



Skill–Stakeholder communication and engagement

☑ [Skill – Assess & manage barriers & facilitators](#)

☑ [Skill – Adapt to local context](#)

What is a stakeholder and what does stakeholder communication and engagement entail?

A stakeholder is a person or organization who has a “stake” in the problem you are trying to solve, and who could influence or be influenced by your research findings. Stakeholders can be policymakers, patients, end-users etc. Here we’ll discuss how to identify stakeholders and understand how to better communicate with and engage them to move research to action.

Why is communication and engagement important?

Communication, involvement, and collaboration with stakeholders are important factors to consider throughout the whole research to action process. When stakeholders are involved in the research process, dissemination and implementation and/or response to policy need - it is much more likely that the intervention gets implemented and used broadly. If end-users and/or people with lived experience of the problem you’re trying to solve are not involved in the process, there is a high risk that the change is not accepted by the end-users because of lacking feelings of involvement and trust.

Communication has, however, been identified as a barrier when translating research to action by both researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders. If you do not involve stakeholders early on there is a greater risk for the following barriers that can affect the uptake of your research negatively:

- Lack of coordination between researchers and policy makers that can hinder or stop your research to translate into action
- Policymakers and researchers do not always understand each other’s terminology and way of communicating and can lead to misunderstandings
- Inconclusive or conflicting findings that partners do not understand
- Lack of timeliness or relevance of research, in which the research process is often characterized as being out of step with the decision-making process.

- Lack or weak relationship with stakeholders and partners
- Poor involvement of decisionmakers/implementors early on in the research
- Decision-making structures that do not provide for research input pathways

How can you improve your communication and make people engaged?

In order to engage and collaborate with your stakeholders, you first need to identify who your stakeholders are. To do that you can do a Stakeholder Map. There are many variants of stakeholder mapping and templates to find online, for example in the Innovation and Technology for Health Toolkit you can do an exercise to identify relevant stakeholders: [1.3-Map-stakeholders.pdf \(cesh.health\)](#)

After you have identified your stakeholders, you can start communicating and engaging them. Importantly, transparent communication and engagement are needed components through the whole research and implementation process, with different stakeholders, at different times and using different means. Three areas have been identified as crucial to move research to policy:

- Personal and recurring contact between researchers and stakeholders
- Timeliness and relevance of research for policy need
- Inclusion of a summary with clear recommendations when presenting research results

As discussed in other sub-tools in this toolkit, personal contact is of great importance!

Some part of communication is connected to the skill to make people listen to you and wanting to get involved in what you are advertising. Tools connected to this kind of more personal characteristics are not listed here but we recommend everyone to work on improving the skills of, for example, public speaking, voice tonality, using humour and personalised narratives and storytelling etc. at another sources. We recommend checking out the Visualising and Communicating Data toolkit (<https://cesh.health/1903-2/>) for guidance on these matters.

Below are some tools to help you communicate with and engage stakeholders, so that you can start to move your research to action. Most of the tools are focused on policymakers, as they are one of the most important stakeholders when implementing research.

TOOL: [Policy Communication Toolkit](#)

By: PACE (Policy, Advocacy, Communication and Enhanced)

This toolkit consists of 9 modules with materials and approaches to build skills to effective communication between researchers and policy audiences, with the goal of increasing the use of evidence in policy and decision-making. You learn how to:

- Understand the process by which research informs the policy environment.
- Identify key policy audiences.

- Identify and communicate the policy implications of research.
- Communicate messages through a variety of platforms, including policy briefs, oral presentations, data visualizations, social media, and more

🔗 **TOOL:** [How to write a policy brief](#)

By: Canadian IDRC

A hands-on tool on how to present research and recommendations to a non-specialized audience. A strong policy brief distils research findings in plain language and draws clear links to policy initiatives. Consist of planning a policy brief, templates and design.

🔗 **TOOL:** [Evidence briefs for policy: using the integrated knowledge translation approach: guiding manual](#)

By: EVIPnet WHO

The manual providing hands-on guidance on developing evidence briefs for policy (EBP). The objectives of the manual are:

- to understand what an EBP is and have the ability to explain to third parties the purpose and comparative advantages of an EBP
- to understand and master the process of preparing for an EBP before its development
- to understand and learn how to develop and evaluate an EBP
- to understand how to prepare for and gain skills in conducting a policy dialogue, and then facilitate and evaluate it
- to acquire skills in developing strategies for the uptake of the EBP, including advocacy and media engagement to influence policy decisions.

🔗 **TOOL:** [SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking \(STP\) 15: Engaging the public in evidence-informed policymaking](#)

By: Oxman, A.D., Lewin, S., Lavis, J.N. et al. Health Res Policy Sys 7, S15 (2009).

Strategies to inform and engage the public in policy development and implementation. Includes three groups of the public; mass media, civil society groups and consumers. The article suggests three questions to consider regarding public participations strategies; 1. What strategies can be used when working with the mass media to inform the public about policy development and implementation? 2. What strategies can be used when working with civil society groups to inform and engage them in policy development and implementation? 3. What methods can be used to involve consumers in policy development and implementation?

📌 **TOOL: [SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking \(STP\) 14: Organising and using policy dialogues to support evidence-informed policymaking](#)**

Questions to guide those organizing and using dialog to support evidence-informed policymaking.

- 1. Does the dialogue address a high-priority issue?
- 2. Does the dialogue provide opportunities to discuss the problem, options to address the problem, and key implementation considerations?
- 3. Is the dialogue informed by a pre-circulated policy brief and by a discussion about the full range of factors that can influence the policymaking process?
- 4. Does the dialogue ensure fair representation among those who will be involved in, or affected by, future decisions related to the issue?
- 5. Does the dialogue engage a facilitator, follow a rule about not attributing comments to individuals, and *not* aim for consensus?
- 6. Are outputs produced and follow-up activities undertaken to support action?

📌 **TOOL: [Social Movement Action Framework](#)**

By: [RNAO](#)

This is a larger and more comprehensive toolbox with multiple categories addressing both internal organisational structures but also the external environment. The [Social Movement Action \(SMA\) Framework](#) describes an approach on how to use social movements and knowledge to create lasting change. The SMA Framework provides an outline of all the associated elements that are part of a social movement. A total of 16 elements – three preconditions, ten key characteristics and three outcomes.

We recommend looking closer at the parts about “public visibility” and “Networks of people and resources”.

📌 **TOOL: [Engaging persons with lived experience](#)**

By: RNAO

Part of the leading change toolkit as the SMA framework above. Toolkit consists of seeing if your team is ready for engaging people with lived experience, why it is important and how you can engage them.

Other resources:

Lavis JN, Robertson D, Woodside JM, McLeod CB, Abelson J; Knowledge Transfer Study Group. How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers?. *Milbank Q.* 2003;81(2):221-172. doi:10.1111/1468-0009.t01-1-00052
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2690219/>