

Health Promotion with Policy Impact

Health Promotion Ontario Conference
Workshop
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Bob Gardner
Director Policy and Research

Why Worry About Policy?

- Wellesley works to develop policy alternatives and directions for health reform that will reduce pervasive health disparities
- we are all interested in health promotion and health reform that will enhance the well being of all – including the most disadvantaged
- we know there are many elements to addressing health disparities:
 - addressing the structural problems that underlie health disparities
 - better service provision
 - community capacity and resource building
 - self-empowerment and resources for individuals → to better control their health and health opportunities
 - and good health promotion programmes
- all of these flow through government policy in one way or another
- maximizing the policy impact of health promotion is the focus of this workshop

The *So What* and *Now What* Workshop

- you've identified unmet needs, gaps or barriers in existing services, problems that need solving
- you've identified innovative health promotion programmes that could make a real difference
- *So what?*
 - what policy or programme action is needed to address the problems identified?
- *Now what?*
 - what needs to happen to get these solutions implemented?
 - which almost inevitably requires changes in public policy
 - a critical part of *Now What* is ensuring your findings and recommendations have an impact with policy makers

- funds and supports community-based research on housing, poverty, social exclusion, and other social and economic determinants of health and health disparities
- commissions comprehensive comparative and other policy research
- identifies and mobilizes for policy alternatives and solutions to pressing issues of urban health and health equity
- works in diverse collaborations and partnerships for social innovation and progressive social change
- supports capacity building on this kind of issue

Agenda

- we're going to work on:
 - assessing policy implications of your health promotion projects
 - identifying policy options that can address the problems identified
 - analyzing the most effective – and winnable -- options
 - developing them further into concrete recommendations
 - getting these recommendations and alternatives into the policy mix, and
 - developing effective communications and advocacy strategies to get them adopted
- with two exercises on:
 - how to identify the policy implications or potential of your issue
 - how to effectively translate your findings and implications into winnable policy options and recommendations

Starting Points

- assume that the goal is to implement new health promotion programme developments or ideas – hopefully towards greater health equity
- so this workshop is about how to influence the policy changes needed to put health promotion reform into practice
- to turn health promotion research and innovation into policy action requires that:
 1. policy makers know about the work and its implications → knowledge exchange strategy
 2. policy makers understand the basis of the problem → means reports have to clearly set out the policy implications of their findings
 3. you give policy makers concrete policy solutions or alternatives that will address whatever the problem is → the more ‘policy-ready’ the recommendations you can provide them are, the better
 4. policy makers have the political will to act – often beyond the power of individual projects → where advocacy, alliances and coalitions come in

Up Stream Through an Equity Lens

- health promotion needs to be planned and implemented through equity and diversity lenses
 - not just the usual focus on individual behaviours and lifestyle
 - policy lever = build into any funding and service agreements that anti-smoking, exercise and other health promotion programs need to explicitly address the social, cultural and economic factors that shape risky behaviour in poorer communities
- equity-driven health promotion would take broader determinants of health into account:
 - Sudbury, Waterloo and other public health units have been leading the way on building this into programmes and practice
 - a very interesting primer has been developed by Health Nexus (formerly the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse), Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance and other partners to help incorporate social determinants into chronic care management and support
<http://www.ocdpa.on.ca/docs/Primer%20to%20Action%20SDOH%20Final.pdf>
 - the Ministry of Health Promotion is analyzing social determinants – but this does not seem to have been reflected yet in what they do

Up Stream Through an Equity Lens II

- equity-driven health promotion would ensure preventive, dental care, sexual and reproductive health, immunization and related public health services are targeted to disadvantaged communities most in need
- specific efforts need to be made to address language, cultural and other barriers to disadvantaged communities getting appropriate health promotion information and support
- potential of cross-sectoral collaboration:
 - LHINs and CHCs working with public health to concentrate well-baby care in poorest neighbourhoods
 - working with City to develop and extend comprehensive drug and harm reduction strategy
 - LHINs working with Board of Education to get public health nurse and other health promotion into schools, especially in poorest and under-served neighbourhoods
 - broad range of providers and stakeholders working in coalitions seeking to ensure dental care for marginalized populations – CHC and other health/social centres could be excellent locations for community dental clinics

Chronic Care Through an Equity Lens

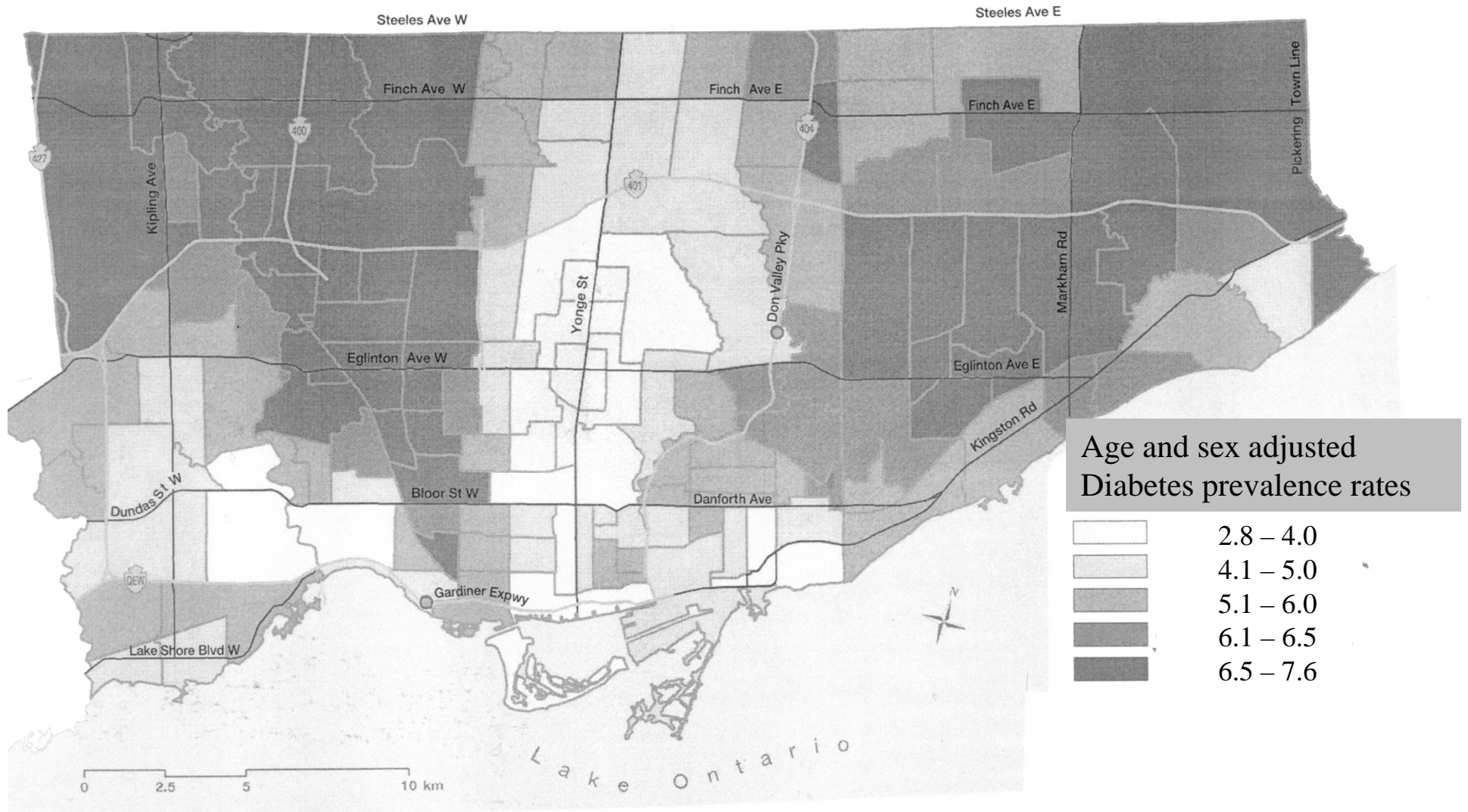
- understanding how to control and prevent chronic conditions is going to be one of crucial challenges for health reform over coming decades
 - not simply to improve health of many
 - but to control demands predicted to be a major burden on system
- chronic conditions clearly reflect wider health inequities:
 - more disadvantaged populations have higher incidences of key chronic conditions
 - at the same time, they have less access to specialized health promotion and preventive services and to chronic care management support
 - similarly, cost of drugs, exercise, alternative therapies and other means to manage chronic conditions are a larger barrier for poorer
- this means that chronic care programmes need to be enhanced and specifically designed for particular disadvantaged communities

Diabetes: The Challenge

- over-concentrated in less advantaged communities and populations = equity issue
- a major driver of ill health and expenditure
- this and other chronic conditions are major provincial priority
- we broadly know what to do to manage treatment and to reduce impact of diabetes
- good groundwork has been done, both in terms of planning frameworks and innovative delivery
- have good data to identify problem areas and monitor results

Toronto Diabetes Prevalence Rates by Neighbourhood 2001

From: R Glazier. Neighbourhood environments and resources for healthy living http://www.ices.on.ca/file/TDA_Ch2.pdf



Diabetes: Comprehensive and Community-Based Solutions

- how:
 - integrated – multi-disciplinary teams, full range of support
 - community-based -- providing barrier-free services and support where people are
 - in languages and cultures of people needing services
 - collaborations of many agencies
 - well coordinated – with neighbourhood and area networks
 - intensive support and long-term follow-up
 - with clear targets for reducing incidence and complications, possibly specific to small areas or particular communities
 - at best, also addressing social inequalities that shape diabetes – working with City and others on nutrition, exercise, employment security
- policy lever = **pilot and adapt in different neighbourhoods**

Diabetes: Build On What Is Working

- luckily a great deal of ground work has been done already
 - the Urban Health Framework developed by GT CHCs has been workshopped on diabetes
 - useful tool to plan comprehensive campaign on coordinated and focused way → policy lever = fund such planning and coordination initiatives
 - reveled solid networks and sophisticated cooperation already underway → policy lever = just needs modest investment for coordination, outreach and expansion
 - famous London Intercommunity Health Centre Latin American Diabetes Program:
 - first arose out of local Hispanic community and CHC
 - now being developed LHIN wide there
- 13 – can explore how to adapt

Health Promotion with Policy Impact

- to turn health promotion research , innovation and programme development into policy change requires that:
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Ensuring your health promotion work has impact: knowledge exchange

- if you have done some research, written up a policy report or developed a proposal, then what?
- Key principles include:
 - identifying who needs to know about your results or proposal – who can act on the findings or who can build support for action
 - know your audience
 - design your roll-out and KE strategy specifically for each audience
 - write results up in clear and accessible language, also geared to specific audiences and purposes
 - but putting them up on Web or sending a report to a few people won't be enough, also need to do systematic outreach to get results to key stakeholders
- lots of good tools and material on developing a knowledge exchange strategy – Cdn Health Services Research Foundation

First Of All: Know your Policy Environment

- to be able to do effective policy research and analysis, you need to know:
 - the policy framework for your particular issue
 - e.g. which levels of govt, and which Ministries or depts govern your issue?
 - what are the main formal policies that shape your area?
 - just as imp't – what are the unstated assumptions and constraints that shape the sphere?
 - what are trends in govt funding and policy in the area?
 - some general facets of how policy is developed and changed within governments – players, processes and constraints
 - and some specific aspects of the government of the day:
 - how does your issue relate to its overall agenda?
 - where is it in the electoral cycle?

Then Identify the Policy Implications of Issue

Implications

- new needs or gaps in existing services identified
- community preferences or priorities determined
- barriers to getting services or support identified
- innovations or ‘best practices’
- pilot test works
- systemic inequities uncovered

Action needed

- service providers adapt or expand services, govts fund
- policy or resource allocations reflect community priorities
- programme or policy changes to reduce barriers
- other providers take them up
- adapt and generalize
- policy changes to address systemic basis

Exercise 1: Identifying Policy Potential

- quickly discuss a health promotion project that you know or have been involved in that showed:
 - how existing policies or programmes were contributing to the particular problem?
 - key gaps where new govt programmes were needed?
 - where existing programmes were not working well or did not have enough resources?
 - where changes in existing policy were needed?
- pick one good example of research with real policy potential and fill out what this potential is
 - we identified Problem X and that its basis was Policy Y
 - if the policy was changed in this way, then the impact on the problem would be Z
- have someone report your example – and its policy potential – to the group

Policy Analysis into Action

To have policy impact we need to:

- understand the political and policy environment and policy process within governments
- analyze the problem(s) identified and identify potential policy solutions
- assess the pros and cons and cost benefits of various policy options
- choose and develop policy options that can work
- make a convincing case for them -- at best, with concrete recommendations that can be acted on
- develop a targeted knowledge exchange strategy to get the analysis and options to those who can decide

What drives political/public policy decisions?

- Timeframe of government's business/election cycle – *make the tough decisions early*
- Short attention span of politics, short shelf life of policy – *"In two years, it's not my problem"*
- Government's policy agenda/priorities – *where does this issue 'fit' within govt priorities*
- Government's communications agenda/priorities – *at crudest, how will acting on issue make the govt look? Is this consistent with how govt wants to present itself*

Policy Drivers II

- Current/prospective state of government finances – *and costs and benefits of particular policy alternatives*
- Current/prospective economic cycle – *view from Bay/Wall Street, global markets*
- Values, beliefs, ethics – *is there a social consensus around this issue?*
- Stakeholders and interests – *what competing interests and perspectives need to be taken into account?*
- Media attention/perspective, opinion polls – *understand the public mood*

How the System Really Works

The Players:

- role of legislators is quite limited (remember this for policy advocacy strategy)
- Ministers and Cabinet make policy
- political staff in Ministers and Premier’s offices are very important
- complex hierarchy of civil servants – Deputy Ministers, ADMs, Directors, analysts and programme officers, etc.
 - trick is to get to the right person/place
 - who is responsible for the ‘file’ and has authority to act
- the courts

How the System Really Works II

- the Process – within civil service:
 - so many demands, so little time; intense rivalries
 - daily fire-fighting; often chaotic, reactive decision-making process
 - highly risk averse (all the more so with new emphasis on “accountability”)
 - critical role of central agencies – Finance, Cabinet Office
- for your proposal to have an impact within govt
→ need to know who decides what, when, how

Think of Policy Development as Process

- a particular policy – or policy framework – is the result of decisions made about how to address a particular objective or problem
 - sometimes this can be a deliberate decision not to address the particular issue
- within the public service there is a generally a careful process of:
 - identifying objectives
 - assessing a range of possible actions to achieve the result
 - analyzing them against number of factors – effectiveness, cost, political context, public and community support, etc.
 - always trade-offs, compromise , different “publics” effected

Look Widely For Ideas and Options

- look at what has been done on the issue in the past:
 - to avoid embarrassment if your options have been tried already, and didn't work or were rejected
- if possible, research what policy alternatives have been tried or considered in other jurisdictions:
 - how other jurisdictions have addressed similar policy problems
 - depending upon the issue – might mean other large cities, other provinces, comparable countries
- this can yield:
 - new ideas or options
 - examples of effective policies/programmes that could be adapted for your purposes
 - justification for your alternatives – e.g. if cost-benefits and effectiveness were demonstrated elsewhere

Analyzing Options

- policy options are the different programme, funding, and ways governments can act to meet your objectives
- to identify the best options, think of a wide range of factors such as
 - how complex and big a policy change you are looking for
 - impact (balancing criteria such as equity, efficiency, stability)
 - cost – be specific -- is it short-term, capital or operating, one-time or continuing, etc.?
 - versus benefits – specify here too – are the benefits short-term or more long term -- such as eventual reduced health care expenditures as a result of upstream investment in health promotion and prevention?
- for government, assessing cost-benefits of options is a standard part of policy process
 - for you, posing recommendations/demands in terms used and understood within the policy process increases your credibility and usability

Assess the Pros and Cons

- outline the pros:
 - effectively addressing problem that needs solving
 - the wider benefits for govt -- e.g., delivers a government commitment, equity, accountability/governance, social consensus, good messages
 - or what lessens risk
- versus the cons
 - the costs – in terms of spending or time required
 - stakeholder opposition
 - or what increases risk -- e.g., lack of “fit” with govt agenda, inequitable impact, liabilities (financial, legal), complexity, lack of constitutional authority

Consider Complexity of Implementation

- assess the best means to achieve the policy objective – to implement your recommended changes
- in the language of policy makers -- which ‘instrument’ will be used to implement the policy
- some are easier to implement than others:
 - changing legislation or regulations is most difficult
 - finding large amounts of funding is harder than smaller – esp. in fiscally conservative climate
 - changing funding or focus within existing allocations or envelopes is easier
 - changing policy guidelines and procedures of existing programmes is easiest

Choosing Options: What Turns a Policy Option into a Decision?

- It's solidly grounded – *your research evidence is clear and convincing*
- It works – *it solves the problem or at least makes it go away*
- It reflects current or emerging values – *it's grounded in social consensus, it seems like the “right thing to do”*
- Its benefits outweigh its costs
- It manages risk well – *it's relatively “safe”*
- Its investment can be justified – *it's cost-neutral or cost-effective*

Choosing Options II

- your alternative's timing is good – *in terms of govt agenda, electoral cycle or other issues*
- It “fits” – *it delivers on the government’s policy, communications, and/or fiscal agenda*
- It’s a new way of doing things – *it’s innovative*
- It reflects “good government” – *it shows political or community leadership to move towards social consensus*
- It’s a simple concept – *it’s easy to understand*
- It’s a great story – *it’s easy to explain, has a human dimension, has clear key messages*

As 'policy-ready' As Possible

- to get your findings or proposals to the intended decision makers – in ways they can understand and use – always involves **translation**
- partially this is cultural
 - into the very different languages and mind sets of govts
 - into 'policy speak'
- partially this is very concrete – translating your findings into:
 - specific actionable policy options and recommendations
 - that will work in the existing policy environment
 - couched in the formats – cabinet briefing notes – and frameworks – cost-benefit analysis and risk management – that govts use
- the more 'policy ready' → the more chance for influence

Exercise 2: Developing Policy Options

- pick one issue per table in which an HP project you were involved in had clear and significant policy implications
- go through the kind of analysis we have been discussing – identify implications, assess the policy environment, analyze options, pick the most effective and winnable for your purposes
- work up concrete policy options and recommendations that you can take to govt to put your alternative into action
- appoint one person to make the usual two minute report outlining your policy issue and why the option you have chosen should be adopted

Making the Case

- Reference the issue and how you've framed it – *this solves the problem as we understand it*
- Translate the policy solution into a communication strategy – *this is what it means*
- Explain the “why” - summarize and highlight the rationale, including the political benefit – *this is why we're recommending this*
- Analyze and acknowledge the risks – *legal challenge, cost pressures, inequity/disparate impact, adverse public/media/community reaction, being off-message, stakeholder pressures (“floodgates”), timing, etc.*

Knowledge Exchange for Policy Makers

- know your audience -- and the policy environment and way of thinking within govts
- customize reports for policy audiences
 - separate/short policy implications summaries
 - translate into terms they understand and with concrete recommendations they can act on
 - use the forms they are used to – decks and briefing notes
 - e.g. always address cost benefits, risk management, options and other factors that govt policy makers think about
- systematic outreach and follow up with policy makers
 - identify people who could be making the decisions – audience again
 - get findings & policy implications to them
 - meeting is best, plus covering letter/brief
 - as part of long-term strategy to build relationships with key policy makers in your spheres

Enhance Impact Through Partnerships

- policy analysis is a specialized – and often arcane – trade
- it isn't effective to try to learn it all for yourself
- who can help?
 - if possible, get experienced policy people on project advisory team early on
 - even better, get Ministry, dept or other officials you hope to influence involved from the start – get them to help define the questions they need answered and the problems as they see them
 - get advice on policy analysis or the environment for your issue – one source is service provider or professional associations

Policy Advocacy

- to win the policy changes you have identified you need:
 - luck – “the right issue at the right time” -- but be ready to seize opportunities when they arise -- proactive opportunism
 - broad understanding of the issue and the political and public policy context in which it exists – emphasized earlier
 - relevance of your objective to the govt's needs, priorities, context, constraints
 - translating your findings and recommendations into ‘policy ready’ terms as much as possible
 - situating your issue as part of a broader coalition or campaign
 - and pulling all this together – an advocacy strategy

Social movements and political change

- the most effective advocacy campaigns – with the best chances of success – are part of wider coalitions and movements
- it's movements that win real change – not just individual advocacy campaigns, however good they are
- think of the really significant historical shifts in public policy and the role of govts – where did they come from?
 - employment equity would not have happened without strong women's and labour movements
 - Medicare and public health system was the result of long campaigns
 - treatment and funds for HIV/AIDS were won by grass-roots organizing

Take the ‘Long View’

- think long-term – significant policy change can take many years
- but also look for immediate winnable issues
 - to build momentum and hope
 - but be careful of co-optation & short-term reforms that deflect from long-term goals
- Caledon Institute for Social Policy has term “relentless incrementalism”
- have good peripheral vision -- situate your issue in relation to
 - other comparable issues → to build coalitions – the wider the better, with ‘unusual suspects’ as well
 - the overall govt policy agenda -- back to ‘fit’

Key Messages

- to ensure health promotion ideas and proposals have a real impact on policy requires:
 1. understanding the environment in which govt policy decisions are made
 2. getting proposals or recommendations to the right people – in terms they can use
 3. being able to identify the policy implications of your analysis and to translate that into concrete policy options to solve the problems we have found
 4. assessing the most effective – and winnable – policy options
 5. being able to make an effective – and winning -- case for your policy recommendations
 6. tying research and policy advocacy into wider campaigns and alliances for social change will maximize its impact

Contact Us

- these speaking notes, further resources on research with policy impact, and a great deal more on health equity and the social determinants of health are on our site at <http://wellesleyinstitute.com>
- my email is bob@wellesleyinstitute.com
- I would be interested in any comments on the ideas in this presentation and on initiatives or experience you're involved in that address these challenges