

Knowledge Mobilization: Increasing Research Impact

SSHRC is committed to strengthening knowledge mobilization among its research community by working with researchers and institutions so they can more readily articulate the value and contributions of their work (SSHRC Strategic Plan 2013-16). This importance is reflected in application expectations for the full array of its funding programs – Connection, Insight and Talent.

To do it well, knowledge mobilization requires careful thought and planning. There are several questions to consider when crafting a strategic knowledge mobilization plan that will, in turn, maximize sharing knowledge and moving *evidence into action*.

HOW DOES SSHRC DEFINE KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION?

H Knowledge mobilization means ensuring that all Canadians benefit from publicly funded research. Its “*essential objective is to allow research knowledge to flow both within the academic world, and between academic researchers and the wider community.*”

A number of other terms are used to describe the process of mobilizing knowledge. These terms include: knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, knowledge brokering, participatory research, implementation science, research utilization and diffusion of innovation.

Regardless of the term used, the hallmark of sharing and using research knowledge is *to increase its intellectual, economic, social and cultural impact*.

WHAT DOES YOUR KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION PLAN NEED TO COVER?

W There are several key questions to consider when mapping out your knowledge mobilization plan. As for your research proper, start with your purpose – the remainder of your plan stems from what you hope to accomplish.

WHY? – What are your knowledge mobilization objectives?

Identify all of the intended outcomes or goals of your knowledge mobilization plan. Consider several possibilities suited to your project:

- Generate awareness or interest
- Generate practice change
- Prompt policy action
- Prompt public action
- Gain new knowledge (e.g., addressing a current gap in knowledge)
- Inform further research
- Other...

TIP: *Clear objectives are the roadmap for your knowledge mobilization planning.*

WHO? – Who do you want to reach/ engage?

Identify individuals or groups you want to reach and work with, e.g., educators, community organizations, special interest groups, policy makers, fellow researchers, decision-makers, general public, media, and consumers. Think about important characteristics of your audience(s) or knowledge users that are relevant to sharing knowledge with them.

TIP: *Effective knowledge mobilization often hinges on relationships. Know and connect with your knowledge users.*

Consider the culture of the population or organization you aim to reach, as well as factors such as community or organizational priorities, natural venues for connecting, and time available.

WHAT? – What is the message of interest to each of your audience(s)?

Sharing knowledge effectively requires an appreciation of what you have to share *and* what is most relevant to your audience(s). Ideally, these two match!

Types of messages generally include:

- Credible facts and data
- Findings and conclusions
- Recommendations, advice or an actionable item for decision-making

TIP: *Choose a limited number of key messages that match your knowledge mobilization objectives. Keep them simple.*

HOW? – What are the most appropriate ways to reach your audience(s)?

SSHRC clearly recognizes that knowledge mobilization is not merely about “transferring” knowledge after it has been produced, but also about allowing opportunities for practitioners and other research users to participate and influence the knowledge-production process from the beginning. Accordingly, knowledge mobilization occurs at various times within the research cycle – integrated throughout and/or at the end of your project.

TIP: *Knowledge mobilization is not a one size fits all! Be strategic and be creative.*

As appropriate, knowledge users can be actively engaged at different stages of the research process, including some or all of: framing the research problem and related questions; designing research methodology; collecting data; interpreting findings; co-creating knowledge products; and sharing findings with your various audiences. Be clear in your plan about how and when each key audience will be involved.

Specify your methods and rationale for your choice of methods. Pick methods suitable for your evidence, your audience(s) and your messages. Select methods with evidence about their relative effectiveness for your audiences, as possible. Be creative in your choice of methods and consider a full spectrum of possibilities:

- **Documents** – working papers, discussion papers, policy briefs, e-newsletters, research summaries, peer-reviewed articles, book chapters
- **In-person meetings** – formal events like conferences and workshops; informal activities such as breakfast/lunch meetings, community forums, dialogue sessions with decision-makers
- **Electronic** – websites, blogs, social media, YouTube and other videos, documentaries
- **Practical tools** – toolkits, practice guidelines, guidebooks, manuals, databases
- **Teaching/training** – teaching and mentoring of students and/or practitioners, training trainers approach, professional education, curricula
- **Artistic works** – art exhibitions (e.g., photography, painting, sculpture), performances (e.g., drama, music, dance), literature, audio recordings
- **Media coverage** – print, radio and television news coverage, on-line media, coverage in media think pieces

Identify the *resources* required to conduct the proposed knowledge mobilization activities, e.g., open access fees, editing, printing, meeting costs, recording/video technical fees. Mention supports (e.g., infrastructure, equipment, technical capacity, personnel, and/or community partners) already in place. Include eligible costs of knowledge mobilization in your budget and mention any in-kind resources in your budget justification.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW YOUR MOBILIZATION WORKED? – How successful were you in meeting your knowledge mobilization objectives? To what extent did you reach your audience(s)?

To complete the knowledge mobilization process, consider how you will evaluate your efforts. For each of your knowledge mobilization objectives, identify how you will know your efforts accomplished their intended goal. Reflect on your progress as you go, as well as at the completion of your project.

SOURCES AND SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Evaluation of SSHRC's Knowledge Mobilization Funding Opportunities: Final Report (September 2013)
(http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/KMb_evaluation_2013_e.pdf)

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Strengthening Canada's Cultures of Innovation. SSHRC's Strategic Plan 2013-16
(http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/strategic_plan_2013-16-plan_strategique_2013-2016_e.pdf)