

## Advancing Engaged Research Globally – Region by Region Assessing Training Needs

### Short Summary of Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada

*Coordinator: Jacqueline Melvold, University of Arizona*

#### Background

This workshop has been initiated by the TD Training Collaboratory and the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance) and created a space to explore the needs for training collaborative, engaged research from different perspectives, involving scholars, policy makers, funders, educators and trainers. It explored the status of training in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, including existing offers and organizations providing these types of training and current demands and asked participants to elaborate on desired futures and recommendations related to training to strengthen collaborative, engaged research. Three sessions were held on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 following the same objectives and workshop structure, including plenary questions and break-out room discussions. This summary includes outcomes of both sessions.

The data collected provides insights for future funding of training and trainers of collaborative, engaged research. In addition, it will serve as an orientation for a newly forming working group of the ITD Alliance on education and training.

#### Participants

In total, 112 participants were invited to attend a workshop, 57 RSVPed and 28 people attended a workshop in the three workshops (50.9% RSVP rate and 25% attendance rate). Most people who attended were from the USA (54%) and Australia (25%). The most common role of those who attended were from universities and worked as academics in research and teaching and learning roles (82%), while the most challenging role to get attendance from were representatives from funding bodies.

#### Results

To do justice to the heterogeneity of language used to name collaborative, engaged research, participants presented words or phrases used to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together and focus on complex problems. Despite a variety of terms used, the most common was transdisciplinarity (TD), followed by co-creation and action research.



### **What currently exists:**

Within the region, TD is gaining traction, particularly in the space of higher education where across all four countries there are bespoke programs that center of ID and TD undergraduate and postgraduate training. There is a desire for TD training to begin earlier (in K-12 schools) and extend beyond postgraduate courses to early- and mid-career academics, as well as reach out into government and community organizations.

### **What could be:**

The overarching vision for TD training is for it to become a cornerstone of education, research, and community engagement. This evolution will be driven by a collective realization that the complex challenges of our time—climate change, global health crises, and social inequality—could not be addressed within the confines of siloed disciplines. The journey to this future was fueled by bold reimagining of education, communication, and systemic change that is shaped by four key priorities: the role of influential organizations, fostering cross-sector collaboration, building new structures and networks that enhance the coordination and integration of transdisciplinary organizations, and embracing community-led approaches.

*What actions do you recommend for building the field or advancing collaborative, engaged research in our region? What are the highest priorities from your perspective?*

The key recommendations for advancing transdisciplinary research in the region are organized into seven priority areas: faculty development and support, student engagement and early integration, funding and resource allocation, community building and networking, awareness, communication, and standardization, strategic planning and cohesion, and expanding the scope.

*Are there specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience?*

Whilst many different organizations were named, they fell under the categories of key organizations with influence and experience (namely scientific societies and organizations, academic publishers, high education societies and global organizations), policy makers and funders, new and existing ID and TD organizations, like the ITD Alliance, and community organizations.

*Who else should be involved in building or strengthening collaborative, engaged research training?*

Building and strengthening transdisciplinary training in the region involves engaging diverse target audiences across academia, policymakers, non-academic communities, the private sector, and media; expanding collaboration beyond academia by integrating diverse perspectives and fostering ethical partnerships; ensuring cultural and organizational alignment through effective frameworks and support systems; and providing practical tools and resources tailored to the needs of early-career faculty, practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders. Several specific organizations were named, and several people were nominated, including commonly underrepresented groups, such as indigenous communities. Worth noting, was the call for TD projects to start more within communities and invite academic knowledges in, as opposed to academic communities always being the driver of TD projects.

*Responsible organizations: The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the [ITD Alliance](#), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity.*

*Regional coordinator: Dr Jacqueline Melvold is an Associate Professor of Practice and the Compton Chair of Creative Intelligence and Innovation at the W.A. Franke Honors College within the University of Arizona.*