

Engaging transformation: Creating and realizing a community driven research program.

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Presenting Notes

For Prezi, please see:

http://prezi.com/uwjwraqheuk2/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

What is the WGDS?

- The Wellington-Guelph Drug Strategy (WGDS) is comprised of community stakeholders who influence and implement drug policy in the City of Guelph
- It is made up of a number of community agencies, including the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington, the Guelph Police Service, CAMH, Sanguen Health Centre, Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health and many others interested in developing and implementing a drug strategy that serves the needs of the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington
- The WGDS works to implement a 4-Pillars Drug Strategy to reduce the impacts and harms of drug and substance misuse
- Four pillars are: Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction, and Enforcement
- These pillars provide a framework for an evidence-based approach to addressing issues of concern around addictions and finding effective strategies for reducing the impacts of substance misuse

What is the Research Shop?

- The Research Shop is housed at the University of Guelph's Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship
- The Research Shop Vision: We envision a community of engaged citizens who create and use research knowledge and experience to achieve positive social change.
- It is a dynamic portal between university and community which matches graduate student interns to community organizations, with whom long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships are formed

Why we partnered

- Partnership with the WGDS is among the largest-scale and longest-lasting partnerships between the Research Shop and a community partner
- The WGDS is particularly interested in partnerships with the Research Shop as research conducted by interns provides "arms length" results that can help to drive policy: according to Raechelle Devereaux, manager of the WGDS, a key benefit to the WGDS of

partnership with the Research Shop is “access to objective, unbiased research to inform policy and decisions on what can be politically charged issues”

- Interns provide this outsider lens on important WGDS issues in a number of ways, including through conducting “rapid response” research and working more in-depth on larger projects to generate findings which may help to guide evidence-based policy/decision-making
- In turn, access to research evidence prompts or reinforces strategic directions for projects and service delivery, and informs policy development
- Adding student capacity to the research conducted for the WGDS has helped to increase response to the rapidly-changing context of drug policy in Ontario; the research is “just in time”
- “Just in time”: in drug policy in particular, issues often emerge suddenly and require attention and research; for example, during the partnership, Oxycontin was delisted from the market, and an intern pulled together a report about the impact of the shift from oxycontin
- WGDS partners help to provide context and expertise to the equation; students working on the projects are not always studying drug-related issues, and the WGDS provides guidance on issues of importance, language use, and framing the issues
- WGDS partners are the primary drivers of research question generation: essentially, the WGDS identifies questions, and Research Shop interns respond
- For the most part, this has been in the form of rapid response research, due to the preferences of the WGDS for timely, relevant research
- Even smaller projects have helped members of the WGDS to back up decisions with research evidence that they would not have had capacity to generate before

History of Partnership

- September 2011: Partnership begins
- The WGDS manager, Raechelle Devereaux, has been the main point of contact in this collaboration, providing an interface between the Research Shop and the other members of the WGDS
- 2011 projects were primarily “rapid response” and included:
 - Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy Housing First Research
 - Withdrawal Management Services and the Effects of Distance
 - Background Research on the Omnibus Bill
 - Pathways to Withdrawal Management Services: Experiences of Service Users (larger project based on initial withdrawal management literature scan)
- 2012 saw the partnership expand to incorporate more in-depth projects such as:
 - Youth Substance Misuse Prevention Program synthesis (in collaboration with a 3rd year Corrections and Penology course)
 - Getting to Withdrawal Management Services in Guelph-Wellington
 - Review/collating drug court forms for Drug Treatment Courts (in collaboration with a graduate course in community-engaged scholarship)
 - Initial rapid response report on Youth Harm Reduction
 - Integration of Youth and Adult addiction services annotated bibliography

- In May 2012, the initial rapid response report on Youth Harm Reduction was presented at the Youth Harm Reduction Forum, which led to the Expansion Report on Youth Harm Reduction
- The partnership continues to grow and evolve

How does the partnership work?

- Interns provide research capacity in the form of policy briefs, literature scans, “rapid response” research, and comprehensive qualitative investigation

What is “Rapid Response”?

- The rapid response model corresponds with community partner needs for quick turn around on projects and an overview of the issue at hand
- The rapid response or “rapid review” model has been noted as an approach that allows for an efficient and timely synthesis of research results (Khangura et al., 2012)
- The primary tension in developing rapid response research is balancing a rigorous review of the literature and providing the information within the timeline required by the intended audience
- In the case of the research conducted for the WGDS, waiting for a systematic review of the literature is undesirable, as decisions based on the research are to be used prior to the period of time it would take to conduct a full review
- The rapid response model provides an option for basing these decisions on at least some of the most pertinent research in the area- as noted in Khangura et al.’s (2012) review of rapid review models, “a modestly robust summary of the evidence is better for informing a health services decision than no evidence at all” (p.15)

Evolving community research topics

- The Youth Harm Reduction Report and Expansion report demonstrate how community-driven research evolves over time
- Initial research questions generated in collaboration with our community partner were: Can the particular character of youth programs have an impact on the success of harm reduction strategies? How do youth shelters in Ontario manage harm reduction programs?
- The report generated with these research questions turned up primarily Toronto-based shelters and programs
- The first question was unable to be answered without seeking ethics approval; based solely on informational interviews, the report was only able to provide information about what exists, rather than ascertain how effective the different programs are
- Consultation with community partners led to the decision to proceed in spite of the changing research focus
- This report was presented at a Youth Harm Reduction Forum in the spring of 2012
- Interested individuals from the community (primarily youth service providers) indicated that this report was interesting, but that it would be more relevant to the community if the shelters/programs included were in cities more similar in size to Guelph-Wellington, which may be significantly different than Toronto-based initiatives
- We then worked with Raechelle to revise the question to find information more relevant to community stakeholders

- The expansion report sought to answer the previous questions but with a tighter focus on cities similar to Guelph; further, it integrated health and safety concerns into the discussion, for example whether shelters and programs have particular health and safety policies in place (ex. sharps containers) whether or not they have NEPs in place
- It was determined that the expansion report would look more like a “community snapshot” of what is being done/what is not being done to support harm reduction policies in Ontario
- This “community snapshot” was also intended to avoid making judgments about particular policies and approaches
- The report includes 2 case studies, which were run by the organizations they were about prior to releasing the report; the feedback was overwhelmingly positive

Mutual benefit: Perspectives on the partnership

- Partnership with the WGDS has resulted in significant benefits to all partners involved, including community partners, graduate student interns, and staff people
- The partnership has shifted and changed over time, and as such has involved a number of different collaborators and stakeholders over time
- The following reflections touch broadly on mutual benefits over the history of the partnership, but focus specifically on the Youth Harm Reduction Report/Expansion Report as an example of an evolving, dynamic, community-driven research endeavor

Interns

- Background: When the Youth Harm Reduction project began, I had performed two short reports for the WGDS and had established a working relationship with both the Research Shop project manager and the WGDS manager, which helped me to tailor the product to community-partner needs
- Challenges included extremely busy community partners and a personal lack of expertise
- As much as possible, information about the services was gleaned from browsing websites; however, this information was not always clear, accurate or up to date; speaking to the providers through informational interviewing provided clarification and further insight
- Another challenge was knowing how to frame the results in a respectful, appropriate way; my work is not directly related to drug policy, and as such I was not always familiar with the appropriate language to use
- Some key benefits included learning about a new area; ability to interact with community stakeholders and feel that research is "making a difference"; and working with passionate individuals from the community
- I was happy to have the guidance of both the RS project manager (Anne) and the community partner (Raechelle) over the course of the project, who both helped to guide the project so that it would best meet the needs of the community partner

Staff

- Ability to work with multiple individual organizations through the WGDS collaboration
- Feeds into development of new partnerships (expanding circles of trust & relationships)
- Diverse projects mean lots of learning about processes & practices

Community partners

- WGDS manager works with Research Shop interns and staff to scope and realize research projects
- “Arms length” research process is important to the WGDS
- Having “just in time” research is also very important for community partners; often issues emerge at times when partners are unable to provide capacity to quickly respond
- Enlisting interns to help with these projects enables the WGDS to gain access to relevant research without having to put a stop to other work they are engaged in at the time that breaking issues emerge
- This research evidence has helped to guide service delivery, the establishment of new projects on the heels of rapid response research, and policy development

Conclusion

New WGDS Initiatives Informed by RS Collaboration

- Creation of Drug Treatment Court
- Alternative treatment program for individuals in the criminal justice system due to substance abuse, involves a combination of drug treatment, court monitoring, and connecting participants with local services
- Harm Reduction Forums
- Annual public forum bringing together community members and service providers in the Wellington-Guelph area to discuss issues related to treatment, community collaboration and inter- agency cooperation
- Community-Based Naloxone Distribution
- Peer-to-peer overdose prevention program to counter the effects of opiate overdose
- Community Withdrawal Management
- Alternative treatment modality to the residential detox programs
- Community Framework for Youth
- Involves the promotion of a community-wide approach to dealing with substance abuse among area youth

Key elements of the WGDS/Research Shop Collaboration

- Mutual benefit
- Evidence-based decision and policy-making
- Long-term partnership

Questions for the Audience

The interns involved in this partnership are not experts in the field of drug strategy; however, this was actually desirable for the WGDS as it provides “access to objective, unbiased research to inform policy and decisions on what can be politically charged issues”

- What are the benefits of conducting research at “arms length” from a community agency?

Rapid response research involves scanning the literature for key articles on community-relevant issues and compiling findings into usable summaries that can be used to drive policy and

evidence-based decision-making. However, these reviews are not the comprehensive kind of literature review often found in scholarly research.

- What are the benefits and limitations of rapid response research, particularly for “politically charged issues”?