

Summative Evaluation of the BC SUPPORT Unit





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BC SUPPORT UNIT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|--|
| BC | British Columbia |
| BC AHSN | British Columbia Academic Health Science Network |
| BC SUPPORT | BC Support for People and Patient-Oriented Research and Trials |
| CIHR | Canadian Institutes of Health Research |
| CST | Clinical Systems Transformation |
| CTBC | Clinical Trials BC |
| DaSHI | Data Science Health Informatics |
| DEI | Diversity, Equity & Inclusion |
| HESM | Health Economics and Simulation Modelling |
| KT | Knowledge translation |
| KT/IS | Knowledge Translation and Implementation Science |
| LOS | Letters of Support |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MSFHR | Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research |
| PCM | Patient Centered Measurement |
| PE | Patient Engagement |
| POR | Patient-oriented research |
| PREMs | Patient-reported experience measures |
| PROMS | Patient-reported outcome measures |
| RWCT | Real World Clinical Trial |
| RWCTs | Real-world clinical trials |
| SPOR | Strategy for Patient Oriented Research |

Executive Summary

Background

The British Columbia (BC) Support for People and Patient-Oriented Research and Trials (SUPPORT) Unit's **goal is to support, streamline, and increase patient-oriented research (POR)** throughout BC. POR is defined by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) as a continuum of research that engages patients as partners, focuses on patient-identified priorities, and improves patient outcomes. The BC SUPPORT Unit has **two main roles: (1) provide services** to patients, researchers, healthcare providers and health system decision makers, and **(2) facilitate initiatives** identified as provincial priorities.

The BC SUPPORT Unit collaborates with multiple partners (e.g., the provincial government, funding organizations, health authorities, universities) to achieve its goals. The Provincial Hub in Vancouver coordinates activities across BC and provides services to the Vancouver region, and four additional regional centres provide services to the Fraser, Interior, Northern, and Vancouver Island regions. The Unit has four priority stakeholder groups who it aims to work with and provides services for—researchers, patients, healthcare providers, and health system decision makers.

Evaluation Overview

This summative evaluation includes the BC SUPPORT Unit's activities and initiatives that occurred during its Phase 1 funding cycle (2016-17 to 2021-22). A mixed-methods evaluation approach was used. Data sources included a document and literature review, an online survey with 364 respondents who were familiar with the BC SUPPORT Unit, and interviews and focus groups with 88 individuals involved with the BC SUPPORT Unit. The focus areas of this evaluation include:

1. Relevance of the BC SUPPORT Unit and alignment with CIHR's Strategy for POR (SPOR) initiative
2. Effectiveness of the BC SUPPORT Unit activities and domain areas
3. Progress towards expected outcomes including intermediate and ultimate objectives
4. Efficiency of the BC SUPPORT Unit's design and delivery
5. Main areas of opportunity for the BC SUPPORT Unit to support future sustainability

Key Findings

The evaluation identified the following findings in each focus area:



Relevance of the BC SUPPORT Unit

- The BC SUPPORT Unit services complement current federal and provincial government priorities and are generally well aligned with SPOR principles and goals.
- The BC SUPPORT Unit has a strong provincial infrastructure that provides an effective forum for individuals and institutions to collaborate and participate in POR.
- There is an ongoing need for the BC SUPPORT Unit to increase awareness of current and emerging POR best practices.



Effectiveness of the BC SUPPORT Unit Activities

Based on the Phase 1 objectives for the BC SUPPORT Unit’s six key domain areas, the evaluation determined the extent which each domain met their preliminary goals:

| Domain | Status |
|--|---|
| Consultation & research: The Unit delivered satisfactory, timely, and tailored consultations to a broad range of stakeholders and across a variety of topics through its Hub and regional centres. |  Objectives met |
| Training & capacity building: The Unit delivered a broad range of activities (e.g., web-based learnings, workshops, conferences) and awards, which were perceived as sharing useful best practices and being relevant to the needs of stakeholders. |  Objectives met |
| Methods support & development: This domain shifted from providing methods support to advancing POR methodology in 6 topic specific Methods Clusters. This domain met its new objectives although additional knowledge dissemination work can be done. |  Objectives met |
| Applied health systems research, knowledge translation & implementation science: Activities for this domain have been implemented more recently and intersect with many other aspects of the Unit. Objectives are on-track and anticipated to be achieved with continued focus. |  Objectives on track |
| Data platforms & services: This domain experienced significant delays in implementation due to the large number of complex projects and funding partners; however, much foundational work has been completed and with the right leadership should see impacts moving forward. |  Objectives on track |
| Real-world clinical trials: Despite some progress, this domain had challenges implementing meaningful activities and progressing in this area, in part due to a lack of designated leadership. |  Objectives not met |



Progress Towards Expected Outcomes

Through their strong provincial infrastructure and implementation of a diverse portfolio of activities, the BC SUPPORT Unit is making progress on its expected outcomes through the following collective impacts:

1. **Increased capacity for POR amongst priority groups.** The Unit implemented a variety of activities to facilitate progress towards increased understanding, willingness, and ability to conduct and engage in POR
2. **Increased opportunity for patients to participate in POR.** The Unit cultivated multiple opportunities and a province-wide standard for patient engagement across the health and research landscape of BC.
3. **Laid a foundation to actualize a culture of collaborative inquiry.** The Unit built awareness and buy-in for POR, as well as supported relationship-building amongst their priority POR groups.
4. **Laid a foundation for evidence to be translated into health care policy and practice.**
5. **Created foundational data platforms and services.**

The BC SUPPORT Unit has established groundwork for its ultimate (10+ years) objectives, with particular progress being made towards a culture change in POR that values all stakeholders.



Efficiency of Design and Delivery

- The BC SUPPORT Unit has a **complex operating model with 12 funding partners**, more than any other SPOR Unit in Canada. Inclusion of many funding partners helped the Unit's goals by **supporting initiatives and positions related to POR that may not have been funded otherwise.**
- The Unit's delivery model **supported staff at a Hub and 4-regional centres across BC** which allowed the Unit to be adaptive to local contexts.
- The Unit's overall design supported their goals but **created challenges for cohesion, alignment, and measurement** of the Unit's objectives as oversight of a large number of external partners was difficult while concurrently establishing foundational features of the Unit.

Recommendations and Areas of Opportunity

Based on findings, there is opportunity for the BC SUPPORT Unit to focus on the six following areas as it moves forward:



Continue having an ingrained infrastructure. The BC SUPPORT Unit's infrastructure involves close partnerships with government entities. This ingrained infrastructure has the potential to create change from within and should be continued.



Increase focus on diversity and inclusion. The BC SUPPORT Unit has opportunity to engage more diverse populations and activities that support safe integration of vulnerable populations into POR.



Increase visibility. The BC SUPPORT Unit has opportunity to increase the promotion of its activities and services to a broad range of stakeholders to increase visibility and uptake.



Expand & target services for healthcare decisionmakers and providers. As the BC SUPPORT Unit progresses to a more health systems focus, they have the opportunity to expand services and supports to be more inclusive of healthcare decision makers and health care providers.



Conduct strategic stakeholder planning. The BC SUPPORT Unit has opportunity to conduct a strategic stakeholder planning session to examine which existing relationships may benefit their long-term goals. Conducting meaningful Phase 1 wrap-up activities with current partners has potential to strengthen external relationships and build an important network of organizations for ongoing work POR.



Conduct a collaborative performance measurement session. At the beginning of the next phase of funding, the BC SUPPORT Unit has the opportunity to conduct a collaborative performance measurement session co-developed with key internal stakeholder to align future objectives.