

Innovation in Evidence

BACKGROUND PAPER FOR CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 15 -16 | UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

Strengthening Canadian Efforts to
Identify What Works (and What Doesn't)
in Social Policy

BY LISA LALANDE & JOANNE CAVE

MowatNFP
MOWAT'S NOT-FOR-PROFIT POLICY RESEARCH HUB

MUNK SCHOOL
OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS
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CSKA | Community
Safety
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“Applying data and evidence to shape social policy and practice innovation drives better outcomes and fuels inclusive growth. Knowing what reduces child poverty, raises graduation rates or lowers greenhouse gas emissions — and investing in what works — are key to building a successful 21st century society.”

Stephen Huddart,
McConnell Foundation

FOREWORD

October 1, 2018

As Deputy Minister of Corrections and Policing in Saskatchewan, I feel we are in a unique position in government and within a long entrenched system (criminal justice system) to impact change. This ministry has two essential levers to impact change -the first is police which is first contact into the criminal justice system), and the second is corrections which for many is the final or repeated contact with the criminal justice system. In my time as Deputy Minister, we have come to recognize we have one of few vantage points within broader human services to reverse engineer where the system has fallen short in helping individuals and families.

In the past our only solution has been to collaborate and work harder - but, the real innovation comes when we put the brightest minds from all sectors working toward common outcomes that are measurable.

The work behind planning this conference of The Mowat Centre and the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance, in addition to lessons learned from colleagues abroad, allows us to leverage the brightest minds working in this space. It will take not only the collective wisdom but challenging the status quo to deliver better outcomes for our citizens and to apply better value in the use of government resources, both financial and human.

Upon completion of this conference, I very much look forward to a follow up paper that will help direct or redirect resources in a more meaningful and collaborative way, amongst partners which includes public, private and philanthropy. Complex problems have been plaguing most governments around the world for many decades. It is my belief that solutions lie between all partners in finding new ways of doing business.

The solution should not be a debate about who does the work, as there is enough work for everybody! Rather, the solution should be about leveraging all resources to put the right tool to the circumstance in the timeliest way that creates the best value for citizens/clients and the taxpayer.

It is my firm belief that these solutions are within our grasp and this conference is a big step toward getting things done.

Respectfully,

Dale McFee

Deputy Minister, Corrections and Policing, Government of Saskatchewan

1 INTRODUCTION

The landscape for evidence-informed policymaking¹ is changing rapidly. Organizations and governments are increasingly operating in environments of scarcity, relying on evidence² to direct the impactful and efficient allocation of resources. Social issues like poverty and marginalization are also becoming more complex and entrenched, requiring more sophisticated and evidence-driven interventions.

However, there are also unique pressures on evidence institutions.³ Resource and time constraints compromise researchers and their ability to provide robust real-time evidence to inform the development of new interventions and policies. In addition, governments, service providers and risk-averse institutions can be slow to embrace innovative and experimental approaches to collecting, interpreting and applying evidence.

The Innovation in Evidence Conference is a response to these challenges, and an opportunity for Canadian and international policymakers and practitioners to discuss emerging approaches and opportunities for collaboration.

Goals of the Conference

The conference has three primary objectives:

- » Identify opportunities to strengthen the national evidence ecosystem.⁴
- » Directly inform efforts currently underway in Saskatchewan and Alberta to improve the use of evidence in policymaking and program delivery.
- » Explore the potential for international collaboration on social policy issues.

1 Evidence-informed policymaking is defined as “the best available research and information on program results to guide decisions at all stages of the policy process and in each branch of government. It identifies what works, highlights gaps where evidence of program effectiveness is lacking, enables policymakers to use evidence in budget and policy decisions, and relies on systems to monitor implementation and measure key outcomes” (Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, 2014, p.2). Retrieved from: www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2014/11/evidencebasedpolicymakingaguideforeffectivegovernment.pdf.

2 The results of systematic investigation toward increasing the sum of knowledge; research that can be independently observed and verified. Evidence can be classified into three general categories: theoretical evidence (ideas, concepts or models, often developed in an academic context); empirical evidence (data about the actual use of an intervention); experiential evidence (insight from service users, practitioners or experts in the field). Evidence can be qualitative or quantitative and collected from a range of sources, including government, independent research organizations, think tanks, service provider organizations and service users.

3 Evidence institutions are defined as “organizations designed to possess the technical expertise to review and produce robust policy research as a resource to the public and policymakers” (see Cave, Aitken & Lalande, 2017).

4 The evidence ecosystem is the collective environment of evidence institutions, policy thinktanks, data centres, academic research institutions, government bodies and service delivery organizations that collect, use and disseminate research and data.

This conference will bring together international leaders and innovators in evidence-informed policymaking to share emerging trends, discuss lessons learned and provide fresh insight into the challenges facing policymakers, practitioners, researchers and academics in their quest to understand ‘what works.’

The conference will focus on key themes such as generating, translating, adopting and funding evidence. It will also emphasize tangible and practical examples relating to building integrated data ecosystems and meaningful end-user engagement to learn from and, where appropriate, align with global trends and practices.

Forthcoming Papers

This paper is the first in a series of papers prepared for the Innovation in Evidence Conference. The Mowat Centre will also release a report on the current state of Canada’s evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem and a post-conference paper identifying key lessons learned from the conference, next steps and opportunities for collaboration between Canadian and international partners.



2 CONTEXT

While evidence-informed policymaking is not new, it has gained greater traction in the last decade.⁵ Governments, philanthropic funders and non-profits, facing fiscal constraints, are under greater scrutiny about how funds are spent and what outcomes are being achieved.

In Canada, evidence institutions play an important role in supporting evidence-informed policymaking. Organizations like the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), and PolicyWise conduct research and evaluations and mobilize evidence in a variety of fields. However, Canada's evidence-informed policymaking ecosystem is less developed than some international counterparts, particularly in social policy. Canada has been falling behind other leading countries in using evidence to improve the efficient use of public dollars and the impact of public policies and programs.⁶

There are efforts underway across the country to improve the use of evidence in policymaking and program delivery. Notably, new highly collaborative models of “integrated social practice” are being developed in Saskatchewan and Alberta that capture the immense potential of interdisciplinary practice and community engagement. They take a multi-sectoral horizontal, cross-government approach to deliver locally-relevant, targeted human services interventions.

Those driving these efforts recognize that new approaches to generate and share evidence that is useful to policymakers and practitioners will be crucial to addressing the complex human services challenges they face. Such efforts must be grounded in:

- » Strategic partnerships.
- » Data-driven decision-making.
- » Local, community-based decisions.
- » Achieving meaningful outcomes and value for resources.

Globally, evidence institutions such as policy labs or What Works Centres have emerged as a promising tool to better link research with practice, to build capacity for experimentation in the policy development process, and to get evidence into the hands of policymakers and frontline practitioners when it is needed most.⁷ We can benefit from drawing on lessons learned from the What Works Centres globally to inform new approaches here in Canada.

5 In 2015, the Canadian federal government made a series of commitments to supporting evidence-informed policymaking and outcomes measurement. These commitments included creating a Policy on Results as well as a new Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet responsible for results and delivery. In 2017, the Government launched a Co-Creation Steering Group to develop a national Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy, which includes recommendations for improving Canada's understanding of 'what works'.

6 The Mowat Centre's forthcoming report will have more information on the state of Canada's social policy evidence ecosystem which will serve as important context setting. This report will be available on its [website](#) in November 2018.

7 What Works Centres have been profiled in the Mowat Centre's recent work, [Bridging the Gap](#).

Promising Efforts Underway in Saskatchewan and Alberta

The Community Safety Knowledge Alliance

The Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA) is a non-profit based in Saskatchewan that supports governments and others in the development and implementation of new approaches to community safety and well-being.⁸ Their client-centred, multi-sectoral methodology is designed to address vulnerability and risk on interconnected social issues before harm occurs or to mitigate further risk of harm.⁹

Recognizing that elevated risk factors cannot be addressed by a single agency alone, CSKA has been shifting towards a model of practice that focuses on how governments, organizations and communities can work together across different systems (e.g. justice, health, education, social services, etc.) to transform the lives of citizens they serve (see Figure 1). They are working towards improving shared outcomes for the highest-needs individuals and families and ensuring value-for-money.

The Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre

The Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre (SKCAC) acts as a single multi-disciplinary entity, integrating key wrap-around services (see Figure 2) towards the achievement of shared outcomes. Their approach has been proven to greatly improve the quality of care to urgent cases, more quickly enable information sharing to reduce the systemic traumatization of children, and positively impact the long-term health and well-being of children.

There are currently more than 20 child advocacy centres (CACs) operating in Canada, with many more being planned or in development. Several CACs are developing a network coast to coast and creating national guidelines and best practices to protect every child in Canada; SKCAC, which is the largest and most comprehensive in Canada, is one of the lead advocates in this emerging network.

FIGURE 1

CSKA Models of Practice

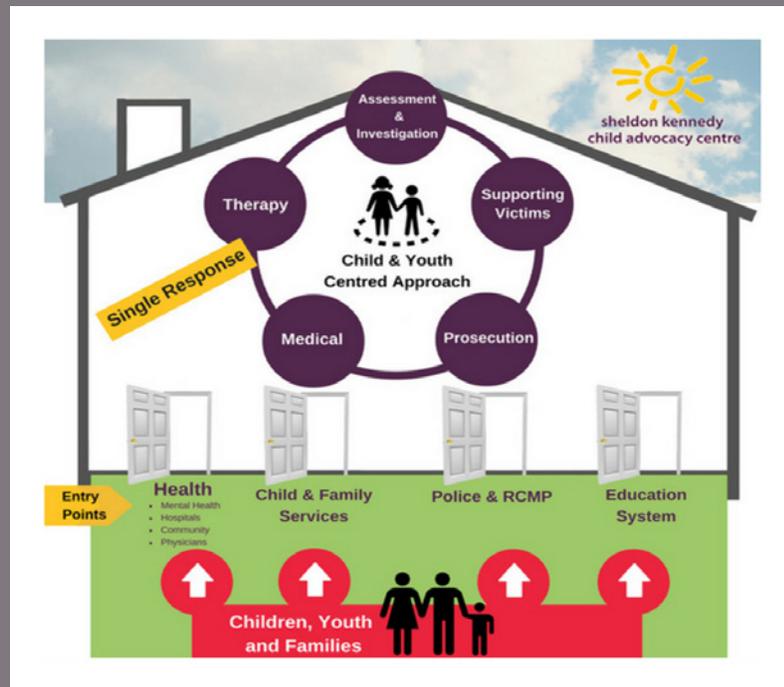


8 Community safety and well-being is defined as “the combined outcome from the greatest absence of crime, addiction, mental suffering, violence, poverty, homelessness, sickness, injury and/or other social harms that a community can collectively achieve.” Retrieved from: http://www.cskacanada.ca/images/board-member-documents/PDFs/CSWB-Concept-Practice-Alignment_May2018_final_DIGITAL_revised_2.pdf.

9 Nilson, Dr. C. (2018). “Community Safety and Well-Being: Concept, Practice, and Alignment.” Available at: <http://www.cskacanada.ca/news/90-community-safety-and-well-being-concept-practice-and-alignment-report-released>.

FIGURE 2

Key Features of the SKCAC Integrated Practice Model



Source: KPMG (2015). "The Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre Social Return on Investment Study." Available at: <http://calio.org/images/social-return-on-investment-study.pdf>.

Alberta and Saskatchewan have been leaders in developing integrated data sharing and analysis platforms to create space for new models of client-centred service delivery. This has enabled policymakers and practitioners to better generate, share and use evidence that reflects the on the ground realities of practitioners and beneficiaries.

While they are making significant advances, they are seeking opportunities to create additional frameworks to build continuity in practice, build shared measurement approaches, and further embed experimentation into their models; they are also identifying pathways to create more robust and timely evidence required to unlock new sources of revenue (i.e. private capital). To this end, the CSKA and SKCAC are exploring how the What Works Centre approach to generating, translating, sharing and funding evidence can further support their efforts.

3 THE EVIDENCE OPPORTUNITY

There are many types of evidence institutions in the global ecosystem. This section uses What Works Centres (WWCs)¹⁰ as one example of how new types of evidence institutions are emerging to bridge the gap between research and practice, as profiled in the Mowat Centre’s previous research, *Bridging the Gap: Designing a Canadian What Works Centre*.

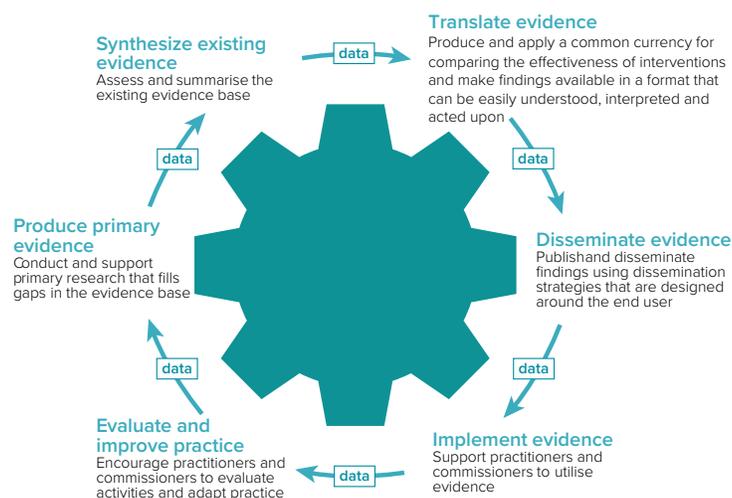
What Works Centres are one organizational approach to building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking and practice. WWCs add value to the evidence ecosystem by evaluating the rigour and usefulness of evidence and mobilizing that evidence for application by governments, non-profit organizations and frontline practitioners;¹¹ consequently, these institutions bridge the gap between producers of evidence and consumers of evidence.

WWCs are often structured as a collaboration among academic institutions, governments and non-profit organizations. They typically focus on a subsector or issue area (e.g. crime reduction), although some have a geographic focus and address a large range of policy issues.

Figure 3 depicts the core activities performed by WWCs. They systematically assess and synthesize the evidence base in their field of expertise, commonly in accordance with an accepted standard of evidence.¹² They produce both rapid evidence reviews and comprehensive systematic reviews of the global evidence base on specific programs and interventions to

FIGURE 3

The Core Activities of a What Works Centre



10 The term “What Works Centre” originated in the UK in 2011 to describe a government-led initiative to enable public service commissioners to access independent, high-quality evidence for a broad range of social policy issues.

11 UK Cabinet Office (2018). “The What Works Network - Five Years On”. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

12 Standards of evidence are commonly used in scientific research to rank, or compare, types of evidence. They can be used to compare interventions, develop evaluation plans, allocate funding and improve evaluation practices within an organization. For more information regarding standards of evidence, please visit https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards_of_evidence.pdf.

Source: UK Cabinet Office (2018). “The What Works Network - Five Years On”. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-what-works-network-five-years-on>.

guide decision makers; where evidence is weak or unavailable, they seek to fill such gaps by commissioning new research or encouraging other organizations to do so.¹³

WWCs also lead demonstration projects, design and execute experiments, quasi-experiments, and other tests and help build capacity in evaluation and impact reporting. WWCs can create products, such as evidence comparison toolkits or practical guides, that help users of evidence comprehend complex research findings and apply evidence. They may also establish partnerships and develop outreach programs to encourage the adoption of evidence.

What Works Initiatives in the UK and US

The UK is regarded as a world leader in the application of evidence in policy and practice, and that is largely due to the increasing profile of the What Works Centres (WWCs).¹⁴ In 2013, the What Works Network was launched in the UK. The Cabinet Office leads the stewardship of the Network; inside the Cabinet Office, the Network is supported by the What Works National Adviser¹⁵ and the What Works Team.¹⁶ The WWCs that comprise the Network receive funding from a variety of sources, including government, philanthropic organizations and research councils.¹⁷

The Network is made up of ten independent WWCs¹⁸ – seven full members and three affiliates.¹⁹ The Network has several requirements for membership:

- » Operate independent from government
- » Have a clear, relevant policy focus
- » Use consistent metrics to assess the efficacy of interventions
- » Disseminate evidence for decision-making
- » Contribute to the process of commissioning programs, services and interventions
- » Focus on the needs and interests of evidence users and key stakeholders

There is growing interest in expanding the What Works Network globally. The goal is to identify and share successful and evidence-based models of crime, education, local growth, health and early intervention worldwide. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) International Partnerships program is an excellent example; through the program, the EEF is working with partners in Australia, Europe, Latin America and South-East Asia to support large-scale trials and help develop versions of the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit.²⁰

13 UK Cabinet Office (2018).

14 UK Cabinet Office (2018).

15 The UK Government appointed a What Works National Adviser within the Cabinet Office to advise Ministers on the interpretation and use of evidence in the development of new legislation.

16 The Cabinet Office's What Works Team operates across government to share findings from the What Works Centres and support civil servants in using high-quality methods to test whether programmes and services are delivering results.

17 The Economic and Social Research Council is one of the most significant funders of the What Works Network.

18 The What Works Centres are loosely based on the model of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. For a list of WWCs that belong to the Network please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network#the-what-works-network>.

19 The affiliate members are existing evidence institutions that opted to align with the What Works Network under the guidance of the UK Cabinet Office.

20 UK Cabinet Office (2018).

The United States is also a leader in evidence-building institutions for social policy, although there are no organizations that formally participate in the UK What Works Network; notably, the United States has several policy labs that have many characteristics similar to the What Works Centres. The initiatives in the United States, however, are often driven by foundations and academic centres, rather than government, resulting in less centralized coordination. The American federalist political system has also created a more fragmented evidence ecosystem with local, state-level and national institutions. This paper draws on lessons from both contexts to inform the Canadian approach.

How are What Works Centres Different?

Although What Works Centres (WWCs) are part of a spectrum of evidence institutions (which include research institutes, thinktanks, implementation units, policy and innovation labs), they have characteristics that set them apart:

- » They are independent from government (they have non-partisan governance structures) to preserve neutrality and depoliticize the evidence-based policymaking process. However, they have an explicit connection to the policy process (i.e. What Works National Adviser and What Works Team in the UK Cabinet Office to advise Ministers on the interpretation and use of evidence).
- » They place the users of evidence at the centre of their work, rather than funders or researchers.²¹ WWCs often include the needs and views of populations impacted by policies and programs in their governance models, mandates, and research agendas (i.e. in defining problems and research questions, setting priorities, designing and producing research). They apply evidence in practice through activities such as citizen panels, implementation collaboratives,²² research networks and demonstration projects.
- » While there are requirements to be included in the What Works Network (as described above), they have flexibility in how they set up their organizational structures and governance models.
- » They make evidence accessible, understandable and useful to the people who need it, consequently bridging the gap that often exists between those who produce evidence and those that consume it (e.g. governments, practitioners).

The Impact of What Works Centres

Due to significant differences in mandate, function and scale, What Works Centres (WWCs) define success and evaluate their impact differently – some focus on influencing policy, while others prioritize the practice of frontline service providers. Overall, however, there is growing evidence to suggest that WWCs are having a beneficial impact.

²¹ Please refer to pages 11-15 of [Bridging the Gap](#).

²² Used by NICE, an implementation collaborative is a group of experts/researchers that focus on applying evidence and translating it into technical guidance for practitioners. The NICE implementation collaborative focuses on system-level barriers that prevent the uptake of sound evidence in the medical field.

The evidence generated by WWCs has contributed to numerous changes in the public service: over 22,000 police officers in London are wearing body cameras based on evidence from a College of Policing trial and more than 380,000 teaching assistants are being better utilized in the school system based on research from the Education Endowment Foundation.²³

WWCs are providing policymakers and practitioners with more information on ‘what works.’ The Centres have commissioned or produced 288 evidence reviews (48 of them systematic reviews) and commissioned or supported over 160 trials. WWCs have used this evidence to create evidence comparison toolkits and practical manuals – digestible summaries of the evidence base - to inform decision-making. This allows the users of the evidence to sort interventions and programs based on impact and budget. The Centres are translating their assessments into practical advice and guidelines – recognizing that policymakers and practitioners have limited time to engage with detailed research findings.

Products created by WWCs have informed national policy decisions. For example, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produced a guidance that informed NHS England’s decision to introduce a new access and waiting time standard, which requires that more than half of adults with a first episode of psychosis begin treatment within two weeks of referral; within a year, the percentage of people receiving treatment within this timeframe rose from 64 per cent to 80 per cent.²⁴

They are also building the capacity of governments and practitioners to put evidence into practice. The What Works Team has worked with civil servants to support their participation in the Future Leaders Scheme (FLS). The FLS trains civil servants to test whether policies and practices are delivering results using the best available methods. 390 civil servants have designed trials as part of the 2017-18 FLS.²⁵

Although the US-based Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy²⁶ is now defunct, the Coalition’s work informed the creation of several new federal evidence-based policy initiatives, including the \$109M Evidence-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, the \$1.5B Evidence-Based Home Visitation Program, and the \$70M Social Innovation Fund. The What Works Cities²⁷ initiative has had numerous policy impacts through a variety of programs to enhance the evaluation and evidence capacity of policymakers and service practitioners in US cities. For example, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the initiative used data to identify outreach strategies that would diversify the city’s police force; in Mesa, Arizona, the initiative helped the Mayor’s Office identify the most blighted neighborhoods and redirect more than \$800,000 in resources.²⁸

23 UK Cabinet Office (2018).

24 UK Cabinet Office (2018).

25 *ibid.*

26 The Coalition was a non-profit, non-partisan organization, whose mission was to increase government effectiveness through the use of rigorous evidence about “what works.”

27 In 2015, Bloomberg Philanthropies launched What Works Cities, a national initiative to help 100 mid-sized American cities enhance their use of data and evidence to improve services, inform local decision-making and engage residents. It is a partnership between the UK Behavioural Insights Team, Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab, Johns Hopkins University Centre for Government Excellence, Results for America, and the Sunlight Foundation. For more information about the What Works Cities initiative, please visit <https://whatworkscities.bloomberg.org/>.

28 Bloomberg Philanthropies (2017). “2017 Annual Report.” Available at: https://www.bbhub.io/dotorg/sites/26/2017/05/May_2017_Annual_Report.pdf.

4 MAKING IT WORK IN CANADA

Canadian governments and non-profit organizations have long sought a better understanding of the impact of their work, and this drive has been increasingly prioritized, and formalized with the federal government, in the efforts underway across the country, including in Saskatchewan and Alberta. The What Works Centres provide a promising opportunity to help further efforts to solve complex, interconnected social issues at scale. Now is the ideal time for serious consideration of the evidence infrastructure in Canada, and for high-return investment in understanding what works and what doesn't.

Moving forward will require special consideration on how to align efforts between the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. Approaches should also reflect and build off the recommendations in the recent report from the Social Innovation and Social Finance Co-Creation Steering Group, Inclusive Innovation: New Ideas and Partnerships for Stronger Communities, to further develop Canada's evidence ecosystem.

Situating the Conference

The Innovation in Evidence Conference has been designed to identify opportunities to improve the use of evidence in policymaking and program delivery in Canada and directly inform efforts currently underway in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Key Conference Themes

The conference will focus on key themes such as generating, translating, adopting and funding evidence. It will also emphasize tangible and practical examples relating to building integrated data ecosystems and meaningful end-user engagement to learn from and, where appropriate, align with global trends and practices.

Please refer to Appendix B for conference themes by session.

FIGURE 4
Conference Themes



Generating Evidence

This theme will explore the resources, human capital and organizational infrastructure that is required to generate high-quality evidence for policymakers and service providers.

The following questions will be explored:

- » What are the key drivers of evidence supply and demand?
- » How can the cycle of evidence generation align more effectively with policy and decision-making processes?
- » How should evidence be assessed, compared and ranked in Canada? Should hierarchies or standards of evidence be universally applied across a sector or stakeholder group?
- » Should evidence institutions strive towards international collaboration and alignment on evidence standards or hierarchies?
- » What are promising practices to engage end users²⁹ meaningfully in the research design process?

HIERARCHIES AND STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE³⁰

Standards of evidence are commonly used in scientific research to rank, or compare, types of evidence. Standards of evidence can be used to compare interventions, develop evaluation plans, allocate funding and improve evaluation practices within an organization. Several What Works Centres have created their own standards of evidence, while others adopt or adhere to existing standards in the scientific community.³¹

There has been significant debate and discussion about whether standards of evidence should be aligned/coordinated across evidence institutions. Recent research has suggested that there are significant barriers for alignment — namely, the need for evidence institutions to share their technical expertise and change their practices to adopt a unified standard. The Alliance for Useful Evidence has proposed a matrix of evidence rather than a hierarchy, recognizing that there can be significant differences in objectives, study design and research outputs.³² A principles-driven approach may be more appropriate given the proliferation of standards of evidence and unique needs of each subsector.³³

29 End users are defined differently by each What Works Centre, but can include members of the general public, non-profit organizations, practitioners/service providers, research/academic institutions, policymakers or the media.

30 Largely popularized in evidence-based medicine, a hierarchy of evidence is an approach to structuring evidence by the level of methodological rigour. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews and meta analyses are commonly placed at the top of a hierarchy of evidence as the gold standard. A standard of evidence is a framework for evaluating and organizing evidence based on pre-determined criteria (e.g. relevance to systems change, methodological rigour). A standard of evidence may be organized as a hierarchy of methods, but it is not required.

31 See page 7 of Bridging the Gap for more information about standards and hierarchies of evidence.

32 Nutley, S., Powell, A. & Davies, H. (2013). "What counts as good evidence?" Alliance for Useful Evidence. Available at: <https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/What-Counts-as-Good-Evidence-WEB.pdf>.

33 Puttick, R. (2018). "Mapping the standards of evidenced used in UK social policy". Alliance for Useful Evidence. Available at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping_Standards_of_Evidence_A4UE_final.pdf.

Translating Evidence

Evidence is only effective when it is accessible, understandable and useful to stakeholders. Policymakers and practitioners have limited time to engage with detailed research findings. Given this, many WWCs and policy labs have experimented with different approaches to engage end users in the outputs/research findings (e.g. evidence toolkits, advice, guidelines and outreach programs).³⁴ Through this theme, the following questions will be explored:

- » How can evidence be effectively translated to end users?
- » What tools are needed to support policymakers and practitioners in utilizing evidence?
- » What approaches can support greater dissemination of evidence to end users?
- » What barriers have other jurisdictions faced and how did they overcome them?
- » How should evidence institutions define success when it comes to translating evidence?

STRATEGIES TO MAKE EVIDENCE USEFUL AND ACCESSIBLE

WWCs and evidence institutions take different approaches to ensure that policymakers and practitioners utilize the evidence. Some examples include:

- » The Education Endowment Foundation's interactive Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides a brief summary of the international evidence on 34 types of teaching interventions – from homework to extending school opening hours.
- » The Early Intervention Foundation produced guidance on 23 parenting interventions that have been shown to work for vulnerable families. They have partnered with government to distribute the guidance to 141 local commissioners delivering the Troubled Families Programme.
- » The College of Policing's Crime Reduction Toolkit rates 52 types of interventions according to impact and cost and provides direction on how and where certain interventions work, and how to implement them.
- » What Works Scotland uses a collaborative action research (CAR) methodology to translate research findings in local “learning sites” in partnership with local service providers and practitioners.

³⁴ UK Cabinet Office (2018).

Adopting Evidence

One of the central recommendations of Bridging the Gap was that a Canadian What Works Centre or evidence institution should be clearly integrated in the policymaking process.³⁵ This theme will explore the following questions:

- » What mechanisms (e.g. legislative, policy) may be needed to incentivize or facilitate the adoption of evidence?
- » What kind of feedback loops are needed to link evidence with policy development in an ongoing way?
- » What are some examples of capacity building initiatives within governments to improve the utilization of evidence?
- » What are some promising practices or examples of partnerships and outreach programs that have helped put evidence into practice?

IMPROVING UPTAKE OF EVIDENCE

UK What Works Centres have assisted with the adoption of evidence in the following ways:

» **Informing national policy:**

The Welsh Government's recent child care program, for example, was created based on an evidence review of the impact of free child care on poverty reduction and maternal employment. It also informed pilots to test sustainable and accessible program options.

» **Building the capacity of governments and practitioners to put evidence into practice:**

The What Works Team has conducted evidence audits across government departments, supported departments publishing Areas of Research (ARI),³⁶ and trained civil servants in methodology (e.g. 18 departments and agencies have made use of the Trial Advice Panel set up in 2015 to help civil servants design and implement high-quality trials).

³⁵ See page 13 of Bridging the Gap. Available at: <https://mowatcentre.ca/bridging-the-gap/>.

³⁶ ARIs set out evidence gaps that are a priority for government departments. They help academics identify where their research can have direct impact on policy and are now feeding into the investment plans of UK Research Councils.

Funding Evidence

In *Bridging the Gap*, UK What Works Centres (WWCs) indicated that their annual operating budgets typically ranged between \$1 - \$100M. However, experts have indicated that a WWC would ideally require £10M to carry out its activities. By comparison, Canadian evidence institutions typically operate on a smaller scale, with budgets of approximately \$3-5M.³⁷

This theme will explore the following questions:

- » What kind of funding models are most appropriate for scaling up evidence institutions?
- » How does the scale of funding affect an evidence institution's (such as WWCs) ability to carry out its activities?
- » How can philanthropic organizations and research councils contribute to expanding/deepening the evidence landscape in Canada?
- » How can we ensure that evidence institutions have sustainable funding sources?

FUNDING MODELS

In the UK, What Works Centres are typically funded in the following ways³⁸:

» **Endowments:**

While endowments provide long-term sustainability and independence from the precarity of government funding cycles, they are difficult to secure and can result in less flexibility if the funding is earmarked for specific purposes.

» **Project-Based Grants (Government/Other Funders):**

Project-based funding can allow evidence institutions to be flexible/respond to emerging research needs, but they can result in significant precarity and unpredictability. Significant research projects can be long-term commitments for evidence institutions, and project-based funding can create the risk that these projects may be ended prematurely.

» **Fee-for-Service Contracts:**

Fee-for-service contracts can provide independence for evidence institutions but are difficult to sustain as a primary revenue source. Fee-for-service contracts are sometimes more appropriate when evidence institutions are more established, as they do not provide significant stability for organizational start-up costs.

³⁷ See page 24 of *Bridging the Gap*.

³⁸ Ibid.

Enabling the Non-Profit Sector

Charities and non-profit organizations are the program and service delivery partner of choice for federal, provincial-territorial, and municipal governments. Building the evidence base in social policy requires creating enabling legislation and building the capacity of charities and non-profits in measurement and data.

Interestingly, UK What Works Centres are largely detached from government departments facilitating outcomes-based funding arrangements, such as the Centre for Social Impact Bonds.

This theme will explore the following questions:

- » What can we learn from the “on the ground” perspective of service providers and frontline organizations?
- » How can evidence institutions work with non-profit and charitable organizations to build data capacity?
- » How can evidence institutions assist in facilitating outcomes-based funding arrangements in the non-profit sector?

BUILDING OUTCOMES CAPACITY IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

In 2017, the Mowat Centre published a paper, *Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Measurement in Canada*. The paper identified the following recommendations:

- » Establish a backbone organization to help charities and non-profit organizations measure their outcomes.
- » Introduce a national outcomes fund to mobilize capital for measurable social outcomes that align with emergent policy priorities.
- » Pilot the adoption of a standard of evidence and systems-level outcomes measurement approach for a specific issue area.
- » Map the charitable sector data ecosystem.
- » Invest in data infrastructure and ease access to data that can inform progress on social problems.³⁹

³⁹ Lalande, L. & Cave, J. (2017). “Measuring Outcomes in Practice: Fostering an enabling environment for measurement in Canada.” Available at: <https://mowatcentre.ca/measuring-outcomes-in-practice/>.

Transitioning to a What Works Centre

This theme accounts for the various design elements to be considered when either creating or transitioning existing evidence institutions into a What Works Centre. These include:

- » Organizational structures.
- » Relationship to government.
- » Governance models.
- » Standards of evidence.
- » Funding models.
- » Data infrastructure.
- » Cross-sector partnerships.

ESTABLISHING THE WHAT WORKS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is an initiative to foster evidence-informed practice in children's social care.⁴⁰ The Centre is Commissioned by the Department for Education and is currently being established with support from a development team (also referred to as an "incubator"). Led by Nesta and its Alliance for Useful Evidence, the development team is working closely with its research partner, CASCADE at Cardiff University, to establish the Centre's priorities, "how it will identify, generate and share evidence, and how it will be managed and led to ensure that its activities lead to change."⁴¹

The Centre is being developed in three main phases:⁴²

» **Phase 1: October 2017 – June 2018**

The development team engages with the sector and researches the use of evidence, the policy environment and sources and dissemination of evidence. The team also designs the organization and starts to recruit the executive team for the future centre.

» **Phase 2: June 2018 – June 2020**

The development team provides mentoring and support to the new executive team to help the development of the Centre as an independent organization.

» **Phase 3: June 2020 Onwards**

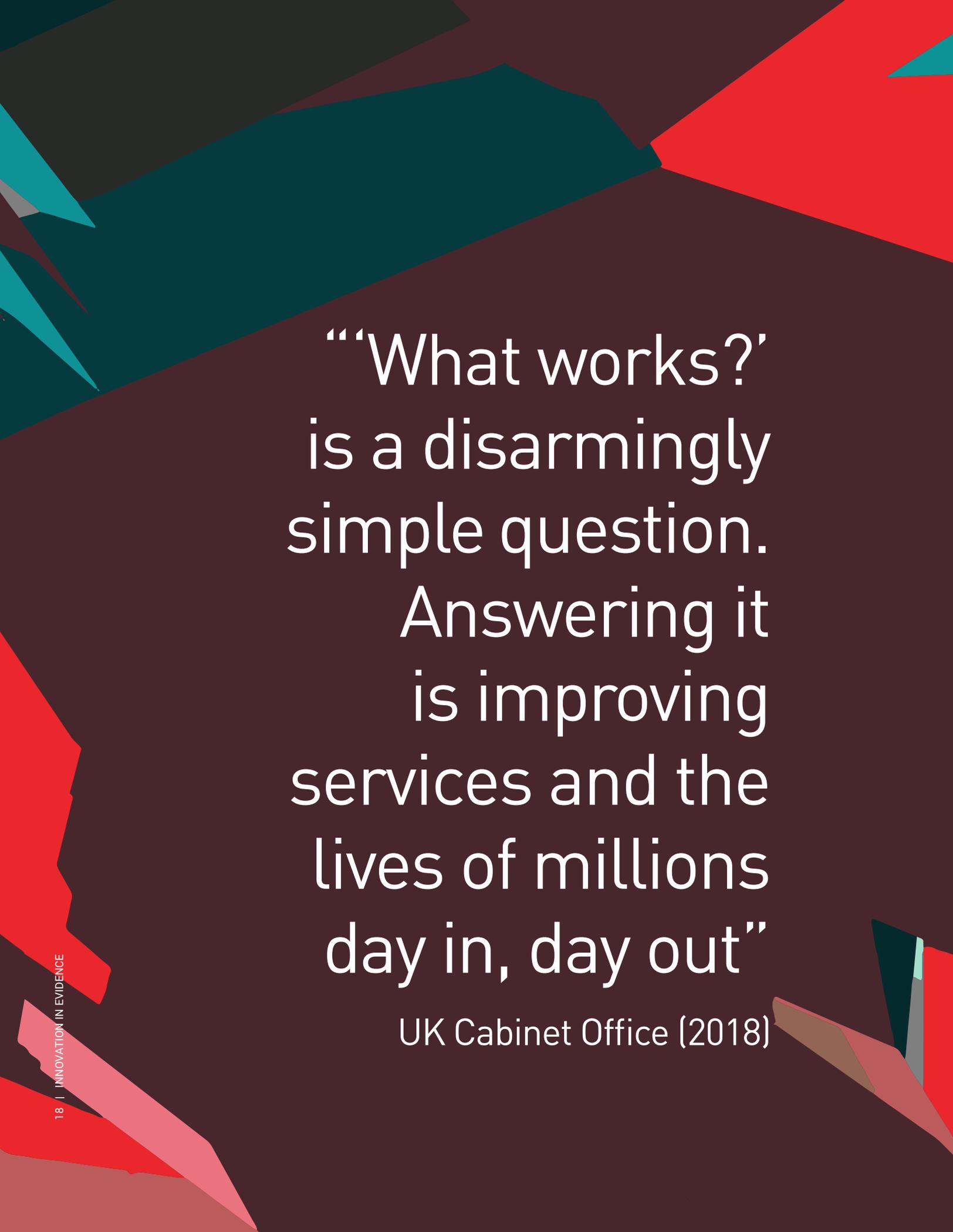
The development team completes its role and the Centre becomes an independent, sustainable organization.

For an up-to-date detailed conference agenda and for supplemental reading materials, please visit our conference website: <http://innovationinevidenceconference.com>.

40 Nesta (2018). "What Works Centre for Children's Social Care Development Team." Available at: <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/what-works-for-children/>.

41 *ibid*.

42 Social Care Institute for Excellence (2017). "What Works Centre for Children's Social Care: Development Team". Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/news/mediarelease/what-works-centre-development-team>.



“‘What works?’
is a disarmingly
simple question.
Answering it
is improving
services and the
lives of millions
day in, day out”

UK Cabinet Office (2018)

5 CONCLUSION

This is an exciting time for evidence institutions, both in Canada and internationally. Current efforts to increase collaboration and information sharing are changing the evidence landscape significantly by reducing duplication, standardizing approaches and promoting cross-sectoral partnerships. The existence of innovative approaches to generating and using evidence, such as the What Works Centres, presents an opportunity to build on these efforts to strengthen Canada's evidence ecosystem. The Innovation in Evidence Conference is an important step towards seizing this opportunity.

APPENDIX A: CONFERENCE SPEAKERS & FACILITATORS

Keynote Speakers



Jon Baron
VP of Evidence-Based Policy,
Laura and John Arnold
Foundation



Dale McFee
Deputy Minister,
Corrections and Policing,
Government of Saskatchewan



Lynn Barr-Telford
Director General,
Health, Justice and Special
Surveys Branch, Statistics
Canada



Mark MacLeod
President and CEO, ISM
Canada



Dr. Jonathan Breckon
Director,
Alliance for Useful Evidence,
Nesta



Matthew Mendelsohn
Deputy Secretary to the
Cabinet for Results and
Delivery,
Privy Council Office



Dr. David Halpern
Chief Executive,
The Behavioural Insights
Team



Andrew Parkin
Director,
Mowat Centre



Chief Cadmus Delorme
Cowessess First Nation



Sasha Tregobov
Principal Advisor,
The Behavioral Insights Team



Stephen Huddart
President & CEO McConnell
Foundation



James Turner
Deputy Chief Executive,
Education Endowment
Foundation



Sheldon Kennedy
Director – Sheldon Kennedy
Child Advocacy Centre and
Co-founder – Respect Group
Inc.

Special Guests



Ron Anderson
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Community Safety &
Wellbeing, Corrections &
Policing, Government of
Saskatchewan



Dr. Jen Gold
Head of the What Works
Team, Implementation Unit,
UK Cabinet Office



Sara Austin
CEO,
Sheldon Kennedy Child
Advocacy Centre



Ursula Gobel
Associate Vice President,
Future Challenges, SSHRC



Hanna Azemati
Program Director,
Harvard Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab



James Hughes
Executive Lead,
Government and Partner
Relations, McConnell
Foundation



Robyn Blackadar
President & CEO,
PolicyWise for Children &
Families



Dr. Jeremiah Hurley
Dean of the Faculty of Social
Sciences,
Professor and former
Chair in the Department of
Economics,
Member: Centre for Health
Economics and Policy
Analysis, McMaster University



Yvan Clermont
Director,
Canadian Centre for Justice
Statistics, Statistics Canada



Adam Jagelewski
Lead Executive,
MaRS Centre for Impact
Investing



Colleen Ebbitt
Senior Policy Advisor,
Investment Finance Specialist,
Government Inclusive
Economy Unit



Stephanie Lee
Director,
Washington State Institute for
Public Policy



Dr. Daniel Garfinkel
Sheldon Kennedy Child
Advocacy Centre

Special Guests



Tris Lumley
Director, Innovation &
Development,
New Philanthropy Capital
(NPC)



Dr. Chad Nilson
Community Engaged Scholar/
Advisor,
Centre for Forensic Behavioural
Science and Justice Studies
– University of Saskatchewan
(NPC)



Carrie Sanders
Policy Specialist, Sheldon
Kennedy Child Advocacy
Centre



Sarah Schulman
Lead of Social Impact,
InWithForward



Nerys Thomas
Head of Knowledge, Research
and Practice,
College of Policing



Jean Pierre Voyer
President and CEO, SRDC



Helen Yung
Artist/Researcher

Facilitators



Joanne Cave
Social Policy Researcher



Adam Jog
Policy Associate,
The Mowat Centre



Sarah Doyle
Director of Policy and Research,
Brookfield Institute for
Innovation and Entrepreneurship



Lisa Lalande
Executive Lead,
Mowat Centre's Not-for-
Profit Research Hub



Betty Ferreira
Founder and Principal
Consultant,
ReStructure Consulting



Andrew Parkin
Director,
Mowat Centre



Raequel Giles
Executive Assistant to the
Deputy Minister,
Corrections and Policing,
Government of Saskatchewan



Karen Pitre
Consultant



James Hughes
Executive Lead,
Government and Partner
Relations, McConnell
Foundation



Anne White
Senior Policy Advisor,
Government of Canada,
Privy Council Office

Hosts



Cal Corley
Chief Executive Officer,
Community Safety
Knowledge Alliance



Lisa Lalande
Executive Lead,
Mowat Centre's Not-for-
Profit Research Hub

For the latest list of speakers and facilitators, please visit the [conference website](#).

APPENDIX B: CONFERENCE THEMES BY SESSION

Theme	Conference Sessions
Generating Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Plugging the Gap: Building the Supply of Evidence » Data is the Fuel of Change: Exploring the Role of Data and Data Sharing in Evidence-Informed Decision-Making » Data in Practice: Examining Data Systems at Work » What Does Meaningful Engagement Look Like in Practice?
Translating Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mobilizing and Applying Evidence: Making Evidence Accessible, Understandable and Useful » Data in Practice: Examining Data Systems at Work
Adopting Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Using Evidence in Real Life: What Does Meaningful Engagement Look Like in Practice?
Funding Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Building Effective Funding Models » Evidence and Outcomes Funding
Enabling the Non-Profit Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supporting the Path to Outcomes: Enabling Non-Profits as a Key Service Delivery Partner to Government » Data in Practice: Examining Data Systems at Works » Using Evidence in Real Life: What Does Meaningful Engagement Look Like in Practice?
Innovation & Experimentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Innovation and Experimentation in Canada » Evidence in Action: Fostering Integrated Social Practice in Canada
Transitioning to a What Works Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Delivering What Works: Transitioning to a What Works Centre Approach » Build Effective Funding Models » Evidence and Outcomes Funding

