

Engaging with your AHSN

Academic Health Science Networks (AHSN) were created in 2013. There are 15 across England. They aim to improve local community health and contribute to building a thriving local economy. They work in partnership with local organisations in order to speed up adoption of innovative practice and facilitate wealth creation through various activities such as the co-development of new products and services. This leaflet provides a handy top ten tips to help you engage and work with your local AHSN.

Tip 1 - AHSN website

The AHSN have a main website www.ahsnnetwork.com and a region specific website. Before contacting the AHSN be sure to read both of these, but especially your local website so that you understand what their local key areas of interest are and what their priorities are. You should also be able to identify the key people to contact from their website.

Tip 2 - Mention research prudently

The AHSN are not a focused research organisation. They are not very interested in being involved in pure research activity. Nor do they fund pure research activity. They are however, interested in innovation and development. So use the “R” word wisely – for example in any opening approach highlight an interest in innovation and development.

Tip 3 – Emphasise practical impact

Emphasise your interest in practical research with real impact. Illustrate how practical AHP research could further their agenda (see tips 4-9). Give them examples of practical AHP research that you have supported which has had real local impact.

Tip 4 - Stress local needs

One of the AHSNs’ objectives is to focus on the local needs of their patients and populations. To do this they partner up with many local organisations. Highlight that your organisation/team has a similar local focus of developing practical allied health profession research and innovation to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Tip 5 – Collaboration and partnership

Local AHSNs wish to work with local partners in a collaborative and inclusive way. Ask them if they are doing anything to mobilise the potential of AHPs. Highlight how you and your organisation/team could work in partnership with them to mobilise practical AHP research to achieve their priorities. Identify other regional partners you have worked with and the positive outcomes from this.

Tip 6 - The innovation agenda

The AHSN is focussed on driving innovation. This agenda is broad and includes the facilitation of the development of new treatments or new systems of working. Identify how your organisation/team might facilitate this. Alternatively, contact the AHSN to say you want to drive innovation within AHPs and ask if they would be willing to work with you to achieve this.

Tip 7 - Working with industry

Similar to driving innovation the AHSN are keen to promote working with business to maximise the economic potential of treatments and services generated within the local NHS. Again, identify how your organisation/team might facilitate this or contact the AHSN to say you want to drive innovation within AHPs and ask if they would be willing to work with you.

Tip 8 - Speed up adoption

The AHSN are keen to seek new ways of speeding up adoption of innovative practice into the NHS. They wish to support the “more rapid spread of research and innovation”. If this aligns with your team/organisations activities then this may be an area where the AHSN and yourselves could work collaboratively to target AHPs.

Tip 9 - Wealth creation

The AHSN are keen to use NHS innovations to support and develop the local economy through wealth creation. Examples given are codevelopment, testing and evaluation of new products and services. Identify how your team/organisation could tap into the AHP community to facilitate this which would be attractive to the AHSN.

Tip 10 - Pitch it to them

When you are ready to approach the AHSN be very clear what you want. Show that you have done your homework. Show them you know what their targets are. Identify where you share similar targets and where you feel there is the potential for partnership working, focusing on AHPs, to enhance the health and wellbeing of the local community.

For contact details about your local hub and for further information about **cahpr** please visit our website www.cahpr.org.uk/cahpr

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