

Knowledge Mobilization and Grant Proposal Writing: A Researcher's Guide

The Monieson Centre
in conjunction with
Queen's Office of Research Services



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Robert Sutherland Hall
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Conference video and speakers' slide presentations:

http://business.queensu.ca/centres/monieson/events/knowledge_conference.php

Introduction

“Many of us practise knowledge mobilization in some form every day – we just don’t realize it.” – Karina McInnis, Associate Director, Queen’s Office of Research Services

In an era of shrinking funds and increased demand for research dollars, granting agencies want to know the research they support will make a difference. This holds true whether an academic researcher or a community non-profit organization is awarded the grant. More than 100 academic researchers, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, research and administrative staff, business and community leaders, and government policy makers participated in a one-day workshop hosted by The Monieson Centre, Queen’s School of Business, and Queen’s Office of Research Services to learn methods to enhance



Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre; Peter Levesque, Knowledge Mobilization Works!; Karina McInnis, Associate Director, Queen’s Office of Research Services

knowledge mobilization, a key component of any grant application. Through hands-on exercises and discussion, the workshop clarified what it means to incorporate knowledge mobilization and translation activities into programs of research. Peter Levesque, a past SSHRC Director, and founder of Knowledge Mobilization Works! facilitated the workshop.

Evolution of Knowledge Mobilization (KMb)

Peter Levesque, Director of Knowledge Mobilization Works!, defines knowledge mobilization, or KMb, as the complex process of making what we know ready for service or action to deliver value. Another commonly used definition is “getting the right information to the right people in the right format at the right time so as to influence decision making” (Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation). The current evolution of knowledge mobilization goes beyond knowledge as a thing. Knowledge is now viewed as a flowing between and among various individuals and networks. Knowledge management incorporates many concepts.

Today's knowledge management initiatives are part of the job, not just an "add-on" to the current workload of employees. Knowledge mobilization is taken seriously by organizations – many consider it to be their top priority.

Choosing Appropriate KMb Methods

Peter Levesque cites five top reasons why KMb is important for grant success:

1. Granting agencies require it
2. The changing nature of expertise - there are more people in more places who are specialists
3. The growing demand for collaboration and co-creation – a greater sense that the value of the knowledge that is produced must be shared with others
4. New generational norms
5. An inflation of expectation of results

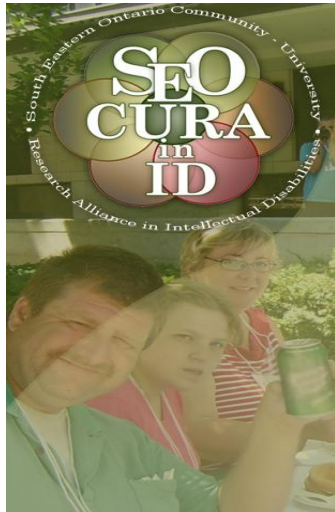
Knowledge mobilization can take many forms. Tools for knowledge mobilization include events; publications; meta tools such as needs assessment studies, experimental projects, and developing reference materials; sustainability approaches such as advisory boards, discussion forums and expert networks; and KMb and learning, which includes collaborative exploration, distance learning, and co-op arrangements.



At the core of choosing appropriate KMb methods is determining the ones that are complementary, give the most value, and thus are maximally useful for the recipient of the knowledge. Appropriate KMb methods will take into account the message that is being delivered and should reflect not only the type of new knowledge, but also the audience for that knowledge.

Queen's Examples of Successful KMb

Prof. H el ene Ouellette-Kuntz and Maureen McDonald of Community Health and



Epidemiology outlined the evolution of KMb in the Community-University Research Alliances Project, "Southeastern Ontario CURA in Intellectual Disabilities". In the beginning of the grant writing process, KMb included a list of traditional activities such as bulletins and conferences. However, this evolved into a commitment to share new knowledge among partners rather than have one group produce the knowledge, and others receive it. The CURA team recognized the importance of establishing trust, and made sure KMb was an integrated underlying thrust of the final grant project, not just a required section of the application.

Dr. Yolande Chan and Jeff Dixon of The Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business explained that KMb was the main goal of the Knowledge Impact in Society project, "Revitalizing Rural Economies by Mobilizing Academic Knowledge". The project is an effort to help



stimulate Eastern Ontario's economy by bringing researchers and organizations together to generate value through knowledge. The three-year initiative includes more than 30 businesses, community groups, and governmental organizations and uses a number of KMb vehicles. Discovery Workshops help determine research priorities for each community. Knowledge syntheses distill current academic literature into practical tools understood by those of varying backgrounds. Case studies highlight success stories that provide examples of business practices that can benefit others, and annual conferences inform a wide range of practitioners, policy makers, and academic researchers about innovative approaches to community economic development.

Preparing a Proposal: Thinking Kmb

Knowledge mobilization should not be an afterthought. Peter Levesque of Knowledge Mobilization Works examined techniques that will keep Kmb at the forefront of the entire grant writing process. A strong narrative is key; the researcher should explain clearly what research is planned, and why it is important. The application should state clearly the potential value of the new knowledge, who will benefit, and how. Finally, the application should be explicit about the methods by which the knowledge will be exchanged.

What are Funding Agencies Looking for in Kmb? What works? What doesn't?

knowledgetranslation@CIHR



Jacqueline Tetroe and Leah Jurkovic of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) emphasize Knowledge Translation (KT) is part of the CIHR mandate to “excel...in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians...” They note the process takes place within a complex system of interactions between researchers and

knowledge users. These interactions vary in intensity, complexity, and level of engagement depending on the nature of the research and the findings, as well as the needs of the particular knowledge user. Specifically, KT makes users aware of knowledge and helps them use the knowledge to improve health and health care systems. KT closes the gap between what is known and what is needed, and it moves knowledge into action. The CIHR presentation also included important tools for researchers to use to enhance the chances of success for their funding applications.

Queen's Examples

Researchers funded by the three tri-council agencies, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council (SSHRC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) explored KMB practices in successful grant applications. Dr. Joshua Pearce of the department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering outlined the benefits of service learning. This teaching method combines community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. It has been found to be a positive experience for students, faculty, educational institutions, and community partners. In particular, students are more motivated, they work harder and learn more, and they experience lasting benefits.



Dr. Myra Hird of the Department of Sociology emphasized the importance of knowledge mobilization in the training of graduate students. Students benefit from mentoring and instruction from highly experienced academic supervisors. They learn important research techniques that will hold them in good stead as they

pursue their academic or professional careers. In fact, graduate student training should be a central deliverable in any SSHRC application because 70% of SSHRC funding goes directly to graduate students.

Dr. Daren Heyland, a professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, examined knowledge translation in critical care nutrition, explaining it required the right patient, the right treatment, the right intensity (dose/duration), the right timing, and the right setting to achieve the right outcome.

It was impractical for individual clinicians to assimilate massive amounts of information to



make unaided judgments about complex decisions. A multi-faceted dissemination or knowledge translation strategy would result in improved nutrition support practices. The active strategy around this dissemination included having dietitians positioned as local opinion leaders, web-based tools including benchmarked site reports, interactive workshops with small group problem solving, training on rapid cycle change, and educational reminders such as manuals and posters.

Conference Value

The value of the conference to the Queen's community and beyond is reflected in the comments received from participants at the conclusion.

"I approached the session with zero expectations, but it was a very rewarding session to hear about examples of KM and actual theory behind it."

"It is a vast and complex topic but it is great to see it highlighted at Queen's and that assistance is available."

"This was a very engaging day. Wonderful speakers, great information, and a relevant topic. Thank you."



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