



## Toolkit Stage 4

# Translating your research knowledge and evidence

This stage is intended to guide you through the processes needed to effectively translate and transfer your research knowledge to your target audience(s).

### Key steps

- Define your role in the knowledge translation process (*for example, to improve 'connectivity' between the researcher(s) and research user(s)*)
- Facilitate engagement within your network of stakeholders, bringing together researchers and research users (*before the dissemination stage*)
- Encourage all your stakeholders to take responsibility for engagement and knowledge exchange
- Develop a flexible knowledge translation strategy

### Theory

While having a good dissemination strategy is important, there is more to generating impact. Effective knowledge translation is crucial to bridging the existing gap between the production of research knowledge and its use within practice and policy.

Knowledge translation describes the two-way processes and methods used to bring together those who produce the research knowledge and those who use it in order to translate that knowledge into policy and/or practice. It is defined as,

*"all steps between the creation of new knowledge and its application to yield beneficial outcomes for society...an interactive process underpinned by effective exchanges between researchers who create the new knowledge and those who use it...bringing users and creators of knowledge together during all stages of the research cycle is fundamental to successful knowledge translation"<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> Sudsawad, P (2007) *Knowledge translation: Introduction to models, strategies, and measures*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research: Austin, Texas

If effective knowledge translation is a key factor in maximising the chance of turning research knowledge into social change, then whose responsibility is it?

In terms of creating impact from research, it is suggested that “researchers...must become entrepreneurs who operate effectively in highly political environments; distil powerful policy messages from the results of research; use networks, hubs, and partnerships and build coalitions to work effectively with all stakeholders; and maintain long-term programs that pull all of these together. If they have clear intent, they should equip themselves with skills: they need to be fixers, storytellers, networkers, and engineers.”<sup>5</sup>

But some of the essential skills and indeed capacity needed for effective knowledge translation may in fact lie with the research *funder*, where the research project manager (or similar) acts as the ‘intermediary’ between the researcher(s), practitioners, policy-makers or other key agencies who will use the research knowledge.

In the NRF/University of Bristol project, the research funder’s position allowed them to act as an independent, formal referee for voluntary organisations within the region. As a regional ‘champion’ and independent knowledge and relationship broker, they were central to the knowledge translation process. They were in an ideal position to facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing between both the voluntary and statutory sector and between local and national practitioners and policy-makers. Their expertise, skills and knowledge (combined with the Foundation’s reputation within the region and its status

as an independent funder of sector-specific research) meant that, in some cases, they provided a conduit for translation and dissemination of the research findings leading to its use in policy and/or practice development.

### Things to consider

An effective research/project approach is one that involves consideration of **knowledge translation** at each stage of the research project cycle.

As the research funder/project manager, what is your **potential role in the knowledge exchange, translation and transfer process**? What are the different roles and skills required within the process?

What **resources/internal capacity** do you have for knowledge exchange and translation activity?

In what ways can you **facilitate knowledge exchange** activity between your researchers, practitioners/policy-makers and the wider communities you serve?

Where are the **opportunities to support** your researcher(s) to translate the knowledge into policy and/or practice development?

Where in the research/project cycle are the **opportunities for effective engagement** and knowledge exchange between your researcher and research users?

Can you **bring your researcher(s) and research user(s) together** and encourage them to take responsibility for knowledge exchange?

<sup>5</sup> Pellini, A and Serrat, O (2010) *Enriching Policy with Research*. Washington, DC: Asian Development Bank

How do you make sure that your messages are heard? Who will co-ordinate the research dissemination? What are the **means of communicating** with relevant audiences?

For example:

- electronic
- face-to-face
- email alert system
- internal news summaries or digests etc

What **capacity for receiving and using research knowledge** do your target audiences have? Is there one key (named) person who will transfer the research within each partner organisation?

### Helpful hints and possible pitfalls

The purpose of a knowledge translation strategy is to identify, follow and maintain your 'routes to impact'. There are some key stages to successful knowledge translation:

- outline clear, specific objectives for the strategy itself
- outline clear, specific objectives for the activities within the strategy
- develop your overarching/key messages
- know your maximum potential audience
- monitor and evaluate activity (to help you measure your reach and impact)

Focus on the interaction within your knowledge translation strategy. How does your organisation communicate with and engage stakeholders at each stage of the research-project?

Knowledge translation is not about promoting solutions to the sector. It is about translating the research findings, knowledge or evidence objectively to help the sector take ownership and develop their own solutions.

### Exercise/Framework

Develop a flexible knowledge translation strategy that will act as a framework of interaction between your researcher(s) and research users (see Figure 5).

You will have conducted a stakeholder analysis and this should be incorporated into your knowledge translation strategy. It is useful at this stage to double check:

**1. Have you considered all your possible audiences or is there anyone else for whom the research results could affect policy or practice?** For example:

- voluntary organisations
- community projects
- policy-makers
- statutory or public bodies
- other funders
- academic institutions etc

**2. Who are the key players in your networks?**

**3. What is the purpose of your dissemination activities?** For example:

- to engage
- to inform
- to promote
- to raise awareness<sup>6</sup>

*continued overleaf*

<sup>6</sup> JISC Project Planning: Dissemination Plan [www.jisc.ac.uk/fundingopportunities/projectmanagement/planning/dissemination.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/fundingopportunities/projectmanagement/planning/dissemination.aspx)

#### 4. What dissemination tools and methods will you use?

For example:

- conference, workshops or seminars
- full and/or summary report
- issue-based briefing papers
- journal articles
- online/blog
- expert panel or reference group
- media/press release
- interactive website
- email newsletter
- individual or sub-group meetings/  
capacity-building clusters

**Figure 5**

**Possible structure of a knowledge translation strategy**

| Target audience | Purpose | Tools/ method | Outputs needed | Key messages | Date/ venue | Resources needed | Actions to be completed and dates | Evaluation method |
|-----------------|---------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
|                 |         |               |                |              |             |                  |                                   |                   |
|                 |         |               |                |              |             |                  |                                   |                   |
|                 |         |               |                |              |             |                  |                                   |                   |

#### ✓ Stage 4 checklist

- Researcher and research funder/ manager’s role in knowledge translation process clarified
- Opportunities to facilitate knowledge exchange and translation between researcher(s) and target audience(s) identified
- Knowledge translation strategy developed