



Virginia Tech–Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Scaling Up Participatory Action Planning to Address the Opioid Epidemic in Rural Virginia Counties

What is the background for this study?

This study evaluates two community engagement methods: the Stakeholder Engagement in Question Development and Prioritization (SEED) and a modified Delphi Method. The study works in three rural Virginia counties addressing local opioid misuse. This participatory research engages residents and local stakeholders to understand and explore the factors impacting opioid misuse in the community, develop a community driven action plan based on these insights, and explore how these community engagement processes can strengthen civic engagement.

What are the research questions?

The goal of this study is to implement an independent evaluation of the SEED Method as a community engagement tool. The research questions are:

1. What is the effectiveness of the SEED Method and the Delphi methods as approaches to community engagement, development, and prioritization of stakeholder-driven priorities?
2. How can these methods be used to improve community capacity to address the opioid crisis?

Who are your community partners?

This study involves a partnership between Virginia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Cooperative Extension, a statewide education and outreach network that uses research findings to equip Americans with the knowledge and skills to solve community problems.

How are community members engaged in the research to action process?

Researchers collaborate with local practitioners to apply results from previous participatory research in their communities. The research team engages stakeholders in the three communities to form community research teams (CRTs) that participate in the research design, implementation, and evaluation. The CRTs are trained on the SEED or Delphi methods, and lead other stakeholders through each stage of the process. An advisory board consisting of previous SEED implementers advises the research team on process and evaluation of the project.

What data and methods are used in this study?

Researchers use a randomized between-groups design to compare the SEED Method with the Delphi Method.

Study At-A-Glance

Study Title
Scaling Up Participatory Action Planning to Address the Opioid Epidemic in Rural Virginia Counties

Researchers
Carlin Rafie, PhD
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Grant Cohort 2022

Timeline 2022-2025

Study Location Blacksburg, Virginia

Study Topic Area(s)
Community Development
Health & Social Wellbeing

The SEED Method includes training and facilitation tools to help engage a diverse group of stakeholders to evaluate issues, generate research questions, and develop strategies and priorities. The Delphi Method is an iterative process that engages groups of experts through a series of individual, anonymized surveys, during which experts receive feedback that represent the “group response” and then attempt to revise their individual answers to reach group consensus. Each county has a control group and intervention group. Two of the counties implement the SEED Method and one implements the Delphi Method. Researchers then conduct a comparative analysis by participant role and site to examine the value of options for participation in community-engaged research approaches. Researchers also hold interviews and focus groups with community members, including people in treatment and recovery, to further inform the study on efforts to reduce opioid misuse.

How does this research translate to community action?

This study provides insights into what factors facilitate or hinder community efforts to reduce opioid misuse and leads to the development of a community-driven action plans. The research team also measures the extent to which participatory research approaches help build networks and relationships with organizations, institutions, and decision-makers to strengthen civic infrastructure and tackle the community-identified issue. This study also trains participants in the SEED Method and supports participants’ skill growth and community engagement.

What are potential opportunities to apply study findings and/or build on this research?

Findings from this study may yield insights into specific approaches for community-engaged action research to best address the opioid crisis or other community needs and build on previous research on the effectiveness of participatory research as an approach to community engagement.

For more information on the study:

Study Website	Home The SEED Method: An Evidence-Based Method for Engaging Communities Connect (extension.org)			
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