

COMMUNICATING EVIDENCE FOR UPTAKE AND IMPACT

Most research and evaluation aims to create change – in understanding, in practice or in policy. To have an impact, you need to be clear about the change you want to see, and who that change involves. Effective communication of research and evaluation is about getting your evidence known about and used by those who are involved in the change you want to see. And that's not just about writing a report at the end of a research project. It's about engagement with your audience, building relationships with stakeholders, exchanging knowledge, and learning. The golden rule for effective communication for impact is **start early** – identify your impact objectives and target audience at the beginning, make a plan, ensure that it is included in your budget, and act on it.



AUDIENCE

Identifying and understanding your audience is the first step in successful communication – and it helps to do it at the beginning. Brainstorming a list is a useful start – being as specific as you can. But this is only the first step. Now you need to narrow it down. There are many different ways of doing this. You could cluster your audience into groups, you could split them into primary or secondary targets, or you could classify them as 'internal' or 'external' – anything that will help you prioritise and be precise. Then you need to discuss what you want each group to do with your research in order to have impact. This will help you plan when and how to try and engage them.



MESSAGES

Messages are the things that your audience needs to know. So when you write them, start with the different sections of your audience. Consider which part of what you have learned you want to share, and what kind of language you want to use to share it. In general, good messages are simple and concise – which means that they aren't easy to write. Leave enough time to draft and re-draft your messages. It will also help to learn from your own experience – think of times when you've been an audience – what messages worked for you? Look at a report or a blog or a brief that was really memorable for you – what was the message, and how was it written?



CHANNELS AND PLATFORMS

There are many channels and platforms for communication – digital and analogue – ranging from conversations to emails, blogs to podcasts to radio programmes. The two important questions in deciding what to use are: What is available to you? and What does your target audience use?



OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

Your plan for outputs and activities will be based on your audiences, messages and channels. Remember you will repurpose your evidence for different outputs and activities, and that you can distil a report into a brief, into a blog, into a Tweet. Also remember to factor in real costs – especially for producing high-quality written outputs, translation into other languages, and audio and video editing.



MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

Even a simple MEL exercise will help you understand how your communications have been received. Monitor downloads to learn about who has accessed publications, track Twitter impressions to understand more about your audience, or keep a log of communication activities and feedback.

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