



Workshop Report

Durham Regional Police Service and Barrie Police Service Accelerator

June 10 – 21, 2024





MicroResearch

MicroResearch (www.microresearch.ca) is an innovative strategy aimed at building the capacity of local health care professionals and other professionals to better address community health care problems by finding local solutions for local problems. The program began in 2008 in Uganda as a collaboration between faculty at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (Jerome Kabakyenga) and Dalhousie University (Robert Bortolussi and Noni MacDonald). Since then, the research capacity building workshops have been held in 10 countries with 1,306 participants. As of May 2024, 130 locally driven research projects have been funded and launched with 52 completed, with results published in peer reviewed international health journals. The program was so successful that in 2016 it was brought to Nova Scotia. It was recognized early in Nova Scotia that the MicroResearch program could be of value beyond core acute and chronic care professionals for others keen to find solutions to community health problems. As well, there is interest in Canada in MicroResearch beyond Nova Scotia. Fifteen workshops have been delivered in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario, training 170 participants.

MicroResearch Process

The MicroResearch process advances in three phases: (i) Training Workshops are the first phase in the process. (ii) Teams formed during the workshops are then able refine and improve their research ideas for a grant submission to MicroResearch and review by an international panel of research experts from Canada and Africa. Once the research teams have responded to the reviewer recommendations with changes to their proposal, approval is given on scientific merit. (iii) Teams are then able to submit their proposal to their local Research Ethics Board (REB) for approval and carry out their research. They are also encouraged to bring their findings back to the community through a Knowledge Translation plan. This report outlines the Research Training Workshop held at Durham Regional Police Service Accelerator Whitby site, June 10-21, 2024.

Workshop Objectives and Organizers

The class comprised of 18 participants from Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS), Ontario and Barrie Police Service (BPS), Ontario with coaches and co-teachers from DRPS and Memorial University of Newfoundland.

This workshop involved three teams. Participants were recruited from sworn and civilian members of DRPS and BPS.

The key objectives for the participants of the MR Virtual Workshop:



- to develop skills needed for community focused research,
- to develop skills to work in a multidisciplinary group and to become a team,
- to write a successful community focused research proposal overview based upon a question of their choice.

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Workshop Partners

This workshops and projects emerging as a result are supported by partners including:

- Dalhousie Medical School, Dalhousie University (Volunteer teachers)
- IWK Health (Volunteer teachers)
- MicroResearch private donors

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- Durham Regional Police Service
 - Barrie Police Service

Workshop Planning and Recruitment

Participants were recruited through email communication and word-of-mouth from Durham Regional Police Service and a guest team from Barrie Police Service, recruited in a similar manner. The 18 participants (12 from DRPS and six from BPS) included a wide range of disciplines and professions within policing including the Wellness unit, Special Victims Unit, Intimate Partner Violence and I.T.

The pre-workshop assessment was completed by 16 of the 18 participants (89%). As shown in the Pre-Workshop evaluation, 37.5% participants had previous health research experience; 5 as study participants, 3 as research assistants, 1 as site investigators and 1 as principle investigator. Participants indicated the top things they wanted to get out of the workshop was practical research experience, collaboration with other members, professional knowledge, acquire knowledge to bring back to police team/ division.

Workshop

The ten-day workshop combined lectures and daily small group interdisciplinary, interactive working sessions. Many of the lectures, support materials and tool kits were recently updated and refreshed in 2024 to include new slides on using the internet, principles in clinical research challenges in research, ethics, knowledge translation, budget, research to policy, and how to get published. Session lectures began at 9 am local time. Session lectures were followed by group work sessions with the coaches. The lectures, exercises, and group work over the nine days led the participants step-by-step through the development of a research proposal overview. Participants moved from formulating an idea to the development of the research question, to the selection of methods to fit the questions taking into account the budget available and the formulation of the overview of a knowledge translation plan and determination of what communities to engage, when and how. Daily workshop attendance, which was always enthusiastic, ranged from 94% to 100%.

Team Research Proposals

As in previous workshops, the major educational component was centred on the proposal overview development in the interdisciplinary groups that over the course of the workshop evolved into teams. There was a significant amount of content on Day 1 to orientate and allow participants to develop their own ideas into a research question based on their own experiences. On Day 2, the collaboration began when participants were divided into three groups. Working in breakout rooms, the groups then discussed each member's question and applied the FINER criteria (discussed during the lecture on Day 2) and selected the "best" one to develop into a research proposal overview throughout the rest of



the workshop. On Day 3, a spokesperson for each group presented the topics to the class and noted the question selected by the group and the rationale for its selection. The questions selected on Day 3 were:

- Group 1 – Group A- What are the experiences for members post potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTs) and how can the Service better support them?
- Group 2 – ‘Team Bravo’- How can DRPS better support workers experiencing traumatic events to prevent further injury?
- Group 3 – ‘Barrie Trailblazers’- Would a proactive holistic approach to supporting mental health of our members have a positive effect on the well-being of frontline officers?’

A discussion followed each group’s presentation, with emphasis on importance of narrowing and refining each question.

The series of lectures that followed provided knowledge and skills needed to develop these questions into research proposal overviews. All the lectures included core elements to the MR concept, which were essential in preparation for the proposal overview presentation for external critique on the final day of the workshop.

Throughout the workshop, each group evolved into a team, working together on their proposal overviews, guided by their coach.

Final Day of the Workshop

On the final day of the workshop, each team presented the overview of their proposal in a ten-minute presentation to a panel of four local experts. The review panel, along with the two Canadian facilitators, adjudicated each team’s presentation and suggested how the proposals might be further strengthened.

The local review panel included:

- Rich Johnston, Barrie Police Chief
- Garry Cobitt, Vice-Chair, DRPS Board
- Leah Dunbar, Program Manager, Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General

Final Team Questions:

1. What is the perceived effectiveness of organizational support systems used by sworn and civilian members following a traumatic event?
2. How can the Durham Regional Police Service best support members through the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) process?
3. Would a proactive approach geared towards police recruits to manage their mental health stressors improve wellness?



Review Panels General Comments

The local experts noted that all teams had clearly worked hard and presented their proposal overviews well. The reviewers were impressed by the professional presentations of the PowerPoints.

The expert panel members felt that all 3 teams showed that they worked well together, with each member contributing to the final proposal presentation. The teams made great progress in refining their research topic and plan over the two-week workshop. The KT plans and budgets were generally well done but will also need to be refined as the specific research plan is further developed. Each research proposal will need some refinement before it is ready to be submitted for a MicroResearch grant. Teams need to show their project question is well-justified, that the design/methods are appropriate, and will be understood by a reviewer from across and outside Canada. All of the projects will contribute to betterment of policing in Ontario, Canada, and are worthy to proceed for a formal application for a MicroResearch Grant proposal in September 30, 2024.

Workshop Evaluation

An assessment of the workshop by participants as well as how well their team functioned was obtained using structured evaluation forms submitted with 15/18 (83%) of participants completing the form.

Overall, the workshop was highly regarded by participants and the hybrid in-person/virtual program was well accepted, although several felt the program was “too hectic” and the timing could be reconsidered to take into account other commitments:

“Time for the workshop. If could be adjusted from 3 to 4 or 5 o'clock, you might have realized that most of the participants are always working officers and most people are not in position to be granted short leaves for the training.”

Lectures that participants indicated were particularly helpful included knowledge translation, research methods, sampling and statistics, and how to develop a research question. Overall, respondents indicated that the lectures and workshop content helped to “demystify” research and provided participants with the tools needed to help create positive changes in their communities:

“To be grounded in evidence based social research with focus on identifying the practical challenges and issues the vulnerable go through and be able to address the real underlying issues to transform society.”

“I really like the research field, but I didn't know how to get involved and to start. As soon as I heard that Micro Research is training people in research, I was very interested. I found an opened door that can lead me to the realization of my dreams, which are research!!!”



Most participants responded in their evaluation that working as a team enhanced their research and the workshop experience stimulated their interest in research. Several indicated potential challenges in continuing to work as a team, including geographical distances and time constraints, however, mentorship, access to experts, and funding could help ameliorate these issues.

“Overall, the team worked exceptionally together, everyone contributed and shared their thoughts. We came to satisfactory resolutions for all when there was any debate or challenge in thinking.”

“We all have skills that were utilized and questions that were asked are on point and relevant to their roles.”

Recommendations and Comments

The program was well and enthusiastically received. Unexpected benefits included breaking down of silos across police services between civilian and professional components - a sense of comradery developed that was not evident at beginning of workshop. Teams from DRPS and BPS both felt well supported in this program by their leadership. Of particular note, one workshop graduate has decided to proceed onto formal training in research, while several others commented on how the research skills learned could help them better address daily tasks in their jobs. Some participants indicated that they had told other colleagues how helpful the workshop was and hoped DRPS would host another.

The site and support for MicroResearch by DRPS and BPS was excellent. One small negative was room temperature. The participants' ability to fully dedicate their work time to the workshop made it possible for them to fully immerse themselves in the experience and made the program work better than if they had only been there for half-days.

Recommendations

1. Provide more clarity on the daily overview of what will be taught then what is expected in group time for participants with more emphasis on where and when fit into the long program work not just the proposal overview. It was confusing for some to see the relevance of lectures without clarity on group expectations to follow. “For example, we would get a lecture on how to approach an ethics board, and some people would think that we were putting together an ethics proposal that afternoon”.
2. Work with DRPS and BRPS to ensure MR teams are coached and supported to develop full proposals.



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to the local site for providing administrative and organizational support. As well to the local volunteer coaches and co-teachers for their continued involvement in MicroResearch. Thank you to the panelists for their valuable feedback and constructive critiques on the final day of the workshop. Finally, we thank the participants for their engagement throughout the ten days.

Respectfully submitted,

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