

How Can Co-production Support the Sustainability of Innovations?

Anticipating and Bridging 'Gaps' Along the Way

Sustaining an innovation is an ongoing process, requiring constant attention to maintain relevance and functionality. Innovations often rely on external funding, leading to potential stop/start progress. Co-producers can maintain momentum during gaps and prevent stalling.

Collaborating with Existing Networks

Identify and work with established community groups and social networks rather than solely relying on project-specific teams. These enduring networks provide sustained support and are not limited by project timelines.

Valuing Stakeholder Knowledge

Recognize that the local, situated, and social knowledge of stakeholders is crucial for tailoring innovations to the specific needs and priorities of the locality to better ensure engagement and sustainability.

Engaging in Continuous Co-Production

Co-production with a diverse range of stakeholders—including service users, health and social care providers, third-sector organizations, and community groups—throughout all stages of development can contribute to sustainability.

Addressing Compensation for Co-Producers

Compensating co-producers financially can be challenging due to institutional limitations. Many co-producers contribute out of altruism and belief in the innovation's potential; appreciate that, and explore ways to acknowledge their contributions that are valuable to them.

Anticipating Lengthy and Complex Developmental Journeys

Innovations often undergo prolonged and intricate processes from conceptualisation to sustained practice. Be prepared for a non-linear path with multiple iterations involving a wide range of stakeholders and co-production work.

Respecting Social Capital

Co-producers who connect communities and research bring valuable social capital from long-term relationships of trust. Be respectful of this contribution and ensure that it is used carefully and not taken for granted.

Some examples of co-produced activities associated with sustainability

- Boundary Spanning: Bridging gaps between different communities or sectors.
- Championing: Advocating for the innovation to gain support.
- Knowledge Exchanging: Facilitating the flow of information among stakeholders.
- Transferring Ownership: Enabling stakeholders to take charge of the innovation.
- Evaluating: Continuously assessing and refining the innovation.
- Resourcing: Securing necessary resources and funding.
- Maintaining: Ensuring ongoing functionality and relevance.
- Tailoring: Adapting the innovation to fit specific contexts or needs.