

2009 Sport Canada Research Initiative Advisory Committee Final Report

This report provides summaries of the 2009 SCRI conference workshop and evaluation survey. The summaries are followed by a series of recommendations to implement in 2010-11.

1. Solutions Report emerging from the SCRI Conference Workshop (Ian Bird, Facilitator)

The purpose of the SCRI 2009 conference workshop was to generate - and move to action on - solutions for effective and sustained sport-policy-research exchange. This report synthesizes the systemic, institutional, and individual solutions that were presented, forming the basis for an agenda for action to be developed in 2010.

Systemic Solutions

While the following systemic solutions are presented by theme, they all interconnect, ideally operating in concert with one another. The ideas below were the result of collective discussion and consensus – intended to be implemented through an open-source, community approach.

1. FORUM

The most popular solution to emerge from the workshop was the idea of a forum (also described as a “hub,” “platform,” “linkage system,” “nexus,” “network,” “consortium,” and “clearing house”). There was a strong consensus that a permanent, moderated forum could bring practitioners, policy makers, and researchers together to collectively identify, prioritize, generate, and inform research questions as well as share success and failure stories. This forum would require a strong leader/director to prompt and coordinate activity. Many ideas for the mechanism were presented, including: wiki, copractice, Facebook, web 2.0 networks, journal, newsletter, communities of practice, etc. Two examples that were suggested include Networks on Cities and Communities (Duxbury) at Simon Fraser University and the Canadian Obesity Network.

2. MATCHMAKER

Another related solution presented was the notion of a ‘matchmaking’ mechanism that could *actively* match area-specific individual researchers with sport organizations, policy makers and/or evaluators. Suggestions included: a database, a sport research registry, and a professional community ‘animator.’ While articulated

as a distinct solution, this idea was often presented in the broader context of information sharing.

3. COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

The idea of stronger and more formalized research collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policy makers also emerged. The most popular solutions related to this theme were: community-based research and community-based knowledge mobilization funding (i.e., Public Outreach Grant and/or Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) in sport participation.) A CIHR emerging team grant was also presented as a possible solution. A related idea was a collaborative degree program that builds research capacity and a generation of “tri-lingualists” connecting research, policy, and practice in their work. There was also discussion of non-traditional research projects including private sector and community involvement, adhoc, or pilot initiatives and seed money for collaborative team building.

4. CONFERENCE FORMAT

There was strong support for the SCRI conference, and many ideas related to improving the format were presented. Suggestions included: expanding the conference audience via web technologies, pursuing partnerships with other conference organizations (i.e., SCAPPS 2010), bringing in more practitioners as delegates, integrating theme-based workshops, consensus-building, and inviting more practitioners and policy makers to present papers/panels in the plenary.

5. Provincial/Territorial CONFERENCE

The idea of creating similar conferences at the provincial/territorial and regional levels was popular. These conferences were described as opportunities to share knowledge, to gain awareness of issues/challenges, to build networks and relationships to extend benefits and outcomes of Canadian research, and to represent grass-roots experience.

6. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Improving Knowledge Transfer was considered critical. While most solutions related to integrating KT components into research funding requirements and institutional incentives/mandates, the idea of creating KT papers from existing academic literature was also suggested. There was strong consensus that learnings from research needed to get into the public domain but also that policy makers and practitioners needed to consider KT as well. It was suggested that policy makers could share program logic models and rationales with researchers as part of this process and that practitioners could share their theory based evaluations.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

One of the solutions that emerged was focused on monitoring and evaluation, specifically using more external researchers for this purpose. The benefits included: important learnings for practitioners, the ability to hold funded organizations accountable, and the ability to better share research methods and success stories for improvement of policy/programs and evaluation.

Institutional Solutions

Institutional solutions related both to practices already under way and to those that could be implemented in the future. While these solutions were not developed by consensus, there was a high degree of overlap and repetition. Ideas related to accessibility of information and collaboration between policy, research, and practitioner communities.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Make language of institutional websites accessible to varied audiences.
- Disseminate results in a practical way (i.e., presentation in person vs. dropping off a report to the organization involved in the study)
- Write regular newsletters that transfer and translate policy and research

COLLABORATION

- Provide small funds as an incentive for national sport organizations (NSOs) to do research in concert with academics (e.g., CS4L)
- Fund action research projects that are practitioner-driven
- Assign institutional value ('currency') to research, KT, and non peer-reviewed publications that are more applied and collaborative
- Develop more informal academic connections with policy makers and practitioners, i.e., graduate student seminars, Sport Canada 'brown bag lunches'
- Create an institute on social policy at department level to encourage collaboration with field professionals who then advocate at a government level
- Invite researchers to listen to policy makers discuss and debate potential policy solutions (the inverse of the SCRI)
- Create sport system partnerships with Universities (i.e., Brock University/ the club excellence program) to ensure evidence-based evaluation and methodology.

- Agir localement: que les chercheurs de notre institution fassent plus d'efforts pour communiquer/ écouter les politiciens locaux ou municipaux.
- Through the Sport Canada Policy and Planning Division, inform researchers on Federal-Provincial/Territorial bilaterals
- Collaborate on the development of logic models for policies and programs
- Develop workshops on specific topics like researcher skills that policy practitioners would want to attend.
- Provide reports back to the athlete/coach/practitioner populations that we research so that they may benefit from our findings.
- Include practitioners in policy dialogues.
- Initiate a community forum with representation of Aboriginal and Disabled people.

Individual Solutions

Delegates came up with individual solutions that ultimately connected to ideas at the institutional and systemic levels. These statements provide a valuable list of ideas for ways that any one of us can contribute from within our own context with or without additional resources.

- I want to directly help practitioners implement relevant research findings.
- I would hold some cultural related workshop with researchers to inspire new thoughts and new perspectives.
- I can encourage the development of an easily accessible document summarizing SCRI research projects/findings/recommendations.
- I will engage researchers in the take-off phase of work: Club excellence and building capacity; sport for life (LTAD, education, health); and delivery of sport administration.
- I will coordinate opportunities for researchers and leaders of NSOs to interact on a more frequent basis.
- I will explore opportunities to share relevant research through our organization.
- I can make connections outside the discipline of sport studies to other disciplines/departments at my university.
- As a researcher, I can ensure that my work is not solely or exclusively focused on theoretical "advancements" but seriously takes potential pragmatic concerns/outcomes.
- I can take time to meet with someone from my province's sport governing body to discuss ideas and/or funding opportunities.
- I have the opportunity to share my current research with practitioners, NSOs, provincial sport organizations (PSOs) and policy makers.
- As a researcher, I can dedicate time whenever I travel to meet with sport practitioners.

- I can make an effort to communicate findings with practitioners.
- I will share the conference research materials with staff within our ministry.
- I will encourage better linkages between sport policy research and policy development in ongoing policy development procedures.
- I can host regular discussion groups involving researchers, policy makers, and coaches to highlight issues in sport development.
- I can dedicate time to review what research is being conducted.
- I can link with the Policy Branch to garner support for the research agenda.
- I can raise questions that might generate research and share with others.
- I can connect on a regular basis with researchers involved in my area of policy development.
- I can write up short summaries of published manuscripts that could be sent to key stakeholders.
- I can be a matchmaker bridging academics with practitioners.
- I can give researchers access to youth development programs for evaluation research.
- I can recommend research topics and researchers to present at the annual LTAD conference.
- I can continue to advocate for federal investment in sport participation research.
- I can play more; read more; write more.
- Stop thinking social policy makers are **'the devil.'**
- I can involve PSOs in the development of my research questions.
- I can do more community-based presentations.
- I can try to understand what the other silos do and how I can fit within their agenda.
- I can share my research directly with the sport community and with policy makers.
- I can meet with a policy maker in person to better understand the policy process and what the best method of dissemination is **for them**, not for my own convenience.
- I could try to have discussions with practitioners and policy makers prior to getting involved. What is relevant? What will make a difference?
- I want to learn more about the language policy makers use; what terms should I use to best convey the findings of my research?
- M'informer auprès des décideurs pour connaître les questions de recherche qui sont pertinentes pour eux.
- M'informer d'avantage sur le processus (étapes) et délai auxquels sont confrontés les décideurs afin de tout mettre en œuvre pour que l'information soit disponible au bon moment.
- Convince smaller communities to get involved in developing sport activities for kids and assist them in finding funding for human resources.
- I will strive to seek out relevant research to inform my day to day practice.

- Talk about the conference with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are not here.
- Meet with those researchers who are working on relevant topics.
- Encourage Sport Canada to keep supporting a conference of this type which is open to non-researchers.
- I will share the outcomes of my research on Management by Values with different audiences: practitioners, policy makers, and researchers.
- I will share knowledge about sport and physical activity when attending meetings/conferences outside this direct field (i.e., medicine, health surveillance).
- I can incorporate, into all of my research projects and outputs, the development and dissemination of accessible language summaries.
- I can upload work to the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC).
- I can organize policy-research-practice exchanges on my campus.
- I can teach/guide my students to think/act pragmatically re: policy-research-practice exchange.
- I can dedicate time to emailing and calling colleagues each week.
- I can share ideas 365 days a year.
- I can build bridges between students and researchers.
- I can be a better student of my own field.
- I can build bridges between colleagues and ideas and build bonds to keep them going.
- I can use accessible language in my writing.
- I can send references or even PDF files of research papers that I think may be of interest to the policy makers and practitioners that I know.
- I should hook up more often to government web pages to see what they are up to.
- As a first time attendee at this workshop, I've met many researchers with whom I plan to remain in contact to discuss and develop research ideas and projects.
- I can invite sport councils, foundations, NGOs, etc. to Sport Matters seminars and call people to invite each time.
- I can re-initiate field trips for graduate students and faculty to innovative community programs suggested by policy makers.
- At various points during the process of a research project, I can take time to review my thinking by attempting to consider what I am doing from the perspective of a policy person and practitioner.
- I will read Fred Coalter's slide presentation more closely and read his book to enhance my understanding of theory-based evaluation.
- I can connect with public policy staff in provincial/territorial governments to discuss collaborative policy development processes.
- I can ensure theory models and logic models are developed for all Sport Canada policies and programs.

- I can meet with researchers who best understand the sport and recreation needs of new Canadians.
- I can meet with other consultants, policy makers, to hear their view of sport, their priorities, and their language.
- I will read Carol Weiss!
- I will try to clarify realistic expectations of the policies I need to work on.
- Lorsque je vais recontrer les provinces et territoires, prendre le temps d'aller voir les les chercheurs en sport; Sport Leadership Conference; phone calls, emails; meetings with my clients- NGOs, multi-sport organizations (MSOs).
- I will spend time familiarizing myself with the broader sport policy context.
- I want to dedicate a minimum of one hour to writing each day at the office.
- I can make efforts to stay current on ground level initiatives and possibly look for ways to get involved in those.
- I will take time to create KT forms for communication of research (i.e., newsletters)
- I will take time to find and read current research.
- I can do a better job of contextualizing my work to appeal to the broader community.
- I can actively submit editorials to newspapers aimed at challenging/educating practitioners and policy makers, and news-persons on current events regarding sport, physical activity, and exercise.
- I will make an effort to report my research findings in publications that are geared towards coaches, athletes, and other practitioners.
- When I publish in this area, I will collaborate with a policy practitioner.
- I can spend more time reading the research in a more comprehensive and in-depth way.
- I can become more educated about the policy-decision-making-research process and connection.
- I can commit to working with provincial/territorial governments and researchers in each province to grow provincial data.
- I can collect examples of municipal sport policies
- I can dialogue more with teachers who interact often with at risk youth to obtain a better perspective of what they believe could be an effective solution.
- I can seek literature from outside my discipline and outside academics to aid in situating my research in a broader context.
- Using a community-based research model, I can meet with local community centres to discuss the questions they want answered in their youth programs; why do they use the programs? are they effective?
- I can send an abstract or one-paragraph summary of each publication after they are published to the targeted sport programming groups that would benefit from this work.
- I can read research papers outside my area of expertise.

2. Conference Evaluation Summary

The conference evaluation was, overall, extremely positive. The following is a summary of comments and suggestions submitted to the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) following the conference. The results are based on 63 returned surveys.

Conference Binder

The vast majority of respondents (93.7%) found the binder content extremely useful and comprehensive, often referring to its value beyond the conference as a repository, knowledge sharing tool, and reference resource. Delegates, however, found the inclusion of both official languages made the binder too cumbersome. 85.7% of delegates noted they would keep the binder for future reference. 46% of delegates indicated they would appreciate receiving the binder contents electronically.

Research Presentations

98.4% of respondents enjoyed the researcher plenary presentation format. 88.7% felt the length was “just right.” 8.1% felt they were too short and 4.8% felt they were too long. There was strong support for the focus on final results, though many thought more time for questions and discussion was needed. Many also indicated a desire to see presentations by practitioners and policy makers.

Keynote

Only 29.5% of respondents felt the keynote was a main attraction for attending the conference. Although most delegates found the keynote presentation interesting, they felt there was not enough time to discuss his key points and “unpack” the presentation. A few delegates found the presenter too provocative, even “insulting.”

Workshop

80.4% of respondents enjoyed the policy workshop, though comments were varied. Those who enjoyed the session liked the format and objectives. Among those who did not enjoy the workshop, many felt the small number of practitioners and policy makers in the room limited the potential outcomes of the exercise, and some questioned the effectiveness of the session’s design. Some felt the discussion was too similar to the ones from previous conferences and questioned whether or not it was a productive use of time. *Note: At the time of evaluation, delegates had not yet seen the summary of workshop outcomes.*

Poster Session

76.8% of respondents enjoyed the networking and poster sessions, indicating that the relaxed, networking-focused format was appreciated and that it was a great addition to the conference program. Many respondents suggested that while the networking was productive, the poster session was problematic; the posters were presented too late in the day, in competition with the networking opportunities and too disconnected from the rest of the conference (i.e., the ballroom) to inspire the engagement they deserved.

North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) Conference

There was wide support for a SCRI conference partnership with NASSS this year and other organizations in the future. More than half (57.4%) of the respondents attended NASSS sessions after attending the SCRI conference.

General Comments

91.4% of respondents plan to attend the SCRI conference next year. The majority of respondents felt the conference was very well organized, that the conference objectives are important, that the overall format is effective, and that it was a highly valuable learning and networking opportunity. The conference was also described as unique in the fields of sport and academia. Some suggestions for improvement include:

- Expand the role of the practitioner and policy maker
- Leverage web 2.0 technologies
- Partner with SCAPPS in 2010
- Include a presentation by Sport Canada Research and Policy Analyst on how to draw out policy implications from researchers' work
- Continue to invite provocative thinkers
- Include research-oriented presentations by practitioners and policy makers
- Continue partnership with SIRC
- Allow more time for discussion after keynote
- Move poster session to earlier in the day
- Focus more on the "so what" in smaller theme-based groups
- Include more individuals from PSOs and NSOs
- Include a presentation by Sport Canada on current political and policy climates
- Post conference materials in advance
- Present examples of other successful policy-practitioner-researcher nexuses
- Add second day to program for more discussion
- Offer binders in French OR English, not both.

3. SCRI Advisory Committee Recommendations

Based on the workshop outcomes and the evaluation survey, the SCRI Advisory Committee developed a series of recommendations to be implemented in 2010-11. The 2009 SCRI committee recommends:

1. That Sport Canada create a workgroup comprised of the SCRI Advisory Committee, Ian Bird, and relevant experts (i.e., Canadian Research Council representatives) to move to action on the conference workshop outcomes. The workgroup will develop a report recommending roles and responsibilities and timelines related to each of the seven institutional solutions contained in the 2009 SCRI Conference Workshop Solution Report.
2. That the SCRI Advisory Committee continue discussions with SSHRC related to improving the SPRI, including the development of indicators for a program evaluation in 2011 and opportunities to fund Public Outreach Grants and/or CURA grants in the future.
3. That the SCRI Advisory Committee initiate discussions with SCAPPS with a view to hosting the 2010 SCRI conference in conjunction with their October 2010 conference in Ottawa.
4. That the Advisory Committee consider all suggestions related to format, logistics, and conference materials emerging from the evaluation survey when planning the 2010 conference.
5. That Sport Canada engage SIRC again for managing conference logistics and online conference content in 2010.