

Fostering Research Collaborations Training Toolkit – Workshop Brief

This document and the associated resources have been developed to help other organizations use and adapt the training materials designed to facilitate the workshop **Fostering Research Collaborations at the Graduate and Postgraduate Levels**.

I. Introduction

“Knowledge exchange” refers to a combination of strategies through which research can help drive societal and cultural impacts. The process involves collaborations with various stakeholders, from industry partners to community members. Effective knowledge exchange encompasses a spectrum of skills related to communication and partnership development that can be implemented at any stage in the research process.

Graduate students and postdocs have much to gain from learning about knowledge exchange and implementing its strategies. For those who wish to stay in an academic context, establishing competency in research communication and partnership development can help strengthen the ethical perspective in

the design of research methodologies, greater capacity to drive positive change, and the potential to develop lasting partnerships with non-academic organizations.

For early-career scholars considering job opportunities other than the professorial track, knowledge exchange can provide tangible skills in key areas such as project management, facilitation, communication. Knowledge exchange involves careful consideration of various kinds of expertise and organizational structures. For scholars who have limited experience beyond academic contexts, knowledge exchange offers concrete networking strategies as well as a new way to consider a wider range of applications for their research.

II. Context

On February 26, 2020, the [UBC Knowledge Exchange Unit](#) offered a workshop entitled Fostering Research Collaborations at the Graduate and Postgraduate Levels to UBC graduate students and postdocs to help develop their skills in knowledge exchange. The workshop was provided in partnership with the [UBC Public Scholars Initiative](#), a program that supports graduate students to engage in public scholarship as an integral part of their doctoral dissertations.

This document and the associated resources have been developed to help other organizations adapt and use the training materials designed for this workshop.

Components of the Fostering Research Collaborations Toolkit:

1. **Workshop Brief** (this document):
An overview of the workshop components and suggestions for adaptation.
2. **Slide Deck**:
The content of the original workshop presentation.
3. **Facilitator Guide**:
Instructions to design, coordinate, and facilitate the scenario activity component of this workshop.

III. Workshop Components and Suggestions for Adaptation

The *Fostering Research Collaborations* workshop was composed of multiple parts, separated by 15-minute breaks (please see Slide 3 of the associated Slide Deck). Any of these components could be rearranged or modified to suit another organization's specific needs and objectives. The table below provides suggestions for adaptation.

Knowledge Exchange Overview Presentation (Slide Deck)

30 minutes

Our presentation content spoke to the following learning objectives:

- Identify goals and challenges for engaging with a range of collaborators, partners, and stakeholders
- Use open-ended questions to begin a dialogue with partners, collaborators, and stakeholders
- Situate partners, collaborators, and stakeholders within a pathway to positive change

Workshop designers may wish to adapt this deck to provide information about their organizations, contextualize their learning objectives with appropriate examples, and incorporate any material provided by guest speakers.

When adapting these materials for your organization, please make these changes:

- **Slides 4 and 5:** remove or replace with information about your organization and mission
- **Slides 10-21:** include slides provided by (or co-developed with) a faculty guest speaker
- **Slide 38:** remove or replace with names and information about your guest panelists

Resource note: The Slide Deck has been provided separately. Please adhere to terms of use when adapting this material.

Insights from an Assistant Professor

1 hour

We invited an Assistant Professor from our organization, Dr. Omar Swei, to speak to his experiences with research collaborations throughout the different stages of his career as a graduate student, postdoc, and faculty member. Participants benefited not only from Dr. Swei's expertise, but also from hearing a faculty member discuss tangible, real-world examples of our core learning objectives.

Other organizations planning similar activities might want to look for a guest speaker within the organization who can relate to the challenges that participants may be facing. The goal here is to garner insights from someone who has been “in the same shoes” as the workshop participants.

Resource note: Dr. Swei provided a brief set of slides specific to his experience and presentation content. Workshop designers should work with their invited speakers to determine whether slides are required and, if so, what content should be included.

Scenario Activity

2.5 hours

The scenario activity created a safe space for participants to practice respectful engagement with potential partners, collaborators and stakeholders.

Resource note: Please see the Facilitator Guide for details.

Lunch with Guest Panelists

1 hour

We invited our guest panelists early in order to give them time to engage with workshop participants informally before the more rigid panel structure. We sat each guest at a different table with a group of workshop participants, and we put the workshop participants in charge of introducing that particular guest at the start of the panel.

Guest Panel

1.5 hours

Our three panelists were representatives from local organizations who had experience partnering with our university in various ways. When considering who to invite to a panel such as this one, the planning organization might think about bringing in people who have complementary insights to the participants and the guest speaker above. A not-for-profit, for instance, could bring in researchers working in academic contexts, representatives of other kinds of organizations entirely, or a mixture of guests with complementary expertise.

We provided our panelists with three high-level questions in advance that tied directly to our learning objectives. The remainder of the panel was an open Q&A with participants.

Resource note: Our three questions are included at the end of our Slide Deck and can be modified to your objectives and panelists' expertise.

IV. Facilitation Tips

The development of this workshop yielded a number of lessons about facilitation and ideas for future development. Here are some key takeaways:

- Use a self-assessment tool (e.g. the [KT Pathways Tool](#) developed by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research) to clarify participants needs in advance and show that you are engaging directly with their interests
- Provide frequent breaks (rule of thumb: 10 minutes/hour)
- Alternate between presentations, guest speakers, and interactive activities in order to keep participants engaged, always making sure to return to the learning objectives
- If you are working with other facilitators, provide them with a detailed agenda and prompts in advance
- Invite participants to come early to get oriented. Ask a colleague to greet them and answer any last-minute logistical questions. This will allow the participants to get to know each other, and enlisting help will enable you to focus on preparing for the event.

V. Acknowledgements

This material was developed by the UBC Knowledge Exchange Unit within the Vice-President, Research and Innovation Office at the University of British Columbia, with support from Research Impact Canada through the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre. Please cite our work when circulating this document and associated resources.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Knowledge Exchange Unit
VP Research & Innovation

innovation ubc

We would like to acknowledge the Public Scholars Initiative and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research for their critical contributions to the workshop's content and delivery.

Public Scholars Initiative: PSI is a UBC initiative that supports graduate students who have committed to incorporate knowledge mobilization and build authentic partnerships within their doctoral project. Our workshop was integrated into their existing workshop series.

Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research: MSFHR is British Columbia's health research funding agency and a leader in knowledge translation and exchange in the province and beyond. The Knowledge Exchange Unit benefited from the MSFHR Train-the-Trainer Program to design the workshop and roll out the KT Pathways Tool with participants.

We would also like to thank all the speakers and participants who took part in the workshop.

This project was funded by The Conference Board of Canada through the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.

Any omissions in fact or interpretation remain the sole responsibility of Research Impact Canada. The findings do not necessarily reflect the views of the Future Skills Centre, its funder, or its partners.

Future Skills Centre is a partnership of Ryerson University, The Conference Board of Canada, and Blueprint.