

Questions to Consider in Setting Up and Maintaining a Research Action Network

What is the network's overarching purpose?

- what is the collective frame and how broadly will it be defined?

What are the goals/objectives of the network?

Among the possibilities:

- sharing of questions, challenges, resources, information and expertise
- creating safe spaces to tell and share stories
- building of capacity, including to support grant writing, research and advocacy
- conducting and sharing research and connecting research to practice and policy
- advocacy
- education
- formation of strategic alliances to bring about change
- developing a unified strategy

Who are its members?

- what are their responsibilities?
- what are the benefits to them of membership?
- what interests, voices and perspectives should be reflected?
- will there be more than one category of membership?
- will any category of member be required to pay a membership fee?
- if there are different categories of membership, will one category have voting privileges and another play a supporting – not a decision-making – role?

How are network goals accomplished?

- how will members connect and how often?
- is there potential to connect to and work with other networks?

What will be the structure and what values will inform that structure?

- what structure is necessary to accomplish the goals?
- will there be one central organizing group (a hub) and if so, will this be a single organization or made up of people from many groups/organizations?
- how closely will the members work together in joint actions?
- will the emphasis be on creating strong horizontal links between groups and organizations and/or on vertical links connecting local groups to a central co-ordinating hub?
- will all members have an equal voice?
- what will be the process of decision-making?

Who will be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the network?

- these activities will vary depending upon the goals/objectives but may include
 - keeping listings current on the website
 - posting new information to the website
 - moderating e-forums
 - regulating multi-directional flows of information
- to the extent that a network seeks to engage in more co-ordinated forms of strategic action the need for devoted staff time increases

What tools will be used?

- website
 - document repository for resources and information
 - notices of important events
 - interactive discussion forums
 - training modules and/or materials
- bulletins (on website or via email)
- membership directories
- social networking tools
- on-line courses
- conference calls
- webcasts and web meetings
- YouTube videos
- NING – an on-line tool to facilitate networking, action, collaboration and change
- creation of Virtual Model Community

Funding

- a successful network requires some level of staffing and this must be funded
 - research grants
 - charge membership fees (including two categories of members – fee paying and non fee paying)
 - foundations and non-governmental organizations.

This guide was produced by the Women, Homelessness, and Community-Based Participatory Research project. It is based on the experiences and recommendations of a group of women experiencing poverty and homelessness, who have been involved with community-based participatory research. Other guides, and the full project report, can be found at www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=55138. This project was funded by Canadian Homelessness Research Network (CHRN), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and Homelessness Partnering Strategy of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.



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