

## Identifying Innovators and Early Adopters

Innovators and early adopters can be invaluable contributors toward health information outreach projects. Their enthusiasm for the resources and technology you introduce will make them role models for the rest of the community. They also may endorse the resources and help others access them. During your community assessment, try to collect the information described below to help you identify innovators and early adopters.

1. Who shows the most enthusiasm for learning about the resources? When you present a website or offer a training session at a site, who seems most likely to sign up or request training?
2. Who in the community actually needs better access to health information but does not have an adequate method for accessing it? Community health workers, for instance, often provide individualized assistance to community members yet may lack awareness of easy-to-use online consumer health databases.
3. Who currently has values, habits, experience, and needs that are consistent with use of online health information? For instance, you might find a group of clinic staff members who must do patient education. They may find the MedlinePlus tutorials an excellent, efficient way to make presentations to patient groups. Adult literacy educators may need to teach some basic computer skills and would integrate MedlinePlus training into a computer literacy session.
4. Who in the community has some experience with the technology? Experienced users will respond more quickly to your innovation. For instance, in many communities targeted by outreach, school-aged youth are often the most experienced with computers.
5. Who will see tangible results from their searches? Some people have roles in the community that involve working with others with health care concerns. If your source of health information is better than what they currently have, they will be very interested in learning about your information resources.
6. What resources are available to the community that may compete with what you are introducing? Your innovators will take an interest in the tools you want to present to the community if the tools are superior to what they are using. If their information needs are already being met, you will have to show them how your method is better (faster, higher quality, more individualized, etc.) to get their attention. You will want to know what is being used in the community now (what the innovators are using and recommending to others) so you can compare your product to the status quo.
7. Who in the community has access to locations where they can practice using the innovation? One of the most troublesome areas of outreach is that people will not retain a skill like using online health information unless they can practice on their own time. If your health information outreach involves accessing online health resources, you will want to make sure those you train will have convenient access to computers.