Beyond Deadlines and Deliverables:

How a Project Management Mindset
Can Create Stronger Teams

Dr. Whitney A. Sweeney

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Project Management Project Team

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Scientist

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We discover, translate and disseminate interventions to improve health and health care

Translational Teams are Unique

Translational Teams are a hybrid of product development and academic teams

- **Product Development Characteristics**
  - Device, drug or intervention for application to human health
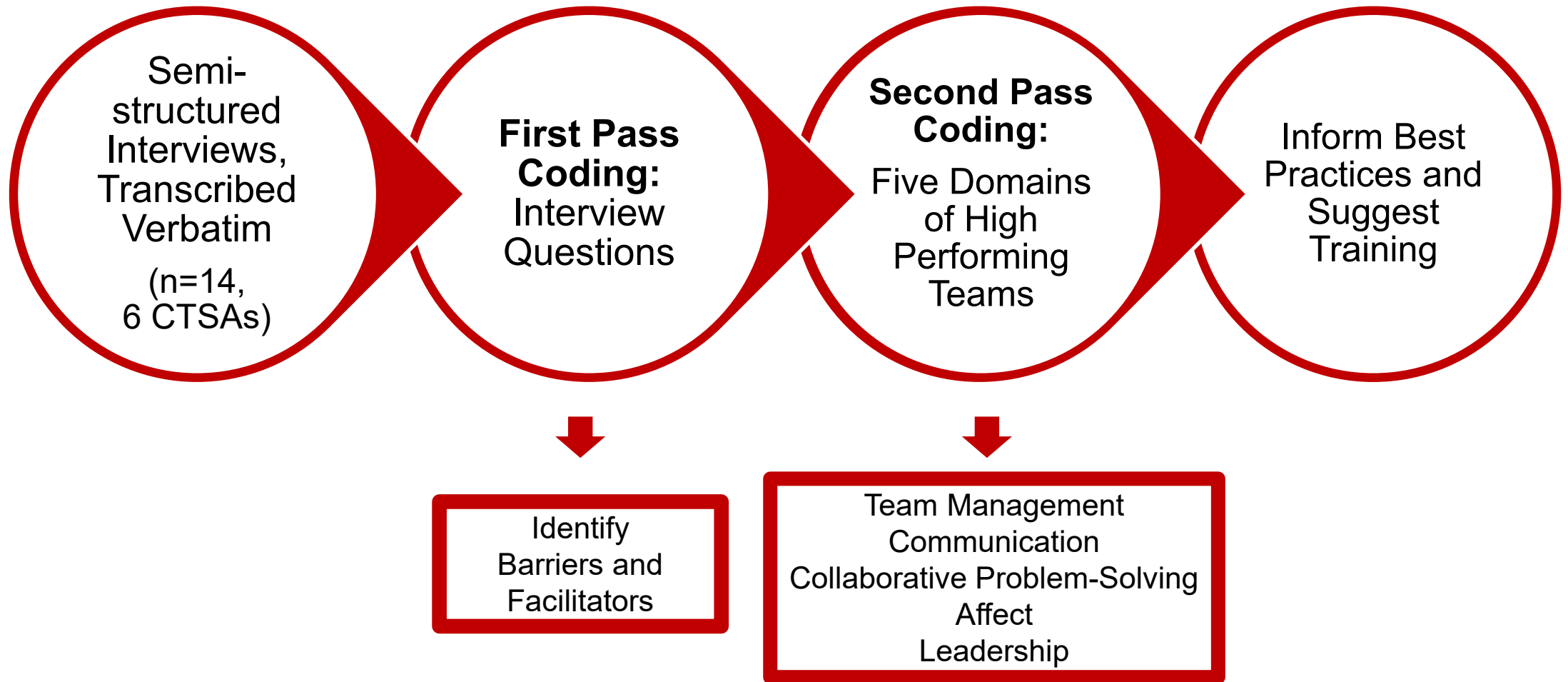
- **Academic Characteristics**
  - Led by experienced scientist/scientist
  - Focused on generating new knowledge
  - Involved in training investigators
  - Roles defined by subject expertise

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(Calhoun et al, 2013; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020)

"Poor project management may be more to blame for the difficulties that arise in health-related research projects than flaws in research methodology."
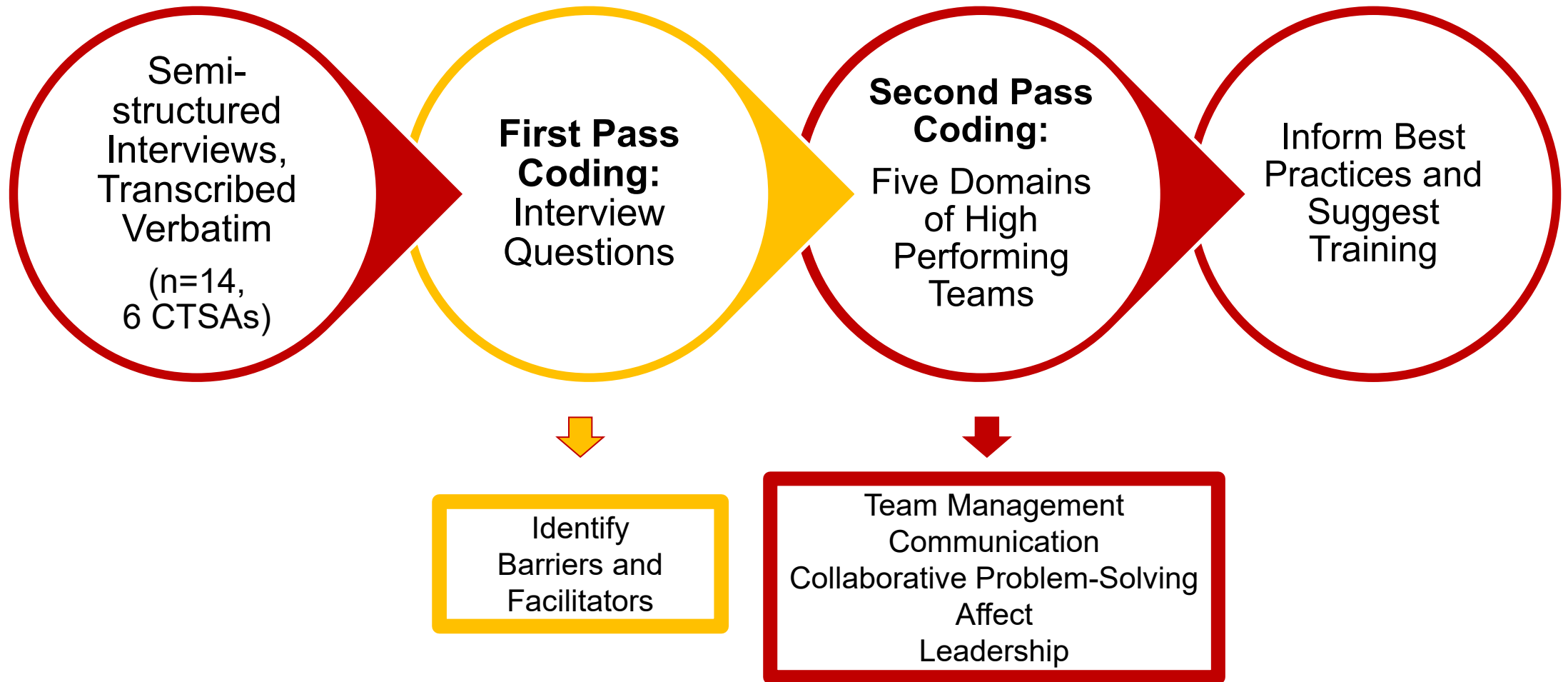
(Payne et al. 2011)

Qualitative Interview Process

Semi-structured Interviews, Transcribed Verbatim (n=14, 6 CTSAs)

First Pass Coding: Interview Questions

Identify Barriers and Facilitators

Second Pass Coding: Five Domains of High Performing Teams

Team Management
Communication
Collaborative Problem-Solving
Affect
Leadership

Inform Best Practices and Suggest Training

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(Brasier et al 2023)

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(Brasier et al 2023)

Barriers

Institutional

Lack of Institutional Support
- *"The greatest challenge is not enough hours in the day and trying to manage the allotted time."*

Complicated Interpersonal Networks
- *"There's a lot of people management in project management. There's a good amount of wrangling stakeholders and keeping folks motivated and making sure that there's the right culture or energy, even within the team, that folks are feeling comfortable speaking out."*

Team

Pushback
- *"I think they don't totally understand how a project manager can be valuable. (...) Their bandwidth is just so small and they just don't necessarily understand what we can provide for them."*

Role Confusion
- *"I think sometimes a challenge is that my role is a little bit, kind of in between or not clear...."*

Individual

Communication Breakdown
- *"...you get ghosted every once and a while and it's frustrating."*

Need for Agility
- *"I'm always looking for different things that can inform or improve what I'm doing. So I'm always on the lookout for those things, but I don't ever find it in one place or in one format, or that it's immediately in front of me."*

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Facilitators

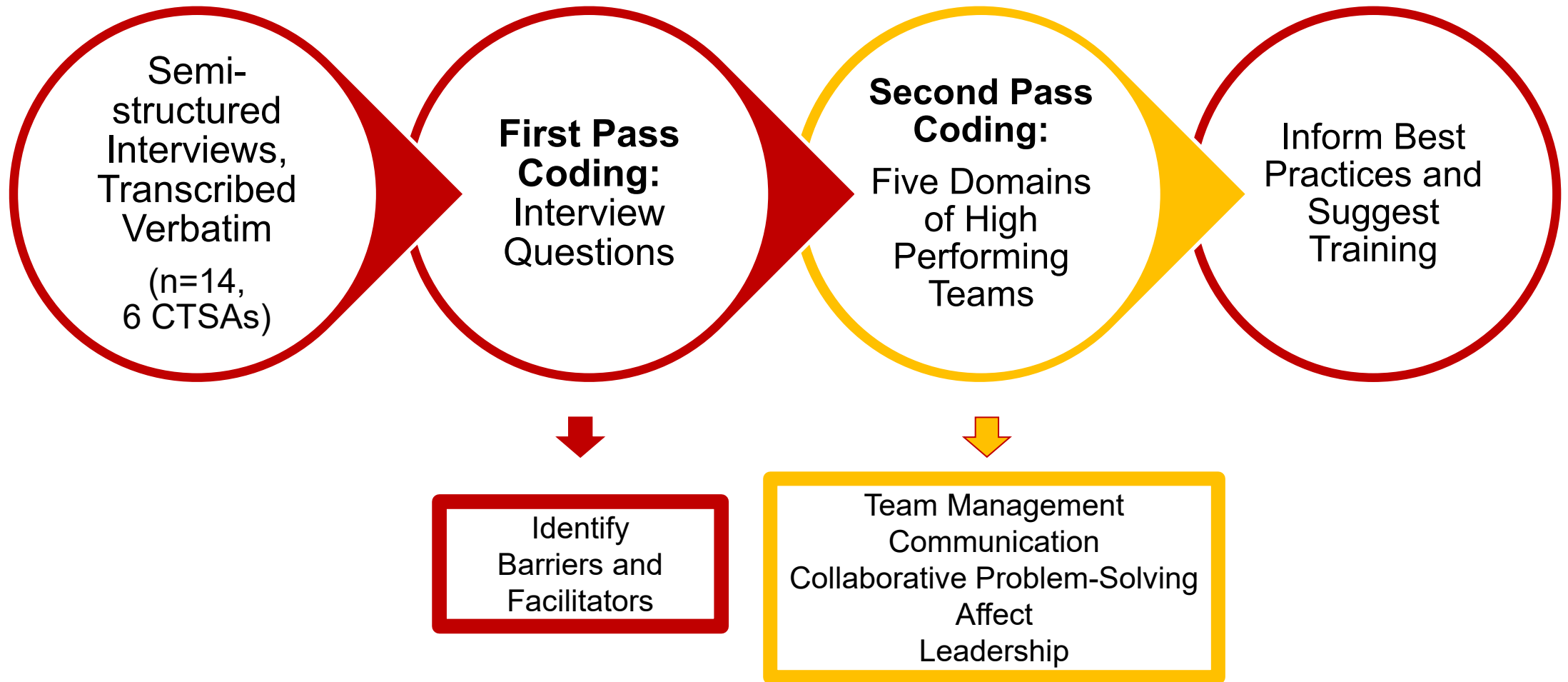| Level	
Institutional	**Learning Communities** • "…working with those other PMs and having a collective group has ended up being a really valuable resource…It really helped us all to level up and also create better communication."
	Inclusive Team Culture • "…part of what we are trying to do is create a culture where people could feel safe speaking up and give feedback, give important and direct feedback."
Team	**Shared Leadership** • "…a project leader, he let me lead the project in the translational sense, not the science. I think we were able to build a trusting relationship amongst the team. Understanding that everybody has their strengths and weaknesses…"
	Transparent Communication • "So, there's a lot of clarifying questions that need to be asked…at least you give a good starting point that everyone's looking at the same thing…"
Individual	**Autonomy** • "Our office and our project leaders I think do really well because we are given a lot of freedom and flexibility. We are not micromanaged and, so I think we are trusted to do the project work."

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(Brasier et al 2023)

High-Performing Teams

Team Management
- Shared Vision, Clear Roles and Responsibilities, Effective Project Management

Communication
- Shared Knowledge, Transactive Memory

Collaborative Problem Solving
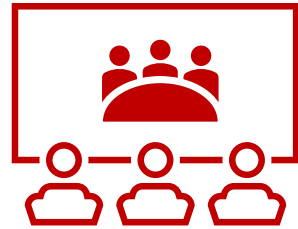- Learning/Adaptation, Collective Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity

Affect
- Trust, Cohesion, Psychological Safety

Leadership
- Sense-making, Conflict Resolution, Goal-Setting

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(Brasier et al 2023; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020) Copyright 2024 ICTR Team Science Core

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(Brasier et al 2023; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020)

Team Management

Specific Observable Behaviors

Strategically managing meetings

Use visualizations

Develop project plans

Relevant Training

Basics of Project Management

Team Science Fundamentals

Collaboration Planning

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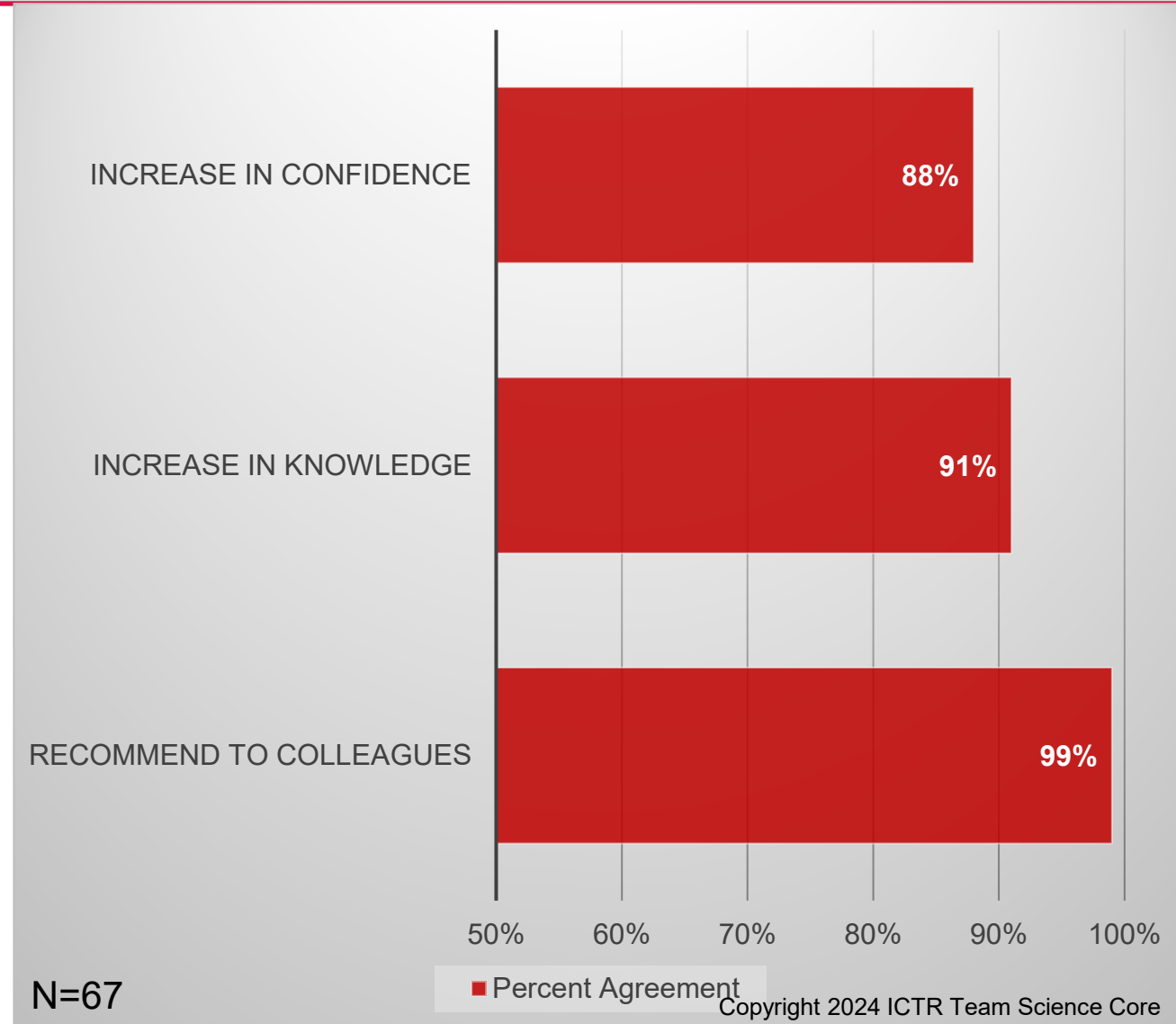
Teams benefit when they discuss known, potential challenges to collaborative research and develop strategic plans to overcome them

(Rolland et al., 2020)

UW-ICTR Collaboration Planning Intervention Evaluation Results (2023-2024)

>30 TEAMS RECEIVED INTERVENTION

INCREASE IN CONFIDENCE — 88%

INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE — 91%

RECOMMEND TO COLLEAGUES — 99%

50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Percent Agreement

N=67

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Collaboration Planning… One year later

100%

Said Collaboration Planning enhanced their team's ability to effectively collaborate (n=7)

[Collaboration Planning] helped us have a strong and positive start in working through all aspects of our project with mutual respect and value for all contributions of everyone on the team irrespective of their role.

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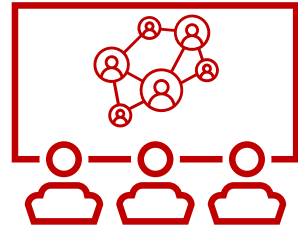- Learning/Adaptation, Collective Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity

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(Brasier et al 2023; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020)

Communication

Specific Observable Behaviors

Develop org charts and central repositories

Facilitate exchange of expertise

Relevant Training

Project Management Documentation

Knowledge Brokering

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Knowledge Broker

"Brokering has been described as a human force that facilitates the process of knowledge transfer and adoption"

- Brokers need to be able to:
  - relate to people with diverse backgrounds
  - understand different ways of thinking
  - understand the different contexts in which information can be used and shared, and
  - be able to critically analyze evidence.

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(Holgate, 2012)

Interdisciplinary Integrators

Bridge Builders – Bringing different people together

Boundary Crossers – Navigating social boundaries

Translators – Discussing, reflecting on and translating different perspectives

Catalysts – Leveraging potential synergies and generating new knowledge

Facilitators – Designing, planning, implementing and facilitating integrative processes

Contributors – Providing own intellectual contributions to scholarship

Mediators – Recognizing power imbalances and managing interpersonal conflicts

Advisors – Providing opportunities for learning and growth

Evaluators – Monitoring, assessing and evaluating integrative processes

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(Hoffmann et al. 2022)

Pre-Project Questions

Ask questions about their role and responsibilities, to get to know the team member.

⬇

Ask about the research project

| What excites them about the project? | What challenges do they anticipate? | What does success look like for them? |

⬇

What do you feel you can best contribute to this project?

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(Goss, 2024)

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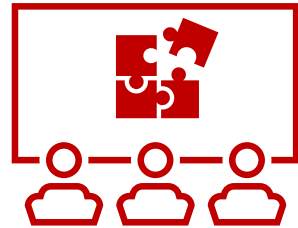- Learning/Adaptation, Collective Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity

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Collaborative Problem-Solving

Specific Observable Behaviors

Use data visualizations to facilitate collaborative data analysis

Conduct regular debriefs

Relevant Training

Facilitation Skills

Agile Principles

Team Debriefs

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Team Reflexivity

Teams need to regularly reflect to evolve and adapt

1. Evaluate past actions and performance

2. Assess both taskwork and teamwork

3. Learn from failures and successes

4. Craft action for improved future functioning

We do not learn from experience…
We learn from reflecting on experience.
~ John Dewey

Schippers, Edmondson, & West, 2014

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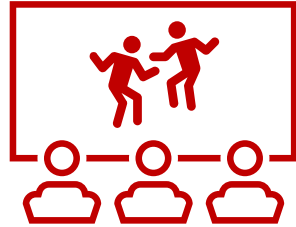- Learning/Adaptation, Collective Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity

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(Brasier et al 2023; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020)

Affect

Specific Observable Behaviors

Hold one-on-one check ins

Equalize power and elevate voices

Share constructive and compassionate feedback

Relevant Training

Relationship Building

Active Listening, Gratitude, and Humility

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Assigning Projects

A research institute just hired a new Associate Director. As one of her first tasks, she was asked to complete a grant application to develop initiatives to improve diversity, inclusion and equity within the organization. The deadline involved a quick turn around and she was new to this team. She had met with all four members of the team, Bob, Aoife, Sheriff and Pat, but had spent the most time with Bob since he was on a committee to which they had both been assigned. Based on her interactions with Bob, she decided he was best suited for the lead role on the grant. The proposal was successful, and the project funded. However, well into the funding period she later discovered that the project was significantly behind schedule. It was later uncovered that Aoife was quite upset at being excluded.

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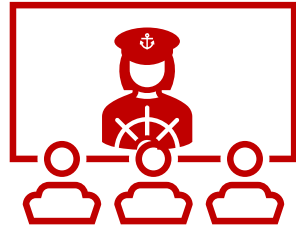- Learning/Adaptation, Collective Intelligence, Transdisciplinarity

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(Brasier et al 2023; Lotrecchiano et al, 2020)

Leadership

Specific Observable Behaviors

Facilitate shared goal setting

Keep team aligned with shared vision

Prioritize needs of team members

Connect project partners with needed resources

Relevant Training

Leading without Authority

Servant Leadership

Need Based Conflict Resolution

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Servant Leadership positively impacts:
- Team attitude
- Team performance
- Trust in leadership
- Perceived leader effectiveness
- Perceived leader integrity

(Goss, 2019; Eva et al. 2018)

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The Ideal PM Environment

Institutional Support

Money and resources

Foster culture of PM

Learning Community

Share tools and techniques

Collaboratively problem-solve

Inclusive Team Environments

Buy In

Shared leadership

Bi-directional Communication

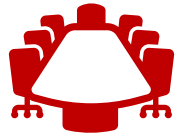Transparent information sharing

Full stakeholder engagement

Flexibility and Satisfaction

Autonomy to select projects

No micromanagement

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Essential Training

TEAM MANAGEMENT LOGISTICS

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

KNOWLEDGE BROKERING

LEADING FROM WHERE YOU ARE (MANAGING UP/ SERVANT LEADERSHIP)

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Questions?

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