Planning Your Interdisciplinary Meeting

4. Linking the shared mental model to project tasks

Now that the team has reached some agreement on a shared mental model of the research problem, they are ready to begin asking what information is needed to address this problem and how should it be linked or integrated. This may or may not involve discussion of actual analyses. The team may want to develop multiple paths forward since there are diverse perspectives on every socio-environmental problem (i.e., a “family of solutions”) and each may require different types of information or ways in which it is integrated.

Prepare the team for re-engagement

- Open the morning semi-socially with a different activity from what was done the prior day
- Review the shared mental model that the team developed earlier and allow time for additional discussions and edits. Remind team that they can and will revisit this over the course of the project. It is a “living” team model.
- Introduce goals for the day and allow the team to revisit the agenda and make revisions if needed

Identify project tasks and begin work specific to the project

- The shared conceptual model is the starting point for the team to identify exactly how they will address the research problem including:
  - what types of information/data, model, or theoretical pieces are needed
  - ideally, how these will be linked and/or synthesized
- Develop a workflow or some document that illustrates the above tasks in bullets
- The above team tasks can take considerable time and are rarely completed on Day 2. In fact, they may not even be near completion by the end of Day 2 depending on how much re-meeting planning had been done. Further, additional work outside of the team meetings is usually needed to determine if the information desired is available.
- Revise the workflow and conceptual model if needed (iteratively) based on data/information availability and new findings.

Review accomplishments and assign tasks

- Using a process that is agreeable to the team, identify who is responsible for completing each task that is needed prior to the next meeting. This is an essential step and it is the leadership responsibility to follow up periodically with a phone call or video meeting to monitor each member’s progress and encourage them to move forward
- Review the assignments with all
- End the meeting with a celebration.