Environment – Understanding the Baseline

[⬈] **Environment – Assessing the local context**

What do we mean with environment baseline?

Assessing the environment, culture and attitudes of your team, organization and setting **a baseline to build a common vision on**.

Why is it so important?

To successfully translate research to action, the trajectory towards impact should be viewed as an important and common vision of your entire team and not something you pursue on your own. The translation of knowledge should be considered as an important part of the whole research process and to achieve this it is crucial to have your team and organization on board.

People sometimes have divergent perceptions of how well (or not) the organization or team is doing. Building a baseline through identifying the discrepancies and discussing the environment of your team can help to develop a shared vision and a plan of action going forward. **In short, knowing where you are at the start and understanding the extent to which the environment supports, and is motivated to work towards, the linking of research to action allows you to assess, measure and evaluate changes that occur.**

Achieving a supportive internal environment and being able to utilize the skills within, as well as collaborate with those outside, will facilitate the translation of research to action.

How do we get there?

Digging into the organizational environment can be a daunting step as it may uncover areas that are not ideal and will need some work to improve. There are tools and facilitators to make this process easier and importantly, to make sure feedback is constructive and not discouraging for the team. For example, using anonymous scorecards or surveys to provide the basis for discussions, building strategies and for reaching agreements.

Below are two shortlisted tools to help you get started but do check out the deep dive section as well for more in-depth recommendations, best practices and more tools.

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TOOL: Scorecard
By: SUPPORT (4-page document "Additional file 2")

A scorecard to address the key steps needed to ensure the appropriate use of research evidence to inform decisions related to health policies and programs. View this tool as the building block for reaching a consensus about the strengths, weaknesses, priorities and needed strategies. It is a short and concise tool that can easily be printed out and handed to members of your organization or research team, or be filled in during a group discussion.

We suggest reading the whole SUPPORT article (7 pages excluding references) to understand the context of how this scorecard was developed and for what purposes. For instance, it can also be used to monitor how well an organization is doing in its efforts to improve its use of research evidence.

The scorecard is divided into four main questions with sub- categories and a 1-5 scoring grade.The four main questions are:

1. *Do your organizational culture and values support the use of research evidence to inform decisions?*

2. *Does your organization do a good job of setting priorities for obtaining research evidence to inform decisions?*

3. *Does your organization do a good job of obtaining research evidence to inform decisions?*

4. *Does your organization do a good job of assessing the quality and applicability of research evidence and interpreting the results to inform priority decisions?*

TOOL: Team Retrospective
by Hyper Island

Hyper Island has curated a toolbox full of methods and techniques that can help facilitate action in various areas of professional life. One of the activities they recommend doing consistently is a 'Team Retrospective' as this can help you identify what has worked well, what could be improved, and uncovering challenging areas. We think this exercise can be a great way to challenge your team, bring knowledge translation to the table and find the sense of vision, motivation and common trajectory needed for research to action processes to be successful.

Check out the step-by-step guide for a successful team retrospective session.

TOOL: SWOT analysis

Take inspiration from this step by step guide within the Innovation Toolkit to map out your organization's Strengths and Opportunities (internal factors), Weaknesses and Threats (external factors).