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Planting the Seeds for Change: A Case Study from York University's Knowledge Mobilization Graduate Student Internship Program

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Abstract

This practice-based article describes the academic and non-academic outputs and outcomes of community-academic research collaboration. The collaboration began with a university-sponsored knowledge mobilization internship. A doctoral student spent four months as a knowledge mobilization intern with a youth shelter. With additional funding, the internship evolved into a multi-year collaboration that positively influenced employment opportunities for local youth workers, the shelter's economic stability and reputation in the local community, young people's sustained transitions out of the shelter, and academic growth and development on the part of the doctoral student.

There is consensus in the literature on community-engaged scholarship that community-academic collaborations have the potential to stimulate positive social change (Pearlman & Bilodeau, 1999; Roche, 2008; Research Triangle Park, 2004; Office of Community-Based Research, 2009). The term "engaged scholarship" encompasses any strategy or activity that fosters engagement or collaborative relations across academic and non-academic settings. Community-informed, collaborative, and participatory research approaches are central to engaged scholarship, but engagement – in its broadest sense – is not limited to research-related activities. Service-learning opportunities, bridging organizations, resource and asset-sharing structures, community-academic colloquia and knowledge sharing ventures, capacity-building opportunities, shared advocacy initiatives, and public forums/debates represent other activities that can contribute to mutual learning and engagement across institutional settings.

The literature is less clear about how specific engagement strategies engender positive social, cultural, economic, or environmental change. For example, while the implementation of a service-learning component in a post-secondary education program is seen as a way to institutionalise a partnership between an academic institution and a community organization (Eckerle-Curwood, 2011; Vazquez Jacobus, Baskett, & Bechsteinb, 2011), questions remain about the impact of students' short-term involvement in community settings. Service-learning opportunities require significant investments (for training and supervision) on the part of community organizations. A short-term commitment between a student and an organization does not necessarily engender the conditions of mutual trust (Pearlman & Bilodeau, 1999) that are required to support impactful change (Northmore & Hart, 2011).

For senior graduate students (e.g., doctoral students embarking on their dissertation research), however, short-term involvement with a community organization can set the stage for ongoing collaborative research and the generation of mutually beneficial knowledge. With sufficient funding (Austin, 2003; Cherry & Shefner, 2004; Flicker & Savan, 2006; Israel, Schultz, Parker, Becker, & Adam, 1998; Lantz, Viruell-Fuentes, Isreal, Softley, & Guzman, 2001) and support from a community outreach partnership center or community engagement office (Cherry & Shefner, 2004; Hart & Northmore, 2011; Northmore & Hart, 2011), collaborative relationships between graduate students and community professionals can indeed influence positive social change.

This article explores the impacts of a 16-month (2007–2008) research and knowledge mobilization partnership between an emergency shelter for youth and a doctoral student at York University. The collaboration began with a four-month knowledge mobilication internship, which was coordinated and sponsored by York University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit. Subsequently, the doctoral student received a Can-

ada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which allowed the collaboration to continue beyond the initial internship.

York University's knowledge mobilization internship is distinct from traditional service-learning opportunities. The internship has an explicit emphasis on the co-production of knowledge relevant to community and academic purposes (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006); it is a paid work opportunity, rather than a credit-based learning opportunity; and it expressly targets graduate students. While the internship program differs from traditional service-learning opportunities, it also seeks to accomplish some of the same objectives. The internship program provides graduate students with an opportunity to: apply theoretical and/or research knowledge in a workplace setting, provide a service to the community, and learn with/from community professionals and community members (Hynie, Jensen, Johnny, Wedlock, & Phipps, 2011). While service-learning opportunities and paid internships both fall under the umbrella of engaged scholarship, they employ distinctive mechanisms in support of engagement between community and academic stakeholders.

The Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University provides services to faculty, students, and their non-academic research partners that support collaborations and the co-production of research so that research can inform decisions about public policy and professional practice (Phipps, Jensen, & Meyers, 2012; Phipps, 2011). The staff recognises that the long-term impacts of knowledge mobilization are not always immediately visible to stakeholders. In order to capture the wider impacts of the knowledge mobilization internship program, staff members have been following up with internship participants in order to engage them in discussion about the immediate and longer-term effects of their collaborative activities. One key observation from these follow-up discussions is, while internships have resulted in scholarly outputs (e.g., conference presentations and academic articles) on the part of graduate students, the outcomes (i.e., local changes) and impacts (i.e., broad social changes) of collaborative activities are experienced in the communities where the internships were situated. The internships represent one of a number of drivers of a particular social change.

As such, qualitative research conversations are an effective means for capturing the various social, economic, and political context features, which also influence the efficacy of any collaborative endeavor.

This paper conveys the non-academic and academic outcomes of a knowledge mobilization internship and subsequent collaboration between Nichols (York University) and Walter Johnstone, executive director of the Youth Emergency Shelter of Peterborough in Ontario, Canada. It explores the wider influence of the collaboration on the economic stability of the shelter, training opportunities for community college and undergraduate university students, labor market conditions in the youth sector, and life outcomes among young people who are homeless or precariously housed. It concludes with key recommendations for a) graduate students; b) leaders of community-based organizations; and c) university knowledge mobilization or engaged scholarship units.

Assessing the Impacts of Knowledge Mobilization

Traditionally, knowledge transfer refers to the dissemination and uptake of research knowledge in policy or practice – that is non-research – settings. More recent conceptualizations of knowledge mobilization reference the multidirectional exchange of knowledge between diverse stakeholders (e.g., institutional decision makers, researchers, community members, policy makers) (Bennett & Bennett, 2008; Nutley, Walter, & Davis, 2007; Cooper & Levin, 2010). The York University knowledge mobilization internship program was intended to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange processes between faculty members, graduate students, and people who work in community, non-profit, or non-governmental organizations. The organization also brokers relationships with government and private sector organizations.

The knowledge mobilization internship program has been in existence since 2007. Each year, the university funds a number of these graduate student internships in community and non-profit organizations, hospitals, public institutions, and environmental organizations. The goal is to develop students' research and knowledge mobilization capacities, while simultaneously fulfilling the knowledge needs of various non-academic sectors. To date, the internship program

has supported 40 graduate student internships in a wide variety of organizations. A recent evaluation of the university's knowledge mobilization programs (Hynie et al., 2011) indicates evidence of knowledge co-creation between faculty, students, and non-academic partners. Non-academic partners increased research skills as a result of partnership activities. Students report gaining a variety of new skills and, in some instances, increased labor market participation. The increasing numbers of applicants for the internship program indicate increased interest in knowledge mobilization among academic and non-academic partners. Moving forward, evaluation participants expect to see further returns from their participation in the internship.

A review of the literature on assessing and supporting university-community engagement reveals few standardized assessment tools or outcomes-focused evaluations (Hart & Northmore, 2011). While university benchmarks and performance indicators have been developed to measure socio-economic and cultural contributions, these have not yet been linked to a systematic evaluation of community-engagement strategies/activities. Further, the benchmarks fail to adequately capture community perspectives on evaluation activities. Hart and Northmore (2011) suggest that the paucity of outcomes-based evaluation of engagement may be linked to timing. A long-term timescale would be required to capture higher-level institutional outcomes and broader social or community-level impacts.

In contrast to community development, which is understood as service to/for the community, community engagement is a reciprocal relationship based on reciprocal social, political, and institutional relations (Pearce, Pearson, & Cameron, 2007). As such, evaluating engagement requires more than a quantitative (numeric or economic) measure of the work. Pearce et al. (2007) suggest that rigorous qualitative methods (i.e. interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and questionnaires) as well as the implementation of simple output data-collection systems can be effectively used to track engagement outputs over time.

In order to explore the longer-term effects of the knowledge mobilization internship program, the executive director of Research & Innovation Services at York University (Phipps) has been conducting follow-up telephone interviews with former knowledge mobilization interns and the community, non-governmental, or non-profit agencies with whom they worked. In June 2012, Phipps, Johnstone, and Nichols engaged in a conference call to talk about Nichols' 2007 knowledge mobilization internship with the Youth Emergency Shelter. The focus of this conversation was the changes, which Johnstone and Nichols observed as a result of their collaborative activities. Subsequent sections of this paper explore the various changes Johnstone and Nichols attribute to the internship and the additional 12 months of collaboration that followed it.

Shared Goals for Collaboration

A clear description of the internship's central problematic – that is, the research and knowledge mobilization issues it sought to address – is central to our ability to convey the project's impacts. In Ontario, Canada young people are considered "independent minors" when they live outside the care of parents or guardians and are between 16 and 18 years of age. Until they are 16 years of age, the province's child protection system is responsible for providing care and guardianship to young people who require permanent or temporary care outside their familial homes. Once they are 18 years of age, they are no longer considered minors. The two-year gap – between 16 and 18 years of age – is a particularly vulnerable time for young people.

Services for youth have been designed for young people who live with, or have the support of caregivers; services for adults are not designed to accommodate the learning curves of newly independent youth nor their urgent and evolving service needs. Where services for independent minors exist (e.g., the Ontario Works [OW] social assistance system has an application process designed for approving and monitoring funding for applicants/beneficiaries who are between 16 and 18 years of age and live outside the care of a parent or guardian), the application and monitoring processes require considerable institutional literacy on the part of applicants. Further, service utilization requires that young people adhere to strict eligibility criteria and engage in relations of compliance with service delivery organizations. For example, in order for young people to maintain their eligibility for OW, their school attendance records and bank accounts are monitored to ensure ongoing eligibility for benefits. In addition, they must

attend regular meetings with an OW worker as well as bi-weekly monitoring meetings with a community service worker (Nichols, 2008; forthcoming).

Establishing Grounds for Collaboration

Nichols started doctoral studies in 2006. She wanted to engage young people in a social change-oriented investigation of public and social services, which began with their experiences living as independent minors in the community. Her goal was for young people to engage in participatory research in the institutional settings where they were actively attempting to get their needs met. In this way, they would learn how the different systems worked and point to specific policies and programs that do not work for youth living independently in the community. When a call for applications for a four-month knowledge mobilization internship came across her faculty listserv, Nichols decided to look for an institutional partner with whom to submit an application.

Having just returned to live in the small city where she was raised, Nichols had limited familiarity with the human service sector and relied on social networks to make a connection to a local youth-serving agency. A family friend and professional colleague offered to introduce her to the executive director (Johnstone) of the local youth shelter (The Youth Emergency Shelter [YES]). Nichols met with Johnstone and explained the nature of the internship. She shared her own research interests and asked whether Johnstone had research, policy, or program needs that a knowledge mobilization internship could support.

Right from the start Johnstone and Nichols sought to identify mutually beneficial target outcomes – that is outcomes that would satisfy Nichols' research interests and doctoral program requirements, Johnstone's fund-seeking needs, and their shared desire to influence better institutional outcomes for young people living outside the care of parents or guardians. Young people's ineffective engagement with human service institutions is an issue that many youth-serving professionals identify impacting the life outcomes of young people who are homeless, street involved, and/or precariously housed. In addition, staff at the shelter had been collecting demographic data during shelter intake processes (i.e., where a young person requests admittance

at the shelter), but these data had not been collated or analyzed. As such, the data were not being used to support the shelter's ongoing fund-seeking work. Johnstone identified that the organization and analysis of internal data would be an additional outcome he would like to see from a knowledge mobilization internship.

Nichols went home that night and began writing a research and knowledge mobilization plan that would address the following questions: 1.Who is accessing the Youth Emergency Shelter, and for how long? 2. What other institutions are shelter residents engaging? 3. What knowledge do residents have about accessing social, public, and community services? How can this knowledge inform service provision? 4. What knowledge do residents need to more positively facilitate their engagement with social services and/or various public institutions?

The internship was intended to generate knowledge that would increase the efficacy of young people's engagement with human service organizations. Johnstone and Nichols hoped the internship would be a catalyst for knowledge mobilization among young people and between young people and service providers. The ultimate goal was to use this knowledge to support better social outcomes among young people who are homeless or precariously housed.

Collaboration Facilitators: Funding and institutional support

Johnstone and Nichols were awarded four months of internship funding in the spring of 2007. Also in the spring, Nichols received a three year doctoral fellowship, which would begin that fall. In order to support Nichols' ongoing academic writing and conference participation and the time needed for her to establish trusting relationships with shelter staff and youth, she and Johnstone planned for her to spend three days per week at the shelter for four months and then continue to spend two or three days per week throughout the fall term.

In the end, the partnership proved so fruitful that Nichols remained deeply involved in shelter activities as a volunteer researcher, grant-writer, program-developer, and staff educator until the end of the following summer, 2008. At this point, Nichols began a two-year term as a volunteer board member on the shelter's board of directors. In the next sections, we recount the details of partnership activities – that is, the collaborative

process – and explain how these activities led to key outcomes and ultimately created impact in the community.

Collaborative Activities

Collaborative activities began with relationship building between Nichols and shelter staff, youth, and administration. Nichols shadowed the shelter workers and learned from them about their interactions with youth. She participated in the shelter's recreation program, going climbing at the local climbing gym with youth and serving as a volunteer lifeguard for a youth summer day program. The first four months enabled participant observation and key informant research on the part of Nichols. All of these research activities were grounded in ongoing discussions with Johnstone and other professional leaders in the community (e.g., senior leaders at the local Youth Services Organization).

During interviews with shelter workers, Nichols discovered that one of the workers was already aggregating the shelter's intake data. These data were then made available to Johnstone for his fund-seeking purposes. Interviews with shelter workers also fundamentally shaped how research findings were mobilized. Shelter workers expressed concerns that the shelter no longer provided programming to support life-skills learning among youth. As such, they observed what they described as a "revolving door syndrome," where the same youth cycled through the city's social services. Nichols discussed this finding with Johnstone, who explained how municipal funding formulas shape the shelter's ongoing economic difficulties and precluded a solution within the shelter's existing funding programs.

Using Research to Identify Knowledge Mobilization Needs and Resources

The shelter's funding relationship with Ontario Works and the city means that it receives all of its funding on a per diem basis (i.e., when a bed is full). Further, the funds that it receives only cover two-thirds of the cost of an occupied bed. A relationship with the local child protection agency (the Children's Aid Society or CAS) makes up for much of this funding shortfall. At the time of the internship and subsequent collaboration, the shelter provided temporary and semi-permanent housing to the region's "hardest to house" youth in CAS care. In order to reserve the shelter's entire first floor for CAS-involved youth, CAS

paid for the beds whether they were occupied or not. The relatively stable nature of this funding allowed the shelter to ensure that there were at least two paid shelter staff at all times. But neither CAS, nor Ontario Works funding were enough to pay for programming for youth. As such, placement students from the local college or university, volunteers, and other local service providers (e.g., public health nurses) offered programs and activities on an ad hoc basis.

All of the shelters across the province are funded using the same formula (although most will not have the additional influx of funds from child protective services). In order to provide more than a bed and a meal, shelters have to engage in extensive program-based fund-seeking work. Given that Nichols had studied Revenue Canada legislation for charitable organizations and Ontario's non-profit funding regimes as part of her master's thesis work, she and Johnstone determined that they should collaborate on a research proposal to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The goal was to seek support for a life-skills learning program for shelter youth, a need identified by the shelter staff as previously mentioned.

Nichols began by examining existing programs and assessment devices. In most instances, standardized paper-based life skills evaluation tools were used to assess young people's knowledge of predetermined life skills (e.g., whether a youth knew the correct temperature for ironing a cotton shirt). Given Nichols' preliminary research (e.g., participant observation and in-depth interviews) with youth at the shelter, she could see that existing assessment devices would not elicit robust descriptions of young people's knowledge. A multi-paged, pen and paper-based assessment would have been excruciating for most of the youth who used the shelter. Many had not progressed very far in school and school participation became even more difficult when they were experiencing periods of homelessness or housing instability (e.g., when they had to leave the city where they were attending school to stay at the only youth shelter in the five county area it serves). A number also reported having learning disabilities. More troubling, however, was that the standardized indicators of life skills knowledge did not account for the diversity of non-standard knowledge and skills young people brought to the table, nor did they allow them to self-determine their learning goals.

In terms of existing life skills programming, most programs used a group-learning model. As with the standardized assessment protocols, instructors predetermined life skills learning objectives, and they did not take into account the diverse experiences/needs of participants. Some youth had been feeding their families since they were themselves young children. Others had been caring for younger siblings. Still others were exceptional managers of small budgets (ending up at the shelter after an eviction for other reasons, e.g., drug use). The content of the life skills programs Nichols observed did not take young people's prior learning into account; nor did the program processes attempt to mobilize knowledge among youth.

Working collaboratively with an educational assistant at the alternative school, which adjoins the shelter, Nichols drafted a summer program to support life skills learning among youth in the care of CAS. This program was rooted in the principles of experiential and peer-to-peer learning. Young people had substantial opportunity to collectively determine the specific foci of their program. Ultimately, the outline for this summer program was transformed into the Transitioning Life Skills program, an individualized life skills program designed for each youth and carried out between a young person and his or her mentor

The assessment process involved an interview with a program coordinator, a role Nichols took for the first few months. The interview revolved around a series of conversation topics. Young people were invited to share their prior learning, experience, and goals for a number of life skills areas (e.g., education, healthy relationships, housing, cooking, and healthy eating). The content of these interviews informed the development of individualized life skills plans for each youth.

Seeking Funds

In order to implement the program, Nichols sought three years of seed funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a grant-making agency of the Government of Canada. As a former educator, Nichols was confident in her ability to develop a sound social-educational program, but required Johnstone's considerable financial management experiences and institutional leadership to devise an appropriate financial plan for the program. A key component of the application is the development of an itemized

budget and a compelling budget justification.

Working collaboratively – and with input from a Trillium granting officer – Johnstone and Nichols developed a financial structure intended to produce a self-sustaining program within three years. The shelter would sell the program to local youth serving organizations (like CAS), using a fee-for-service structure. A fee-for-service structure requires other youth serving organizations to purchase the program for their young clients and would not only provide services to other clients but also provide a revenue stream to YES.

With sufficient enrollment, the program was designed to operate on a cost recovery basis. The program needed to generate enough revenue to pay for the youth mentors as well as a program coordinator. At the time of Nichols' research, the shelter had no frontline leadership positions. There were frontline staff and an executive director, but given the executive director's involvement in fund-seeking and managerial work, there was little ongoing professional development and mentoring of frontline staff. The Transitioning Life Skills Program was designed to a) support young people's sustained transitions out of the shelter (i.e., reduce shelter recidivism); b) provide an additional income stream for the shelter; and c) create a frontline leadership position and ensure ongoing training for staff.

Collaborative Outputs and Outcomes
Non-academic Outputs and Outcomes

In 2008, the Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded the shelter $130,000 over three years to support the development and implementation of the Transitioning Life Skills Program. Johnstone and Nichols requested diminishing funding over the three years to support their goal of creating a self-sustaining program (due to increased numbers of fee-for-service clients) by year three of operation. In 2008, a program coordinator was hired, and fee-for-service contracts were established with the local CAS. Over the next four years, Ontario Works, the John Howard Society, Peterborough Youth Services, and other CAS agencies purchased the program for their young clients, effectively turning the Youth Emergency Shelter into a social enterprise. The Transitioning Life Skills Program and a work skills development program led to the shelter being named one of the province's success stories in the 2008 Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Service's, Breaking

the Cycle, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/breakingthecycle/index.aspx).

A 2007/2008 Shelter Newsletter featured an article on the Transitioning Life Skills Program with excerpts from an interview with one of the first youth (Max) to participate in the program. In the article Max describes how he and Nichols – who was voluntarily acting as the program coordinator – "talked about whether I knew how to cook, if I knew about budgeting, if I had all the things I would need when I moved out." Max explained that he "already knew about most of those things"; he went on to identify that what he "really need[ed] to know is how to keep my friends out of my house." As such, he and his mentor created a plan for how to deal with someone who doesn't want to leave his place. If his plan doesn't work, he can call his mentor. "There is support there when I need it," Max said, which was different from other programs he has participated in.

Although the program coordinator position has not been able to be sustained beyond the three years that were funded by Trillium, the shelter has employed program leaders, who act as youth mentors as well as team leaders, but without all of the additional responsibilities of the coordinator's role. Fifteen youth workers (graduates from local community college programs) have been employed as mentors in the program, and the program has served 120 youth to date. These youth workers gain meaningful one-on-one youth work experience – experience that differs considerably from much entry-level frontline work with youth (e.g. traditional shelter work and group home work).

The shelter has not evaluated the outcomes of the program, but Johnstone indicates that he has observed two central changes resulting from implementation of the program. The first change is that young people develop close relationships with shelter staff in general, and their mentors in particular, that support their positive navigation of life's "hiccups." While the Transitioning Life Skills Program did not end recidivism, it has created a framework for supporting young people's sustained transitions out of the shelter. It also reduced the average length of stay in the shelter from 37 to 28 days. While former shelter residents do contact the shelter in a crisis situation (e.g., seeking respite from an abusive partner), this brief stay or meeting is seen by the youth

as one piece of a larger plan to remain living independently in the community. Johnstone notes that the goal of ending recidivism came from staff; youth, on the other hand, want caring adults and community supports that they can access over the long term. The program has addressed youth's desires for accessible supports and caring adults. The second change is in the quality of the staff seeking employment opportunities at the shelter. Many child and youth work positions offer limited opportunities for youth workers to engage one-on-one with youth. Yet it is in the context of their one-to-one relationships with youth that youth workers describe observing the biggest changes among their clients. As such, child and youth workers with considerable experience have elected to work in the Transitioning Life Skills Program as a way to connect meaningfully with youth and see the day-to-day effects of their work. Recognizing the value of these opportunities for staff, Johnstone sought to include placement students from the local college social services programs in the Transitioning Life Skills Program.

The placement students job-shadow youth mentors, develop and lead programs and workshops, and participate in staff meetings. Upon graduation, the strongest placement students are offered employment opportunities as paid mentors within the program. In this way YES has created a training ground for potential future employees who are more prepared for shelter and youth work and has created a pool of more highly qualified personnel, benefiting not only YES but other social service agencies as well.

Academic Outputs

During her doctoral studies, Nichols published three article that convey findings from her research at the youth shelter. In 2011 she defended her doctoral research – an applied institutional ethnographic research project on service provision for homeless youth – and her dissertation won her faculty's annual award for Best Doctoral Dissertation. Since then the research has informed an additional article, which has been submitted for peer review, as well as two forthcoming chapters in edited volumes. She also has a forthcoming book with the University of Toronto Press. Her doctoral research findings inform her teaching practice as an instructor of pre-service teachers and shape her continued research on the coordination of education and

other services for at-risk youth and community academic research collaborations.

Contributions to Social Impact

The collaborative relationship between Johnstone and Nichols, supported first by York University and later by the government of Canada, led to the creation of a social entrepreneurial venture that contributes to the shelter's ability to hire and retain talented staff. It has also increased its public profile as a key provider of education and social supports – not just a bed and a meal – for homeless youth. YES has recently received $60,000 funding from Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities for the program, and Johnstone is currently undertaking discussions with another agency in Ottawa about the possibility of replicating the program there. The program has opened up a new funding stream for YES beyond the OW funding.

Additionally, the program offers young people a structure through which to pursue ongoing learning in the context of their rapidly evolving lives. Because of the close relationships they develop with their one-on-one mentors and other shelter staff, young people return to the shelter throughout their adolescence and early adulthood, often just dropping in to say hello or phoning to convey an update. The presence of stable and caring adults in their lives contributes to their abilities to live independently in the community, particularly when they encounter a hurdle or just need to talk. Furthermore, the program's flexible and responsive structure has proven to be particularly effective with the community's "hardest to serve" and "hardest to house" youth. These are young people with complex social-emotional, physical, and/or learning needs. Increasingly Johnstone observes that service providing agencies are paying to have these young people participate in the shelter's holistic and individualized life skills program. This further contributes to the success of the shelter as a social enterprise. According to Johnstone, "None of this would have been possible without Nichols and the support of York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Working in partnership, community organizations and institutions of post secondary education build capacity for knowledge mobilization among graduate students. An explicit focus on learning to engage knowledge mobilization processes enables graduate students to develop skills (e.g., communication, research application, and non-profit grant-writing) that further their scholarly careers and/or prepare them for labor market participation outside of academia. At the same time, the community organizations that host the internship benefit from the additional capacity to support areas such as research, data-analysis, and/or writing where they may not have sufficient capacity in-house.

While a four-month knowledge mobilization internship may not provide collaborators with enough time to enact a mutually beneficial knowledge exchange and social change agenda, it does provide a structure for ongoing collaborative activities at the inter-institutional level – that is, between a university and a community organization. Viewed from this perspective, individual knowledge mobilization internships represent phases of collaborative activities between the university and the community. Graduate students have an opportunity to apply their academic training and theoretical knowledge, and community organizations benefit from the students' grounding in current theoretical knowledge and/or increase their organization's capacity to generate/apply research.

As this article illustrates, internships also contribute to significant collaborative benefit when the collaboration extends beyond the four months of the paid internship. For graduate students hoping to engage in community development work or community-based research, the knowledge mobilization internship is a way to build relationships with various community leaders, learn about community members and practitioners' research needs/desires, and co-develop a collaborative research agenda. For community organizations wanting to engage in evidence-based program development and/or grant-writing, a long-term relationship with a senior level graduate student can generate fruitful outcomes.

This article concludes with key recommendations for a) graduate students; b) leaders of community-based organizations; and c) university knowledge mobilization or engaged scholarship units.

Graduate Students
- Be prepared to compromise. In order to meet the needs of a community

agency, the people it serves, and your university's degree requirements, you will need to be flexible in your research plans, timelines, and deliverables.

- You will learn more than you teach. Practice humility and openness in your interactions with community members, practitioners, and organizational leaders. They have much to teach you.
- If you want to pursue a community-engaged research agenda, consider doing an internship as a pilot project or a relationship building exercise with a community organization.

Leaders of Community-based, Non-profit, or Non-governmental Organizations
- Take seriously this opportunity to mentor the next generation of community-based researchers and knowledge mobilizers. Graduate students are primed for learning. A service-learning or internship opportunity represents a chance to train graduate students to work respectfully and responsively with community and provides access to potential future employees.
- Each discreet internship or service-learning circumstance represents an opportunity to build and sustain links between a community organization and an institute of post-secondary education. Rather than viewing an internship or service-learning opportunity as a one-off activity, these activities are more fruitfully understood as opportunities for ongoing collaboration for mutual benefit.
- Feel free to engage directly with your local university engagement unit and find out about the types of services it offers and opportunities for participation in knowledge exchange activities.
- Knowledge mobilization activities including internships is a way of accessing academic research to inform new programs and services and contribute to improving the lives of your stakeholders and constituents.

University Knowledge Mobilization Units
- Paid internships are important opportunities for graduate students to apply their academic training in non-academic settings. Research assistantships support graduate student development as researchers; knowledge mobilization internships support their development as users and translators of research knowledge and prepares them for valuable careers outside of academia.
- The coordination and oversight of a successful internship program is paramount to its success. A productive internship process is facilitated when the university offers training and supports for graduate students, coordinates payment, and ensures accountability to knowledge mobilization work plans.
- Knowledge mobilization is a process that supports research and knowledge based collaborations. Some of those collaborations produce innovative outcomes that have a beneficial impact on the lives of clients. Knowledge mobilization is a process that enables social innovation.

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