Is research working for you?

A self-assessment tool and discussion guide for health services management and policy organizations

OUR PURPOSE

Our vision

Timely, appropriate, efficient and high-quality services that improve the health of Canadians.

Our mission

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement is dedicated to accelerating healthcare improvement and transformation for Canadians. We collaborate with governments, policy-makers, and health system leaders to convert evidence and innovative practices into actionable policies, programs, tools and leadership development.

IS RESEARCH WORKING FOR YOU? A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Why use this tool?

In today's healthcare systems, it is essential for organizations to make the best use of an ever-growing body of research information. Provincial or territorial health ministries, hospitals, professional practices, long-term care organizations, or community health organizations can all gain significant advantages by using research in the right way.

This self-assessment tool from the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement will help you identify how you gather and use research and where there is potential for improvement.

The foundation can assist in your assessment and discussions at any stage. Feel free to contact:

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Making decisions in health services

Difficult financial, organizational, and resource decisions must be made by those who fund, organize, and set priorities in health services, by those who develop health policies, and by health services providers.

Today's healthcare systems are changing rapidly and decision makers face:

◥ a complex environment;
◥ vast quantities of information that are often contradictory and come from many different sources; and
◥ new demands for accountability.

About research...

Research is one of many sources of information and data used in making decisions. In particular, *health services research* can help to:

◥ explain the need for certain decisions;
◥ show the reasons for choosing one of many competing arguments;
◥ increase confidence in decisions that are made; and
◥ help build consensus.

IS RESEARCH WORKING FOR YOU? A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL AND DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

3

About self-assessment...

Using this tool can help your organization determine:

- how research is currently being used;
- where research is located;
- the capacity within your organization to locate and use research;
- ideas for better use of research; and
- next steps your organization should consider.

Suggestions for using this tool

Self-assessment will work best if:

- a group of decision makers and interested people in your organization works
- together on the answers, discussing them as you go along;
- the answers are collated and used for the second half of the tool called **Our Results**:
- **A Discussion Guide**; and
- you consider the suggestions in the "**What Next?**" section to use the results in an effective way.

About this tool...

There are four general areas of assessment.

1. **Acquire**: can your organization find and obtain the research findings it needs?
2. **Assess**: can your organization assess research findings to ensure they are reliable, relevant, and applicable to you?
3. **Adapt**: can your organization present the research to decision makers in a useful way?
4. **Apply**: are there skills, structures, processes, and a culture in your organization to promote and use research findings in decision-making?

Since this is an assessment, there are no right or wrong answers.

About the ratings

The choice of ratings for each question varies, depending on the nature of the question. In all cases, a rating of "1" means a low capacity or frequency of activity, while a "5" signifies something your organization is well-equipped to do or does often.

PART ONE: ACQUIRE

1.1 ARE WE ABLE TO ACQUIRE RESEARCH?

RATING

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

We have **skilled staff** for research.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has **enough time** for research.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has **the incentive** to do research (it is used in our decision-making).	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has **the resources** to do research.	1	2	3	4	5
We have **arrangements with external experts** who search for research, monitor research, or do research for us.	1	2	3	4	5

1.2 ARE WE LOOKING FOR RESEARCH IN THE RIGHT PLACES?

RATING

1 = Don't do 2 = Do poorly 3 = Do inconsistently 4 = Do with some consistency 5 = Do well

We look for research in **journals** (that is by subscription, Internet, or library access; examples are the Journal of Health Services Research & Policy and Healthcare Quarterly).	1	2	3	4	5
We look for research in **non-journal reports (grey literature)** by library, Internet access, or direct mailing from organizations such as ministries of health, the Centre for Health Economics & Policy Analysis (CHEPA), or the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research (CHSPR).	1	2	3	4	5
We look for research in **databases** by subscription or Internet access, such as the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Cochrane Collaboration, and citation indices.	1	2	3	4	5
We look for information on **web sites** (those that collate and/or evaluate sources) such as Best Evidence or Bandolier.	1	2	3	4	5
We work with **researchers** through formal and informal networking meetings with our staff.	1	2	3	4	5
We **get involved with researchers** as a host, decision-maker partner, or sponsor.	1	2	3	4	5
We **learn from peers** through informal and formal networks to exchange ideas, experiences, and best practices.	1	2	3	4	5

PART TWO: ASSESS

2.1 CAN WE TELL IF THE RESEARCH IS VALID AND OF HIGH QUALITY?

RATING
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Staff in our organization has **critical appraisal skills and tools** for evaluating the **quality** of methodology used in research.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff in our organization has the **critical appraisal skills** to evaluate the **reliability** of specific research by identifying related evidence and comparing methods and results.	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has **arrangements with external experts** who use **critical appraisal skills and tools** to assess methodology and evidence reliability, and to compare methods and results.	1	2	3	4	5

2.2 CAN WE TELL IF THE RESEARCH IS RELEVANT AND APPLICABLE?

RATING
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Our staff can relate our **research to our organization** and point out similarities and differences.	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has **arrangements with external experts** to **identify the relevant similarities and differences between** what we do and what the research says.	1	2	3	4	5

PART THREE: ADAPT

3.1 CAN WE SUMMARIZE RESULTS IN A USER-FRIENDLY WAY?

RATING
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to present research results concisely and in accessible language.**	1	2	3	4	5

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to synthesize in one document all relevant research, along with information and analyses from other sources.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to link research results to key issues facing our decision makers.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to provide recommended actions to our decision makers.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has arrangements with external experts **who use research communication skills to present research results concisely and in accessible language.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has arrangements with external experts **who use research communication skills to synthesize in one document all relevant research, along with information and analyses from other sources.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has arrangements with external experts **who use research communication skills to link research results to key issues facing our decision makers.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has arrangements with external experts **who use research communication skills to provide recommended actions to our decision makers.**	1	2	3	4	5

PART FOUR: APPLY

4.1 DO WE LEAD BY EXAMPLE AND SHOW HOW WE VALUE RESEARCH USE?

RATING
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Using **research is a priority in our organization.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has committed **resources** to ensure **research is accessed, adapted, and applied in making decisions.**	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization ensures **staff** is **involved in discussions on how research evidence** relates to our main goals.	1	2	3	4	5

The **management** of our organization has clearly **communicated our strategy and priorities** so that those creating or monitoring research know what is needed in support of our goals.	1	2	3	4	5
We **communicate internally** in a way that ensures there is information exchanged across the entire organization.	1	2	3	4	5
Our corporate culture **values and rewards flexibility, change, and continuous quality improvement with resources to support these values.**	1	2	3	4	5

4.2 DO OUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES HAVE A PLACE FOR RESEARCH?

RATING
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

When we make major decisions, we usually allow **enough time** to identify researchable questions and create/obtain, analyse, and consider research results and other evidence.	1	2	3	4	5
Our management team **evaluates the feasibility** of each option, including potential impact across the organization as well as on clients, partners, and other stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
Decision makers in our organization give **formal consideration to any recommendations** from staff who have developed or identified high-quality and relevant research.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders know **when and how major decisions will be made.**	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders **contribute evidence and know how that information will be used.**	1	2	3	4	5
Staff who have provided evidence and analysis usually **participate in decision-making discussions.**	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant **on-staff researchers are made part of decision-making discussions.**	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders receive **feedback** on decisions, with a rationale for the decision.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders are **informed of how available evidence influenced the choices** that were made in our organization.	1	2	3	4	5

OUR RESULTS: A DISCUSSION GUIDE

Based on the self-assessment, our organization should work on the following areas so that we can use research better to make informed decisions that help meet our goals and objectives:

1. **Establish research as a priority in our organization** (Check one)
   We feel research in our organization should have:

   ☐ Much higher priority   ☐ Somewhat lower priority

   ☐ Somewhat higher priority   ☐ Much lower priority

   ☐ The same priority

2. **Integrate the use of research into the work of people in our organization** (Check one)
   We feel we need to:

   ☐ Integrate research much more often   ☐ Integrate research slightly less often

   ☐ Integrate research slightly more often   ☐ Integrate research much less often

   ☐ Maintain our current level of integrating research

3. **Encourage the use of research by our decision makers** (Check one)
   We feel our decision makers:

   ☐ Do not use research at all   ☐ Use research with some consistency

   ☐ Use research poorly   ☐ Use research well/enough

   ☐ Use research inconsistently

4. **Increase our capacity for research** (Check all that apply. If you have more than one answer, please rate your needs from 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest priority.)
   We need:

   ☐ ___ Skilled staff   ☐ ___ Incentives

   ☐ ___ Resources   ☐ ___ Arrangements with external experts

   ☐ ___ Time

5. **Acquisition of research** (Check all that apply. If you have more than one answer, please rate your needs from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest priority.)
   We need better access to:

   ☐ ___ Journals   ☐ ___ Web sites

   ☐ ___ Non-journal reports (grey literature)   ☐ ___ Oppotunities to work with researchers

   ☐ ___ Databases   ☐ ___ Learning from peers

6. **Assessment of research** (Check the one that is most appropriate or best describes your situation.)
We need to:

☐ Begin to assess and adapt research

☐ Assess and adapt research more often

☐ Maintain our current ability to assess and adapt research

☐ Adapt and assess research a bit less often

☐ Adapt and assess research much less often

7. **Linking of research results to key issues facing our decision makers** (Check the one that is most appropriate or best describes your situation.)
Our decision makers need to:

☐ Begin to consider research in making decisions

☐ Consider research more often in making decisions

☐ Maintain our current frequency of considering research

☐ Consider research a bit less often

☐ Consider research much less often

OUR QUESTIONS BASED ON OUR RESULTS

The results of this self-assessment tool will be used by the foundation to assist your organization in better targeting the information and resources you need.

These are sample questions that will fit many situations, but take time to write those specific to your organization based on the self-assessment exercise.

Our organization has the following questions about making research work for us.

1. How do we help our organization understand the importance of research?
2. How do we access skilled staff?
3. How do we access outside assistance with research?
4. What training is available in writing research summaries?
5. What case studies can we cite to emphasize the importance of research?
6. Is research acquisition costly?
7. What if we cannot afford research?

WHAT NEXT?

CFHI has created a new assessment tool to help healthcare leaders assess their organization's or system's capacity to undertake improvement initiatives. This tool is built around six levers that will guide organizations toward making the changes needed to become a high-performing healthcare organization.

To learn more, please see CFHI's Assessment Tool™ for Healthcare Delivery Organizations and Systems or contact us at **info@cfhi-fcass.ca**.

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11