



Scholar-Practitioner Co-creation Workshop

American University
October 9, 2025

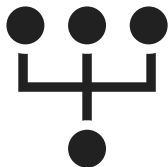
Starting the Session



Introductions

- Name
- Department and discipline
- Co-creation experience
- One question you have about co-creation

Plan for the day



Module 1. What is co-creation?
(45 minutes)



Module 2. Doing co-creation:
Tips and guidance (45 minutes)

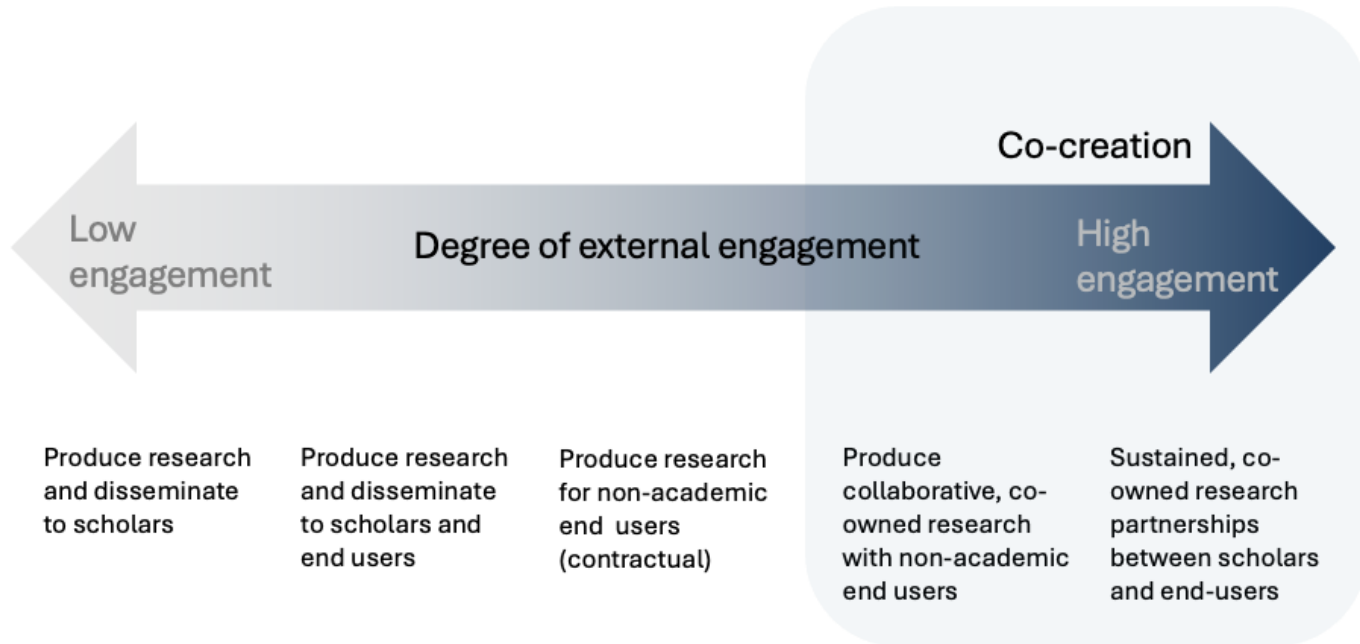


Module 3: Applying co-creation
principles: Connecting to your
research (45 minutes)

Module 1. Introducing Co-creation

Unit 1. What is Co-creation?

Co-creation on the research spectrum



Where do I sit on the spectrum?

Ask: Have I been doing co-creation?

Reflect on your recent or upcoming research. Place a post-it note on the printout of the spectrum to begin to brainstorm where you might place your current/recent research.

Core components of co-created research

- *Identify* important research questions
- *Conduct* rigorous *research* on these questions, and;
- *Engage* partners throughout the research process.



NB: All phases require engagement of some form!

Defining co-creation

“The joint production of innovation between combinations of industry, research, government and civil society” (De Silva et al (2022))

other elements to consider:

- As a participatory approach: a participatory design approach, which leverages the experiential knowledge of non-academic actors (Middel et al, 2024)
- As a form of collaborative knowledge generation: the collaborative generation of knowledge by academics working alongside stakeholders from other sectors (Greenhalgh et al, 2016)

Actors – who co-creates?

Who are the actors involved in co-creation?

- Community
- Policymakers
- Industry
- Practitioners
- Researchers
- Others...

Examples

- In pairs, review the three examples provided in your printed handouts
- For each example discuss, is this co-creation? Where might it fit on the spectrum?

Unit 2. Why do co-creation? Benefits and Challenges

What are the benefits of co-creation?

- Reflect on this question: *Why would you do co-creation?*

BOX 11 – The benefits of applying a co-design approach:

- Generation of rich and well elaborated sets of ideas with a high degree of user value
- Improved systemic knowledge of an issue or policy with better understanding of customer or user needs as well as broad benefits and impacts
- Immediate validation of ideas or concepts
- Higher quality, better differentiated products, services, or policies
- More efficient and robust decision-making
- Lower overall development costs and development
- Better cooperation between different people or organisations and across disciplines – creation of long-lived communities of purpose

What are the challenges in co-creation?

- Reflect on this question: *What challenges might I face if I choose a co-creation model for my research?*

A messy process

“Co-creation of new knowledge poses many challenges to researchers and stakeholders, particularly regarding its **“messiness”** and **non-linear approach** to implementation and evaluation. However, it has the potential to become an alternative framework of best practice for public health interventions in third sector organizations, most notably as ***it eliminates the often-lengthy gap reported between research evidence and translation into practice.***” (Pearce et al, 2022)

Tips for doing co-creation (from USAID)

Does my problem lend itself to co-creation?

Is my problem adaptive?

- i.e., when there is no readily understood solution to a problem, no shared understanding of the problem's root causes, there is scope to iterate and adapt the research process

Are my team and I committed to co-creation?

- Those leading co-creation must approach it with the right reasons and mindset, including a willingness to share information and power in decision-making and an openness to new views and approaches.

Are my counterparts willing to co-create?

Bottom line: **Co-creation requires more than one party. Sometimes, people lack the trust or incentives to share information/ideas openly. Other times, one party might be unwilling to dedicate the time to participate.**

Applying Concepts to Practice

- Imagine you plan to design a co-creation partnership in the field(s) below. Where would you begin? What would you consider? What types of research questions might you ask?
 - AI use in the college classroom
- After the discussion, reflect on what your own goals may be for your co-created work. Identify a potential goal for your co-created research.

Case Study (U.S. State Department)

- How is this co-creation?
- What principles does it embody?
- What were the challenges and opportunities of this form of co-creation in this case?

Questions?

Let's revisit any remaining questions



Coffee Break

Module 2. Doing co-creation

Unit 1. Designing research

How to Design a Co-created Project?

1. Identify research questions
2. Consider several elements:
 - Relationships
 - Funding
 - Oversight
 - Administration and logistical arrangements
3. Partnership Design
4. Research Design

How to Co-create Research Questions

- Research questions do not *only* come from existing literature
- Literature often disconnected from current empirical reality
- Cutting edge research questions focus on the empirical reality existing literature *does not* explain
- Trick: find an empirical reality that is not easily explained by existing literature but contributes to it.
 - Puzzle - “X, Despite Y”
- Some recommended practices for co-creating resources include:
 - Conducting surveys to gain feedback on questions, holding ‘consensus building’ workshops to refine research questions, using communities of practice to target potential users and feedback, polling with stakeholders to prioritize questions.
- Recommended resource: <https://www.monash.edu/msdi/research/good-questions-review/choosing-policy-relevant-research-questions>

Reflection Questions

Quietly reflect on the following questions, and then to discuss as a group:

- How do I currently design research questions?
- What might I think about or change if I wanted to explore co-creating research?
- What is a research question I would like to explore via co-creation?

Starting a Co-created Project

- Tip: If working in teams, designate 'point people' for coordination functions (from [COACCH best practices](#)). Important considerations:
 - Expectation management
 - Flexibility and iteration
- Tip: If capacity in the project, consider designing surveys to help establish goals, identify needs and interests, and inform decision-making processes on how teams can best engage (from [COACCH best practices](#)). Important considerations:
 - Access to data
 - Ownership of data
- Tip: Consider options to co-own data, to enable joint ownership of the product and potential additional follow-on products. Important considerations:
 - Deliverable types, as valued by different involved stakeholders



Unit 2. Cultivating relationships for co-creation

Reflection exercise: Mapping Partners for Co-creation

Reflect:

- Within your research agenda, who are key research and practice organizations?
- Who do you want to talk to?
- Who are the main funding bodies?
- Who will be impacted by the outcomes?
- Who will be using the outcomes?

“A key feature of successfully co-produced research is the amount of ‘advance work’ – such as building trust and revealing tensions and expectations between collaborators – that is needed before knowledge-generation begins. In fact, this advance work can have profound effects, as knowledge co-production processes are heavily influenced by the circumstances of their creation.”

-NORSTRÖM ET AL. 2020 [15]

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are they willing and committed?• Is there mutual respect?• Can you trust each other?• Do they have the capacity to partner?• Are they committed to improving conditions through the use of evidence?• Is there organizational support for the partnership? | |
|---|--|

<https://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/topic/structuring-a-partnership/>

- Reflect on the guidance and consider three potential partners you could consider for co-creation in your work
- Reflect on the questions shared about evaluating these potential partners
- Share thoughts on these reflections

Unit 3. Structuring Co-created Projects

Co-creation Design Principles

“If the point of co-creation is to spark new lines of inquiry, researchers involved in co-creation must be willing to let go of the questions they think *they* should be asking and be open to the questions that *others* think are most important.”

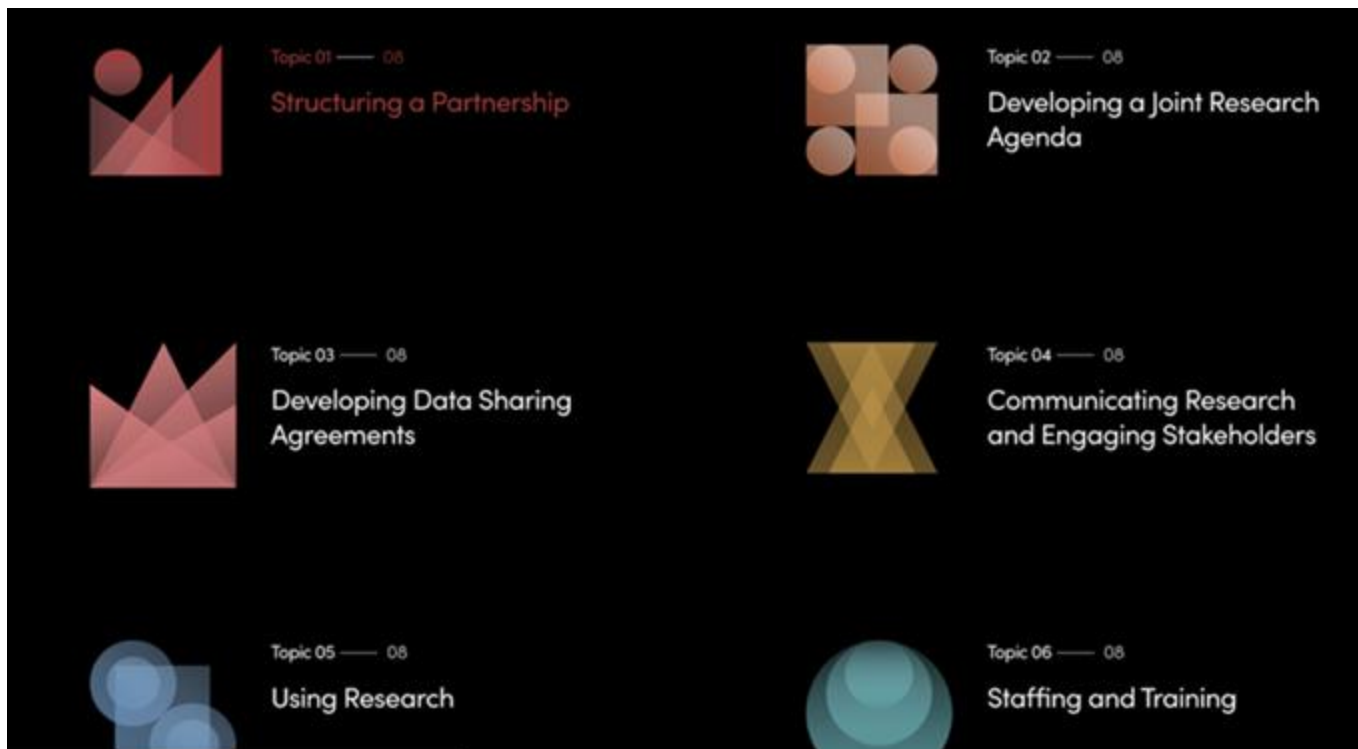
“When done well, co-creation has the potential to improve the relevance and impact of research, foster greater collaboration and understanding between researchers and practitioners, and ultimately contribute to positive change in the aid sector. But it is **time-consuming and requires patience, careful planning, regularly questioning one’s assumptions, and continuous communication.**”

[From Campbell et al](#)

Structuring your Research Project in Co-created Ways

- Structuring a partnership
- Developing a joint research agenda
- Developing data sharing agreements
- Communicating research and engaging stakeholders
- Using research
- Staffing and training

W.T.Grant Foundation Guidance



Partnership design exercise

Research stage	Non co-creation design	Co-creation design

- On the provided worksheet, imagine how you would like to design a partnership for co-creation.
- Consider research stages, what a traditional design that is not co-created might look like, and what might be different about a co-created design.

Module 3. Connecting co-creation to your research

Unit 1. Developing your co-created project

Exercise: Describe a current or envisioned research project.

Consider:

- To what degree is it co-created?
- If I am not doing co-creation, what could I change to adapt the project to involve co-creation?
- How would I apply some of the principles we discussed so far?

Considerations for Research Design

Co-creation requires:

- Centering other voices - “Scholars to bring knowledge to the table and to put the voices of others at the center...”
- High levels of communication - “Regular communication, persistence, and respect...”
- Flexibility - “Researchers to be flexible and willing to let go of their prior expectations...”
- Time - “A considerable time investment...”

Exercise: Research design template

- On worksheet, work in pairs to discuss a potential research project

BOX 5 — The five principles of co-creation for policy processes

- 1___ **Clarity of scope and purpose:** the purpose and scope of the exercise must be clearly identified and defined.
- 2___ **Focus on outcome:** expectations and expected concrete outcomes must be defined from the design stage of the event so as to enable an optimal harvesting of results.
- 3___ **Inclusiveness and representativeness:** the right participants must be selected, in terms of individual expertise, representation of all the relevant stakeholder groups and diversity of personal backgrounds for an optimal development of collective intelligence.
- 4___ **High-quality, tailored process:** the design of the event must be tailored so as to best serve the purpose and not be the slave of orthodoxy with regard to standard tools. Preparation and resources should be allocated for the smooth implementation of the process and the harvesting and analysis of the results.
- 5___ **Systemic perspective:** this is essential for understanding the positioning and dependency of the issue at stake on external factors, for connecting the parts to the whole with all the sensibilities involved and maintaining coherence of action.



Unit 2: Presentations and Reflections



Exercise: Research Design Poster

On the poster, share key takeaways from designing your research, which can include:

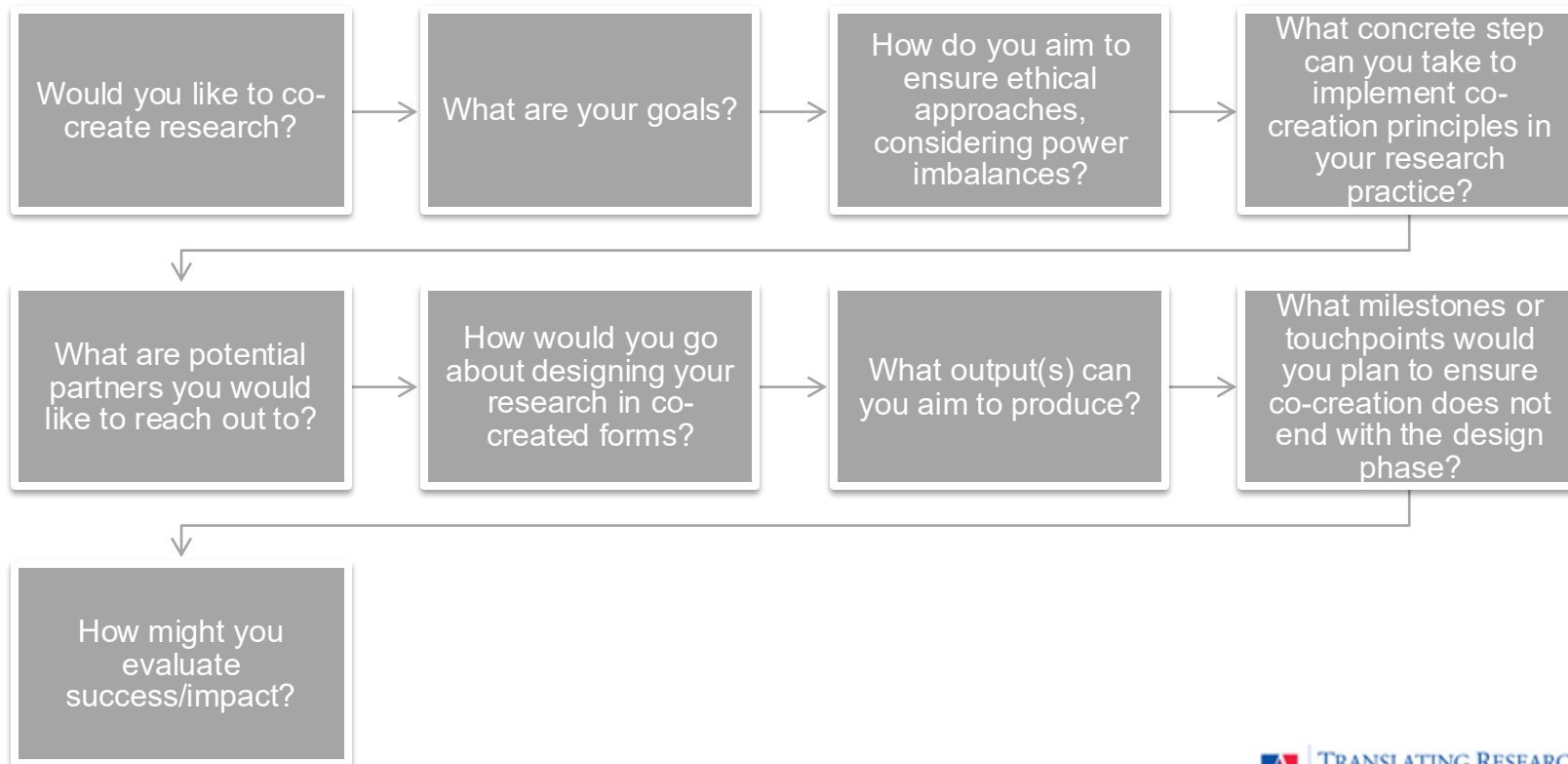
- Research question
- Potential partners
- Research design
- Research products
- What would success look like?





Reflections and Conclusions

Questions you can ask in your research going forward



Closing

Co-creation and my research

- Revisit your reflections from the start of the workshop, where might you fall on the spectrum?
- Remaining questions or comments?
- One action item (or multiple!) you plan to implement?