

Canadian Policy
Research Networks

Applied Policy Research Makes Strange Bedfellows:

Connecting Researchers, the Academy & Governments

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Presentation Outline

- What's a CPRN?
- From the Academy to a Think Tank and Back Again...
- Challenges for Researchers, Policy-makers & Funders
- Building Effective Research Collaborations: Lessons from CPRN
- Knowledge Transfer, Translation, Exchange or Mobilization
- Risks & Rewards



What's a CPRN?

- CPRN is an independent think tank committed to policy-relevant research and dialogue with governments, stakeholders and citizens
- Established in 1994, our mission is to create knowledge and lead public dialogue on social and economic issues important to the well-being of all Canadians
- We involve policy-makers, stakeholders & citizens in all aspects of our research from design through to dissemination



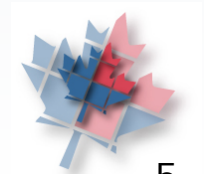
From the Academy to Think Tank and Back Again...

- In 2002, I joined UofR as a Political Scientist and Research Faculty at SPHERU
- SPHERU's mission: *Promoting health equity by understanding and addressing health disparities for vulnerable peoples through policy relevant research*
- Seconded to CPRN in 2003, return to SPHERU July 1, 2007
- My challenge is to explore whether the CPRN research model can work in a university



Challenges for Researchers

- University researchers often express suspicion of the motives of policy-makers
 - Often misunderstand the policy process inside governments
- Academic reward systems privilege some kinds of research over others
 - Time & energy devoted to collaboration with communities, policy-makers & others often not recognized by universities
- Intellectual property rights



Challenges for Policy-Makers

- Lack of internal policy capacity
- Difficulty looking at medium- to long-term objectives
 - Too focused on today's problems & today's crisis
 - Want work yesterday
- Difficulty in letting go of policy process & allowing others inside
 - Decision based evidence...
- Cumbersome procedures for flowing funds



Challenges for Funders

- Funding organizations encourage partnerships & collaboration in research design, BUT
 - Do not fund the time and effort it takes to build real partnerships with policy makers & communities
 - Letters of Support are not enough
- Collaboration with communities & non-gov't actors takes time and effort from them
 - This goes unrewarded & unfunded
 - Resource intensive for small organizations



Building Effective Research Collaborations

- Gov't & stakeholder dialogue to set a mutually agreed upon agenda
- Independent research on medium- to longer-term issues (staying ahead of the curve)
- Multiple funding partners
- Research papers are independently peer-reviewed



Building Effective Research Collaborations

- Research identifies options rooted in both traditional research methodologies and dialogues with citizens
- Policy roundtables create neutral space
- Free broad-based dissemination
 - Available to non-funders
 - Creation of a public good
 - Further dialogue and reflection, without having to commit to specific action plan



Lost in (Knowledge) Translation

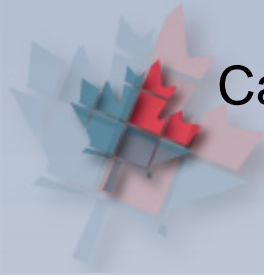
- Is it KT¹, KT², KE, or KM?
- In truly collaborative research, KM becomes part of the research process
 - Everyone sets the agenda & research questions
 - Everyone participates in the research
 - Everyone understands & shares results
- Less to “translate”, less lost in the process
- Knowledge goes beyond the funding partners
 - Creating a “public good”



Risks and Rewards

- Risks
 - Politics around every corner
 - Willingness to walk away comes at a cost
 - Universities sending inconsistent messages about collaborative research
- Rewards
 - Can see influence on policy thinking (direct and indirect)
 - Can push issues up the policy agenda
 - Public goods in the hands of researchers, communities, NGOs & activists





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For additional information:

www.cprn.org

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www.e-network.ca

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