Small Places as Consumers of Research: Constraints and Opportunities to Building Capacity

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Community-University Partnerships 'The Challenge'

- Rural and small town places face many changes
- Seek information to make the best decision
    - Need timely, relevant, and useful information
- Academics enter research task seeking to improve questions
- Mismatch of expectations
    - Communities want answers
    - Academics want questions

Constraints to KM - I

- Small municipal offices – few staff
  - Experience
  - Turnover and institutional memory
  - Limited local technical support and resources
- Getting mutual commitment
- Partnering demands
  - Difficult on time / staff
  - Often need financial commitment

Constraints to KM - II

- Bottom-up 'may not be equipped' to mobilize knowledge

- Need support for building relationships / capacity
  - Poorly understood by funding programs
  - Academic and funding institutions talk 'engaged language' but not equipped to follow through with infrastructure / support

Developing Opportunities

- Relationship development
  - Who to talk to / know who to call
  - Routine interaction (become the 'go-to' focal point)
  - Developing trust
- Residents contact us with significant concerns / events in the community
  - Researchers privy to emerging issues
  - Improved ability to respond timely to needs

Research "Product Cycle" for Consumers

- Design
  - What do we really need to know?
- Execution
  - Building local skills so they can do it next time
- Implementation
  - Communication
  - Follow through

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in project design:
  - Ensures fit with partnership goals
  - Improves understanding of questions and how results can be used

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in execution:
  - Provides labour and builds capacity (data collection, writing, promoting results)
    - Tumbler Ridge Seniors' Needs Project

Communities as Consumers of Research

- Involvement in implementation:
  - Communicating research
    - Update letters, newspaper articles, radio interviews, posters, copies of research products, websites, community forums, council presentations.
    - Posting solely on a university website does not work!

Communities as Consumers of Research

- **Implementation** continued:
  - Build momentum to initiate change
    - Linking communities with similar issues (i.e. rural transportation)
    - Promoting best practices
  - Respect, patience, flexibility, AND follow-up!
  - Planning sessions to bridge results and next steps
    - Short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions
    - Success breeds success

Partnership Issues

- It's a people process
- "Getting to know you" protocols
- Relationship development
- Listening / sharing
- Capacity building
- Mutual commitment

Developing Community Capacity to be Consumers of Research

- Develop relationships / trust
- Understand the research process / results
- Communication
- Planning and follow-up

- Knowledge mobilization will improve once appropriate time /resources / roles are allocated to people and processes