

What are the benefits of membership with ICcer for post-secondary institutions?

The Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICcer) is a network of post-secondary institutions and continuing care provider organizations collaborating to enhance continuing care for Albertans. We do that by working with academics, researchers, educators, providers, and students. We are often asked, especially when recruiting new members, to describe the value added by ICcer.

Overall Benefits

“Working with ICcer has provided me with immediate connections in the continuing care sector that would not normally be possible or would take years to develop. I've gained a greater appreciation of the challenges of providing care in this context, by sitting at the same table as providers from across the province. This perspective allows me to give thought to how we prepare our learners from the different post-secondary environments to work collaboratively in continuing care. The literature says that the best way to improve the health system is to partner across sectors, which is what ICcer is doing for continuing care.” Dr. Sharla King, Director, Health Sciences Education & Research Commons, University of Alberta

ICcer's main value is the networking opportunities that it provides. There can be a single point of contact for providers, academic institutions, and researchers, all of whom have the prime goal of making our continuing care system as effective as it can be.

As a network, ICcer differs from other centres and institutes. Those other entities have an ownership component that ICcer does not have. No one “owns” ICcer; individual partner autonomy is not relinquished, rather it is enhanced by association with others' efforts. As each partner is added, additional synergy occurs. The nature of interactions, priorities, possible projects and collaborations are enhanced by the interaction of the partners.

Perhaps the ***most significant ICcer value is that big aspirations, like developing the highest quality continuing care system, cannot be accomplished by any one segment or organization alone.*** They cannot be obtained even by large research centres. It isn't about the amount of money available; it is about the will to solve problems. A network like ICcer that requires only a commitment to a cause has the opportunity to make a difference. ICcer does not limit the activities of its partners nor duplicate existing activities. Its major goals are to link organizations, activities, and sectors of the continuing care system.

Benefits to Post-Secondary Institutions

Post-secondary institutions have identified several major benefits to ICcer membership. First, it allows smaller institutions to develop research capacity in students and faculty. Taking the lead on research projects can be a challenge for colleges, despite the fact that scholarly activities are required for many faculty. ICcer allows them to partner with other institutions or organizations to conduct research and to provide mentoring opportunities for faculty and students.

“As a founding member of ICcer, NorQuest College values the ability to capitalize on the collective wisdom of the ICcer group in order to propel ourselves forward in meaningful ways.” Jackie Nelson, Dean Faculty of Health & Community Studies, NorQuest

They are also able to integrate findings from ICcer-supported research, and other research in continuing care, into the applicable curriculum. Curricula needs are also brought to their attention by the provider organizations sitting at the ICcer table.

“The ICCER community brings research opportunities to our faculty and experiential learning to our students. It also helps our community as we move forward to fulfil a current need for more continuing care facilities. Finally ICCER helps Keyano College to fulfil its mandate for Excellence in teaching and learning including research activities.” Dr. Vincella Thompson, Dean School of Health, Wellness and Human Services, Keyano College

The increasingly complex continuing care sector demands that all frontline providers have the ability to enhance their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their residents/clients. Both regulated and unregulated health providers are ‘knowledge workers’ and require new knowledge and skills to keep up with the changes in the continuing care sector. ICCER provides the opportunity for post-secondary institutions to instill, at the pre-service level, the value of research to improve practice.

The Community Needs Driven Research Network

The value ICCER provides has been recognized by Alberta Health. In 2014 Alberta Health awarded ICCER a 3-year operating grant in order to support the Community Needs Driven Research Network activities that were started with funding in 2012 from Alberta Innovates Health Solutions.

Through the consultation activities of the Community Needs Driven Research Network, ICCER identifies the research and education needs from the perspective of continuing care providers, and then works to encourage researchers and educators to meet those needs. The ICCER Secretariat supports teams of researchers/ educators/ providers/ decision makers by identifying research funding opportunities and by helping to develop research proposals and educational activities. The level of support given to teams can vary.

ICCER has also forged connections with similar institutions/organizations within Canada, such as the Atlantic Institute on Aging, and is developing relationships with international organizations related to aging and continuing care.

The ICCER Secretariat is the ‘glue’ that holds ICCER together. Through the work of the Secretariat, members keep up to date on activities within Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. The network is supported through social media activities, presentations at provincial/ national conferences, and educational opportunities. ICCER normally holds two major education events each year with opportunity to participate across Alberta, and Canada, by videoconference. We also host events in Edmonton and Calgary that allow researchers, providers, and government policy people to network and discuss issues.

“I am astonished by the amount of new information in this event and wonder "where I have been: that I heard/learned so little with an organization that I thought was "keeping abreast".”

“Good opportunity to meet and mix with others I wouldn’t normally have. I really enjoyed talking with people and being able to have an open discussion and bounce ideas off of each other. I look forward to attending more networking events in the future.” Participant comments.

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