GUIDE 6

EVALUATING YOUR KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION AND DISSEMINATION: HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ACHIEVED

Knowledge Translation, Dissemination, and Impact

A Practical Guide for Researchers

1. Why do we need to evaluate whether our knowledge translation activity has been successful?

You have done the hard work in creating and getting the evidence to the key stakeholders and knowledge users but how do you know whether it has had any benefit. You need to know what you are doing is succeeding and whether people are using the knowledge, and evidence, you produced to make decisions about their practice or policy. If they are not, why not? Is it because the evidence is not useful to them or because your messages were not strong enough? Evaluating your knowledge translation activity can show:
- Whether you are achieving your goals.
- Where you need to focus more attention.

2. Planning your evaluation

Good practice includes evaluating the knowledge translation (KT) and impact process during and after the research study.

- **What** part of your KT activity are you evaluating?
- **Will** your evaluation be a process or outcome evaluation or both?
  - Process: how you created and implemented your KT activity.
  - Outcome: what difference did the KT make, what worked well and what did not work so well.
- **What** resources are available to carry out an evaluation. What do you want to achieve and what do you want to measure?
- **Who** needs to be involved in your evaluation?
- **What** do you want to achieve and what benefits will come from your evaluation?
- **Are** there any ethical issues to be addressed?

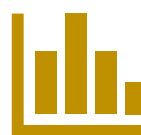There are **five steps** to planning an evaluation:

Stakeholder mapping	Outcome's mapping	Deciding on your KT indicators	Data collection methods	An evaluation plan

---

Step 1 – Stakeholder engagement and mapping

Involving stakeholders in your evaluation can have the additional benefit of engaging them in promoting your research, helping to disseminate it, and acting on the findings.

In considering who needs to be involved in the evaluation, it may be helpful to refer to any stakeholder mapping you undertook in planning your KT. *Guide number 5 - Stakeholder Engagement* has useful guidance on identifying and mapping stakeholders.

Consider who might be interested in your evaluation e.g.
- The research team
- Knowledge users/stakeholders

- Funders.

Would any of those stakeholders be able to help you plan and carry out your evaluation or help you to formulate the right questions to ask?

Step 2 – Outcomes mapping

A starting point for the evaluation would be to review the outcomes map or planning template for the KT inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that you developed at the beginning of your project (see *Guide number 2 – Planning Knowledge Translation*). From your outcomes map or planning template decide what you want to measure in order to record your progress.
Areas to consider when evaluating are:
- The efficacy of KT activities throughout the lifetime of the research project including post-research.
- The outcomes, responses, and impact of KT activities.
- How the message/knowledge was received; how the intended recipient became aware of the research message, accessed, and received the research message.
- Did the message/knowledge reach all those who may be interested including those from marginalised or seldom heard groups?
- How the knowledge was used – did it result in a change in understanding, attitudes, levels of knowledge, a change in behaviour or practice.
- Whether the knowledge and the right messages reached the target audience.
- The success of collaborations with key stakeholders and whether the right stakeholders were engaged.
- The impact – whether the message and knowledge resulted in any outcomes. Did the research inform, shape, or change policy, practice, behaviour, reduce costs or waste, or result in any further research?

Step 3 – Deciding on KT indicators and measures

Deciding what to measure will depend on what type of evaluation you are doing (process or outcome) and what you are interested in finding out. When setting your indicators/measures of success, you should think about them as specific and measurable outcomes. The following are examples of measures you might want to consider:

Process	Inputs; the approach to KT. Completion within the time frame and budget.
Reach	Who and how many stakeholders are receiving the outputs from the study? Number of people; type of stakeholder. Number of clicks on social media and websites; how long people spend on the site. Number of stakeholders attending events/training. Number of publications.
Use	How are stakeholders/knowledge users using the knowledge or evidence? What do they think about it? Did their knowledge, skills, awareness, confidence improve as a result?

Actions	What did stakeholders/knowledge users do as a result of the KT?
Change	Did policy, guidance, systems, practice, change as a result of the KT? Did behaviours change?
Outcomes	Did health outcomes change as a result of the new knowledge and evidence?

Step 4 – Data collection methods

What **methods** might you use in your evaluation?
Will the methods be qualitative or quantitative or mixed?
Are there existing tools that can be used, or will new ones need to be developed?
Consider the following tools:
- Questionnaires
- Surveys
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Focus groups
- Bibliometrics
- Statistics from social media platforms
- Economic data
- Monitoring or tracking your KT activity using a simple tracking tool such as the one below:

Monitoring/tracking tool

KT activity	Outputs and actions	Outcomes	Source of outcome data	Date	Other comments
What is the activity that is being tracked?	*Record each action that is being taken to support the KT activity.*	*Record each outcome that results from the KT.*	*Where did the outcome data come from e.g. survey, interview, social media stats?*	*Record the date you were gathered the information.*	*Is any further action needed?*

Step 5 – Evaluation plan

An evaluation plan might be helpful to set out your intentions:

What KT activities are you undertaking?

Evaluation goals	
Stakeholders **Who are they and how are they going to be involved?**	
Methods to collect evaluation data	
Measures of success	
Risks or challenges in collecting the evaluation data	
Roles **Who will do what in the evaluation?**	
What resources are needed	
Timeline and milestones	

Case examples

Examples of where evaluation plans and planning have been used can be found at:
https://training.cochrane.org/resource/evaluating-knowledge-translation-part-1

Cochrane Collaboration training 'How do we know if we are making a difference'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ri7Y5rk6ujI&list=PLxFw8aTtvq-fD2sMPjtX9MiO6huCPeeiv

VMM V4 August 2021