



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
for the
**CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR HEALTH POLICY AND
SYSTEMS RESEARCH**



**CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEMS
RESEARCH**

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Message

Message by Dean FMS

Message

Message by Director

Table of Contents

Message	3
Message	3
Background	5
Introduction	6
Mission	6
Vision.....	6
Values.....	6
Core Functions and Services	6
Strategies	7
Governance Structure.....	8
Staffing	9
Proposed Financing.....	9
Monitoring and Evaluation	10
Conclusion.....	10
References	11

Background

Health systems in the Caribbean are under pressure from resource constraints, rising expectations and increasing population demands. Many of these systems are also fragmented and inequities in access and coverage exist. Weak health systems are a critical obstacle to improving health. This is a serious challenge facing governments of the Caribbean.

Health decision-makers in the Caribbean need research that can help address their real-world policy and systems problems. Health systems in the Caribbean need strengthening, with the need for more evidence based policy making and implementation as well as evaluation (1-3). An Assessment conducted in November 2017 (4), confirmed that there is a demand by policymakers in the Caribbean for this type of research support, and that there is also scope to increase research production in this area. Traditionally, however, the nexus between decision-makers' research needs, and the offerings of the academic community has not been seamless. Strategies to ensure the uptake of research into policy, programming and practice need to be developed and strengthened.

Health policy and systems research (HPSR) is a field of study that seeks to understand and improve how societies organise themselves in achieving collective health goals, and how different actors interact in the policy and implementation processes to contribute to policy outcomes (5). This field of research focuses on health policies—how they are developed, implemented and evaluated, and health systems—what can be done to improve the performance of these systems, with a focus on any or all of the six health systems building blocks: governance, financing, service delivery arrangements, health human resources, information and evidence, and medical products and technologies (6). In short, it is a field of study that enhances the health policy process and the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system.

The establishment of the Caribbean Centre for Health Policy and Systems Research will respond to the existing needs in the region by providing a program of academic excellence in the HPSR field. The Centre will improve the relevance of the University of the West Indies (UWI) to Caribbean Governments and will also aspire to make a mark in the international arena.

Box 1: Utility of Health Policy and Systems Research

The utility of health policy and systems research derives directly from its ability to inform policy and decision making. If HPSR is conducted in a manner that is remote from policy and decision-making then it is likely to be of limited value. Close involvement of policy and decision makers is required throughout the research process – from identifying research questions, to interpreting data and writing up – in order to ensure the relevance of the final product.

World Health Organization Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research

Introduction

This strategic framework has largely been informed by the work of the joint UWI (FMS) and Ministry of Health (Trinidad and Tobago) work group, and the two-day retreat of November 6 and 7, 2017 (supported by PAHO). It reflects agreement among partners on the scope and strategy of the Centre, and provides the structure for further discussions and decisions of a task force and/or the Centre's Advisory Committee.

Mission

- ✓ To generate and facilitate the use of evidenced-based research, empowering countries in the Caribbean to strengthen health systems and policy making processes, thus enabling greater equity in health.

Vision

- ✓ To be a world-class centre, promoting synergies among policymakers, researchers and communities, to achieve optimal population health outcomes.

Values

- ✓ Excellence (in all areas of operation)
- ✓ Responsiveness (to needs of stakeholders)
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Credibility
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Innovative and solution driven
- ✓ Inclusiveness (continuous collaboration with partners and key stakeholders)
- ✓ Equity (provision of services to countries in the region in a fair manner).

Core Functions and Services

Function 1: Research execution

The Centre will conduct health systems, health services and health policy research, responsive to the needs of the decision-makers and health systems leaders in the Caribbean. The research program will emphasise the use of various methodologies such as implementation and improvement science and will span all thematic areas related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Function 2: Knowledge Translation activities

The Centre will assist policymakers and health system leaders to utilise the best available research evidence in health policy and health system decision-making, by providing them with the following products and services:

- ✓ Rapid Response to knowledge/evidence needs
- ✓ Policy briefs and research syntheses
- ✓ Deliberative policy dialogues
- ✓ Repository of Caribbean research

Function 4: Citizen Engagement

The ultimate goal of health system strengthening is to improve the health of citizens. Although public policy is important to create incentives and supportive environments for appropriate health behaviours, the actions of individuals and communities are pivotal to improve health and build resilient health systems. Growing evidence confirms that under the right conditions, citizen engagement can help governments achieve improved results(7-9)

The Centre will assist decision-makers and health system leaders to engage with communities as partners in health, by convening forums and dialogues with citizens to deliberate on current health system problems and to identify evidence-based solutions to address contemporary health issues.

Function 5: Health Human Resource Training and development

To build the competencies of health system managers and other health professionals, Training courses in the following areas will be provided:

- ✓ Health Systems policy development
- ✓ Policy Analysis (initially development, with implementation and evaluation likely to follow)

Strategies

The proposed Centre for Health Policy and Systems Research was born from the aspiration to respond to the needs of CARICOM Ministries of Health. The following strategic approach will therefore be used to shape the Centre's work program and to execute its core functions:

- ✓ Priority setting. The research agenda will be defined in collaboration with the Centre's principal stakeholders—the Ministries of Health Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and

Suriname — after conducting priority setting exercises with them. The Centre’s annual program of work will be strongly focused on the identified priorities.

- ✓ Embedded research. The research program will be embedded in the decision-making process. Policymakers and health system managers will therefore be actively involved in defining research questions and research will be conducted in partnership with them. This will ensure context-specific issues are accounted for and that research findings have a greater relevance and uptake in decision-making.
- ✓ Inter-disciplinary and multisectoral collaboration. The multi-disciplinary nature of HPSR is well recognised. The Centre will pursue collaborative relationships with other Faculties, such as the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Ministries (across countries) when input from these disciplines is required.
- ✓ Inter-campus collaboration. The methodological strengths of existing UWI research centres on other campuses, are also recognised and well appreciated. In executing its research program, the Centre for Health Policy and Systems Research will facilitate the UWI functioning as a single regional institution, through the pursuit of inter-campus collaboration. Care will be taken to ensure the Centre does not duplicate, but rather complements existing initiatives within the UWI system. The same holds for collaborations across universities in Guyana and Suriname, and outside the UWI system in Trinidad and Tobago.
- ✓ Research independence. The value of the Centre will lie in its unique ability to respond to the research needs of Governments and to serve as an academic think-tank or research contractor. Notwithstanding this relationship, the Centre will conduct independent research and provide impartial advice that is founded upon research of the highest standards of academic inquiry.

Governance Structure

The Caribbean Centre for Health Policy and Systems Research will be hosted by the Faculty of Medical Sciences, at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine. The Centre will be managed by a Director who will lead on the strategic direction and oversee the operations of the Centre. An Advisory Board will be established to assist with goal setting and monitoring of strategic objectives. The Advisory Board will be chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences. Membership of the Advisory Board will include, but will not be limited to representatives from:

- ✓ University of Guyana
- ✓ University of Suriname

- ✓ Ministry of Health Trinidad and Tobago
- ✓ Ministry of Health Guyana
- ✓ Ministry of Health Suriname
- ✓ Regional health organisation such as Pan American Health Organisation
- ✓ Healthy Caribbean Coalition
- ✓ McMaster Health Forum (international partner)
- ✓ Community (layperson, nominated by a civil society organisation)

Staffing

The Centre will initially have the following staffing arrangements.

- ✓ Core staff. Dedicated academic and support staff as follows:
 - Director
 - Research Fellows
 - Administrative Assistant
- ✓ Adjunct staff of the Centre. Academic staff across the St. Augustine, Mona and Cave Hill UWI campuses will complement the Centre's expertise and capacity.
- ✓ External staff of UWI. Researchers from University of Guyana, University of Suriname and other institutions, affiliated with the Centre.

Proposed Financing

The proposed financing arrangement for the Centre will be as follows:

- ✓ Contributions from the UWI to the Centre. Financial and in-kind support to cover infrastructure, salary of core staff (Director, Research Fellows and 1 Administrative Assistant).
- ✓ Contributions from Governments (Ministries of Health) e.g. MOUs with Ministries to cover an identified research agenda and policy support per year.
- ✓ Research Grants. Funds to cover the conduct of research and the involvement of adjunct and external staff in research projects.
- ✓ Fee-for-services. Professional fees for consultancy and other services, payable by benefiting countries and agencies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation framework to determine the impact of the Centre's research and its other services will be developed.

Conclusion

The need for a Centre for Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) was reflected in the needs assessment undertaken and validated at the two-day retreat of November 6 - 7, 2017. The strategic framework focuses on four key elements: vision, mission, goals and strategies and provides the answers to the why, what and how for the proposed Centre. The framework defines the strategic direction for the Centre and the approach to its work. It reflects agreement among partners on the scope and strategy of the Centre, and provides the structure for further discussions and decisions of a task force and/or the Centre's Advisory Committee.

References

1. Caribbean Health Research Council. 2008: Translating Health Research to Action: A Toolkit for the Caribbean. Available from: caribbean.org/Portals/0/Downloads/Publications/Research/Health%20Research%20Policy/Caribbean%20Research%20to%20Policy%20Toolkit.pdf; 2008 Feb.
2. Fraser, H. S. Research, health policies and health care in the Caribbean. The role of the University of the West Indies. *West Indian Med J*; 50(Supl.4): 23-26, Sept. 2001.
3. Bennett, Nadia R; Cumberbatch, Chisa; Francis, Damian K. There are challenges in conducting systematic reviews in developing countries: the Jamaican experience. *J Clin Epidemiol*; 68(9): 1095-8, 2015 Sep.
4. University of the West Indies (St. Augustine). Needs Assessment for Health Policy and Systems Research Centre in the Caribbean. 2017 Nov.
5. Gilson L, Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, World Health Organization. Health policy and systems research: a methodology reader [Internet]. Geneva, Switzerland: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research : World Health Organization; 2012 [cited 2017 Sep 26]. Available from: http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/alliancehpsr_reader.pdf
6. Remme JHF, Adam T, Becerra-Posada F, D’Arcangues C, Devlin M, Gardner C, et al. Defining research to improve health systems. *PLoS Med*. 2010 Nov 16;7(11):e1001000.
7. Abelson J, Eyles J, McLeod CB, Collins P, McMullan C, Forest P-G. Does deliberation make a difference? Results from a citizens panel study of health goals priority setting. *Health Policy Amst Neth*. 2003 Oct;66(1):95–106.
8. Smith G, Wales C. Citizens’ juries and deliberative democracy. *Polit Stud*. 2000;48(1):51–65.
9. Street J, Duszynski K, Krawczyk S, Braunack-Mayer A. The use of citizens’ juries in health policy decision-making: A systematic review. *Soc Sci Med*. 2014 May;109:1–9.