

A Process to Identify Research Priorities in a Multisector Group

Carolyn Gotay¹, Melissa Ashman¹, Kitty Corbett², Chris Lovato¹, Michelle Reid¹
1. School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC
2. School of Public Health and Health Systems, University of Waterloo, Waterloo ON

OBJECTIVE

In this study, a diverse set of stakeholders identified priorities for worksite wellness research. A structured group problem solving methodology was used to identify and rank research ideas.

WORKSHOP

The “Wellness @ Work” workshop was a free one-day workshop on incorporating health promotion into the workplace, which brought together attendees involved in workplace health and wellness promotion from across the country. The goal of the workshop was to set priorities for workplace wellness research and action in BC.

Renowned Canadian and international experts on workplace health and wellness, as well as workplace wellness program participants and advocates for better health and wellness in organizations in BC, presented in various formats.



Presentation topics included:

- An overview of mindfulness meditation
- A review of a workplace wellness research study in BC worksites
- Workplace culture & barriers to wellness programs
- Innovations in men’s health promotion
- Organizing physical activities in the workplace



ATTENDEES

Over 100 people attended the workshop, and 19 people registered as online webcast participants. Attendees came from government, health care, private industry, non governmental organizations, and academia. Organizations represented included:

- TELUS
- Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcome Sciences
- Providence Health Care
- YWCA Metro Vancouver
- BC Healthy Living Alliance
- Coast Mountain Bus Company
- Pacific Blue Cross Insurance
- Surrey School District
- YVR Airport Association
- Government of Yukon
- BC Teachers Federation

NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

Participants were attendees at a worksite wellness workshop. They were asked:

What are the highest priority research questions regarding worksite wellness? In other words, what questions need to be answered that will make worksite wellness programs more widely implemented?

The nominal group process provided data to answer this question. This technique uses a structured multistep process:

1. **Introduction and explanation:** Participants are welcomed and the facilitator explains to them the purpose and procedure of the meeting.
2. **Individual silent generation of ideas (10 minutes):** Each participant writes down all ideas that come to mind when considering the question. Participants are not to consult or discuss their ideas with others. The participants are asked to write down all the ideas that come to mind, not to evaluate their ideas, but rather to brainstorm. Each idea should be one simple point.
3. **Round robin presentation of all responses without critical commentary or feedback (15 minutes):** Each person presents their idea in turn, summarizing it in a single sentence, while a note-taker records all ideas. All participants have equal opportunity to present ideas.
4. **Group discussion to clarify ideas and combine similar ideas (15 minutes):** Facilitators invite participants to discuss any of the ideas that require further details or explanation. While no ideas should be eliminated, the group may suggest new items for discussion and combine items into categories. After the participants have had their say, the facilitators should work to further collapse the ideas into categories, which is recorded by the note-taker.
5. **Voting and ranking (10 minutes):** Ideas are prioritized in relation to the original question. Following the voting and ranking process, immediate results in response to the question are available to participants, so the meeting concludes having reached a specific outcome.



The discussion was recorded and transcribed to retain details about ideas generated.

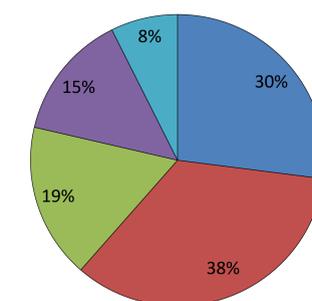
RESULTS

37 people participated in the priority setting exercise.

40 distinct research questions emerged initially. Discussion generated two themes: **program characteristics**, and **organizational issues**.

Individuals selected their top priority using an anonymous electronic voting system. **Measurement** was the highest program research priority, endorsed by 38% of respondents: e.g., what are the core measures of effectiveness.

Workforce needs was the highest organizational research priority, endorsed by 47%, e.g., what do workers need and what do they want?

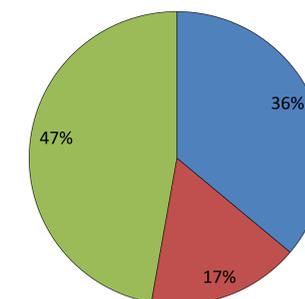


Vote #1: Program characteristics

- **Measurements and indicators:** what are the best indicators? What are the core measures or outcomes that everyone could agree on? How do we assess effectiveness?
- **Attrition/motivation/sustainability** issue. Getting people in and getting them to stay.
- **Who do we target** in these interventions? Do we segment the population? Who are those segments? High-risk people? Different occupational groups? What scale of organization do we target? **MEN?**
- **New technologies** and how we incorporate them into interventions. What’s the best use of them?
- **Built environment.** How do we create an environment in offices and beyond that supports worksite wellness?

Vote #2: Organizational issues

- What do people want from a workplace wellness program? How can we meet their needs? What are the **barriers and facilitators?**
- How to initiate and maintain a **culture of wellness** internally and beyond the worksite? Who should lead the way in cultural change? Should it be institutions of higher learning and/or health? What facilitates and hinders a culture of wellness? Case studies of success worksites, and what the process was? How can we shift the culture so everyone engages?
- **Implementation and delivery**, in particular who delivers them and who is responsible for them: managers, leadership. How do we engage them and what’s important to them?



DISCUSSION

The nominal group process proved to be an effective way of identifying research priorities in a diverse group where many individuals did not know one another.

Advantages of this approach include:

1. Considering all options
2. Allowing each person an equal and private vote
3. Identifying priorities quickly.