

How to disseminate your research:

Getting your message heard - and used

This guide is for researchers who are applying for funding or have research in progress. It is designed to help you to plan your dissemination and give your research every chance of being utilised.

What does NIHR mean by dissemination?

Effective dissemination is simply about getting the findings of your research to the people who can make use of them, to maximise the benefit of the research without delay.

'Research is of no use unless it gets to the people who need to use it'

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department of Health

Principles of good dissemination

Stakeholder engagement: Work out who your primary audience is; engage with them early and keep in touch throughout the project, ideally involving them from the planning of the study to the dissemination of findings. This should create 'pull' for your research i.e. a waiting audience for your outputs. You may also have secondary audiences and others who emerge during the study, to consider and engage.

Format: Produce targeted outputs that are in an appropriate format for the user. Consider a range of tailored outputs for decision makers, patients, researchers, clinicians, and the public at national, regional, and/or local levels as appropriate. Use plain English which is accessible to all audiences.

Utilise opportunities: Build partnerships with established networks; use existing conferences and events to exchange knowledge and raise awareness of your work.

Context: Understand the service context of your research, and get influential opinion leaders on board to act as champions.

Timing: Dissemination should not be limited to the end of a study. Consider whether any findings can be shared earlier.

Remember to contact your funding programme for guidance on reporting outputs.
[Click here for more information](#)

Case studies - click for examples of effective dissemination

- » [Case study 1: Using blogs, podcasts and social media to increase reach](#)
- » [Case study 2: Making use of press releases and infographics](#)
- » [Case study 3: BITES and Signals to showcase findings](#)
- » [Case study 4: New ways of utilising steering groups for dissemination](#)
- » [Case study 5: Using stakeholder engagement and cinema](#)

Your dissemination plan: things to consider

Objectives

What do you want to achieve, for example, raise awareness and understanding, or change practice? How will you know if you are successful and made an impact? Be realistic and pragmatic.

Audience

Identify your audience(s) so that you know who you will need to influence to maximise the uptake of your research e.g. commissioners, patients, clinicians and charities. Think who might benefit from using your findings. Understand how and where your audience looks for/receives information. Gain an insight into what motivates your audience and the barriers they may face. Remember to feedback study findings to participants, such as patients and clinicians; they may wish to also participate in the dissemination of the research and can provide a powerful voice.

Timeline

When will dissemination activity occur? Identify and plan critical time points, consider external influences, and utilise existing opportunities, such as upcoming conferences. Build momentum throughout the entire project life-cycle; for example, consider timings for sharing findings.

Resources

Think about the expertise you have in your team and whether you need additional help with dissemination. Consider whether your dissemination plan would benefit from liaising with others, for example, NIHR Communications team, your institution's press office, PPI members. What funds will you need to deliver your planned dissemination activity? Include this in your application (or talk to your funding programme).

Strategy

Partners / Influencers - think about who you will engage with to amplify your message. Involve stakeholders in research planning from an early stage to ensure that the evidence produced is grounded, relevant, accessible and useful.

Messaging - consider the main message of your research findings. How can you frame this so it will resonate with your target audience? Use the right language and focus on the possible impact of your research on their practice or daily life.

Channels - use the most effective ways to communicate your message to your target audience(s) e.g. social media, websites, conferences, traditional media, journals. Identify and connect with influencers in your audience who can champion your findings.

Coverage and frequency - how many people are you trying to reach? How often do you want to communicate with them to achieve the required impact?

Potential risks and sensitivities - be aware of the relevant current cultural and political climate. Consider how your dissemination might be perceived by different groups.

Think about what the risks are to your dissemination plan e.g. intellectual property issues. Contact your funding programme for advice.

Start planning your dissemination here

» [Dissemination plan template for applicants](#)

Links to other guidance

- » [How to write a policy briefing](#)
- » [How to write a press release](#)
- » [How to use social media](#)
- » [INVOLVE \(plain English writing\)](#)
- » [Top tips from the NIHR Journals Library](#)
- » [Typical costs of resources](#)
- » [Ways to apply behavioural insights](#)

Useful organisations

- » [Academic Health Science Network \(identify and spread health innovation\)](#)
- » [Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology \(routes to impact with UK parliament\)](#)
- » [R&D Forum \(contact for CCGs\)](#)
- » [Research Design Service](#)
- » [Science Media Centre \(working with news media\)](#)