



# Research-Practice Consensus Workshop Model

Fall 2006

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging  
Research-Practice  
Consensus Workshop Model

---

© The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging  
Beebe Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 14853  
Phone 607 255 4553 • Fax 607 254 2903

# Table of Contents

Goals of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model . . . . .	1
Overview of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model . . . .	2
Evolution of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model . . . .	3
Steps in the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model . . . . .	3
1. Selecting the topic . . . . .	4
2. Producing a non-technical literature review . . . . .	4
3. Selecting a panel of experts . . . . .	5
4. Convening the workshop . . . . .	7
5. Follow-up roundtable . . . . .	8
6. Dissemination and Implementation . . . . .	9
References . . . . .	10
Checklist for Success . . . . .	11
<i>Appendix A:</i> Invitation to CITRA Consensus Workshop	
<i>Appendix B:</i> CITRA Consensus Workshop flyer	
<i>Appendix C:</i> CITRA Consensus Workshop sample agenda	
<i>Appendix D:</i> CITRA Consensus Workshop follow-up email	

# *Goals of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model*

The CITRA consensus workshop model detailed here was created as part of a community-based research partnership of social science and medical researchers at Cornell University and an organized group of approximately 250 aging service organizations in New York City. The concept of the consensus workshop emerged from in-depth discussions of ways to bridge the gap between research and practice.

The consensus workshop is designed to achieve several specific goals. First, it addresses the need for meaningful dialogue between researchers and practitioners. Opportunities for equal-status contact between researchers and practitioners in which serious research issues can be openly discussed are few. The consensus workshop model provides a venue for such dialogue.

Second, scientists' agendas frequently do not reflect the real-world concerns of eventual end-users of research (Stokes, 1997). A major aim of the consensus workshop model is thus to identify discrepancies between interventions recommended by research and the actual experience of gerontological practitioners. Our assumption is that practitioners can shed light on why some programs do not achieve expected results and can provide important contextual information useful for the design of future intervention research projects.

Third, Kitson and colleagues (1998) suggest that effective movement of research evidence into practice requires researchers' attention to the environment in which the research is to be placed and to the *method* of facilitating the knowledge transfer, rather than simply assuming that the rigor of the evidence is sufficient justification for adoption (Kitson, Harvey, & McCormack, 1998). Generally, translating research to practice has meant summarizing research findings and disseminating them in ways perceived as "palatable" to practitioners, typically in the form of fact sheets or issue briefs. By encouraging practitioners to critique existing research and to place it in actual contexts where older persons are

served, the consensus workshop aims to capture practitioner interest and to encourage discussion about the implications for practice.

## *Overview of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model*

To achieve these goals, CITRA modified an existing model popular in the scientific community. Many government agencies and scientific organizations organize “consensus conferences” or workshops (Black et al., 1999; Ferguson, 1993; Goven, 2003). Notable sponsors of such consensus workshops include the National Institutes of Health, the National Academy of Sciences, the Rand Corporation, and major foundations. These events take several different forms, but they usually involve the following steps: (1) A topic is selected that is both an important problem and one on which there is scientific evidence; (2) A group of scientific experts on the topic is selected; (3) A preliminary report is prepared that summarizes available research findings; (4) Meetings of the scientific panel are held involving presentations and discussion of the report; and (5) A final consensus report is produced.

Although such conferences are often successful in influencing the direction of a field of research, they focus on synthesizing empirical findings without significant input from “front-line” practitioners. Thus, the consensus findings may fail to reflect the practice wisdom of those who are involved in providing services on a day-to-day basis and thereby risk reduced effectiveness in addressing human problems. In response to this concern, CITRA adapted the standard consensus conference model by integrating practitioners throughout the process. As in conventional consensus conferences, we prepared a systematic review of the recent scientific literature on a particular question of interest. However, in an additional step, research findings were rendered in less technical language and presented to practitioners who then joined with researchers in a dialogue about the current research and future research priorities. We describe the process in detail here and provide an example using the topic of falls prevention.

## *Evolution of the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model*

In our first consensus workshop on the topic of falls prevention among community-dwelling older adults, we began with recommendations to practice from the existing research literature. Our intention was to translate research to practice. We found, however, that the measurable value in bringing researchers and practitioners together in this forum proved to be the practice-based suggestions for future research. Practitioners emphasized several high-priority directions for future research - areas that are highly relevant to practitioners, but perceived as missing from the scientific efficacy literature. For example, practitioners concurred that older adults tend to revert back to old movement patterns after a fall, thus investigations of how they might learn and practice new movement strategies on a variety of different terrains, rather than in one room or in a physical therapy office, is important to future falls prevention. Secondly, they asserted that the types of assessment tools available to them fail to emphasize the fit between the environment and the users of the environment. They appealed for assessment instruments that are more detailed and sensitive to individual differences. These practice-based suggestions from practitioners can serve to guide continued research on the topic of falls prevention.

## *Steps in the CITRA Consensus Workshop Model*

The major steps in the CITRA consensus workshop model are: (1) Selecting a topic, (2) Producing an up-to-date, non-technical translation of the literature, (3) Selecting a panel of expert researchers and expert practitioners, (4) Convening a larger group of researchers and practitioners for discussion, (5) Arriving at an initial consensus statement of research and practice recommendations, and (6) Convening a follow-up meeting to create a final consensus document. The following explains each step in more detail as facilitated in the CITRA model.

## *1. Selecting the topic*

An advisory committee consisting of a representative group of aging service providers and advocates is convened and charged with topic selection. Over the course of several meetings, this group selects topics based on the following criteria: (a) the topic is relevant to the day-to-day challenges of aging service practitioners and preferably policy relevant b) sufficient research is available on the topic for a review, and c) the effort must not duplicate a recent, very similar effort.

In addition and if resources allow, the advisory group may want to facilitate a needs assessment of the relevant service providers and advocates. The topic selected would then need to be compatible with this needs assessment.

After selecting topics, the advisory committee prioritizes them and selects one topic for the first consensus workshop.

## *2. Producing a non-technical research review*

After the consensus conference topic is selected, members of the CITRA staff review the available scientific literature and prepare a written research review that (a) sets out the practice-relevant research in a non-technical way, and (b) suggests practice recommendations based on the research. It is important that the person(s) who assumes this task has some experience searching the scientific literature. Also, this person must have some understanding of the technical language used by researchers or be able to identify a researcher who can help translate the research into non-technical language.

The consensus workshop model does not require the preparation of an original technical meta-analysis or synthesis of existing data. Such efforts are not necessary to provide an adequate research summary that can serve as the springboard for discussions.

The goal of the research review is to produce a thorough but non-technical summary of the findings of the strongest research studies available on the topic. In the case of most topics, the strongest research studies are randomized controlled trials (RCTs) testing the efficacy of interventions designed to promote the health and well-being of older people dwelling in the community. Many researchers now recognize that randomized controlled trials should be submitted to further tests in real world settings, and presenting them to practitioners is a step in this direction.

There are four steps in writing the research review: 1) locating and summarizing the most recent scientific reviews of RCTs addressing the topic; 2) locating and summarizing RCTs published since the most recent scientific review was published; 3) extracting major conclusions from the reviews and new articles that relate to implementing interventions in the community; 4) translating the summary and conclusions into clear proposals that can serve as the basis for concrete discussion at the consensus workshop. After the research review is completed, it is sent to the research experts for further comments and to the practitioner experts to ensure that the literature translation is understandable.

The first research review that CITRA has produced, *Falls Prevention through the Lenses of Researchers, Practitioners, and Policy Advocates*, can be found at <http://citra.org/reviews.php>.

### *3. Selecting a panel of experts*

A panel of 6 experts on the consensus workshop topic - three research experts and three practice experts – is selected. There are several steps in selecting experts.

#### ***Research Experts***

The goal for including research experts is to provide expert outside guidance on the research review produced for the consensus conference. In addition,

research experts attend the consensus conference, commenting on the research review and participating in the group discussion. As a first step, research experts who have published extensively on the topic or who have published in closely related fields are listed from the research review. We then contact the experts by email and then by telephone conference and explain what the consensus conference is about and how they can contribute to it. Experts are offered modest financial incentives to take part. We attempt to recruit experts who are local to the area in order to facilitate network connections between researchers and practitioners in New York City.

### ***Practice Experts***

The goal for including practice experts is to provide practitioner feedback of the research review drafts and to ensure that the language is clear and understandable to non-researchers. Practitioner experts are recruited through CITRA's network of community agencies serving older adults in New York City. A conference call is held to further explain the process and to answer any questions. Experts are chosen to represent different practical approaches to the topic of the consensus conference. For example, one expert would be chosen from agencies that provide hands-on services relevant to the topic, another from an agency that evaluates proposals for new programs.

The practice experts are viewed as equal partners with the researchers throughout the process of the research review and consensus workshop. They review drafts of the research review, ensuring that the language is clear and understandable to non-scientists. During the workshop they respond to the research review and actively engage in the group discussions. They also provide essential feedback on the agency dissemination strategy.

We recommend that you obtain permission from all experts to be audio-taped during the consensus workshop. Transcriptions of the tape can be used to revise the document

A list of all experts, including their contact information and a short summary of their topic related work and contributions is distributed to all consensus workshop participants.

#### *4. Convening the workshop*

A consensus workshop is held to discuss the research review. Although, it is not expected that specific clinical or practice guidelines will emerge, as is the case in the traditional consensus model, in the end the group seeks to achieve consensus on recommendations for ways to make research more relevant to practice environments.

An important concern, therefore, is the composition of the workshop. It is necessary that participants are selected jointly by both researcher and practitioner organizers from the advisory committee. Invited participants include researchers, practitioners, and advocates with special expertise or interest in the area. Experience suggests that a group size of not more than 30 captures relevant expertise while allowing for contributions from all participants. The workshop lasts approximately three hours, and is tape-recorded and transcribed. (A sample invitation to the consensus workshop is included in *Appendix A*. *Appendix B* is a flyer with a longer explanation of the CITRA Consensus model that can be included with the invitation.)

The agenda for the consensus workshop begins with about 30 minutes of introductions and overviews. It begins with an introduction to the consensus workshop process followed by an explanation of how the topic was selected. Introductions are followed by an overview of the research review.

Next on the agenda are comments on the research review from the panel of 6 experts (3 research experts and 3 practice experts). Each expert is given 5 minutes for their remarks. The experts offer their comments in an order that works best for the consensus workshop topic.

During the second hour of the consensus workshop, participants engage in a facilitated discussion of the topic and the research review. The goal of the discussion is to provide a time and space for all participants to share their relevant insights, remarks, and observations regarding the topic of interest. As the discussion continues, any recommendations mentioned are written on big sheets of newsprint or chalk boards so everyone can see them.

Next, each participant is asked to identify their top three topic related policy, practice, and research recommendations from the lists pulled from the longer discussion described above. For example, each participant can be given three small round-shaped stickers. Participants are then given 10 minutes to review the recommendations written on the newsprint sheets or chalk boards. During this time they are asked to place one sticker next to their three top recommendation choices. Participants can also opt to put more than one of their stickers next to any one recommendation. The facilitator then identifies which items received the most “votes”. The discussion then continues focusing on the refinement of the recommendations. (An agenda is included in *Appendix C*.)

On the day after the consensus workshop, all participants are sent a follow-up email in which they are asked to summarize their comments from the consensus workshop discussion and then add any new thoughts they have had since the workshop. This response enables participants to contribute additional meaningful input after they have had time to reflect on the topic. (See *Appendix D* for follow-up email text.)

## 5. *Follow-up roundtable*

It is true that consensus may be difficult to come to in a single meeting. Therefore, the workshop transcript is used to add to and refine a list of potential recommendations to be discussed further at the follow-up roundtable.

At the roundtable, the updated list of potential recommendations is presented. A discussion is facilitated in which participants are asked to concentrate on refining and narrowing the list of recommendations and the ways in which the recommendations may be disseminated. After the roundtable is held, the research review is revised to include the final list of recommendations. The revised document is again disseminated to workshop participants who are asked to review it one more time. This set of participant feedback is used to revise the research review for a final time. The research review is then made available to practitioners and researchers in the community.

## *6. Dissemination and Implementation: Practitioners utilization of research findings*

It is expected that the consensus workshop process and the report emerging from it will be disseminated at the local and regional level. This can take the form of articles submitted to professional journals, presentations to organizations, as well as, conference presentations, training and consultation sessions on the process, executive summaries of workshops, and a website. If possible, organizers should track activities of individual participants and others in their organizations based on the workshop, and how individuals were affected by participation in it. Selected examples include:

- A participating researcher submits a federal grant proposal to test a program in senior centers. Her previous work involved such testing in clinical settings, and she was directly influenced to seek funding to test the program in agency environments.
- A government agency incorporates findings from the workshop into its community training program on falls prevention.
- A recommendation emerges that case managers be trained in a specific evidence-based practice.
- Efforts begin to use Interagency Councils that already meet regularly as forums for continuing discussions between the falls prevention research and practice communities.

## References

Stokes, D. E. (1997). Pasteur's quadrant: Basic science and technological innovation. *Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.*

Kitson, A., Harvey, G., & McCormack, B. (1998). Enabling the implementation of evidence based practice: a conceptual framework. *Quality in Health Care, 7*, 149–158.

Black N, Murphy M, Lamping D, & McKee M, Sanderson C, Askham J, Marteau T. (1999). Consensus development methods: a review of best practice in creating clinical guidelines. *J Health Serv Res Policy. 4*, 236-48.

Ferguson JH. (1993). NIH consensus conferences: dissemination and impact. *Ann N Y Acad Sci. 70*, 180-98; discussion 198-9.

Goven, J. (2003). Deploying the consensus conference in New Zealand: democracy and de-problematization. *Public Understand. Sci. 12*, 423–440.

# Checklist for Success

**Please note:** We recognize that this is not necessarily a linear process and that many items below will be performed concurrently.

## 1. *Selecting the Topic*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish advisory group
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select 2 meeting dates for advisory group
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advisory group selects a set of topics for research reviews
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advisory group prioritizes the topics, choosing one topic for the first consensus workshop

## 2. *Producing a non-technical literature review*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Research staff review available scientific literature
- \_\_\_\_\_ Research staff prepare written research review
  - \_\_\_\_\_ locate and summarize most recent scientific reviews on the issue selected
  - \_\_\_\_\_ locate and summarize relevant research published since the most recent scientific review was published
  - \_\_\_\_\_ extract major conclusions
  - \_\_\_\_\_ translate summary and conclusions into clear proposals

## 3. *Selecting a panel of experts*

### *Research Experts*

- \_\_\_\_\_ List research experts who have published extensively on the topic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prioritize those research experts who live in the same or surrounding city as the practitioners
- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish availability of financial incentive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact research experts and invite them to participate

### ***Practice Experts***

- \_\_\_\_\_ List different practical approaches to the chosen topic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select agencies that reflect these practical approaches
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact practice experts from these agencies and invite them to participate

### ***4. Convening the workshop***

- \_\_\_\_\_ Brainstorm perspective participants and select up to 30 participants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Email invitations, including the written research review
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare agenda and recruit facilitators, presenters, and scribes from staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tape or videotape workshop
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send a follow-up email to all participants requesting additional feedback, thoughts, etc.

### ***5. Follow-up roundtable***

- \_\_\_\_\_ Revise research review based on workshop transcript
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select date and location for roundtable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Convene follow-up roundtable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Revise document based on roundtable discussion
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distribute final research review with recommendations to practitioners and researchers in the community

### ***6. Dissemination and Implementation***

- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify products of the workshop and determine how they will be disseminated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Track activities of workshop participants that relate to their participation in the workshop. Activities could include grants proposals, incorporating workshop results into training programs, and continuing discussions between research and practice communities.

**Appendix A:** Invitation to CITRA Consensus Workshop

**SAVE THE DATE!**

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA)  
invites you to attend...

**A Consensus Workshop on  
Social Isolation among Older Adults**

**March 6, 2006, 9:00AM - 1:00PM**  
**Cornell Cooperative Extension, 16 East 34th St, 8th Floor**

In cooperation with our Community Advisory Committee, CITRA selects several aging-related topics per year on which (1) to produce an up-to-date non-technical translation of the literature; (2) to convene a select group of research, practitioner, and policy experts for discussion; (3) to arrive at a consensus regarding research, practice, and advocacy recommendations; and (4) to disseminate recommendations to the various aging communities. CITRA's goal is to create and model a forum for a continuous loop of communication between research, practice, and advocacy such that there is joint conception of aging-related problems and solutions. Please see the attached overview of the entire consensus workshop process! So, please save the date and we will be in touch again soon with more details.

**Attendance is by invitation only.**

## **Appendix B:** CITRA Consensus Workshop flyer

### **CITRA Consensus Workshops**

#### *What are CITRA Consensus Workshops?*

In cooperation with our Community Advisory Committee, CITRA selects several aging-related topics per year on which (1) to produce an up-to-date non-technical translation of the literature; (2) to convene a select group of research, practitioner, and policy experts for discussion; (3) to arrive at a consensus regarding research, practice, and advocacy recommendations; and (4) to disseminate recommendations to the various aging communities. CITRA's goal is to create and model a forum for a continuous loop of communication between research, practice, and advocacy such that there is joint conception of aging-related problems and solutions.

#### *What are the criteria for topic selection?*

- a. Sufficient research must be available on the topic.
- b. The topic must be practice relevant, and preferably policy relevant.
- c. The topic must be compatible with the needs assessment already conducted by CITRA and CITRA's Community Advisory Committee.
- d. The effort must not duplicate a recent very similar effort.

#### *What happens after topic selection?*

1. Two-three scientific experts are identified who serve as consultants to the research review and writing process and who join the consensus workshop discussions.
2. CITRA staff review the available scientific literature and prepare a written research review that (a) sets out the practice-relevant research in a non-technical way, and (b) makes practice and policy recommendations based on the research.
3. A consensus workshop is held to discuss the written research review. An attempt is made to achieve consensus on research, practice, and policy recommendations. The workshop is small, by invitation only, and involves members of the advisory committee, the research experts, several additional practitioners and policy advocates who have special expertise, and CITRA personnel.
4. A follow-up roundtable discussion is held to arrive at final recommendations and to discuss plans for dissemination.

**Appendix C: CITRA Consensus Workshop sample agenda**

8:30 - 9:00	Continental Breakfast Sign-In Handout Packets/Nametags
9:00 - 10:00	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome/The Consensus Workshop/Introductions</li><li>• The Research Review &amp; Falls Prevention Topic</li><li>• Overview of the Paper</li><li>• Reactions by experts (5 minutes each)</li></ul>
10:00 – 11:00	General Discussion and development of recommendations
11:00 – 11:30	Refining recommendations
11:30 – 11:45	Break
11:45 - 12:00	Where do we go from here? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Timeline</li><li>• Feedback</li><li>• Written Evaluations</li></ul>

***Appendix D: CITRA Consensus Workshop follow-up email***

Dear Falls Prevention Consensus Workshop Participants,

Thank you for attending the Falls Prevention Consensus Workshop. What an amazing time we had together on Thursday! If this is only the beginning, imagine what our joint work together will produce over time. Looking forward over the next few weeks, we will attempt to incorporate the workshop discussions into the paper we all read. After we have a draft of the new document, we will send it around to all participants for further input and feedback.

You can help us with this process by doing two more things: 1. Please briefly list the important points you made at the workshop (just in case anything was not picked up by the recording device), and 2. Please add any further thoughts you have had since the workshop. This will help us make sure that the final document reflects the richness of our discussions. Don't worry if you cannot remember everything, there will be another opportunity to respond when we send out the next draft, which may also jog your memory. In the end, we will disseminate a document that reflects the joint thinking of our differing groups.

Have a wonderful day, and I look forward to hearing back from you. I will send a list of all participants soon.

Sincerely,