

Advancing evidence-informed practice and policy through linkage and exchange

Goering, P., Butterill, D., Jacobson, N., & Sturtevant, D. (2003)

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REGISTRY OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION METHODS AND TOOLS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

RESOURCE: Method
ACTIVITY: Knowledge Exchange
STAGE: Planning, Doing

DESCRIPTION

This approach illustrates key recommendations and lessons learned through the process of establishing formal and arm's length relationships between researchers and policy-makers. This is seen as a useful way to approach knowledge exchange at the organizational level.

The concept of 'linkage and exchange' is central to this framework. Creating opportunities for researchers and policy-makers to link and exchange with one another has the potential to drive both timely and relevant research. Encouraging interactions between policy-makers and researchers diminishes the cultural divide between the two communities and increases the probability of evidence-informed policy making.

The developers of this framework offer four steps to knowledge transfer and exchange to advance the knowledge translation process:

1. developing and maintaining an inter-organizational partnership
2. working on interactive research projects

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3. disseminating research findings
4. developing evidence-informed policy

RELEVANCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

The steps presented in this model were developed from lessons learned through an inter-organizational research-policy partnership focusing on systems integration and mental health in Ontario. However, this approach to linkage and exchange would be transferable to several public health areas in multiple environments.

This framework supports close interaction between researchers and policy-makers. Building trusting relationships between these two groups can improve access to relevant and evidence-informed policy alternatives, especially in an environmental climate that is subject to time-sensitive decision making. For instance, the method could be used to inform rapid public health responses, such as the development of an immunization policy to address a pandemic.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation

Information not available

Validity

Not applicable

Reliability

Not applicable

Methodological Rating

Not applicable

IMPLEMENTING THE TOOL

Who is Involved?

Partnership between researchers and policy-makers would require the involvement of policy analysts, researchers, research/data analysts, communications officers and evaluation specialists.

Time

Information not available

The investment of considerable time and resources on the part of both parties is required to build and sustain the types of partnerships described here. This is especially the case during the formation of new and complex partnerships.

Additional Skills Needed for Implementation

Not specified

Steps for Using Tool

This method consists of a four-step approach to linkage and exchange to advance interactive evidence-informed policy development. The steps to inform the application of this knowledge transfer and exchange process include the following:

1. Develop and maintain an inter-organizational partnership:

This ongoing step is foundational and reflects the process for creating formal opportunities for regular linkage and exchange between researchers and policy-makers. The developers suggest the following strategies to build and sustain these formal partnerships:

- Conduct an independent needs assessment (each organization separately).
- Create a joint workplan for the new partnership.
- Build trust by explicitly discussing cultural and procedural differences.
- Facilitate communication by defining working concepts and terms of engagement.
- Define the partners' roles, responsibilities and expectations.

2. Ensure credibility while working interactively on relevant research projects:

This step highlights several points to consider when research organizations and policy-making agencies/bodies partner to work on specific projects. For instance, it is important to maintain appropriate ethical and scientific boundaries while working closely on projects so that neither group is subjected to undue influence or bias.

Although it is beneficial to have closer working relations between these groups, the following actions are recommended to preserve the objectivity and credibility of both parties:

- Establish an advisory board that represents multiple stakeholders.
- Develop clear terms of reference (roles, responsibilities and accountabilities).
- Involve an independent granting agency to issue proposals and award funds.
- Ensure adherence to peer-review processes.
- Collaborate on publications and presentations to allow the partners to work together to meet individual organizational objectives while maintaining their independence.
- Establish explicit practices to manage real or perceived conflicts of interest.

3. Disseminate the research findings widely:

There are several points to consider when disseminating research findings resulting from collaborative partnerships between researchers and decision-makers:

- Identify appropriate opportunities to disseminate research findings and solicit feedback. For example, policy forums are dissemination opportunities that serve different functions and objectives for the partners involved. Policy-makers may view this as an opportunity for *stakeholder consultation* to inform their policy decisions. On the other hand, researchers may see policy forums as opportunities to receive *feedback* from policy-makers in their present and other jurisdictions.
- Frame these sessions as opportunities for decision-makers and policy-makers to hear about the research directly, share their perspectives on what they have heard and determine whether or not it would be useful for their purposes.
- Present consistent and salient messages using key partners to establish clear priorities and policy implications.
- Take deliberative steps to discuss ownership of the final product.
- Provide government policy agencies with official notification prior to the release of research publications. It is important to afford policy-makers sufficient time to prepare for their public release.

4. Contribute to a process that supports evidenced-informed policy development:

Researchers and decision-makers often collaborate on relevant projects and engage one another in a participatory discourse in pursuit of mutually desired outcomes. This paper illustrates how each group can benefit in different and meaningful ways from the knowledge exchange process. By working in close proximity, researchers and decision-makers are exposed to the practical realities (cultural norms, challenges) inherent within each environment. This process, coupled with a shared commitment to develop timely and relevant policy alternatives, sets the stage for the advancement of policy that is informed by multiple sources of knowledge.

Conditions for Use

Not specified

TOOL DEVELOPMENT

Developer(s)

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Method of Development

This method is discussed in relation to the steps involved in forming a partnership between a provincial government branch and an academically-affiliated research unit. This formal partnership between the Health Systems Research and Consulting Unit (HSRCU) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Mental Health Rehabilitation and Reform Branch (MHRRB) of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care was funded over a two-and-a-half-year period. Funding was provided from a Canadian Health Services Research Foundation and a Canadian Institutes of Health Research chair award to HSRCU. This funding was conditional upon having a decision-making partner. The MHRRB is responsible for developing policy and strategies to support mental health reform in Ontario. The HSRCU is a well-established research unit affiliated with the University of Toronto, providing research-based consulting.

Release Date

2003

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RESOURCES

Title of Primary Resource	Linkage and exchange at the organizational level: A model of collaboration between research and policy.
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File Attachment	None
Web-link	
Reference	Goering, P., Butterill, D., Jacobson, N., & Sturtevant, D. (2003). Linkage and exchange at the organizational level: A model of collaboration between research and policy. <i>Journal of Health Services Research & Policy</i> , 8(S2), 14-19.
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	Periodical
Cost to Access	Journal article purchase
Language(s)	English
Conditions for Use	Copyright © 2003 The Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd.

Title of Supplementary Resource	Using 'linkage and exchange' to move research into policy at a Canadian foundation.
File Attachment	None
Web-link	
Reference	Lomas, J. (2000). Using 'linkage and exchange' to move research into policy at a Canadian foundation. <i>Health Affairs</i> , 19(3), 236-240.
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	Periodical
Cost to Access	Journal article purchase
Language(s)	English
Conditions for Use	Copyright © 2001 Project HOPE - The People-to-People Health Foundation, Inc.

Title of Supplementary Resource	The role of health services research in developing state health policy.
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File Attachment	None
Web-link	
Reference	Coburn, A. F. (1998). The role of health services research in developing state health policy. <i>Health Affairs</i> , 17(1), 139-151.
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	Periodical
Cost to Access	Journal article purchase
Language(s)	English
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