

Co-creation as a Learning Model in a Continuing Education
Program in Community Engagement:
Consideration of Process, Experience, and Impact

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Co-creation means that we challenge and nurture each other through learning. We observe our own assets and needs, we work to understand the same of our colleagues, and we work to create a plan that has me challenging others to learn from my skills/ knowledge/ experiences, and has my co-learners challenging me to learn from theirs. It is multi-disciplinary. It requires strong leadership to help us understand and participate in this process. It is not the academic culture that most of the co-learners, myself included, have ever experienced before.

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Table of Contents

Background	2
Methodology	4
Findings	5
Conclusion	13
References	14

Background

The Leadership in Community Engagement (LCE) program was launched by Hamilton's McMaster University Centre for Continuing Education in October 2016. Offered to working professionals in the urban setting of Hamilton and neighbouring communities, the aim of the program is to provide participants a foundational understanding of community engagement philosophies, practices, and skills to build their capacity in knowledge, skills, attitudes and networks.

The LCE program was developed in response to a need for formal community engagement learning opportunities in Hamilton. Community engagement is a process through which organizations and individuals build sustainable relationships so that they can foster positive community change (Community Engagement, 2014). It is also a professional practice field of increasingly importance in Hamilton, Ontario. Catalyzed by the findings of the 2010 Hamilton Code Red media series which revealed dramatic divides in the social determinants of health across the city's neighbourhoods, various community-based organizations and initiatives have addressed these disparities in the post-2010 window. In 2011, the President of McMaster University Dr. Patrick Deane delivered a statement called *Forward with Integrity* which has served as a public commitment to the principles and practices of community engagement including the establishment of McMaster University's Network for Community-Campus Partnerships and re-orientation of the Centre for Continuing Education.

A 2015 study of community engagement professionals in Hamilton found a remarkable balance between formal training and years of experience practising community engagement. This circumstance has enabled practitioners to draw on each other's formal training and practical experiences. The study also identified a need for and interest in formal learning opportunities as a response to the range of educational backgrounds among community engagement practitioners (Wingard, 2015). While various Canadian universities offer programs with a community engagement focus, community engagement professionals come from diverse educational and other backgrounds, and many of the aforementioned programs require a prerequisite undergraduate degree (Wingard, 2015). Moreover, the 2015 study found that individuals working in community engagement in Hamilton are interested in professional development opportunities (Wingard, 2015). All considered, there was and continues to be a need for flexible and responsive university programs for those who work in community engagement who may or may not have a post-secondary degree. The LCE program is such a program in that it is an open enrolment program consisting of five Senate approved courses. The credits earned through the program can be presented for elective credits within degree programs in the School of Social Sciences at McMaster University.

The development of the LCE program was a collaborative effort. Beginning in 2015, representatives from the Hamilton Community Foundation, the Neighbourhood Leadership Institute, McMaster University Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), and Faculty of Social Science and School of Social Work at McMaster University have worked together to develop an academically rigorous and Hamilton-specific program. In the context of the study reported here, these organizations are called the program initiators. The Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton Legal Clinic, the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, the Social Planning and Research

Council of Hamilton, and the City of Hamilton were the key community partners consulted during the development of the program.

A co-creative learning environment is a distinguishing element of the LCE program. Students in the LCE program are referred to “co-learners” due to the co-creative pedagogy used in the learning process. Student engagement can be described as “serious interest in, active taking up of, and commitment to learning” (Bovill, 2011). When individuals take an active and participatory role in learning, the process and outcomes of learning are improved (Bovill, 2011). Benefits include the emergence of meaningful rather than rote learning experiences, breakdown of power differences between students and instructors, encouragement for learners to take greater responsibility over their learning, and opportunities to engage in critical thinking (Barnett, 1997; Freire, 2003). Bovill et al. (2011) further suggests that active learning creates a shift from doing to awareness of why something is done.

In a co-learning environment, both the teacher and student are involved in seeking and providing feedback, experimenting with alternative strategies, and learning from such experiences. Given these emphases, a co-creative pedagogy is valuable in adult higher education, and particularly in learning about community engagement as it mimics the professional environment. Beyond the classroom, community engagement professionals work together to improve the social and economic well-being of their communities. Through co-creative practices, they become active participants in the evolution of their communities (Wells & Bryne, 1999).

Despite the importance of evaluation in higher education and the extensive work done at universities to evaluate specific courses and programs, there is little evidence of the evaluation of the process of developing and delivering courses in which co-creation is a defining component. Thus, McMaster’s LCE program offers a novel area of exploration for two reasons. First, a non-traditional co-creative approach was taken to program planning and delivery. Second, the approach used in the development and delivery of the program brings an authentic cross-section of individuals to the educational table. For these reasons, the development and delivery experiences associated with this program comprise an important subject for study.

From Fall 2016 to Spring 2017, 82 co-learners took part in various courses offered through the LCE program. As the first academic year for the program reached its end, it was an opportune time to reflect on the process used to design the LCE program and the experiences of program initiators, community partners, and co-learners. More specifically, the goal of this research project was to understand how a co-creative spirit and educational strategy impact individuals involved throughout the process and to identify areas for improvement. Moreover, these findings may also benefit the field of continuing education more broadly especially emerging co-creative learning initiatives.

Methodology

Research Questions

A qualitative research methodology was used in the study with two research questions driving data collection. The questions were the following:

1. How does the co-creative experience of the LCE program affect those involved in the process from conception/near conception to delivery?
2. How does the co-creative learning experience of the courses in the LCE program affect co-learners and the Hamilton community and other communities represented in the program?

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the McMaster University Research Ethics Board. Financial support was provided by the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education.

Data Collection

Four stakeholder groups contributed data: program initiators, community partners, course facilitators, and co-learners. Program initiators included those involved in the conceptualization, design, and delivery of the program. They were invited to semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and were asked about their roles in the program, their experiences, and their feedback on the co-creative approach. A one-on-one interview was chosen to elicit program initiators' unique experiences and insights.

Second, community partners who were actively consulted during the design of the program design and who encouraged their staff to participate in the program were invited to a focus group. Participants were asked about their experiences contributing to the development of the program and their perceptions of the impact of taking part in program on their employees. A focus group design was selected to enable community partners to reflect together upon shared experiences.

Course facilitators and co-learners who had participated in one or more LCE courses were invited to complete co-learner and facilitator-specific surveys made available through LimeSurvey. Facilitators were asked to share their experiences and feedback on a co-creative approach to program delivery.

Co-learners were asked to share their experiences of the co-creative model and the degree to which they perceived their participation to impact their professional practice. An online survey method was chosen to maintain anonymity and confidentiality and to reach as many participants as possible.

All prospective participants were invited to the study through an emailed letter of information, with reminder emails as needed.

Following data collection, survey transcripts were downloaded from LimeSurvey while interviews were transcribed using the Rev.com transcription service. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were protected by storing all identifying information -such as contact information and transcripts in the secure online file storage called MacDrive.

Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately and then cross-referenced. The qualitative data derived from the interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey questions. The quantitative data included responses to the close-ended survey questions.

The quantitative findings led to descriptive results pertaining to the participants. As well, in select cases, quantitative findings supported the qualitative findings although the sample was too small to suggest causal relationships. The quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel software.

In relation to the qualitative data, two members of the research team reviewed the data separately and then together in order to discern participants' co-creative experiences and to make meaning of the co-creative process in the context of the LCE program. Thus, an inductive analysis strategy was used. Qualitative data were coded with the support of NVivo 11.

Once the qualitative and quantitative datasets had been separately analyzed, they were cross-displayed in order to discover relevant themes as well as situations of convergence and tension in the data.

Findings

All six program initiators agreed to participate in the study. They included representatives from the Hamilton Community Foundation, McMaster University's Centre for Continuing Education, the Neighborhood Leadership Institute, and McMaster University's School of Social Work.

Three community partners representing the Hamilton Legal Clinic, Hamilton Public Library, and the City of Hamilton took part. Due to difficulties coordinating a common meeting time, only two community partners were interviewed together.

Three facilitators completed the survey, while another shared her answers during an in-person interview. Thirty-seven of 82 co-learners for a response rate of 45% participated in the survey, with 21 completing all questions.

The majority of participants were located in Hamilton. The group's experiences in community engagement were diverse and often longstanding. Some participants wore several "hats" during the project. For example, two program initiators were also facilitators, and a number of community partners were also co-learners

In the final analysis of the data, five principal themes emerged. They are discussed below with supporting quoted text.

Theme 1: The definition of co-creation in program development evolves

All participants felt positively about the use of a co-creative approach. While it presented challenges, the benefits outweighed them. Co-learners, facilitators, community partners and program initiators valued the opportunity to voice their needs, expectations, and questions and to feedback that then informed the delivery of the program.

During the program development stage, thinking and decision making based on a diversity of perspectives added richness to the program. In turn, the program became relevant to diverse co-learners. Though participants in the study may have held an idea of what co-creation entails before their involvement with the LCE program, their perceptions evolved over time based on events that occurred during the program development process and the blending of team members' experiences, knowledge, and biases. Components of the class structure and curricula sometimes changed from the initial expectations of the program initiators.

Based on the participants' responses, co-creation occurs when people with a variety of standpoints, experiences, educational backgrounds, and perspectives come together with a shared purpose. For example, a community partner shared that collaboration with the team revealed how the skills they practice in their day to day work are, in fact, unfamiliar to people working in different professions or communities. As such, this information, according to the participants, should be included in the courses.

Program initiators, facilitators and community partners repeated that being comfortable with change and ambiguity is an important ingredient to successful co-creation. One program initiator explained this idea in the following way:

The concept of co-creation is about entering into a process without a preconceived idea of what the outcome is going to be, and instead being open to a variety of different people's ideas so that you are actually creating something together - not just bringing people together to realize your personal or institutional vision of whatever this is supposed to be. – Program Initiator

As partners with multiple commitments entered the project at different times and others “parachuted in and out” for particular tasks, the team evolved based on a number of factors including types of contribution made by different members, their level of involvement, and the varying levels of connectedness and relationship across the team. Even within the program initiators group, the level of involvement varied: some initiators contributed to specific tasks such as curriculum development and brokering of institutional relationships, while others were involved from program inception to delivery. In this changing setting, flexibility and creativity with expectations and tools of collaboration were important so that partners did not feel disconnected. It was challenging but essential to maintain ongoing communication with all partners as the work unfolded and especially so when the work became intensive. Time was taken to ensure that new team members were welcomed, updated, and supported. One program initiator stated the following:

[Partners'] frequency [and intensity] of participation is going to shift and change over time, and so part of our work together was to be flexible to allow that ebb and flow of people in and out of the process. That is easier said than done because having people shift and change in your group as you're doing such intensive work can be disruptive. - Program Initiator

Additionally, a program initiator shared that it would be beneficial to be more aware of who was “on the other tables” and that certain processes had occurred without the involvement of all members of the group. Based on this observation, transparent communication across the entire team and not just among those involved specific tasks is significant:

Personally, I don't know what other conversations were taking place. Maybe I didn't need to know. I'm sure I didn't need to know and I'm sure whoever needed to know knew. In the end, it would be nice to know because it's like - do we have consistent feedback? Are all of the views the same Are there views that have been taken into consideration or not? - Program Initiator

In this busy and changing setting, ongoing focus on the core values of co-creation was essential. During program development, program initiators and community partners came to the table with certain institutional expectations and assumptions. For example, partners were not solely motivated by a belief in co-creation. For the most part, they were motivated by desire to provide a rigorous and high quality professional development opportunity for their employees. Constant negotiation, reflection and compromise were needed to balance differing institutional values to realize a shared focus.

Although institutional partners were familiar with a more structured approach to embarking on a project in which concrete deliverables are articulated beforehand, in this co-creative context, team members encouraged one another to “sit with the process” (Program Initiator), consult the available literature and best practices guideline, and seek one another's input as way of informing next steps. This approach was, at first, challenging for some team members. However, trusting relationships between team members achieved largely through previous experiences of collaboration enabled the team to “take a risk” together. Overall, the co-creative approach facilitated thoughtful use and discussion of team members' contributions and, ultimately, a more open-minded program than might have occurred otherwise. The following three statements reflect these ideas:

Pushing institutions and organizations to set aside their own goals, either personal, professional, or institutional goals, and instead listen more than they talk and be open to the unexpected is an important skill to grow in our community partners. It builds resilience, and it inspires creative innovative thinking in a way that gets people out of their day-to-day work. - Program Initiator

Co-creation is ... more about the discussion around the table as opposed to any one dictated position. - Community Partner

Co-creation is listening, coming together, meeting both principled needs, as well as the practical needs. And coming up with the best possible solution without anyone dominating, but certain people having more power or resources than others. - Program Initiator

Theme 2: Co-creation and balancing of power dynamics in program development

The use of a co-creative approach brought into focus who was at the table and who was not. Team members were committed to ensure that the voices of the program initiators and community partners were equally valued, despite differences in expertise, role, and experience. This commitment to equity enhanced the credibility and authenticity of the program: multiple points of view were respected and integrated, thus reflecting the diverse field of community engagement beyond the university. Amid institutional pressures such as deadlines, the choice of a co-creative approach is unique because it is more time-consuming and complex than program development led by an individual. It also requires the balancing of sometimes competing ideas:

We had an agreement that everyone would have the same space to provide input and feedback and ask questions, and that [partners like McMaster CCE] weren't weighted larger than other partners like the Social Planning and Research Council or the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic or Hamilton Community Foundation. Everybody had an equitable voice at the table to raise questions and share ideas. This was a cornerstone of how we made decisions. - Program Initiator

How was this equitable voice achieved? Frequent reflection and transparent communication were key components. Even though not all points of view were selected, effort was made to ensure that all perspectives were considered and validated. For example, after the launch of the first course, community partners shared ideas for various adjustments they wished to see in the second offering: program initiators and community partners reconvened, discussed the ideas, and considered how they could be incorporated. All team members valued the opportunity for follow-up and timely "real time" feedback. Observing that the courses evolved based on their feedback validated the participation of the community partners in the partnership and their valuable investment of time. A facilitator who was also a program initiator stated the following:

To be received on a really authentic level by the director of the CCE is a really big transition for me - to recognize that everybody from my first year undergrad student to the director of the CCE, is an individual, and we're all working in these oftentimes stifling and challenging to navigate institutions." - Facilitator and Program Initiator

While there was a commitment to address power differences, in certain instances, it was not fully realized and constant reflection and re-adjustments were necessary. When discussions occurred with senior members of community organizations and not potential co-learners, there may have been missed opportunities in that the expectations and learning needs of the latter group were not heard. This circumstance may have created a kind of drift from the initial goal to develop a program that is accessible and relevant for all co-learners. Although the community partners represented their front-line staff, there may have been mistranslations of co-learners'

expectations. In part, this limitation was shaped by institutional requirements which preset certain aspects of the program and made communication with potential co-learners difficult. Furthermore, two community partners felt that, in addition to contributing to, the higher level goals of the program, it would have been helpful for them to review or build some of the program content based on their knowledge of relevant tools and professional experience. In short, as suggested above, constant reflection and re-adjustment were needed to maintain a focus on shared goals:

When you are working with such a diverse range of people, you are continually working within a complex system that is always shifting and changing. Sometimes I feel like we get closer to the idea of equitable voice and decision making, and then at other times we have to stop, take a moment, remember why we're doing this, and then re-adjust. - Program Initiator

Theme 3: Co-creation, relationship changes, and stakeholders

Flexible and open relationships were identified as important to collaboration. In the case of the LCE team, they were facilitated because of the cohesive nature of the team. Team members demonstrated openness to the ambiguity of the project and ability to adapt to working with different people in perhaps different ways than in previous settings. Team members also brought their respective expertise to the project including expertise in curriculum development, the practice of community engagement, and knowledge of the learning needs of those who work in community engagement. Practical strategies such as regularly scheduled in-person meetings, email updates, opportunities to provide feedback, and clarity about roles and expectations were employed to maintain team cohesion.

Two principal kinds of relationship presented in the data and are discussed below.

(i) Relationships and Community Partners

The co-creative approach asked team members to listen first and be grounded in the collaborative process, often over individual goals. This orientation required creativity and flexibility in how ideas are conceived and implemented, especially given the multiple roles that partners held. The principle of reciprocity was essential in these relationships. Team members expected to contribute to program development, while also gathering networks, education, and or recognition for their own institutions or communities. For example, organizations affiliated with McMaster University benefitted through their demonstration of their responsiveness to community needs. While the main goal was to develop the LCE program, reciprocity was critical in addition to acknowledging that all partners contributed their time, expertise, and ideas:

Everybody wants to make a better Hamilton, a better community engagement experience for the people who are doing the front-line work, as well as the residents they're working with. But the other agenda is we all wanted to do the right job for our own institution.... for the Neighborhood Leadership Institute to really be well regarded and supported, and... CCE to be established as a more community facing organization. - Program Initiator

Team members' willingness to listen to feedback encouraged open relationships with a rich exchange of ideas:

I found that McMaster was very open of critical comments and praise. There was no wall put up for anything. So they appreciated any and all comments. -
Community Partner

Program initiators and facilitators shared experiences of receiving and dealing with strong feedback from community partners. This circumstance was evidence of openness to receiving feedback, and underscored how important directing feedback to the right people through respectful processes is in a program like the LCE program:

Both from an education position, as well as from a community engagement position, I was receiving feedback that I knew needed to be addressed, but I was in an awkward position. No, I wasn't in an awkward position ... [I struggled to understand] where is my role in this, and how do I bring that forward and help facilitate it? - Program Initiator

(ii) Relationships and Post-secondary Institutions

In the LCE experience, the co-creative approach is grounded in teamwork, and guards against individual gains and traditional approaches to program development. This positionality meant challenging common understandings of a "successful" program such as a program defined by the amount of revenue generated. At times, the pressure to manage institutional expectations posed a threat to the values that define co-creation and the overall goals of the program to support and enhance community engagement. For example, a facilitator described how that the traditional university focus on replicability and standardization of courses was challenging. S/he believed this rigidity went against the value of a community engagement course being responsive to diverse learners and facilitators. The following two statements reveal this tension:

There've been interesting moments where [different] cultures, the corporate culture of CCE, the academic culture of the university, the fraught political cultures of the community partners, and then the grassroots ethic of community engagement, come together in really sticky ways. - Program Initiator

I would like to move away from those things, but then there's policies and there's staff that are driving us back towards those things. It's challenging." - Program Initiator

According to the participants, it was necessary to "break the rule" at times. That is, the team strove to innovatively align with institutional rules rather than aggressively go against the rules. The dedicated leadership of "institutional champions" helped facilitate a positive environment for a co-creative process. The institutional champions are people with connections and influence within certain institutions including McMaster University's Centre for Continuing Education and the Hamilton Community Foundation. These persons were deeply committed to the project vision and supported all member of the LCE team through mediating relationships, providing access to resources including funding and space, providing knowledge of institutional needs, and

making it possible to “break the rules.” One such institutional champion demonstrated how passion for the project made it possible for them to have the role of a mediator between the institution and the community partner:

I stayed very close to this program. Typically, there might be a hand off of once a program got going, to one of our staff members. I worried a little bit about handing it to somebody else. Is that wanting to hold on to the baby? Partially, but I think you also have to have the vision. So I don't think I'll ever step away completely. - Program Initiator

4) Co-creation and a Different Orientation to Teaching

Instructors in the LCE program are facilitators in that much of their role involves supporting co-learners as they interact and learn from one another. The facilitators who participated in the study described how designing the course experience and facilitating it were different from what they might do in a more traditional educational experiences. For those facilitators involved in the curriculum development phase, creating room for flexibility and being open to organizations outside of the academic world—such as community-based, corporate, and municipal organizations—was critical informing. The outcome of this approach meant a lessening of the autonomy of facilitators in creating the course. To integrate the varying perspectives of stakeholders, brainstorming and iterative discussions with stakeholders occurred regularly.

According to the participants, the spirit of co-creation carried into the classroom. Facilitators described how that the course “belonged” not only to the facilitator but to the co-learners. Everyone in the classroom—including the facilitator—was a learner. In addition to being experts in the subject material, the facilitators needed to be especially comfortable in allowing students to guide the content, in letting questions and conflicts arise, and working together to resolve challenges. The following statement conveys these ideas:

In the classroom, co-creation to me means techniques or strategies where people are responsible for piecing apart, figuring out and teaching each other content. - Facilitator

This approach to teaching and learning also raises some challenges. One facilitator spoke about being challenged about his or her teaching methods and how it was easy to react defensively. In turn, the facilitator also spoke about the risks of being less receptive to feedback and negating the opinions of the feedback provider. In such situations, the facilitator explained that it was necessary to pause and refocus on the values of co-creation.

It is likewise difficult to customize a course to meet the needs of diverse adult learners and support the sharing of their knowledge and experiences compared to a course primarily centered on the knowledge and skills identified as important by the instructor. To overcome this challenge, small class sizes which foster relationship building and innovative learning and assessment strategies were employed. For example, after realizing that the pre-determined final assignment would not meet the professional requirements of some of the co-learners, the facilitator decided to develop an alternate assignment together with them. As the following

statement reveals, facilitators in the program are challenged to seek input from the co-learners in their teaching and assessment practices:

A lecture would not be a suitable approach in this course whereas dialogue and problem solving were always on my mind as meaningful strategies. - Facilitator

Finally, the institutional structures did not always align with the co-creative approach. For example, a standard question in the course evaluation asks students to provide input on the instructor's knowledge in the subject area. Such questions focus on the knowledge of the instructor, and not on the knowledge of the co-learners or the instructor's skills in facilitation.

5) A co-creative learning environment, relationship building, and attitudinal changes

Co-learners reported viewing themselves as equals within the classroom. They further spoke about high levels of interaction, collaboration, and opportunities to develop confidence and discussion skills. In response to the statement "I was an equal partner in decision-making about my learning in this course" on the survey, 10 of 22 responses were "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree":

I was a little nervous heading back to the classroom after many years. This was a wonderful experience. Our participation was valued and contributed to the learning process for all. The content was excellent, but more than that, the learning atmosphere was uniquely supportive and motivating. - Co-learner

Many co-learners reported increased knowledge and comfort discussing the concepts of power and privilege, which may suggest that how these topics were discussed was particularly effective. However, there was resistance from a number of co-learners to the focus on learning about power and privilege. Further, while some co-learners reported that they did not gain much new knowledge and skills, they found it helpful to watch others experience the learning process. They also spoke about becoming aware of new resources and perspectives and gaining a better appreciation of contextual and theoretical knowledge to use in their day to day work. For example, some co-learners reported that it was helpful to have dedicated time and a relaxed environment in which to work through relevant professional struggles with others. A singular focus on discussion and collaboration contributed a feeling of accountability for each other. The co-learners were motivated to support their colleagues in their learning:

I generally am not a fan of group work, but I actually found that working in the group for the final project was one of the best ways I got to know the other co-learners, and that was where some of my best learning happened. - Co-learner

At the same time, some co-learners felt that a more traditional or didactic teaching style may have been beneficial for certain content areas. This feedback may suggest that it is challenging to foster attainment of certain skills or the "nitty-gritty of how it is to be on the ground doing the work" (co-learner) when each co-learner is focused on a unique population, and possesses different knowledge, experiences, and perspectives:

I prefer a more traditional style of learning where the instructor is an expert who facilitates learning and shares knowledge. I found that co-creation doesn't always

translate to learning in a group of professionals where everyone already has experience planning and problem solving. - Co-learner

The participants were in full agreement that new relationships were built and/or existing relationships were deepened as a result of their participation in the courses. Some participants enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate via the course work and form friendships with diverse individuals, while others carried the relationships to their professional and personal lives beyond the classroom. For others still, it was encouraging and inspiring to have access to people who can be reached out to in the future. It is hypothesized that these new and strengthened relationships will lead to meaningful collaboration between community engagement professionals and tangible improvements in community initiatives:

Networking and collaborating in the course with folks from other organizations throughout the city enabled each of us to bring institutional services to the joint table which led us to be aware of how we can work with one another after the course. - Co-learner

I have developed friendships and networks with people who work in various sectors. These relationships have increased my knowledge of what is going on in Hamilton as well as increased the number of allies within my community work. I have learned so much from my co-learners which has improved my understanding of diversity and my ability to effectively work across differences. - Co-learner

Conclusion

The LCE program incorporated a co-creative approach from the inception of the program, through its development, and during its delivery. Staying true to the values of co-creation meant listening to diverse partners, developing shared goals, taking time for frequent reflection, inviting feedback, and practicing transparent and ongoing communication. Such strategies were embraced by all team members around the LCE table. Specifically, these values led to a need for flexibility by all partners; equitable relationships; involvement opportunities for community partners outside of academia in course development; a shift from teaching to facilitating; and opportunities for relationship building and learning from multiple perspectives within the classroom.

The complex and time-consuming process of co-creation enabled tailoring of courses to the needs of community engagement professionals and supported exceptional relationship building. Its challenges included finding ways to respect the ambiguity of the co-creative process and the requirements of academic institutions. The need to be open to feedback from people from different areas of expertise and diverse standpoints also emerged as an important message. Research into how the values of co-creation have carried forward into professional practice and how relationships between team members and co-learners after courses have been completed is recommended.

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