

The Learning Collaborative Model: *An Integrated Knowledge Translation Approach to VR Research*

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INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION
promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities



Presentation Outline

- What is a Learning Collaborative?
- The Learning Collaborative as a KT Strategy
- Theoretical Underpinnings
- Examples
- Implementation & Learning

How can VR agencies learn from their peers to address challenges most of them face?

How can VR researchers engage end-users and tailor research to intended audiences needs?

Learning Collaborative

- Researchers provide a fabric for stakeholders to interact
 - Someone plays a matchmaker
 - Encourage relevant peer-to-peer interactions
- Constant feedback loop that benefits both stakeholder and researcher
- New knowledge is created
 - From interaction between stakeholders
 - From interaction between stakeholders and researcher

Core Elements of a Learning Collaborative

- Topic to explore (addressing an unmet need)
- Coaches
- Peer group
- Forum for interaction
- Common goal

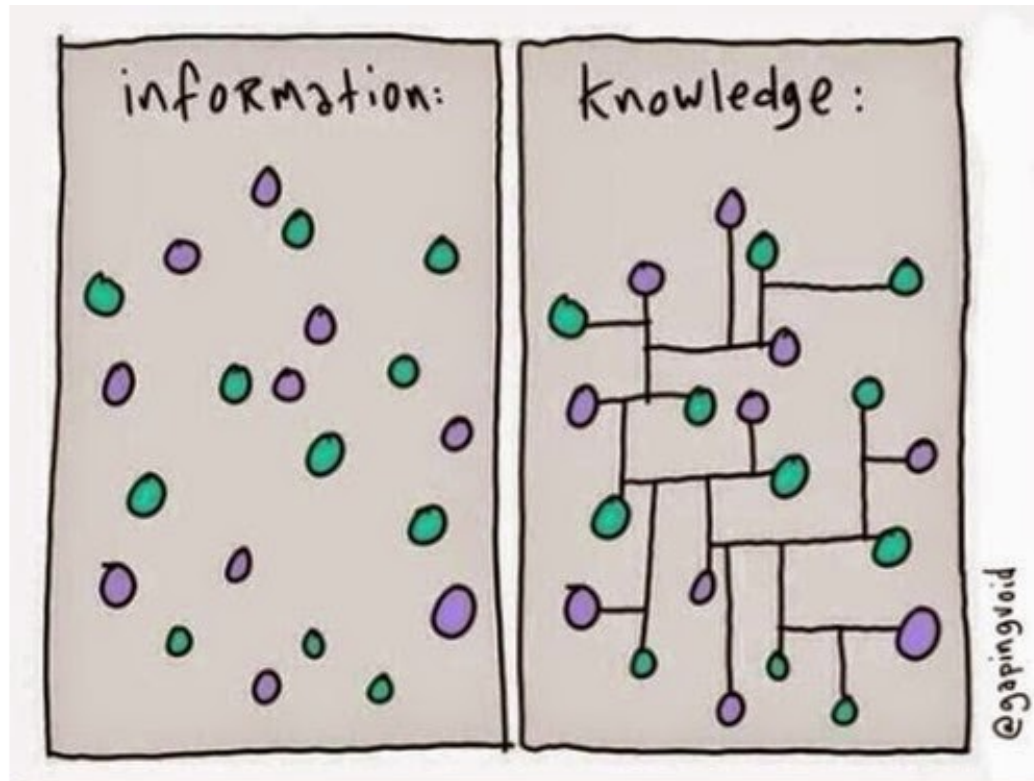
The Learning Collaborative Model

FEATURES:

- In-person meetings
- Webinars
- On-site and distance consultation
- Self-assessment
- Tailored evaluation



Knowledge Translation



KT Elements of the LC model

- Interactive and engaged process
- Built lasting relationships
- Facilitated knowledge sharing
- Customized technical assistance
- Tailored research to users' needs

Theoretical Underpinnings

- Research is an important component of LC
- LC can be a vehicle for participatory action research
- Researchers work with stakeholders
- Field becomes the lab
- Research inform actions and actions inform research

Cont...

- LC allows for
 - Stakeholders learning from stakeholders
 - Stakeholders learning from researchers
 - Researchers learning from stakeholder
 - Using mixed methodology
- Research issues can come from
 - Researchers (e.g., researcher wants to test a hypothesis)
 - Stakeholder (e.g., stakeholder wants to improve a program)

Learning Collaborative

Examples

- RTAC on VR Program Management
- Demand Side Progressive Employment
- American Indian VR

Research and Technical Assistance Center on VR Program Management (RTAC)

- RTAC: Project funded by NIDRR and RSA
- Goal: Identify, test, and disseminate management practices
- End Product: Performance management model/ framework

VR Program Management Learning Collaborative

- ICI adapted a Learning Collaborative (LC) strategy to partner with 29 SVRAs including:
 - 7 Commissions for the Blind
 - 1 American Indian VR program (Chickasaw Nation), and
 - 21 General or Combined agencies.
- The LC strategy is a tested strategy (notably used in public health)
- Applied to RTAC to engage SVRAs in intensive TA that culminates in shared learning, adoption of practices, and professional development

Key components of the RTAC Learning Collaborative included:

- Initial visits by ICI staff to each project to develop plans
- Three face-to-face meetings with all agencies
- Monthly teleconferences involving all agencies
- Additional in-person and telephone interactions between VR agencies and ICI staff
- Peer-to-peer exchanges on specific topics of interest
- Coaches helped facilitate the process and foster partnerships between agencies

Components of VR Program Management Examined in Management Model

- Communication
- Leadership
- Partnerships
- Services & Processes
- Customers
- *Mission & Strategic Planning*
- *Data, Quality Assurance & Metrics*
- *Workforce*
- Outcomes

Outcomes

- Define in greater detail how each component relates to VR Program Management
- Identify & develop tools
- Examine relationships between practices & intended outcomes

“Successful and sustainable collaborations are not self-managing; rather they require well-explicated processes and structure and capacity-building.”

-Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality



Implementation and Learning

- Adapting the LC strategy
- Improving the LC strategy
- Evaluating the LC strategy

Adaptation of the LC strategy

- The ICI plans to adapt this strategy in two other projects focusing on:
 - Progressive employment
 - American Indian VR system

Evaluation of the LC strategy

- Employed an outside evaluator who completed quarterly formal evaluation surveys
- Reported improvements were:
 - Improved communications with and among agency staff
 - Increased awareness, knowledge, and use of data as the basis for agency decisions
 - Increased staff development opportunities for emerging agency leaders
 - Improved relationships with agency stakeholders and partners
 - Streamlining of agency policy
 - Improvements to agency hiring practices and identification of new staff positions
 - Improved management focus and alignment of resources

Improving the LC experience: Lessons Learned

- Participants should set clear goals & establish work plan (accountability)
- Significance of early interaction
- Identifying the right issue/ topic to be addressed

Key takeaways

- Research “with” stakeholders rather than research “for” stakeholders
- Transferrable to almost any population/ audience
- Tool for advancement of VR research & KT efforts

Questions & Discussion



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