THE CATALYST

Engaging stakeholders for Knowledge Translation: Where do I start?

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Many times, we are connected to, or know of many different individuals and organizations we would like to involve in our Knowledge Translation plan.

We may also be aware of other organizations and individuals that we are not already connected to but might like to engage. But how do we go about figuring out who we should be engaging and how to go about doing it?

Before beginning on this journey, it is important to first be clear about your purpose as well as your innovation (the tool or piece of research you are hoping to implement). Determining your purpose may include some stakeholder engagement even at that phase of your project.

A great way to start identifying your stakeholders (or actors and agents of change) is to do a bit of a “brain dump”, looking at which people/organizations you think should be involved to help you to be effective in your Knowledge Translation plan and writing down everyone who comes into your mind. Some potential stakeholders might include:

- Colleagues and leaders in your own organization
- Thought leaders or researchers in the field
- Family caregivers
- People with lived experience
- Existing networks or groups whose work is relevant to the scope of your project
- Organizations (other than your own if applicable) that are working in areas that are related
- Changemakers and policy makers

You can then divide them into categories that you think make sense (for example: frontline workers, health care professionals, community members, people with lived experience, etc.).

Once you have done this, you will want to start asking some questions as you review your list to determine who your key players and champions (agents of change) might be. Some key questions to ask:

- Who will use the innovation?
- Who else is working on something similar or in the same area?
- Who has the power/influence to make things happen? And where do they have this influence?

- Who can help access the resources we need to implement this plan (people, money, space, network, reach, etc)
- Who has the potential to be a detractor and take away from the process?
- Who has expressed interest already?
- Who would be most committed to and supportive of the plan?
- Who has the capacity to support?

There are many other potential questions, but these can get you started! You want to be sure you engage a variety of stakeholders to ensure your plan stays on track, reaches those you want it to, and creates the change you had hoped. This means it is crucial for you to engage people with lived experience and potential end users as well as organizations, leaders, staff etc. The earlier stakeholder engagement happens the better.

Asking questions can help you start to pull out who an agent of change within your process might be or in other words an influencer or a champion. Once you have your list and have sorted it into categories as well as identified some of your agents of change it is time to move on to strategizing your engagement approach and how best to engage each of the individuals and organizations on your list.

Other Helpful Resources:

Research to Action's list of resources to help support stakeholder engagement:

https://www.researchtoaction.org/2015/09/stakeholder-mapping-resource-list/

Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement's library of tools and articles to support stakeholder engagement in the community:

https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityengagement

BSR's stakeholder engagement tools:

https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/stakeholder-engagement-five-step-approach-toolkit

International Association for Public Participation's IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement:

https://iap2canada.ca/Resources/Documents/0702-Foundations-Spectrum-MW-rev2%20(1).pdf

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