

## Assessing Research Activity and Capacity of Community-Based Organizations: Development and Pilot Testing of an Instrument

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### What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- To develop a framework of research activity and capacity within community-based organization (CBOs) and to develop and pilot an instrument (the Community REsearch Activity assessment Tool [CREAT]) for assessing research activity and capacity of CBOs.
- The CREAT tool was broad in scope to capture the different research and reporting experiences and priorities of CBOs.

### What Is the Problem?

- Recent emphasis on CBO participation in academic–community research partnerships, community needs assessments, program monitoring and evaluation, and evidence-based practice has depended on CBOs' capacity for research.
- Little is known about CBO capacity and little attention has been paid to this issue in the literature.
- Both a framework and measures are needed that can assess CBOs' existing research infrastructure, skills, activities and needs; and capture changes that occur as a result of research capacity-building efforts.

### What Are the Findings?

- The four primary domains of the CREAT framework include 1) Organizational support for research, 2) generalizable experiences, 3) research specific experiences, and 4) funding.
- Thirty CBOs participated in the CREAT pilot survey.
- These organizations reported a high prevalence of activities in the research specific experiences domain, including conducting literature reviews (70%), using research terminology (83%), and collecting primary data (100%).
- Almost two thirds reported collecting primary data at least weekly.
- Disseminating research findings was important to respondents, and funders, board members, and policymakers were the most commonly reported dissemination audiences.
- The scientific community was identified as an audience for dissemination by only one third of the organizations overall, and by only 18% of respondents from smaller budget organizations.
- Respondents reported a number of barriers to conducting research, with the most commonly identified issues focused on staff time and skills.

## Who Should Care Most?

- Individuals and organizations working to enhance research capacity and activity of CBOs in a way that aligns with their mission.
- Community organizations interested in strengthening their research capacity.
- Institutional review boards with responsibility for overseeing ethical approval of community-based research and for overseeing research affiliates.
- Academic and other researchers who work in research partnerships with CBOs.

## Recommendations for Action

- Disseminate CREAT framework and measures among a wide range of CBOs to further refine the tool.
- Encourage CBOs to use CREAT tool to understand and enhance their research infrastructure needs.
- CBOs interested in developing research capacity could complete the CREAT to identify areas of higher and lower research capacity.
- CBOs could also complete the tool as a way to think more about the role of research in their organizations.
- Encourage CBOs and researchers to use CREAT before starting a new community research partnership or project to identify and enhance the research capacity needed for their joint endeavor.
- Develop a complementary framework and tool for assessing researcher capacity to conduct community-engaged research to inform new partnerships and projects.