

Highlights: SEARCH I and II Program Evaluations¹

Participant Impact

- 83% of respondents reported that **SEARCH had a positive influence on career development.**
- **Participant career changes and advancement:** 75% of survey respondents reported role or position changes since participation in SEARCH. There was an increase in the proportion of manager and director roles and movement from research to management positions, and practice to research positions.
- **Organizational loyalty and continuity:** 61% of survey respondents remained with the same organization two and four years post-participation in SEARCH.
- **Highly motivated adult learners:** More than half (56%) had requested to participate in the SEARCH program either and almost 50% of respondents reported additional formal education post-SEARCH participation.
- **Increased personal and professional networks:** 89% of survey respondents reporting ongoing use of the SEARCH personal and professional networks for the purposes primarily of identifying best practices and new information.
- **Skills related to choosing, using, and creating evidence:** two of three participants reported ongoing application of these skills 'often/always' in their current work. In addition, over half of respondents had increased or substantially increased responsibility for choosing, using, and creating evidence in the organization.
- **Other outcomes:** reported by more than 70% of participants were increased: leadership skills, value to and recognition from the organization, ability to influence decisions, and job satisfaction.

Research Impacts

- **New research:** 72% of participants engaged in new research within 2 to 4 years of the program's end. A number of organizations reported substantially increased success in grant applications.
- **Publication and dissemination:** 64 external and 15 peer-reviewed journal publications resulted from 50 SEARCH I and II projects within 4 years.
- **Organizational support for research:** 80% of participants agree/strongly that their 'organization is supportive of research' and 50% 'currently receive support from direct supervisor to apply learning'.

¹ From Evaluation Projects focused on long-term (2-4 years post program) surveys of SEARCH I and II participants and their health authority senior managers

Project Impacts

- **Project findings have been applied:** SEARCH project findings have been applied at various levels both within and beyond organizations, by individual practitioners, departments, and entire organizations.
- **Project findings were often used to plan, implement, and modify individual programs and services:** Most often findings were implemented at the program level, but some SEARCH projects have helped to shape the development of the overall health system in Alberta.
- **Skills developed through the process of completing SEARCH projects were applied extensively in practice:** The *process* of learning how to conduct research was often reported to be as important as the *outcome* or specific findings of a given SEARCH project.
- **Several factors facilitated the application of SEARCH project findings. These included:** organizational support; organizational culture; resources to support project completion, dissemination, and application of findings; participant characteristics (e.g., level of authority, interest, and motivation); politics; timing; leadership; key player involvement and buy-in; nature of project findings; and “fit” between the individual SEARCH participant (e.g., interest, motivation, autonomy) and the sponsoring organization.

Organizational Impacts

- Virtually all informants identified that the SEARCH program had a significant impact in their organization in terms of:
 - Significant increases in the **knowledge and skill levels** of participants
 - **Collaboration and networking** across the province
 - Enhanced **access to research resources** such as computers, library resources, databases and faculty members.
- Over half of the informants identified significant impact on the primary outcomes of:
 - Promoting **supportive attitudes and values for research and evaluation** across the organization
 - **Facilitating health research and evaluation** activities
 - Providing **strategies for appropriate information retrieval and assessment**
- Over half of the informants identified significant impact on the secondary outcomes of:
 - **Follow up projects** based on original SEARCH project
 - Development of **proposals in new areas**
 - **Change in policy, operations or practice.**
 - Enhanced recognition of organizational expertise
- One third of respondents reported significant **influence on decision making**
- **Factors which contributed to greater impact** in an organization included:
 - Participant’s role, Projects that addressed issues of high importance; Organizational culture that purposefully seeks to cultivate strategies for evidence-based decision-making; Support and involvement of senior management; A mentor; Organizations with fewer competing opportunities for capacity building; Ability and willingness of participant to engage in other research related activities; effective communicators; Infrastructure support for ongoing activity;