



**LASER
PULSE**

ENHANCING RESEARCH TRANSLATION IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A COLLECTION OF SKILLS-BUILDING
TOOLS FOR RESEARCHERS





ABOUT LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a \$70 million program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University—with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame—implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of more than 3,500 researchers and development practitioners in 80 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, as well as other local stakeholders, to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher–practitioner teams to codesign solutions that translate into policy and practice.

Cover image: A principal investigator meets leaders of the Ik community in Karamoja, Northern Uganda, during monitoring of a project focusing on improving community livelihoods through ecotourism. *Photo courtesy of Makerere University ResilientAfrica Network*

Suggested citation: Rice, C., ed. 2023. Enhancing Research Translation in International Development: A Collection of Skills-Building Tools for Researchers. *LASER PULSE Research Translation Tools & Resources Series*. Center for Global Health Equity, School of Medicine, Indiana University. Produced for LASER PULSE, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMER

These resources were developed by Indiana University staff and faculty. We would like to acknowledge LASER PULSE key personnel with Indiana University: Christopher Rice, editor of this collection, as well as Dr. Matthew Aalsma, Dr. Jim Ansaldo, Dr. Malaz Boustani, Dr. Richard Holden, Dr. Gabriel Filippelli, Dr. James Kelly, Michael Scanlon, Jenna Wozniak, and the IU Office of Online Education for their extensive contributions to specific tools and resources.

We would like to further acknowledge staff from Catholic Relief Services, Makerere University, Purdue University, and University of Notre Dame for their assistance in reviewing these materials, as well as Solveig Bang for additional editorial and design support.

The *Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis* was developed by Catholic Relief Services staff at LASER PULSE, Alexandra Towns and Laura Riddering.

This collection was produced as part of the USAID-funded LASER PULSE program. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

ACRONYMS

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ERT	Embedded Research Translation
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
IU	Indiana University
IUPUI	Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis
LASER PULSE	Long-term Assistance and Services for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
SOW	Scope of work
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS COLLECTION.....	1
TOOLS AT A GLANCE	3
1. PLANNING AND STRATEGY TOOLS	4
A. RESEARCH TRANSLATION IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING TOOL	6
B. EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS.....	13
C. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TOOL.....	17
D. RESEARCH TRANSLATION DISSEMINATION PLANNING TOOL.....	22
RESOURCES ON RESEARCH TRANSLATION	27
2. SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO RESEARCH TRANSLATION.....	29
A. IMPACTING POLICY CHANGE	31
B. ENGAGING COMMUNITIES	37
C. HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE NUDGE	44
D. EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING.....	48
3. CREATING BRIEFS AND OTHER WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.....	51
A. HOW TO PLAN FOR AND UTILIZE A BRIEF.....	53
B. POLICY BRIEF TEMPLATE	58
C. PROJECT SUMMARY TEMPLATE.....	61
D. USING ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE	63
CONCLUSION	66

ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

Increasingly, researchers, practitioners, donors, and policymakers are focused on the impact of collaborative research projects on development outcomes. This idea of how research translates into policy and practice, and ultimately to impact, has gained traction across disciplines, and is an important area of exploration and effort in international development. In the development context, research translation generally means translating discoveries made through research into a format that can be understood and applied by policymakers, end users, partners, and stakeholders in practice for development impact.

A common approach to research translation is a two-phase process in which research findings are translated into practical applications after the research has concluded. LASER PULSE, however, approaches research translation as an integrated component of the entire research cycle, built in from the very beginning of the project instead of as a final phase in the research process. This is reflected in our model of Embedded Research Translation (ERT).

The tools developed in this collection were part of the process of developing this model. As such, most titles reference the generic “research translation,” while one references “Embedded Research Translation.” The materials emphasize key components of the ERT model and at times reference the model’s four pillars of Partnership, Process, Product, and Dissemination, but are meant to be more broadly applied than just in LASER PULSE’s ERT model, and can be effective if deployed using alternative approaches to research translation.

While not included here, we would like to acknowledge additional LASER PULSE resources designed by Catholic Relief Services that have influenced amendments to these tools. These include: [*Promising Practices for Embedded Research Translation: A Toolkit to Improve Partnerships, Processes, Products, and Dissemination*](#) and [*Guiding Questions to Plan for Research Translation: A Workbook to Develop a Research Translation Strategy, An Implementation Plan, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Research Impact in International Development*](#).

Enhancing Research Translation in International Development: A Collection of Skills-Building Tools for Researchers, is a compendium of LASER PULSE resources that were originally designed as individual tools to primarily aid researchers in planning for and conducting research translation. Based on gaps in publicly available research translation tools and guidance, as well as needs expressed by LASER PULSE projects, LASER PULSE developed a series of tools, templates, and guidance materials to assist in research translation planning and implementation. This is not a comprehensive toolkit for research translation since it does not capture other materials that are easily found online or were not expressed as specific needs by LASER PULSE projects. However, it does reflect the experiences of a large USAID-funded program in developing the most needed resources to support 40+ research for development projects across the world.

Our primary audience for this collection is researchers in USAID partner countries as well as higher-income countries who are active in or interested in research for development. However, we anticipate that many of these materials will also be useful for USAID as well NGOs and other government entities as they partner with researchers in development work.

The collection includes (1) planning and strategy tools for research translation implementation, stakeholder analysis, communication, and dissemination; (2) guidance on specific approaches to research translation related to policy change, community engagement, nudges, and effective storytelling; and (3) guidance on creating briefs and other written communications.



The purpose of this collection is to organize resources created by LASER PULSE into a useful package for development researchers to learn to conduct effective research translation. It is expected that these tools will address critical gaps in knowledge, understanding, and implementation. We anticipate this collection will enhance researchers' abilities to plan for and deliver on research translation for development impact. We encourage researchers to refer to these tools and materials as part of their projects and fill out the appropriate tools and templates with partners to aid in the planning and implementation of these projects.

TOOLS AT A GLANCE

1. PLANNING AND STRATEGY TOOLS



A. Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool

Guides you through implementing the four pillars of Embedded Research Translation—Partnership, Process, Product, and Dissemination.



B. Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis

Assists you to identify key influential stakeholders and engage them throughout the research project.



C. Communications Strategy Tool

Guides you through sections on audiences, resources, barriers, goals and objectives, messages, products and channels, and ultimately evaluation.



D. Research Translation Dissemination Planning Tool

Enables your project to effectively deliver solutions to the right development actors toward eventual scaling-up and wider application.

2. SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO RESEARCH TRANSLATION



A. Impacting Policy Change

Equips you with guiding questions and useful strategies to help your research impact policy.



B. Engaging Communities

Assists you to effectively engage local community stakeholders in your projects to ensure impact and the sustainability of partnerships.



C. Harnessing the Power of the Nudge

Helps you use the nudge to achieve your research translation goals and make an impact in your research projects.



D. Effective Storytelling

This powerful means to share and interpret experiences will help your findings engage and inform non-technical experts in ways they understand.

3. CREATING BRIEFS AND OTHER WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS



A. How to Plan for and Utilize a Brief

Helps you plan a strong briefing document that includes a robust strategy to reach and change audiences, not only summaries and recommendations.



B. Policy Brief Template

Enables you to develop policy briefs that focus on implications for a specific policy rather than solely on research, and help the audience to understand their importance.



C. Project Summary Template

Enables you to engage your audience's attention by summarizing your project's main findings and helping them to see why they should care.



D. Using Accessible Language

Helps you better communicate your work by avoiding jargon, increasing clarity, strategizing to tailor messages to diverse stakeholders, and looking at context and content.



Photo by Jeffrey Goecker/Purdue University

1. PLANNING AND STRATEGY TOOLS

.....
A. RESEARCH TRANSLATION IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING TOOL
.....

B. EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS
.....

C. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TOOL
.....

D. RESEARCH TRANSLATION DISSEMINATION PLANNING TOOL
.....

PLANNING
AND STRATEGY
TOOLS



SPECIFIC
APPROACHES
TO RESEARCH
TRANSLATION



CREATING
BRIEFS AND
OTHER WRITTEN
COMMUNICATIONS



1. PLANNING AND STRATEGY TOOLS

This section presents four planning and strategy tools to aid in research translation: implementation planning, stakeholder analysis, communications strategy, and dissemination planning. The tools overlap in themes and content, and may not necessarily need to all be used in planning for an effective research translation project. Consult these tools early on in your partnership to see which you could use, complete them with partner input, and revise them during the course of your work.

The *Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool* is the most comprehensive and covers most key considerations in planning for and implementing research translation. *Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis* is referred to in the three other tools, but is most effectively applied when filling out the specific tool provided. Similarly, *Communications Strategy* is referred to in other resources, but we feature a specific tool for those projects that need to plan specifically for communications. Lastly, within communications, for focusing more on dissemination, the *Research Translation Dissemination Planning Tool* reflects key considerations within one of the four pillars of Embedded Research Translation.

We advise starting with the *Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool*. Once filled, if you need more detail for mapping, prioritizing, and engaging stakeholders, use the *Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis*. If you need to strategize at a higher level when you are engaging certain audiences or exploring how to develop and tailor content toward them, fill out the *Communications Strategy Tool*. If you seek to expand upon the dissemination component of the *Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool* or you want to be more specific about dissemination after working through the *Communications Strategy Tool*, consider using the *Research Translation Dissemination Planning Tool*. Do not wait to conduct a stakeholder analysis, create a communications strategy, or plan for dissemination at the mid-point or toward the end of your project; plan early, and revise throughout your project.

Consult these tools early on in your partnership to see which you could use, complete them with partners, and revise them during the course of your work.

1A Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool

This tool guides teams through the four pillars of Embedded Research Translation—Partnership, Process, Product, and Dissemination—but is intended to be applicable to any approaches to research translation. The template is meant to be used after team formation and during the process of determining partner roles and developing work plans. It will inform the early-stage planning process and guide future planning with activities and thought processes critical in effectively translating research into practice. Projects are encouraged to revisit this planning template to see how tracked progress reflects initial planning and whether the implementation plan needs revision to guide future work.

Project Title (if applicable):
Team:
Goal(s) of Research Translation:

Partnership

Effective partnership is critical in research translation. The formulation of the project team and structures will ultimately guide how partners work together and how impactful your project will be. Fill in this section to work through partner roles, stakeholders involved, and other foundational components that will set the stage for a strong partnership and impactful research translation project.

Have you considered whether to form a project advisory group?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you identified individuals, organizations, and networks that might partner with your team as research translation partners?	Yes No	If so, who?
Which of the following stakeholder groups are included in your partnerships?		
Donors Media	Policymakers Private sector	Nongovernmental organizations Public
		Researchers Government

In which of the following research project steps do your partners play roles?		
Ideation	Partner(s) responsible:	
Research question formation	Partner(s) responsible:	
Project design	Partner(s) responsible:	
Data collection and analysis	Partner(s) responsible:	
Product development	Partner(s) responsible:	
Dissemination of results and recommendations	Partner(s) responsible:	
Have you communicated partners' roles, degrees of involvement, and level of decision-making in a scope of work (SOW)?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you documented a process for keeping partners informed throughout the project cycle?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you established a cost structure for the partnership?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you clarified intellectual property rights between partners (e.g., file sharing, data ownership, branding, etc.) in a formal written agreement?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you documented a communication structure with donors?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you assessed each partner's needs and explored what they value?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
What human resources are necessary for the successful implementation of this project? Which ones are currently available and which ones are still needed?		
What financial resources do you have and need? What gaps exist between the two? Do you anticipate any issues?		

Process

The process pillar will guide you in research translation from setting up how you will structure your project to the foundation of how you will work together with partners. Engage in the activities below and track progress to guide the process by which you collaborate and engage stakeholders toward effectively conducting research translation.

Have you finalized your budget and travel needs?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you finalized your work plan and timeline?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you acquired Institutional Review Board approval (if applicable)?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you determined the appropriate reporting procedures?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Does the research design take into consideration the needs of end users?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:
Have you mapped relevant stakeholders and identified key audiences ?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:

Identify three key stakeholders to engage throughout the project and during the dissemination phase:

		Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
Have you conducted a needs analysis (or related analysis) of key stakeholders? If yes, summarize the needs of each key stakeholder.	Yes No			
Have you conducted a context analysis (or related procedure) to identify factors that facilitate and/or hinder research translation? If yes, summarize the results of the context analysis for each key stakeholder.	Yes No			

		Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3
Have you documented a process for engaging key stakeholders throughout the project? If yes, summarize engagement procedures for each key stakeholder.	Yes No			
Have you identified and engaged others who might help you to gain access to key stakeholders, including potential messengers or “champions” of your work? If yes, identify these others in relation to each key stakeholder.	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:		

Product

A research translation product is a tangible item that has specifically been adapted to meet the needs of an audience toward informing policy and/or practice change. Based on the conclusions and recommendations of research, potential products include briefs, trainings, manuals, innovations, educational materials, or multimedia intended to create change. Note that the products must be shared through a certain channel applicable to your target audience or audiences. Your audience could relate to your key stakeholders in the *Process* section or represent a different group toward achieving change. Your target audience is the group you target your findings, messages, and products toward. Complete this section to ensure the intended products are appropriate to the audiences and will maximize impact.

Who is your target audience? Who has an interest in or could benefit from your findings? Who can change or influence practice or policy?

	Audience 1	Audience 2	Audience 3
What are the main messages or recommendations that you want to share? Make sure your audience is able to take action based on said messages.			
What is the desired goal or outcome of sharing these messages?			
What research translation products have you planned to share with each key audience?			
What action do you expect each key audience to take in response to the products? Make sure they will have sufficient knowledge and understanding to take the said action.			
Have you received inputs from key stakeholders to make sure products align with the needs of your audiences above?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	

Dissemination

Dissemination is “an active approach of spreading evidence-based information to the target audience via determined channels using planned strategies” (Tabak et al. 2012). Strategies elaborated below will enable your project to effectively deliver solutions to the right development actors toward eventual scale and wider application. Although this section is located toward the end, it requires extensive planning from the beginning of a project and dissemination activities can begin before a project concludes.

	Audience 1	Audience 2	Audience 3
What are your objectives for engaging each key audience (e.g., promote interest, elicit feedback, improve practice, etc.)?			
What are the engagement strategies for each key audience toward promoting research translation?			
When is it preferable to implement the strategies for each key audience, and at what stage(s) will you share information?			
What methods will be used to share products and findings with the audiences (e.g., meetings, conferences, presentations, phone calls, webinars, emails, working groups, communities of practice, etc.)?			
How will each key audience benefit from the information they receive through research translation?			
What barriers could limit information sharing for each key audience? What can be done to reduce the barriers for each key audience?			
What strategies do you have to engage with others beyond your key audiences toward project sustainability or the continued application of your findings?			
Do you have a project champion to continue to advocate for change?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
What other avenues exist for replication or scaling up of your project or findings? Consider post-project events and opportunities to continue dissemination after the project ends.			

Evaluation

Evaluation is critical in research translation as it is an iterative process. We encourage projects to continually monitor engagements toward research translation and consider the questions below as learning opportunities to understand whether your research translation planning and implementation were sufficient to affect your desired development outcome. Develop monitoring & evaluation indicators with your team and/or donors, track information to assist in evaluation, and consider using an external evaluator.

Did your goals, objectives, or strategies change during the course of implementation?	Yes No	Original strategy:	Revised strategy:
Did you produce what you intended, or revise your product?	Yes No	Planned:	Revised product:
Were you able to reach your intended audiences?	Yes No	Intended audience(s):	Actual audience(s):
To what extent were translated products beneficial to your key audiences?	Notes/Next steps:		
Was your research translation planning sufficient, or did you have gaps in your planning or implementation?	Notes/Next steps:		
Did dissemination activities reach a sufficient number of people?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
Did you budget adequately?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
Did the right people receive your products to affect change?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
Did audiences understand the messages and act on them?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
To what extent did your project influence policy or practice change?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
Did you ultimately achieve your goals or objectives?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	

References

Tabak RG, Khoong EC, Chambers DA, Brownson RC. 2012. Bridging Research and Practice: Models for Dissemination and Implementation Research. *Am J Prev Med*. 2012 Sep;43(3):337-50. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2012.05.024. PMID: 22898128; PMCID: PMC3592983.

1B Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis



LASER PULSE encourages researchers and practitioners to collaboratively identify key stakeholders to inform, consult or engage throughout their project using a Stakeholder Map and Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
Photo courtesy of Purdue University

WHAT IS EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION?

LASER PULSE defines *Embedded Research Translation* as an iterative codesign process among academics, practitioners and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge. Core to this approach to translation are four pillars: **partnership**, **process**, **product**, and **dissemination** (see image below). Additional information on the Embedded Research Translation model can be found on the [LASER PULSE website](https://laserpulse.org/).

WHY INCLUDE STAKEHOLDERS IN EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION?

A key component of LASER PULSE's Embedded Research Translation model is the collaboration of researchers and practitioners in development research projects. Involving stakeholders in all phases of a research project results in translated products that are custom designed for the development challenge and to the needs of the users of the product(s).

By ensuring stakeholder involvement and buy-in from the start of the project, the translated products are more likely to be adopted and applied by these key actors, enabling greater uptake and broader impact than researchers and their translation partners would be able to achieve on their own. A thorough stakeholder analysis will assist project teams to identify key influential stakeholders through stakeholder mapping, and to plan how to engage with stakeholders throughout the research project.



Four pillars of Embedded Research Translation

WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders include community-based organizations, nonprofits, government entities or private-sector enterprises that should be informed, consulted or engaged throughout the research project. They are not direct members of the project team, yet they have valuable insights to contribute to the project and have a major role in the wider application of the research findings and research translation product(s).

Project teams should carefully identify and consider the needs and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the research translation products are applicable beyond the partners directly involved in the project, and to ensure that they ultimately lead to greater impact. Consider specifically targeting two to three key stakeholders throughout your project for more active involvement and toward tailoring final materials.

HOW TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS IN EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION

LASER PULSE has developed two stakeholder analysis tools, a Stakeholder Map and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, that provide the basis for how to identify key stakeholders in your project area and involve them meaningfully in the research project. These tools should be used at the beginning of the research project and updated throughout the research process.

Download a template of the [Stakeholder Map](#) and [Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#). Then edit it and fill it in with your research team.

Use the following questions to guide discussions between research team members as you conduct the stakeholder analysis:

WHO?

- Whose voice can improve the implementation of policy or practice?
- Which actors, organizations or institutions should know about this research?
- Who is directly implicated in the research translation products?
- Who can enhance the use of research translation products to address development challenges?
- Who can influence the application and generation of impact from the research?
- Are the perspectives and knowledge of typically marginalized populations included? *E.g., women, youth, minorities.*

WHERE?

- Through which local contexts could collaborations be formed? *E.g., in community groups, regions, professional networks.*
- What levels would be the most effective for scaling up the translated products? *E.g., community level, national level, international level.*
- Within the organizations identified, which individuals would it be most effective to have consistent contact with over the length of the entire project? *E.g., the president of an organization might be the most effective contact to motivate a group, but in a different organization it could be a technical advisor.*

WHEN?

- How can you involve stakeholders throughout the initiative, not just during end-of-grant dissemination?
- Are there certain times of the year when stakeholders may be more or less available and interested in engaging with your team? *E.g., national holidays, seasonal variabilities, elections or political cycles, and annual events such as conferences.*
- When during the project cycle could you collaborate directly with stakeholders? *E.g., developing research questions, collecting data, designing products, implementing dissemination activities.*

Tool adapted from:

CRS. 2015. *ProPack I: The CRS Project Package; Project Design Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers*. Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services.

ODI RAPID. 2020. [The Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix \(AIIM\)](#).

OXFAM. 2008. [Quick Guide to Power Analysis](#).

Tools4Dev. n.d. [Stakeholder Analysis Matrix Template](#).

TOOL 1: STAKEHOLDER MAP

LASER PULSE encourages researchers and practitioners to collaboratively identify potential key stakeholders for their research project through stakeholder mapping (see example Stakeholder Map below). These initial discussions should take place in a formal workshop or virtual brainstorming session,

and should be updated as connections are made throughout the research translation process and if the project receives recommendations from other stakeholders. Note that while there may be a wide range of stakeholders that a project should consult, not all of them will have the same levels of

knowledge, impact, influence and interest in engaging with the team. The Stakeholder Map is a tool to determine the level of engagement that will be required of each stakeholder by identifying their levels of knowledge, impact, influence and interest in the research project.

Stakeholder institution name	Contact person and contact details	Knowledge How much does the stakeholder know about the research topic? What is their area of expertise? Low Medium High	Impact How much does the research project or translation product impact and/or benefit them? Low Medium High	Influence How much influence will they have on generating impact from the research translation products? Low Medium High	Interest How much interest do they have in participating? Low Medium High	Engagement level Based on impact, influence and interest, decide on the level of engagement: • Informed = Communicate plans and decisions early and often • Consulted = Solicit for input on decisions • Active = Must actively participate and have a vote in decision-making
E.g., Youth group	E.g., Mary email@email.org 123-456-7890	E.g., High; Extensive knowledge of agricultural market and agricultural methods	E.g., High; They could be the end users of the technology developed	E.g., High; If they do not use the new technology, then there will not be an impact	E.g., Low; They are hesitant to work with researchers	E.g., Active

TOOL 2: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

After completing the Stakeholder Map and identifying the relevant stakeholders for a project, LASER PULSE encourages the team to develop a plan for engaging with these key actors. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (see example

below) should be filled out in discussions between the researchers and practitioners on the team to capture when, who and how to inform, consult or engage the stakeholders identified in the mapping activity above. Note

that each phase of the project will have different engagement needs, and this template will outline a plan to reflect the changing needs. Each project team will have different needs and may decide on the best time to involve stakeholders.

Stakeholder name	Contact person and contact details Include preferred communication style (email, phone, in-person meetings, etc).	How should these stakeholders be engaged? List the activities, messages and engagement methods.	When will these stakeholders be engaged? List the timeline for the activities. Remember to engage early and often.	What are the planned outcomes or deliverables from the activity? List how the activity will inform the project.
Stakeholders to inform				
Stakeholders to consult				
Stakeholders to actively engage				
<i>E.g., Youth group</i>	<i>E.g., Mary email@email.org</i>	<i>E.g., The research team will engage at regular intervals with the youth group through workshops to explain the research and technology to be developed and to be able to tailor it to their needs. It is important to be transparent about the research to build trust.</i>	<i>E.g.: Focus group interviews 07/01/2023</i> <i>Feedback workshop 08/15/2023</i> <i>Prototype workshop 12/1/2023</i> <i>Training workshop 05/1/2024</i>	<i>E.g., The interviews will identify the priorities of the youth group. The series of workshops will contribute to the codesign of the technology, testing the prototype, and preparing the youth to be able to champion it in their communities.</i>

1C Communications Strategy Tool

This tool is for use specifically for projects that require a robust communications strategy, but is also a useful tool for any project to strategize toward communicating messages effectively. It will guide you through sections on audiences, resources, barriers, goals and objectives, messages, products and channels, and ultimately evaluation. Projects can consult this template early on to begin thinking about communications, audiences and objectives. Complete it with partner input and revisit it during the course of the project.

Audiences: Who do you wish to impact? What is important to know about them?

Conduct an analysis (e.g., force field, social network, stakeholder, SWOT, network, context, etc.) to identify two or three key audiences that are integral to achieving your goals in research translation. Identify audiences you would need to directly influence to create the change you seek. Potential audiences include fellow researchers, donors, journalists, policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, and various publics. Be specific—for example, note the kinds of policymakers at the national or local level, in a government ministry or in parliament, or even one specific policymaker, that make up your key audiences.

Audience 1:

Audience 2:

Audience 3:

Research your audiences through interviews, focus groups, surveys, or secondary research. List important facts learned about your key audiences that influence how you will communicate with them. Important information may include their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, preferred communications methods, cultural needs, the existing policy infrastructure, timing in legislative cycles, etc. Note the most important information about your audiences that will help you develop strategies to develop messages and products through specific channels.

Audience 1 facts:

Audience 2 facts:

Audience 3 facts:

Resources: What resources do you have? What resources do you need?

Assess your resources to develop a feasible communications strategy and/or demonstrate a need for further resources. Consider both budgetary and human resources, including: honoraria, information technology, materials, meeting expenses, personnel, travel, etc.

Budgeted resources:

Needed resources:

Barriers: What may interfere with communication?

Engage in a process to identify potential barriers to communication (e.g., problem tree analysis). Barriers may be related to culture or language, access to information, ability to decipher and apply information, bureaucracy, timing, technology, skills and capacity, etc.

Potential barriers:

Goal and Objectives: What do you wish to accomplish?

Identify an overarching goal for your communications. Goals are more broad-based than objectives and allude to impact. What is the desired impact of your team's research? Potential goals include influencing policy, changing practice, and improving well-being.

Goal:

Identify three communications objectives that align with your goal. Keep in mind the acronym "SMART," which reminds us that objectives should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. Potential communications objectives during the course of your project could include:

Ensure 100% of key stakeholders are informed about important issues throughout the project.
Engage 80% of stakeholders within the project's first six months to promote interest and ownership in the project.
Position your work such that 70% of stakeholders perceive of the project team as experts during and after research.
Maintain transparency such that 90% of stakeholders perceive of the project team as open and transparent throughout the project.
Engage stakeholders to the extent that 60% provide feedback to the project before it ends.

Participate in three local community engagement events within the first six months to ensure that 70% of the community feels the project team cares about them and their concerns.
Demonstrate that your team shares community values, with 70% of the local community feeling that the project shares its values by the end of the first year of the project.
Frame research implications so that 80% of key audiences view the research topic in ways that resonate with their values at the project's end.
Share information with five policy influencers within a government ministry by the end of the project.

Objective 1:
Objective 2:
Objective 3:
Messages: What do you wish to communicate?
For maximum impact, summarize your research implications into three key points that are easy to communicate, remember, and repeat. Choose language that is actionable and compels the reader to do something in response to the information.
Key Point 1:
Key Point 2:
Key Point 3:
Storytelling is a powerful communications strategy. Employ storytelling techniques such as setting, character, plot, conflict, theme, and narrative. Tell stories that align with your key points and resonate with your audience. Include vivid detail and emotion to create changes in attitudes and/or behaviors. Consider framing your messaging around the existing problem and the potential solutions. Focus on creating value and evoking your audience's sense of community.
Story 1:
Story 2:
Story 3:

You may have developed your key points and stories from your knowledge of specific audiences. If not, highlight different aspects of your message for different audiences, according to their interests, passions, and needs. What important points and/or compelling stories will resonate most with your key audiences?

Audience 1:

Audience 2:

Audience 3:

Products and Channels: What will you do to accomplish your goals?

	Audience 1	Audience 2	Audience 3
Identify products that will communicate your key messages to your key audiences most effectively. Products may include blogs, case studies, educational materials, fact sheets, journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles, podcasts, policy briefs, press releases, research reports, videos, and website content. Make sure your project has an individual or institution responsible for producing these materials.			
Identify channels that will enable you to disseminate your products to your key audiences. Channels may include communities of practice, conferences, debates, emails, forums, media events, meetings, panels, phone calls, presentations, social media, symposia, training sessions, webinars, and working groups.			

Identify important dates for communications: days or months for planned events or existing conferences, community events, or legislative events that you might want a representative to attend. If more than a few dates are significant, consider organizing these in a Gantt Chart. Make sure your project has an individual or institution responsible for communicating during key events.			
Evaluation: How will you know that you have succeeded?			
When feasible, work with an independent evaluator to evaluate the impact of your communications strategy. Assess the effectiveness of your strategy with both your internal team and your key audiences. Analyze and discuss the results, then revise your communications strategy as necessary. Potential indicators for measurement include: Reach, usefulness, actual use, changes in knowledge and/or attitudes, changes in policy/practice, partner and/or end user satisfaction, partnership outcomes, etc.			
Internal team indicators:			
Audience 1 indicators:			
Audience 2 indicators:			
Audience 3 indicators:			
Evaluation findings and trends:			

1D Research Translation Dissemination Planning Tool

Dissemination is a critical component of [Embedded Research Translation](#) that begins at project onset as “an active approach of spreading evidence-based information to the target audience via determined channels using planned strategies” (Tabak et al. 2012). Generally, dissemination is seen as an end-of-grant activity in most projects. While many dissemination activities do occur after the data analysis and report writing phases, this work is greatly aided by foresight and planning from the beginning stages of project development. Dissemination tactics that inform the earliest project stage can inform subsequent stages of implementation and may aid in sustainment. The strategies elaborated on below will enable your project to effectively deliver solutions to the right development actors toward eventual scaling-up and wider application. Use this tool in collaboration with your partners to determine effective dissemination activities and approaches early on. Reassess this template with partners to guide you as you begin your dissemination activities.

Project Title (if applicable):

Project Partners:

Early Stage

The focus of the early stage is to engage and plan with partners (those with substantial involvement in the project) and key stakeholders (those who contribute to and/or benefit from the project) in the form of advocacy organizations, public service organizations, private sector representatives, donors, government entities, or even fellow researchers. Before the project’s start, clearly define what roles partners play in dissemination and outline how to get stakeholders involved. Key aspects include partner and stakeholder mapping, identifying their needs, and clarifying resources needed to disseminate work upon project completion.

In which of the following dissemination steps do your partners play roles?

Stakeholder engagement	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:
Networking and external event attendance	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:
Event planning	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:
Content creation for products	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:
Policy advocacy (if applicable)	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:
Dissemination of results and products	Partner(s) responsible:	Timeline:

What is your overall goal for dissemination? Potential goals include influencing policy, changing practice, improving well-being, promoting interest, and eliciting feedback. Include objectives as applicable.				
Have you conducted a stakeholder analysis ? Consider who has an interest in or could benefit from your findings.		Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
Identify three key stakeholders to engage with throughout the project and during dissemination, and summarize your knowledge of their needs: Stakeholder 1: Stakeholder 2: Stakeholder 3:				
Have you created a plan toward engaging key stakeholders early on during ideation, research question formation, and data collection?		Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
If yes, summarize planned engagement activities, timelines, and intended outcomes for each key stakeholder. Note what format or medium of a research translation product would be most appropriate for each.				
Stakeholder 1	Engagement activities	Timeline	Product	Intended outcome
Stakeholder 2	Engagement activities	Timeline	Product	Intended outcome
Stakeholder 3	Engagement activities	Timeline	Product	Intended outcome
What level(s) will you consider targeting for dissemination? Local Regional National International				
What human and financial resources are necessary for the successful dissemination of this project? What steps can be taken now to ensure needed resources exist for dissemination?				

Mid-Project

For dissemination at mid-project, maintain engagement with partners and stakeholders. Engage in the activities below and track progress to guide the process by which you continue to engage stakeholders toward effectively disseminating research results. For more in-depth considerations of the collaborative process and translation product, please see the [Research Translation Implementation Planning Tool](#).

Are stakeholders engaged in the project? If not, re-engage to help them feel ownership of the project. Consider workshops, focus groups, surveys, meetings, etc. to engage stakeholders and refine the dissemination plan and products.	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:		
	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	
Have priorities or context changed for stakeholders since the start of the project? If so, summarize the changed priorities or context for each key stakeholder.				
	Stakeholder 4	Stakeholder 5	Stakeholder 6	
Have new stakeholders emerged since the start of the project that you should engage? If so, summarize engagement activities for each new key stakeholder.				
Have priorities or context changed for stakeholders?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:		
Based on new priorities, context, or stakeholders, do you need to make changes to intended research translation products? Product 1: Product 2: Product 3:				

Project's End

Approaching the project's end, the team should finalize analyses, reflect on the implications of research findings with partners and stakeholders, finalize research translation products, and conduct final dissemination activities. Plan how best to disseminate to your target audiences, who could be related to your key stakeholders above or represent a different group you should engage toward achieving change. Your target audience is the group you target your findings, messages, and products toward. Think through who stands to benefit, who has an interest, who is an agent of change, and who has the capacity to influence policy or practice change. Potential research translation products include briefs, trainings, manuals, innovations, educational materials, or multimedia to create change. Note that products must be shared through a channel applicable to your audience. Complete this section to ensure the intended products are appropriate for the audiences and will maximize impact. Consider conducting additional activities after the formal conclusion of your project to maintain momentum. Keep track of your impact to understand if your dissemination planning has been effective.

Have key stakeholders received an opportunity to provide feedback on interpreting results, framing recommendations, and developing translation products? Do they agree that your key messages are meaningful? If not, consider additional means for feedback and revise messages.	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
	Audience 1	Audience 2	Audience 3
What are the main messages or recommendations you want to share? List specific audiences to receive messages as appropriate.			
What action do you expect each audience to take in response to the products you develop? Make sure the audience will have sufficient knowledge and understanding to take said action.			

What methods will be used to share products and messages? Consider meetings, conferences, presentations, phone calls, webinars, emails, working groups, communities of practice, etc. Be specific about methods and timeframes.	Product(s): Dissemination methods and timeframe:	Product(s): Dissemination methods and timeframe:	Product(s): Dissemination methods and timeframe:
Do you have a research liaison or project champion to facilitate additional opportunities or continue advocating for your work?	Yes No	Notes/Next steps:	
What avenues exist to increase awareness or apply findings more widely? Consider post-project events and opportunities to explore replication or scale through networks, working groups, associations, online discussion boards, or individual meetings.			

Resources on Research Translation

- Ademokun, Alexander, Annelise Dennis, Emily Hayter, Clara Richards, and Laura-Elena Runceanu. 2016. "Evidence Informed Policy Making Toolkit." [https://www.inasp.info/sites/default/files/2018-04/EIPM Toolkit-Ed2-FULL.pdfresearch_en.pdf](https://www.inasp.info/sites/default/files/2018-04/EIPM%20Toolkit-Ed2-FULL.pdfresearch_en.pdf).
- Anastopoulou, Louisa, Terry Martin, Domenico Rossetti di Valdalbero, and Henrike Ülger. 2010. "Communicating Research for Evidence-based Policymaking: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities." http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/guide-communicating-research_en.pdf.
- Bennett, Gavin, and Nasreen Jessani. 2011. *The Knowledge Translation Toolkit: Bridging the Know-Do Gap: A Resource for Researchers*. Edited by International Development Research Centre. Canada: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://www.idrc.ca/en/book/knowledge-translation-toolkit-bridging-know-do-gap-resource-researchers>.
- Breckon, Jonathan, and Isobel Roberts. 2017. *Using Research Evidence: A Practice Guide*. https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Using_Research_Evidence_for_Success_-_A_Practice_Guide.pdf.
- Brownson, RC, GA Golditz, and EK Proctor. 2017. *Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health: Translating Science to Practice*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oso/9780190683214.001.0001.
- Carter, Lucy, Liana Williams, and Michaela Cosijn. 2019. *The Principles and Practices of Ethical Community Engagement: Resources to Support Engaging for Impact*. https://siagi.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/2019-09-siagi_rdi_ece-principles-and-practices_final.pdf.
- Catholic Relief Services. n.d. *Partnership Basics*. <https://ics.crs.org/course/partnership-basics-introduction-crs-approach-partnership>.
- Catholic Relief Services. n.d. *Partnership In Practice: How to Effectively Care for and Manage a Partnership*. https://ics.crs.org/node/683-partnership_in_practice.pdf.
- Cordeiro M, E Jackson, C Adams, A Roche. 2020. *Improving Research Use in International Development: An RDI Network Action Research Project*. Research for Development Impact Network, Canberra. <https://rdinetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2021-RDI-Network-Action-Research-Report-3.0-Interactive.pdf>.
- Cornish, Hilary, Jude Fransman, and Kate Newman. 2017. "Rethinking Research Partnerships: Discussion Guide and Toolkit." *Research and Evidence*, 1–60. https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-10/discussion-guide-ngo-academic-research-oct2017_0.pdf.
- Georgeou, Nichole, and Charles Hawksley. 2020. "Enhancing Research Impact in International Development: A Practical Guide for Practitioners and Researchers." https://rdinetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ERIID_V8_DIGITAL.pdf.
- Georgalakis, James, and Pauline Rose. 2019. "Exploring Research-Policy Partnerships in International Development." *IDS Bulletin* 50 (1): 1. <https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2019.103>.
- Grimshaw, Jeremy M, Martin P Eccles, John N Lavis, Sophie J Hill, and Janet E Squires. 2012. "Knowledge Translation of Research Findings." *Implementation Science* 7, no. 50. <https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1748-5908-7-50>.
- Hanley, Teresa, and Isabel Vogel. 2012. "Guide to Constructing Effective Partnerships." <https://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/effective-partnerships-report.pdf>.
- Harle, Jon, and Ruth Bottomley. 2018. *How Can We Strengthen Research and Knowledge Systems in the Global South? Reflections from INASP's Five-Year SRKS Programme*. https://www.inasp.info/sites/default/files/2018-07/SRKS%20report_external_final_0.pdf.
- McGriffin, Emily. 2017. *Improving Our Collaborations for Better Development Outcomes: A Short Summary of a CCIC-CASID Literature Review*. www.casid-acedi.ca.

- McLean, Robert, Ian D Graham, Kwadwo Bosompra, Yumna Choudhry, Stephanie E Coen, Martha Macleod, Christopher Manuel, Ryan McCarthy, Adrian Mota, David Peckham, Jacqueline M Tetroe, and Joanne Tucker. 2012. Understanding the Performance and Impact of Public Knowledge Translation Funding Interventions: Protocol for an Evaluation of Canadian Institutes of Health Research Knowledge Translation Funding Programs. *Implementation Science* 7, no. 57. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-7-57.
- MEASURE Evaluation. 2009. Making Research Findings Actionable: A Quick Reference to Communicating Health Information for Decision-Making. https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-09-39/at_download/document
- Roper, Laura. 2002. Achieving Successful Academic-Practitioner Research Collaborations. *Development in Practice* 12 (3): 338–45. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4029505>.
- Searles, Andrew, Chris Doran, John Attia, Darryl Knight, John Wiggers, Simon Deeming, Joerg Mattes, Brad Webb, Steve Hannan, Rod Ling, Kim Edmunds, Penny Reeves, and Michael Nilsson. 2016. An Approach to Measuring and Encouraging Research Translation and Research Impact. *Health Research Policy and Systems* 60. <https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-016-0131-2>.
- Shucksmith, Mark. 2016. *InterAction: How Can Academics and the Third Sector Work Together to Influence Policy and Practice?* <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/interaction>.
- Sudsawad, Pimjai. 2007. *Knowledge Translation: Introduction to Models, Strategies, and Measures*. Austin, TX: National Center for Dissemination of Disability Research. https://ktdrr.org/ktlibrary/articles_pubs/ktmodels/ktintro.pdf.
- Tabak RG, Khoong EC, Chambers DA, Brownson RC. 2012. Bridging Research and Practice: Models for Dissemination and Implementation Research. *Am J Prev Med*. 2012 Sep;43(3):337-50. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2012.05.024. PMID: 22898128; PMCID: PMC3592983.
- Winterford, K. 2017. How to Partner for Development Research. Research For Development Impact Network, Canberra, Australia. https://rdinetwork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/How-to-Partner-for-Development-Research_fv_Web.pdf.
- Young, David, and Ron Borland. 2011. Conceptual Challenges in the Translation of Research into Practice: It's Not Just a Matter of 'Communication'. *Translational Behavioral Medicine* 1, no. 2: 13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13142-011-0035-1>.



Photo courtesy of Fortex AV

2. SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO RESEARCH TRANSLATION

A. IMPACTING POLICY CHANGE

B. ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

C. HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE NUDGE

D. EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

PLANNING
AND STRATEGY
TOOLS



SPECIFIC
APPROACHES
TO RESEARCH
TRANSLATION



CREATING
BRIEFS AND
OTHER WRITTEN
COMMUNICATIONS



2. SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO RESEARCH TRANSLATION

The guidance documents on specific approaches to research translation here reflect the needs of LASER PULSE Network members and are otherwise not publicly available or easily accessible. These include guidance on policy change, community engagement, nudging, and storytelling. They are not the only approaches to research translation, but represent key areas in which many projects have sought assistance. Notably, these resources are not templates but written guides to complement similar [online courses](#).

These guidance materials are not in a particular order. If your work is relevant to local, regional, national, or international policy, consult the *Impacting Policy Change* guide. If you work at more of a community level or would like to learn more about taking community needs into consideration, hear from the experiences of an Indiana University faculty member in *Engaging Communities*. If both apply, consult both guides. Nudging and storytelling are research translation strategies that can be used throughout the project lifecycle. Whatever your topic, learning the basic tools behind how to nudge individuals or groups toward behavior change and tell effective stories based on research can greatly assist your research impact. Particularly with *Impacting Policy Change*, *Engaging Communities*, and *Harnessing the Power of the Nudge*, consulting these during the design stage of your project can help ensure your work is designed for success. However, it is worthwhile to review these guides and consult the *Effective Storytelling* guide when you are engaged with policymakers, local communities, attempting to nudge toward behavior change, or tell stories about your work for greater impact.

The guidance documents here are not the only approaches to research translation, but represent key areas in which many projects have sought assistance.

2A Impacting Policy Change

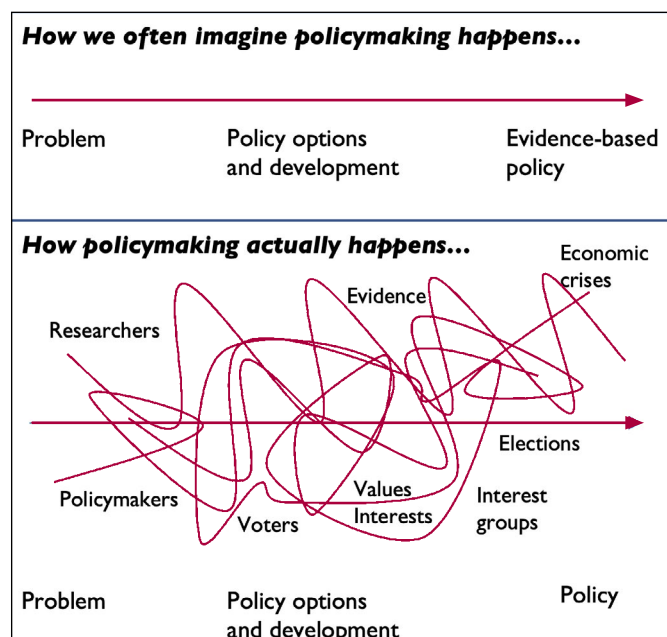
Researchers are increasingly tasked with demonstrating the impact of their research on practice and policy, and often want it to have real-world impact rather than residing only in academic journals and being discussed only among their peers. Yet, many researchers are not taught how to conduct research in ways that are more likely to have an impact on practice and policy, and best practices are still emerging (Oliver and Cairney 2019). This guide equips researchers with guiding questions and useful strategies to help their research impact policy. While this guide specifically focuses on the impact of research on policy, many of these strategies are also applicable for researchers who want to impact practices or programs.

The research-to-policy gap describes how evidence produced by researchers often encounters one of the following scenarios: 1) It does not make it to the desks of policymakers; 2) it is not used by policymakers to inform policy; or 3) the period between evidence production and policy impact is too long (Martin, Mullan and Horton 2019). Explanations for why this gap exists and is so pernicious generally fall into two categories:

1. **Researchers and policymakers often have different professional backgrounds, training, and approaches to understanding and addressing societal issues.** However, in many cases,

they can find common ground and the potential for collaboration. For example, many researchers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate impact on a broader scale, while policymakers face pressure to ground policy in the best available evidence (Soriano and Baugh 2002).

2. **Many researchers assume that policymaking follows a rational and linear process, but it is actually a complex process driven by political environment, budget constraints, and social and economic conditions** (Stone 2011). Research has an important role to play, but is often not designed and aligned with the goal of supporting policy choices. Thus, the goal of impact-oriented researchers should be to increase the use of evidence to inform decision-making and policymaking while recognizing other factors will also play a role (Hawkins and Parkhurst 2016).



Strategies for researchers to impact policy: Plan, Do, Push, Learn

As a researcher, you can use four strategies to increase the likelihood that your research will have an impact on policy: (1) **Plan** by identifying policy stakeholders and the policy environment in your research area; (2) **Do** by designing and conducting research that is policy-relevant and inclusive; (3) **Push** by effectively disseminating and communicating your research; and (4) **Learn** by monitoring, evaluating, reflecting, and, if necessary, adapting your strategies for policy change.

Plan: Identify policymakers and policy environment

- ◆ *What is the core issue or set of issues that you want your research to help address or, in other words, what is the problem you want to help solve?*
- ◆ *Who are the key individuals and groups involved in creating, implementing, evaluating, or influencing policy in your issue area?*
- ◆ *How does the broader policy environment, including political, social, and economic factors, influence your issue area, and policies and policymaking in this area?*

Planning for policy impact involves identifying and understanding the policy stakeholders and environment related to your area of research. A **policy stakeholder** can be any individual or group that creates, implements, or influences policy, and includes elected officials and lawmakers, bureaucrats, and their advisers (or the **policymakers**) as well as lobby groups, media organizations, and researchers. Each of these different types of policy stakeholders will likely have their own interests and level of influence and decision-making authority as well as their engagement with research in the policymaking process. The **policy environment** encompasses the larger picture of how and why policymaking occurs in the way that it does. A helpful model for thinking about the policy environment is the policy triangle (Figure 1), which includes not only policy **actors** but also the **content** of specific policies, policy **processes**, and the broader political, social, and economic **contexts** that impact policy agendas and possibilities (Buse, Mays and Walt 2012). Often, only when these factors converge is sufficient momentum created for policy change (Kingdon 1984).

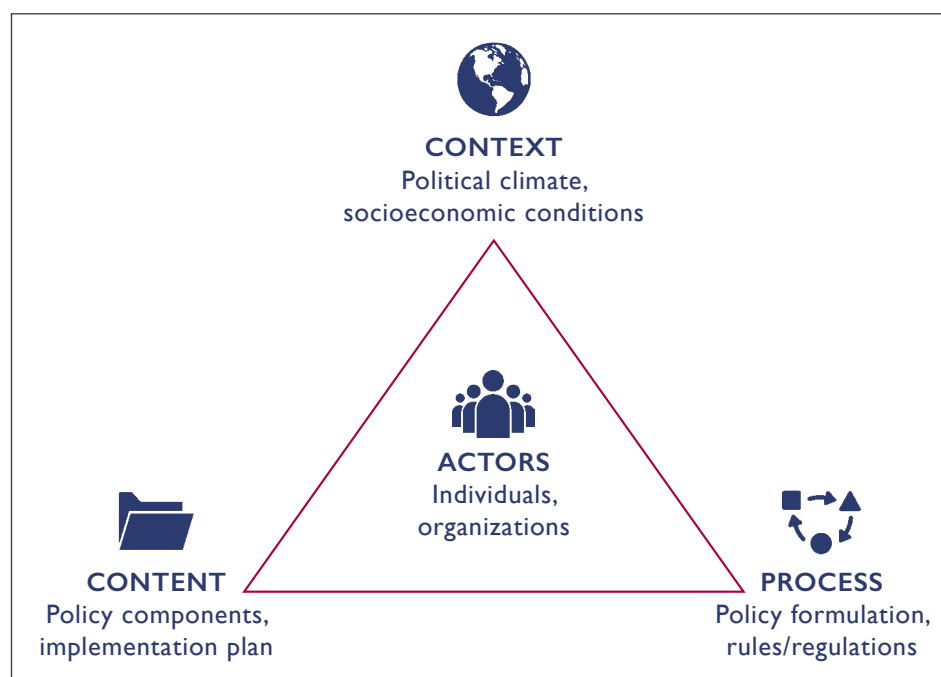


Figure 1: The health policy triangle. Adapted from Walt and Gilson 1994.

To identify policy stakeholders and the policy environment, consider these strategies:

- **Perform literature reviews, and internet and media searches** to gather preliminary information about your policy area.
- **Conduct stakeholder mapping** to identify key actors.
- **Set up informal interviews with key actors** to better understand the policy environment and opportunities for researchers to engage policy stakeholders.

Do: Design and implement relevant and inclusive research

- ◆ *What policy stakeholders will you engage in your research, how do you plan to engage them in the research process, what are the potential challenges, and how will you mitigate those challenges?*
- ◆ *What policy impact or policy change do you hope to achieve with your research?*
- ◆ *What stage(s) of the policy process do you aim to impact (agenda setting, policy development, implementation, or evaluation) and at what scale (local, national, or global)?*

Doing research that is more likely to have an impact on policy requires designing and implementing your research in ways that are **relevant and responsive** to a specific policy issue and policy environment, and **inclusive of various stakeholders** in the research process, including policymakers. The level and forms of engagement with policy stakeholders is on a spectrum (Figure 2). At one end, you may only engage policy stakeholders as consumers at the end of your research by, for example, sharing policy briefs based on your research findings. At the other end, policy stakeholders are deeply engaged in the research process, including participating in aspects of the research design, implementation, and interpretation of findings (Murray 2011).



Figure 2: Spectrum of engagement with policy stakeholders.

Co-production of research and partnership with policy stakeholders can increase the policy relevance of research as well as the likelihood policymakers will use it in the policy process. It is important for researchers to carefully plan to work with policy stakeholders in the research process, including clearly identifying partner roles and expectations and shared work plans throughout the design, implementation, and dissemination phases of research. It is also important to be clear about your **impact objective** – a statement of what sort of policy change you want to see from your research and how you intend to make this happen, including working with policy stakeholders and other research partners.

Remember, policy impact is not confined to informing new policies; it can also include influencing small or incremental changes to existing policies, changing policy dialogue and the voices that are included in policy conversations, shaping the range of policy options considered by policymakers, assessing the implementation and evaluation of policies, and creating new networks between researchers and policymakers (Hall 1993).

Push: Disseminate and communicate in appropriate ways

- ◆ *Who is your primary audience and what do they need to know? What are the key messages that you want to deliver?*
- ◆ *How will you incorporate dissemination and communication strategies throughout your research (and not just at the end)?*
- ◆ *What types of translation products are most appropriate for your research and your primary policy audience – i.e., how does your audience best receive information?*

Your dissemination and communication strategies will depend on your primary audience and likely how engaged policy stakeholders are in your research process. For example, if your research deeply engages policy stakeholders at all stages, dissemination and communication may be easier since stakeholders will be more familiar with the research and its findings, and feel ownership of it. You should plan for multiple dissemination and communication strategies that occur at various stages of the research project (i.e., not only after the research is completed) and use **multiple translational products**.

Translational products can take many forms (Figure 3) that should be tailored to your specific audience based on what you want them to take away from the research, and how best they receive information. Remember, researchers are not just **knowledge producers**. To be effective policy change agents, researchers also need to be **knowledge translators** who can translate research findings for non-specialist audiences, and **knowledge brokers** who can work alongside policy stakeholders and policymakers to incorporate research findings into policy debates and instruments (Shaxson 2016). In your communications with policy stakeholders, remember to use non-technical language, have clear and concise key messages that relay research findings *and* actionable recommendations, and be engaging. Many [LASER PULSE resources](#) can be used to enhance your dissemination and communication.

Policy-Relevant Translational Products
Written materials – e.g., policy briefs, white papers, toolkits and blogs
Digital tools – e.g., websites, data visualizations and digital networks
Events/meetings – e.g., policy dialogues, workshops and webinars
Multimedia – e.g., social media, podcasts and videos

Figure 3: Policy-Relevant Translational Products
(Adapted from Tilley, Ball and Cassidy 2018)

Learn: Monitor, evaluate, reflect, and adapt

- ◆ *What monitoring and evaluation strategies will you use to track progress toward your impact objective? What metrics and indicators will you develop and use?*
- ◆ *What strategies (e.g., workshops, interviews, surveys) will you use to ensure that you are reflecting and adapting your research to ensure maximum policy impact?*
- ◆ *What is your sustainability plan? How will you ensure that your research continues to make an impact on policy after the project is over?*

Learning is an essential part of partnerships and working with policy stakeholders, and includes strategies to **monitor** and **evaluate** all aspects of your research process and impact, reflect on what is working and what is not, and adapt, as needed, in collaboration with your research partners (Mayne et al. 2018). You should cocreate a monitoring and evaluation plan with your research partners to identify and track tangible metrics and indicators to measure progress toward your impact objective. There are many monitoring and evaluation frameworks, so choose one that works for you and your research partners. Some monitoring and evaluation models are specifically designed for research undertaken to inform and influence public policy (e.g., see Hovland 2007). At regular intervals during the research process, consider reviewing your progress with all your partners, with time and space for them to **reflect** on successes and challenges, and to identify ways that the research and/or partnership should **adapt**, if needed, to better meet your impact objective. Finally, make a **sustainability plan** with your research partners to ensure that your research continues to have a policy impact when the project is over. While researchers may move on to new projects, it is important to identify actions that research partners or project champions can take to continue to engage in policy dialogue about your research findings. For additional information on impacting policy change, continue to visit the LASER PULSE [Learning](#) page. Many other resources below may be helpful as you plan, do, push, and learn to maximize the policy impact of your research.

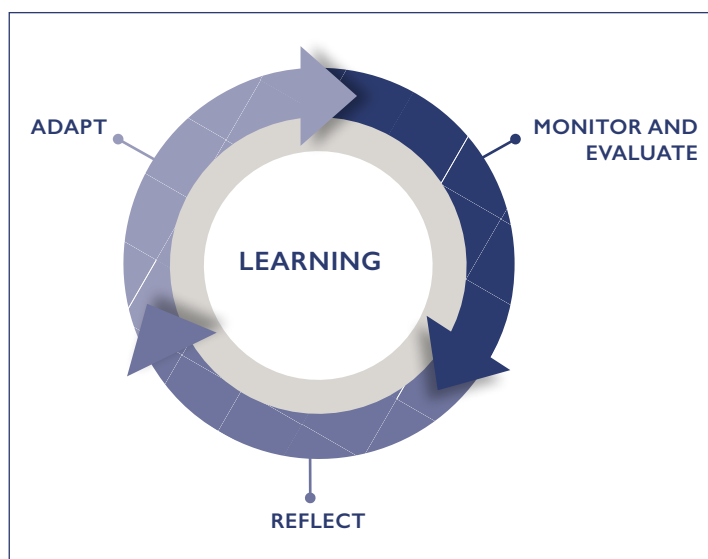


Figure 4: The Learning Cycle

References and Additional Reading

- Buse, Kent, Nicholas Mays, and Gill Walt. 2012. *Making Health Policy*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Dodsworth, Susan, and Nic Cheeseman. 2017. The Potential and Pitfalls of Collaborating with Development Organizations and Policy Makers in Africa. *African Affairs* 117 (466): 130-145. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adx041>.
- European Commission. 2021. *10 Tips for Researchers: How to Achieve Impact on Policy?* Brussels: European Commission, Joint Research Centre. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/10%20Tips%20for%20Researchers_How%20to%20achieve%20impact%20on%20policy.pdf.
- Hall, Peter A. 1993. Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain. *Comparative Politics* 24 (3): 275-296. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422246>.
- Hawkins, Ben and Parkhurst, Justin. 2016. The 'Good Governance' of Evidence in Health Policy. *Evidence & Policy*. 12.
- Hovland, Inge. 2007. *Making a Difference: M&E of Policy Research*. London: UK Overseas Development Institute. <https://odi.org/documents/1407/2426.pdf>.
- Kingdon, John. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Lindblom, Charles. 1959. The Science of 'Muddling Through.' *Public Administration Review* 19 (2): 79-88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/973677>.
- Martin, Keith, Zoë Mullan, and Richard Horton. 2019. Overcoming the Research to Policy Gap. *Lancet Global Health* 7 (S1-2S2). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109x\(19\)30082-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109x(19)30082-8).
- Mayne, Ruth, Duncan Green, I.M. Guijt, Martin Walsh, Richard English, and Paul Cairney. 2018. Using Evidence to Influence Policy: Oxfam's Experience. *Palgrave Communications* 4 (122). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0176-7>.
- Murray, Lesley. 2011. Deliberative Research for Deliberative Policy Making: Creating and Recreating Evidence in Transport Policy. *Social Policy Society* 10 (4): 459-470. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746411000212>.
- National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. 2020. *Policy Makers: How Can You Engage with Policy Makers?* London: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/understanding-audiences/policy-makers>.
- Oliver, Kathryn, and Paul Cairney. 2019. The Dos and Don'ts of Influencing Policy: A Systematic Review of Advice to Academics. *Palgrave Communications* 5 (21). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0232-y>.
- Shaxson, Leah. 2016. *Achieving Policy Impact: Guidance Note*. London: UK DFID-ESRC Growth Research Programme. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c48952ded915d388a7e2c98/DEGRP-Impact-guidance-note.pdf>.
- Sorian, Richard, and Terry Baugh. 2002. Power of Information: Closing the Gap Between Research and Policy. *Health Affairs* 21 (2): 264-273. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.21.2.264>.
- Stone, Deborah. 2011. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. 3rd Ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Tilley, Hellen, Louise Ball, and Caroline Cassidy. 2018. *Research Excellence Framework (REF) Impact Toolkit*. London: UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI). <https://odi.org/documents/5774/12319.pdf>.
- Walt, Gill, and Lucy Gilson. 1994. Reforming the Health Sector in Developing Countries: The Central Role of Policy Analysis. *Health Policy Plan* 9 (4): 353-370. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/9.4.353>.
- Young, John, Louise Shaxson, Harry Jones, Simon Hearn, Ajoy Datta, and Caroline Cassidy. 2014. *ROMA Guide to Policy Engagement and Policy Influence*. London: UK Overseas Development Institute (ODI). <https://odi.org/en/about/features/roma-a-guide-to-policy-engagement-and-policy-influence/>.

2B Engaging Communities

As you plan to implement research translation projects, one of the most critical components to consider is the extent to which and methods by which you engage communities. While research translation and community engagement do not have a single prescriptive approach that works in all cases, we feature tips and examples of partnerships and international programs from the experiences of Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Professor of Earth Sciences Gabriel Filippelli. We hope this will assist you in effectively engaging local community stakeholders in your projects, as applicable, to ensure both the impact and sustainability of partnerships.

Background

Public participation in research offers opportunities for researchers to explore society at a much more granular level than in traditional research, and then to build influence through relationships. Meanwhile, it offers communities increased knowledge of the issues affecting them and pathways to solving these. Community engagement in participatory research is on a spectrum from passive participation in data collection to active participation in the research process (Figure 1). Communities can be involved solely in data collection, consulted early in defining the problem at hand, active across the entire research process, and assist with the uptake of the findings. Effectively, this can permit community involvement to evolve toward deeply embedded partnerships that benefit *both* researchers and communities. By creating sustainable, bi-directional partnerships and engaging non-university partners with the processes and outputs of research projects, **knowledge transfer moves both ways** and communities can be engaged in framing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and developing tools that make sense for communities involved.

Part of this motivation to pivot to a new model of research engagement has arisen from the tensions and distrust in previous approaches, where research was done *on* instead of *with* communities. This provided little lasting benefit to the communities themselves while explicitly benefitting the researcher side of the relationship. Participatory approaches do not preclude researchers from doing what they do best—conducting research, publishing in specialty journals, and building research reputations—but they do ensure that the research products reach community members where they can inform practical and locally relevant solutions.

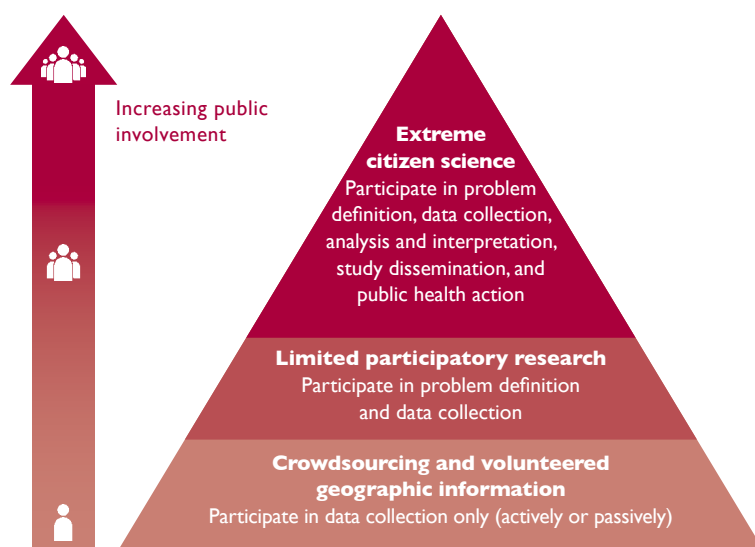


Figure 1: Pyramid of participatory research approaches (English et al. 2018)

Components of Successful Community–Researcher Partnerships

While understanding the context of participatory research is critical to ensure successful collaboration, there are four key components of successful community-engaged research partnerships:

Mutually Beneficial. Partnerships should generate benefits for both community and the researcher partners. The community partner should benefit in the ways they find appropriate and valuable, such as analytical support, solution-building, or technology transfer. The researcher gains data and access to resources that they would not otherwise be able to obtain, and uses these for knowledge creation and to expand the resource base for continued discovery.

Respectful and Reflective of Local Knowledge. Traditional knowledge in international partnerships includes community-based knowledge that has been accrued over decades or even generations that would be impossible for an outside partner to build in the span of a research partnership. For example, research projects on climate change in the Arctic have involved the multi-generational perspectives and observations of indigenous peoples, which have proven critical where scientific climate monitoring was incomplete (Golden et al. 2015).

Bi- or Multidirectional in Communication and Engagement. Partnerships succeed when lines of communication or engagement between the partners are well developed, and when the expertise of both sides is respected and built into the structure of the partnership (Figure 2). When these lines of communication are perceived as isolating, unresponsive, or biased, the trust in the information received and the motivation to act on this information is threatened. The key to building bidirectionality is to integrate communication between the two sides throughout the project to ensure perspectives are reflected in research procedures.

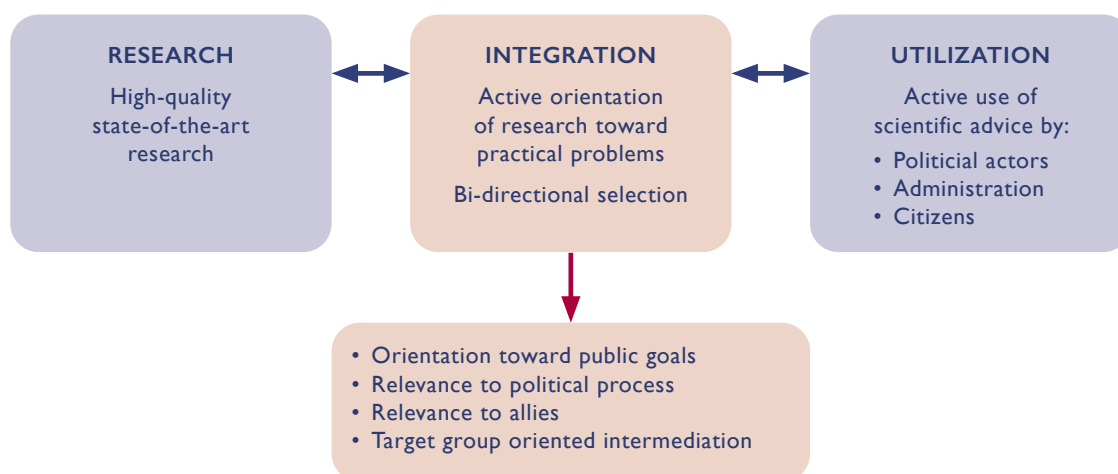


Figure 2: RIU model of bidirectional knowledge transfer between researchers (left) and practitioners (right). Adapted in Do (2019) from Böcher and Krott (2014 and 2016).

Sustainable as Partnership Evolves. The key to a sustainable partnership is to regularly explore whether the partnership is meeting the needs of each partner, whether the partnership needs to change direction in light of priorities and/or funding, and when parties need to move in or out of the partnership to meet their needs. An effective partnership should be able to evolve over time through continued work, additional funding, or joint opportunities for different collaborations. Partnerships that reflect the above components are more likely to be sustainable.

Overcoming Obstacles to Building Lasting Researcher–Community Partnerships

There are a variety of barriers to building lasting researcher–community relationships. However, through active consultation and mutual respect, partners can work to overcome obstacles.

- 1. Lack of incentives to engage at the university level.** Generally, researchers are not well recognized for the effort that is involved in building impactful and sustained community-engaged research programs. For example, a researcher may spend ample time developing deep and meaningful community contacts toward an impactful engagement program but is not rewarded by promotion and tenure committees for doing so.

Overcoming the obstacle: Build university capacity to recognize the value of community-engaged research, both to the research enterprise and the general community. Expand the definition of service to include service to community.

- 2. Lack of sustained leadership at the community level.** Partnerships with communities are often catalyzed by individuals within the community who have a passion to make changes, or by organizations that have a mandate to achieve. When that catalyzing individual moves on or organizational priorities change, the partnership with the university may become less of a priority to successors.

Overcoming the obstacle: Build multiple bridges to a single organization and/or partnerships with multiple organizations whose missions are complementary, providing a fallback option should one organization change priorities.

- 3. Lack of trust among partners.** The history of scientific research on human subjects and communities is rife with issues. Institutional review boards have effectively eliminated the most egregious of these abuses, but more subtle issues persist, such as not considering community perspectives and benefits, or failing to fulfill promised deliverables.

Overcoming the obstacle: Build value and mutual respect through a series of participatory workshops with all partners, opportunities to learn from communities and reflect on the partnership, recognition of community contributions through co-authorship, and commitments to extending the partnership beyond one project. Consider with your partners how you can document and measure partnership and engagement to ensure shared accountability for researchers and community partners (Luger et al. 2020).

- 4. Lack of funding avenues to support the partnership.** For both universities and communities, obtaining sustained and consistent funding to support a community-engaged program is challenging. University partners typically seek research funding from federal sources that may not have local community support as a key priority and that does not extend for long durations. Similarly, community organizations seek funding from federal, state, or private foundation sources that may not fund original research but instead focuses on community action.

Overcoming the obstacle: Simultaneously develop multiple complementary funding streams. For example, a researcher pursuing federal grants to research water resource changes could interleave this with a foundation grant with a local partner for water security and access. Indeed, such efforts often add credibility and show capacity for both federal and foundation reviewers. In addition, researchers can target a growing number of funding opportunities that prioritize community engagement.

Overcoming Obstacles and Making Impacts: An Example in Safe Urban Gardening

Building meaningful sustained partnership takes time, but a key starting point is engaging early, often, and equally. The structure of these engagements can be formal or informal, but they must always start by sharing individual values and goals, and learning from each other in such a way that a sound partnership can be built. The common obstacles to this process can be overcome, with intentional and measured program development, which by necessity must evolve to fit the changing needs of partners and funding sources. Below is an example of successful program development between researchers and communities.

Safe Urban Gardening Initiative, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

The Safe Urban Gardening Initiative began as a project to map the distribution of harmful lead contamination in cities, involving basic sampling in legal rights of way and parks. To expand sampling, the team partnered with a local inner-city high school science teacher who wanted a hands-on and relevant project for his students. The students were trained in sampling and subsequently sampled in their own neighborhoods. Their findings showed shockingly high values in an area around an old lead smelting facility.



Figure 3: The Safe Urban Gardening Initiative, a partnership between the Center for Urban Health at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis and several community partners in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Identifying and Empowering New Community Partners

The researchers used these findings to partner with a local environmental justice initiative and a local children's health organization to obtain an EPA Environmental Justice grant, designed to expand the citizen science sampling of yards by residents. Upon realizing that the burden of lead contamination was not just in streets or parks, but also in homes and backyards, the team proposed the Safe Urban Gardening Initiative to sample properties in central Indiana. It designed a guide on safe urban gardening (Figure 3) to distribute to homeowners' organizations in the region to provide communities with solutions to deal with and mitigate lead contamination.

The research team then received a community engagement grant designed to transfer much of the sampling, education, and stakeholder engagement to youth development programs already running in three partner organizations. This resulted in many innovations, including door hangers in advance of an in-person visit, a simpler risk communication system, and a youth-initiated mulching campaign in neighborhoods with likely lead hazards. Instead of researchers presenting the data, youth groups created a video about how to test soil for lead. While researchers achieved hundreds of previously inaccessible samples, communities obtained valuable information on existing lead contamination and how to garden safely.

Project Iteration and Sustainability

The last evolution of the program involved moving indoors, with community members collecting dust from vacuum containers and sending them for laboratory analysis of indoor risks. This program eventually went international through [an interactive web-based portal](#) for information, sampling instructions, and results reporting.

Currently, the MapMyEnvironment program provides interactive tools to explore the environmental conditions in neighborhoods, request testing of individual household samples, and learn about exposure hazard risks and mitigation.

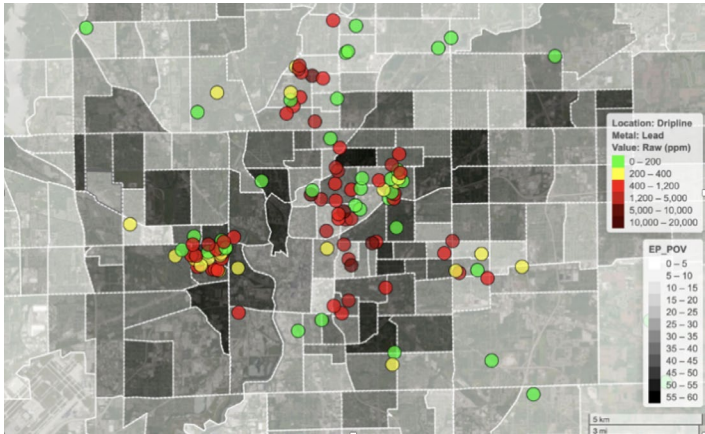
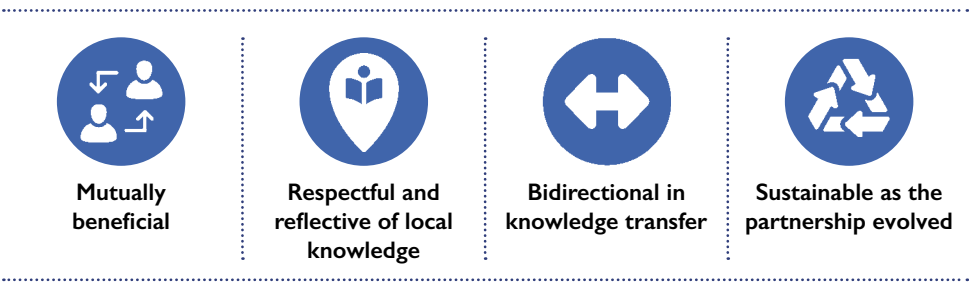


Figure 4: A MapMyEnvironment image of Indianapolis, where contaminant lead in soils (colored circles) is depicted alongside communities’ economic status (percent of poverty, in gray).

Takeaway Points

In the course of a decade, what started with minimal engagement from the research team in taking soil samples to find hot spots in lead poisoning led to a larger-scale community engagement program, and eventually to a multinational research enterprise to understand the drivers of environmental health and key mitigation factors around the world, involving a diversity of partnerships.

Components of a successful community–researcher partnership



To reflect on the four components of successful community–researcher partnership, this example was:

- **Mutually beneficial.** Researchers obtained access to backyards and gathered rich soil data that resulted in 10 publications. The community obtained results to identify areas of major concern and, in one case, a neighborhood conducted a free mulch drive to mitigate the immediate problem of lead exposure.

- **Respectful and reflective of local knowledge.** Youth leaders in the program had a strong sense of the most problematic areas in the community and how to conduct testing appropriately with respected community members. The community also heard a young local voice delivering the message about contamination and mitigation.
- **Bidirectional in knowledge transfer.** In addition to researchers transferring knowledge on contamination hotspots and mitigation efforts to communities, communities transferred knowledge to researchers on how to communicate with vulnerable populations. This was facilitated by close collaboration and frequent communication with community representatives. Youth community members became empowered action drivers to do and communicate science.
- **Sustainable as the partnership evolved.** The partnership grew and expanded appropriately over time through central Indiana, including long-term relationships with community organizations and the private sector. The partnership eventually evolved into an international program to gather citizen science information about environmental hazards and communicate results that have local impact, expanding beyond lead to heavy metals, allergens, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and antimicrobial resistance.

Overall, the program learned that community input can have unintended benefits for long-lasting research partnerships. A key lesson learned was that researchers should engage in deeper and more meaningful ways to focus on sustainably building capacity within vulnerable communities to address community needs through community channels.

Next Steps and Resources

The models and example presented can guide your work to effectively engage communities in a variety of settings for research translation. As you build your partnerships and engage communities in research translation toward development impact, remember to construct your engagements in ways that are mutually beneficial, reflective of local knowledge, bidirectional in communication, and sustainable as partnerships evolve. Alongside your partners, consider how you can measure engagements across these different dimensions at the start to allow for and encourage mutual accountability.

For additional reading on the strategies outlined here, please see:

- [Map My Environment](#)
- [Citizen Science Association](#)
- [Community-Based Participatory Research Program](#) (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities)
- [All of Us Research Program](#) (National Institutes of Health)
- [Community-Engaged and Community-Based Participatory Research](#) (CITI Program)

References

- Böcher, Michael, and Max Krott. 2014. The RIU Model as an Analytical Framework for Scientific Knowledge Transfer: The Case of the 'Decision Support System Forest and Climate Change.' *Biodiversity and Conservation* 23: 3641-3656. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10531-014-0820-5>.
- Böcher, Michael, and Max Krott. 2016. The RIU Model as an Analytical Framework for Scientific Knowledge Transfer. In: *Science Makes the World Go Round*. Springer, Cham. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-34079-1_2.

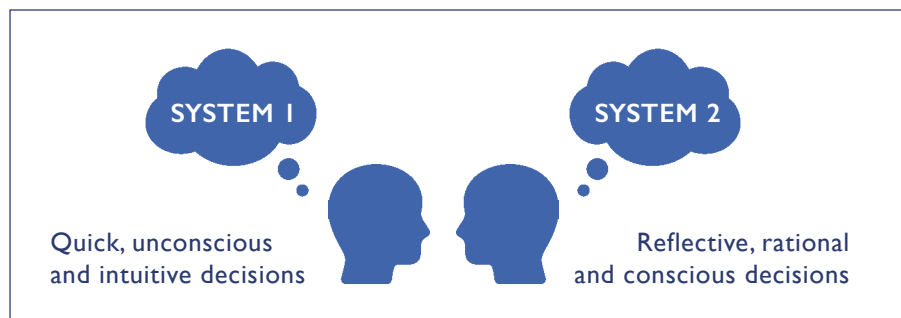
- Do, Huong, Nataly Juerges, Max Krott, and Michael Böcher. 2019. Can Landscape Planning Solve Scale Mismatches in Environmental Governance? A Case Study from Vietnam. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2514848618822510>.
- English, PB, MJ Richardson, and C Garzón-Galvis. 2018. From Crowdsourcing to Extreme Citizen Science: Participatory Research for Environmental Health. *Annual Review of Public Health* 39: 335-350. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040617-013702>.
- Filippelli, Gabriel M, Martin Risch, Mark AS Laidlaw, Deborah E Nichols, and Julie Crewe. 2015. Geochemical Legacies and the Future Health of Cities: A Tale of Two Neurotoxins in Urban Soils. *Elem Sci Anth* 3: 000059. <http://doi.org/10.12952/journal.elementa.000059>.
- Golden, Denise M, Carol Audet, and MA (Peggy) Smith. 2015. 'Blue-ice': Framing Climate Change and Reframing Climate Change Adaptation from the Indigenous Peoples' Perspective in the Northern Boreal Forest of Ontario, Canada. *Climate and Development* 7 (5): 401-413. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2014.966048>.
- Hendricks, Deborah, Amy Shanafelt, Sheila Riggs, Kathleen Call, and Milton Eder. 2019. Proceedings of Advancing the Science of Community Engaged Research (CEnR): Innovative and Effective Methods of Stakeholder Engagement in Translational Research: Abstracts. *BMC Proceedings* 13 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12919-019-0163-z>.
- Israel, Tiffany, Helena Farrow, Yvonne Joosten, and Yolanda Vaughn. Community Engagement Studio Toolkit 2.0. Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. https://www.meharry-vanderbilt.org/sites/vumc.org.meharry-vanderbilt/files/public_files/CESToolkit%202.0.pdf.
- Luger, Tana M, Alison B Hamilton, and Gala True. 2020. Measuring Community-Engaged Research Contexts, Processes, and Outcomes: A Scoping Review. *Milbank Quarterly* 98 (2): 493-553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12458>.

2C Harnessing the Power of the Nudge

A nudge can be an effective tool to alter a behavior to achieve a desired behavioral outcome. It can be used through the research translation process where a behavior to change has been identified, potentially when collaborating with partners or stakeholders, but is perhaps most salient when designing translation products and conducting dissemination activities. As you engage in research translation projects, consider using these techniques to help influence behavioral change toward evidence-based practices. This guide and associated learning modules ([Overview](#) and [Simulation](#)) will help you use the nudge to achieve your research translation goals and make an impact in your research projects.

Behavioral Economics and the Nudge

Behavioral economics studies show how the decision-making of individuals is affected by a combination of economic incentives and psychology. It assumes that people often do not make decisions in a rational fashion, their thoughts and choices are influenced by their environment or context, and that two separate brain systems operate when decisions are made. System 1 often makes quick decisions that are unconscious and intuitive, and reflects most of our daily choices. System 2 makes decisions that are reflective, rational and conscious. People most often process information in quick and unconscious ways. As a result, they are most likely not making decisions based on rational argument.



Choice architecture or choice design is presenting stakeholders with choices in different ways in the hope of influencing their decision-making processes. The power of behavioral economics and choice architecture is often harnessed through the use of the nudge, defined as **any aspect of choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding other options or influencing their decision with money or prizes**. A nudge is largely used to impact an individual's system of decision-making, which is quick and primarily based on intuition. Influencing this level of decision-making can help you as the researcher achieve greater impact as a result of your research.

How to Nudge: A Step-by-Step Process

A variety of nudges exist that can be used to indirectly influence decision-making. To properly identify what kind of nudge to use when and how, a step-by-step process can be used to guide you:



Step 1: Identify the behavior to change and the desired target behavior.

The first step in being able to change any behavior is to **clearly determine the current behavior and identify the target behavior desired**. You can identify the behavior to change by observing a group or individuals in action, similar to an observational study. If this is not an option, you can rely on data trends to point you in the right direction, and follow up with local research partners or universities to conduct focus groups or interviews to pinpoint the specific behavior in need of change.

Step 2: Map the process leading to the current behavior. Once the behavior to change and desired target behavior have been identified, map the choice architecture to help determine what is leading to the current behavior.

- Map the choice architecture or choice process that is leading to the behavior you seek to change. Identify:
 - Any default options selected.
 - Alternative choices that are available but not being selected.
 - Actions taking place that contribute to the current behavior.
- Identify the people in the environment who are contributing to the behavior you seek to change.
- Determine the target audience for the nudge.

Step 3: Select a nudge. Once you have assessed the behavior you seek to change, it is time to select a nudge. A list of nudges can be found [here](#). As you select a nudge or design your own nudge, remember the **EAST** acronym. Keep the nudge: **E**asy, **A**tttractive, **S**ocial and **T**imely.

Step 4: Check the potential of your nudge. Once you have identified a nudge that you believe might influence a behavior, you can assess its potential effectiveness by using the [Mindspace Checklist](#) (right), a quick way to know whether your nudge is effective enough to use in a real-world setting. Score each item from 1 to 5 based on your own judgment by checking the appropriate score. The higher the nudge score, the more effective the nudge will likely be. If your score is 35 or higher, your nudge is capable of affecting behavioral change.

Step 5: Experiment using the selected nudge. Now that the nudge has been selected, a user can experiment by running a nudge sprint, a process for quickly planning, implementing and reviewing the outcome of a scenario to determine whether a process is able to result in the user's desired outcome. This is an iterative process to rapidly plan, test, and assess to determine whether the desired outcome is achieved.

MINDSPACE Checklist
This checklist is a quick way to know if your nudge is effective enough to use in a real world setting. Each item below represents a type of nudge or intervention. Score each item 1-5 by checking the appropriate score. The higher the nudge score the more effective the nudge. Score items based on your own judgment. If your score is 35 or higher, your nudge is capable of affecting behavioral change.

MINDSPACE Explanation
MINDSPACE is easy to change behaviors that result from contextual influences. It stands for Messages, Incentives, Norms, Defaults, Salience, Priming, Affect, Commitment and Ego. With Mindspace you can encourage good things (donations, littering, excess debt and excess absenteeism) and encourage others (volunteering, voting, saving for retirement, and increasing productivity).

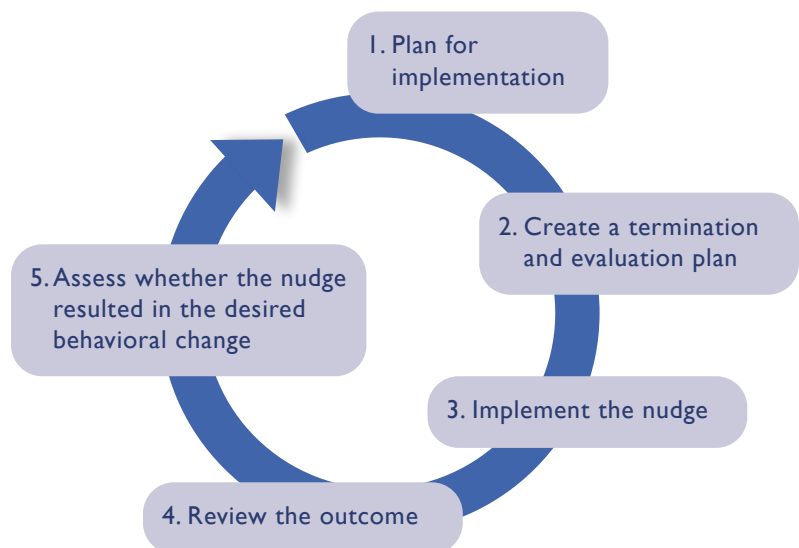
Nudge Type	1	2	3	4	5
Messenger People are heavily influenced by who delivers information					
Incentives People are very loss averse					
Norms People are strongly impacted by their perception of what others are doing					
Defaults People go with the flow and tend not to change preset options given					
Salience People are drawn to information perceived to be novel and relevant					
Priming People are impacted subconsciously by environmental cues					
Affect People go with their gut feelings; their first, emotional reaction					
Commitments People seek to follow through on our public promises					
Ego People want to feel good about themselves					

40-45 = Grade A – Good to go!
35-39 = Grade B – Proceed, but analyze the key elements that may be weak in MINDSPACE.
30-34 = Grade C – Look for ways to improve the score in the areas that are weak in MINDSPACE.
25-29 = Grade D – Make significant changes to adjust the MINDSPACE and re-score.
24 or less = Grade F – Make a new plan for the appropriate behavior change.

Total Score (1-45) =

Process to implement a nudge:

- **Plan for implementation.** Determine when the nudge will take place, how it will be implemented, the length of time to run the experiment, and establish a measurement or sensor in the system to determine whether the nudge is working.
- **Create a termination plan and evaluation plan.** Determine a metric to measure whether the nudge is working and a plan to terminate the approach if you are unable to see a change in the metric you have selected. Generally, select a measurement that is sensitive to a change in the system. For example, measuring calories burned after exercise.
- **Implement the nudge.** Once the nudge has been planned, run a sprint experiment in a designated timeframe. Monitor the measurement you have selected to assess whether the sprint is working.
- **Review the outcome.** After the sprint, review the process. Create time and space with your team to reflect on what worked, what could have been improved, what data your measurements collected, and whether you observed the target behavior you sought to achieve from the target audience.
- **Assess whether the nudge resulted in the desired behavior change.** After reviewing the information gathered from the sprint, determine whether the desired behavior change was realized. If yes, then the nudge was successful, and you should continue to monitor whether the nudge is successful in the long term. If not, assess the information gathered from the first nudge sprint, adjust, and run another sprint with a new nudge or an adjustment to the process. The process is agile as it is flexible to the changing nature of the situation or the adaptation to evolving human behavior.



Conclusion

The nudge is a powerful tool to influence behaviors of key stakeholders in development. Whether you are working in agriculture, education, health, the environment, or other fields of development, consider using the concepts and steps outlined above to design and implement nudges to help contribute to or facilitate your research translation efforts and achieve greater impact.

Additional Reading

Boustani, Malaz, Jose Azar, and Andrew O'Brien. 2020. *Artifacts, Ritual, Nudges, Stories, & Group-based Non Verbal Video Production*. <https://hii.iu.edu/resources/chiis-residency-oct-artifact-and-rituals---read-only.pdf>.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2013. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Thaler, Robert H., and Cass R. Sunstein. 2009. New York: *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Penguin Books.

2D Effective Storytelling

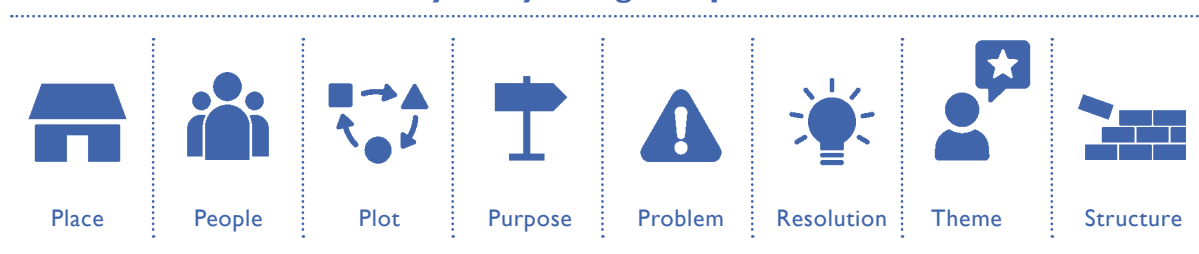
Our brains are hard-wired for stories (Gottschall 2012). You may not think scientists are storytellers, but you actually *do* tell stories in your journal articles, conference papers, and presentations. You tell those stories to peers who know how academic stories are structured, but you will be more effective in research translation if you learn to tell stories for a non-expert audience. Rather than describing how you arrived at your findings, tell a story about how the problem presented itself and how what you learned can change things. As you engage in your projects, storytelling will help your findings engage and inform non-technical experts in ways they understand.

What is Storytelling?

Storytelling is the process of using fact and narrative to communicate something to your audience. More specifically, storytelling is a means to share and interpret experiences. The goal is to turn your experiences into experiences shared with an audience.



Key Storytelling Components



Not all members of your audience will be able to relate well to scientific data, but they will enjoy a good story about how research can solve problems. Focus on the connections and minimize the distinctions between you and your audience. Be more than just the distinguished expert. Be the colleague with a really good story.

When you present at a conference of peers, you explain your research based on the shared experiences of research scientists. That is a story. When you present to a lay audience, the story you tell must leverage the shared experiences you have with them—the non-experts—rather than your peers with whom you share many assumptions and much knowledge.



Basic Storytelling Tips



Use a “hook” to engage audience.



Minimize background information.



Keep it concise. Better too short than too long.



Keep to your main point. Avoid digressions.



Highlight emotional elements.



Show rather than tell.



Do not rush.



Poke fun at yourself but nobody else.



Allow and welcome interruption.

Create and Structure Stories About Your Research

Every story has a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning introduces characters and scene. The middle develops a problem to be solved within a plot. The end resolves the problem.

- Open with an engaging anecdote about your key point to grab attention. Draw your audience in.
- Introduce main and secondary characters, and describe their relationships. Help your listeners relate to your characters as fellow human beings with a common mission.
- Describe the scene in which the action takes place. Help them see the place.
- Put your characters into the action of an unfolding plot. As your characters engage with each other, your listeners engage with your ideas about relationships.
- End with the solution and perhaps characters expressing newfound understanding.

A classic storytelling structure is the Dramatic Arc (Figure 1). It has a beginning, middle (where a climactic moment provides the greatest intensity), and an end. In many stories based on research, the climax is the evidence-based solution to a specific problem.

Telling a story is persuasion. By helping your audience to see the important relationships between people, places, and ideas, you help them understand how solutions based on scientific research can work.

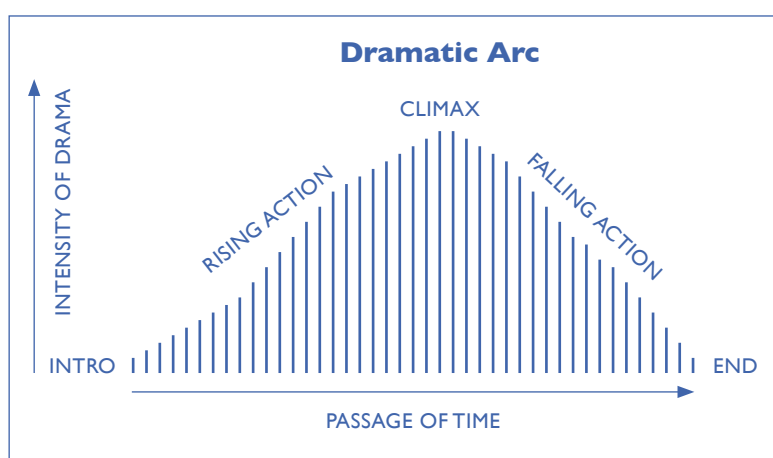


Figure 1: The Dramatic Arc (Freytag 1900)

Ladder of Abstraction

Explaining the relationship between abstract theory and concrete action is challenging. Building a series of intermediate steps between them will be more effective when constructing your story. In this way, the reader gradually builds a chain of relationships between these seemingly distinct levels of understanding.

Consider using S.I. Hayakawa's theoretical model (1949), the Ladder of Abstraction (Figure 2), to reveal how story concepts can be understood at different levels and then build those different levels of understanding into your narrative. In this example on silage farming techniques, the farmer's aspiration is prosperity, while the daily fear is that their cow will die and jeopardize the family's livelihood. Between these two extremes are intermediary concepts that connect them.

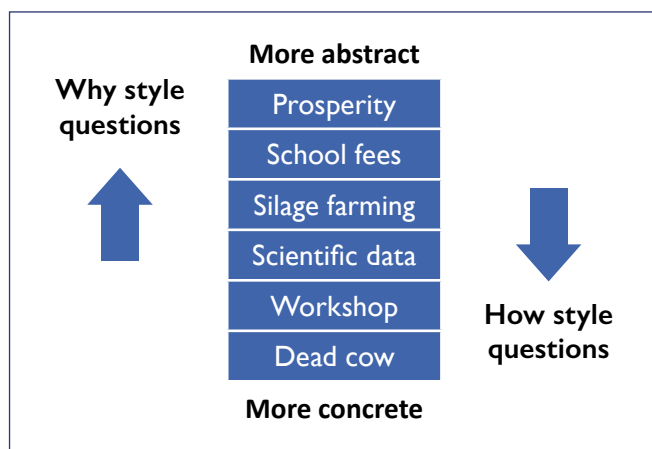


Figure 2: Ladder of Abstraction. Adapted from Barrett 2018.

The Ladder is especially useful for scientists because you generally think in abstract and conceptual ways, but must often convey concepts and findings in concrete terms to audiences far less familiar with the theories you work within. Please see the [Worksheet](#) for more details about the Ladder and watch the [Storytelling module](#) for more insight into how you can improve your storytelling.

Additional Reading

Barrett, Tom. February 3, 2018. Up and Down the Ladder of Abstraction. <https://tombarrett.medium.com/up-and-down-the-ladder-of-abstraction-cb73533be751>.

Freytag, Gustav. 1900. [Copyright 1894], Freytag's Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art by Dr. Gustav Freytag: An Authorized Translation From the Sixth German Edition by Elias J. MacEwan, M.A. (3rd ed.), Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Gottschall, Jonathan. 2012. *The Storytelling Animal*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Hayakawa, Samuel I. 1949. *Language in Thought and Action*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Jenkins, Keith. April 30, 2012. 5 Types of Photos That Make for Strong Photo Essays, Audio Slideshows. Poynter Institute for Media Studies. <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2012/5-types-of-photos-that-make-for-strong-photo-essays-audio-slideshows/>.

Konnikova, Maria. April 19, 2012. The Storytelling Animal: A Conversation with Jonathan Gottschall, in Literally Psyched, *Scientific American*. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/literally-psyched/the-storytelling-animal-a-conversation-with-jonathan-gottschall/>.

Scanlon, Chip. September 29, 2003. What is Narrative, Anyway? <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2003/what-is-narrative-anyway/>.



Photo by Jeffrey Goecker/Purdue University

3. CREATING BRIEFS AND OTHER WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

A. HOW TO PLAN FOR AND UTILIZE A BRIEF

B. POLICY BRIEF TEMPLATE

C. PROJECT SUMMARY TEMPLATE

D. USING ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE

PLANNING
AND STRATEGY
TOOLS



SPECIFIC
APPROACHES
TO RESEARCH
TRANSLATION



CREATING
BRIEFS AND
OTHER WRITTEN
COMMUNICATIONS



3. CREATING BRIEFS AND OTHER WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Briefs and written communications are perhaps the most common approach to product development in research translation, and can be very effective if developed correctly. Find tools in this section to help you use accessible language, and plan for and develop briefing documents. Tools and guidance here are specifically intended for written communications and briefs, and include *How to Plan for and Utilize a Brief*, *Using Accessible Language*, a *Policy Brief Template*, and a *Project Summary Template*.

Find tools in this section to help you use accessible language, and plan for and develop briefing documents.

While you should consult the *How to Plan for and Utilize a Brief* guide early as you plan the scope and audience for your products, much of this guidance is most useful as you design and deploy written communications. When writing about your outcomes and recommendations, consult the *Using Accessible Language* guide to make sure the content you create is useful for policymakers or practitioners. If you are designing briefs, consider using one of the two briefs as a first step. The *Policy Brief Template* is intended for a policy audience and assists with using your findings to create actionable recommendations on a current policy, while the *Project Summary Template* is more general about your project's findings and might help begin an evidence brief.

3A How to Plan for and Utilize a Brief

LASER PULSE's approach toward integrating research into practice or policy rests on the [Embedded Research Translation](#) model—which necessitates early and active collaborations among researchers, practitioners, and other development stakeholders. This ensures that research translation is embedded across all phases of the project, from identifying the research topic to disseminating the findings for broader impact and scale. Key to this integration is the development of a translation product, a tangible material based on research findings that is tailored for use by a specific audience.

Briefing documents on research are the most common translation products. A strong briefing document will include a robust strategy toward reaching and changing audiences, instead of only summaries and recommendations. Other tools in this section offer guidance on developing the content and formatting of a brief. This guide features tips on how to use these briefs effectively to achieve change.

Note that while most guidance here is relevant to policy briefs, and policy briefs are highly prevalent and useful, for your project, you may consider employing a different kind of brief depending on the degree to which your project context and findings are policy relevant. Consider research briefs, evidence briefs, technical briefs, white papers, and others when planning for your final deliverables.



Key Considerations for Your Brief



Target the right people at the right time with the right message through the right channel.



Map the policy environment to understand who will use your brief.



Research key groups to understand what is most important to them and how to best influence them.



Engage stakeholders early on to build confidence and trust in, and ownership of, your work.



Tailor your brief's content, language, and framing to a specific audience



Consider a variety of complementary dissemination activities.

Investigate Key Audiences

The general audience for a brief on your research is the knowledgeable non-expert. While policymakers represent a critically important audience, it also pays to complete a stakeholder analysis to identify additional audiences. Consider mapping the policy environment to develop a broader list of stakeholders that have power to either create or influence policy in your area. Beyond stakeholder analysis, other tools include context mapping, outcome mapping, network analysis, forcefield analysis, or power analysis. Even a general SWOT analysis, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, can help you begin to explore the field around you. These tools will help you assess what the drivers of policy change are in a particular landscape.

Investigate these key audiences to identify those that may be particularly interested and influential. From the information you have, determine your primary, secondary, and (if applicable) tertiary audiences based on who stands to benefit from your work, who has an interest in it, who has the capacity to influence policy, and who could serve as a long-term agent of change.

Research individuals who may have an interest in taking action on your findings, to determine their interests, information needs, and preferred means of communication. You can find secondary information if sufficient, or conduct your own primary research through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, surveys, and more. Find what works for your project so you gain enough of an understanding about your audience to influence them. Assess the level of information policymakers may need, from general to specific or expert, as well as the volume of information that is most helpful – whether it is a bulleted list, a few pages, or a full report. Discover their level of conceptual understanding of your topic. Determine the types of statements they might respond to and types of information they consume.

Engage stakeholders to promote ownership and action

Policy briefs are effective tools for creating interest in a project and its findings. However, a brief is not sufficient on its own to affect change in the policy sphere. To advocate effectively for policy change, it is necessary to engage stakeholders in ongoing dialog to promote ownership and action.

Once you understand how knowledgeable your audience is about your research subject, how the audience members prefer to receive communications, what their information needs are, and how receptive they are to either change or causing change, you will be prepared to engage with them.

Build Strategic Partnerships

Ongoing engagement with policymakers and other key stakeholders may lead to the development of strategic partnerships. Use the information you have gained above to prioritize engagement with certain stakeholders and the degree to which you can formalize engagement into a partnership. Consider including these stakeholders in the research process by gathering input and recommendations on the research focus, as well as updating them as the project progresses. Use the process of developing a brief to involve stakeholders in making decisions connected to the project to help them feel ownership in the findings.

Develop Strategies for Engagement Toward Dissemination

TIMING

It is critical to get a brief into the hands of the right people at the right time. Writing and disseminating a brief soon after or even before the publication of research will build momentum and interest in new findings. It is also effective to publish when a topic or issue is in the news or otherwise has come into focus for end users such as policymakers. Assess upcoming events and legislative cycles to see when engagements could be most useful. Consider communicating to mobilize public support that could influence policy.

CHANNELS

Mailing or emailing briefs is a common distribution strategy. Be sure to send the brief to a specific person who is directly involved with the issue at hand or has the ability to influence it. Also, publish the brief on a website, write about the research and findings on a blog, and link to both on social media. Distribute briefs through professional social networking sites, and submit press releases to local media. Present findings at conferences and other professional events.

In-person communication can make the difference between someone discarding a brief or reading and acting upon it. Follow up mailings with phone calls to ask whether stakeholders would like additional resources, reports, etc. Ask them to distribute the brief to other interested and involved colleagues.

Organize group meetings, workshops, and webinars where issues can be discussed in more depth. Be prepared for audiences to have a different interpretation of the findings. Also, keep in mind that interactions with various audiences will differ, communication may be inconsistent, and you will need to refresh their memories on previous discussions and interactions.

ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with the public can be an effective strategy for policy advocacy. Organizing public events can be useful for obtaining public feedback on your research, and its implications and recommendations. At such an event, you might use a policy brief to consult with stakeholders to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. The brief can also be used to initiate collaboration with policymakers who will offer advice and recommendations on your project. These collaborations will give you greater access to pathways that influence policy change.

Create Content and Tailor Materials to Your Audience

Based on information obtained under *Investigate Key Audiences*, tailor your content to meet the needs of stakeholders actively engaged in your project. If you find your audience responds particularly well to briefing documents, use the guidance in our [Policy Brief Template](#). When developing a policy brief, establish whether you are advocating for the development of or change to a specific policy, or objectively showcasing information about policy options.

For briefs that are less policy relevant, consider using our [Project Summary Template](#) to briefly discuss the implications of your project findings. Note that sending briefing documents to the right audiences is only one part of influencing. To influence change, you may need to combine briefs with meetings or presentations as part of a larger communication strategy.

Make sure your audience will respond well to the content in and presentation of the brief. Avoid jargon and present recommendations in accessible language. If possible, use language that your audience members use in their work. Distill your research findings into key messages that encourage your audience to understand the action you want taken and to take that action. Only provide essential information to a particular audience and avoid ancillary content.

Consider the extent to which graphs, charts, and images may be helpful in communicating your main points. These components, when combined with appropriate white space in a document, will guide your reader toward the main sections and to key information.

Dissemination Activities

The dissemination stage of your brief does not begin after your findings have been completed. As noted above, strategies for engagement will target various points during the project cycle. Early findings and preliminary versions of briefs can be shared with policymakers before the end of a project to update them, assess their feedback, and create ownership.

Before completing the brief, reassess the channels and engagement opportunities identified in your strategies to create a set of dissemination activities. After finalizing content, consider sharing it with a few relevant project stakeholders for feedback before sending to wider audiences. Upon completion, send the brief to key stakeholders as part of a set of dissemination activities. Pair the brief with workshops, events, or meetings, to allow for additional context.

Evaluate the Impact of Engagement Strategies

After executing your strategy and disseminating your brief, assess the effectiveness of your strategy with key audiences and gather evidence to assess the most effective communication and engagement strategies used by the team. When feasible, work with an independent evaluator to evaluate the impact of the engagement strategies surrounding your brief. If you have project or communications goals and objectives, assess the extent to which they were met.

Track stakeholder responses, and use website and social media analytics. Perform a cost–benefit analysis on your engagements. Assess whether or not policymakers understood or acted on your message. Determine whether stakeholders perceived your team as credible and trustworthy. Look at project outcomes to see where communication played a role. If it did, assess how well it worked to achieve that particular outcome.

Potential indicators include reach, usefulness of the brief, usage of the brief, changes in knowledge or attitudes, changes in policy or practice, partner or end-user satisfaction, and outcomes of partnership. Determine overall findings and trends in your engagement to revise approaches in the future.

Remember that stakeholders, and policymakers in particular, build relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. Work to become a trusted information source. Maintain current data and update websites. Use evaluation findings to develop a research agenda that is relevant to the current policy context.

Learning

Consider what ongoing professional learning may help the team to increase its awareness of stakeholders’ needs, access routes, and professional routines. Trainings on communication with policymakers are available at many institutions and those that involve policymakers themselves are particularly valuable.

Be sure to explore in-house resources that may support communication with policymakers. Within universities, centers, institutes, and departments feature existing infrastructure. For example, Indiana University offers an online database of expert faculty, along with [research communication training](#) and support for working with news and media outlets, as well as liaising with state and federal government officials. Nonprofit or donor organizations have additional resources. Explore the capacity within your own organization to assist with communicating your brief.

Additional Reading

Bennett, Gavin, and Nasreen Jessani. 2011. *The Knowledge Translation Toolkit: Bridging the Know–Do Gap: A Resource for Researchers*. Edited by International Development Research Centre. Canada: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://www.idrc.ca/en/book/knowledge-translation-toolkit-bridging-know-do-gap-resource-researchers>.

Brownson, Ross C., Graham A. Colditz, and Enola Knisley Proctor. 2018. *Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health: Translating Science to Practice*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190683214.001.0001>.

Building Public Trust Through a Responsive Parliament: A Quick Guide to Constituency Outreach. National Democratic Institute. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Quick%20Guide%20to%20Constituency%20Outreach%20%28English%29.pdf>.

Grimshaw, Jeremy M., Martin P. Eccles, John N. Lavis, Sophie J. Hill, and Janet E. Squires. 2012. Knowledge Translation of Research Findings. *Implementation Science* 7, no. 50. <https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1748-5908-7-50>.

MEASURE Evaluation. 2009. *Making Research Findings Actionable: A Quick Reference to Communicating Health Information for Decision-making*. https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-09-39/at_download/document.

CONCISE, INTERESTING, AND INFORMATIVE TITLE



Informative caption goes here. Photo by Chanyalew S. Aweke/Haramaya University

Highlight the first sentence of your introduction in bold type. An effective introduction grabs your audience's attention and motivates them to act. Policy briefs should focus more explicitly on implications for a specific policy rather than solely on the research. Describe the problem you wish to address, and help the audience to understand its importance. Provide the background information necessary to understand the issue. Offer evidence and/or examples that illustrate the causes and implications of the current situation.

In the second paragraph, you may describe the project or research and what it addresses. This may be a good place to mention your research questions, your project's focus, and your team.

Describe the context of your research on a development challenge, including the individuals or organizations involved, other significant background information, and what the steps are to create change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Summarize** 3 to 5 main ideas that you want your audience to remember, even if they don't read the rest of the brief.
- **Weave in** recommendations that are clear, easy to understand, and realistic.
- **Launch** each recommendation with an action verb.
- **Emphasize** key terms in bold type.

As you write the brief, consider these questions:

- What is the situation like now? What needs to change?
- Who is involved in making the change?

Describe in more depth why the issue is important, and emphasize the essential information your audience needs to know. Focus on plain writing and avoid academic or technical language.

A statement that summarizes your findings relevant to policy

In this section, you'll describe your project's most important research finding and related policy recommendations, based on the audience receiving the brief. Remember that a policy brief ultimately is persuasive. Tailor your findings summary to your audience's interests and needs. Consider what is most practical and relevant for them to know. Again, focus on plain writing and avoid academic or technical language. Highlight unique methods or data collection, but avoid excessive detail. Your audience is more interested in meaning than method.

Storytelling is a powerful communications strategy. Tell stories that align with your key points and include vivid detail and emotion in order to trigger changes in attitudes and/or behaviors.

Consider techniques such as developing a narrative, tailoring your language to a particular audience, employing metaphors and vivid imagery, and focusing on key individuals related to the project. Bridge with the next section by describing policy implications of your takeaway points.

USE GRAPHS,
CHARTS AND
INFOGRAPHICS



A key point is highlighted here along with an icon.



A key point is highlighted here along with an icon.



A key point is highlighted here along with an icon.

A statement that summarizes your policy recommendations

In this section, provide options for potential revisions to policy. Recommendations can include thoughts about policy change, the cost of the intervention, how it is delivered, and what cultural considerations are important. Consider what your findings mean for policy decisions and what information will inspire your audience to act. Use active voice with actionable language.

Make sure that your research supports the recommendations. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the different options, including costs, benefits, and potential side effects. Using evidence and examples, describe the impact of policy revisions and how they can address the issue. Discuss the viability of implementing your recommendations and tie recommendations back to the overall benefit for the issue at hand. What is the overall call to action, and what can the reader do next? If you have space, add additional support or citations that you consider necessary.

On the bottom right or left, place an image of the team or the project environment with attribution of the key researchers and communities involved. Include a link or contact information for the reader.

“GRAB YOUR READER’S ATTENTION WITH AN INFLUENTIAL QUOTATION OR USE THIS SPACE TO EMPHASIZE A KEY POINT.”

Cite your source here



Photo by Gary Burniske

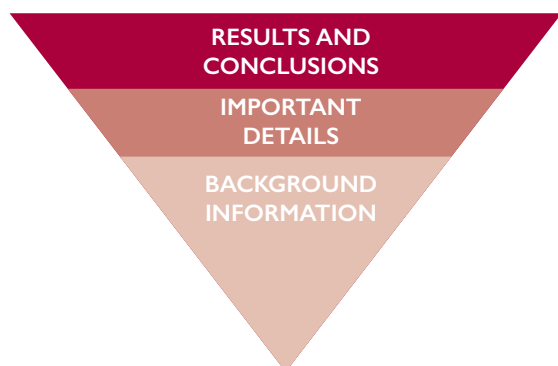
**Project Name | Main Contact | Phone |
Email | Website**

CONCISE, INTERESTING, AND INFORMATIVE TITLE



Informative caption goes here. Photo by Doug Linstedt/Unsplash

Highlight the first sentence of your introduction in bold type. Engage your audience's attention by summarizing your project's main findings and helping the audience to see why they should care. This format runs counter to the ways in which scientists are typically trained. Traditional academic papers begin with background information, move on to supporting details, and finally present their results and conclusions. However, when communicating with other audiences, it is effective to invert this model as shown in the diagram below. Journalists use this inverted model to place results and conclusions—which are often of most interest to non-experts—before more detailed information, such as methodology.



**INSERT A PLAIN-LANGUAGE
VERSION OF YOUR PROJECT'S
MAIN FINDING(S) IN THIS SPACE.
TAILOR THE FINDINGS TO MATCH
THE NEEDS OF THE AUDIENCE.**

Your second paragraph can provide background information on the research problem you investigated. As you write, consider these questions: What issue has your research addressed and what is the context behind this issue? Identify the development challenge for which your work has designed a solution.

A statement describing your key research focus and context

In an academic paper, the methods section must provide enough information so that the experiment can be duplicated. However, this level of detail is unnecessary in this brief. Describe your research question(s) and general methods, but without the level of detail used in an academic paper. Use plain language to help your audience understand the key

focus on your project and the ways in which your team gathered and analyzed data. The goal is to provide enough information to inspire confidence that your team has been rigorous in its approach. Use this section to connect your research focus to the on-the-ground practice and context of the issue you are engaging.

A statement summarizing your project's findings

Present the findings of your study using plain language and vocabulary appropriate to a general audience. Include key data gathered resulting from the methods your team used.

Be concise, and avoid providing data that is not directly related to your main findings.

Use graphic elements to present data more efficiently and effectively. Again, focus on helping non-experts to understand the key findings of the project.

As you write, consider these questions

- ◆ What approach did you take to translate your research into practice?
- ◆ How did you engage the community?
- ◆ Did you develop any regional partnerships?
- ◆ What was the role of the implementing partner?
- ◆ What worked for you in applying your research to a development challenge?
- ◆ What effective steps did you take that would help your project serve as a model for others?

A statement summarizing how results will be applied in practice

Using plain language, interpret your project's findings, and describe their significance to practice in the light of what was already known about the problem being investigated. Show your audience how they can act on your findings. Explain the underlying meaning of your research in terms your audience understands. Help your audience to see how your project advances a development solution as a product, practice, or policy. Encourage their ownership of the problem and its remedies. Provide actions the audience can take to adopt, adapt, or otherwise benefit from this solution. Describe the process of translating research into practice, and specific activities undertaken by your team. Also highlight any research translation, community engagement implications or best practices that your audience could utilize. On the bottom right or left, place a picture of the team or the project environment with attribution of the key researchers and communities involved. Also, include a link or contact information for the reader.



Photo courtesy USAID/Uganda

**Project Name | Main Contact | Phone |
Email | Website**

3 D Using Accessible Language

Scientific language is useful in many contexts, but it often represents an access barrier for end users. Critics argue that overly technical language is not helpful to policymakers, leaders, and other stakeholders who make decisions that could be informed by the research. Jargon interferes with the ability to process information, even when definitions are provided. Jargon also reduces interest in research and makes practitioners or policymakers less likely to take ownership of research and relate to the research community.

Increase clarity

As researchers explore better ways to communicate their work, they are calling for increased language clarity in research communication. Suggested strategies fall into broad categories, including more effective ways to organize documents and recommendations around writing style. For example, writing in the passive voice is less effective because sentences are longer and the subject may be absent or overlooked. The active voice helps your reader more easily understand your message and its context.

Some researchers worry that increasing the clarity of scientific information means that they must oversimplify complex information. Simplified language sometimes lacks the nuance that helps stakeholders to understand new information and act on it. Even when research-based information is presented clearly, stakeholders may not change their attitudes and behaviors in expected ways. However, it still is important to use accurate terminology, even while avoiding jargon. Researchers may assume that the solution is to provide more or clearer information to stakeholders. However, sometimes changing the way you present the information is more effective. In all cases, it is important to realize that stakeholder inaction in response to your findings does not necessarily mean that they are anti-science or anti-intellectual.

Strategies for Increasing Clarity

- ◆ Begin documents with their purpose and bottom line, including necessary background information toward the end.
- ◆ Organize documents into short sections with useful headings.
- ◆ Write brief paragraphs that focus on one topic only.
- ◆ Keep sentences short, feature the main idea first, and keep subject, object, and verb close together.
- ◆ Use active verbs and pronouns, and short, simple words.
- ◆ Use examples, bullet points, tables, and graphic elements.

Effective research communication is not just a matter of disseminating information to stakeholders; it is about creating meaning *with* stakeholders, and the general public's knowledge is valuable and relevant in the research process. While it still is important to consider the clarity of research communication, it is also important to learn new ways of engaging with stakeholders in dialog.

Engage with diverse stakeholders

Informing the attitudes and behaviors of stakeholders relies on more than just the clarity of messages. Researchers play various roles in the communication process. They may disseminate research findings to other professionals, testify as public experts, help stakeholders understand research findings, participate in decision-making, and more. Each of these contexts involves different stakeholder groups, who may be experts in other fields and have their own language, jargon, communication goals, and concerns. In fact, research communication takes place in many different contexts: in conferences and conversations with peers, in the media, at events and meetings, and in reports and products such as briefs.

This requires researchers to develop a process to identify stakeholder groups, understand their needs, and incorporate their language and priorities into communications. A simple way to build an understanding of stakeholder needs, language, and priorities is to attend public events where researchers interact and communicate with those outside of their areas of expertise. For example, attending a local talk on a topic of interest to your stakeholders.

Researchers may also take more formal approaches to ensuring they are communicating clearly. Consider the following strategies:

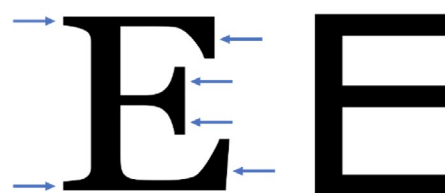
- **Paraphrase Testing:** A stakeholder is asked to read a document prepared by a researcher, and to describe its meaning in their own words. This method is best for brief documents.
- **Usability Testing:** A stakeholder is provided with a hypothetical scenario in which they would need specific information, and asked to use a document created by researchers to find and understand that information. *Example scenario: You learn that a river may be polluted. Find out whether you should report it to a local or national environmental agency. If you do, find out the process for doing so.*
- **Controlled Comparative Studies:** Different groups of stakeholders test different versions of a document. Researchers collect and compare data on how well the stakeholders were able to paraphrase information from and/or use the different versions.

Employing these strategies will enable you to draft content with your audience in mind, check content accuracy, and assess how well your audience will understand your messages.

Strategize to tailor messages

As researchers develop clarity around stakeholder needs, language, and priorities, they can better tailor communication to those audiences. While content is important, research has found that careful design of messages can increase their persuasiveness. For example, it is more effective to introduce familiar concepts before new or controversial findings. Providing multiple options for decisions rather than only one may spur more stakeholders to act. Focusing on the benefits of engaging in a new behavior, rather than the consequences of failing to engage in that behavior, is also more effective in some contexts. The paraphrase and usability testing approaches described above can help researchers to learn which strategies are effective in communicating with their particular stakeholders.

Also, a product's visual design elements can affect the persuasiveness of its messages. It is vital to carefully consider a document's layout and design, including fonts, colors, and imagery. For example, italics can be difficult to read, and sans serif fonts may be more easily read than serif fonts in certain mediums (online versus printed). (A serif is a decorative element at the end of a letter stem. The arrows in the illustration point to serifs.)



As another example, employing strong color contrasts in graphics, as in the image below, can increase the persuasiveness of messages. Remember that color usage and contrast can also affect the accessibility of material to people with sight impairments.



Focus on context as well as content

Language clarity alone is insufficient as a strategy to increase language accessibility in research communication. Researchers should develop processes for engaging with, and understanding the needs and language of, diverse stakeholders. Testing the effectiveness of messages will help researchers to tailor those messages to different audiences. In more accessible terms: Context is as important as content in research communication. When your research project involves diverse stakeholders with different needs, consider approaches toward accessible language. The strategies outlined in this document as well as our online training are critical elements in a comprehensive strategy for research translation. Accessibility lends itself to action, which can mean increased impact for your research translation project.

Additional Reading

- Bucchi, Massimiano, and Brian Trench. 2008. *Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology*. Routledge.
- Krieger, Janice L., and Cindy Gallois. 2017. Translating Science: Using the Science of Language to Explicate the Language of Science. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 36 (1): 3-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X16663256>.
- Neil, Jordan M., Janice L. Krieger, and Thomas J. George Jr. 2017. Innovation or Inconsistency? Framing Colorectal Cancer Guidelines to Improve Public Perceptions of Updated Screening Recommendations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 36 (1): 14-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X16663258>.
- PlainLanguage.gov. 2011. Federal Plain Language Guidelines. <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf>
- Rice, Ronald E., and Howard Giles. 2017. The Contexts and Dynamics of Science Communication and Language. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 36 (1): 127-139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X16663257>.
- Shulman, Hillary C., and Olivia M. Bullock. 2019. Using Metacognitive Cues to Amplify Message Content: A New Direction in Strategic Communication. *Annals of the International Communication Association* 43 (1): 24-39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2019.1570472>.
- Shulman, Hillary C., Graham N. Dixon, Olivia M. Bullock, and Daniel Colón Amill. (2020). The Effects of Jargon on Processing Fluency, Self-Perceptions, and Scientific Engagement. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 39 (5-6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X20902177>.

CONCLUSION

We hope these resources will be helpful to you in designing and implementing effective research translation projects toward greater development impact. Whether you use the Embedded Research Translation model, components of it, or an alternative approach to research translation, we hope this collection of resources will continue to aid you in the process of making research more accessible, useful, and ultimately impactful.

For additional information on research translation, please see the [LASER PULSE website](#). For questions on the collection, please contact Christopher Rice at charice@indiana.edu.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



PURDUE
UNIVERSITY®



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



INDIANA UNIVERSITY



MAKERERE
UNIVERSITY
We Build for the Future



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME