

## **Building an institutional capacity for knowledge mobilization**

### **Call for new university partners**

#### **Background:**

ResearchImpact is a pan-Canadian network of six universities committed to maximizing the impact of academic research for the social, economic, environmental and health benefits of Canadians. Founded in 2006 RIR is committed to developing institutional capacities to support knowledge mobilization by developing and sharing knowledge mobilization best practices, services and tools.

Knowledge mobilization<sup>1</sup> is a suite of services that connects academic research and researchers with people and organizations seeking to develop sustainable solutions to social, environmental, economic and cultural challenges. Knowledge mobilization services also support research and knowledge-based collaborations. Funding agencies are increasingly asking researchers to articulate plans for knowledge mobilization. For example, SSHRC Insight Grants require both a knowledge mobilization plan and a statement outlining the anticipated impact of the proposed research. Institutional knowledge mobilization support services also have the potential to assist faculty in preparing well-crafted and justified knowledge mobilizations plans (the “how”) that support the impact statements (“the what”).

Knowledge mobilization is concerned with research that has the potential to inform decisions about public policy, professional practice and social programs. Knowledge mobilization works with research from the social sciences and humanities, health and natural sciences. Partners for knowledge mobilization can be from the public, community/non-profit and the private sector. Knowledge mobilization also supports engagement of research and researchers with the broader public.

The foundation of any institutional knowledge mobilization capacity is the knowledge broker who provides knowledge mobilization services to researchers, students and their non-academic partners.

Founded in 2006 by York University and the University of Victoria, ResearchImpact is Canada’s knowledge mobilization network. In 2010-2011 ResearchImpact expanded to include Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, Université du Québec à Montréal, University of Guelph and University of Saskatchewan. Responding to local opportunities and constraints has resulted in different models of institutional knowledge mobilization services; however, all six universities have invested in an institutional capacity to support knowledge mobilization among faculty, students and partner organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Many organizations use a diversity of terms to describe what we call knowledge mobilization. There are subtle distinctions between knowledge transfer (KT), knowledge translation (also KT), knowledge exchange (KE), knowledge transfer & exchange (KTE), knowledge translation and transfer (KTT), knowledge mobilization (KMb), knowledge integration (KI); however, they are all terms to describe essentially the same process of connecting research to practice/policy. See appendix A for a list of definitions or related activities.

Now maturing as an interactive working network and having completed an initial period of definition and goal setting, ResearchImpact would like to solicit interest from the academic community to join us in building knowledge mobilization expertise and sharing best practices.

This document explains the objectives of ResearchImpact and outlines the process through which we will be inviting institutions to express their interest in joining Research Impact.

Mandate of ResearchImpact: to maximize the impact of university research on society by supporting knowledge brokers

Goals of ResearchImpact: We will accomplish this mandate by delivering on the following goals:

- Building on excellence and experience to become a distributed network of expertise in knowledge mobilization practice
- Developing and sharing knowledge mobilization tools
- Providing a platform for knowledge brokering across ResearchImpact institutions
- Being recognized as knowledge mobilization leaders nationally and in our regions
- Serving as a national advocacy voice for knowledge mobilization
- Engaging with other universities seeking to build capacity in knowledge mobilization

Growth of ResearchImpact:

ResearchImpact is seeking new university partners who will contribute to developing knowledge mobilization excellence and achieving ResearchImpact goals. We seek university partners who have:

- Established an institutional commitment to KMb and related activities
- Dedicated at least one FTE-equivalent knowledge broker for institutional KMb
- Dedicated a Director with KMb in his/her portfolio
- Developed KMb tools and/or services to complement those developed by existing ResearchImpact universities
- Are interested in developing their own expertise

Through an open call, we will seek partners who will help expand our current regional distribution and who will add to our synergistic interactions as we work to grow. We are hoping to add several new universities that have committed to the formal development of knowledge mobilization and see the benefits of a collaborative discourse in capacity building and development of best practices.

For those universities who are interested in developing an institutional capacity to support knowledge mobilization but are not yet ready to contribute based on excellence of experience, ResearchImpact will work with them to build capacity for knowledge mobilization and will remain committed to sharing best practices and knowledge mobilization tools

## Expectations for ResearchImpact membership

We are looking for new members actively building their knowledge mobilization capacity including:

1. Canadian university: to manage growth ResearchImpact will initiate growth from the Canadian university sector embracing other research and international institutions in future growth planning
2. Documented commitment to institutional knowledge mobilization: an established university plan, research plan, engagement plan, or other document that identifies knowledge mobilization or related activity (see Appendix 1) as an institutional priority
3. Established investment in one or more FTE for knowledge mobilization staff
4. Emphasis on practice and policy relevant scholarship for the benefit of society
5. Maintain geographic distribution of ResearchImpact to avoid one region dominating while enabling development of regional ResearchImpact nodes

## Responsibilities of ResearchImpact members

In addition to developing and delivering local knowledge mobilization services responding to local opportunities and constraints, all ResearchImpact members will be expected to undertake the following:

1. Identify one Director and at least one knowledge broker as main points of ResearchImpact contact as well as identify an executive academic authority (VP Research or equivalent authority) for oversight of knowledge mobilization
2. Participate in monthly knowledge brokers' teleconference
3. Director and Broker(s) will attend annual ResearchImpact meeting
4. Contribute to ResearchImpact communications including blog and twitter
5. Participate in and/or support joint presentations (for example at CAURA, Congress, CUExpo)
6. Dedicate \$10,000 annually to ResearchImpact operations (web site, social media, communications and evaluation). Of this, \$5,000 will be provided annually to the lead ResearchImpact university (currently York University) under an inter-institutional agreement and approximately \$5,000 will be dedicated to support travel to ResearchImpact meetings and events.

It is estimated that local knowledge brokers will be expected to dedicate 1-2 days per month on national ResearchImpact activities.

**Application/Selection Process & Timeline:** Complete applications are due no later than January 25, 2013 and should be e mailed to [info@researchimpact.ca](mailto:info@researchimpact.ca). Applicants will be notified of a decision by March 15, 2013. New RIR partners will be required to sign the RIR Inter-Institutional Agreement.

A complete application consists of three parts:

- A. free form answers to the 9 questions below
- B. letter of commitment from Executive Academic Authority (details below)
- C. letters of support from collaborating organizations

Applications will be reviewed by the Directors of the 6 RIR members and recommendations will be made to the Executive Academic Authorities of the 6 RIR members who will make the final decision. Decisions will be based on the Responsibilities of RIR Members and how well respondents can help RIR meet its goals (above).

**For More Information:** Information sessions have been held at CAURA 2012 and Congress 2012 and information will also be available at Innovation Partnerships 2012. You may also speak to Michael Johnny, Manager, Knowledge Mobilization at York University, 416-736-2100 x 88876; [mjohnny@yorku.ca](mailto:mjohnny@yorku.ca).

***APPLICATION for membership in ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche***

Please complete sections A, B and C and submit to [info@researchimpact.ca](mailto:info@researchimpact.ca) by 430 pm on Friday January 25, 2013

(A): Please provide the following information (free form response: no page limits, no formatting requirements)

1. Name of university
2. Name of main contact person for this application (for any questions about the application, and for notification of the decision on the application)
3. The main contact person's email address and telephone number.
4. Why do you want to participate in the initiative, what are your goals in participating, and what are the institutional outcomes you expect from your participation?
5. Please provide the name of and contact information for the following RIR representatives at your institution

- a. Executive Academic Authority with oversight for institutional knowledge mobilization
  - b. Director responsible for institutional knowledge mobilization
  - c. Knowledge broker as primary staff support and contact for institutional knowledge mobilization
6. In addition to the individuals identified in Question 6 please identify any other institutional resource or capacity that engages in knowledge mobilization and related concepts shown in Appendix A (i.e. Research Unit, SSHRC Partnership Grant, service learning, intern program etc).
  7. How does your university provide services and activities that promote, support and advance any of the concepts identified in Appendix A? Please identify if these services and activities are underway (and if so, for how long) or planned (and if so, the time frame for launch of planned activities and services). Please also provide web links to on line resources if available.
  8. Please recommend training needs you anticipate would build your capacity for institutional knowledge mobilization.
  9. What questions, comments, concerns or suggestions do you have on RIR?

*(B) Letter of Commitment:* A letter of commitment from a university official who is able to commit the expected financial contribution must be submitted along with the answers to these 9 questions in section A and letters of support in section C. The letter should elaborate on the ways in which s/he supports your university's participation in RIR, including financial support.

*(C) Letters of Support:* Provide up to three letters of support from partner organizations with whom your institution has collaborated on knowledge mobilization and related activities. The letters of support should help substantiate your existing knowledge mobilization and related experience and describe the benefits and/or outcomes experienced or anticipated by the partner organization.

## Appendix A

Definitions of terms closely related to knowledge mobilization:

- **Knowledge Mobilization** brokers relationships between researchers and non-academic research partners so that research and evidence can inform decisions and understanding about public policy, professional practice and other applications. Knowledge mobilization services include methods of knowledge transfer, knowledge translation and exchange, and extend them to include the co-production of knowledge. Knowledge mobilization turns research into action.
- **Social Innovation** is an **umbrella term** that encompasses social enterprise (for profit companies with a social mission) and social finance (impact investing, mission related investing). **Social Innovation** is the creation or application of research and knowledge to develop sustainable solutions to social, environmental and cultural challenges. Social innovation results in more efficient and effective human services, more responsive public policies and greater cultural understanding. Knowledge mobilization (the **process**) may contribute to social innovations (the **outcome**).
- **Community engagement** is “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Carnegie Foundation) and includes many possible avenues for that exchange including knowledge mobilization.
- **Community-engaged scholarship** (CES) involves the researcher in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and results in scholarship deriving from teaching, discovery, integration, application or engagement (Campus Community Partnerships for Health).
- **Community Based Research** (CBR) is a form of knowledge mobilization where the research questions are driven by community partners and engage academic and community researchers as equal participants in all stages of the research process. CBR is a co-production methodology. CBR leaders in Canada include the Office of Community Based Research (UVic) and Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship (Guelph) both of whom are ResearchImpact partner universities.