

Building a Research Alliance:

The Nova Scotia Continuing Care Sector Experience

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Background:

The Nova Scotia Department of Health is creating and replacing more than 1500 beds in the long term care sector (~15% of total beds). Part of the renewal of the sector includes incorporating new staffing models and physical design characteristics. Scant Canadian research is available to confirm the benefits of these modifications with regard to impact on resident quality of life. A core group of researchers and decision makers interested in long term care was formed in 2009 and with support from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, this research alliance expanded into an 18-member multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral collaborative team with strong leadership and staff support. In a 6-month period our team developed a comprehensive funding proposal for the CIHR: Partnerships for Health System Improvement program. The proposed project will examine the differences in nursing home staffing approaches and physical design on the quality of life of nursing home residents in Nova Scotia. The project results will not only inform decision makers in Nova Scotia, but long term care systems across the country facing similar challenges. This presentation illustrates the lessons learned when working with a diverse and expansive team on the funding proposal, *Care and Construction: Assessing Differences in Nursing Home Models of Care on Resident Quality of Life*.

Plan Opportunities for Focused Dialogue:

It is important to recognize that any group of researchers, decision makers and practitioners face challenges in finding time to dedicate to yet another initiative. Two in-person working sessions were held at strategic points in the development process. The outcome of the first working session was the formulation of a research question and ideas about methodological approaches. At the second working session, members confirmed the research objectives and methodological approaches. During these focused working sessions, members were able to familiarize themselves with each other and have an opportunity to become more engaged in the discussions and the process.

Maintain a Timeline:

Developing a funding proposal with 18 team members in a 6-month period required that tasks be completed in a timely manner. A timeline was created and maintained to guide the allocation of human resources and team communication. Team members were aware in advance when materials would require their review, creating an expedited turnaround.



Christina and Hedley Ivany Place, West Bedford
Opened June, 2010



Alderwood Rest Home, Baddeck
Opened July, 2010



Windsor Elms Continuing Care Society, Windsor
Opened November, 2010



Be Strategic With Communication:

Working with diverse researchers and decisions makers requires acknowledging and accommodating their time constraints. Communications with the team were focused and personalized.



Voluntary/Policy Organizations Multidisciplinary Researchers



Government Nursing Home Management

Incorporate Diverse Perspectives:

Incorporating perspectives from multiple disciplines and sectors into a research project is challenging yet important if members are to feel valued and their time commitment worth the effort. Team members actively contributed to all aspects of the proposal – research questions, methodology, knowledge translation plan – to ensure the project’s relevance to their area of interest as well as the funder’s mandate. The process to achieve this included effective team leadership, negotiation, compromise and consensus.

Establish Working Groups:

To support in-depth dialogue and to advance specific aspects of the project, working sub groups were established. Members selected a group that fit their topic of interest or area of expertise. The groups communicated via email and teleconference. The working groups enabled members to become familiar with each other’s capacities and particular lens. This process helped to form collaborative working relationships amongst the team.



Construction Underway at Tideview Terrace, Digby
Opening June, 2011

Building Research Capacity for the Future:

The collaboration between academics, government, private sector, voluntary sector and policy advocates was formed to develop a specific funding proposal, but the capacity of this team to influence the long term care sector extends beyond the immediate outcome of a funding proposal. Through the proposal development process, knowledge about nursing home models of care was exchanged, further gaps and areas of interest were identified, and professional relationships were strengthened. The potential is great for these individuals to collaborate on future research and policy initiatives.