

Using network mapping to help build communities of practice

Norman, C. & Huerta, T. (2006)

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REGISTRY OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION METHODS AND TOOLS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

RESOURCE: Method
ACTIVITY: Knowledge Exchange
STAGE: Planning

DESCRIPTION

This resource describes a strategy (method) for organizing individuals and organizations around a common purpose or goal. The researchers used a network mapping model to facilitate the development of a community of practice (CoP) around smoking prevention and cessation [Web-assisted tobacco intervention (WATI)]. CoPs are self-organizing, adaptive and responsive learning systems. They use simple rules and procedures to guide collective learning across organizations. This learning can occur when individuals with different but complimentary skills and expertise actively share their knowledge. The method draws on social networking methodology, complexity theory, science of networks and organizational behaviour. It can help with planning, organizing and evaluating knowledge dissemination and exchange strategies involving CoPs.

RELEVANCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

CoPs provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and exchange activities in public health. This strategy will be useful to those who are planning and developing CoPs that include multiple sectors and involve

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the collaboration of many disciplines. Individuals and organizations involved in health promotion and disease prevention across geographically dispersed communities/ populations may find this approach especially useful.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation

Has been evaluated

The researchers evaluated the impact of activities that took place during a three-day professional meeting. Participants completed a questionnaire prior to the research meeting and again three weeks following the meeting to evaluate the strategy. Researchers used mapping processes to illustrate social and professional networks in the area of Web-assisted tobacco intervention (WATI) at baseline. The questionnaire assessed expectations, knowledge, motivation for collaborating and interpersonal relationships, and took less than 30 minutes to complete. This process encouraged the formation of new network connections, increased participants' engagement in knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) activities and formalized collaborative CoPs involving multiple disciplines and sectors.

Validity

Not applicable

Reliability

Not applicable

Methodological Rating

Not applicable

IMPLEMENTING THE TOOL

Who is Involved?

Practitioners, funding representatives, policymakers, governmental representatives (at all levels as appropriate) and researchers involved in health promotion and disease prevention may find this to be a valuable strategy. It would also be useful for community-based organizations and NGOs to exchange knowledge.

Time

More than 8 hours

Implementing this strategy requires more than eight hours, and is likely to be context-dependent. Individual participants attend a three-day professional event involving a series of meetings and

interactive educational sessions. Those implementing this strategy should expect to invest a considerable amount of time in planning the three-day event. Organizers will need to: develop the agenda and session content; invite and register potential participants and speakers; and figure out logistics including accommodation, meeting space, meals and transportation.

Additional Skills Needed for Implementation

Not specified

Steps for Using Tool

The authors suggest the following steps: • Hold/host/organize an interactive meeting and educational session for individuals/ organizations sharing a common area of interest. • Determine participants' expectations and knowledge, the nature, frequency and intensity of their relationships and their motivation for collaborating. • Use network analysis procedures to produce and present a network map of the participants and other potential members of the CoP, including the strength, direction and centrality of their relationships. • Extend the network by engaging peripheral stakeholders (increase the number of links). • Develop core activities and communication processes for the CoP. • Work through the stages of CoP development proposed by the Wenger et al. (2002) (potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, transformation).

Conditions for Use

Not specified

TOOL DEVELOPMENT

Developer(s)

Cameron Norman, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

- Background in public health, community psychology and evaluation

Tim Huerta, PhD, Research Scientist, Provincial Health Services Agency and the British Columbia Child and Family Health Research Institute, Vancouver, BC; and Research Assistant Professor in Health Organizational Management, Rawls College of Business, Texas Tech University

- Background in organizational behaviour and network research

Method of Development

This method draws on social networking methodology (social network analysis), complexity theory, science of networks and organizational behaviour.

Release Date

2006

CONTACT PERSON

Corresponding author:

Dr. Cameron Norman

Dalla Lana School of Public Health,

University of Toronto

Health Sciences Building,

155 College Street, 5th Floor, Room 586

Toronto, ON M5T 3M7

Phone: (416) 978-1242

Email: cameron.norman@utoronto.ca

RESOURCES

Title of Primary Resource	Knowledge transfer and exchange through social networks: Building foundations for a community of practice within tobacco control
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.implementationscience.com/content/1/1/20
Reference	Norman, C. & Huerta, T. (2006). Knowledge transfer and exchange through social networks: Building foundations for a community of practice within tobacco control. <i>Implementation Science</i> , 1(20). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-1-20
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	Periodical
Cost to Access	None
Language(s)	English
Conditions for Use	Copyright © 2006 Norman & Huerta

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Title of Supplementary Resource	Cultivating communities of practice
File Attachment	None
Web-link	Not applicable
Reference	Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). <i>Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge</i> . Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
Type of Material	Book
Format	Paper copy
Cost to Access	Book purchase
Language(s)	English
Conditions for Use	Not specified

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