COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH CANADA

Strategic Plan
2014-2018

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Background

From their inception, the mandate of universities has included the translation of knowledge generated through research and education for societal benefit. In recent years, this historic commitment has seen greater emphasis and impetus for the post-secondary sector as a whole, both in Canada and internationally. The drivers have been both internal, related to a heightened sense of social imperative and responsibility, and external, as funding agencies, especially governments, have sought tangible measures of returns on investment of public monies.

In Canada, various mechanisms have been developed to stimulate knowledge translation and the research funding agencies have played a primary role through programs specifically designed to build and sustain relationships between post-secondary institutions, especially universities, and public and private sector partners. In this context, various terms have been used to describe the functionality – knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, knowledge mobilization, etc. In parallel, various entities and networks within and beyond the institutions have been created to undertake activities in support of community-campus linkages.

This is the background for the Community Based Research Canada (CBRC) strategic plan. CBRC was founded in 2008. Its original intent was to serve as a network of post-secondary institutions, community-based research organizations and individuals who are committed to community based research. As of 2013, CBRC's vision had evolved to become a national champion and facilitator for community based research (CBR) in the broader context of community-campus engagement through its network of post-secondary institutions and community partners.

At the end of its first five years, CBRC remains an informal network and relies on supportive institutions (most prominently UVic's Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community University Engagement and the Centre for Community Based Research in Kitchener) to provide administrative services. Governance and work on specific initiatives relies on volunteers from the community research sector.

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide development of CBRC from 2014 to 2018. This timeframe has been chosen because it coincides with CBRC's first decade and covers the 2015 and 2017 CUExpos, the biennial national meetings convened by CBRC.

Environmental Scan

Release of this strategic plan coincides with a time of significant developments in Canada and internationally in community-based research in the broader context of community-campus engagement activities, including the role of networks as coordinating, convening and enabling organizations.

Nationally, the Community-Campus Collaboration Initiative (CCCI) was launched in 2011 with the support of the Governor General, David Johnston. With the vision of Canada becoming a *smarter and more caring* nation, the CCCI aims to promote a culture of collaboration to harness the resources of communities and post-secondary institutions to address '*big and complex societal issues'* in the social, environmental and cultural domains that require multi-sector approaches and solutions. CBRC is a participating organization given that community-based research has been identified as a key mechanism for collaborative initiatives and for building an evidence base for understanding and addressing Canada's societal challenges.

Still within Canada, CBRC is part of and conduit for both national and international networks in the broad public engagement domain. These include the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CASL), ResearchImpact-ReseauImpactRecherche, and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH).

Internationally, CBRC is linked with the UK National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), the Living Knowledge Network in Europe, and the Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER).

CBRC shares with several of these allied organizations a guiding philosophy and principles that draw from an understanding of knowledge democracy, focus on network capacity building for community based research, and support a national movement for knowledge creation and application for societal benefit and impact.

SWOT Analysis and Strategic Issues

In preparing this plan, a SWOT analysis was conducted and the results are summarized in Appendix 1. The *strengths* point to the substantial experience gained since CBRC's inception in 2008, the respect gained by the executive leadership, the expertise and commitment of the dedicated support staff, the success of the CUExpo meetings and the associated membership growth, and the recognition achieved with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) as the principal federal funding agencies for community-based research.

The *weaknesses* relate primarily to dependence on volunteer time and effort both of the leadership and the staff coupled with the challenge of securing sustained operating support from institutions, partners and funders. Alignment with community needs and priorities for what is still mainly a university focused and driven network is also an issue; as is the need to establish more clearly defined standards of excellence, performance criteria, and impact measures.

Opportunities and *threats* relate to external factors over which CBRC has limited, if any, influence or control. Echoing the environmental scan, the *opportunities* link to the momentum around community-university engagement at the national and institutional level, and the creation of funding programs, especially by SSHRC and CIHR, to support collaborative research with community partners. Moreover, this energy and focus aligns with societal issues in Canada for which CBRC network members have

considerable knowledge and expertise and thereby should resonate with Canadians. This expertise is by no means to the preserve of the universities; on the contrary, growth in community-based research, knowledge production and mobilization emanating from community-based and social change organizations is critical to CBRC achieving its vision and mission.

The **threats** parallel externally the internal weaknesses already identified, especially the limited resources available from institutions and other stakeholders to cover CBRC's operating funding needs on a sustained basis. This problem is potentially compounded by possible confusion and perceived (at least) competition among organizations in the CBR/CUE space.

The combination of the environmental scan and SWOT analysis lead to two strategic issues which underpin this plan:

- What are the core functions and initiatives that CBRC should focus on, given its value proposition and realistic revenue streams?

- What core budget and dedicated staff resources are required and what are sustainable (multi-year) sources of funding support?

Vision, Mission and Goals

CBRC's raison d'etre and mandate are nested within a national research ecosystem whereby post-secondary institutions and allied research organizations engage on an equal footing with community partners to address societal challenges and achieve positive impacts for the benefit of Canada and Canadians. CBRC plays a coordinating, convening and enabling role to harness research resources and assets and to facilitate and build collaborative relationships, especially between our community partners and our universities, colleges and hospitals, in ways that might not otherwise occur or be sustained.

This ethos and positioning are reflected in CBRC's **vision** and **mission** statements:

> *Vision:*
>
> A vibrant society in Canada enabled by community based research that addresses major societal challenges.
>
> *Mission:*
>
> To be a national champion and facilitator for collaborative community based research and community-campus engagement in Canada.

Consultations among the CBRC membership culminated at the CUExpo 2013 conference in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, in three primary goals being endorsed for CBRC and for this strategic plan:

Goals:

- Catalyze a national movement and capacity building

- Advance community-university research, policy and advocacy engagement

- Provide communication and network support

The goals capture the inspirational, operational and outreach purposes of CBRC. Within the broader context of community-campus engagement, nationally and internationally, CBRC is part of a movement to change the research culture, especially to promote the importance of community and post-secondary sector collaboration to co-create knowledge, advance social innovation, and generate evidence that is timely, robust and appropriate for informing policy and practice. In so doing, CBRC values multiple forms of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge and knowledge gained through lived experience. The three goals reflect the combined enabling and support functions of CBRC recognizing that there are activities for which CBRC itself takes the lead and others where CBRC supports activities led by members of the network.

Underpinning these goals is CBRC's need to achieve sustainability through its business and operational planning and this is the focus of on-going fund-raising and outreach efforts to build CBRC's institutional, partner and individual membership base.

Principles

The goals, indeed CBRC's overall philosophy and approach, are grounded in a set of six principles that underline the distinctive qualities of CBRC, echo the cardinal values of community based research, and commit to best practice in all aspects of the work enabled and conducted.

- **Excellence**: enabling research, research training, and applications of the highest international quality

- **Partnership**: actively engaging communities and academic partners in the co-creation and co-management of CBR programs and projects, the co-interpretation of findings, and the co-dissemination of CBR results

- **Impact**: maximizing the benefit for Canada and Canadians by knowledge exchange to address societal problems

- **Accessibility**: providing a national platform of expertise and resources giving access to the full spectrum of researchers engaged in CBR in universities and community agencies

- **Accountability**: being open, transparent, and responsible to the research communities we serve, and to our funders and partners, in delivering the best services possible with the resources available

- **Leadership**: anticipating and shaping the future of CBR policies, programs and practices for researchers and other stakeholders

Value Proposition

Recognizing that it was created and continues to evolve within a larger research ecosystem, with various regional, national and international initiatives and organizations having emerged to advance community-campus engagement, CBRC has been explicit in stating its value proposition and thereby its distinctive and complementary role.

- CBRC enhances the capacity of our communities and universities by:

    - Learning/sharing best practices in design, implementation and evaluation of CBR

    - Building intra- and inter-institutional research teams in collaboration with community partners for funding applications

    - Interacting with SSHRC, CIHR and other funding agencies on CUE/CBR program development

    - Networking with and providing research support to community organizations and agencies locally and nationally (e.g., United Way, Imagine Canada)

    - Participating in the development of CBRC through its Steering Committee

    - Connecting with allied international efforts in CUE/CBR (e.g., UK NCCPE; GACER)

    - Contributing to national conferences and fora (esp. CUExpo and CCPH)

    - Advancing the recognition and respect of CBR in our universities, colleges and hospitals

    - Benefiting from the proven success of CBRC

Action Plan and Performance Indicators

CBRC has identified action plans aligned with each of its three primary goals and various activities are in progress (see Appendix 2). Action plans are reviewed on an on-going basis and performance is assessed annually against the following outcome and impact indicators for each goal. In so doing, the distinction between the enabling and support roles of CBRC is recognized as are the implications that follow for the accountability of CBRC.

- Goal 1: *National Movement and Capacity Building*

    - Establishing/funding a national network of CBR excellence hubs

    - CBRC memberships

    - CUExpo registration and outcomes

    - Students recruited and funded as CBR interns

    - CBRC governance and management assessment

- Goal 2: *Research, Policy and Advocacy Engagement*

    - Successful funding applications enabled/led by CBRC

    - Recruitment/funding of CBR graduate students

    - Publications in peer-reviewed journals and policy-related media

    - Development and use of robust outcome/impact measures for CBR

    - Case examples of CBRC enabled policy development

- Goal 3: *Communications and Network Support*

    - Website hits and resource use

    - Use of CBRC inventory of best practices

    - Registration/feedback for CBRC webinars

    - CBRC enabled stories in the national, regional and local media

Governance, Management and Budget

Since its inception in 2008, CBRC has functioned as an informal network. Governance has been the responsibility of an Executive Committee which has met monthly by teleconference and at least annually in person. A Steering Committee meets quarterly and provides input from a broader constituency of member organizations (see Appendix 3). Primary authority vests with the Executive Committee with issues deemed of greater import brought to the Steering Committee for discussion prior to a decision.

Management functions are shared by a small secretariat staff employed by the Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community-University Engagement at the University of Victoria and the Centre for

Community Based Research in Kitchener. To date, these services have been provided largely on an in-kind basis.

Membership in CBRC is open to post-secondary institutions, community organizations, and individuals with shared interests in and commitments to advancing community-based research. Annual fees are graduated by membership category.

The CBRC Executive and Steering Committee have recently endorsed a recommendation to seek incorporation as a non-profit corporation under the federal Corporations Canada Act. Several factors were considered as advantages in formalizing CBRC's governance at this stage of its evolution. They include:

- Regularizing the governance and management of CBRC by establishing a constitution, board of directors, etc.
- Establishing a clearer organizational structure, reporting relationships, human resources and fiscal management policies, etc.
- Reducing the risks (fiscal and other) of informal arrangements
- Signalling the evolution and status of the organization to its members and partners
- Securing core competencies in strategic areas through the board, etc.
- Strengthening advocacy for CBRC by recruiting key influentials to serve on the board
- Formalizing the co-governance (community-campus) structure of CBRC
- Providing the option of securing charitable status

From a budget perspective, CBRC is at the limit of its ability to function, progress and meet the goals of this plan based on the *ad hoc* sources of income that have been its history to date. A budget planning framework has been drafted to cover core operations and management functions. The main income and expenditure categories are summarized in Appendix 4.

Appendix 1

SWOT Analysis

- **Strengths**

  - CBRC's progress since formation in 2008

  - Committed and talented leadership

  - Dedicated and experienced support staff

  - Success of CUExpo meetings

  - Growth in membership

  - Definition and dissemination of mission and goals

  - Engagement of partner organizations

  - Recognition and respect from SSHRC

  - Links with international organizations

- **Weaknesses**

  - Dependence on volunteer time and effort

  - Level and stability of operating funds

  - Uncertain mandate and role relative to institutions

  - Alignment of priorities and plans with community partners' needs

  - Ambiguous definition of areas of relevance and excellence

  - Underdeveloped performance and impact measures

  - Lack of success in securing major project/program support

- **Opportunities**

  - Alignment with big societal issues for Canadians

  - Alignment with/participation in CCCI

  - Tri-Council support of CUE/CBR (esp. SSHRC and CIHR)

  - Prominence of CUE/CBR in university strategic plans

  - Regional/institutional hubs of CBR excellence

  - Involvement in international networks

- ***Threats***

  - Lack of university funding for institutional CBR support

  - Uneven community partner buy-in to university CBR plans and priorities

  - Matching funding capacity of community partners

  - Competing organizations in the CUE/CBR space

  - Low(er) priority of social issues on federal and provincial government agendas

  - Few highly respected champions/leaders of CBR

  - Recruitment of top quality graduate students to CBR related projects

  - Insufficient evidence of CBR impacts on societal advance

Appendix 2

Action Plan

Goal 1:   Catalyze a national movement and capacity building

- CBRC will achieve this goal by:

  - Building a hubs of excellence network in CBR

  - Creating spaces for learning, capacity building and reflections on CBR theories, methodologies, practices and impacts.

  - Strengthening core support for CUExpo's bi-annual conference.

  - Organizing annual gathering of CBRC Steering Committee and Membership.

  - Developing new CBRC student internship program.

- Activities in progress:

  - A map of the development of CBR in Canada, incorporating key developments in CBRC's history.

  - A project to develop an inventory of CBR best practices in Canada.

  - Organizing the biannual CUExpo conferences, the main face-to-face convening opportunity for Canadians engaged in CBR and, increasingly a recognized key event in the international CBR context.

  - Working actively with other key Canadian networks with interests in CBR to ensure that limited resources are used most effectively across network to build the movement. Key initiatives in this regard include CRBC's participation in the Campus Community Collaboration Initiative (CCCI), launched with the support of the Governor General and active collaboration with Research Impact, the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning, and Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CF:ICE), among others to coordinate efforts to maximize impact.

  - Participating in international events and networks (GUNI, GACER, BFN, CCPH, LKN etc.) to develop international understanding of CBR practice and impact in Canada and build bridges to enable members to learn from international experience. The UNESCO Chair in Community Engagement is a member of the CBRC Executive.

  - Graduate student participation on CBRC Executive Committee.

Goal 2:   Advance research, policy and advocacy engagement

- CBRC will achieve this goal by:

    - Advancing social and research innovation in Canada by bridging different perspectives, research cultures, disciplines and approaches to knowledge production.

    - Understanding and measuring CBR impacts locally and nationally.

    - Supporting policy, advocacy, and development focused on public engagement and CBR in Canada.

    - Connecting local and global initiatives to the national realm.

    - Participating in related policy conferences and fora.

    - Engaging with other international organizations and networks.

- Activities in progress:

    - A knowledge sharing platform regarding systemic issues that challenge development of the sector, such as assessment of community based research in academic tenure and promotion decisions.

    - An initiative to develop CBR standards and research excellence criteria

    - CBRC is collaborating with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) in the UK on common areas of interest, including capacity building, assessment of impact and culture/drivers for change, particularly in the postsecondary sector.

Goal 3:   Support communication and network support

- CBRC will achieve this goal by:

    - Providing E-News, Resource and Networking Opportunities via the website, creative methods and social media.

    - Creating and connecting stronger student, community, campus and local-national-global network exchange via innovative web and social media.

    - Participating in and acting as liaison for international CBR/CUE networks.

    - Continuing support for the Engaged Learning Exchange.

- Activities in progress:

    - CBRC has a regularly published Newsletter and website for members and the interested public

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Appendix 3

CBRC Executive and Steering Committee

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CBRC Executive

Chair: Katherine Graham, Carleton U, Senior Advisor, Office of the Provost
Vice-Chairs: Sylvie De Gros Bois, Directrice de Université du Québec à Montréal   UQAM, Service aux Collectivites / **Joanna Ochocka,** Executive Director--- Centre for Community Based Research, Kitchener
International Chair: Budd Hall, University of Victoria, UNESCO Co--Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility In Higher Education / Global Alliance for Community---Engaged Research
Geri Briggs, Co-Manager, Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE), Director, Canadian Alliance for Community Service---Learning (CACSL)
Leslie Brown, Director, Institute for Studies & Innovation in Community-University Engagement, UVic
Jody Butler Walker, Executive Director, Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research
Linda Hawkins, Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship, Univ of Guelph
Warren Dodd, PhD Candidate, Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship Intern and Vanier Scholar, Univ of Guelph
Special Advisor: Martin Taylor, University of Victoria

CBRC Steering Committee

Sherry Ann Chapman, Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning) with the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP) & Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Penny Gurstein, University of British Columbia, Professor and Director, School of Community & Regional Planning/Centre for Human Settlements/ Co-Chair UBC Task Force on CBR
Tracey Herbert, Executive Director, First Peoples Heritage and Language Council of B.C.
Ted Jackson, School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton U. Senior Research Fellow, Carleton Centre for Community Innovation.
Ann Macaulay, Professor and Inaugural Director of Participatory Research at McGill Univ
Jennifer Mullett, Director, Community Based Health Research Centre, Vancouver Island University
David Phipps, Director, Research Impact- ReseauImpactRecherche, York University,
Manuel Riemer, Assistant Professor and Director of the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action, Wilfrid Laurier University.
Brenda Roche, Director of Research, Wellesley Institute
Cheryl Rose, University of Waterloo, Social Innovation Generation (SIG), Director of Partnerships and Projects
Penelope Rowe, CEO, Community Sector Council, Newfoundland and Labrador
Sarena Seifer, Executive Director of Community---Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) and an Adjunct Professor, University of Guelph
Julian Somers, Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University
Rosa Venuta, Project Lead, Citizen and Patient Engagement, Canadian Institutes for Health Research
Paul Watson, Canadian CED Network, CCEDNET / Research Director, Alberta Rural Development Network

Appendix 4

Budget Planning Framework

- **Income**
  - Fees
    - Membership
    - Conferences
  - Institutional support for CBRC operations
    - Staff
    - Space
    - Support services
  - Community partner support for CBRC operations
    - Staff
    - Space
    - Support services
  - Research funding support for CBRC operations

- **Expenditures**
  - Staff salaries
    - Regular support staff
    - Occasional staff
  - Student stipends
    - Graduate students
    - Undergraduate students
  - Travel costs
    - Local
    - Long distance
  - Meeting expenses
    - Local and teleconference meetings
    - Annual meeting
  - Conference costs
    - CUExpo
    - Other events
  - Communications and outreach
    - Web support
    - Equipment costs
  - Supplies and services
    - Office supplies
    - Other costs