

## **Aging research and design thinking: How interdisciplinary collaboration and stakeholder engagement can drive trainees' research impact**

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### **Abstract / Résumé**

Aging research is increasingly seeking to solve complex challenges in a context where discovery to implementation and impact may take decades. Design thinking is an approach to problem solving that can accelerate impact by incorporating multiple perspectives, including those of interdisciplinary colleagues, stakeholders and end-users (including older adults), into research development and implementation.

The objective of this study was to measure the research impact for 26 trainees (graduate students and postdoctoral fellows) who received funding and in-kind support from a central aging research institute for at least one year over the course of a five-year period (2017-2021). Trainees had varying uptake of these approaches to their aging research.

Trainee respondents completed a survey that asked about interdisciplinary collaboration and design thinking approaches, including engagement with older adults, caregivers, and other stakeholders.

Here we describe how these approaches were related to patterns in trainee success; trainees whose funded research involved more new collaborators - both within and outside of their discipline - reported more publications, conference presentations and invited talks associated with their research. Further, qualitative responses to survey questions regarding the impact of interdisciplinary and stakeholder interactions describe how trainees were able to make adaptive changes to methods, variables included for analysis, knowledge translation and implementation strategies.

We conclude that, in this sample, trainees who engaged in greater interdisciplinary and stakeholder engagement had greater research impact, as measured via traditional academic metrics and more nuanced assessment of knowledge mobilization and implementation

### **References**

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