

# Adding Value to Your Research Toolkit Guide



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Workbook**  
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This toolkit is the result of a two-year innovative partnership project between the Northern Rock Foundation and the University of Bristol which set out to assess how using a 'research/project' approach – combining grant-making with sector-specific research and capacity building activities – could improve the value of its investment in the sector. The project has improved our understanding of how the Foundation can make its research knowledge and evidence work harder to maximise its impact on project development, policy and practice by focused planning for commissioning, governance and knowledge translation.

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# Toolkit Overview

## Who is the toolkit for?

Foundations and other organisations that fund or directly commission research to inform their work increasingly need to make the knowledge and evidence produced work hard to get maximum value from it. If you fund or commission sector-specific research to inform your grant-making, you are probably aware that it takes a great deal of time and resources to turn even the smallest pieces of research and evidence gathering into changes in policy and practice.

This toolkit has been designed primarily with Trusts and Foundations in mind but may be useful to other third sector organisations that use, fund or commission research to support their work. The aim of this guidance is to help you get the most value and impact from your investment in research and resulting grant-making by helping you think through the process of planning, governing and disseminating a research project.



## Structure of the toolkit

The toolkit contains worksheets to guide you through each of the key stages in the research/project process:

### Stage 1

#### Defining the problem

This stage of the toolkit is designed to guide you through the process of defining the problem and existing evidence; mapping out the changes you would like to happen as a result of your research project and clearly defining your research questions.

### Stage 2

#### Planning and governing your research project

This stage is intended to provide considerations and helpful hints to help you develop and govern your research project, rather than be a comprehensive guide to the commissioning process. Here we include tips on developing a good research brief, choosing your researcher and convening a research steering or advisory group.

### Stage 3

#### Engaging your audience(s)

This stage will help you think through the process of working with your target audience(s), ie the intended users of your research knowledge and evidence. The key purpose of this stage is to ensure that your audience(s) is (are) receptive to the research and more likely and able to use it.

### Stage 4

#### Translating your research knowledge and evidence

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

### Stage 5

#### Evaluating impact and further gaps in knowledge

This stage is intended to signpost the existing tools available that will help you to review and measure the progress, outcomes and impact of your research project and identify further gaps in your knowledge base.

While reviewing and evaluating your progress and outcomes is often thought of as the final stage in the process (and appears as the final stage in the toolkit), it is important to stress here that this does not necessarily reflect the order of research/project process and planning, for evaluation should not be left until the end of the project.

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### **Each of the five stages is structured in the following way:**

- Key steps
- Theory
- Things to consider
- Helpful hints and possible pitfalls
- Exercise and/or framework
- Checklist of actions to be taken

### **Supporting evidence from the NRF/University of Bristol project**

Unless otherwise stated, the guidance in this toolkit is based on the findings from an innovative knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) project between Northern Rock Foundation and the University of Bristol '*Adding Value to Grant-making: the Northern Rock Foundation's research/project approach*', which set out to assess how using a 'research/project' approach – commissioning evidence to inform effective grant-making – could increase the impact of the Foundation's programmes.

As part of its 'funder-plus' approach, the Northern Rock Foundation's research/project approach combines grant-making with sector-specific research to fill important knowledge gaps, demonstrate what works, and share important learning to inform and influence evidence-based project development, policy and practice.

### **Increasing reach and impact through the research/project approach**

The NRF/University of Bristol project highlighted a set of conditions or '**routes to impact**' that, when combined, have the potential to create the maximum influence on the extent to which the research and associated projects impact on policy, practice and other projects. The toolkit has been developed to incorporate the 'routes to impact' depending on where they occur within the research/project cycle. The steps have been designed to try and help simplify what is, in the real world, a complex and non-linear process.

### **Facilitating reach and impact through the research/project approach**

Creating the widest possible reach and impact from research knowledge and evidence is an ongoing process that requires active facilitation. The NRF/University of Bristol project found that the role of 'facilitator' does not necessarily lay with either those who *produce* or those who *use* the research. For the purposes of developing this toolkit, the knowledge, experience and skills required of the facilitator were based on those of the Northern Rock Foundation's grant programme manager. In other organisations the role of this 'facilitator of impact' may fall within the remit of the research project manager or another responsible officer, or may be shared between the funding organisation and the research provider.

**Systematic pre-planning** and **effective knowledge translation** (ie the steps between the creation of new knowledge and its application to yield beneficial outcomes for society) are **key** to getting the most from your research project. Knowledge translation is not merely about promoting solutions to the sector but translating the research findings, knowledge or evidence objectively to help the sector take ownership and develop their own solutions.

We hope that this toolkit will show you how, by situating knowledge translation processes at the heart of your research project approach, you can maximise its impact and help improve the effectiveness of your investment in research to support your work in the third sector.



## Toolkit Stage 1

# Defining the problem

This stage of the toolkit is designed to guide you through the process of defining the problem; exploring the existing evidence; mapping the changes you would like to happen in order to help you clearly define or understand your research questions.

### Key steps

- Define the specific problem the research project is to address
- Evaluate the existing evidence to identify the gaps in knowledge
- Define your aims and objectives
- Identify your key stakeholders
- Calculate potential resources required (including non-financial)

### Theory

Through improving your understanding of the issues you are seeking to address, you can make an important contribution to creating an environment where existing knowledge, policy and practice can be challenged and discussed more fully.

Evidencing the need for the new knowledge to be produced, and systematic pre-planning

of the research project, are both key to getting the most value and impact from your research project. Clarification of your long-term goals, indicators of success and the actions needed to achieve those goals will help you to define the aims and objectives of your research project as precisely as possible.

In order to create a comprehensive picture of progress, impact and achievements throughout the research/ project process, you will need to record these within some sort of project plan. For example, developing a framework such as a **Theory of Change**<sup>1</sup> or a **Logic Model**<sup>2</sup> at the beginning of your research project helps you carefully think through how your research project will work. In terms of generating impact, it will help you to plan and track the different potential ways that the research outputs can be used and the processes involved in the translation of the research knowledge and evidence to create impact (Stage 4 of the toolkit covers building, translating and transferring relevant key messages to your target audiences). It will also help you build measures of eventual impact.

<sup>1</sup> Theory of Change is an established approach for strategic planning and was defined by Weiss (1995) as a method of articulating the short to mid-term changes and small steps that need to happen to reach the desired longer-term outcomes or change.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed information on the origins of program logic modelling see *The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide* or *The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook* [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org)

## Things to consider

### What is the problem you want to address?

What exactly are you trying to achieve through this research project?

How does this relate to your organisational (and/or programme level) objectives?

What do you already know about the problem and where are the **gaps in existing knowledge**?

Use **web and/or literature searches** and consider organising a **stakeholder network** or meeting in order to investigate and understand all possible gaps in knowledge and the type of evidence required from the research. This will also provide an opportunity to gauge the level of 'research receptivity' amongst the target audiences and relevant communities, ie the capacity or willingness to use the research or implement the findings.

Is there any other, **similar research activity** happening locally that could either inform your research project, answer some of your questions or complement your research project? It would be worth finding out whether it would be mutually beneficial to combine your findings (for example, to corroborate and 'add weight' to the evidence produced).

What is the **political context** within which your research findings will be received? What are the current or likely developments in the field or policy arena? Formal or informal **horizon scanning** is an important consideration for any research project manager. Tools to help you with your horizon scanning can be found at [www.hsctoolkit.bis.gov.uk/The-tools.html](http://www.hsctoolkit.bis.gov.uk/The-tools.html).

Make sure that your research project **aims and objectives** are explicit (ie specific and measurable).

What will be the **specific outputs and related outcomes** of the research project?

Thinking about **impact**:

What **type** of impact are you aiming for?

- Do you want the research to directly contribute to change in policy and/or practice? (*ie instrumental impact*)

- Do you want the research to raise awareness and/or contribute to the working knowledge of practitioners? (*ie conceptual impact*)

- Do you want the research to confirm or legitimise existing policy or knowledge? (*ie symbolic impact*)

- Do you want the research findings to help build capacity within the sector? (*ie capacity-building impact*)

- Do you want changes to happen (eg in stakeholders' knowledge, skills or attitude) as a result direct result of either taking part in the research process or knowledge exchange activities? (*ie process impact*)

**Where** do you want to make an impact?

- Locally/regionally?

- Nationally?

- Internationally?

What **level** of impact are you aiming for?

- Individual and/or organisational?

- Operational and/or strategic?

**Who** do you want the research findings to benefit?

- Service users? Practitioners? Service providers?
- Service commissioners? Policy-makers?
- Other agencies

**When** do you want to make the impact? At what stage in the policy-making or practice development process?

- Agenda setting stage?
- Development stage?
- Implementation stage?

### **Resources**

It is important at this stage to work out the resource implications for the whole of your research project. Record all the inputs you think you will need, including non-financial resources (such as time of research project manager or admin staff, or anticipated time and information needed from advisory or steering group members etc), not forgetting to factor in the resources required for developing and disseminating the research outputs and other knowledge translation activities (see Stage 4).

### **Helpful hints and possible pitfalls**

Thinking through the whole research project cycle (including evaluation) and developing a comprehensive project plan (including a timetable of key milestones) at the beginning of your research project.

### **Exercise/Framework**

There are a number of different frameworks available that can be used or adapted to help you plan (and evaluate) your research project including:

#### **Logic model**

A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve.

[www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/WK-Kellogg-Foundation-Logic-Model-Development-Guide.aspx](http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/WK-Kellogg-Foundation-Logic-Model-Development-Guide.aspx)

#### **Theory of change**

Backwards mapping requires planners to reason backwards from the long-term goal through the intermediate and early-term changes necessary to reach the goal. This process creates a set of connected outcomes known as a 'pathway of change'. A pathway of change graphically represents the change process as it is understood by the initiative planners and forms the skeleton around which the other elements of the theory may be developed.

[www.theoryofchange.org/about/how-does-theory-of-change-work](http://www.theoryofchange.org/about/how-does-theory-of-change-work)

### Impact map

Impact mapping is a tool that can be used to describe what you will be looking for, as well as the evidence that tells you if what you have been doing has made a positive difference. For an Impact Map template visit

[www.proveandimprove.org/myimp/index.php](http://www.proveandimprove.org/myimp/index.php)

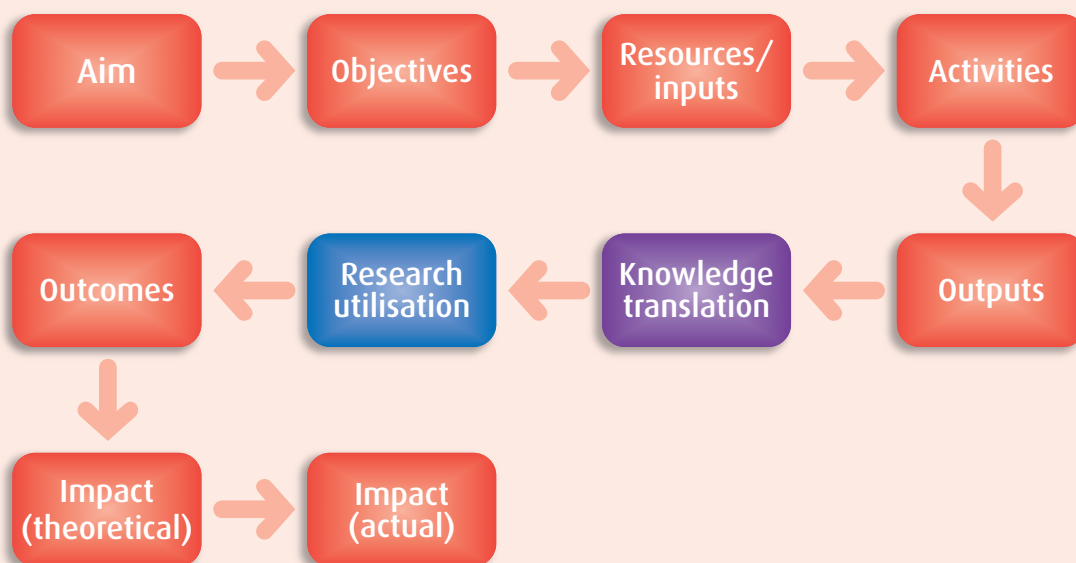
### Gantt chart

A Gantt chart is a useful way of showing activities (tasks or events) displayed against time. On the left of the chart is a list of the activities and along the top is a suitable timescale. Each activity is represented by a bar; the position and length of the bar reflects the start date, duration and end date of the activity

[www.gantt.com](http://www.gantt.com)

For the purposes of the assessment of the Northern Rock Foundation’s research/project approach, we used a traditional logic model in order to capture the logical flow between the research project objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. We then adapted the logic model to incorporate two further components in order to record the more detailed information on all the different possible ways that the research outputs had been used and the processes involved in the translation of the research outputs. Capturing this information within these additional parts of the logic model were essential for understanding the complex processes involved in the dissemination and research utilisation effort (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**



### Exercise/Framework

Develop your project plan (including timetable of key milestones). Figure 2 provides an example of how it may look:

**Figure 2**

Objectives	Resources/inputs	Activities	Outputs	Knowledge translation/ dissemination	Research utilisation (expected/desired)	Outcomes (expected/desired)	Outcomes (actual)	Impact* (expected/desired)	Impact (actual)
<b>Objective 1</b>	Include financial and non-financial resources needed			Include any formal and informal dissemination plans or suggestions for how the research knowledge	Record here all the ways that the research knowledge could be utilised by different stakeholders				
<b>Objective 2</b>									
<b>Objective 3</b>									

\*consider social, economic and environmental impacts as part of this.



## Toolkit Stage 2

# Planning and governing your research project

This stage is intended to provide considerations and helpful hints to help you develop and govern your research project, rather than be a comprehensive guide to the commissioning process.

### Key steps

- Develop your project plan
- Convene an early research project steering/advisory group
- Clarify your stakeholders and primary target audience(s)
- Develop your research brief and tender document (based on Stage 1 activity and input from early research project steering/advisory group meeting)
- Commission your researcher (strong reputation; established and respected in the field; same objectives, interests and ethos as your organisation)

### Theory

It is important to involve the target audience(s) for your research findings (eg service users, service commissioners or providers, policy-makers and practitioners) in the planning and commissioning stage of your research project. Early steering groups, advisory groups or

reference groups serve some or all of the following key functions:

1. To build networks
2. To increase the likelihood of the research findings being used (as involving your target audience(s) from the beginning should help them to take ownership)
3. To identify your data or evidence needs
4. To help develop your research brief and tender document
5. To explore access to data by involving 'gatekeepers' at a senior level
6. To set the terms of reference for the group

In terms of governing your research project, continuing to have regular steering/advisory group meetings can also be used:

7. To support the research process
8. As a research quality control mechanism
9. To share knowledge and advice – to 'add value'
10. To monitor relationships between the key partners involved
11. To resolve any arising problems, eg with data access or within or between particular organisations
12. To facilitate your role as a 'critical friend'
13. To facilitate your role as knowledge and relationship broker

Organising (and/or chairing) these groups is a useful way to facilitate collaborative problem-solving through information and knowledge exchange but it is important to agree the exact purpose of the group, setting the terms of reference at the first meeting. Where appropriate, formal data sharing agreements between group members should be drawn up and reviewed regularly to avoid potential problems with data access further on in the research project.

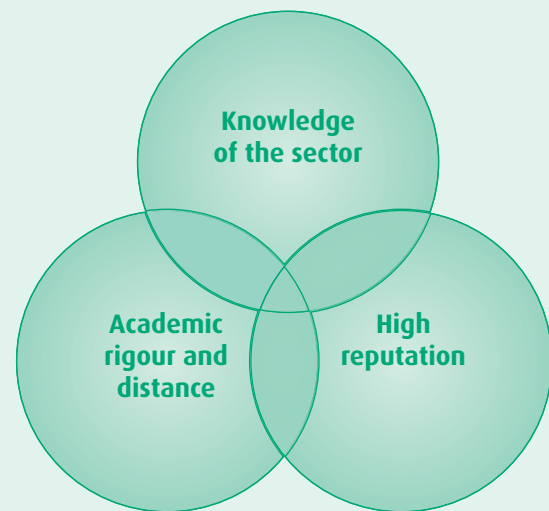
### Choosing your researcher

To maximise the chances of your research findings being used to influence the sector (and create potential impact), you should consider commissioning a researcher that is close enough to the sector to understand it but with sufficient distance and academic status to be seen as credible and independent, and with enough reputation in the field to be 'a draw' for your target audience(s). Independence (that is, independence from local authorities, statutory agencies and service providers) may not be enough to ensure audience receptivity and utilisation of the research. There is a careful balance to be struck between the researcher being seen as sufficiently independent (including from the funder), but with a high reputation and a strong (and sometimes partisan) knowledge of the sector. See Figure 3.

Understanding the internal processes and culture of the organisations you work with (your potential research users) and commissioning researchers who are considered 'experts in the field' and who share a strong understanding of the processes and cultures will provide the best potential for a successful outcome and impact.

**Figure 3**

#### Essential qualities of a researcher



### Things to consider

Who are your **target audience(s)** and how will you **consult them** at this stage? This may be informal through one-to-one conversations or small meetings with your existing stakeholders (who may suggest other relevant audiences/contacts) or more formal meetings with other key agencies who have a potential interest in the research findings. Do as much consultation as you can at this stage but remember that the research findings may identify another key audience(s) further on in the process that you may not have necessarily considered at the outset.

**Convene a steering or advisory group** to help guide the research project and provide you with a governance mechanism. Include all those key stakeholders who will benefit from the research in order to facilitate essential network building and to ease the knowledge translation throughout (see Stage 4).

In the first meeting (pre-commission stage) **agree the function** of the group. Is it to steer the research project process? Or to advise only? Is it to monitor operational processes and deal with issues raised by the research itself? Is it to help extract the ongoing learning from the research and transfer this to assist community project development? Do you need more than one group depending on the purpose and size of the research project? What are the resource implications of having the group(s)?

It is also advised to **monitor the function** and impact of the group against the original terms of reference to ensure that the objectives remain focused or that all members are clear if the objectives have changed. You could consider changing the dynamics of the group as the project progresses if this is necessary to remain effective.

Do you have a project **monitoring and evaluation plan** and is it 'research specific'? It is important to ensure methodological and ethical issues are dealt with before the research project starts, for example considerations around sampling, consent and confidentiality. For more information on building ethics into the research design, go to **[www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Building-ethics-into-the-research-design-8](http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Building-ethics-into-the-research-design-8)**.

At this stage it is a good idea to develop a **dissemination plan or strategy** as part of the research specification. Do you or the researcher have a dissemination plan? Consider your aims of dissemination and whether there are different ways that the research could be disseminated to each audience. You will also need to consider all the possible resource implications of this (including any staff time

needed to help produce outputs and organise events).

**How will you commission** the research? By directly appointing a researcher? Or inviting a handful of known researchers to apply? Or holding an open competition? The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has produced a free guide to commissioning research which also provides a list of resources for further guidance and sample commissioning documents

**[http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/document/commissioning\\_research.pdf](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/document/commissioning_research.pdf)**

### Helpful hints and possible pitfalls

Whilst involving policy-makers and practitioners in a steering or advisory group can create advantages such as facilitating essential access to data from key agencies or having a ready-made peer review panel, it may also create tensions or issues that you will then need to deal with. Consider monitoring attendance as frequent membership turnover can lead to a lack of continuity and understanding of the original research objectives and a change in commitment to the project. Also be aware of any potential conflicts of interest between 'strong-minded' or 'strongly-focused' stakeholders/members.

Early planning and confirmation of dissemination events as part of your dissemination strategy can actually become an effective way of managing reporting deadlines within the project lifespan.

Employing a researcher with a passion for and dedication to the cause and high reputation can often mean you get very good value for money.

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However, it is important to ensure at the commissioning stage that they do indeed have the capacity to conduct the work to meet your specified project deadlines.

While it is a good idea to include researchers in the early steering or advisory group(s) to help with developing your research questions and brief, you will need to consider issues around **intellectual property**. For example, there is a possibility that you might use ideas put forward by researchers who are then not awarded funding for the work. Intellectual property is increasingly becoming an issue for research funders and it is important that this is considered at the commissioning stage (for example, to cover issues such as data ownership and whether the research datasets will be publicly available once the research is complete). The NCVO guidance includes a section on issues to consider.

### Exercise/Framework

Develop your research brief based on the information gathered during Stage 1 and Stage 2. A standard research brief should include (but not be limited to):

- Research aims and objectives
- Research outputs
- Intended outcomes
- Research methods
- Research participants
- Timescales
- Budget
- Research ethics<sup>3</sup>

The Social Research Association provides further guidance on running a competition to commission research, which can be accessed at

[http://the-sra.org.uk/sra\\_resources/research-commissioning/](http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/research-commissioning/)

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<sup>3</sup> In Focus: Commissioning research. National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). London.



## Toolkit Stage 3

# Engaging your audience(s)

This stage is about working with your potential audience(s) so that they are receptive to the research and more likely and able to use it.

### Key steps

- Identify the roles, needs and expectations of your key stakeholders
- Establish close networks and open dialogue with your target audience(s)
- Identify any possible barriers to, and facilitators of, the use of research knowledge and evidence
- Identify your potential 'champion(s)' and engage them

### Theory

In terms of translating research knowledge and evidence into practice and/or policy, a key route to impact identified was 'audience receptivity'. Research will only have an impact if those who receive it have either the capacity or the skills to interpret and apply the findings. Understanding the needs of the potential research audience and their general 'receptiveness' to research will help to ensure that the knowledge produced will be realistic and relevant and therefore more likely to be used.

Engaging the target audience(s) is an essential role for either the researcher or the research funder (or both). As research funder, you may have a potentially important role to play as 'intermediary' between the researcher and the potential users of the research. You may have essential links within the field that the researcher might not. You may have a role as an 'independent' knowledge or relationship 'broker' that the researcher does not. If you want your research to have national impact, you may be in a better position to bridge the local agenda with the national through interpreting local needs (and offering a 'reality check' to national policy-makers).

Shared objectives and understanding of the latest developments in the field have the potential to lead to increased resources being available to develop the scope of research

project, ie through collaboration and co-funding. A shared understanding is more likely when there are close networks and open dialogue with, and between, key stakeholders within the field. As research funder, you may be in a better position than the researcher to capitalise on your existing networks and gain access to vital data needed for the research project.

Research knowledge and evidence is also more likely to be translated and adopted into policy and/or practice when there are 'champions' within the sector that can make things happen through their own position, connections and (sometimes) passion and dedication to the cause.

### Things to consider

It is important to be absolutely clear by this stage exactly who is likely to be interested in or affected by the research findings so that you can start to **engage and develop the key messages** relevant to them. As research funder, you may already have started to build these links in the early planning but at this stage is important to make sure you have all the right people engaged.

Review your initial **stakeholder analysis**. Is there anyone else for whom the research knowledge would be of direct benefit? What are their information needs? What are their links/networks? What are their attitudes to using research to inform their work? How do they currently use research? What capacity do they have to make changes based on research knowledge and evidence? (Record as much information as possible, for example see Figure 4.)

What are **barriers to the use or application of research knowledge** for your target audience(s)? Use the early steering/advisory group meetings to gauge the level of knowledge or research 'receptivity' amongst target audiences and to develop your networks further.

**Build and develop networks** at the appropriate level. Who are the key players in your networks? How far do your networks reach? Could they go further? What added value do you get from these links?

**Create strong relationships** with both the researcher(s) and your stakeholders and act as an intermediary between the two (the research project manager has a key role to play in facilitating knowledge exchange between those who produce the research and those who will use it). Do you or can you use face-to-face and informal communication to build connections between the researcher(s), practitioners and policy-makers (and any other potential beneficiaries of the research)?

**Identify 'champions' and engage them.** What are their links/networks? The researcher and/or steering group may help you to identify your 'champions'. Invite your 'champions' to be a member of the steering/advisory group.





## 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



## Toolkit Stage 5

# Evaluating impact and further gaps in knowledge

This stage is intended to guide you through reviewing or measuring the progress, outcomes and impact of your research/project.

### Key steps

- Develop an impact measurement framework
- Monitor and document all activities within your knowledge translation strategy on a regular basis
- Invite feedback from your target audience(s) or research users to assess how the research outputs/knowledge and evidence is being used
- Record all types and levels of impact, including process impacts as and when they occur in the research/project life cycle
- Use any feedback or learning as soon as possible to improve knowledge, practice or policy development and to refine your theory of change framework

### Theory

Although reviewing and evaluating your progress and outcomes is often thought of as the final stage in the process (and appears as the final stage in the toolkit), it is important to stress

here that this does not necessarily reflect the order of research/project process. Evaluation should not be left until the end of the project. Reviewing and evaluating should actually form an integral part of each stage in the research/project cycle, and in particular the planning stage.

At the very beginning of the research/project cycle you will have carefully considered your aims, objectives and measures and recorded these in your theory of change framework or logic model. In order to create a comprehensive picture of the research/project's progress and impact, you will need to continuously review these throughout its lifespan (and also beyond its completion) to build the evidence of impact and full value.

It is important to monitor and document all of your knowledge translation and dissemination activities to evaluate the usage, outcomes and impact of your research. The review and evaluation process often happens at the end of the research/project cycle because that is traditionally when any formal dissemination of research outputs occurs. Again, it is important to see the research/project approach as a continuous cycle and so reviewing should be part of each stage of the process in order to inform the next.

### Things to consider

Capture any **process** 'impacts' or 'influence' throughout the research project cycle. It is important to capture the process impacts as they happen, as well as the usage, outcomes and impact of the final outputs. By process impacts, we mean capture evidence of any changes that occur during the process of conducting the research (for example, a change in stakeholders' knowledge, skills or attitudes as a direct result of either taking part in the research or any formal or informal knowledge exchange activities). Build this into your research project management, for example, by making it part of your steering/advisory group meetings or project review meetings with the researcher.

**Apply your learning** from either the process or the outcomes of the research project as soon as possible and record this each time it happens (including exactly what was learnt and how this was then applied, ie to either develop knowledge, practice or policy).

### Measuring reach and impact

How will you know if the research outputs or findings are being used and applied as desired or expected? How will you find out?

If the research or research outputs are not being used as desired or expected then why? Are there any barriers to it being used and applied in practice or policy?

### Helpful hints and possible pitfalls

Be mindful of potential data collection and sharing issues. Having steering/advisory group meetings and/or regular progress meetings with the researcher(s) in place can be crucial in facilitating essential data access or sorting out any potential problems with data sharing.

In developing your impact measurement framework, the first step is to revisit your project plan and your knowledge translation strategy. Use this to decide how you will then measure the use and impact(s) of the research/project.

Remember to be aware of and record any unexpected and negative outcomes or impact as well as the positive. These are often the source of the most useful learning to be applied!

**Exercise/Framework**

Develop an impact measurement framework to track and quantify practical examples of the research usage, outcomes and impact (positive and negative). Record these within a framework that can be incorporated into your original project plan/theory of change/logic model. Figure 6 shows an example of a possible framework to be used.

There are various frameworks and resources to help you when thinking about evaluation or impact measurement. These can be used or adapted to suit your specific needs.

The Economic and Social Research Council website provides a wealth of information and guidance on research and evaluation strategies for different needs from analysis and scoping to economic impact evaluation

[www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-evaluation/index.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-evaluation/index.aspx)

The nef website also provides guidance on measuring impact and developing good indicators etc

[www.proveandimprove.org/meaim/developgoodindicators.php](http://www.proveandimprove.org/meaim/developgoodindicators.php)

Big Lottery Fund have developed an introduction to impact measurement to help funders demonstrate what they are achieving (at project/programme level)

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er\\_impact\\_measurement.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_impact_measurement.pdf)

**Figure 6**

Details of usage, outcome or impact of research	Source of evidence	Type of impact	Level of impact	Beneficiary of impact	Stage at which impact occurred
		eg conceptual; process; instrumental; symbolic; capacity-building; operational; strategic	eg local; regional; national; international	eg research funder; grantee/ researcher; practitioners; service commissioners; service providers; policy-makers; other agencies	eg setting the policy agenda; policy or practice development; policy or practice implementation

## Routes to impact

### Multi-agency/cross-sector relationships

Can be both a facilitator and barrier to research utilisation and impact

### Relative size of the sector

A small number of organisations in a sector might mean: tight network of practitioners and service providers; shared understanding of developments in the field; more resource to develop research/project scope (cross-boundary/partnership working)

### Existence of champions

Research is more likely to be grounded and transferred into policy or practice when there are champions within the field that can make things happen

### Independent status and reputation

(of researcher and/or research funder)  
Research evidence is more likely to be used if the source is seen as free from political influence



### Research planning, commissioning and governance

Systematic pre-planning and effective knowledge translation processes are key to creating reach and impact from the research/project

### Dissemination activities

(of researcher, research funder or other)  
Knowledge translation does not always, or only, happen as a result of formal dissemination activities

### Quality, timeliness and accessibility of research

A combination of timing, credibility plus support to fit the 'pieces of the jigsaw' together

### Political context

Building a body of good quality research addressing clear local knowledge gaps is more likely to influence policy or practice when the time is right for change than using political context as the key driver for the research/project

### Networks and connections

(of researcher and/or research funder)  
Knowledge translation is often a result of engagement, brokerage and existing networks and connections

## Facilitating impact – The role of the Foundation’s grant programme manager

Assessing the impact of the research/project approach over a longer period of time showed that creating wider impact from research knowledge and evidence is an ongoing and active process. We know that effective knowledge translation and transfer activity is a key factor in maximising the chance of turning research knowledge into social change. But whose responsibility is it to drive or facilitate the impact of sector-specific research? Is it that of the researcher themselves? Or should it be those who will be using the research knowledge?

Our project highlighted the important role of the grant programme manager in facilitating or enhancing the impact of the research/project approach. They, in effect, become an additional player within the ‘impact interface’, suggesting that responsibility for driving or facilitating that impact does not necessarily only lie with either those who produce the research or those who use it.

The primary purpose of the Foundation’s grant programme manager is to *“provide Trustees of the Foundation with sufficient information and analysis of applications submitted to make their decisions about whether or not to offer grants. A secondary purpose is to assist the Chief Executive in preparing policy for Trustees’ consideration”*. This job description masks a wide variety of roles, skills and behaviours that we were able to unpick during the assessment of the Safety and Justice Programme research/ project approach to grant-making which are summarised in Figure 1.

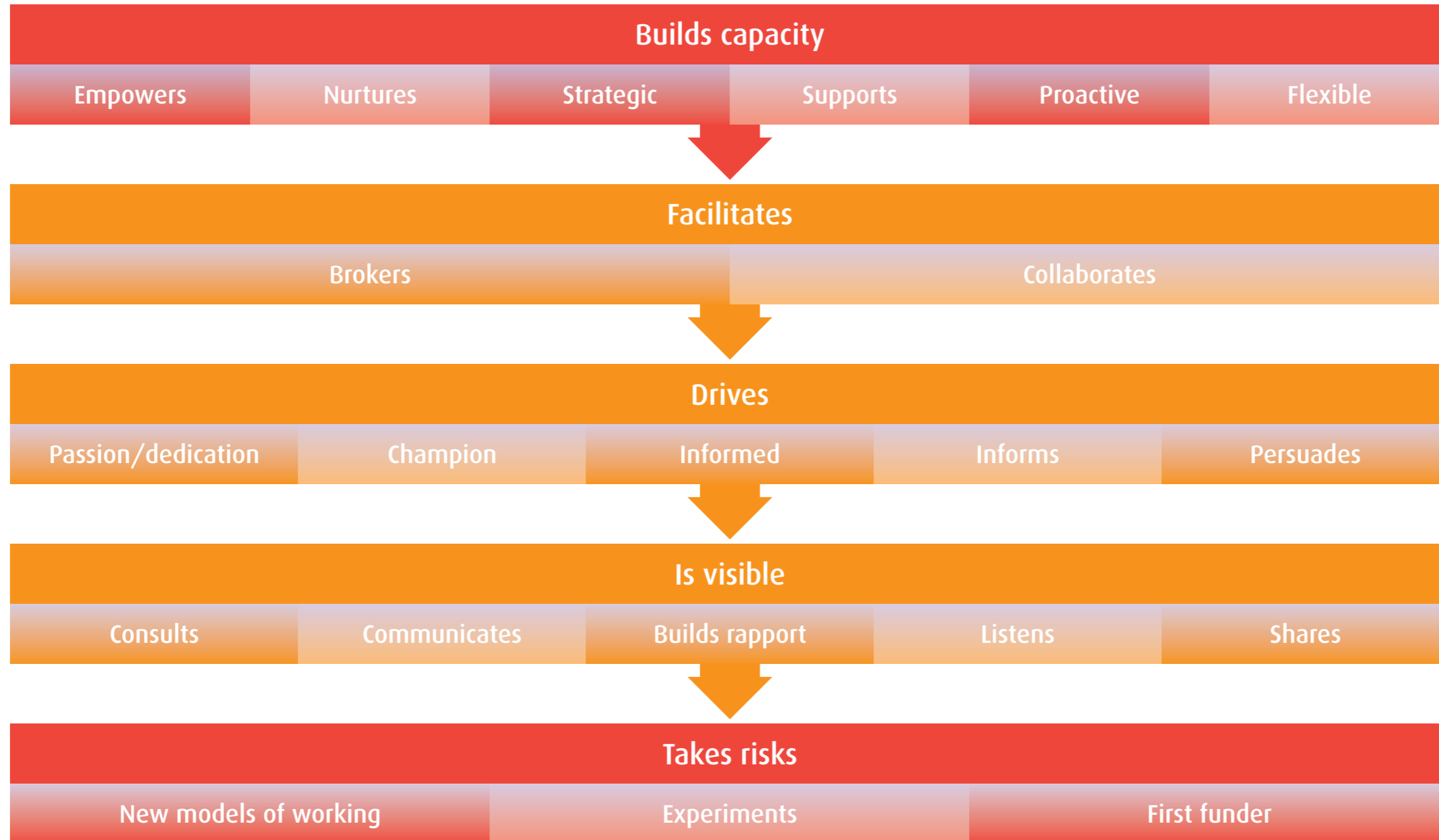
Influence and impact on both policy and practice are created when research knowledge is used to full effect. The role of the Foundation’s grant programme manager includes that of a knowledge broker, which

is very important in terms of accelerating the transformation or application of knowledge into action. As an independent knowledge and relationship broker, they have been an important facilitator of the knowledge translation process (and therefore of the utilisation and outcomes of the research). Because of the trustful and close relationships the programme manager has forged with grantees and other key stakeholders within their field, they are in an ideal position to facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing between both the voluntary and statutory sectors, between academics and practitioners, and between local and national practitioners and policy-makers.

The knowledge produced by research projects funded under the Foundation’s Safety and Justice Programme (both from the findings and the process of doing research), combined with the close relationships that the programme manager has developed with policy-makers and practitioners across the sector, has contributed to an in-depth, strategic and operational, understanding of domestic abuse, sexual violence and sexual exploitation. This has contributed largely to their ‘informed intuition’ approach to nurturing and developing the sector in the region. Communication skills, experience and a commitment to sharing and learning are absorbed within their tacit knowledge and it is this that has led to informed, evidence-based and therefore intelligent grant making; greater understanding, possibilities and leverage within the sector and the region; and improved quality of public and professional discourse and debate.

**Facilitating impact** – The role of the Foundation’s grant programme manager

Figure 1



## Framework for project planning

Objectives	Resources/ inputs	Activities	Outputs	Knowledge translation/ dissemination	Research utilisation (expected or desired)	Outcomes (expected or desired)	Outcomes (actual)	Impact** (expected or desired)	Impact (actual)
Objective 1	Include financial and non-financial resources needed for the whole project including dissemination activity			Include any formal and informal dissemination plans or suggestions for how the research knowledge could be translated	Record here all the ways that the research knowledge could be utilised by different stakeholders				
Objective 2									
Objective 3									
Objective 4									
Objective 5									

\* consider social, economic and environmental impacts as part of this