

# Development of a Planning Tool to Guide Dissemination of Research Results

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## Article Exhibit

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# Dissemination Planning Tool

## Purpose

AHRQ is increasingly interested in research that has “real world” impact in the practice of health care. This tool will help you, the Patient Safety Researcher, develop a plan for disseminating your research findings and products to potential users in the health care system. This tool is designed to prompt your thinking about the processes that you would use to disseminate your findings or products, beyond publishing and presenting in peer-reviewed venues.

This tool will ask you to identify the aspects of your research that are ready for dissemination, and to think about who could benefit from your findings or products. It will also encourage you to consider various ways to reach these users — establishing direct links as well as working through intermediary organizations, or tapping into existing networks.

## Components of a Dissemination Plan

Developing a dissemination plan will facilitate the translation of your research into practice. Your dissemination plan will include five major elements:

- I. **Research findings and products**—*What is going to be disseminated*
- II. **End users**—*Who will apply it in practice*
- III. **Dissemination partners** —*Individuals, organizations or networks through whom you can reach end users*
- IV. **Communication**—*How you convey the research outcomes*
- V. **Evaluation** —*How you determine what worked*
- VI. **Dissemination work plan**—*Where do you start*



## Instructions

Select **one** research finding or product that you expect to be particularly important in improving patient safety, and that is ready for dissemination. You may want to complete the tool separately if you have several findings or products to disseminate.

For each component of a dissemination plan, you will answer a few key questions about the selected finding or product. At the end, you will integrate your responses into an overall strategy and workplan.

## EXHIBIT A

- *Don't be discouraged if at first you cannot answer every question in this planning tool; the questions serve as prompts to consider these elements in the future as your dissemination effort evolves.*
- *Consider this a working document to help you think through the steps you will need to take to get the word out about your research finding or product.*
- *This may take a few iterations! You may want to work back and forth between questions as your thinking develops. You may do a first pass at the tool, and revisit it after a few days. You may also want to ask for input from others.*

### I. Specifying Research Findings and Products: What You Intend to Disseminate

Draw the boundary around your research finding or product as broadly or as narrowly as you wish, depending on your dissemination aims. Be specific. The more concrete you can be in defining your finding or product, the easier it will be to complete the tool. For example,

- You may want to disseminate 1) an event reporting system as a large product or 2) separately disseminate the taxonomy, measurement tools or data analytic methods that you developed as smaller aspects of the reporting system.
- You may want to disseminate a best practice guideline, a curriculum that you developed around the practice, or research findings on outcomes resulting from adoption of these guidelines.

1. **Describe the research finding or product you wish to disseminate. You may want to start by listing your major findings and products, then select one major finding or product for dissemination.** *For example – A decision support device, an educational curriculum, data collection tool, etc.*
2. **What problems related to safety in patient care does your research finding or product address?**
3. **What makes your research finding or product stand out?**  
*For example – Is it an innovative way to tackle an existing problem? Does it identify a new problem? Does it support or contradict current practices?*

#### ***Issues to consider in selecting what to disseminate:***

- ▶ *Think about the pros and cons of disseminating portions of the research vs. all related products and findings. Different end users (e.g., policymakers and health care providers) may be interested in different aspects of the research.*
- ▶ *Is your research finding ready for dissemination?*
- ▶ *How strong is the evidence on your research findings? How generalizable are your findings?*
- ▶ *How does your research finding/product conform to current procedures?*
- ▶ *What additional research (for a finding) or testing (for a product) would be needed before launching a dissemination effort?*

## EXHIBIT A

### II. Identifying End Users

End users are individuals and health care professionals or delivery organizations that could benefit from and use your research finding or product. These end users are the ultimate target for your dissemination efforts. Specifying your target audience and their needs will provide focus for your dissemination plan and will help you tailor your offering to their needs.

- 1. List the end users for your research finding or product. Be as specific as possible. You may want to specify health care settings as well as types of clinicians or administrators.**  
*For example – ICU nurses, family physicians, hospital administrators, blood bankers, medical schools, doctors' offices.*
- 2. Describe how your research finding or product is useful to your end users. Why would they want to use your finding or product?** *For example—does it increase efficiency? Improve quality of care? Provide legal protection?*
- 3. What recent or future events might help or hinder end user interest in your finding or product?**
- 4. Have you involved these end users in your research project? How? How can you involve them at this point?** *For example –Have nurses evaluate the use of an infusion pump.*
- 5. What barriers might your end users face in trying to implement your finding or product? What suggestions might you have for overcoming these barriers?**

### III. Working with Dissemination Partners

You do not have to work alone in trying to reach your end users! Consider working with professionals who are trusted opinion leaders and are influential in their fields. Think about formal and informal networks that you can tap into to spread the word about your research findings or products. Consider also how you might develop working partnerships with organizations to which your end users belong, or that can influence them through their credibility, expertise, or licensing powers. These individuals and organizations can serve as dissemination intermediaries, amplifying your reach into your target audiences.



- Think about *opinion leaders* in your professional community who might be interested in spreading the word about your research.
  - *Informal networks* and colleagues may be useful dissemination partners.
  - *Organizational dissemination partners* could include quality improvement organizations, professional groups of your target audience, accreditation or licensing boards, or health care delivery associations.
- 1. List individuals, organizations, and informal networks who might partner with you in translating and communicating your research findings or products to your end users. Note how they are important to reaching particular end users.**

## EXHIBIT A

End users	Individual/Organizations/Networks	Importance to end users
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For example:

<i>Family Physicians</i>	<i>Dr. Sheila Smith, a trusted colleague</i>	<i>Professional credibility</i>
<i>Quality Managers</i>	<i>Institute for Healthcare Improvement</i>	<i>Quality improvement expertise</i>
<i>Pharmacists</i>	<i>United States Pharmacopeia</i>	<i>Establishes standards for medications</i>

2. **How does your research finding or product fit with and advance the mission and goals of these parties? Why would they want to work with you? What recent/future events might help or hinder their willingness to work with you?**
  
3. **What characteristics of your finding or product would appeal to each of these potential dissemination partners?**
  
4. **How can you develop an ongoing relationship with these potential dissemination partners? How would you work with them so that your research finding or product is included in their communication channels, and/or tailored to their health delivery systems?**

***Issues to consider about dissemination partners:***

- ▶ *How will you reach the professional opinion leaders? Do you work with anyone who can link you up with them?*
- ▶ *How will you work with organizational partners? Do you have a personal contact, have you reviewed their websites, their standard publications, and annual reports? What materials might you prepare for their use?*
- ▶ *Do you need different partners to reach different end users?*
- ▶ *How can you use the partners existing informal networks to reach end users?*

## EXHIBIT A

### IV. Communicating Your Message

Effective dissemination relies on the use of varied channels—e.g., publications and reports, websites and other electronic communications, meetings and conferences, person-to-person communications, formal collaborations or informal networks.

Consider what methods and channels you might use to bring your research finding or product directly to your end users or partners. Consider also how your dissemination partners communicate regularly with their constituencies—your end users. How you might use their channels to disseminate your finding or products?

You should consider all of these channels to ensure that the widest possible audience is exposed to your research finding or product and in ways that are both accessible and easy-to-use. Cost and cost-effectiveness are obviously important considerations in choosing the right medium.



Your end users could obtain information about research findings, products, or innovations in health care through various means. Optimally, you will need to use a combination of methods to reach end users.

#### **Broadcast media**

- Academic journals
- Book chapters
- Technical Reports
- Trade magazines
- Regular Newspapers
- Special interest Newsletters
- Radio or TV interviews
- Interest group List-Servs
- Websites

#### **Personal contact**

- Academic detailing
- Clinical Specialty associations
- Informal professional networks
- Professional conferences
- Professional meetings (e.g., grand rounds)
- Workshops and other CME/CNE training
- Participating in improvement collaboratives or test beds

**1. How do you think your end users obtain information about health care innovations? Which of the methods above would be effective channels to reach them? What combinations of methods could reinforce your message?**

**2. Which of these methods could you *realistically* use to reach your end users?**

**3. Which methods do your potential dissemination partners use to communicate with your end users? Which ones could be used as channels for your research finding or product?**

**4. What difficulties might end users have with the methods of communication used, and how could you plan to overcome those difficulties?**

## EXHIBIT A

### **Issues to consider about communicating your message:**

- ▶ *What materials might you provide to potential dissemination partners about your research? How can you frame your research results to make them relevant to your partners' agenda?*
- ▶ *How will you tailor your materials and message to adapt to their ways of communicating with your end users?*

## V. Evaluating Success

Evaluating the success of your dissemination efforts is an iterative process. Once you have begun to disseminate your research finding or product, consider how you might evaluate the effect that your dissemination strategies have on getting your message to end users. Dissemination is not a one-time activity; rather, it is a long-term relationship with your users that will provide ongoing feedback to help you improve your message.

**1. How will you know if you have met your dissemination goals? What are your success criteria? Are there measurable indicators for these criteria?**

*For example – Number of physicians reached, responses to advertisements, number of website hits, number of inquiries received.*

**2. How will you involve end users in evaluating the dissemination activities?**

*For example – Obtaining feedback on how easy the research product was to use, what was needed to translate research findings into practice in their setting.*

**3. How will you involve your dissemination partners in evaluating the dissemination activities?**

### **Issues to consider in evaluating success of the dissemination effort:**

- ▶ *What are ways that you can measure the success of your dissemination effort?*
- ▶ *How will you keep in contact with users and potential users?*
- ▶ *How will you provide feedback to your users and dissemination partners? How will you incorporate their feedback in your future research, product design and ongoing development?*

## EXHIBIT A

### Developing A Summary

After you have considered the components of your dissemination plan, use the last page to write a summary of 100-200 words that outlines your basic plan, based on the structure in this planning tool, by completing the following statements.

My research finding or product is \_\_\_\_\_. (*DESCRIPTION*)

It can be used to \_\_\_\_\_. (*VALUE STATEMENT OF ADVANTAGES OVER CURRENT PRACTICE*)

My primary end users are \_\_\_\_\_. (*WHO IS IN A POSITION TO USE THE INFORMATION*)

I plan to involve users in my dissemination efforts by \_\_\_\_\_. (*HOW CAN I MAKE SURE THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR*)

I can use the following individuals, organizations and networks \_\_\_\_\_ to help. (*WHO HAS INFLUENCE WITH TARGET USERS*)

The ways that I will communicate the results include \_\_\_\_\_. (*COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS*)

Potential obstacles that I face in disseminating my research include \_\_\_\_\_.  
(*LIST POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES*)

I can mitigate these obstacles by \_\_\_\_\_. (*PLAN TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES*)

I plan to evaluate the dissemination plan by \_\_\_\_\_. (*INDICATORS TO BE USED; PLANS FOR INVOLVING END USERS AND PARTNERS*)

I plan to encourage feedback from end users and dissemination partners by \_\_\_\_\_  
and provide feedback to them by \_\_\_\_\_ (*OBTAINING AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK*)

### My Dissemination Strategy Summary



**EXHIBIT A**

**VI. Dissemination Work plan**

► Immediate action items, schedule, and persons responsible:

Action Items	Timeframe	Who is Responsible?

**Resources needed:**

► Longer term action items, schedule and persons responsible:

Action Items	Timeframe	Who is Responsible?

**Resources needed:**