

# When collaboration is both the network and the evaluation: A seven year assessment of the Institute for Continuing Care Education & Research

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The Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (IC CER) is a network of post-secondary institutions and continuing care provider organizations collaborating to improve continuing care in Alberta. It was established in 2008, with representation from four key partners. Since then it has grown and, at the time of the evaluation, had 12 organizations. The evaluation framework shown below is based on the “Guiding Principles for Collaborative Approaches in Evaluation” (CAE) as developed by Shulha et al.<sup>1</sup> Collaborative evaluation approaches involve systematically inviting and engaging stakeholders in program evaluation planning and implementation.

Guiding Principles	What we did
<b>Clarify motivation for collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ICCER network is a collaborative initiative.</li> <li>• The desire to evaluate its accomplishments using CAE aligned with ICCER’s overall philosophy and operation.</li> <li>• The ICCER staff and evaluator met to explore how a CAE could best be developed and implemented.</li> <li>• These meetings fostered a shared understanding of the evaluation purpose and expectations.</li> <li>• An evaluation committee of ICCER staff, representatives from member organizations, and the external evaluator was established.</li> </ul>
<b>Foster meaningful relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The success of the evaluation was based on two fundamental pillars: i) ICCER staff were the context and program experts, and ii) the evaluator brought the evaluation expertise.</li> <li>• The two areas were brought together in open and transparent discussions.</li> <li>• Options for the evaluation were explored in a trusting and non-judgemental atmosphere.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop a shared understanding of the program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two overarching evaluation questions were developed based on the mission, vision, strategic directions and guiding documents.</li> <li>• This led to a shared understanding of the program logic and rationale.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotes appropriate participatory processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Area of Inquiry Framework was shared, reviewed and agreed upon by the evaluation committee.</li> <li>• This Framework outlined the population and methods for the data collection.</li> <li>• The ICCER staff took the lead in contacting and arranging for data collection.</li> <li>• Draft tools were developed by the evaluator and these were shared with the committee that provided feedback and edits that reflected the need of ICCER.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor and respond to resource availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The collaborative evaluation was valued by ICCER and its members by ensuring that staff and evaluation committee members had the time and resources to carry out their involvement in a meaningful and successful way.</li> <li>• A variety of ways for participating were used, such as face-to-face meetings, conference calls, and review of documentation electronically.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor evaluation progress and quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICCER staff took the lead in communication with all potential stakeholders, describing the purpose and rationale for the evaluation and the value of stakeholders’ contributions.</li> <li>• Monitoring of the evaluation progress was ongoing.</li> <li>• As unexpected events were introduced, ICCER staff and the evaluator informed one another. Data collection progress updates were provided on a regular basis. The motto was “no surprises” at the end of the evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote evaluative thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICCER is founded on inquisitiveness and embraces the value of evidence. Evaluative thinking is one of the foundations upon which the organization is based.</li> <li>• The Evaluation Committee saw the evaluation as a process of further learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Follow through to realize use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Evaluation Committee jointly explored the findings and interpreted the results. This led to clarity in terms of next steps, and laid the foundation for the evaluation to become meaningful learnings for future actions.</li> <li>• The ICCER Steering Committee used the evaluation findings to guide the development of 2016/17 and 2017/18 priorities.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>LM Shulha, E Whitmore, JB Cousins, N Gilbert, and H al Hudib, American Journal of Evaluation, Published on line, Dec 18, 2015.

Supported in part by Alberta Health



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