

SIIP Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces Case Competition

Summary Report

January 2024





SIIP SUPPORTING INCLUSION *through* INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

Supporting Inclusion through Intergenerational Partnerships Project

The Supporting Inclusion through Intergenerational Partnership (SIIP) project is a 5-year (2019-2024) project at the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA) to promote social inclusion among community-dwelling older adults living with dementia, and their care partners, in Waterloo Region, Ontario.

One of the SIIP project's objectives is to spark innovation through the "Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces" case competition event designed to raise community awareness and engage youth and community members to identify barriers and co-create solutions.

Funding for SIIP is provided by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program.

Purpose of Case Competition

The Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces case competition focused on collaborative problem-solving for real-world challenges. Community organizations and post-secondary students throughout Waterloo Region worked together to understand challenges faced by older adults, particularly people living with dementia, and create solutions to these challenges to help engage older adults living with dementia in community programming.

Event Overview

The Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces case competition was a two day event, which took place on January 20-21, 2024 at the RIA in Waterloo, Ontario.

Attendees

Representatives from four local organizations participated in the event:

Organization	Challenge
Centre for Community, Clinical and Applied Research Excellence (CCCARE)	Improving navigation in the parking lot and within the building
Green Care Farms	Challenge #1: Enhancing accessibility for the walkway to the farm Challenge #2: Enhancing accessibility for the sensory gardens
African-Family Revival Organizations (AFRO)	Facilitating easier and more accessible transportation to programs
K-W Seniors Day Program	Designing an outdoor space for programming

Twenty post-secondary students from the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and McMaster University’s Waterloo Regional Campus participated.

Guest Speaker Panel

Guest speakers - Kayla Regan, Research Coordinator and Clinical Exercise Physiologist, Brain and Body Lab, University of Waterloo, Samantha Biglieri, Assistant Professor and Director of Health Access and Planning (HAP) Lab, Toronto Metropolitan University, Rebekah Churchyard, CEO and Founder of Green Care Farms, and Kathleen Vanderlinden, person living with dementia - participated in a one-hour panel discussion about how the built and social environment in Waterloo Region is impacting people living with dementia, how to improve the environment to reduce social isolation, and opportunities to promote participation in community programming and supports.

Attendees found the panel to be very impactful and set the context for the teams as they developed their solution.

“The guest panel gave me a new perspective on the things we interact with everyday, or don’t realize how inaccessible they are, or how they could be improved. Having someone living with dementia explain their challenges really puts things into perspective.”

- Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces Student Participant

Design Thinking Process

Community organizations submitted challenges in their built and social environments that impact the accessibility and inclusiveness of their space, specific to engaging older adults living with dementia. Some of the challenges included: transportation, accessibility, signage, parking, and comfortability.

Student teams were matched with one of the organizations and tasked with creating a product or solution that addresses the organization’s challenge.

Over the two days, facilitators Mairin Scannell and Heather Thompson walked students through the process of brainstorming, developing ideas, prototyping, receiving feedback, and preparing for a pitch presentation.

“Overall very digestible, we had a bunch of ideas and narrowing them down to what we wanted to implement was helpful. The entire process was really helpful.”

- Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces Student Participant

At the end of the second day, teams pitched their idea to a panel of judges for the opportunity to receive an honorarium.

Outcome

Based on participant feedback (Appendix A), the case competition met its objectives of:

- Teaching students about the challenges that people living with dementia face in their built and social environments
 - 100% (7 of 7) of student participants agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped them gain a deeper understanding of unique challenges that people living with dementia face within our community when trying to stay connected and included.
- Teaching students design thinking skills
 - 100% (7 of 7) of student participants agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped them gain skills in design thinking (e.g., coming up with ideas, choosing an idea, prototyping, evaluation planning, budget and work planning, and pitching an idea).
- Creating ideas for how the community can be more inclusive of people living with dementia.
 - 100% (11 of 11) of student and community organization participants agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped create ideas for how our community can be more inclusive of people living with dementia.

Overall the competition was very well received by attendees with all students being satisfied and all community organizations reporting that the event met all domains of the Program Acceptability Framework¹: attitude, intervention coherence, burden of participation, perceived effectiveness, ethicality, self-efficacy, and opportunity cost.

“I enjoyed the collaboration between the students and the organization. I have learned valuable skills and brainstorming techniques.”

- Creating Dementia-Friendly and Inclusive Spaces Student Participant

Next Steps

Community organizations that participated have a chance to apply for a microgrant to implement solutions created in the case competition.

The SIIP Backbone team will incorporate lessons learned from this case competition and the Isolation to Inclusion case competition into a resource for others to use when planning a case competition.

¹ Sekhon, M., Cartwright, M., & Francis, J. J. (2017). Acceptability of healthcare interventions: an overview of reviews and development of a theoretical framework. *BMC health services research*, 17(1), 1-13.

Appendix A: Detailed Participant Feedback

Feedback from student participants

Based on student feedback, the case competition met its objectives of teaching students about the challenges that people living with dementia face when trying to stay connected and included, in teaching students design thinking skills and in creating idea for how our community and be more inclusive of people living with dementia:

- 100% (7 of 7) agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped them gain a deeper understanding of unique challenges that people living with dementia face within our community when trying to stay connected and included.
- 100% (7 of 7) agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped them gain skills in design thinking (e.g., coming up with ideas, choosing an idea, prototyping, evaluation planning, budget and work planning, and pitching an idea).
- 100% (7 of 7) agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped create ideas for how our community can be more inclusive of people living with dementia.

Things that students found Insightful or inspiring from the event:

- “How to address barriers.”
- “All of the stories from AFRO felt so inspiring and eye-opening.”
- “Depth perception problems with some building designs and the issues that can be faced with crossing the street that I’ve never considered before.”
- “I didn’t know that lack of contrast from ground to objects can cause difficulties with depth perception.”
- “The panel discussion, specifically Dr Biglieri’s research and research methods (e.g. walking interviews).”
- “I was very moved when the older woman spoke about love, emphasizing that the only thing she feels scared of is forgetting how to love. Dementia is a challenging process that gradually eliminates parts of your memories. It was very difficult for me to hear, but now my purpose in life is to be more empathic and work for the well-being of older adults, including those diagnosed with dementia, so they can have a better life.”

Favourite part of event

- “Collaborating with different individuals.”
- “Learning from guest speakers.”
- “Creating solutions.”
- “Getting to know all the members and the organizations, as well as the importance of brainstorming in divergent and convergence.”
- “Creating ideas with my group.”
- “Working with other students from different programs.”

- “My favorite part of the event was the opportunity to share with older adults because they have a wealth of knowledge for us. Having the chance to learn about their lives, the methodology selected for the event, I liked it. The person who explained the methodology did her job very well. The organization was very good.”

Recommendations for improvement

- “Maybe shorter first day.”
- “Future challenges include on how to grasp more attention from judges in presentations as well as learning more about dementia itself.”
- “Lesser time.”
- “Everything went really well, perhaps just more time allocated to creating the slides for the pitch.”
- “I would include more time to get to know your team members. I think we had 5 minutes to share a fun fact...at least half of our group did not introduce themselves and I feel like it’s harder to create the safe and trusting environment needed for design thinking with strangers. I would honestly dedicate at least 30 mins with icebreaker questions or games or something. Timing wise I think January is fine because it’s before midterm season.”
- “If I have the opportunity to organize the event, I would invite faculties from my university, not only those related to health. Sometimes, different perspectives on problems are important. I would also work on advertising to encourage more people to participate, including a diverse group of adults, including older individuals. I believe that dedicating 2 days to the activity is ideal, and perhaps placing more signs at the entrance would help when you arrive for the first time.”
- “I felt like the prompt was too specific. The prompt basically gave us the challenge and solution...like we spent the day design thinking and then I looked back at the prompt and I was like we sort of already had this.”
- "Me gustaría recibir las fotografías del evento, ya que fue una parte importante de mi vida y quiero tener los recuerdos. 'Lo único que no debes olvidar es el amor.'"
 - Translation: “I would like to receive the photographs of the event, since it was an important part of my life and I want to have the memories. 'The only thing you should not forget is love.'”

How students found out about the opportunity:

- 3 - In class from professor or guest lecture/speaker
- 1 - From a volunteer organization or volunteer coordinator
- 1 - On UWaterloo Learn (learning management system)
- 1 - via email
- 1 - from a print advertisement

Feedback from Community Organizations

For Community Organizations, the Backbone team used questions based on the Program Acceptability Framework² and using modified questions from the work of Timm et al, 2022³ to assess whether and how the case competition was or was not acceptable to community organizations that joined the event to work with student teams to help address a problem. Overall, the challenge was acceptable across all domains: attitude, intervention coherence, burden of participation, perceived effectiveness, ethicality, self-efficacy, and opportunity cost.

- **Affective Attitude**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that they were glad they were asked to participate in the case competition
- **Intervention Coherence**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that they received enough instruction throughout the event.
- **Burden of participation**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy for them to participate in the event (finding the time, attending, etc.).
- **Opportunity Cost**
 - 100% (3 of 3) agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the event was at least as valuable to them or their organization compared to other work that they could have been doing.
- **Perceived Effectiveness**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that the event helped create ideas for how our community can be more inclusive of people living with dementia.
- **Ethicality**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that ideas and solutions for how our community can be more inclusive of people living with dementia are important to me.
- **Self-Efficacy**
 - 100% (4 of 4) agreed or strongly agreed that they are confident that they can help make our community more inclusive for people living with dementia.

² Sekhon, M., Cartwright, M., & Francis, J. J. (2017). Acceptability of healthcare interventions: an overview of reviews and development of a theoretical framework. *BMC health services research*, 17(1), 1-13.

³ Timm, L., Annerstedt, K. S., Ahlgren, J. Á., Absetz, P., Alvensson, H. M., Forsberg, B. C., & Daivadanam, M. (2022). Application of the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability to assess a telephone-facilitated health coaching intervention for the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes. *Plos one*, 17(10), e0275576.

In particular, community organizations found the guest speaker panel to be insightful and inspiring and also enjoyed witnessing community members coming together to help solve real-world problems for people living with dementia:

- “Hearing from Kathleen on the panel was very important to me. I also would love to see more Carefarms out there, such an inspiring idea and I think the principles can be applied to other scenarios beyond farms.
- “Hearing firsthand accounts from individuals living with dementia or their caregivers can provide deep insight into their experiences, challenges, and triumphs.”
- “The information provided from the speakers was insightful.”
- “I wasn't able to attend the entire event, but enjoyed the guest panel as well as the ideation process with the group.
- “Witnessing the dedication of communities, organizations, and volunteers who provide support, resources, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by dementia can be uplifting and motivating.”
- “Spending time with my husband 😊 also meeting other individuals from the other participant organizations.”
- “The students' presentations. They showed great initiative.”
- “Increasing awareness and understanding of dementia through events can empower individuals to recognize symptoms early, reduce stigma, and create more inclusive communities.”

While overall comments were positive, for future iteration of the event, community organizations suggested having more guest speakers, more opportunity to interact between groups, more dementia education, and providing feedback on student presentations:

- “I think the length is good. I would maybe add some more opportunities to interact between groups.”
- “For a two-day event, we would invite experts in the field of dementia research, caregiving, advocacy, and policy to deliver keynote speeches in their mother tongue to some of the seniors we survey and participate in panel discussions. Include individuals with lived experience of dementia to share their perspectives.”
- “Offer a variety of workshops and interactive sessions covering dementia care strategies, communication techniques, coping mechanisms for caregivers, legal and financial planning, and creative therapies that support their culture.”
- “For the students I think they would benefit from feedback on their plan and presentation. Feedback will allow them to learn and build their skills. Without the feedback they have no way of knowing what they did well and what they could do to improve.”



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