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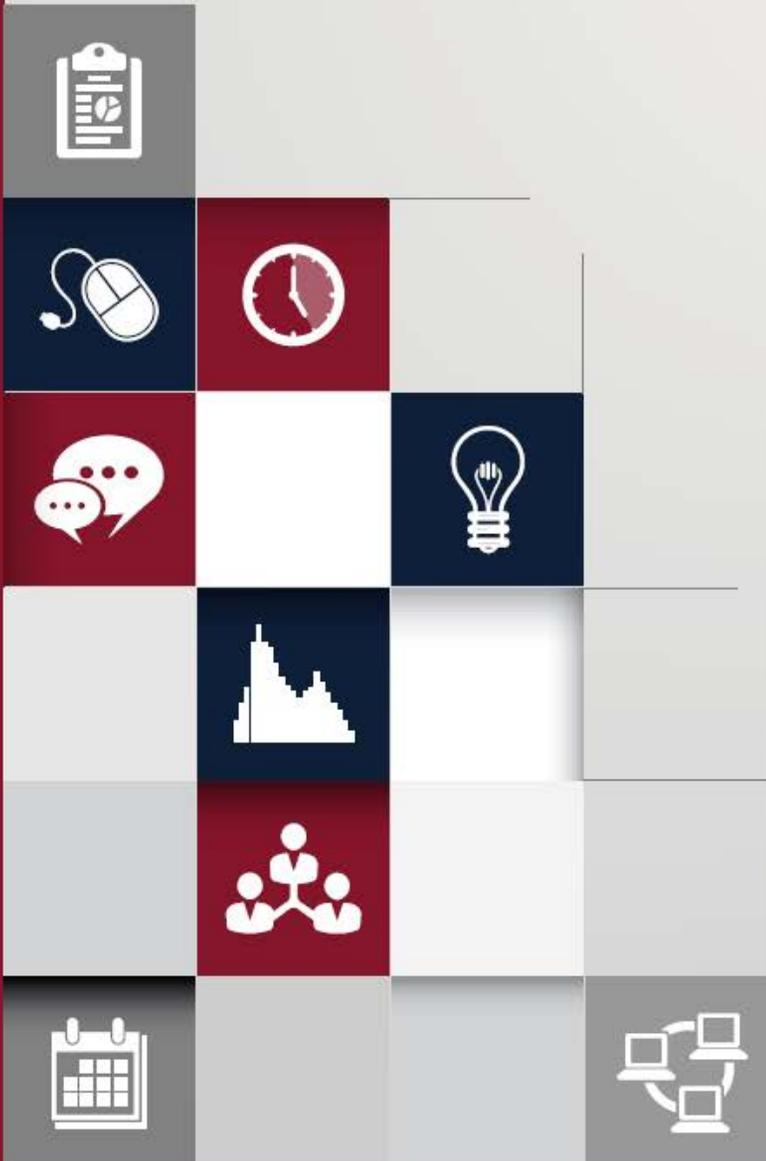


2014

ECONOMICS OF POLICING

NATIONAL POLICING RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

OUTCOMES REPORT



BUILDING A **SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA**

Canada

NATIONAL POLICING RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

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CONTEXT

Canadian police services are facing a range of challenges and opportunities. The cost of policing (\$13.5 billion in 2013) continues to rise yearly despite a steady drop in reported crime. This phenomenon is impacting the dialogue and debate regarding not only the cost of policing in Canada but the need for police services to become more efficient and effective. However, what is not taken into consideration by the public's observation of the cost of policing and reported crime rates are the additional roles performed by today's police services.

The role of the police officer has evolved and includes not only law enforcement but also a variety of initiatives designed to reduce public disorder, improve the quality of life in communities and address the needs of vulnerable and at-risk groups (Griffiths, 2013). Such duties include conducting crime prevention education in elementary and secondary schools, participating in multi-agency committees that address community issues, and dealing with individuals in the community living with mental illness. This is a direct consequence of the emergence and evolution of community policing, as well as changes to other services such as health, justice and education inadvertently placing more responsibilities onto the police (Griffiths, 2013). In this respect, much of what police do cannot simply be measured by reported crime statistics. While the public may be more attuned to policing than ever, there remain many nuances and complexities to this work that are inadequately identified or measured and coordinated police indicators do not provide a full picture of the role of police officers in the 21st century.

It is within this new dynamic policing context that a comprehensive body of Canadian policing research is needed. More than ever, police and the public would be well served by more independent research and critical analysis of policing (Robertson, 2012). Police services require such research to drive policy and strategies to improve how they serve the public. Research also plays a central role in providing the public with a deeper understanding of the nature of policing. In addition, any discussions regarding the economics and sustainability of policing should be guided by sound empirical research that accurately reflects the current state of policing in Canada.

The reality of policing research in Canada is characterised as poor and fragmented with a lack of communication between researchers and police. There are also few scholars in Canada conducting policing research compared to other fields and this is exacerbated by the fact that police services are not always open to working with researchers or interested in being research subjects. In addition, there is little capacity and few avenues to ensure that policing research is

accessible to police services, governments or the public. The academic research that exists is “hidden in plain sight” (Griffiths, 2013:6), published in professional journals that are rarely accessed by police services and/or written in an unusable or in-actionable format for police leaders (Bradley & Nixon, 2009). This is compounded by a lack of funding specifically for policing research.

Canada relies heavily on policing research from other jurisdictions, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom. What is required is that Canada develops the ability to produce evidence-based, Canadian policing research that supports sound and defensible policing policies and practices. It is against this backdrop that on November 13, 2013, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety approved the *Shared Forward Agenda*, a strategy for the future of policing in Canada. The strategy includes a three-pronged research plan which seeks to create the following:

- 1) a policing research network;
- 2) a national research agenda; and
- 3) a web presence for all policing research (portal).

THE NATIONAL POLICING RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

On March 5-7, 2014, Public Safety Canada, in partnership with Simon Fraser University, hosted the *Economics of Policing: National Policing Research Symposium* at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Symposium, the first of its kind in Canada, brought together 98 representatives from the three national police associations, frontline officers, Canadian and international academics, federal, provincial and territorial government representatives, and other policing partners together to 1) discuss the governance, structure and mandate required for a Canadian policing research network, 2) identify research priorities for the policing community in Canada, and 3) comment on a prototype of a web portal for policing research.

This report provides a summary of the discussions and findings, as well as the key ideas, innovations, opportunities, themes, questions, challenges and conclusions that came out of the two-and-a-half-day discussion. A further goal of the report is to articulate the participants’ deliberations, considerations and decisions related to the development of a national policing research network or centre and policing research priorities for Canada.

The views expressed herein are those of the participants at the Symposium and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or Simon Fraser University.

Summary of Presentations and Discussions

Day 1

A number of both Canadian and international speakers provided their views and perspectives on the development of a policing research network or centre in Canada. The Symposium was set up to allow participants to hear from the speakers and then engage in open and frank discussions.

Opening Remarks

The Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, via a video message, informed participants that both the Government and the Department see the Symposium as an important step to advancing policing research in Canada. The Minister noted that the academic community is a core element in helping us gain a fuller understanding of our current policing system and providing direction on the best steps forward to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing and public safety in Canada. Minister Blaney was pleased that the discussions on policing research were in collaboration with, rather than on behalf of police services and the national police associations. In conclusion, the Minister commended the participants for their efforts in continuing to build sustainable, high-quality policing services that will continue to meet Canadians' high expectations and serve as a model for the rest of the world.

Chief Constable Jim Chu, Vancouver Police Department, welcomed participants to Vancouver and noted the importance of bridging the gap between the research community and police. Chief Chu commended the government on demonstrating commitment and leadership on this issue. He also noted that he was pleased to see such a mix of participants from across the country and encouraged participants to be bold and creative in shaping the future of policing in Canada on the subject of policing research.

Contextualizing the Importance of Research

Norbert H. Haunerland, Associate Vice President of Research, Simon Fraser University, highlighted how important it is for academics to understand the research needs of the policing community. He also noted that policing research must not only respond to police needs but be

done in a way that the research can be used to inform policing policies, practices and operations.

Economics of Policing

Mark Potter, Director General, Aboriginal and Policing Policy Directorate, Public Safety Canada, provided an overview of the context of policing in Canada today and the opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing through the Economics of Policing *Shared Forward Agenda*. He noted that although the reported crime rate has been decreasing since the early 1990s, police work itself has become more complex and time consuming. Changes to policies, legislation and procedures have increased the investigative workload and the expectation of accountability. Mr. Potter shared with the participants the strategy for improving policing in Canada which includes early actions related to the three pillars of the Shared Forward Agenda – a strategy for the future of policing approved by all Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety in November 2013:

- 1) Efficiencies within Police Services;
- 2) New Models of Community Safety; and
- 3) Justice Efficiencies and the need for focused policing research.

Mr. Potter closed with an overview of the future initiatives being considered for inclusion in the way forward on policing in Canada.

State of Police Research in Canada

Professor Curt Griffiths, Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, provided an overview of his report commissioned by Public Safety Canada entitled *Economics of Policing: Baseline for Policing Research in Canada*. Dr. Griffiths informed participants that the current state of policing research in Canada is inadequate and that policing research in this country requires a structured centre, dedicated funding and the inclusion of police in decision making related to research needs and direction. Dr. Griffiths noted that the creation of a national police research strategy for Canada must include collaborative relationships between police services, governments and academics, and should leverage and build on the successful international structures and programs for policing research.

The International Experience

Professor Gloria Laycock, Ph.D., University College of London, United Kingdom (UK), provided an overview of the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (WWCCR) and policing research in the UK. Dr. Laycock noted that the UK faced its own challenges in bringing together

the historically divergent streams of policing, academia and government, in order to jointly agree on initiatives and develop a research strategy. Having worked together to find common ground while maintaining academic independence, the WWCCR is one of six centres of excellence created in the UK to develop and disseminate research that ultimately supports the development of evidence-based policy. The WWCCR is supported by a consortium of eight universities with the following mandate: review research on practices and interventions to reduce crime; label the research based on quality, cost and impact; and provide Police and Crime Commissioners and other crime-reduction stakeholders with the knowledge, tools and guidance to help them target their resources more effectively. The WWCCR also encourages local engagement between police and universities.

Based on her experiences with the WWCCR, Dr. Laycock highlighted a number of key points that she feels Canada would be wise to take into consideration during the development of its own national policing research network and agenda. The UK promotes multidisciplinary policing research and Dr. Laycock suggested that while developing an initial research network and agenda is important, both must remain flexible as it is impossible to predict, at the outset, what research will prove relevant to policy and practice in the future. In developing policing research, academics need to understand the political and policing contexts, while police and policy makers must come to see the value of research. She noted that to support the development of sound and relevant research, it is critical for qualified individuals to act as research team leaders and to have researchers involved in policy development and implementation. The research developed must produce concise results that can be easily understood by police, police leaders and partners, and implemented into police operations. Dr. Laycock specified that all research that is published should undergo a process of peer review to ensure that the best work is being produced. She also noted that, as such, a process for dissemination must be established at the outset of the research network.

Some of the other important factors raised by Dr. Laycock included the need for a close link between research and police training and the creation of a body of knowledge that police services can draw upon to develop and drive their training. Dr. Laycock also stressed that the creation of a network and being able to develop evidenced-based research on a national level will require the establishment of a long-term funding plan.

Professor Lorraine Mazerolle, Ph.D., University of Queensland, and Foundation Director and Chief Investigator of the Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security (CEPS), Australia, provided an overview of the Centre, which has been cited as the most ambitious initiative designed to develop collaborative relationships and research partnerships between the

police and academia. CEPS was officially established post 9/11 as international and transnational crime began to grow, with a view to improve policing and security research capacity in Australia. It is funded by the external Australian Research Council (ARC) in order to ensure a degree of academic independence. The Centre is administered by Griffith University and operates across a consortium of universities that includes Queensland, Australian National and Charles Stuart. In terms of governance, the structure of CEPS is fairly streamlined and consists of the following: an Executive, which has overall responsibility for the management and operations; an International Advisory Board that provides strategic advice to the Executive; and a Research Management Committee, which acts as an advisor to the Executive on a variety of issues. CEPS also has a Practitioner-in-Residence program which provides fellowships for senior or regular police officers to work with them on specific policing research projects. This program serves to bridge the gap between police services and academia.

In terms of challenges, Dr. Mazerolle identified that during the inception phase of CEPS, the organization faced a number of struggles related to attracting international partners: getting buy-in from all Australian police services; signing project agreements; balancing state, national, and local interests; achieving the right mix between industry-relevant and scholarly-led projects; achieving equal relevance to all police services; and getting police to understand the true role of the Centre. Based on these struggles, Dr. Mazerolle suggested that Canada focus on the following during the development phase:

- developing a clear mandate of policing research;
- having a stable financial stream;
- achieving buy-in from police and key stakeholders across Canada;
- ensuring the director of the centre is a policing scholar;
- engaging multiple universities from across the country to bring expertise into the centre;
- establishing a strategic growth plan and identifying key performance indicators;
- establishing three or four large transformative projects;
- ensuring peer review; and
- developing some form of practitioner-in-residence program.

Overall, Dr. Mazerolle noted that Canada is thinking about policing research strategically and whatever centre is formed, it will need to be flexible and have the ability to evolve as police and Canadian communities change.

Dennis Rosenbaum, Professor of Criminology, Ph.D., Law and Justice, and Director, Center for Research in Law and Justice and the National Police Research Platform, United States, introduced the *National Police Research Platform* and spoke to current policing research partnerships in the US. Funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Department of Justice, and law enforcement agencies, the Platform is a long-term project with the goal of advancing knowledge of American policing at the individual, organizational, and community levels, and improving the quality of American policing through transnational research. The Platform promotes evidence-based learning within the policing field and contributes to the continued professionalization of law enforcement. Drawing upon the participation of police services across the US, the Platform provides researchers with access to police personnel. The progress of the Platform is evaluated by a national advisory board made up of senior police officials from thirteen US police services, as well as the President of the Police Foundation and the Executive Director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association. Feedback on the progress of the Platform is also collected from participating agencies.

Dr. Rosenbaum touched on the research initiatives he has worked on in the US using surveys to better understand police in the context of their jobs. His work on surveys examines, for example, the “life course” of new police officers and supervisors, police-community interaction, as well as elements of importance to the police population, such as employee health, stress and job satisfaction, leadership and supervision, training, as well as the civilian role in policing, police accountability, integrity and discipline.

Dr. Rosenbaum noted that the development of the Platform, as with other entities that are trying to bring an organizational structure to diverse communities of practice (academics and police), faced barriers related to trust, prioritization of research, as well as producing timely and understandable research products. He also noted that the Platform still faces a number of challenges, including the following: reaching a consensus on what areas to measure and how to measure them; obtaining organizational participation (in all aspects of the Platform); institutionalizing the Platform among police; and developing effective feedback mechanisms.

One of the key points raised by Dr. Rosenbaum in his presentation is that whatever the structure of a Canadian research centre, it must have the ability to provide appropriate feedback to participating police agencies. Police services and policy makers must be able to use the research findings both conceptually and instrumentally (e.g., using the findings to develop and/or modify police administration, policy and/or operations). Echoing the thoughts of Drs. Laycock and Mazerolle, Dr. Rosenbaum noted that providing appropriate feedback and

dissemination ensures the research findings are interpreted and translated in a way that practitioners understand and can tangibly apply at the organizational level.

Key Findings from the International Speakers

A national policing research network or centre must meet the following criteria:

- have a clear mandate;
- have stable, long-term funding (e.g., 5-7 or 7-10 years);
- be flexible enough to address future research needs;
- establish a strategic growth plan and identify key performance indicators;
- have qualified research team leaders;
- engage multiple universities from across the country;
- ensure academics understand the political and policing context and police understand the value of research;
- develop research products that respond to the needs of police services;
- develop research that is concise and can be easily understood and implemented by police services;
- produce three or four large transformative projects;
- have a peer-review process;
- have the right structures for the dissemination of research and information, as well as the collection of feedback; and
- have some form of practitioner-in-residence program.

In sum, each of the international models presented at the Symposium faced similar challenges and barriers in the development of their national police organizations and for some, many challenges persist. The successes, failures, and lessons learned from these organizations can serve as useful examples in the development of a Canadian policing research centre. More importantly, the suggestions provided by Drs. Laycock, Mazerolle, and Rosenbaum informed the discussions that took place throughout the Symposium and will help ensure that the experiences of these international best practices are taken into consideration in the development of the Canada policing research centre.

The Fundamental Questions

Over a two-day period, participants worked in groups on very specific questions related to 1) the governance, structure and mandate of a national policing research centre, and 2) national

policing research priority themes. The task of envisioning these aspects of a future centre proved to be highly challenging but incredibly informative as group members with diverse professional backgrounds brought their individual views and perspectives to the discussions to guide the future of policing research in Canada. Below is a summary of the participants' discussions.

Governance and Structure

To begin the process of thinking about governance and structure, participants were provided with sample research centre models. They were also asked to respond to several questions: the role(s) of stakeholder organizations; possible funding options; decision parameters for research priorities; how the structure would support both police needs and academic independence; how best to foster collaboration and innovation; as well as the role of international researcher(s).

In terms of the overall governance and structure of the research centre, opinions varied. Although there was widespread agreement that it is difficult to discuss the structure of a research centre independently of funding, the group was able to agree on several key elements related to governance and structure.

Some of the highlights of the participants' decisions echoed the points raised by the international speakers. Participants called for inclusion and the need for a legitimate policing research centre that is supported by all key stakeholders. In order to achieve and maintain legitimacy, participants noted that the centre cannot simply respond to the views of funders but must look to advance wider policing priorities through research. The prevailing line of thought was that the structure of the centre be less rigid and hierarchical (top-down) and more nimble and transparent. However, participants did call for the centre to contain 'governing bodies' with clear mandates and real roles and responsibilities for members. They also felt that the centre should have the ability to shift its research direction as policing priorities evolve, new partners emerge, and funding sources change.

In reviewing the various model structures of research networks presented, participants noted that many of the elements within the structures were similar and, therefore, identified the elements that were not included but necessary for a Canadian model. It was widely acknowledged that governments (i.e., Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Ministers) should have a leadership role in the organization that mirrors the general oversight and strategic direction role that civilian governments have with police services. Some participants suggested a structure in which FPT Ministers serve as a distinct node with ultimate authority over the

executive board. Other participants indicated a preference for FPT representatives to have a more integrated role with other members of the centre, in order to avoid developing a rigid hierarchical design. In addition to government, academia (from both the social sciences and other disciplines), police and policing partners (including police boards and unions) were also deemed as essential to a successful research centre. Together with government, these three groups were seen as a balanced representation of the entire policing community upon which to base a centre.

Participants explored the need for further representation on the centre and concluded that representatives of municipal governments, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), should be involved in some capacity considering that 80% of policing costs are in urban municipal areas. Similarly, communities were viewed as having a significant stake in a national policing research centre, though how exactly they would be involved remained relatively unclear. Other possible groups included non-government organizations (NGOs) and public agencies outside the realm of policing, such as health and justice, as they too could contribute to the centre given the issues police face. Although private consulting groups have done work in the policing realm, participants did not include them in the governance structure.

In relation to the structure, the overarching belief was that the authoritative body (be it an executive committee, board, or government department) must take an “arm’s length” approach to the governance of research in order to ensure academic independence. In general, the proposed structures involved a board of governors responsible for developing broad policy priorities (e.g., setting the research direction) and would represent various interest groups such as FPT governments, police associations, university leaders, municipalities and possibly other relevant bodies. It was suggested that an executive/management/steering committee fall under the board of governors. The committee would have operational and oversight powers and would be responsible for applying the policies set out by the board. Suggestions for membership at the committee level varied, but the majority of participants were supportive of including academic researchers, police academics, and senior police officials.

Participants agreed that the next levels of the centre structure needed to be focused on addressing the actual research themes and conducting the research. This component of the structure should include research/university subject matter experts in police and policing research, as well as policing academics imbedded in field research - so-called “pracademics”. This level of the centre would act as the adjudicator and carry out research projects based on the identified research priorities. Participants noted that decisions needed to be made on whether the centre would be based on the pillars of the *Shared Forward Agenda* or research

themes. Participants also suggested the centre have a small administrative body or secretariat to manage its day-to-day functions.

With regard to the inclusion of international researchers in the structure of a Canadian research centre, participants felt that an international advisory board would serve to assist the board of governors and executive committee in their work. However, international partners would have neither a direct say in governance nor in establishing research priorities and projects, but could assist with lessons learned and provide an alternate lens during developmental phases.

Participants stressed the need for the centre to focus on stabilizing national representation before integrating international partners. This is a prime example of the need for a nimble and flexible centre structure.

There were a number of issues raised that fell outside of the discussions on governance and structure. Participants noted the need for transparency of governance and the need for stakeholders to have a true voice at every level of the centre. In order for policing research to evolve as a priority in the academic world, participants indicated that there needs to be fluidity in the structure, inclusion of partners as priorities change and a structure that can embrace such changes in its hierarchy. Interestingly, participants strongly advocated for the inclusion of provincial, territorial, as well as municipal representatives but remained committed to having governments at arm's length when it comes to determining the research priorities. Several of the speakers noted the importance of feedback and a well-informed centre, therefore participants cited a feedback loop of information as an integral part of ensuring that research is up-to-date, informative and not duplicated.

Mandate

Developing a clear mandate for the Canadian research centre is central to its success.

Participants were provided with a proposed mandate that focused on three specific objectives:

- 1) providing leadership and coordination of policing research;
- 2) expanding, promoting and sharing policing research; and
- 3) improving policing and public safety in Canada.

In the working group sessions, participants were asked to confirm or modify the draft mandate provided to them in order to ensure that it reflects the needs and priorities of the policing community. The discussions then focused on whether there were any gaps in the mandate, whether it was flexible enough to accommodate applied or primary research, and if there were any other key recommendations that needed to be considered.

As with governance and structure, the discussions on mandate proved to be a challenging but fruitful endeavour. For the most part, the participants indicated that the stated mandate was focused and diverse enough to reflect the varying needs of the policing community. The general consensus from the group was that the centre should start small, focusing on three to four research streams or programs, and gradually expand after achieving initial successes. Some participants, however, recommended broadening the context of the mandate to include areas that relate to policing, such as private security, crime reduction, community safety, etc. Others felt that at this time there is value in maintaining a focus on the policing community.

The prevailing sentiment was that starting too broadly may overwhelm the centre. Participants did, however, note that the inclusion of a coordination role in the mandate was essential in order to ensure that the centre bring scholars and practitioners together and to limit the possibility of redundancy in policing research by allowing researchers in one area of the country to know if similar research is being conducted in another part of the country.

Similar to the governance and structure of the centre, participants felt that the mandate must remain flexible in order to incorporate new research streams as they emerge. As a result, participants identified several guiding principles related to the mandate. They called on the need for research to be relevant to police services but still be driven by academic curiosity. Similar to the guidance given by the international speakers, participants saw merit in undertaking a small number of research projects that are done very well, rather than focusing on quantity. There was mention of building collaboration by being inclusive and conducting timely, relevant and applicable research. There was general consensus that policing research needs to focus on evidence-based innovation that focuses on the main challenges and opportunities in policing. Finally, participants expressed the need to strike a balance between supporting short- and long-term projects.

Participants recognized that the mandate should reflect a national perspective, however, they felt that the centre should also harmonize regional and local interests. It was noted that one of the core foundational elements of the centre should be to promote a better understanding of policing in Canada and develop a “new wave” of policing scholars through scholarship programs, promoting “police–practitioner scholars” and looking at other academic disciplines for crossover.

Other Points of Discussion

A Network vs. a Centre Structure

Throughout the Symposium, participants discussed whether the organization responsible for coordinating policing research in Canada should take the form of a network or a centre. A network denotes a fairly dynamic structure, which permits growth, the inclusion of new and international partners, and the ability to change focus without restructuring the bureaucratic elements of the network. A centre is more static, in that it requires a fixed location where staff have clearly identified roles and responsibilities. Overall, participants felt that a more nimble and flexible structure would provide focus for policing research priorities that would have national benefits. In the end, it is for these reasons that the participants were ultimately supportive of a hybrid-type model for Canada – one which has a structured coordinating body with core funding, but also include a more free-flowing, collaborative network executing the research.

Breaking Down Silos and Bridging the Gap Between Police and Academics

During the Symposium, participants noted the relationship between police services and academics either does not exist or is overshadowed by some degree of mutual suspicion and distrust. Some participants from the policing community indicated that academics are often critical of policing and this does not always translate into constructive recommendations for improving service delivery. Participants determined that a key goal of the centre should be to facilitate collaboration, communication, and the sharing of information between all key stakeholders, including police services, academics, various levels of government and all partners working as part of the larger criminal justice system.

Funding

Throughout the Symposium discussions, participants raised many questions related to funding, particularly how a national policing research network would be funded. Participants noted the importance of core funding to ensure stability for long-term research plans and projects. They also noted that core funding could attract additional funding partners to fund short-term research projects aimed at exploring emerging issues in policing. Participants were of the opinion that core funding ought to be sustainable for a period of at least five years, while additional funding could be made available for the life of specific research projects. It was suggested that all levels of government be asked to identify existing funding sources that could act a core funding, while the private sector should be looked to for any additional funding.

Key Findings from the Discussions

The **governance and structure** of a national policing research network must meet the following criteria:

- be supported by all policing stakeholders;
- ensure that research addresses wider policing priorities, not only those of funders;
- be nimble and transparent;
- allow for a shift in research focus as needed;
- have various levels of government play a leadership role; and
- involve partners from both the policing community and academia, as well as municipal partners, non-government organizations and public agencies outside of policing.

The **mandate** of a national policing research network must meet the following criteria:

- respond to new research streams as they emerge;
- allow for research that is relevant to police but also driven by academic curiosity;
- allow for the production of research that is timely, relevant and applicable;
- balance short and long-term research projects;
- harmonize national, regional and local research interests;
- promote an understanding of policing in Canada by Canadians;
- support a 'new wave' of policing scholars in Canada through scholarships; and
- encourage 'police-practitioner' scholars and the examination of crossover academic disciplines.

Canadian Police Research Network Model

MANDATE:

- 1) provide leadership and coordination of policing research;
- 2) expand, promote, and share policing research;
- 3) coordinate involvement of scholars and practitioners in policing research development; and
- 4) contribute to improved policing and public safety in Canada.

FPT MINISTERS

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
 FPT representatives,
 national police associations, university
 representative, municipalities
*Develop broad policy priorities
 Set research direction*

**INTERNATIONAL
 ADVISORY
 COMMITTEE**
*Provide international
 perspective*

SECRETARIAT
*Manage day-to-
 day functions and
 funding*

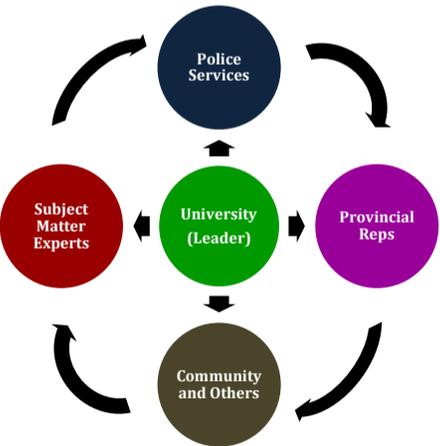
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
 Academic researchers, police academics,
 senior police officials, and members of
 police associations and police boards
*Operational oversight
 Applying Board policy*

TEAMS
 Turn research priorities into research projects

Pillar 1: Efficiencies Within Police Services

Pillar 2: New Community Safety Models

Pillar 3: Efficiencies Within the Justice System



RESEARCH PORTAL:
 One access point for all policing
 research in Canada

Day 2

Speakers from the Canadian policing community, Simon Fraser University and Public Safety Canada provided their views and perspectives on the development of national policing research priorities for Canada. Following these presentations, participants engaged in open and frank discussions to identify research priorities relevant to their own organizations. Finally, an e-voting session was held in order to identify the top five policing research priorities for Canada.

Research Needs and a National Research Agenda

On the second day of the Symposium, the three national police associations provided an overview of their respective research needs and explained some of the concerns the policing community has with their current access to policing research. The three associations highlighted that the policing community is very interested in working with researchers to advance Canadian policing research priorities.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) went on to present the CACP Research Foundation's Canadian Police Executive Research Agenda. In developing this Research Agenda, the CACP wanted to obtain an understanding of the research needs of Canadian police executives, develop stronger relationships and improve engagement with the research community, as well as put research into action. The priorities of the Police Executive Research Agenda are Human Resources, Funding and Financing, Community Engagement, Operations, Impact of Technology and Policing Models.

Graham Farrell, Professor, Simon Fraser University, provided an overview of the benefits research can provide to the policing community. Dr. Farrell indicated that policing research can offer insight into community issues and could be used to examine the philosophies behind various policing models (e.g., problem-oriented, community and intelligence-led policing). It can also ensure that research methods used are rigorous and valid, that policing practices are always supported by evidence, and that policing is contextualized within national trends, such as declining reported crime rates.

Rachel Huggins, Manager, Aboriginal and Policing Policy Directorate, Public Safety Canada, outlined how the research questions and issues submitted by participants in advance of the Symposium were organized into 17 research topics for the group discussions. Using safer communities as the ultimate goal for police, the criminal justice system and other organizations, Ms. Huggins discussed how the 17 research topics were categorized under two themes:

- 1) Countering Crime and
- 2) Administration of Police Services

These two themes reflect the key areas that often drive policing costs, including policing efforts to tackle crime directly, such as frontline policing; and back-office costs, such as IT services, training and HR. Ms. Huggins also noted that as the research agenda coming out of the Symposium is part of the work being done under the *Shared Forward Agenda*, the themes and topics would be linked to the three pillars of the strategy, namely: 1) Efficiencies within Police Services; 2) New Models of Community Safety; and 3) Efficiencies within the Justice System.

Developing a Research Agenda

The session on developing a national policing research agenda gave attendees the opportunity to consider a wider range of possible research topics and prioritize policing research needs for the country. To build the research agenda, participants were encouraged to move, add or remove topics as they saw fit. Participants raised several issues that resulted in changes to the draft topics and their categorization. While the ultimate selection of research topics is important, the questions that were raised during the discussions are very significant to the development of the agenda. For example, there was debate as to whether staffing and training should be mutually exclusive or an overarching topic. There were questions as to whether an agreed-upon definition for core policing is required, and how broadly or narrowly we should define the research themes. Participants also raised issues related to mental health and whether it should be its own separate topic or embedded within other policing research topics such as the use of force, training, core policing, community policing, policing and technology, policing diverse communities, etc. Although participants noted the need to further dissect some of the topics presented, there was general agreement that, as a first step, the draft topics covered many of the emerging areas requiring further inquiry.

Central to any discussion on research priorities is the nature of research itself, that is, what is research in relation to the policing context? This question directly ties into the notion of evidence-based practice (best practices), which was also a term that many participants believed lacks clarity. For example, evidence-based practice was listed as a research topic under the Countering Crime umbrella. However, many felt that all police practices should be built on research, resulting in all policing practices being evidence-based. The development of evidence-based practices should, therefore, be an overarching goal within the research agenda, not a research topic unto itself.

In relation to research, participants noted that in general, “research” means different things to different individuals (e.g., academics, police services, and government) and can be carried out in various ways. In the context of policing research, the prevailing notion was that research is often carried out in the following ways: information gathering; experimental research; and identifying and rectifying problems. It was felt that all streams of research should inform policy and ultimately operations in some capacity.

The discussions then moved to finalizing the research topics and ensuring that they are broad and flexible enough to incorporate the various policing issues, while addressing the concerns debated by the participants. As a result, participants identified five priority research topics:

- 1) Community Safety & Policing Practices
- 2) Performance Metrics & Resource Allocation
- 3) Policing Vulnerable & Diverse Communities
- 4) Organizational Health & Well Being
- 5) Core Policing

Participants also noted the need for guiding principles in relation to the research agenda, including the following:

- evidence-based research as a core practice;
- community involvement in policing research;
- policing research beyond crime control; and
- a flexible research framework.

Day 3

Getting the Information Out – Dissemination and the Development of a Canadian Policing Research Portal

The *Baseline for Policing Research in Canada* report highlighted the need to develop a mechanism to disseminate policing research findings. Currently, the avenues for the dissemination of policing research in Canada are minimal, and those that do exist lack the capacity to share research with police services, governments and the community in general. As such, a core goal of the *Shared Forward Agenda* is to develop an online portal for policing research that can be accessed by police services and other policing stakeholders, as well as the general public.

The Symposium concluded with a demonstration of a mock-up for a proposed policing research portal for Canada. A significant advantage of a portal is the ability to compile existing research in one location and to provide other important information on policing to stakeholders and the general public. In this respect, a portal can serve as the warehouse or clearing-house of information that is required in a policing research network. The demonstration allowed for a discussion among police services, academics and government representatives on the required features of the portal, as well as suggestions on how to ensure the portal's usability and longevity. The suggestions were very informative and the participant feedback was positive and will be taken into consideration as the policing research portal is developed.

Key Suggestions from Participants

The Portal should carry out the following tasks:

- ensure that the research is from a reputable source;
- link professionals and practitioners to foster collaboration and connectivity around policing research;
- include literature reviews on specific subjects to document already existing research;
- demonstrate that it is not a duplication of existing libraries that hold policing research;
- disseminate policing research to interested users; and
- be available to police services and all Canadians as a reference tool.

WAY FORWARD AND NEXT STEPS

The materials presented in this report have documented the key presentations and discussions that occurred over the course of the two-and-a-half day *National Policing Research Symposium*. This report identifies the important lines of inquiry and essential considerations as well as the decisions taken on the development of the three-pronged research plan under the *Shared Forward Agenda* related to the following:

1. a policing research network;
2. a national research agenda; and
3. a Web presence for all policing research (portal).

These discussions produced a wealth of materials and ideas on how to improve the capacity to conduct policing research in Canada, as well as how to create structures that would foster collaboration between the police, academics, governments and stakeholders. The overall

feeling of those that attended the Symposium was that the status quo with respect to policing research in Canada is inadequate. It is for these reasons that the three-pronged research plan was developed and will help to re-shape the way policing research is conducted and disseminated in Canada. In moving forward, Public Safety Canada will continue to advance the development of this research plan in collaboration with police and other stakeholder groups in attendance at the Symposium. We all have a role to play in the future of Canadian policing research.

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