



Sharing Your Program Success with the World: Innovative Dissemination Strategies

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OVERVIEW

Dissemination is increasingly recognized as an important component of the research process, particularly for sharing results with a broad audience. This tip sheet is meant to complement the [Disseminating Evaluation Results](#) tip sheet that provides key planning activities Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) grantees can use to share results. The overall goal of the tip sheet is to provide specific tips that program directors, developers, and evaluators can follow to increase dissemination and visibility of their evaluation results.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION

A recent review of dissemination literature from various disciplines found common lessons related to dissemination (Brownson et al., 2018). The following lessons learned can help begin filling the “translation gap” between what is known about effective programs and what is used in practice.

- 1) Dissemination must be an active process that is **considered from the beginning** of the project. Like other project activities, dissemination should be ongoing, iterative, and evolve over the course of the project. The information being disseminated may change as the project is implemented. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has developed a [Dissemination Planning Tool](#) that can walk researchers and project teams through specific steps for planning dissemination throughout the lifecycle of a project. Refer also to the [Disseminating Evaluation Results](#) tip sheet.
- 2) **Engaging stakeholders and end users** in the research, interpretation, and dissemination process can improve dissemination (Slunge et al., 2017). Engaging stakeholders and end users can help ensure that the different aspects of the dissemination plan—channels used, materials developed, and key concepts shared—are relevant and resonant to the various target audiences. It can also help build support for and trust in the information being disseminated.

Use the [Dissemination Planning Tool](#) to create steps for your dissemination

3) **Message framing is critical**, and different frames are needed for different audiences—particularly if the goal is to expand dissemination beyond traditional networks. For example, the message frame used for a policy audience will likely be very different than the frame used for a program facilitator audience. Effective framing should also consider the unique context of different audiences and what information is most salient and important given the context.

4) The dissemination **strategy (and channels) should be relevant** to the culture of the agency, organization or network within which it is being disseminated. This relates to the frame and how the message is conveyed. For example, if an agency typically uses a weekly email to convey critical information, including your messaging within that email may be effective. If other organizations or fields are more familiar with in-person dissemination, then be sure to build that tactic into your plan.

5) Dissemination impact—the extent others use or pass on information you share—can be measured in a variety of ways. **Consider the appropriate measures of dissemination** depending on your audience and the particular product. Key measures usually include reach and engagement (by audience type) and use of a particular product or component that has been disseminated.

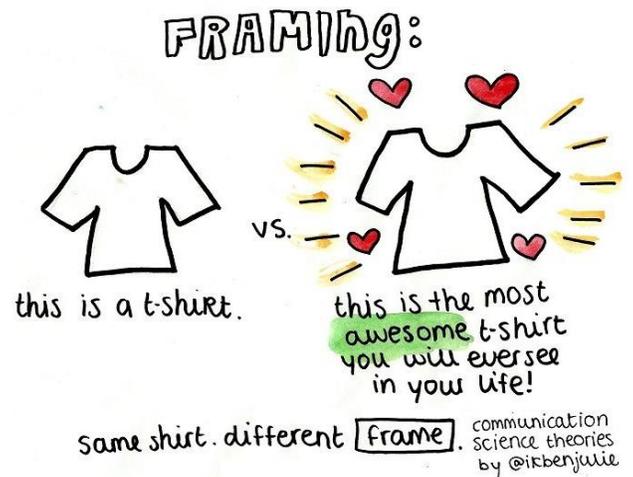
INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Innovation within dissemination is broad and can apply to the strategies used for project design and data collection, analyze, and interpretation. Innovative strategies can also apply to the specific medium or style used to share the information or results.

Design

When considering innovations to design your dissemination strategy, specific activities may include those that invite input from the beginning of the project. Examples of these include the following:

- Hold **interviews or focus groups** with stakeholders or end users at the beginning of the project to understand what type of materials they might consume and channels they might use to find information. These types of focus groups could also be conducted throughout the project at various points to build awareness of the work overall and to share information.
- Host **community meetings** and opportunities to provide small group feedback on the project and results and the work through suggested channels. These sessions will help you understand the salient points and concepts most important to your audience. You might also consider participating in other relevant community meetings to help learn about community priorities and share information about the project over time. This will lead to stronger relationships when it is time to disseminate final results (Ondenge et al., 2015).
- Consider developing or engaging a **community advisory board** who can review the project along all of its phases (i.e., start-up, implementation, and analysis). Board members should represent a variety of perspectives (e.g., education, health care, business, government, youth, parents, social services) and be representative of the community (Green & Mercer, 2001).



Source: Build Business Results Network. (n.d.). *What is message framing?*
<https://buildbusinessresults.com/what-is-message-framing/>

Collect

You might also consider pursuing innovative strategies to collect data and information that can support dissemination efforts. For example, adding audio or visual elements to your project or research might enhance engagement with the results.

- These elements could include **photovoice** to supplement other data collection or research activities. Photovoice is a qualitative method used in community-based participatory research (Nykiforuk et al., 2011). Participants are invited to use photography to highlight issues important to them, which enables researchers to have a better understanding of the context in which participants live.
- Consider creating a brief montage of **video interviews**. Brief videos could cover a range of topics from participants, including their perspectives about the challenges you are addressing or the impact of the programming you offer. These could be developed throughout the implementation phase. The movie *Up* provides an example of a montage, which can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2bk_9T482g

Example Photovoice



Source: Florian et al., 2016.

Analyze and Interpret

Including innovative strategies in your analysis and interpretation of results may also increase the likelihood that they are widely shared and disseminated. Strategies to do this include the following:

- Host **data walks with community members**. These are usually done in person and involve visually displaying the data and inviting conversation in small groups to explore the data in more detail. Questions might include reactions to the data presented, recommendations for what to explore further, and ways to describe the data for others in the community. Data walks can be used at any point during the project and could be a useful way to invite community engagement from the beginning. For more information about data walks and how to set one up refer to [The Anne. E. Casey Foundation \(2016\)](#) and [Murray et al. \(2015\)](#).
- Engage the **community advisory board** to help support this step. As described above, engaging a community advisory board can help ensure that the priorities and perspectives of community members—not just researchers—are included in the analysis and interpretation plans. This will result in more relevant and applicable dissemination products.

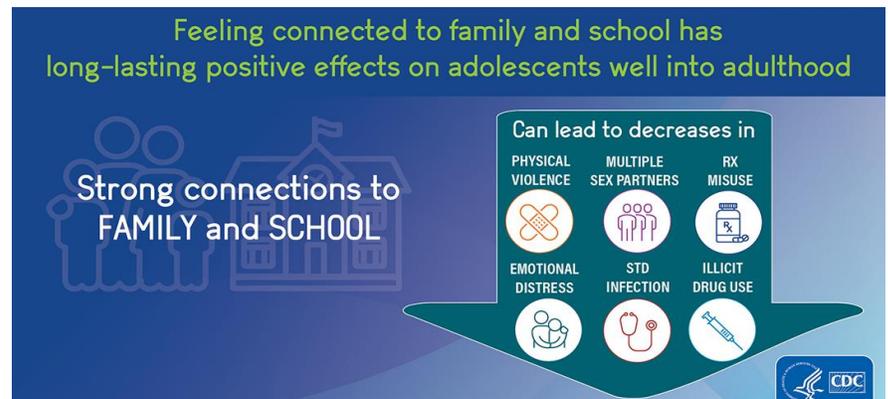
Share

Innovation in dissemination can also occur through the particular channels, mediums, and strategies used to share findings. This includes strategies for bringing research to the real world in a format that can be widely used and shared (Elmi, 2011).

- Often, long research reports or articles are not read and may not be used (Doemeland & Trevino, 2014). Although it is important to have peer-reviewed research articles and reports that describe the research and findings in more detail, think about other creative ways to share findings from the research. **Videos, infographics, and blogs** are mediums that may help expand the utility and use of the information. PREP grantees are able to use [The Exchange Studio](#) to develop personalized infographics and tip sheets to raise awareness of their work. (Note: You must be registered for The Exchange and logged in to access The Studio. Find instructions on how to register [here](#).)

- **Videos:** As described above, you could create videos with participants or other key stakeholders to share information about your program. When developing the video, identify the goal and plan the content accordingly. Also, consider the platform that you will be using to tailor the video content and length. In general, online videos, especially those shared through social media tend to be very short (i.e., 2 minutes or less) (Gotter, 2019). Creating videos has become substantially more cost effective because technology for filming and editing is more ubiquitous. Work with the target audience to determine what style of video might be most appropriate for them.

Example Infographic from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

- **Infographics:** These are visual representations of data or ideas that convey complex ideas or results quickly. Using infographics can make the information more appealing and understandable to a wider range of audiences than text-based reports alone (Olfert et al., 2019). Consider working with a graphic designer or using software tools like [Venngage](#) or [Canva](#) to develop infographics. Keep infographics concise and consider how they might be shared to inform the design.
- **Blogs:** Blogs are discussion- or information-based webpages. These can be embedded in your website or on a blogging website. Blogs can share information in a longer format than social media and can provide links to other information (e.g., infographics). If you develop a blog for your website, consider how often you will update the blog and the general tone of the blog page. For disseminating information about your program and results, you could also identify other websites used by your target audience and offer to develop a guest blog post for those websites.
- Consider engaging community members to share results in an **entertaining format** (Gruia, 2019). For example, perhaps you could share general information about the program via a dramatic performance or live skit of some kind. You could use storytelling to share the key findings and impact of a program through the lens of an individual or group to make it feel more personal and relevant. Storytelling, through different mediums (e.g., written, spoken, video) is a more entertaining format than traditional research reports (Taylor et al., 2017).
- Publishing key findings through an article (or several articles) in **peer-reviewed journals** along with professional conference presentations will be important for establishing the impact and credibility of the research you have conducted. Most peer-reviewed journals provide information about the type of articles they accept and the submission process. To get started, identify the most appropriate journal for your results. There are a variety of adolescent-focused and health education-focused journals that might be relevant, and each of these will have information for authors about the types of articles that they publish. Taking a look at the guidelines will help you determine how to craft your articles.
- Depending on your overall dissemination objectives, you may consider **presenting at national-, regional-, state-, and community-level conferences and meetings**. National-level meetings may be helpful for raising general awareness of your evaluation and program, whereas more locally focused meetings may be helpful for continued sustainability and implementation within your local region and community.

Expanding the type of conference at which the research findings are presented could provide additional opportunities for program expansion and implementation. When thinking about suitable types of conferences and meetings, identify those that may be appropriate based on the population that your program serves, the implementation setting in which your program was evaluated, and the topics that are covered and addressed by the program.

- **Tips for Submitting a Presentation:** If you are interested in presenting at a conference, find out if the conference has an open call for abstracts or if the presentations are by invitation only. If they are invited, consider reaching out to the conference organizers and providing them with a brief description of what you might present and why it is relevant for their audience and conference. For abstract-based conferences, carefully review the abstract criteria and ensure that your abstract meets those criteria. Highlighting how your presentation will connect to the overall conference theme and audience can be helpful for increasing the likelihood that your abstract will be selected for presentation.
- Consider using **mass media and social media** to share research findings. The best outlets to use will depend on end users and key stakeholders. For example, social media platforms better suited for research dissemination include [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Medium](#). Other outlets include podcasts, op-eds, letters to the editor, interactive PDFs to increase engagement, briefs specific to various audiences (i.e., policy briefs for policymakers), and brief reports to complement the journal articles.
- The following resources can help as you disseminate the results of your program:
 - [The health communicator’s social media toolkit](#)
 - [What’s your organization’s digital footprint?](#)
 - [Adolescent pregnancy prevention social media toolkit](#)

Overall, dissemination is an iterative and engaging process that should include input from the various end users who you want to reach. Including dissemination as a key component throughout the research process can be useful for ensuring that the information you are sharing is resonant and relevant for the target audience.

RESOURCES

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