



Environment – Assessing the local context

[Environment – Understanding the Baseline](#)

What is assessing the local context?

You should assess the local context to have a better understanding of the setting where you are planning to implement your evidence.

Context is defined as the setting where the evidence or intervention is being conducted and includes the people that are involved and/or will be affected by the change.

Why is it so important?

Research, as everything else, is part of a wider context and is constantly affected by different economic, social and political processes that take place in society. Therefore, context should be considered in all aspects of research to action – the design, the data collection, how and when you disseminate, how you package, how to best implement, how you communicate, etcetera. This requires one to know the system and environment they are working in. Assessing the local context can help you and your stakeholders understand more about how the evidence/intervention can fit into the end-users' setting.

If you do not know and understand your local context it's a higher risk that you are taken by surprise and caught off guard by different situations that might appear. By being aware of different risks you can more easily prepare yourself for them and have a plan of action. Below are some identified risks that can influence the possibility for change.

- Bad timing of the research output and the policy agenda – your research does not follow the set policy agenda for that area or time
- Geographic barriers to easily implement research and discussions with colleagues
- Political barriers – political change, unstable regime, conflict can prevent your evidence or intervention to be hard and implemented
- Decision-making structures that do not provide for research input pathways
- Poor understanding of the decision-making process and the public system the researcher wants to engage with

How do we get there?

In order to understand the context, information about the organization, sector, country, region, target groups etc., need to be collected.

When conducting your research, the most important is to spend time in the setting and talk to people to understand the everyday life. Use existing material such as political, policy and development plans, contact collaboration partners (if you have any) to see what information they have, search the internet, contact organisations, financing agencies etc.

Assessing the local context should be done on different levels:

- Micro level - individuals
- Meso level – organization: culture, climate, readiness for change, support, structures
- Macro level – system-wide environment
- Included in all levels: social relations and support, financial resources, leadership, time, feedback, environment

Assessing the local context is a major area and is unique to all situations, therefore it can be hard to find a concrete tool. However, below are shortlisted tools to help you get started thinking in the right direction. But as mentioned above, the most important is to be out there in the setting.

In the Innovation and Technology for Health Toolkit you get a step-by-step on how you can do contextual analysis: <https://cesh.health/wp-content/uploads/1.4-Analyse-the-context.pdf>

TOOL: [Implementing health systems guidance](#)

By: John N. Lavis, MD PhD, Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, McMaster University; McMaster Health Forum, McMaster University; Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, McMaster University; Department of Political Science, McMaster University

Provides questions for the users to consider when developing national or subnational guidance or policy informed by global guidance. Includes a workbook with nine steps which addresses: problem, framing, implementation, context, monitoring and evaluation, and policy recommendations and strategies. We recommend looking at step 4 and 5 at this stage, but the workbook should be done as a whole, and we recommend this toolkit in other sub-tools.

TOOL: [Knowledge to Action Framework](#) by RNAO

A comprehensive toolkit including two major parts; The knowledge creation process and the action cycle that includes seven steps that moves knowledge into practice. Shows the process of knowledge translation and give tips and tools on how to move knowledge to action. The action cycle consists of the following steps (look closer at step 3):

1. identifying the problem or issue that you want to change, selecting knowledge to address the problem/issue, and determining the gap between knowledge and practice
2. adapting the knowledge to your context
3. assessing barriers and facilitators to knowledge use
4. selecting the right implementation strategies to make changes in your setting
5. monitoring knowledge use
6. evaluating outcomes
7. sustaining the change/use of knowledge

🔗 **TOOL: [Situation Analysis Manual](#)**

By: EVIPnet WHO

The toolkit helps in planning and conducting a situation analysis to understand the local context with regard to evidence-informed policymaking and knowledge translation. Provide general principles, approaches and tools that can be applied to conduct and present the findings from an situation analyse.

🔗 **TOOL: [Situation Analysis Tool WHO](#)**

By: World Health Organisation (WHO)

This toolkit is specifically focused on ear and hearing care. However, you can use this toolkit to get a better grasp on what kind of questions and areas a situation analysis can consist of. The toolkit includes a lot of great questioners to get inspiration from.

🔗 **TOOL: [SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed Policymaking in health](#)**

By: SUPPORT Tools

The article suggests five questions that can help to identify and appraise the *local evidence* that is needed to inform a decision about policy or programme options. Local evidence is evidence that is available from the specific setting(s) in which a decision or action on an option will be taken.