

research snapshot

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Knowledge Mobilization Leads to Social Innovation

What is this research about?

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) is a suite of services that enhances the two-way connection between researchers and research users (such as organizations seeking to use research to help them make better decisions). KmB enables research to have the greatest possible impact on decisions about public policy and professional practice. It turns research into action. The end result of KmB is social innovation: better human services, public policies, and cultural understanding.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers at York University set out to assess some of the KmB activities at York. They produced a paper which summarizes the experiences of the KmB Unit in its first two years. They also made suggestions about the future of KmB in Canada.

What did the researchers find?

The KmB Unit at York has engaged in four areas:

- Research forums (knowledge exchange)
- Research translation (co-production)
- Research funding (leveraged by the KmB Unit)
- Shared decision-making and governance for KmB

What you need to know:

Building the capacity for KmB will benefit universities and communities. Through knowledge brokers, resources, and clear language research summaries, the KmB Unit at York is working to maximize the social, cultural, and economic impact of research.

Research forums (knowledge)

By the spring of 2008, the flagship research forum of the Km Unit, 'KM in the AM,' had drawn over 200 participants from York faculty, community organizations, and the Regional Municipality of York. KM in the AM is a meeting which takes place during breakfast and focuses on a theme chosen by a community partner. It aims to break down barriers between the community and the university. KM in the AM allows researchers to meet potential KmB partners and has resulted in funded research collaborations.

Research translation (co-production)

The KmB Unit has two knowledge brokers who help researchers collaborate with diverse community partners to create new knowledge. By the spring of 2008, York had received 44 requests for research from research users and 15 requests for research partnerships from York faculty. The KmB Unit matched a

researcher to a research user in over 70% of cases, with close to 20% more pending.

Research funding (leveraged by the KMb Unit)

By the spring of 2008, the KMb Unit helped researchers and their partners to secure seven grants totalling \$11.62 million. In addition, York received sponsored research agreements totalling over \$208,500, which were brokered solely through the KMb Unit. York has had a 2,629% return on its pursuit of funding supported by KMb.

Shared decision-making and governance
York and its decision-maker partners have developed a shared governance model that builds trust and ensures mutual relevance. Decision-maker partners and faculty serve on the KMb Unit's Joint Advisory Committee. This enables the KMb unit to respond to the diverse needs of local communities.

The KMb Unit also produced a library of clear language research summaries that make academic research more accessible to non-academic audiences.

How can you use this research?

This research will be of interest to anyone who aims to maximize the impact of research in Canada. Developing an institutional capacity to support KMb will benefit universities and communities. It takes time, however, to break down barriers and build trust. It also takes resources; KMb is not a self-sustaining activity. Like most technology transfer offices, which commercialize the work of researchers, a KMb Unit requires an institutional investment, especially around broadband technologies. Funding agencies need to support KMb as they do technology transfer.

At the university level, faculty need to be encouraged to participate in KMb. Researchers need to develop effective ways to measure the impact of KMb. In the larger community, decision-makers need to be engaged at all times in the KMb process to determine areas of mutual strategic importance.

About the Researchers

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Keywords

Knowledge Mobilization, Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Translation, research, research forum, technology transfer, community partner, shared governance, decision-maker, funding, social innovation.

Knowledge Mobilization at York

York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides services and funding for faculty, graduate students, and community organizations seeking to maximize the impact of academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. It is supported by SSHRC and CIHR grants, and by the Office of the Vice-President Research & Innovation.

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