



Centres for Research Development: Contributions to Sustainable Innovation Systems

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Context for Innovative Centres Program

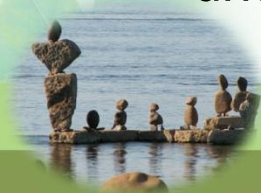
- 2000 Creation of Canadian Institutes of Health Research as Canada's premier health research funding agency - 13 Institutes, broad research themes and knowledge translation
- 2001 cross-country consultations by Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH) identified lack of population and public health research infrastructure
- Seven Centres funded for up to six years (2004-2010) (non-renewable), at \$400,000 per year
- Addressed research to understand and address the impacts of physical and social environments on health
- Viewed as innovative, first of their kind in Canada





Centre Program Objectives

- Align capacity building with strategic health research themes and knowledge exchange activities of participating Institutes
- Better position interdisciplinary teams of researchers, in newly emerging and less developed fields, for accessing open-competition (investigator-initiated) research funding
- Promote networking and mentoring across researchers and existing institutions
- Foster meaningful interactions with research users such as policy makers, public and voluntary sector program administrators, and clinical and public health practitioners
- Create a sustainable path for the activities of Centres for Research Development, with committed multi-year funding
- Facilitate capacity building in regions of Canada with underdeveloped research strengths





Centres for Research Development

Multi-Partner Funding





Seven Centres for Research Development

Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture (CCHSA)	Univ. of Sask.
Centre for urban health initiatives (CUHI)	Univ. of Toronto
Asthma in the Workplace Centre	Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal
Population Health Intervention Research Centre	Univ. of Calgary
Atlantic Rural Environments and Health Centre	Dalhousie Univ.
Centre de recherche Léa-Roback sur les inégalités sociales et de santé de Montréal	Université de Montréal
Atlantic Networks for Prevention Research	Dalhousie Univ.



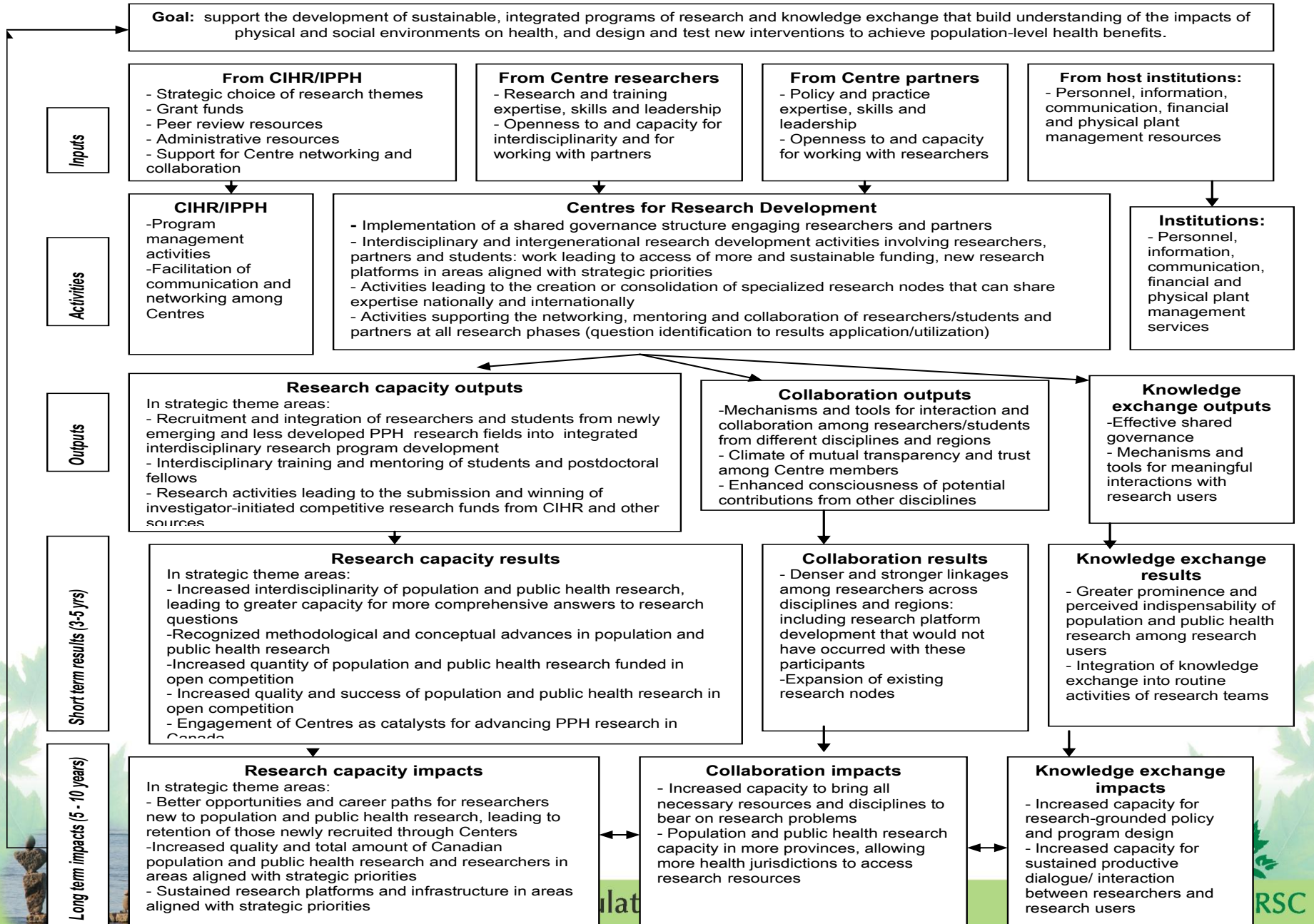
Centres Program Evaluation Development Process

- Participatory approach to evaluation framework and reporting mechanisms (2004-2005)
- Progress reports (2006-2007) and feedback from Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH)
- Mid-term evaluation (by peer review committee) to assess individual Centre performance and recommend funding for remaining period (2008-2009)
 - Continuation of funding for all 7 Centres





Centres for Research Development Logic Model





<h2>Research capacity impacts</h2>	<h2>Collaboration impacts</h2>	<h2>Knowledge exchange impacts</h2>
<p>In basic strategic theme areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better opportunities and career paths for researchers new to population and public health research, leading to retention of those newly recruited through Centres • Increased quality and total amount of Canadian population and public health research funded through open competitions • Sustained research platforms and infrastructure in areas aligned with strategic priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity to bring all necessary resources and disciplines to bear on research problems • Population and public health research capacity in more provinces, allowing more health research jurisdictions to access research resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity for research-grounded policy and program design • Increased capacity for sustained productive dialogue/interaction between researchers and research users





Centres Summative Evaluation (2010-11): Program-level

- Centres program prominently featured in IPPH self-assessment report for 10-year international review
- Aims:
 - Assess gains from the Centres program for population and public health (PPH) research capacity in Canada
 - Assess Centres' **program** model as a tool for research development





Centre Program Evaluation Questions

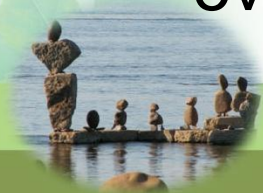
- To what extent has the Centres' program achieved its intended results, adding capacity that would not otherwise have been attained, in research development, collaboration and knowledge exchange? How has the program contributed to CIHR's strategic outcomes?
- How effective was the Centres' model as a research development strategy in population and public health? How effective were its features of: multi-year funding offered to a small set of geographically dispersed Centres, with co-governance structures enabling research user involvement?





Evaluation Approach

- Document review:
 - Progress and final self-evaluation Centre reports
 - Peer review committee and cross-learning reports
- 20 semi-structured key informant interviews
 - Centre representatives (n = 12)
 - Key stakeholders (e.g. decision-making partners) (n = 5)
 - Mid-term peer review committee members (n = 3)
- Centre Directors reviewed draft summative evaluation report





Evaluation: Limitations

- Data are largely self-report, not possible to systematically validate against objective sources
- Key informants (other than the mid-term reviewers) able/willing to comment on the Centres they were familiar with, not the overall program
- Small number of interviews





Program-level Evaluation Challenges

- Not designed as case study-based evaluation
- Trade-offs between telling Centre-specific “story” vs. program-level focus of summative evaluation
- Comparisons between individual Centre programs of research
- Centres operating within heterogeneous contexts and organizational structures
- Attribution vs. contribution of Centre program given complex environment





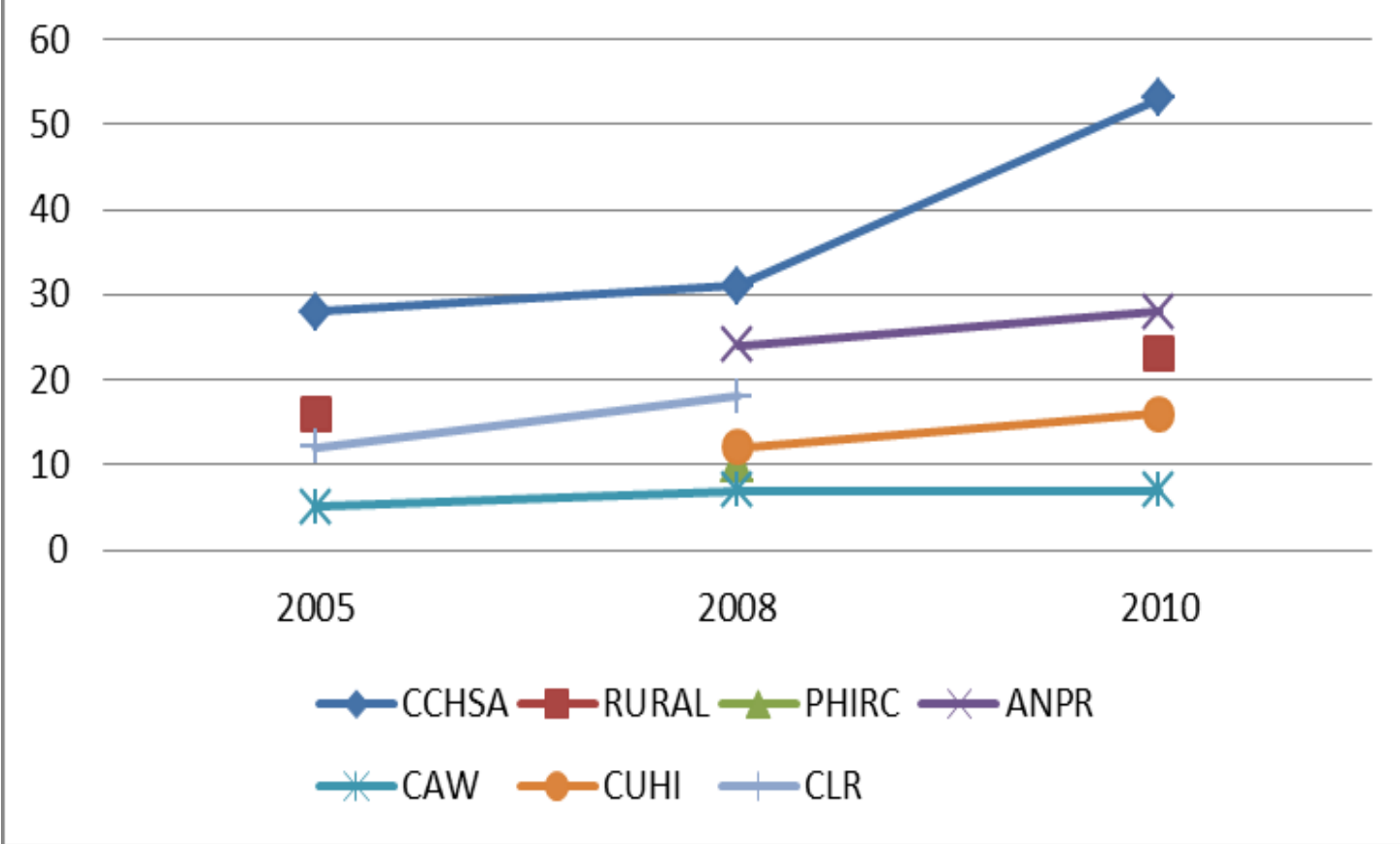
Selected Program-level Findings

Research Capacity Development

- Centres made clear and significant contributions to population and public health research capacity
- Increased level of engagement by different disciplines
- Research outputs: highly productive
- Accessing funds: moving to increased success in peer-reviewed funding competitions



Figure 2: No. of disciplines of Centre researchers





Research proposals generated by Centres (2003-2010)	Total	Mean	Range
Number of research projects supported with seed funding	175	25.0	14-43
Number of seed funded projects that led to submission to peer-reviewed funds	61		
Number of research protocols submitted to granting agencies by Centre members	306	44	9 – 108
Number of successful peer-reviewed grant applications	183	26.1	7-52





Research Capacity Development

- Training and mentoring
- Significant synergies with other complementary initiatives
 - Training platforms, MPH and Schools of Public Health, etc.
- Catalyzing population and public health research
 - Alignment between research chairs and Centre programs of research



Program-level Findings

Sustainability

- Variety of pathways:
 - Sustain research ideas (emergence of research groups)
 - Sustained infrastructure (some Centres still in place)
 - Sustain collaborative mechanisms
- Collaboration:
 - Denser and stronger linkages



Program-level Findings (2)

- Knowledge translation and exchange
 - Co-governance structure involving research users found to be innovative and very effective
 - Varying receptor capacity across Centres:
 - Use of incentives to foster engagement by research users
 - Difficult to document sustained capacity for evidence use by research users



Opportunities and Challenges for IPPH with Centres Program and its evaluation

Opportunities

- Individual Centres address different themes of research
- Some early signs toward building intervention research field
- Mission-driven, programmatic thrust to research
- Synergies with other complementary capacity building investments

Challenges

- Stimulate cross-Centre collaboration to build fields of research
- Evaluation trade-offs between program-level vs. individual Centre focus
- Mid-term evaluation requirements and delays
- Decision not to continue funding of Centres





Conclusion: Centres as innovative model

- Program was a strategic choice/risk for Institute of Population and Public Health
- Seen as highly successful overall
 - Advanced the overall aim of research capacity development and achieved specific program objectives
 - Adopted by other funding agencies





Conclusion: Centres as innovative model (2)

- Co-governance with research users
- Multi-year infrastructure funding – catalyzed mission driven, flexible, thematic and programmatic research
- Broadened conceptualization of paths to sustainability (from evaluation)



Lessons Learned: Evaluator's Perspective (1)

- Simple “Centre” idea with few requirements gave rise to a vastly diverse set of structures, approaches and results
 - Flexible evaluation process needed to consider range of contextual realities and outcomes
- Development of framework and face-to-face meetings
 - Critical for establishing trust and representing Centre interests





Lessons Learned: Evaluator's Perspective (2)

- Funded Centre entities do not easily adopt a program-level focus
 - Resistance to applying common evaluation framework to “my special case”
 - Self-reported data was aimed at funders and competitors
 - Drop-off in assiduity of data collection after mid-term review





THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION

