

Does a structured framework enhance engagement?

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Introduction

Access to evidence and practice knowledge is an important precursor to best practice health care. This is also true in palliative care. However, while availability is a necessary requirement it is not necessarily sufficient to ensure reach into, and uptake by, intended audiences.

This is particularly critical for virtual projects where opportunities for incidental interaction with intended audiences may be more limited. Intentional engagement with intended audiences is one mechanism to identify ways that could increase awareness, use and interaction with evidence and resources.

Since 2008, the CareSearch website has been providing online palliative care evidence and information to health and aged care professionals, patients, carers and families to help them make informed decisions about care at the end of life.

Each month over 100,000 people visit the CareSearch website and a further 15,000 people visit the palliAGED website. However, although well used, the project sought to understand how the context of specific target groups could influence awareness, usage and uptake of the evidence based resources relevant to them.

The aim of this study was to develop an Engagement Framework to support increasing awareness and use of CareSearch evidence and resources by three target sectors groups: Aged Care; Allied Health; and Patients, Carers and Families.

Methods

At the first engagement project meeting, the deliverables and purposes of the project were reviewed by the CareSearch Director and the External Evaluator. They agreed that the intent of the Engagement Framework was to drive and monitor the engagement activities and, therefore, the Framework was itself the first deliverable.

A literature review of approaches used in knowledge translation, implementation science, policy development and social marketing highlighted the need to understand the context in which the three distinct target groups are operating prior to bringing people together to talk about the specific issues affecting awareness and use of resources.

The CareSearch Director and the External Evaluator then met again to finalise the Framework and to formalise a template for project activity. This meeting highlighted the need for process/formative data to explore participant experiences, including staff implementing the engagement activities. Impact/summative evaluation metrics would be formulated as the Action Plans are developed. The proposed approach was then formally reviewed by the CareSearch Advisory Groups to determine its face validity.

Results

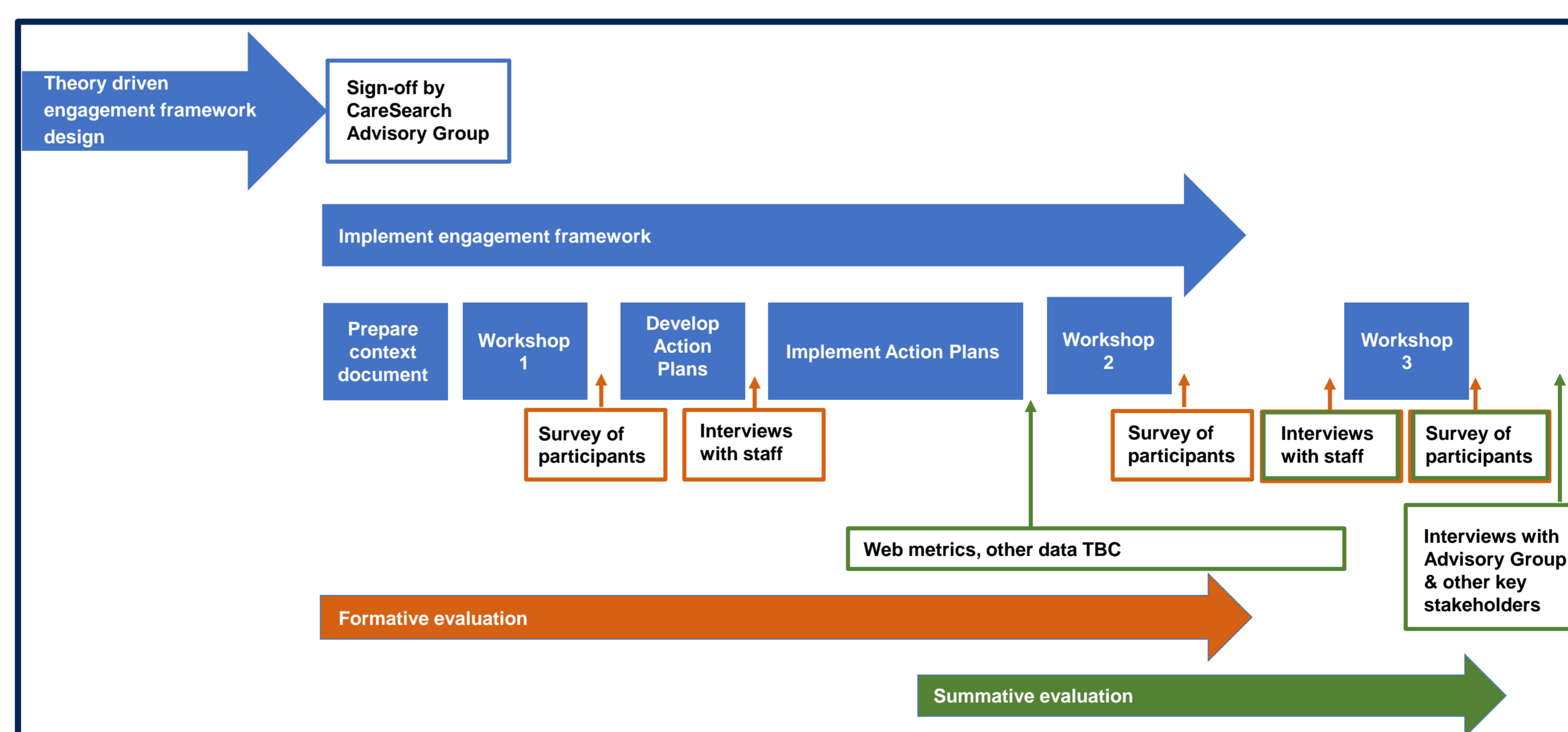
The formal Engagement Framework has been developed. Engagement activities include:

- Development of a context statement for each user group by the Project Team
- Structured recruitment of “exemplar” users for workshops to provide perspectives on value and use of evidence in their context
- Co-development of Action Plans for each user groups for implementation through CareSearch Project Team
- Assessment of impact of Action Plans, and
- Collective evaluation of effectiveness the Engagement Framework.



Conclusions

While evidence retrieval and synthesis activities are critical, we also need to address how to support the use of evidence in practice. A structured approach not only enhances the value of our interaction with intended users but provide us with the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework approach.



Finding out more

Visit the Engagement Project webpage:
<https://www.caresearch.com.au/EngagementProject>
 Email: jennifer.tieman@flinders.edu.au

