Disseminating Evaluation Results
July 2020

OVERVIEW

Dissemination involves making information about your project available to and usable by others (CDC, 2018). This tip sheet is designed to help Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) grantees disseminate the results of their evaluation activities. It guides grantees through various decisions that need to be made, including what information to disseminate, the audience and format for this communication, and what partners and processes will support success.

WHY DISSEMINATE EVALUATION FINDINGS?

There are several reasons why PREP grantees might wish to share their evaluation results.

- **Advance the field**. If your project was implemented successfully and if it benefited your target population, then others will want to hear about it. Other organizations may want to know how to achieve comparable results in their own communities. Policymakers may want to develop laws, regulations, or guidelines to encourage others to implement similar interventions. Lessons learned and barriers faced are also important information to share with other organizations implementing similar programs.

- **Get community feedback**. Study participants and community stakeholders are overlooked audiences for research and evaluation findings. Sharing findings and soliciting feedback from the community is an important step for involving community members as study partners, not just study subjects. Furthermore, study participants and other community members may have unique insight into evaluation results, and they may want to use the results for their own purposes (Baker & Motton, 2005).

- **Build credibility with potential funders.** Documentation of your intervention's feasibility and effectiveness may suggest to funders that your future work is a sound investment.

- **Publicize your project.** If your project is successful, publicizing it can build demand among your target population and awareness among potential partners, funders, and other supporters. This can ultimately promote the sustainability of your project.

CREATING A DISSEMINATION PLAN

The rest of this tip sheet is designed to guide you through creating a plan to disseminate your evaluation findings. Other tip sheets on The Exchange provide more detailed information on each step of the dissemination process.

1. Which findings will you disseminate?

Effective dissemination strategies reflect a goal, like informing or motivating an audience. Several types of evaluation information can be disseminated depending on the nature and stage of a project.

Type of evaluation information	When to disseminate
Formative evaluation, pilot test results Description of how a new or adapted strategy was tested and refined in your target population	• Strategy is new or significantly adapted • Strategy was tested with a small sample before full implementation • Limited literature exists on pregnancy prevention programming with the target population
Process evaluation results Description of intervention strategy and how it was implemented; characteristics of intervention participants	• Program or approach is new, innovative, or not previously well-documented • Project is in its early stages, before outcome evaluation findings are available
Outcome evaluation results Whether, how, and for whom the intervention changed knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors	• Outcome evaluation data have been collected and analyzed
Innovations in evaluation methodology Information about new tools (e.g., survey questions) or techniques (e.g., consent procedures) developed for your evaluation	• Unique research procedures or new data collection instruments have been used
Prevalence and causation data Information on the rates or average levels of behaviors, attitudes, or other characteristics in your target population and the associations between them	• Recent prevalence or causal data are not otherwise available for the target population • Data are available for individuals who were not exposed to the intervention (i.e., baseline or comparison group data)

2. Who is your audience?

Diverse audiences may benefit from learning about evaluation results. These audiences could include current and potential funders, adolescents and families, program administrators and implementers, researchers, policymakers, and the general public.

Effective dissemination strategies should be focused on audience needs. Strategies should also link the audience to resources that allow them to act. For example, if you want to promote the use of your new, effective curriculum, you can facilitate its use by providing a link to electronic versions of curriculum materials in dissemination products. Alternately, if your project hopes to persuade parents to sign up for your effective parent program, you can facilitate sign-ups by including contact information for the recruitment coordinator in any dissemination products targeting parents.

Dissemination should also allow for some dialogue with the audience. In particular, in-person and social media–based dissemination strategies offer opportunities for two-way communication with an audience.

3.   How will you share your results?

Effective dissemination strategies involve a combination of different dissemination methods and formats. Messaging to support the strategy should be addressed to diverse audiences, including non-English speakers, individuals with hearing or visual impairments, and individuals without Internet access. Messages should also be clear, succinct, and jargon-free.

One visually appealing and accessible way to share evaluation results is through an infographic. An infographic is a diagram, chart, or other visual aid that presents information in an easily digestible way. Infographics can be used to share evaluation results in a variety of dissemination products, including written reports, blog posts, and social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Tumblr. The Studio, located on The Exchange, is a useful tool for easily creating infographics because it allows users to customize existing infographic templates. (Note: You must be registered for The Exchange and logged in to access The Studio. Find instructions on how to register here.)

The 4-1-1 on Infographics
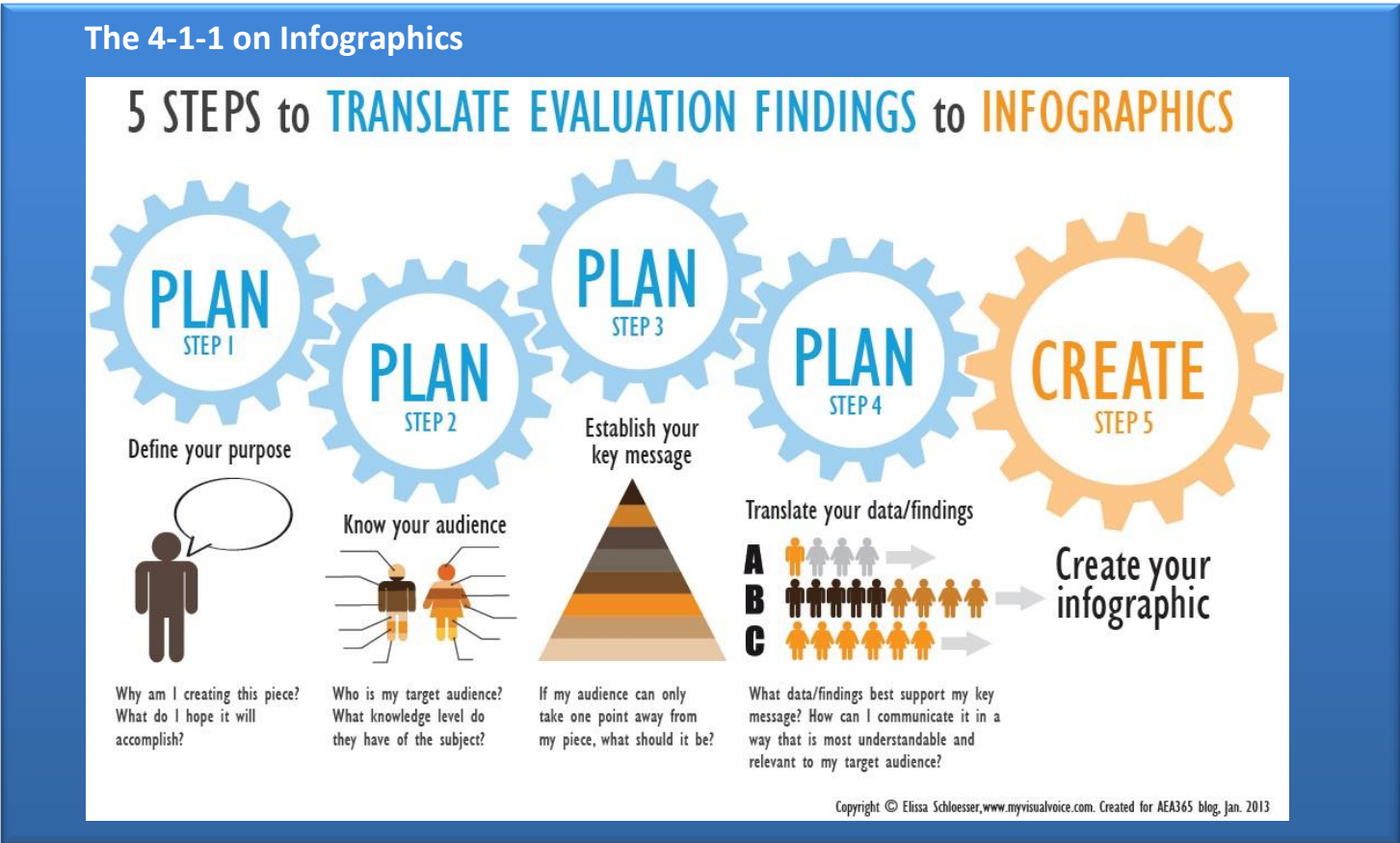
Other dissemination formats include peer-reviewed articles, research briefs, conference presentations, and more. The table on the following page (adapted from Sofaer et al., 2013) includes strengths and weaknesses of selected dissemination formats that projects can consider using.

Characteristics and Examples of Selected Dissemination Formats

Dissemination format	Strengths	Weaknesses	Adolescent pregnancy prevention evaluation examples
Peer-reviewed journal article	• Lends scientific credibility	• Has a long review process • Reaches a mainly academic audience • Is competitive	• Short-Term Impacts of Pulse: An App-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program for Black and Latinx Women (Manlove et al., 2020) • My Journey: Development and Practice-Based Evidence of a Culturally Attuned Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program for Native Youth (Kenyon et al., 2019)
Report, brief	• Can be published quickly • Can be easily accessible and free	• Has less credibility than peer-reviewed journals • May be challenging for audience to locate	• Young Men's Experiences in a Pregnancy Prevention Program for Males (Parekh et al., 2018) • Evaluation of CAS-Carrera Program in Georgia (Tucker, 2015)
Conference presentation	• Lends scientific credibility • Provides opportunity to receive feedback	• Is competitive • Requires resources for travel • Reaches limited audience	• Hanging Out or Hooking Up: A Universal Education Approach to Prevent Teen Dating Violence (Marjavi, 2019) • Reducing Teen Pregnancy Through Effective Contraception: Best Practices for IUDs, Implants, and Emergency Contraception (Salcedo & Rivas, 2019)
Standalone presentation	• Provides opportunity to receive feedback	• Reaches only a small group of people • Can be difficult to schedule	
Community data walk, data party, world café, data placemats	• Engages research participants and community stakeholders • Provides opportunity to receive feedback • Promotes a more equitable research process	• Can be difficult to schedule • Requires a suitable physical space	• Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children (American Academy of Pediatrics., n.d.) • Foster Conversations About Results with Data Walks (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016)

Dissemination format	Strengths	Weaknesses	Adolescent pregnancy prevention evaluation examples
Op-ed	• Reaches a broad audience • Connects research to current events	• Is competitive • Requires a newsworthy topic • Must be written in a short timeframe	• Sex education, contraception are keys to preventing teen pregnancy (Deboeuf, 2016) • Commentary: Another piece of the story to foster care, teen pregnancy (Faulkner, 2018)
Press release	• Can be distributed widely and reach a broad audience • Retains control of message	• May be competitive if distributed by another organization • Requires a newsworthy topic • Needs to follow a set format	• American Journal of Public Health: Building the Evidence Base to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (Office of Population Affairs, 2016)
E-newsletter, listserv	• Reaches a targeted audience • Has a quick turnaround	• May require list hosting service or hosting organization • Relies on audience opening e-mail	• Family Engagement in Adolescent and Young Adult Health Care (Adolescent & Young Adult Health National Resource Center, n.d.)
Blog post	• Offers immediate publication • Is easily accessible • May be free	• May require web hosting service • Can lack credibility • Has the potential to lose content control through comments • Requires ongoing effort to maintain followers	• Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Sharing Success Stories (Quackenbush, 2017)
Social media post	• Offers immediate publication • Free • Has a broad reach • Can be shared easily • Appeals to a youth audience	• Can lack credibility • Has the potential to lose content control through comments • Requires ongoing effort to maintain followers	• Speaking about evidence-based TPP programs (Kane, 2016) • Re:MIX evaluation lessons learned (Cook, 2020) • Berk Teens Matter (Berk Teens Matter, 2019) • TPP Awareness (Teen Pregnancy Prevention, 2020) • Gyrls In The HOOD Foundation (Girls In The HOOD Foundation, 2019)

4.   Who can help you with creating dissemination products and reaching your audience?

Effective dissemination strategies use existing relationships and networks. If you do not have much experience creating a particular type of dissemination product, you may want to partner with individuals who can fill that gap. For example, when writing an article for a peer-reviewed journal, you might involve, as a coauthor, a researcher who has been the lead author of published articles. If your project wants to disseminate evaluation results using social media platforms, you could consider involving youth who can help you learn how to use Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube.

Your project's social connections might also include gatekeepers to your audience. You should try to capitalize on contacts with individuals or organizations that have newsletters, listservs, or blogs through which you can disseminate evaluation findings.

5.   How will you determine whether your dissemination efforts had the desired results?

An important part of a dissemination plan is preparing to evaluate the success of dissemination strategies. Chapter 4 of the *Partnerships for Environmental Public Health: Evaluation Metrics Manual* (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, 2012) contains an extensive list of possible measures, like number of copies of print materials distributed; number of website hits, document downloads, views, shares, and retweets; and comments/feedback from message recipients. If your project is disseminating evaluation results via social media, you can also use the analytics available on these platforms (see Bornkessel & Burrell, 2014).

A dissemination strategy should also include a quality control process that evaluates the accuracy, clarity, and utility of the information shared. Capacity4dev (2015) offers one example of a rating scheme that can be used during this process. You should consider involving different types of individuals in quality control. For example, an evaluation researcher might be best able to speak to the reliability and validity of data and conclusions, whereas representatives from your target audience may have the most valuable feedback on whether your products are clear and useful.

6.   What are the action items needed to make your plan happen?

Once your project has decided on the message, audience, partners, format, and evaluation for your dissemination strategy, it is time to develop specific action items to execute the strategy. These action items should include the responsible person(s), needed resources, and timeline. When developing a timeline, keep in mind that information should be released while it is still current and when it will be most useful for the target audience. Be sure to allow time for any required review of your materials by project management, funders, or partners.

RESOURCES FOR DISSEMINATING EVALUATION RESULTS

The following is a selection of resources that PREP projects may find useful for various stages of the dissemination process.

General Dissemination Plans and Strategies

- Brownson, R. C., Eyler, A. A., Harris, J. K., Moore, J. B., & Tabak, R. G. (2018). Getting the word out: New approaches for disseminating public health science. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice: JPHMP, 24*(2), 102–111.

- California Social Work Education Center: CalSWEC Dissemination Planning Tool

- Carpenter, D., Nieva, V., Albaghal, T., & Sorra, J. (2005). Development of a planning tool to guide research dissemination. In *Advances in Patient Safety: From Research to Implementation*. Agency for Healthcare and Research Quality.

- Marín-González, E., Malmusi, D., Camprubí, L., & Borrell, C. (2017). The role of dissemination as a fundamental part of a research project: Lessons learned from SOPHIE. *International Journal of Health Services, 47*(2), 258–276.

- Tripathy, J. P., Bhatnagar, A., Shewade, H. D., Kumar, A., Zachariah, R., & Harries, A. D. (2017). Ten tips to improve the visibility and dissemination of research for policy makers and practitioners. *Public Health Action, 7*(1), 10–14.

- University of Regina: *Exchanging knowledge: A research dissemination toolkit*

- Yale Center for Clinical Investigation: Beyond scientific publication: Strategies for disseminating research findings

Social Media

- CDC: The health communicator's social media toolkit

- Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB): What's your organization's digital footprint?

- FYSB: Adolescent pregnancy prevention social media toolkit

Data Walks and Placemats

- Office of Adolescent Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Data placemats: An interactive performance analysis tool

- Urban Institute: Data walks: An innovative way to share data with communities

- National Cancer Institute: Making data talk: A workbook

- Pankaj, V., & Emery, A. K. (2016). Data placemats: A facilitative technique designed to enhance stakeholder understanding of data. *Evaluation and Facilitation: New Directions for Evaluation, 149*, 81–93.

Other

- The Op-ed Project: Op-ed writing: Tips and tricks

- FYSB: The Studio

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