

CanChild Strategic Plan Research Impact (ST*R) Working Group Report

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Mission and Vision:

- **Working Group Focus:** Develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to promote impact of CanChild Research
- **Relevant Driver from CanChild Strategic Plan (2020-2025):** Impactful Research & Knowledge Translation
- **Working Group Goal (2021-2022):** Establish an evaluation framework for CanChild Research Impact through the Matter of Focus (MoF) process by defining areas of research impact for CanChild, identifying how to evaluate these areas, identifying what data we are currently collecting, and data that could/should be collected (ideal) to show CanChild Research Impact in the future.

Summary of working group process:

- Grappled with how to define and measure research impact
- Aligned with MoF because of their expertise, concrete definition of impact, and established systematic process for establishing impact metrics
- The work undertaken with MoF was informed by our early thinking and questioning regarding research impact and its multiple components

Introduction to MoF:

Definition: Research impact is defined as 'a contribution to change as a result of research use.'

Figure 1 - MoF training excerpt to illustrate process and final definition of research impact



Guiding questions for the MoF/CanChild collaboration in measuring research impact:

- What are the main ways in which CanChild seeks to influence change?
- What impact does CanChild wish to have?
- How can attributes of impact be evaluated?

Challenges within the working group process:

- We needed to differentiate our scope from that of other committees (knowledge translation and partnership)
- We questioned whether research impact measurement should be the responsibility of individual projects, CanChild as a whole, or both
- We consulted with specific researchers as to how they had conceptualized and measured research impact within individual projects

Figure 2 - Timeline of steps and actions undertaken by the Working Group in 2021-2022:

Research Impact Working Group Timeline



Quarter #1 (Q1): March - May 2021

- Group formation, process of understanding and defining impact, how to measure, what are the components, struggling with concepts, created visual aids with different definitions, realization that we needed external structure

Quarter #2 (Q2): June - August 2021

- Identified co-leads and core team (June 2021)
- Explored multiple approaches to define impact and identified impact domains (at least 2-3 meetings from June to August 2021)
- Explored measurement tools, analytics, and metrics to evaluate research impact (August 2021)
- Identified strategies for impact evaluation from organizations similar to CanChild

Quarter #3 (Q3): September - November 2021

- Collaborated with Matter of Focus to understand and evaluate research impact (Initiated dialogue in September 2021 - and began to work together starting in November 2021)
- 2 workshops to plot pathways, refine data and start to track impact (November and December 2021)
- came to consensus on how we conceptualized research impact

Quarter #4 (Q4): December 2021 - February 2022

- Developed an outcome map (refer to appendix from MoF) that shows CanChild's impact to policy, practice, and society (3 team meetings)
- Identified data and evidence needed to evaluate research impact (3 team meetings)
- Decisions on whether to continue to use OutNav software
 - Outcome of this decision: team believed that the process in working with MOF helped to facilitate the group to create a framework to evaluate CanChild impact but did not believe that continued use of OutNav and reporting outputs were valuable moving forward - essentially pre-filling a report draft of data collected.

Quarter #5 (Q5): March-June 2022

- (April) Analysis session with OutNav representatives
 - Walked through a pathway and confirmed that the report is visually meaningful in that it illustrates the gaps and highlights strengths of what we are collecting; pathway colours change based on coding of stage of progress
 - Helped us realize that we needed to recode the sources
- Report writing and identification of next steps (3 meetings)
- One member took part in Matter of Focus Research Impact School (admission was complementary by MOF).

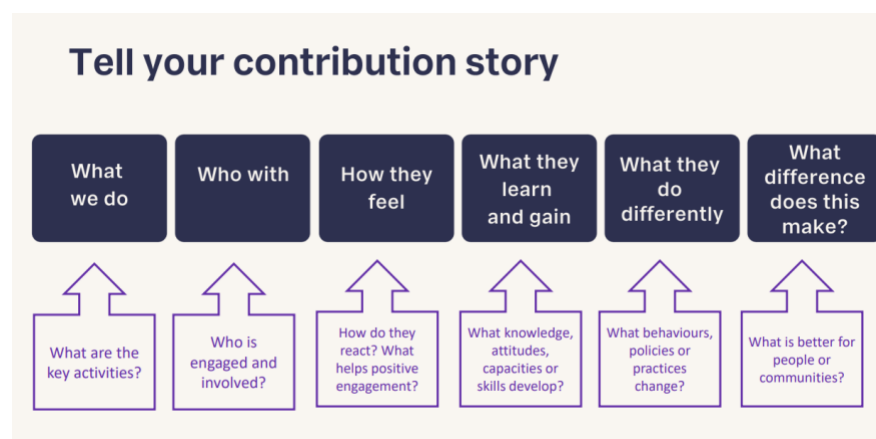
Working Group Outcomes

Appendices A-I provide further details about outputs throughout the process.

Our primary outcome was the creation of two Outcome Maps for two Pathways, using the framework in Figure 3 below. From the colours on the Pathways, which track progress (how far along we are collecting the evidence) and confidence (how confident are we in the evidence we are collecting), we can see what we are collecting well and what we are not (for a single text box or stepping stone, as defined by OutNav).

This process enabled us to examine in depth the data sources that we are currently capturing to measure research impact as defined in both pathways, and identified areas we could collect more detailed information related to our research impact (in the future, and in ideal circumstances). These considerations will require some consultation with CanChild membership, as well as with relevant stakeholders, including children, families, and government representatives.

Figure 3 - MoF training excerpt to illustrate process and structure for creating an Outcome Map



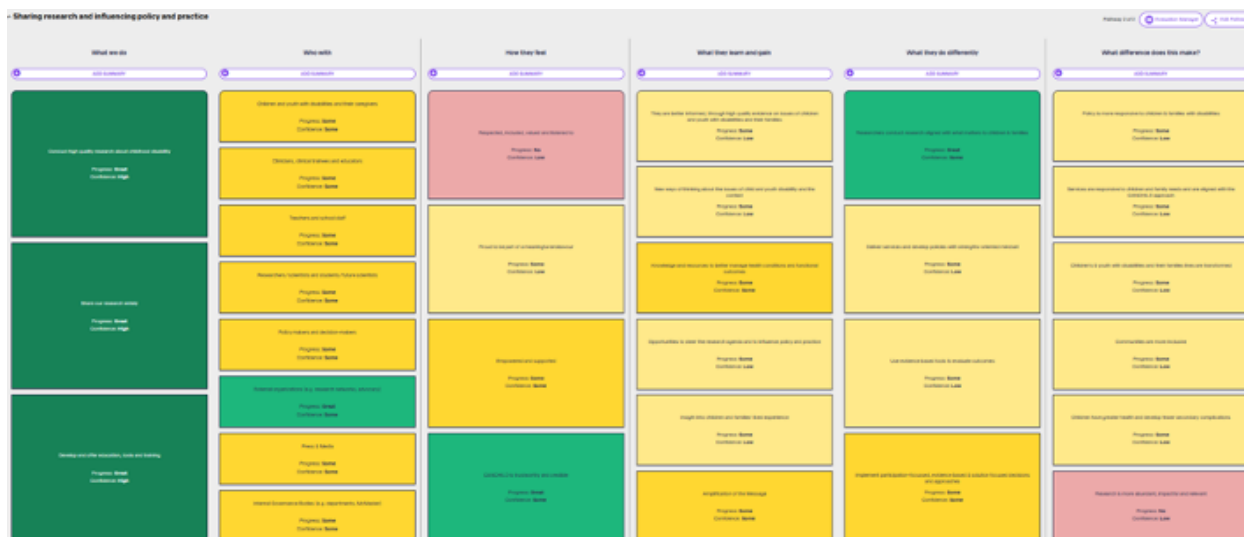
Two Pathways (Also found in Appendix H):

Colour coding Scheme or Legend for each Pathway: Dark Green (High Confidence and High Progress), Light Green (Some Confidence and Great Progress, Dark Yellow (Some Confidence and Some Progress), Light Yellow (Low Confidence and Some Progress), Light Yellow (Low Confidence and Some Progress), and Pink (Low Confidence and No Progress)

i. Primary Pathway: Sharing research, influencing policy and practice

Outcome Results for Stepping Stones in Pathway #1: 3 Dark Green (High Confidence and High Progress), 3 Light Green (Some Confidence and Great Progress, 10 Dark Yellow (Some Confidence and Some Progress), 12 Light Yellow (Low Confidence and Some Progress), and 2 Pink (Low Confidence and No Progress)

Figure 4 - Primary Pathway - Sharing Research, Influencing Policy and Practice



ii. Secondary Pathway: Collaboration and mentorship

Outcome Results for Stepping Stones in Pathway #1: 0 Dark Green (High Confidence and High Progress), 1 Light Green (Some Confidence and Great Progress, 6 Dark Yellow (Some Confidence and Some Progress), 14 Light Yellow (Low Confidence and Some Progress), and 6 Pink (Low Confidence and No Progress)

Figure 5 - Secondary Pathway - Collaboration and Mentorship



The outcome pathways identify what we are doing well, and where the gaps are in our collection of data related to CanChild's Research Impact. Specifically:

Pathway #1

- Things that we are doing well were related to the following 6 stepping stones: Conduct high quality research about childhood disability; Share our research widely; Develop and offer education, tools and training; External organizations (e.g. research networks, advocacy); CANCHILD is trustworthy and credible; and Researchers conduct research aligned with what matters to children & families.
- Only a couple of areas that demonstrate no progress and low confidence: Respected, included, valued and listened to; and Research is more abundant, impactful and relevant.

Pathway #2

- Things that we are doing well were in one area - Provide mentorship.
- There were many gaps in this Pathway (14 stepping stones): Respected, included, valued and listened to; Proud to be part of a meaningful endeavor; Empowered and supported; New ways of thinking about the issues of child and youth disability and the context; Opportunities to steer the research agenda and to influence policy and practice; Insight into children and families' lived experience; Build their confidence and develop skills to advocate for themselves; Amplification of the Message; Researchers conduct research aligned with what matters to children & families; Children, youth, families and practitioners are more likely to engage with the research process; Deliver services and develop policies with strengths-oriented mindset; Children, youth and families advocate for themselves and take on new opportunities and roles; CANCHILD do research that is more responsive to the needs of the sector; and Power is rebalanced between research, lived experience, policy and practice

Future Considerations to measure and evaluate Impact at CanChild

- 1) We recommend presenting the pathways at a CanChild meeting or at a retreat. Representatives from each program of research could offer their insights, particularly since the Working Group did not include perspectives from each program of research. Our findings need to be brought to the larger team for their perspectives and to ensure that we are tapping into all research projects. We also need to discuss how scientists can use these Pathways to inform the research questions that they could explore or further examine.
- 2) If we decide to go forward with keeping track of impact, we need to have someone from every program to share how their research is reflected in Pathway. Note that there are also different stakeholders who can also be

consulted on how CanChild is doing for each milestone on the pathway (e.g., trainees, parents, individuals, policy stakeholders, etc.)

- 3) There is work to be done to define our targets and goals to inform “progress” decisions (i.e., differentiating between good and great. This requires some work to set our goals and to set our threshold - something to discuss with incoming leadership on what is needed and expected year-over-year as a Research Centre. For example:
 - What are we fine with being ok at, and what do we want to be great at?
 - How to use this as an internal reflection tool?
 - We have starting points for progress and confidence, but to move forward we need to know what our targets are and where we want to focus our efforts in improvement
 - It is important to remember that the way our pathway unfolds is supposed to tell a STORY (this is the MoF process)
 - This is where it gets difficult because we are data-driven people
 - What is the story of canChild that we want to tell? We need to clarify our big picture story as an organization.
 - We recommend brainstorming among the larger group about the story of CanChild
 - We also recommend asking Sarah from MoF for examples from other exemplary organizations

- 4) We need to clarify the personnel and roles that are required to implement the process of research impact definition and tracking. This will require CanChild resources.
 - We recommend a full-time role at CanChild dedicated to this, particularly to collect and organize current and future data sources.
 - Need for ongoing intermittent collaboration with MOF and a subscription to OutNav
 - We need to create policies and procedures (e.g., an online form) that scientists and team members use from beginning of projects to plan for which metrics they will track re impact.
 - We need to decide on a few key strategies to focus on to promote impact in each realm/domain and identify the action steps for those
 - We need to assess the feasibility of having all teams report in on their research impact process; what is the burden of extra reporting/collecting information to create a minimum standardized core set/dataset for each project or scientist or staff. Because CanChild is so diverse, it may be difficult to uniformly capture pathways that represent all of our interests and areas of research (e.g., what we collect, what we see as impact, how we study things). Is it even possible - given the diversity and structure of CanChild, -to subsume all the work at CanChild when demonstrating impact?
 - We need to consider ideas as to how new data could be collected - recommendations that range from a “minimal” resource approach to the ideal approach.

- We need to clarify potential expectations of scientists and members to report back on metrics that will inform our pathways (quarterly? vs annually?)
 - We need to check back into CanChild's Strategic Plan to see how this work fits into the plans over the next 5 years.
- 5) Some additional ideas for next steps include:
- Grant funding: big picture, what is the story of CanChild
 - Explore/identify some grant examples on impact for research centres/institutes/organizations?
 - Focus of grant could help to flesh out gaps in our outcome pathways, identification, and development of new sources, explore decisions around thresholds for success (progress and confidence), as well as looking at how each stakeholder would rate different milestones on the Pathway. One possible goal of this work could aim to push institutions to look beyond published research outcomes as a metric for impact. Also, need to examine the feasibility of all steps, including the measures that need to be developed, and the infrastructure needs for this moving forward and if automated (AI) options are possible to explore in this grant. This work can inform innovative practices that assist other research centres and institutes. This could also help researchers within CanChild to look at their research program (reflect on metrics) as evidence to inform decisions on the next steps of their research and/or research gaps.

Overall, this process has enabled us to reflect on how we have made a huge impact! Now we need to see how we can measure this impact and continue to improve our progress tracking. We look forward to a larger group discussion about next steps!