From Research to Impact: Delivering practical outcomes through research engagement

A guidebook for ageing well researchers, policymakers, and practitioners

Version 1 January 2025

CHiAPRT
Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation

Government of South Australia
Office for Ageing Well

Contents

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Summary

This guidebook is a resource for integrating knowledge translation and engagement in research. It contains information, tools, and templates to guide researchers on how to engage stakeholders and use knowledge translation to increase the relevance, usefulness, and impact of research.

Created for Office for Ageing Well, this guidebook has been designed for ageing well researchers and their project partners. It has been developed using co-design principles, working with ageing well researchers, practitioners, policy actors, and community advocates. For more on how it was developed, see the summary below.

The guidebook draws upon the principles established for the Impact Research Grants for Ageing Well (Impact Research Grants), which were co-developed as part of the process during the development of the Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia. These guiding principles note the importance for new research to not only address empirical gaps, but also to ensure that new research is:

1. designed for relevance and impact
2. represents key populations and stakeholders
3. is participatory and collaborative
4. promotes equity
5. reflects on and monitors process and impact.

You can read more about the guiding principles here.

You don't have to read the whole guidebook to get started on improving knowledge translation and engagement in your research. You can work through the different sections and elements at your own pace. If you're familiar with this topic, you might want to jump straight into the **checklists and templates**: you can do this by working through the five elements for knowledge translation below.
If you're new to knowledge translation and research engagement, start at the beginning and then move to five elements. No matter how you use this guide, remember that it's never too late to begin using knowledge translation strategies in your research!

Introduction — context and purpose of this guide

Knowledge from research evidence can have the potential to influence policy, practice, and community action, to maximise health, wellbeing, and life outcomes as we age.

To facilitate this, Office for Ageing Well (which was formerly part of SA Health and is now part of the Government of South Australia's Department of Human Services) is committed to identifying and addressing research questions of importance to policy, practice, and the community. Since 2021, Office for Ageing Well has adopted a strategic approach to research and co-creation of knowledge, which has involved investing in strategic research priorities to guide investigator-driven research, collaboration with researchers and stakeholders, and capacity building for research impact and evidence-informed decision-making.

The Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia includes strategic research priorities that were co-developed with over 100 knowledge producers, community representatives, policy actors, practitioners, and local thought leaders, guided by a project steering committee. The process aimed to represent perspectives of research, policy, and practice communities across the broad range of social and structural determinants of ageing well.

To support implementation of the research priorities, in 2023 Office for Ageing Well established the Impact Research Grants ofr Ageing Well program, which encourage researchers from a variety of disciplines to undertake innovative independent research that builds knowledge to address the social and structural determinants of ageing well and to influence policy and practice.

To ensure successful implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia and Impact Research Grants, Office for Ageing Well has worked with the Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation (jointly based at Health Translation SA, SAHMRI, and School of Public Health, University of Adelaide), to support grant recipients and policy/practice stakeholders in translation and co-production of policy- and practice-relevant research. A program of 'Learning Labs' was delivered to support networking, knowledge exchange, and capacity building. Through this ongoing engagement, researchers and their partners identified a need for practical guidance and templates and tools for research impact and evidence-informed decision-making. This guide was proposed in response and was developed in consultation with Learning Lab participants in 2024.

This knowledge translation guide aims to support integration of knowledge translation in ageing well research. It provides information and case studies that are relevant to funded researchers, future applicants, and the broader research community – to support planning, development, and implementation of strategies that can increase the relevance, usefulness, and impact of research.

Knowledge translation and research engagement

Why do we need to engage, 'translate', or co-produce knowledge?

To ensure that policies, programs and services contribute to improvements to health, wellbeing, and societal outcomes (and do not cause harm), they should be informed by best available evidence. Evidence may be generated from research, from practice wisdom, or from people's lived experience. However, the creation of knowledge alone does not lead to implementation of that knowledge. When new knowledge from research becomes available, there can be a considerable time lag before it is used to inform practice or policy. This is sometimes referred to as the 'know-do' gap (the gap between what we *know* through research, and what we *do* in practice). Ideally, knowledge is co-produced with the stakeholders and communities that it aims to serve and is actively disseminated and implemented to inform decisions or practice. The field of knowledge translation has emerged to provide strategies to bridge these gaps.

Value of research engagement

Whether you're a researcher wanting to engage with external stakeholders, or a policy decision-maker or practitioner wanting to engage with researchers, this engagement requires time and resources, notably for activities like identifying shared priorities, developing relationships, coordinating meetings, maintaining communications, and developing tools and resources. Due to the constraints of research funding, systems, and performance metrics for research in Australia and in universities, researchers often have fewer drivers for engagement compared to policy makers (Jessani et al., 2020). Each individual or organisation that considers investing time and resources in engagement activities is constrained and incentivised in different ways through different processes (Dunleavy & Tinkler, 2021; Oliver et al., 2022; Smith & Stewart, 2017).

Further, different participants may not share the same **aim/goal** in engagement, even if taking part in the same activity. It may be challenging to identify 'co-benefits' or shared goals, despite having similar interests across institutional boundaries. Ultimately, each participant will likely participate in a way that benefits their own/organisations' interests most. Tensions may arise due to complexities in the research process, or in stakeholder organisations' contexts. For example, when research output does not support a desired policy priority, or is not produced in a timely manner, or, when priorities and staff change in stakeholder organisations.

Despite the structural challenges, drivers of research-policy-practice engagement for researchers might include:

- Research impact (individual or collective) is more likely to be generated through increased external engagement (for ideas on assessing research impact, see Element 5: Evaluate your engagement and impact). While societal/community benefit is an outcome of itself, research impact can also help to fulfil academic missions of the individual/team or institution.
- Increased funding opportunities: Australian research funders are increasingly requesting evidence of policy/industry engagement and social or health impact of research beyond the academy. Gradually, research engagement is becoming more acknowledged and rewarded through strategic research funding and awards (both of which contribute to future funding opportunities).
- Academic reputation can be strengthened through engaging with external stakeholders through increased awareness of research and building of reputation. This can lead to invitations to collaborate, serve on advisory boards, and even contribute to academic promotions.
- Access to data and resources is enabled through external stakeholder partnerships, which can enrich research projects, expand recruitment opportunities, and enable deeper and more relevant insights to be generated.

Drivers for knowledge translation/research engagement for policy actors and practitioners might include:

- Public value: Decision-makers and policy actors may seek to 'pull' research into their programs and strategy to increase effectiveness or public value.
- Strategy: Engagement with research and researchers may help to understand a policy problem through different narratives and framings.

The Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia is an example of a strategic approach to identifying and addressing research questions of policy importance.

Recent evidence on this topic notes a **variety of benefits** of research engagement/ knowledge translation (Lawrence et al., 2019), some of which may represent 'co-benefits' (shared benefits for more than one participant group):

- ensuring research is relevant to stakeholders and enhancing the sharing and use of findings
- enhancing methodological feasibility
- building partnerships for future collaborations
- fostering ownership over knowledge creation
- overcoming differences to better understand each other's constraints and areas of interest.

What is knowledge translation?

Knowledge translation is an iterative, relational process to co-produce and exchange knowledge, offering methods to bridge the 'know-do' gap. Knowledge translation actions aim to optimise the meaningful consideration of research evidence alongside other forms of evidence, and may be targeted at practice, research, or systems (Colquhoun et al., 2014). For Office for Ageing Well, knowledge translation means the types of actions or strategies that can be used to ensure that knowledge generated from research funding can inform policy, practice, and contribute to better community outcomes.

Knowledge translation may be referred to as research translation, among other terms[1], and has been defined in various ways. Terminology used throughout this guide is described in Appendix A: Glossary of terminology. A common definition of knowledge translation adopted by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is:

> A dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and ethically-sound application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders, to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people's health.
>
> This process takes place within a complex system of interactions between researchers and knowledge users which may vary in intensity, complexity and level of engagement depending on the nature of the research and the findings as well as the needs of the particular knowledge user.

(Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012; National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d.; Straus et al., 2009; World Health Organization Geneva, 2005).

Knowledge translation is not a one-way linear transfer of information from research to policy and practice, and it is not the same as simple dissemination.

Approaches to knowledge translation

Two broad knowledge translation approaches have been identified – integrated knowledge translation and end-of-grant knowledge translation. In integrated approaches to knowledge translation, stakeholders (people/ organisations who can use the research in practice or policy) are engaged in the entire research process, and researchers meaningfully partner with these stakeholders and potential knowledge users to co-produce knowledge (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012; Kothari et al., 2017). Ideally, this involves partners being involved from conception and throughout (Straus et al., 2013). This approach is more likely to produce research that is directly relevant to and used by stakeholders (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012).

A multitude of knowledge translation theories and frameworks exist, due to a large amount of knowledge translation-related research activity that has emerged over the past few decades. Frameworks and guides have proliferated, aiming to assist researchers (and research co-producers, policy actors, and practitioners) in the creation and translation of research (Milat & Li, 2017). Theories and frameworks are not covered in this guidebook, except to acknowledge one of the most commonly applied frameworks, the Knowledge to Action process (Graham et al., 2006), that has been adopted by several research funding agencies, including the NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2022) and CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012).

[1] Knowledge translation has similarities to other commonly-used concepts and approaches such as 'research translation', 'knowledge transfer', 'knowledge exchange', 'knowledge mobilisation' and 'research implementation', among others.

This process has two key components: the first is on the creation of knowledge to ensure its relevance and usefulness – in which researchers can take an integrated, partnership approach (e.g. collaboratively developing research questions, engaging with stakeholders in research activities); the second is an action cycle including a range of activities that are needed for knowledge implementation, carried out in an iterative way with partners and stakeholders.

This guidebook focuses on integrated knowledge translation, and, on the first component of the *Knowledge to Action process* – creation of useful, relevant knowledge.

Types of knowledge translation strategies

There are many practical knowledge translation interventions, actions and strategies (hereafter referred to as 'strategies') available, again in response to increased research and evaluation related to knowledge translation. These can be broadly categorised as:

- **Push:** researcher-driven publications, reports, evidence summaries, access to tools and resources, end-of-grant dissemination
- **Pull:** policy-/practice- driven requests for knowledge/research, training in research use, employment of knowledge brokers
- **Exchange:** mutually-driven reciprocal relationships or partnership/collaborative research projects, research priority setting processes, deliberative dialogues, participatory action research, and other integrated knowledge translation efforts. These may also involve a knowledge broker role to facilitate partnership development and exchange.

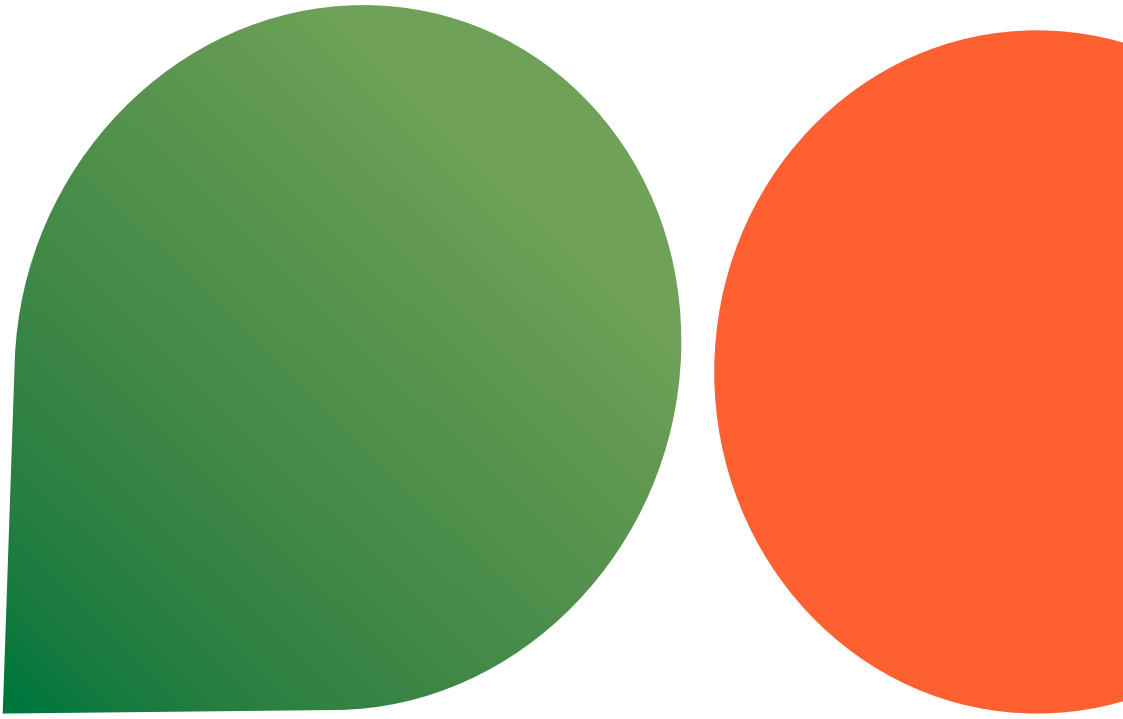
A comprehensive knowledge translation approach may include multiple individual methods or tools (e.g. knowledge brokering, training, incentives, and policy partnerships or advisory boards) (Lavis, 2006; Toomey et al., 2022).

Knowledge translation/ Research engagement Planning

Planning for knowledge translation and research engagement is important because it can help you reach your research impact goals.

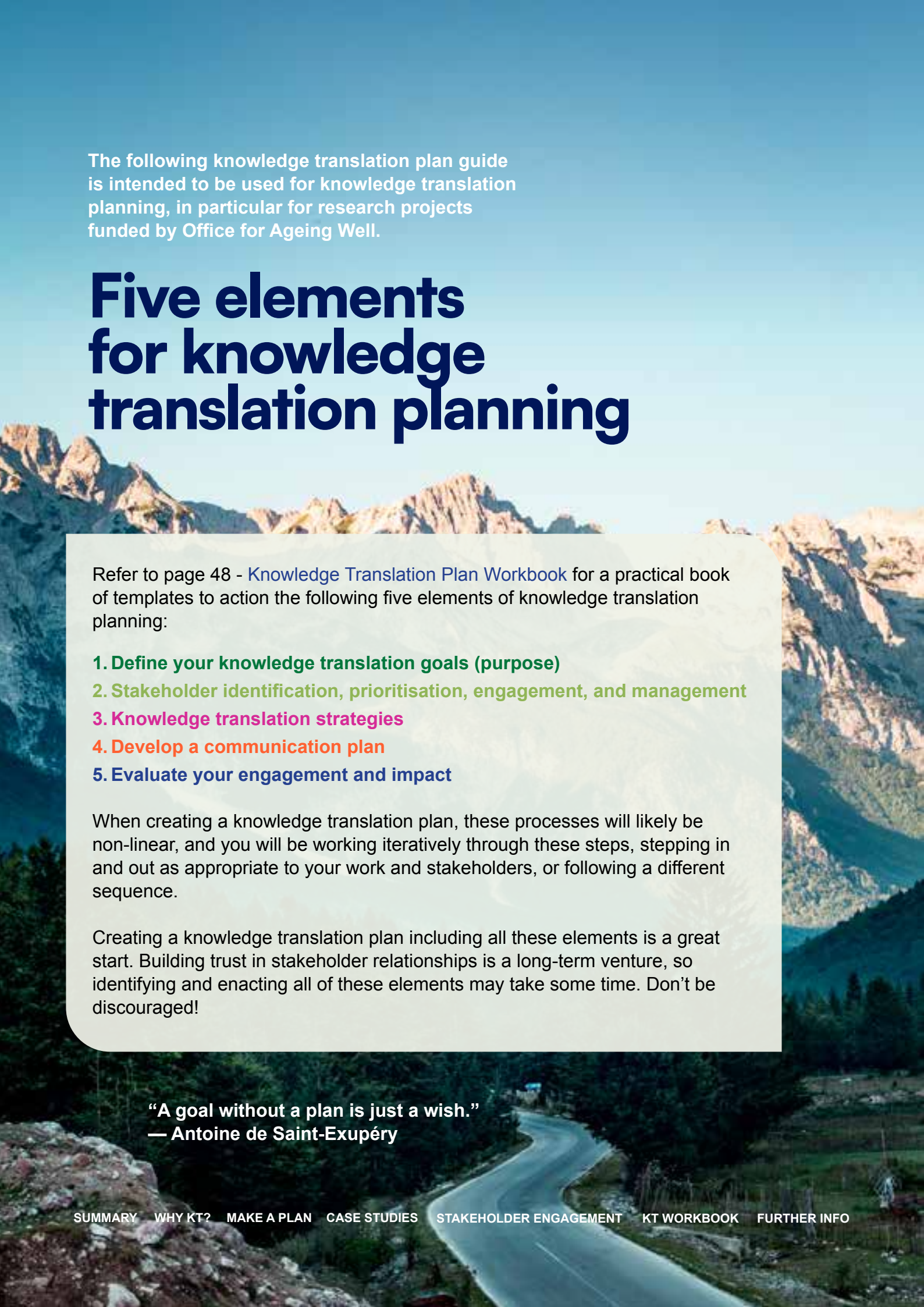
Planning for integrating knowledge translation into research can be challenging within existing resourcing and funding cycles. Planning and implementing knowledge translation involves a commitment among all partners (research producers and stakeholders) to build the capability and culture for research-policy-practice engagement and research impact. However, there are many practical ways to incorporate knowledge translation strategies into research that do not require significant resources or time.

Various knowledge translation tools are available to support knowledge translation planning and action. The next section of this guidebook provides a five-step knowledge translation planning process that you can use and adapt for your own purpose.



The following knowledge translation plan guide is intended to be used for knowledge translation planning, in particular for research projects funded by Office for Ageing Well.

Five elements for knowledge translation planning



Refer to page 48 - Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook for a practical book of templates to action the following five elements of knowledge translation planning:

1. **Define your knowledge translation goals (purpose)**
2. **Stakeholder identification, prioritisation, engagement, and management**
3. **Knowledge translation strategies**
4. **Develop a communication plan**
5. **Evaluate your engagement and impact**

When creating a knowledge translation plan, these processes will likely be non-linear, and you will be working iteratively through these steps, stepping in and out as appropriate to your work and stakeholders, or following a different sequence.

Creating a knowledge translation plan including all these elements is a great start. Building trust in stakeholder relationships is a long-term venture, so identifying and enacting all of these elements may take some time. Don't be discouraged!

"A goal without a plan is just a wish."
— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Element 1
Define your knowledge translation goals

Begin by describing what you would like to accomplish through doing knowledge translation.

Knowledge translation goal-setting is distinct from your research goals (aims and objectives). Knowledge translation goals are long-term outcome aims, which may take many years to achieve or to have a meaningful contribution. As such, they may not be achieved within the life of a research project and must be considered as a non-measurable outcome.

Consider these questions:

- What is your purpose or reason for doing knowledge translation?
- What type of impact do you want your research to have?

To reflect on what type of impact you want your research to have, you might consider the types of changes that you would like to accomplish. Some examples include:

> Advance knowledge
> Build capacity
> Inform decision-making/policy/practice
> Service and system change
> Economic change
> Societal change

(Adam et al., 2018; Banzi et al., 2011; Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 2009; Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Kuruvilla et al., 2006).

Considering these questions and setting knowledge translation goals will better prepare you to develop a knowledge translation plan. It also helps to consider co-benefits of research engagement – this is important to maintain engagement and increase the chance of research impact. Some examples of knowledge translation goals are provided in Table 1, and the Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook can be used to create your own project-specific goals. If you haven't got a current topic or research area ready for knowledge translation goal-setting, you might prefer a more pragmatic approach to consider where your research could have a role in future developments, discovery or impact. One technique is referred to as 'horizon scanning'.

Another practical and simple technique is a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis:

S Strengths
What can we build on?

O Opportunities
What needs are unmet or changing?

A Aspirations
What future state do we want?

R Results
How will we know when we are succeeding?

Table 1: Examples of knowledge translation goals

Advance knowledge	• Establish if a citizen science audit tool can enable evaluation of age friendly communities from the perspective of older people • Support the expanded roll out of the arts and carer project and promote its benefits
Build capacity	• Support food relief practice with co-designed tools and resources to evolve service models and create pathways out of food insecurity • Co-design a monitoring and evaluation framework with the Lived Experience Leadership & Advocacy Network to advance lived experience leadership and governance • Use evidence from the pilot project to put together a grant bid to continue the project
Inform decision-making	• Generate recommendations for a statewide infill policy consultation to support co-housing models for older people • Connect retailers and economic development agencies for increasing inclusivity and diversity in retail and hospitality employment
Service or system change	• Trial and implement an online transport services feedback-system for people with assistance dogs who are illegally turned away from public transport, taxis, and rideshare services • Establish financial incentives to encourage the adoption of age-friendly building design guidelines
Economic change	• Demonstrate productivity changes of increasing the proportion of older employees
Societal change	• Increase public awareness of the harmful effects of ageism through implementation research involving campaigns and community outreach

Element 2

Stakeholder identification, prioritisation, engagement, and management

'*Relationship first, then business*'. This expression of advice is common among many cultures in the world, emphasising the importance of trusted relationships for business integrity. This also applies to research, where the ultimate ambition is to generate research findings and outputs that create meaningful and positive changes within society. This can only be achieved through engagement of stakeholders in the process and outcomes of research.

A stakeholder is any individual, group, or organisation with a direct or indirect interest (a stake) in the success of your research. Their interest often aligns with an organisation delivering intended results/ meeting strategic or financial objectives. Stakeholders may be your agents of change – they often have the ability to influence actions, decisions, and policies to achieve desired outcomes (remember your knowledge translation goals) – this may also include community members such as older people. Stakeholders may be internal to your organisation, but in this guidebook, we are principally focused on *external* stakeholders.

Who to engage?

Checklist: Stakeholders to engage in your research

- ☐ Relevant interests related to the topic/issue/proposal
- ☐ Positions (for or against) the topic/issue/proposal
- ☐ Knowledge of the topic/issue/ proposal
- ☐ Potential alliances with other stakeholders (including networks)
- ☐ Power or Influence, vs Interest
- ☐ Ability to affect the policy/practice process through power or leadership (formal/informal)
- ☐ Ability to act on the knowledge or influence others to act

*Note: In this guidebook, 'stakeholders' is used primarily to refer to individuals and organisations from policy, practice, or service settings. Community/civil society engagement is equally important in research and should be considered in stakeholder identification. For example, stakeholders might include people with lived experience, caregivers, or community advocates.

If community members are one of your key stakeholder groups, be sure to follow relevant guidance and principles for community participation, co-production, and empowerment in research (Boaz et al., 2018).

How to engage? Tools and templates for stakeholder identification and analysis

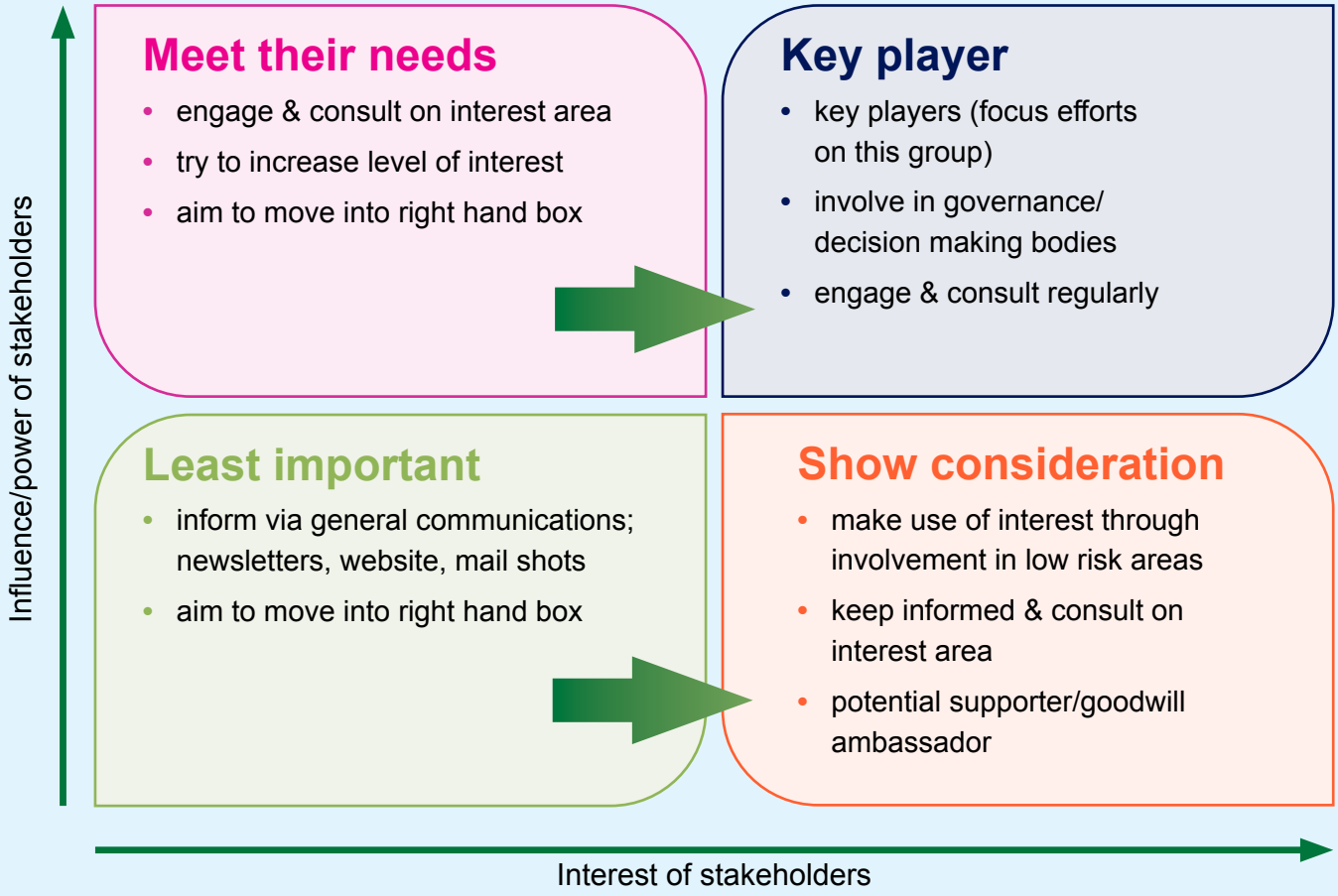
Begin with stakeholder identification, which is a way of brainstorming to define whose interests should be taken into account (therefore who you should engage) when developing your research. Work through the checklist on previous page 'Stakeholders to engage in your research' to identify and define stakeholders for your research. Stakeholder analysis is a process of systematically gathering and analysing qualitative information about key stakeholders.

Once you have identified or defined a list of possible stakeholders, you can then do further analysis to :

- Understand where they 'stand' – interests, position
- Identify influencing factors
- Map and prioritise stakeholders – on a matrix
- Select strategies for engagement
- Develop strategies to mitigate risks to your project.

A stakeholder analysis matrix is provided in Figure 1, and a blank template is available in the Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook.

Figure 1: Stakeholder analysis matrix



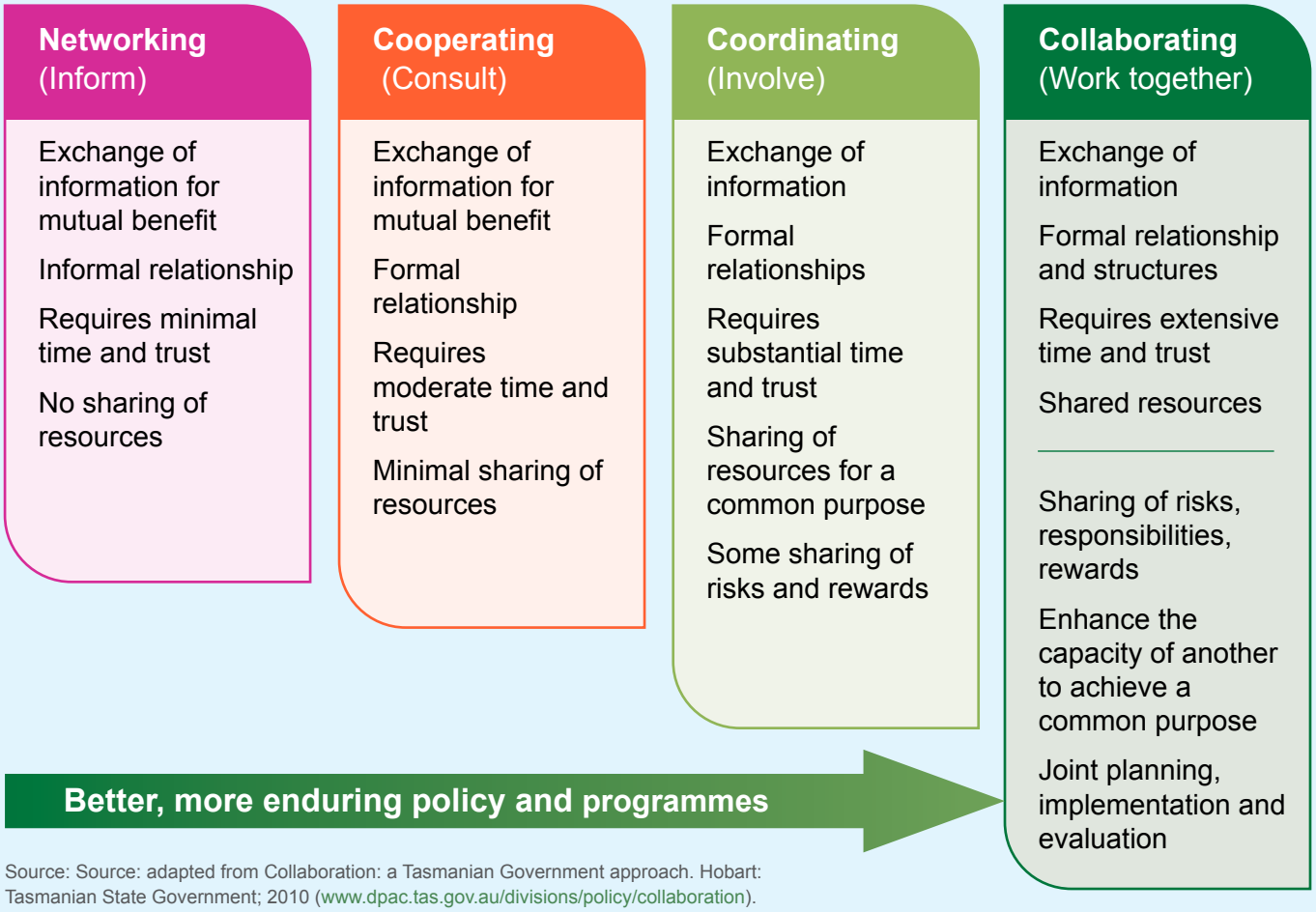
Deciding who to involve - prioritisation

When identifying potential stakeholders for your research, you may come up with a long list of potential contacts, which may exceed the resources you have for engagement activities. Some stakeholders will have greater impact on your project/ research than others. By prioritising stakeholders, you can focus resources on building relationships with those who 'matter most'. This will also help when determining the level/extent to which stakeholders will be involved in the research.

There are two central elements to consider here: **efficiency** versus **legitimacy**. A comprehensive multi-stakeholder process can give a high legitimacy to your research, but it also involves significant time and effort (and costs). The more stakeholders involved, the more difficult and time-consuming it can be to reach common understandings and decisions. Prioritisation of stakeholders can help to balance efficiency and legitimacy.

Refer to the stakeholder identification templates in the workbook for guidance on stakeholder mapping and prioritisation.

Figure 2: Stakeholder engagement continuum



Source: Source: adapted from Collaboration: a Tasmanian Government approach. Hobart: Tasmanian State Government; 2010 (www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/policy/collaboration).

Managing stakeholder relationships

The key to effective stakeholder management is to establish alliances with people who exercise the most influence within their spheres of responsibilities. Depending on the type of stakeholder, and the extent of involvement intended, strategies for mitigating risks to the research may also need to be considered.

While 'soft skills' such as relationship management may be generic to any type of project, there are a few unique features of research-policy/practice engagement that you might want to consider for successful stakeholder management. A rapidly-growing body of research provides guidance on some of the enablers of effective research-policy/practice engagement (Cairney & Oliver, 2020; Williams et al., 2024) and principles for stakeholder engagement in research (Boaz et al., 2018).

Time is essential to allow mutual trust and understanding to develop. Building mature, reciprocal, and trusting stakeholder relationships takes considerable time, which may be beyond the timeframes of your research/project. This means managing expectations about what can be achieved in the timeframes of your research.

Managing stakeholder relationships can be challenging. Many of the enablers to stakeholder relationships may be determined by external factors that can be difficult to influence. In recent Australian research, policy actors reported enablers to engagement with academics/researchers, which included leadership (i.e. their government agency/non-government organisation encourages collaboration with academics/researchers and promotes evidence-informed policy); connections (i.e. knowledge of who to engage within the university/academic institutes), and common or shared priorities.

Sometimes individuals can influence these factors, but other times it requires bigger shifts in organisational culture. Decision-makers, policy actors, and practitioners might have the ability and authorisation to:

- **Build a government/agency culture** that values use of research evidence alongside other sources of information; influence organisational culture through training, capability development, and leadership.
- Identify strengths, existing processes, and **strategic opportunities for research** and evaluation such as planning meetings, new projects, evaluation budgets, and links to networks.
- **Identify funds and resources for knowledge translation/research engagement** through flexible use of existing budgets. This can enable new knowledge co-creation opportunities between researchers, policy actors, and other stakeholders.
- **Set strategic research priorities** that can be used to guide academic research and generate policy-relevant evidence.

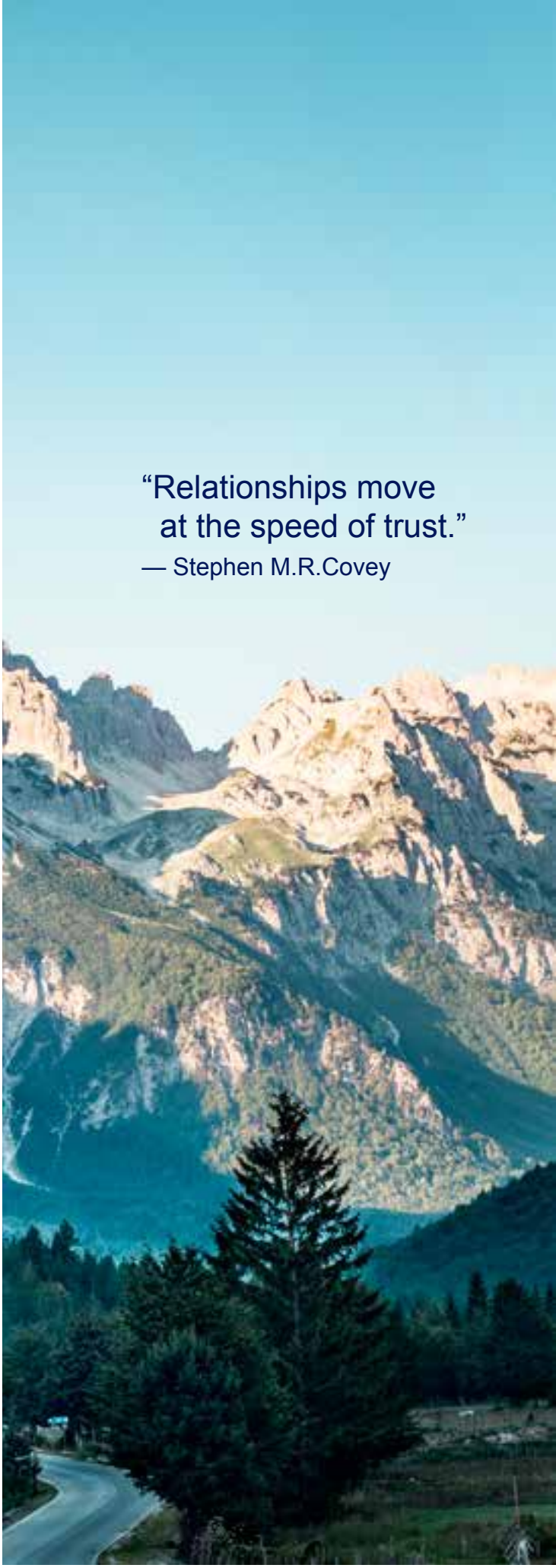
As a researcher, you can work through the checklist of suggestions in Box 1 and consider what you can develop over time to support stakeholder relationships. For additional explanations and evidence supporting these suggestions, refer to Design principles and tips for research-stakeholder engagement.

Box 1: Developing and maintaining stakeholder relationships (Boaz et al., 2018; Cairney & Oliver, 2020; Cvitanovic et al., 2021; Haynes et al., 2012)

Communication and Relationship Management

- **Build trust and trusting relationships**, and develop credibility and collaborative skills. Establish meaningful connections and collaborations with stakeholders working in your area. Attend meetings or workshops that link with your topic of interest but may not be directly relevant. Engage in both informal and formal discussions and seek opportunities to understand diverse perspectives – this helps to build opportunities to collaborate. Building trust and rapport is key to increase the translation of research considered in policy decisions.
- **Improve your communication**, interpersonal, and relationship management skills; and communicate frequently and remain an active listener to maintain engagement.
- **Establish governance** and guidelines/ ground rules for collaboration, which both parties agree to (e.g. shared governance, memoranda of understanding, terms of reference, etc.).
- **Be transparent and authentic** - consider your role as a researcher when engaging with policy and practice, and decide if you are a neutral honest broker or issue advocate.

"Relationships move at the speed of trust."
— Stephen M.R.Covey



Strategic Stakeholder Engagement

Develop a **stakeholder engagement plan**, using appropriate tools and templates (such as in Table 2).

- **Understand the policy process**, context, and engage through various channels (e.g. informal catch-ups, formal meetings/ exchanges, sector networks, etc.).
- **Develop and continually refine your 'pitch'** to communicate the value that your work will bring to different stakeholders.
- **Build upon prior relationships** between organisations; explore opportunities for continued collaborations to enhance potential for cooperative/social learning; sustain stakeholder engagement through research processes.
- **Establish a shared vision** for change: identify or establish a shared vision and, where appropriate, guidelines for collaboration which both parties agree to (e.g. shared governance, memoranda of understanding, terms of reference, etc.).
- **Be 'accessible'** to policymakers: engage routinely, flexibly, respectfully, and humbly. Where possible, **be flexible** to be able to respond to and accommodate stakeholder needs and requests. Provide fit-for-purpose research processes, and tailored support and research products (where resources allow), which is important in facilitating 'user-pull'.
- **Sustain engagement** through research processes, either individually or as a group, informally or formally, responding to ad-hoc requests where feasible.
- **Be 'entrepreneurial'** or find someone (e.g. broker) who can be.

Research Utilisation and Accessibility

- **Make research relevant and accessible** - use storytelling techniques.
- **Communicate clearly and concisely:** craft your messages and recommendations into clear, concise messages that are accessible to people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Use plain language and visuals to convey complex information effectively. Develop tailored research products where resources allow, which is important in facilitating use of research products and tools.
- **Align your research with policy priorities:** Focus your research on issues and topics that align with current policy priorities and agendas. Demonstrating relevance to policy increases the likelihood of the research informing policy and practice.
- **Be flexible** and offer tailored support (to facilitate use of research products and tools).
- **Plan for strategic dissemination** at the outset of new research projects, involving key stakeholders. Produce fit-for-purpose (tailored) research processes, findings, and products.
- **Consider timing:** the policy-making process is often time critical; it is essential to have access to relevant, easily digestible research evidence at strategic moments, such as when policy decisions are being discussed or when public attention is high. Timely information can have a more significant impact.
- **Mobilise stakeholder support:** Engage with stakeholders, including advocacy groups, affected communities, and other experts. Mobilise their support for action, including research and its potential policy implications. A united front often has more influence.

Continuous Reflection and Adaptation

- Develop your analytical and **problem-solving skills** – e.g., to resolve issues or predict engagement challenges.
- **Reflect continuously:** should you engage, do you want to? Consider: is your commitment to creating impact greater than adding outputs to your resume?
- **Keep track** of when and how you have had impact (is it working?) and revise your practices continuously.

Keeping track of stakeholder relationships

To sustain engagement through research processes and keep track of your interactions and impact, you might want to consider keeping records. This helps to maintain a 'paper trail' for sustaining engagement, in the event of team changes/turnover. It is also very helpful for evaluating your knowledge translation/engagement practice and for reporting research impact.

Technological solutions are available, such as stakeholder engagement management tools and stakeholder/customer relationship management software. However, a simple spreadsheet may be sufficient to record dates of key contacts, details of the stakeholder, the nature of the interaction (e.g. support request, information push, knowledge exchange), and what the outcome was (if any). See Table 2 below and Table 8 for further resources.

Table 2: Resource for engaging and maintaining stakeholder relationships

Resource	Spreadsheet from the Australian Public Service Commission https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/aps-mobility-framework/taskforce-toolkit/stakeholder-engagement/getting-stakeholder-engagement-right
What it is	An online spreadsheet that provides guidance on how to identify, initiate, and maintain stakeholder relationships

Element 3
Knowledge translation strategies

Types of knowledge translation strategies

A wide range of knowledge translation strategies is available to researchers/knowledge producers. These can be grouped into three broad types (Lavis, 2006; Toomey et al., 2022).

Push (efforts by researchers to disseminate messages arising from research)

Pull (efforts by stakeholders/decision-makers to build capacity for research use; and structures and processes to support the use of research)

Exchange (meaningful, reciprocal partnerships between researchers and stakeholders)

Push efforts are typically researcher-driven, and generally focus on dissemination (e.g. 'end-of-grant' knowledge translation). Strategies may include, for example, the development and distribution of publications, reports, evidence summaries, or provision of access to materials and resources.

Pull efforts are usually stakeholder-driven. Examples of strategies include capacity-building and training for decision-makers, policy actors, and practitioners to support use of research, employment of knowledge broker roles within decision-making contexts, rapid-response units/consultancies, and development of project templates that instruct teams to provide evidence/rationale for their activities. Pull strategies may involve a number of mechanisms including social influence, facilitation, incentives, and reinforcements.

Exchange strategies are typically mutually driven, and generally focus on improving the interactions between researchers and policy actors/practitioners. This may include the establishment of networks or formal partnerships to support evidence-informed decision making, prioritisation efforts (where policy-actors/practitioners identify their priorities, turn the questions into researchable questions, and promote research into these questions), deliberative dialogues, or integrated knowledge translation (integration of stakeholders throughout the research process). Exchange strategies can also include the use of knowledge brokers, where their role is to facilitate partnership development or knowledge translation and exchange (rather than to simply assist with making sense of research evidence for decision-making, as identified left).

Examples of knowledge translation strategies are provided in Table 3 along with examples. Outcomes/effectiveness of knowledge translation strategies are still under study. However, there is some evidence supporting the potential effectiveness of certain strategies (Table 3). Different strategies may be selected for different stakeholder groups, as appropriate to the project and to meet your knowledge translation goals.

Table 3: Examples of knowledge translation strategies

Push	Pull	Exchange
Peer reviewed journal articles ●	Knowledge brokers ● / boundary spanners	Relationships between research producers and stakeholders
Reviews, overviews	Program champions, opinion leaders ●	Community-based participatory research ●
Evidence summaries, policy briefs, toolkits, printed educational materials *	Rapid response units	Communities of Practice
Guidelines	Consultants	Facilitated meetings, deliberative dialogues ●
Conferences ●, webinars	Training/capacity building	Strategic priority setting
Mass media ●	Audit and feedback processes *	Arts-based knowledge translation
Press releases	Electronic reminders (computerised) ● IT decision-making support ●	Research advisory groups, steering committees
Data visualisation, arts-based dissemination, infographics	Financial incentives (e.g. pay-for-performance schemes to improve practices) ●	Facilitation, knowledge brokering ●
	Academic detailing/ Educational outreach ●	Quality improvement collaboratives ●

● Mostly effective
* Small effects IF optimally designed and appropriately targeted
● Promising but mixed or inconclusive effects
(Barwick, 2008; Grimshaw et al., 2012; LaRocca et al., 2012; Wilson & Kislov, 2022; Yamada et al., 2015)

Selecting knowledge translation strategies – where to begin

When selecting knowledge translation strategies, it can be helpful to clarify

- the purpose of engagement (revisit your knowledge translation goals);
- who it is for/with (i.e. your stakeholders); and
- if it is achievable in complex policy-making systems/practice/ service environments (Hopkins et al., 2021).

Time and resourcing are often limited in research, so it's important to **be pragmatic about what can be achieved within the scope of your project**. Knowledge translation strategies do not need to consume much of the project budget, time, or resources, and research evidence suggests that even simple or single knowledge translation strategies may still be as effective as complex strategies, if they include an active component and are targeted appropriately (Grimshaw et al., 2004; LaRocca et al., 2012). An example of this might be an evidence summary or policy brief, facilitated by a knowledge broker.

Importantly, **interactive strategies are more effective than passive knowledge translation strategies** (such as simple 'push' dissemination of research findings unaccompanied by other activities). The PARiHS (Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services) framework provides a valuable reminder about this when it established that successful knowledge translation depends just as much upon the context where evidence is being introduced, and how it is facilitated, as the quality of evidence itself (Kitson et al.,1998).

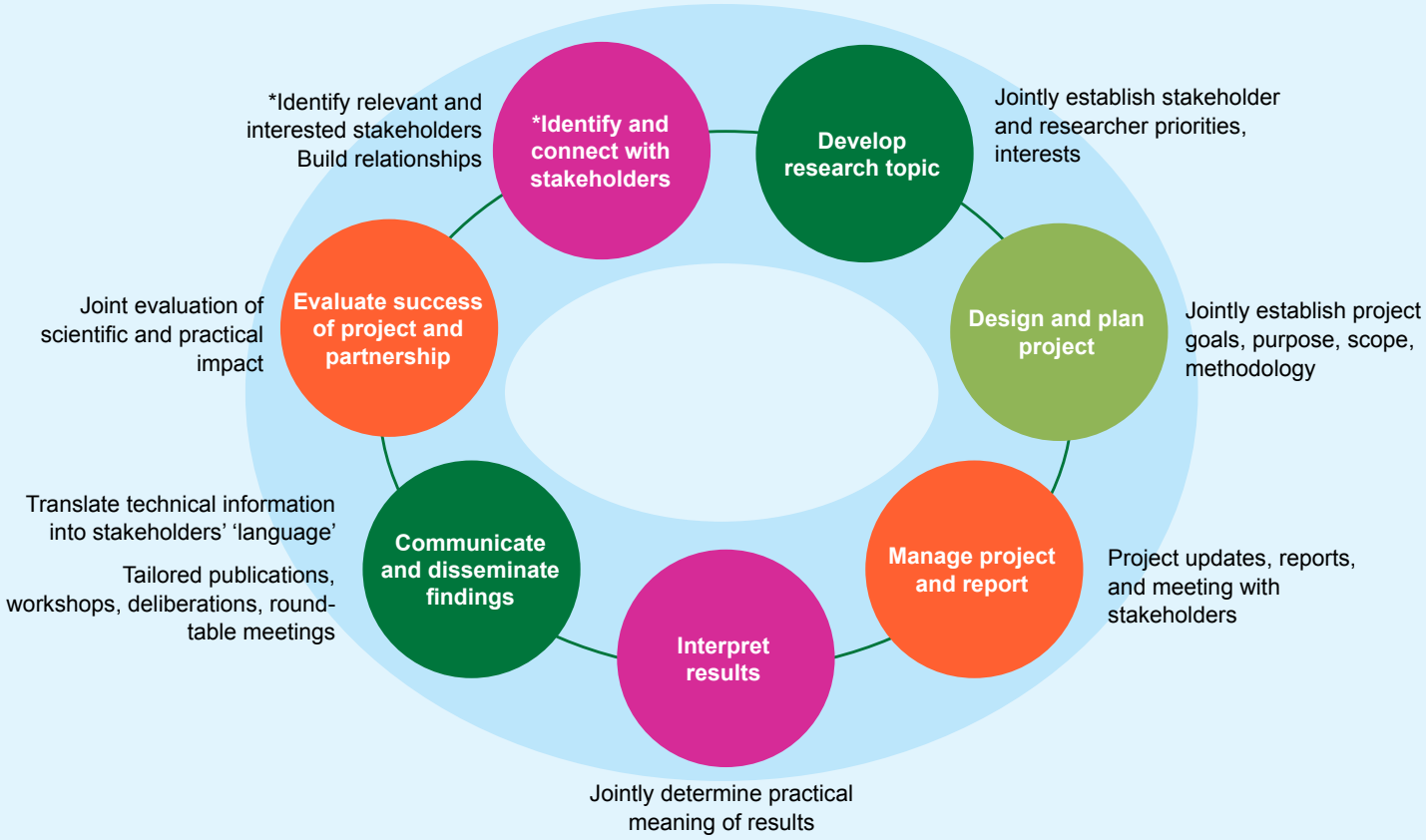
Ultimately, **using more interactive and comprehensive knowledge translation strategies can facilitate greater research impact** (LaRocca et al., 2012; Thijsen et al., 2024; Wolfenden et al., 2022). To find a balance between all the possible strategies for your stakeholders, a good approach is to mix push, pull, and exchange strategies within your available resources. Employing a knowledge broker, either an individual (e.g. project officer, research associate) or an institution (e.g. CHiAPRT, Sax Institute) can help foster linkage and exchange with stakeholders, build relationships, and convene deliberative dialogues.

When and how to use knowledge translation strategies?

It's never too late to begin using knowledge translation strategies in your research. It's ideal to commence stakeholder engagement at the beginning of a research project, then development of shared goals may be easier.

The 'usual' research process provides many opportunities and timepoints to engage stakeholders from policy, practice, and community settings. Below we describe four common opportunities where knowledge translation strategies can be used. Some examples of opportunities for knowledge translation/stakeholder engagement in research are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Stakeholder engagement in the research cycle (adapted from Shantz 2012).



The Policy Cycle

Policy is a ubiquitous term and often poorly misunderstood. In simple terms it is the course of action undertaken by government, business, or institutions to respond to a problem or realise an opportunity. Public policy relates the decisions of government such as the allocation of budgets, provision of services, and the creation of infrastructure such as schools, roads and hospitals. The policy making process is complex, context specific, and often fraught with tensions between competing interests. This is particularly true for public policy where politics, elections, and changing government priorities can have a significant impact on the final outcome. It is important for researchers, policy actors, and practitioners to be familiar with the policy process and understand how government decision-making operates with their local context to be able to leverage these processes to generate positive community impact.

Beyond project commencement, there are many opportunities in the policy cycle, in service, or program development when research engagement can occur (again: **it's never too late!**).

Figure 4: The Australian Policy Cycle, Bridgman and Davis (Althaus et al., 2007)

1. During research design

Participatory research and co-design approaches can facilitate collaboration and support knowledge translation. Cooperation between researchers and policymakers at the agenda-setting or design phase supports the development of policy-relevant research questions, identification of potential barriers, suitable data collection and analysis methods, and contextual application of research findings.

Early engagement and planning for research translation supports knowledge exchange over the course of the project; regular review allows strategies to be adapted as needed. Involving knowledge translation expertise at the planning stages can support the integration of knowledge exchange strategies from the outset.

2. Through relationships

Relationships, partnerships, and networks are central to effective knowledge translation. Relationships require communication, commitment, and mutual understanding; being available and approachable supports continued engagement and dialogue. Communication and trust have been identified as critical components of research-policy relationships (Cvitanovic et al., 2021).

3. In dedicated roles

Advisory groups and steering committees can be a useful mechanism for establishing partnerships between researchers and policy actors and for maintaining communication pathways. Some recommendations when establishing advisory groups (Williams et al., 2024) include:

- Ensure that organisations are represented appropriately, e.g. by individuals with interest in, and capacity to contribute to, the research translation process (refer back to your stakeholder engagement plan).
- Have a dedicated coordinator or project manager.
- Ensure that terms of reference and objectives of the group are understood by all members.
- Ensure that meetings have a clear purpose, agenda, and timeline.
- Meet face to face, if possible, to encourage participation and/or use videoconferencing technology, particularly when members are from diverse geographical areas.
- Ensure that potential conflicts are disclosed and discussed, if appropriate.

Knowledge brokers are an example of a dedicated role that can be used to facilitate connections between researchers and policymakers or other stakeholders (Bornbaum et al., 2015). They may play a range of important roles, such as:

- Identifying, engaging, and connecting with stakeholders.
- Helping stakeholders understand each other.
- Identifying common goals and mutually beneficial opportunities.
- Establishing and maintaining communication channels.
- Facilitating collaboration (e.g. workshops, advisory committees, online forums).
- Facilitating capacity building (e.g. educational activities for stakeholders).
- Project coordination (e.g. grant applications, stakeholder engagement).
- Supporting evaluation and feedback channels.
- Developing and sharing knowledge products, such as evidence syntheses and policy briefs.

4. Capacity development

Individuals and organisations can increase their skills, resources, and culture for integrating evidence into policy and decision-making, and vice-versa. Knowledge translation strategies to develop capacity may include:

- Research translation skills training for researchers and policymakers.
- Training and tools for evidence use – finding, appraising, and applying to practice.
- Access to tailored resources, such as evidence syntheses and policy briefs.
- Access to funding, training, and technology to support ongoing skills development.

Element 4
Develop a communication plan

Strategic communication in research

Communication is a critical part of successful research and knowledge translation. Research communication can take many forms, from involving stakeholders and participants in research processes and exchanging outputs and preliminary findings with partners, to sharing research outcomes to different audiences and influencing decision-makers, policy actors, and practitioners.

Most research is communicated in 'traditional' formats such as peer-reviewed journal articles and conferences. While these are important for research performance metrics, these communication methods have limited effect on influencing policy and practice.

A strategic approach to communication is more likely to support translation of your work and create research impact. This section gives an overview of how to develop an effective communication plan. A template is included in the Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook which can be completed to suit your project. Communications planning should be done at the commencement of your project.

An important first step is to establish your purpose (or key messages) for communication. Revisit your knowledge translation goals and consider what types of communication you might need for different stakeholder groups and audiences at different times throughout your project. There might be multiple purposes for communication – such as sharing knowledge, informing practice, and influencing policy.

Then, you can consider the most appropriate communication methods for each communication product/process. It might be written, graphical, verbal/discussion, or in another format. Find out what 'products' are most relevant and useful to your stakeholders. For example, in government, policy actors are often required to provide briefings to executive directors or a minute to their portfolio's minister. Consider also what channels are available and most appropriate – this might include in-person, on-paper/print, or on-screen/digital channels. Some examples of common research communications are provided on the next page.

On Paper

Infographic
Policy brief
Poster
Report
Letter, submission
Briefing/Minute (e.g. to a Minister)
Journal article
Book chapter
Flyer
Magazine

On Screen

Blog post
Email
Image
Website
Webinar
Video
Website
Infographic
Social media post
Podcast
Text message
App

In Person

Partner meetings
Network events
Seminar
Conferences
Public hearings
Keynote address
Elevator/corridor chat
Public event
'Lunch and learn'
Trade show

Communications Planning

A communication plan is an essential part of your research engagement/knowledge translation efforts. Your objectives for communication are going to be more nuanced and distinct from your broader knowledge translation/impact goal. You may also have limited time and resources for communications beyond 'traditional' journal publications, but 'non-traditional' communications outputs can greatly assist in achieving impact (and your knowledge translation goals). Developing a communication plan can help you prioritise what communication products you will develop, for what stakeholders, and what formats.

A communication plan should include at the minimum the potential products, stakeholder groups/individual stakeholders and audiences, objective/purpose, and method/channels. We also recommend including key messages. A brief worked example is provided below in Table 4, and the blank template is provided in the Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook.

Table 4: Communication plan worked example (adapted from Jones et al)

Product	Objective/ Purpose	Stakeholders, Audiences	Methods/ Channels	Key message (summary)	Timing/ Frequency
Type e.g. papers, reports, infographics, policy briefs etc.	Communication objective for each product	Organisations and people that the info is relevant to, who acts on the findings/has influence	Where/how information is to be disseminated	Why the information is useful, relevant, or important; How stakeholders should feel or act	
Journal paper 1: scoping review	Inform future research and evaluation	> Researchers > Policy evaluators > Evaluation practitioners	> Peer-reviewed journal (name) > Social media > Blog entry	1. Customer journey mapping (CJM) is relevant for social service evaluation 2. CJM can be done respectfully with community members 3. CJM can provide insights for future co-design with community	Submit by December 2024
Briefing report 1: progress update	Keep partners informed	> Research partners (practitioners, policy actors)	- Infographic and email - Partner meeting	1. Report formative interview findings 2. Update on plans for co-design sessions 3. Remind about the project shared goals	Send one week before each bi-annual partners meeting
Online article 1: policy blind spots for age-friendly communities	Share knowledge	> Practitioners > Policy actors > General public	> The Conversation article > Repost on LinkedIn and X	1. Most older Australians aren't in aged care 2. Policy gaps mean that people are living in communities that aren't age-friendly 3. People's ideas for reform	Publish in time to tie in with new government strategy consultation

Communicating effectively with different stakeholders (Brul, 2014)

When preparing any communication material, either written or spoken, it helps to consider your **objective**/**purpose** for communicating (as noted in the communication plan template above). Think ahead to after you have communicated;

- What do you want your audience to **think/believe/know**?
- What do you want your audience to **feel**?
- What do you want your audience to **do**?

Communicating effectively with your stakeholders and audiences requires you to

- **Connect** with your audience.
- **Stimulate** your audience.
- **Be understood** by your audience.

The six principles of 'sticky' ideas is a useful guide to consider how to **connect** with and **stimulate** your audience. You can also explore creative and engaging ways to communicate in written/imagery and spoken forms.

You can use the seven Cs of communication as a checklist, to help you to communicate more effectively, and ensure that you will be **understood**. Note: there is some crossover with the concepts here, and the principles of 'sticky' ideas – particularly with concise, clear, and concrete.

Figure 5: Six Principles of Sticky Ideas (Heath & Heath, 2007)

Figure 6: The 7 Cs of Communication (Broom & Sha, 2013)

Element 5
Evaluate your engagement and impact

As research infrastructure and academic environments around Australia continue to change, academic researchers are increasingly expected to demonstrate their ability to not only deliver new knowledge but ensure that knowledge is used to benefit society.

Types of research impact

Achieving demonstrable research impact 'beyond the academy' is more likely where there is knowledge translation and engagement with collaborators, stakeholders, and groups or individuals who may be affected by the research or research outcomes. Research impact is defined in different ways, however, is generally understood as: *the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research (ARC).*

Scope of the impact can be local, regional, national, or international, as well as at the level of individuals, groups, communities, organisations, or agencies, sectors, or industries.

More specifically, impact may occur in five broad areas (Banzi et al., 2011; Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 2009; Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Kuruvilla et al., 2006):

- **Advancing knowledge/research-related impacts.**
- **Capacity building** (developing researchers, skills, and research infrastructure to create impact).
- **Informing decision-making and policy** (changes in practice, improved public understanding, research-informed policy, at any level by the public).
- **Service and system impacts** (wide change or transformation, improved service delivery, cost savings, return on investment).
- **Economic and societal impacts** (commercialisation, collective or individual economic engagement including employment, improvements in health and living conditions, equity, social justice, and cultural outcomes).

Within each of these types of research impact, there may be varying types of research use (Kuruvilla et al., 2006; Weiss, 1979) or change (Edwards & Meagher, 2020). These could include:

- **Instrumental research use** – research findings directly drive or define plans, decisions, actions, practices, or policy.
- **Mobilisation of support** – research provides persuasive evidence to support activities or policy proposals or raise awareness for new policies or actions.
- **Conceptual research use** – research leads to changes in knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and emotions, or research influences the ideas, concepts, and language of policy deliberations.
- **Redefining/wider influence** – where research leads to rethinking and changing established practices and beliefs.
- **Enduring connectivity** – changes to the number and quality of relationships and trust.

Evaluation indicators and building impact narratives

Planning, activity, outputs, outcomes and impact may be reported and assessed over time. Although research activity may be completed within one, two, or three years, it may be five or more years before impact can be assessed or 'measured'.

Research impact assessment is a growing field, and many different approaches are available. Some of the commonly used methods include:

- **The 'payback' model** – value gained from research. e.g. return on investment.
- **The 'mapping' model** – describes and maps networks and flows of knowledge and the effects of any interactions from research.
- **Impact narrative/case study** – reports or tells a compelling story about the value of research outcomes and impacts descriptively, including the activities that are perceived to have contributed to the impact.

Table 5: Types of research impact and potential indicators
(Banzi et al 2011; Canadian Academy of Health Sciences 2009, Greenhalgh et al 2016, Kurivilla et al 2006)

Impact type	Potential indicators
Advancing knowledge Scientific advances, understanding, method, theory e.g. journal articles, reports, guidelines	Citations, views, conference acceptances, media; field-weighted citation impact, impact factors
Public opinion and engagement, understanding e.g. public awareness, debate	Invitations to present, media; public and online forums, altmetric attention scores (measure of public/ media interest in academic publications)
Informing decision-making and policy/ program change or development, implementation, informing practice	Citation in policy, programs, guidelines; implementation outcomes (adoption, reach etc.)
Service and system impacts (service-wide change or transformation, improved access, process, delivery, cost, organisational change) e.g. client access; time, money, quality	Client access, money, time, resources saved, quality improvements
Social and economic impacts (Contribution to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations) e.g. health, education, employment	Improved health, education, employment outcomes

Evaluating your knowledge translation goals is your first step in assessing research impact. Assign indicators as appropriate to your goal, and consider what you can collect data for over time within your available resources. This may include indicators of reach, usefulness, use, collaboration, program or service effectiveness, policy change, knowledge and attitude change, and/or behaviour or systems change.

Example:
If your project's main knowledge translation goal was to share knowledge, you might track paper citations, blog views, social media mentions, conference acceptances, invitations to present, or impact factors. In contrast, if your project's knowledge translation goal was to inform practice through co-produced tools and resources you might count and describe the number and type of interactions with practitioners, including requests for support or advice; describe involvement of practitioners and other stakeholders in co-production of tools and resources, interview them to ask about their awareness and use of tools and resources produced, and of their intentions to change practice. Some examples of indicators are provided in Table 5.

Importantly, consider how to include the voice of your stakeholders in assessing your research impact.

"Researchers don't make products - industry does; they don't develop policy - government does; they don't deliver social services – community does. So we need to demonstrate impact through the voices of those who are using the evidence."
– David Phipps, Assistant Vice-President, Research Strategy & Impact at York University

Some examples of impact narratives and case studies can be explored in research centres and institutes' impact reports, and in national impact assessment exercises, such as ones that Australia and the United Kingdom have developed. Links to these, including a selection of impact narrative examples and case studies, are provided in the section on knowledge translation case studies. A historical example of a short impact narrative from the 2018 Engagement and Impact Assessment in Australia is provided on the next page.

Box 2: Impact narrative example – Social determinants of health and wellbeing (Adapted from: Baum F, et al. for the Flinders University Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity. (2018) Engagement and Impact narrative submitted to the Australian Research Council 2018 Engagement and Impact Assessment - 11 Public and Allied Health Sciences.(unpublished)).

We now have evidence that social injustice is causing death and illness on a grand scale, which is both unfair and preventable. In Australia, the stark reality is that low-income individuals live six years less than their wealthier counterparts, while Indigenous Australians face an even graver disparity, with life expectancies 11 years shorter than the national average.

The Engagement and Impact narrative research (2018) that investigated the social and economic determinants of health and wellbeing by Baum, Freeman, Fisher, and colleagues has been critical in shaping policy, practice, and societal changes. In public health, where the effects of policy and practice changes on population outcomes often take years to materialise, research impact is best measured through proxies such as contributions to policy decisions and shifts in knowledge and attitudes. While immediate impacts are rare in this field, between 2011-2016, this work:

1. Provided the critical evidence base for **South Australia's "Health in All Policies"** initiative, a cross-government effort aimed at achieving greater health equity;
2. Catalysed global awareness and reshaped **discourse on the social determinants of health** through thought-leading research and advocacy;
3. Enabled **organisational and practice changes within the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress**, a community-controlled Aboriginal health service, improving the quality of care delivered.

Without this rigorous research and thought leadership, these impacts would have been severely undermined.

Researchers achieved this impact through a deliberate knowledge translation and engagement approach, including decades-long relationships with public and community sector stakeholders, research partnerships, policy dialogues, consultancy, evaluation, and training.

Table 6: Some resources for planning, evaluating and describing research impact

Resource	What it is
Altmetric. www.altmetric.com	An online site to view your research publications' mentions in social media and news
Sage Policy Profiles www.policyprofiles.sagepub.com/	A searchable site that identifies any policy documents citing any of your research publications
London School of Economics and Political Science's module on research impact. www.info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/engagement-and-impact/Assets/Documents/PDF/18-0408-KEI-Brochure-V9-ONLINE.pdf	A document of guidance on constructing an impact narrative/story
University of Western Australia's Research impact toolkit www.rdi.uwa.edu.au/research-impact-toolkit#evaluate	A self-guided online resource covering multiple aspects of impact planning and evaluation. Some features are only available to UWA staff.
Cochrane Training videos on Evaluating knowledge translation. www.training.cochrane.org/resource/evaluating-knowledge-translation-part-1	A three-part self-guided collection of videos, tools and articles (Part 1: What is evaluation and why is it important; Part 2: How do we know we are making a difference; Part 3: How to use social media analytics to evaluate)
Emerald Impact Services. www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/impact-services	A paid, self-paced online service to support researchers in planning and documenting impact

Knowledge translation and impact case studies

Knowledge translation and engagement between social impact researchers and community sector and policy agencies

Element	What happened, what worked/didn't work, what was learned
Knowledge translation goals/ Impact goals	Building on existing relationships, a trans-disciplinary team of researchers initiated a new partnership project with two government agencies and three community food relief sector organisations. The researchers hosted a stakeholder meeting to align interests, which informed a grant application (national research funding agency). After two grant attempts, the project was funded. A kick-off meeting identified shared goals, documented as 'propositions' for partner feedback during subsequent interviews. These propositions were revisited at each partner meeting. Defining project goals was challenging, especially when co-benefits were unclear, and required ongoing revision. Researchers defined the knowledge translation goal as: "Advance knowledge co-production and **evidence-informed practice and policy** in household food insecurity responses in South Australia". Individual knowledge translation objectives related to informing practice, policy, and fostering system change. Partners prioritised awareness-raising before practice change.

Element	What happened, what worked/didn't work, what was learned
Stakeholder engagement	To identify relevant stakeholders, the team used a stakeholder identification template and mapping matrix during a team meeting, which revealed more potential stakeholders than could be engaged. Researchers prioritised the two government and three community sector stakeholders that had partnered on the Linkage Project, and selected additional stakeholders in the community sector and local government as 'critical friends'. The team also regularly engaged with the South Australia-wide food relief community of practice, and selected Non-Government Organisations and local governments that were actively pursuing food security strategy or evolving their service models. Over time, key contacts were revised as stakeholders frequently changed roles. Maintaining multiple contacts within an agency was important to mitigate key person risk, typically involving a manager and a subject matter expert. Interactions with each stakeholder group/individual were tracked in a simple spreadsheet, recording the type of interaction any outcomes (or demonstrable impacts).
Knowledge translation/ engagement strategies	Staffing budget was used flexibly to hire a researcher with knowledge brokering and policy experience as the primary knowledge translation strategy. This enabled greater relationship building, co-production opportunities, consultancy responses, co-authoring, evidence searching, and strategic communication. On reflection, a mix of knowledge translation strategies could have been more effective. More resources could have been allocated to team co-location, improved design, more frequent group partner meetings, and possibly a broader steering committee for governance and buy-in at other levels of the 'system'.

Element	What happened, what worked/didn't work, what was learned
Communications planning	At the start, the knowledge broker drafted a strategic communication plan, inviting input from Chief Investigators and PhD students. External partners were invited to provide feedback, aiding publication permissions. Partners were invited to co-author selected communications, supported by a workflow and authorship agreement document. Despite strategic efforts, unexpected communication opportunities arose, especially from grey literature reports, which led to presentations and briefings, and public engagement with a peer-reviewed paper, leading to national TV and radio appearances. Tailored, short reports were the main method of progress reporting. However, progress reports failed to engage; direct conversations proved far more effective than a simple 'push' of information. For commissioned projects occurring concurrent to the Linkage project, 1:3:25 reports were well-received by decision-makers.
Evaluation of impact	The team has produced an engagement and impact narrative to demonstrate progress on knowledge translation goals. Prospective impact evaluation may be possible in future to better understand demonstrable impacts. Impact evaluation metrics include: • Number and type of contact/stakeholder interactions over three years • Attendance and representation at key meetings/workshops, sustainment of agency representation • Co-authorship and joint presentations • Meeting requests and invitations to present • Invitations to partner on new projects • Inclusion of research to policy/in service delivery/organisational processes • Downloads of grey literature reports; and downloads and altmetric attention to peer-reviewed publications • Policy tracing

Element	What happened, what worked/didn't work, what was learned
Demonstrable impacts	To date, the project has led to: • Policy improvements, via commissioned redesign of a state government financial wellbeing program • Enhanced service delivery, via improved client referral processes and plans for an evolved community food/social access model in Foodbank SA&NT, and a new collaborative research grant to transform harvest surplus into nutritious foods through social enterprise • Adoption of an innovative service model, the 'social supermarket', via influencing service design in local governments and community sector organisations.

Knowledge translation approach used in ARC-Linkage project: "Towards zero hunger: Improving food relief services in Australia" (2021-2024 (Bogomolova S, Goodwin-Smith I, Coveney J, Buckley J, Pettman T). Partners: Centre for Social Impact, Flinders University; College of Nursing and Health Sciences Flinders University; UniSA Allied Health and Human Performance; Centre for Health in All Policies Research Translation; Department of Human Services SA; Preventive Health SA, AnglicareSA, Foodbank SA&NT, The Food Centre Inc.

Impact case studies: research impact assessment narratives

Table 7: Online sources with examples/case studies of research impact

Source	What it provides
Australian Research Council 2018 Impact studies (narratives) https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/EI/Web/Impact/ImpactStudies	This repository includes summaries of narratives that were scored 'high impact' in the inaugural Australian research impact assessment. For example: 'Safeguarding the elderly from abuse and neglect'
National Health and Medical Research Council impact case studies https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/impact-case-studies	This webpage includes impact case studies from NHMRC-funded research, described narratively and in poster/ infographic format. For example 'Health and the built environment'
UK Research Excellence Framework 2021 impact case studies https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact	This repository includes examples of research impact narratives, such as 'Addressing driver behaviour'
Research impact reports, booklets and stories from Australian research institutes and centres	https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-research/research-impact https://www.unisa.edu.au/research/rbrc/research-impact/#impact https://www.thekids.org.au/about-us/publications/impact-report-2023/ https://baker.edu.au/impact/impact-report

Stakeholder engagement: principles, tips and checklists

Design principles and tips for research-stakeholder engagement

These guiding principles and tips build on the checklist provided earlier in Box 1, and focus on researcher engagement with policy, practice, and service settings.

Note: community/citizen engagement is equally important and follows similar principles – but if community members are your key stakeholders, be sure to follow relevant guidance and principles for community participation and co-production in research.

Design principles: Boaz et al (2018) recommend engagement in research, based on a combination of existing literature and new empirical insights from a longitudinal study of stakeholder engagement (Boaz et al., 2018).

Tips: Cairney and Oliver (2020) recommend the following individual actions by researchers engaging with policy, practice and service settings, based on a synthesis of 86 publications (Cairney & Oliver, 2020).

Design principles for stakeholder engagement

Organisational

1. Clarify the objectives of stakeholder engagement

The objectives might be one or more of accessing knowledge and skills; supporting interpretation of the results and drafting recommendations; supporting future influence and impact on policy and practice; increasing recruitment/enabling research; supporting transferability. The objectives then need to be shared among all parties.

2. Embed stakeholder engagement in a framework or model of research use

There are a number of models and frameworks designed to show how stakeholders might be engaged in a way that helps increase the chances of research being used in policy and practice, for example, the linkage and exchange model (Boaz et al., 2016).

3. Identify the necessary resources for stakeholder engagement

Resources to consider are budget, time, skills, and competences to manage engagement.

4. Put in place plans for organisational learning and rewarding of effective stakeholder engagement

For example, through appropriate evaluation of stakeholder engagement.

5. Recognise that some stakeholders have the potential to play a key role

Identify those stakeholders who are particularly interested in being engaged and those who are likely to be influential. Depending on the objective of stakeholder engagement, they may provide the most useful input, and are most likely to play a key role in using the results; their engagement should be especially encouraged.

Values

6. Foster shared commitment to the values and objectives of stakeholder engagement in the project team

Ideally, ensure the commitment is there from the outset (Deverka et al., 2012).

7. Share understanding that stakeholder engagement is often about more than individuals

Consideration needs to be given to stakeholders' roles where they act as representatives – their power and influence within organisations and networks they represent and how these change over time.

8. Encourage individual stakeholders and their organisations to value engagement

Support and build capacity for stakeholders and their organisations to engage.

9. Recognise potential tension between productivity and inclusion

Engagement may lead to greater relevance and impact, but may have implications for productivity in meeting project objectives (for example, in a timely fashion). Engaging stakeholders, taking into account their needs and inputs and adjusting elements of the research project based on their feedback takes time and can slow down the research process.

10. Generate a shared commitment to sustained and continuous stakeholder engagement

Project teams and stakeholders see the value of links between research producers and research users to build ongoing collaborations in order to meet the objectives.

Practices

11. Plan stakeholder engagement activity as part of the research programme of work

This should be built into the project protocol or plan (Pokhrel et al., 2014).

12. Build flexibility within the research process to accommodate engagement and the outcomes of engagement

It will also be important to build in mechanisms to allow researchers to have the independence to articulate what is out of scope.

13. Consider how input from stakeholders can be gathered systematically to meet objectives

The importance of some face-to-face contact and interactions should be considered.

14. Consider how input from stakeholders can be collated, analysed, and used

This important aspect of stakeholder engagement needs to be considered earlier than often happens.

15. Recognising identification and involvement of stakeholders is an iterative and ongoing process

Ongoing interaction will be fostered by taking the time and creating the structures to build trustful relationships.

Tips for research-policy engagement
(Cairney & Oliver, 2020)

1. Do high-quality research.

- Use specific well-established research designs, methods, or metrics

2. Make your research relevant and readable.

- Provide and disseminate easily understandable, clear, relevant, and high-quality research
- Aim for the general but 'not ignorant' reader
- Use storytelling. Produce good stories based, for example, on emotional appeals or humour to expand your audience

3. Understand the policy process, policymaking context, and key actors.

- Understand the policy process in which you engage - policy change often happens incrementally, and researchers can help catalyse changes – especially when, on occasion, a 'policy window' opens (where factors align with evidence, and researchers can support a policy advancement)
- Note the busy and constrained lives of policy actors
- Maximise your use of established ways to engage, such as in advisory committees
- Be pragmatic about what 'success' looks like, accepting that research rarely translates into policy options directly

4. Be 'accessible' to policymakers: engage routinely, flexibly, and humbly

- As publicly funded professionals, it is the job of academics to engage with policy and the public
- Discuss topics beyond your narrow expertise, as a representative of your discipline or the science profession
- Be humble, courteous, professional, and recognise the limits to your skills when giving policy advice
- Respect policymakers' time and expertise

5. Decide if you want to be an 'issue advocate' or 'honest broker'

- There is a commonly cited ethical dilemma about whether to go beyond providing evidence to recommend specific policy options or remain an 'honest broker' explaining the options
- If making recommendations, use storytelling to persuade policymakers of a course of action

- However, note the consequences of becoming a political actor. David Nutt famously lost his advisory role after publicly criticising a government drugs policy, some describe the loss of one's safety if adopting an activist mind-set, and anecdotal conversations describe the risk of losing credibility in government if seen as too evangelical while giving policy advice. However, more common consequences include criticism within one's peer-group, being seen as an academic 'lightweight', being used to add legitimacy to a policy position, and the risk of burnout

6. Build relationships (and ground rules) with policymakers.

- Relationship-building activities require investment and a particular skillset, but working collaboratively is necessary to have evidence influence policy
- Academics could identify and connect with policy actors to provide better insight into policy problems. These people can act as champions for your research, and help to identify who else are the most helpful policy actors, or may have connections to Ministerial advisors
- However, collaboration can also lead to tensions and reputational risk. Therefore, when possible, produce ground rules that are acceptable to academics and policymakers/practitioners. Successful engagement may require all parties to reach consensus about processes and outputs

7. Be 'entrepreneurial' or find someone who is.

- Consider your role as a researcher – and whether you can be a daring, persuasive scientist, comfortable in policy environments, and always available when needed.
- Develop 'media-savvy' skills to 'sell the sizzle'
- Become able to convince people who think differently that shared action is possible, and that real, tangible impacts are deliverable
- If not able to act in this way, hire brokers to act on your behalf

8. Reflect continuously: should you engage, and is it working?

- Academics may be a good fit in the policy arena if they 'want to be in real world', 'enjoy finding solutions to complex problems' or are driven 'by a passion greater than simply adding another item to your resume'
- Keep track of when and how you have had impact, and revise your practices continuously

Additional stakeholder engagement tools

Table 8: Some resources and tools for stakeholder engagement

Resource	What it is
Spreadsheet from the Australian Public Service Commission https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/aps-mobility-framework/taskforce-toolkit/stakeholder-engagement/getting-stakeholder-engagement-right	An online spreadsheet that provides guidance on how to identify, initiate, and maintain stakeholder relationships
Template from the Taskforce Toolkit Stakeholder mapping – template	Online PowerPoint template for mapping stakeholders based on their influence and interest
Template from the Taskforce Toolkit Stakeholder feedback tracker – template	Online Excel template that provides a way to record and track stakeholder feedback
Template from the Taskforce Toolkit Stakeholder engagement plan – template	Online Excel template used to plan out and maintain stakeholder engagement

Checklist: avoiding collaboration 'failures'

The checklist below was produced from findings of a review of research on failure of research collaborations and relationships, from industry and innovation research examples (Puliga et al., 2023).

We have restructured their drivers of collaboration 'failures', to suggest actions to do or what to address to avoid these types of failures. There will be some crossover between this list and the tips and checklists provided earlier in this guidebook.

Checklist: avoiding failure of collaborations with industry or policy actors

Environmental Context:

- Assess market conditions and competition
- Evaluate potential for developed 'outputs'
- Obtain governmental support
- Review relevant legal restrictions and regulations

Collaboration Context:

- Consider previous experience with similar partners
- Generate shared understanding of the type of activities from past collaborations
- Assess capacity to integrate acquired knowledge (absorptive capacity)

Interorganisational Processes:

- Align and clarify strategies, visions, goals, and expected outcomes of collaboration
- Establish and manage governance tools (intellectual property rights, contracts, roles, responsibilities)
- Address geographical distance and lack of face-to-face interaction

Management and Relationship Factors:

- Build trust to enhance information flow
- Foster a culture of mutual understanding
- Ensure regular communication and continuous feedback
- Develop a common 'language' suitable for both/all partners
- Confirm commitment and willingness to invest effort
- Address power imbalances between partners

Actors' Characteristics:

- Acknowledge different missions and objectives (e.g. research vs. profit vs. policy goals)
- Manage conflicting management styles and decision-making processes
- Acknowledge organisational bureaucracy and flexibility issues
- Share information about reputations and credentials of partners

Knowledge Translation Plan Workbook

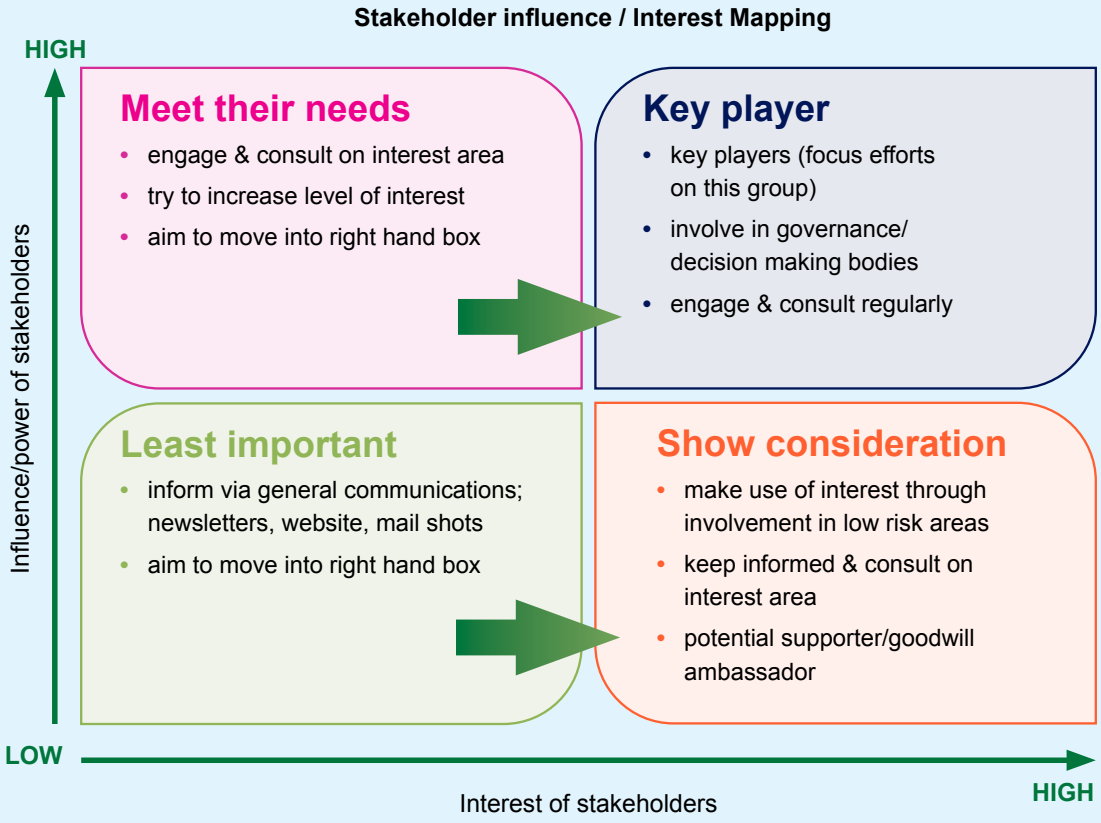
What are your knowledge translation goals?
(Long-term aim, distinct from project goals)

What are your knowledge translation objectives?
(Short-term aim that contributes to achievement of goals)

Who do you need to engage?

Groupings/categories	Organisations	Individuals

Who should you prioritise?



'Key player'		
Influential, not interested (meet their needs)		
Interested, not so influential (show consideration)		
Low influence and interest (Minimum effort)		

What strategies will you use throughout?
(Aim for integrated, relational approaches throughout. Revisit your knowledge translation goals to assist in choosing knowledge translation strategies. Target strategies to your stakeholder groups. Mix push, pull/facilitating user pull, exchange where resources allow)

How will you communicate with stakeholders and other audiences throughout?

Inform

This Stakeholder Group contains individuals who require a broad level of awareness of the project. These stakeholders may also be influential/ important conduits of information to other stakeholders.

Consult

This Stakeholder Group contains individuals who have a requirement to possess a good understanding of the project and will be invited to provide input at critical points

Involve

This Stakeholder Group contains individuals who have a high-level of engagement with the project and are involved in the decision-making process.

Collaboration

This Stakeholder Group contains individual stakeholders who are responsible for driving the project.

Stakeholder Group	Engagement Type Inform - Consult Involve - Collaborate	Communication Objective (purpose or key message)	Method of Communication	Frequency

How will you measure impact of your knowledge translation efforts? (research impact)
(Consider types of impact according to your knowledge translation goals e.g. Academic and research capacity building; public engagement; policy, program and practice impacts; systems and service-wide impacts; social/economic/health impacts)

Further reading

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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of terminology

Evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM): 'the process of distilling and disseminating the best available evidence from research, practice, and experience and using that evidence to inform and improve public health policy and practice'. Put simply, it means finding, using, and sharing what works in public health (Leite, 2011).

Knowledge translation: "The synthesis, exchange, and application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people's health." (Sudsawad, 2007).

Knowledge exchange: The interaction between the knowledge user and the researcher, resulting in mutual learning; effective knowledge exchange involves interaction between decision-makers and researchers and results in mutual learning through the process of planning, producing, disseminating, and applying existing or new research in decision-making. (Jordan et al., 2019).

Research-policy translation: Policy translation is a framework, which helps researchers understand the process of travel of (policy) innovations across countries better, and as a result, manage these in a better way (Mukhtarov, 2021).

Research translation: Research translation is the process of moving research ideas from labs to clinics. It ensures that new medical discoveries become part of the clinical practice of GPs, other specialists, and hospitals. (Department of Health and Aged Care, 2024). It also means the adoption of research into policy and practice.

Co-production: A way of working whereby citizens and decision makers, or people who use services, family carers, and service providers work together to create a decision or service which works for them all. The approach is value driven and built on the principle that those who use a service are best placed to help design it (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2022).

Policy-relevant research: Policy relevant research refers to how effectively research findings inform decisions made by decision-makers. In other words, policy relevance is determined by how applicable and practical research findings are to decisions that need to be made on policy priorities (PolicyWise, 2021).

Implementation science: 'Implementation science is the study of methods to promote the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices, interventions, and policies into routine health care and public health settings to improve the impact on population health.' (University of Washington, 2021).

Evidence based policy: Evidence-based policies is a decision-making process which combines deductive logic with statistical analysis to inform policy decision making (Palangkaraya et al., 2012).

Participatory research: Participatory research (PR) encompasses research designs, methods, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in direct collaboration with those affected by an issue being studied for the purpose of action or change (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020).

Know-do gap: The “know-do gap” is a new term to describe an old problem: the gap between what we know and what we do in practice (Pakenham-Walsh, 2004).

Translational science: "The process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic, and community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and populations – from diagnostics and therapeutics to medical procedures and observational behaviours" (Georgia CTSA, 2021).

Gap analysis: Involves understanding and identifying the difference (‘gaps’) between evidence and actual practice or policymaking; needs assessment at the population, organisation, and/or care-provider level is performed to determine the size and nature of the gap.

Commercialisation: Commercialisation is the process of bringing new products or services to market. The broader act of commercialisation entails production, distribution, marketing, sales, customer support, and other key functions critical to achieving the commercial success of the new product or service (Kenton, 2020).

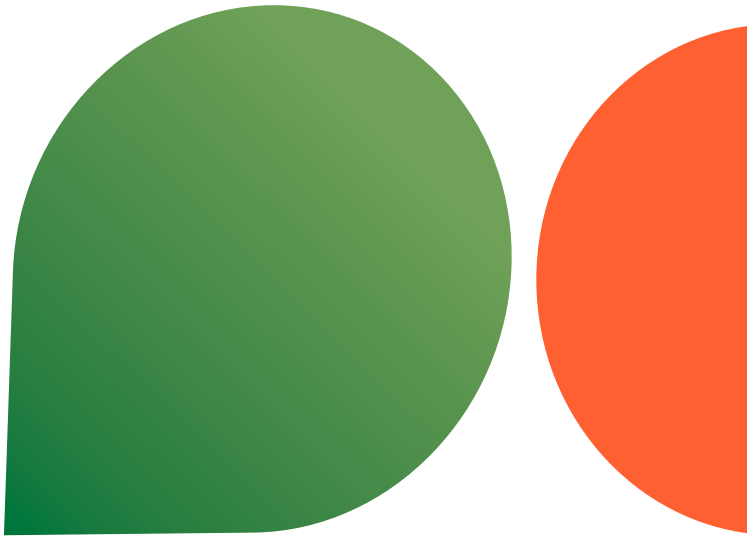
(research) Engagement: Connecting with and involving non-academic communities throughout the research and translation processes (University of Melbourne Knowledge Network, 2016).

Impact: The consequences, actions or knowledge-contributions measurably attributable, at least in part, to a particular source.

Appendix B: How we made this guidebook

How we made this guidebook: This guidebook was developed to respond directly to needs identified by ageing well researchers and their practice and policy partners. To develop a guide, Office for Ageing Well re-engaged the Centre for Health in All Policies Research translation (CHiAPRT), the same knowledge translation specialists who had supported the co-development of the Strategic Research Agenda for Ageing Well in South Australia and the Impact Research Grants for Ageing Well. CHiAPRT and Office for Ageing Well formed a working group to produce this guide.

- First, CHiAPRT reviewed the topics that researchers and their partners had identified as initial 'needs' for knowledge translation workshops (in Learning Lab 1), as well as all the evaluation feedback from workshops with the same group (Learning Labs 2- 4). This was gathered by asking participants what their research was aiming to change, what strategies, skills, and tools would be useful to support knowledge translation in their research.
- A draft guide outline was developed and presented to workshop participants (Learning Lab 5). Feedback was collected. Participants gave helpful and instructive advice, including: use plain language; give examples and case studies; emphasise that knowledge translation is not linear and is an iterative process that can be started at any point in the research cycle; suggest where to focus time on knowledge translation/research engagement and tips for maintaining relationships; add links and examples of research communication products like policy briefs; and add links to examples of research impact assessment.
- The guide outline was updated using workshop participants' feedback, and content was populated by drawing on existing guidance and tools. Workshop participants were also invited to provide their 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' examples of research engagement/ collaborative research.
- A draft version of the guide was provided to Office for Ageing Well, who provided feedback on the relevance to policy and practice, and suggested what was missing.
- The guide was revised to include feedback, and the working group reviewed the final version before progressing to graphic design.



CHiAPRT
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