

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (COOPER ET AL, 2018)

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION NETWORKS IN ACTION: A SCOPING REVIEW OF RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

OBJECTIVES

This scoping review, led by the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, was commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education, Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch (ERESB)ⁱ, to lay the foundation for a developmental evaluation (DE) of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research/ Réseau d'échange des connaissances pour la recherche appliquée en éducation (KNAER/RECRAE). The goal of the DE team is to support the work of KNAER stakeholders through collaborative approaches to evaluation including: clarifying motivations for collaboration, fostering meaningful relationships, developing a shared understanding of the program, promoting participatory processes, monitoring and responding to resource availability, monitoring evaluation progress and quality, promoting evaluative thinking, and following through to realize use. We propose a framework, emerging from the current body of empirical evidence, to understand research-practice partnerships (RPPs) in education, and to explore the wide range of knowledge mobilization (KMb) activities happening across the KNAER secretariat, Math, Well-Being, Equity, and Indigenous knowledge networks. Our intent is that this review will spark discussion and support a broader consultation process with KNAER stakeholders around network learning using evaluative thinking.

SCOPING REVIEW

1. What are the theoretical foundations (terminology, rationale, frameworks) for research-practice-policy (KMb) networks?
2. What empirical research supports research-practice-policy networks as a basis for professional learning?
3. What methods and metrics are being used to evaluate the impact of KMb networks?
4. What are the key messages from previous research on KMb networks?

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

5. How can other research-practice-policy networks initiatives inform our evaluation and provide guidance for exploring the potential challenges and impacts of KNAER initiatives?

METHODS: 5 STAGE PROCESS ADAPTED FROM ARKSEY & O'MALLEY (2005)

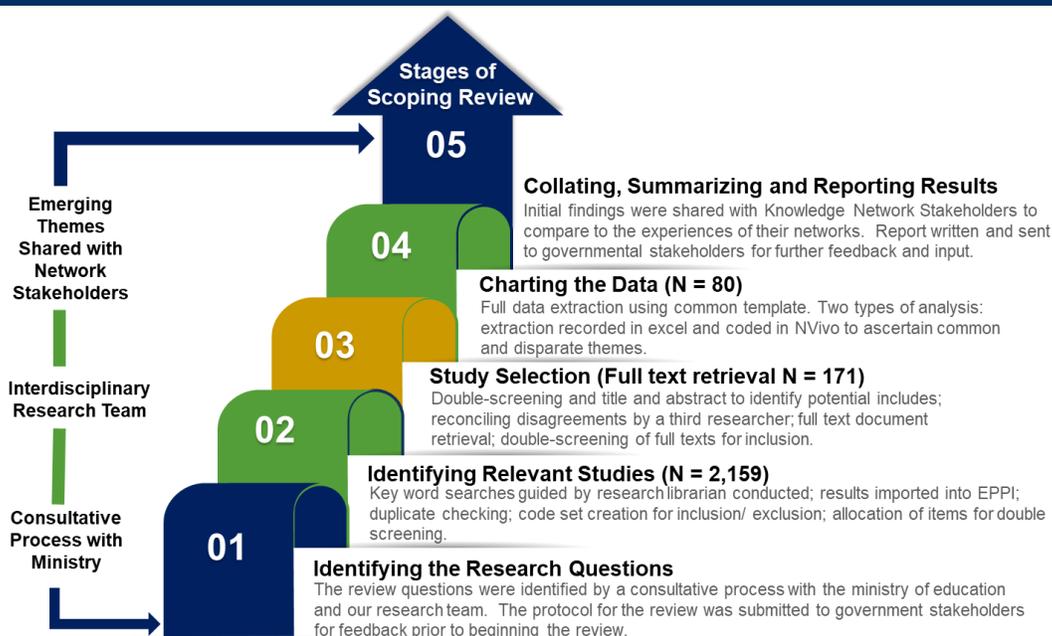


Figure 1. Five Stage Scoping Review Process (adapted from Arksey & O'Malley, 2005)

ANCHORING TERMINOLOGY (COBURN, PENUEL, & GEIL 2013) ARISING FROM REVIEW

- Research-practice-partnerships (RPPs): “Long-term, mutualistic collaborations between practitioners and researchers that are intentionally organized to investigate problems of practice and solutions for improving district outcomes” (Coburn et al, 2013, p. 2).
- Coburn et al (2013) identify 5 defining characteristics of RPPs:
 1. **Long-term:** Partnerships are collaborative arrangements that develop over multiple years, and partners have an open-ended commitment to working together.
 2. **Focused on problems of practice:** Partnerships are focused on addressing matters of concern to educator and community partners, rather than solely on developing theory and knowledge.
 3. **Mutualistic:** Partnerships address the needs and goals of all partners.
 4. **Intentionally organized:** Partnerships have established practices for making decisions together, designing innovations, and conducting research together.
 5. **Produce original analyses:** Research to address questions of mutual interest to educators and researchers informs ongoing joint work of the partners.

RESEARCH-PRACTICE-PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK (DEVELOPED BY COOPER ET AL 2018)

We propose a framework for understanding the organization and work of RPPs emerging from our scoping review. At the core lies shared goals, co-production, and multi-stakeholder collaboration organized around three dimensions: 1) Systems and Structures, 2) Collaborative Processes, and 3) Continuous Learning.

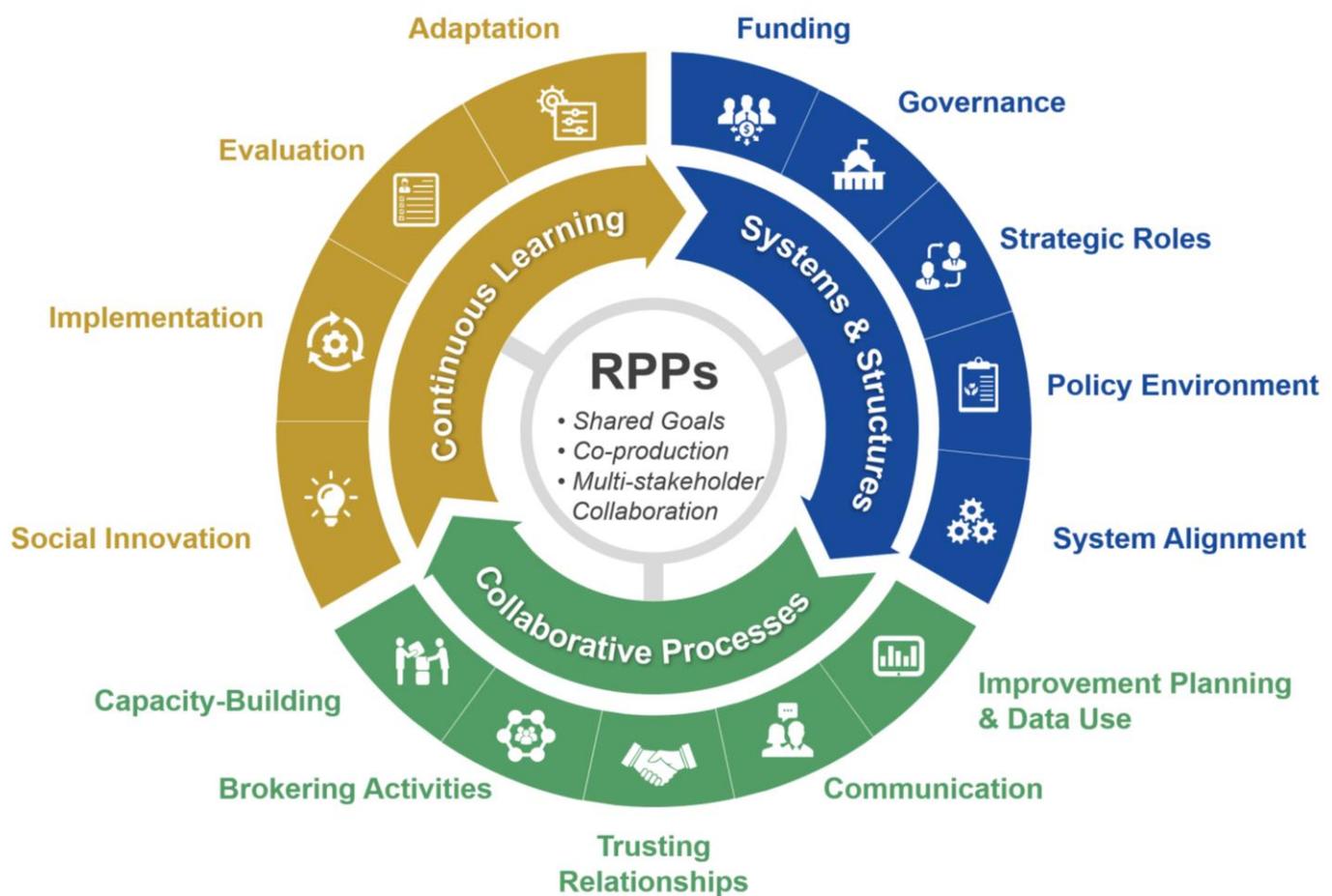


Figure 2. A framework to explore the organization and work of research-practice partnerships across three dimensions: systems and structures, collaborative processes, and continuous learning.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

The scoping review uncovered two noteworthy evaluation frameworks to measure networks. Please note - Not all dimensions identified apply to KNAER, as KNAER networks have an explicit focus on KMB rather than conducting research.

HENRICK ET AL (2017) FIVE DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR RPPS

- 1 Building and cultivating partnership relationships
- 2 Conducting rigorous research to inform action
- 3 Supporting the partner practice organization in achieving its goals
- 4 Producing knowledge that can inform educational improvement efforts more broadly
- 5 Building the capacity of participating researchers, practitioners, practice organizations, and research organizations to engage in partnership work

KOTHARI ET AL (2011) INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

1. PARTNERSHIP DIMENSIONS: Communication, Collaborative research, Dissemination of research
2. EARLY PARTNERSHIP INDICATORS: Research findings, Negotiation, Partnership Enhancement
3. MATURE PARTNERSHIP INDICATORS: Meeting information need; Level of rapport; Commitment

KEY LESSONS

In the end, five lessons emerged for RPPs to be successful: the need to build reciprocal streets of engagement, the need to shift data use from accountability and compliance to network learning, the need to co-produce and identify specific entry points of change, a focus on capacity-building and leveraging brokers across networks, and the need to use communication as a problem-solving tool to assess and adjust innovations and implementation rather than passive reports of activities.

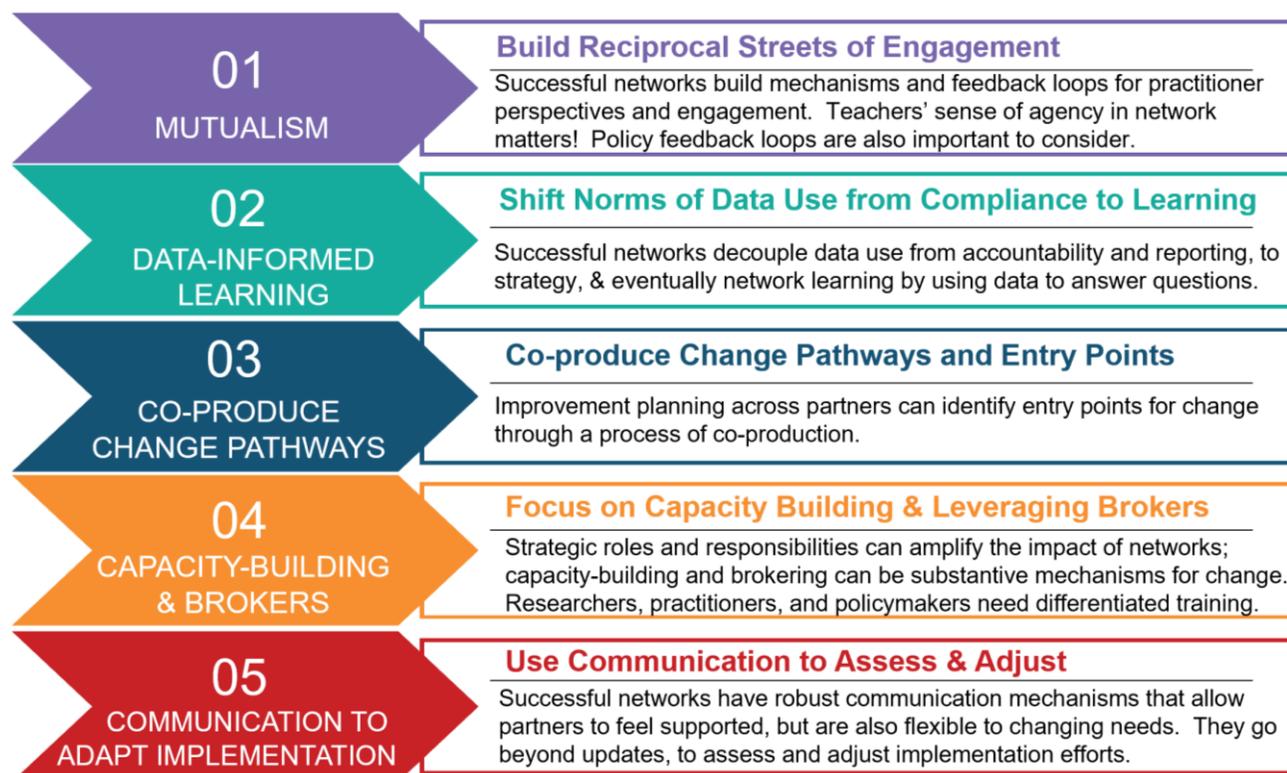


Figure 3. Emerging lessons for RPPs from scoping review.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

In the end, RPPs represent a radically different mechanism to go about knowledge mobilization efforts. And even though RPPs are resource intensive, those that ultimately benefit from these multi-stakeholder networks are the educators, students, families, and communities they serve as the best available evidence is applied to improve the education system.

Based on the framework and emerging lessons arising from the scoping review, the DE team is launching a needs assessment with the provincial networks with questions inquiring about how shared goals, co-production, and multi-stakeholder collaboration influence systems and structures, collaborative processes, and continuous learning in their respective networks. The emerging findings from the needs assessment will provide the foundation for a consultation report that will be presented to KNAER stakeholders to spark discussion and debate, and to co-produce an evaluation framework that will capture the diverse efforts and impacts of the secretariat and knowledge networks across the province of Ontario. The evaluation framework and our approach to the developmental evaluation will be modified based on consultative processes with KNAER stakeholders.

OUR TEAM

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GRADUATE STUDENT TEAM MEMBERS: Stephen MacGregor, Samantha Shewchuk, Lindsay Mainhood

If you are interested in learning more about this project or would like to receive a copy of the full scoping review research report, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Amanda Cooper, (amanda.cooper@queensu.ca).

HOW TO CITE THIS DOCUMENT

Cooper, A., Shewchuk, S., MacGregor, S., Mainhood, L., Beach, P., Shulha, L. & Klinger, D. (2018). *Executive Summary - Knowledge mobilization networks in action: A scoping review of research practice partnerships in education*. Report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Education. Kingston: Queen's University.

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ⁱ The findings and conclusions presented in this scoping review are those of the authors (Cooper et al, 2018) and do not represent the official positions or policies of the Ontario Ministry of Education.