answers you have to your questions the better. Once you get through all of the questions and write out all of your answers you can sort through your ideas and start to hone in on your purpose. What are some of the common themes in your thoughts and ideas?

Start to eliminate any redundancy in the ideas you have written out and begin to narrow in on a clear purpose statement that highlights:

1. The issue or challenge you are aiming to overcome
2. Your objectives in how you will overcome your identified challenge or issue, and
3. The desired outcomes of your project and what you hope to change/impact.

Once you have a clear purpose, you can start moving forward in developing your Knowledge Translation plan and get closer to moving from knowledge to action!

Alexa Bol has a Graduate degree in Community Studies and Global change and more than 15 years of experience in the non-profit sector. Before coming to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Alexa worked in Community and International Development where she used participatory approaches to create positive change at both grassroots and system levels. As Manager of Knowledge Mobilization, Opening Minds at the MHCC, Alexa is dedicated to seeing knowledge translated into action throughout the Mental Health and Addictions sectors in a manner that includes and values all voices.

Mental Health Commission of Canada
https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/
350 Albert Street, Suite 1210 Ottawa ON K1R 1A4
Tel: 613.683.3755 | Fax: 613.798.2989
mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca