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## **Cocreating with Stakeholders Through Participatory Curriculum Development**

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# FACT SHEET



## Cocreating With Stakeholders Through Participatory Curriculum Development

February 2019

### Focus:

Participatory curriculum development (PCD) is an approach to forming a working relationship between researchers and decisionmakers. The purpose of this relationship is to work together to create products that benefit the people who use them. During the PCD process, the researchers receive feedback from the decisionmakers, or stakeholders, about how the products work and any changes that could be made to improve them. This approach is called integrated knowledge translation.

### Context

In 2015, researchers at the University of Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities' (RIIC's) Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities (RTC:Rural ) received funding from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research to develop a multimedia health promotion program. The program offers support, education, and skill-building opportunities to people with disabilities while helping participants improve their health and well-being and succeed in reaching personal goals. This case study outlines how involving stakeholders in a PCD framework shaped the cocreation of the [Healthy Community Living](#) program. The case study also describes the approaches and tools that were used and the lessons that were learned.



### KT Activity

Healthy Community Living (HCL) is a program that supports opportunities for people with disabilities to live well and participate fully in their communities. It includes two independent living skills workshops led by peers. These workshops use curricula Community Living Skills and Living Well in the Community. RTC:Rural followed a PCD process to help key partners become involved in the development of the HCL program. RTC:Rural used a variety of stakeholder engagement approaches to develop, implement, and evaluate each curriculum.

PCD is an ongoing and flexible process that is responsive to the end-users of a curriculum and the situations they are in when they use it. The approach is inclusive, meaning that the people who participate in the process respect one another and make substantial contributions as they work toward a goal. To develop an effective curriculum, a team has to perform certain tasks. The team must identify what learners want or need to know, the types of training that can meet

their needs, what kind of content supports learning, and how the training is delivered. Also, the training is evaluated to make sure that learning took place. Participatory approaches that engage stakeholders throughout the curriculum development cycle are more likely to be relevant to end-users and the setting in which the training is delivered. This process involves end-users throughout the stages of development and is responsive to their needs and interests.

The PCD process includes four main steps for engaging stakeholders in working together to develop a curriculum (Taylor, 2003):

1. Conduct a Situation Analysis
2. Develop a Curriculum Outline
3. Develop Detailed Content
4. Implement and Evaluate the Curriculum

RTC:Rural staff used a variety of tools and activities to engage stakeholders. These tools and activities were important for each step of the PCD process.

## KT Tools

- Key partnership with the Association of Programs For Rural Independent Living
- Online Moodle® classroom
- Teleconference calls
- Webinar meetings
- In-person meetings
- Cameras to collect partner photos and videos
- Slack, a cloud-based team collaboration tool
- eNewsletter
- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Flickr

## IKT Activities

Before writing and submitting the grant proposal for the HCL project, RTC:Rural researchers gathered information about the needs and desires of learners in the disability community. They then identified the PCD process as the method for continuing to collect such valuable input. They then set the PCD process in motion, using their knowledge of those needs and desires to develop the concepts, content, and design for each curriculum. The RTC:Rural project team worked with staff and consumers at Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to lay the groundwork for the curricula.

In Years 1 through 3, researchers partnered with eight CILs throughout the United States to form curriculum development teams. These teams worked with research staff through the first three PCD stages, and they used a variety of KT activities to engage team members in the process. Engagement activities included the following:

- A 4-week orientation was held through an online Moodle® classroom to support the onboarding of project partners. The orientation helped project partners become familiar with all aspects of the project. It involved a blend of teleconference calls, webinars, online discussion forums, and organized information sharing and training.
- A 2-day orientation was held in person. Curriculum development teams were formed, and a facilitator led the teams in a situation analysis. This included a stakeholder analysis, a curriculum fit analysis, and exploring how the curriculum may be applied in particular settings or situations. The teams identified the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum, along with opportunities and threats, of implementing the curriculum in different settings. This involved identifying the realities of both the implementing institutions and the environment that the curriculum could influence.

- During weekly webinars and teleconference calls, the curriculum development teams discussed the types of courses that would meet the needs and wants of stakeholders. They reviewed existing curricula to identify useful content, determined adaptations needed, and assessed the need for new content. Finally, the teams developed a framework for creating the curriculum outline.
- A one-day meeting was held in person with the curriculum development teams to establish procedures for the curriculum content development.
- A sponsored reception was held at the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) conference to gather feedback on the initial project naming and design from stakeholders outside of established curriculum development teams.
- Teams continued to meet weekly through teleconferences and Slack to develop detailed content. During these meetings, the teams created curriculum learning outcomes, developed specific content, and organized the structure of the content for the web-based, multimedia delivery format.
- The facilitators shared a collection of useful concepts and content that curriculum development team members had posted on Slack, Flickr, and Facebook.

In Year 3, researchers began the fourth step of the PCD process (implement and evaluate the curriculum) by forming a partnership with four other CILs in the United States to pilot-test both HCL curricula. The pilot teams met with research staff each week through teleconference calls and used Slack to give feedback on the new web-based curriculum delivery platform, share participant responses to the curriculum content, offer suggestions for the workshop facilitator training content, and recommend changes.

In Years 4 and 5, research staff secured eight CIL sites to implement and evaluate both HCL curricula. Evaluation sites will participate in a 1-day, in-person orientation and training session. Research staff will meet weekly with the selected CIL sites to provide

evaluation support and technical assistance, and they will continue to gather feedback on program implementation and suggestions for change and improvement.

## Dissemination Activities

Research staff distributed HCL project information throughout all phases of the project through the following methods:

- APRIL conference presentations
- HCL website
- HCL promotional videos
- HCL promotional brochures
- Blog posts
- Monthly HCL eNewsletter
- Facebook
- APRIL email blasts
- Promotional merchandise (hats, stickers, sunglasses, cell phone stands)
- HCL snapshot documents summarizing topics covered during each workshop session
- HCL program Information sheets

## Impact

The tools and activities used to engage CIL partners and other stakeholders in creating the curricula led to feedback and contributions that shaped the HCL program. The Curriculum Development Teams produced significant concepts, design, and content, and consumer participants provided valuable feedback.

The effectiveness of the KT activities used in this project has been, and will continue to be, tracked or measured through the following:

- Qualitative interviews with CIL Development Team members and research staff
- Usage reports from Slack indicating the number of conversations, shared documents, etc.
- Evaluation of HCL program adoption and impact
- User satisfaction surveys with HCL program (e.g., consumers, organizations, facilitators)
- HCL eNewsletter subscriber feedback
- Feedback from HCL Facebook followers
- Use of Flickr content

## Lessons Learned

- Building relationships is important for sustaining the PCD process. To respond to the different project stages, changing CIL partners, and local community contexts, researchers used a variety of engagement tools and strategies to build and maintain these relationships.
- The most successful KT tools and activities built trust among researchers and CIL staff, fostered open and frequent communication, promoted sharing of ideas and content, connected CIL partners with one another, and facilitated the collection of knowledge, experiences, and stories from consumers (for example, through video and written testimonials).
- Having a partnership with APRIL and an APRIL staff member on the HCL Leadership Team acted as a knowledge broker between RTC:Rural researchers and the CIL network was key to establishing and building relationships for successful execution of the PCD process.
- Challenges in using the KT tools and activities included lack of technology knowledge, comfort, familiarity, and accessibility; the ability to form strong development teams and working groups from a distance, and maintaining momentum across PCD stages with multiple project stakeholders over the years.

## References

Taylor, P. (2003). How to design a training course: A guide to participatory curriculum development (First ed.). Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.

## For Additional Information

**Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities  
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