Conclusion Summary
The roundtable concluded with a discussion that focused on three themes: research design and methodology; patterns of effect size; and reporting findings in a meaningful way. First, the research design and methodology should be clearly outlined in the beginning stages of a study. This effort includes identifying the outcomes and any mediators. It may be helpful to use measures that have a reported population standard deviation which provide a framework for comparisons. There may be limitations, however, of using a population standard deviation in a demonstration project or large scale study. In any event, the sample standard deviation should be reported. Research projects inevitably collect large amounts of data in an attempt to answer questions from multiple stakeholders. It was suggested that data collection could be scaled back by outlining an executive summary of findings and drafting results tables before data collection begins. In addition, there was a push for data from large scale national studies be made available for secondary analysis.

Second, effect sizes are often used in meta-analyses which attempt to identify the meanings in patterns by comparing studies or comparing effects on one outcome in some studies to effects on outcomes in other studies. In meta-analyses, many researchers pool the standard deviations for practical reasons, though ideally the control group would be used. Third, the results presented should specify the context of the intervention, the elements that are effective in changing outcomes, and the subgroups of people for whom the intervention was effective. Standardizing the language that is used in reporting the subtleties of the research, such as verbs and adjectives, was discussed. Even when careful consideration is given to reporting outcomes, multidimensional findings may be misrepresented in the press. Finally, a Web site will be set up containing the presented information, and a Journal special issue and panel discussions are planned for the future.