



INFORMATION SHEET

BC Community Based HIV/AIDS Research Capacity-Building Program
2003 –2011

Anyone can participate in community-based research and evaluation!

The Community-Based Research (CBR) Capacity-Building Program is a provincial program funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). Similar chapters operate in other provinces. It is designed to improve the skills of AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) in designing, implementing, and disseminating community-based research through the provision of a “CBR Facilitator” (CBRF). Terry Howard, the CBRF, works collaboratively with ASOs to identify and coordinate a wide-range of initiatives that incorporate community-based research and evaluation. ***Have more questions? Mail terryh@bcpwa.org***

In British Columbia, the CBR program is hosted by the BC persons With AIDS Society (BCPWA). The present CBR Facilitator, Terry Howard, MSc PPH, works with approximately eight to ten ASOs at any one time on projects of varying scope and length. Assistance may be provided at all stages of a project including proposal development, brokering partnerships, development of tools, knowledge transfer into program, policy, and evaluation, etc. Projects are chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, with an emphasis on ASOs located outside of Metro Vancouver. The assistance is offered at no cost to the community organizations. The program began in 2003 with a grant of \$80,000 and is now on its third funding cycle with CIHR. The present budget of \$85,000 does not include funds that ASOs must individually raise, with the CBRF’s assistance, from other funding agencies to actually conduct the research.

2008 CBR capacity building, facilitation and evaluation projects included “The Living Well Lab” – a participatory longitudinal cohort study of the impact of complementary and alternative therapies in the wellbeing of people living with HIV at Friends For Life Society; “Good Eats!” a series of workshops about food security and HIV in the Downtown Eastside at the LifeSkills Centre (check www.bcpwa.org/empower_yourself/cbr/#goodeats); “Engaging Physicians”, a community project increase the awareness of general practitioners regarding the sexual health of gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men in the Thompson-Okanagan region with the purpose of reducing stigma and vulnerability to HIV and STIs; PLUGGED! a workshop on how to use interactive, inexpensive, and available technologies in CBR, Evaluation and Programming,

an Interactive Breakfast Café at the 2008 Pacific AIDS Network (PAN) meeting on October 2008, followed by a co-facilitated leadership stream in February 2009, and a peer-reviewed paper on CBR and a book chapter on Positive Prevention for gay men in Canada.

Based on the CBR, evaluation and programming activities and objectives of ASOs, the CBRF offers capacity building in a range of accessible statistical and qualitative methodological options such as survey design and implementation, outcome evaluation tools, body mapping, community mapping, podcasting and digital story-telling, creative writing, survey design and implementation, poster preparation, or Skype distance consultations.

Today, demand for CBR facilitation is high. To accommodate this demand, the CBRF has integrated a community service learning/internship component into the program through connections with the Health Research and Methods Training Facility (HeRMeT) at Simon Fraser University, the School of Social Work at University of British Columbia and other academic outfits. Undergraduate and graduate students are matched with appropriate CBR research projects. The CBR program also relies on highly skilled volunteers provided through BCPWA. The CBRF co-teaches one CBR course in the fall semester at UBC School of Social Work where students join theory and CBR immersion in partner non-profit organizations.

An evaluation of the CBR program conducted in 2006 concluded that ASOs were satisfied with the program and felt that the CBR Facilitator was a valuable resource. Further, ASOs believed they had acquired better research skills through the mentoring of the CBR Facilitator. CIHR has evaluated the entire HIV CBR program with recommendations for next steps announced in October 2009.

One ongoing challenge is convincing ASOs of the value of CBR and process/outcome evaluation, the importance of readiness before a project starts, and the work of knowledge transfer into program, policy, and community (in friendly and accessible formats) once a project has formally ended. Also, a challenge is the considerable “brain drain”; often individual staff who are champions in CBR and evaluation move on to use their new skills elsewhere.

Outcomes: In 2009, the CBRF through the BC Capacity Building Program directly aided in the preparation of CBR funding proposals (of note is the “Positive Reinforcements” Operating grant CBR proposal submitted to CIHR in 2009), delivery of capacity building workshops, preparation of conference abstracts submitted and accepted for academic or community gatherings, field supervision of graduate students, supervision of BCPWA volunteers, aided in the development and administration of surveys, developed brief database searches/literature reviews for specific projects, and attended meetings with community members, academics, volunteers and students to energize the field around CBR. A number of these CBRF activities are continuation of previous years and some of them are ongoing. In addition, the BC CBRF is the Community Representative for the 17th Annual Conference on HIV/AIDS Research.