

Defining a problem using evidence: A SUPPORT tool

A summary of

Lavis, J.N., Wilson, M.G., Oxman, A.D., Lewin, S. & Fretheim, A. (2009). SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking (STP) 4: Using research evidence to clarify a problem. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 7(Suppl 1): S4. doi:10.1186/1478-4505-7-S1-S4



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Categories:

Tool, Define, Synthesize, Adapt, Evaluate, Policy development

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Tool

Relevance For Public Health

This SUPPORT tool provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to defining and clarifying a problem when developing a briefing note. Issue identification is a crucial step in selecting effective evidence-based programs and policies.

Description

Public health professionals may be required to prepare a briefing note on a priority issue. This [SUPPORT Tool](#) provides five guiding questions to identify a problem and articulate the issue's characteristics based on the best available evidence. Clarifying and articulating the issue is a key step that will determine how it will be addressed. Developed by the SUPporting POLicy relevant Reviews and Trials (SUPPORT) Project, this tool can help with issue identification and clarification when preparing briefing notes.

Problem identification involves exploring how the issue came to attention, indicators to determine the magnitude of the problem, comparisons to monitor change in the issue and how the issue is framed. These aspects are critical to [frame options to address the issue](#) and determine [how the selected option will be implemented](#) to effect change.

Creating a searchable question to find research evidence on the issue is critical when developing a [briefing note](#) (see Table 3 on p. 8 of this tool and [Define step](#) from [Evidence-Informed Public Health](#)).

Implementing the Tool

Who is Involved?

This tool could also be used by front line public health staff, program managers or directors as they seek to articulate an issue identified during a needs assessment or priority setting exercise or through program development and/or evaluation.

Steps for Using Tool

Five guiding questions are provided to help identify a problem and articulate the problem's characteristics:

1. What is the problem?
2. How did the problem come to attention and has this process influenced the likelihood of it being addressed?
3. What indicators can be used or collected to establish the magnitude of the problem and to measure progress in addressing it?
4. What comparisons can be made to establish the magnitude of the problem and to measure progress in addressing it?
5. How can a problem be framed (or described) in a way that will motivate different groups?

Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

Evaluation

These summaries are written by the NCCMT to condense and to provide an overview of the resources listed in the [Registry of Methods and Tools](#) and to give suggestions for their use in a public health context. For more information on individual methods and tools included in the review, please consult the authors/developers of the original resources.

Information not available

Validity

Not applicable

Reliability

Not applicable

Methodological Rating



Not applicable

Tool Development

Developers

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SUPPORT Project (SUPporting POLicy relevant Reviews and Trials)
website: <http://www.support-collaboration.org>

Method of Development

The SUPPORT Tools were designed to help people use the best available research evidence in their decision making. The SUPporting POLicy relevant Reviews and Trials (SUPPORT) Project is an international collaboration funded by the European Commission's 6th Framework. The tools are freely available through the [Health Research Policy and Systems Journal](#).

Release Date

2009

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Resources

Title of Primary Resource	SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking (STP) 4: Using research evidence to clarify a problem
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.health-policy-systems.com/content/7/S1/S4
Reference	Lavis, J.N., Wilson, M.G., Oxman, A.D., Lewin, S. & Fretheim, A. (2009). SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking (STP) 4: Using research evidence to clarify a problem. <i>Health Research Policy and Systems</i> , 7(Suppl 1): S4. doi:10.1186/1478-4505-7-S1-S4
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