

Consulting Wisely

Randall Longenecker and members of Rural Residency Consultant Learning Community (RRCLC)
The RTT Collaborative Annual Meeting
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There are many options to consider when looking for advice and assistance in developing a new program or problem-solving in an established program. Participants in this learning community over the past year and a half will engage the audience regarding the choice, manner, and timing of a formal consultation in the design, development, or implementation of a rural residency program. A consult can provide outside validation for plans already in progress. A formal consult provides a good reason to convene stakeholders.

Results of World Café: April 27, 2023

- “The best time to seek consultation is before you need it! ...before things are really on fire!”
- “If you think you need one, it is probably past time”
- “There is no bad time”
- “Create a network and ask questions”
- “When there is a critical mass” (What is a critical mass?)
- “Ask three people at three stages: before, during, and after” successful program startup
- “(consider) ‘consultation light’”

Tips:

- Establish a ‘primary care’ consultant you can trust (see attached listing of residency consulting groups with particular expertise in rural)
- Consult early and often – before you ‘need’ it; when you don’t know what you don’t know
- In a manner that fits the stage (frequent small consultations may be better than one big one:
 - Exploration (diagnostic consultation; under ‘consideration; upon establishing a core leadership group of 2 to 3; find out what you don’t know; first online)
 - On initial design, when starting the application for accreditation (design consultation)
 - Preparation for implementation – Upon accreditation and financial go ahead
- If you wait till you ‘need’ it (disagreements among local leaders, when you’re ‘stuck’) or when the money’s available, it may be too late
- Join an ‘informed’ peer network
- Like in much of life, the sticker price does not reflect quality
- Ask peers who have gone this way before, and take each bit of counsel with a grain of salt
- Remember that rural is different than urban, both because of a relatively resource limited environment, nuances around GME funding, and particular challenges around governance
- Probably get more than one...

Be prepared to answer these 4 questions:

- Why are you seeking this consultation?
- What key questions would you like to have answered?
- What do you expect as deliverables?
- What is the time frame for this work?

These questions are generally reflected (in a more close-ended fashion) in the Professional Services Request The RTT Collaborative asks the individual requestor to complete – a Qualtrics form linked from our assistance page:

<https://rttcollaborative.net/about/tools-and-assistance/>

References:

Hawes EM, Weidner A, Page C, Longenecker R, Pauwels J, Crane S, Chen F, Fraher E. A Roadmap to Rural Residency Program Development, *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* August 2020;12(4):384-7.

<https://meridian.allenpress.com/jgme/article/12/4/384/445472/A-Roadmap-to-Rural-Residency-Program-Development>