

# KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

July 2014



*The Capacity Development Resource Guides highlight the key technical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Each guide identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that individuals and organizations should possess in the area. The standardized indicators listed for each competency and capability map to the accompanying Capacity Indicators Catalog, which helps to generate a tailored tool for assessing and scoring an organization's capacity level. Each guide also includes a list of useful resources for designing and delivering capacity development assistance.*

## TRANSLATING RESEARCH AND DATA INTO USER-FRIENDLY INFORMATION

### DEFINITION

Knowledge translation (KT) helps to bridge the gap between research and policy; it is the process by which complex research and data are translated into easily understood content to inform policy change and implementation. It involves identifying, analyzing, synthesizing, and disseminating data and research findings to advocates, policymakers, budget planners, and other policy stakeholders (Hyder et al., 2010). Knowledge translation requires building connections and facilitating conversations between stakeholders working in the research and policy arenas (Bennet et al., 2008).

### RELEVANCE TO POLICY

Policies informed by evidence and demonstrated impact are more likely to lead to effective resource allocation and the achievement of public health goals. However, there is often a gap between available research and data and policymaking. Enhancing the capacity of researchers and academic institutions, civil society advocates, and government department officials to seek, understand, translate, communicate, and promote evidence will strengthen the public health policymaking process and ultimately improve public health outcomes.

### KEY CAPABILITIES

Key knowledge translation capabilities include understanding barriers to the use of data and research, being able to identify policymakers' information needs,

and communicating research findings through various channels (e.g., written formats, oral presentations, information graphics, media briefings, etc.) (Ashford et al., 2006; PRB, n.d.). The process of knowledge translation is closely related to policy communication and, in many instances, advocacy. Policy communication capabilities include the ability to articulate evidence-based policy recommendations and develop and implement persuasive communication strategies. Advocacy often includes strategic communication directed to specific audiences, with a focus on specific policy changes.

## ■ ■ PERFORMANCE IDEAL

### **High capacity for knowledge translation includes being able to**

- Identify key data and information needed for decision making
- Broker information exchanges between researchers and policymakers and other stakeholders
- Effectively translate that information into non-technical and easily understood language and messages
- Strategically communicate that information through a variety of formats and channels to support policy change

Individuals and organizations are able to identify evidence (research or data) that can be used to influence policy change and are able to translate the evidence into easily understood language. They have myriad skills for communicating the information through print, digital, and verbal formats; media outlets; and constructive engagement with policymakers and decisionmakers. At the highest level of performance, organizations and individuals play leadership roles—with the ability to gain access to decisionmakers and provide policy-relevant information that is actionable—and often help communicate the data needs of decisionmakers back to researchers. Effective knowledge translation at this level contributes to a culture and practice where the best available information is regularly communicated to (and demanded by) decisionmakers in support of policy change.

### **In the ideal, the following would exist:**

- Basic data collection systems and research and public sharing of the data
- A public, transparent, and evidence-based policy process
- A culture where nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, and universities engage with government to influence policy
- Opportunities and mechanisms for policy dialogue and influence
- Systemic monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of policy
- Opportunities and mechanisms for policymakers to influence research and data collection to meet policy information needs

## INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES

### KNOWLEDGE OF

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Policy issues that need to be adopted or changed	KT1
Current data and research findings relevant to specific policy issues	KT3
The research process and a variety of methodologies (basic understanding)	KT4
Policy processes, key influences, and current policy priorities	KT2

### SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO

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Collaborate with researchers to identify data and research findings relevant to the policy process	KT6
Extract, interpret, summarize, and translate data into non-technical language	KT7
Work with journalists and others who disseminate information to reach decisionmakers	KT6
Effectively communicate policy recommendations through writing, interpersonal communication, or public events	KT9
Facilitate participatory exchanges between researchers, technical experts, policy champions, coalitions/networks, and other stakeholders	KT8, KT28
Evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge translation efforts to determine their contributions to policy outcomes and the lessons learned to improve future activities	KT14

### ATTITUDES/VALUES/ATTRIBUTES

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Objective and committed to the use of data and research for policymaking	KT5
Committed to eliminating jargon and technical language so that research can be understood by non-technical audiences	KT7, K8

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

### TECHNICAL ABILITY TO

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Serve as the “knowledge broker” between researchers and policymakers and encourage the participation of various stakeholders in the research and policy processes	KT26, KT28
Interpret and synthesize research and data and tailor outputs to key policy-related audiences	KT19

**TECHNICAL ABILITY TO (CONTINUED)**

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Develop clear, effective, and evidence-based information and communication products that link the information provided to policy recommendations and potential (public health) impact	KT10, KT11, KT23
Survey relevant policy issues, prioritize those that need attention and have a reasonable chance of adoption or revision, and formulate desired policy changes, with attention to gender, equity, and inclusion elements	KT20, KT21
Generate an ongoing stream of information to policymakers and explain the link between this information and policy recommendations	KT22
Adapt to new communications channels and trends and continually develop innovative means of delivering the stream of information	KT13
Systematically evaluate the effectiveness of policy communication efforts to determine their contributions to policy outcomes and the lessons learned to improve future activities	KT14

**RELATIONAL ABILITY TO**

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Develop trust and maintain links with the research community to ensure access to new data and research and collaborate to identify information relevant to the policy process	KT24, KT25
Develop trust and maintain constructive links with various policy stakeholders, including communities, decisionmakers, and peer organizations	KT27, KT29
Understand the information needs of decisionmakers and identify the appropriate materials and channels for delivering information to them	KT30
Earn the trust and credibility of the public, constituents, media, and donors	KT27
Work effectively with journalists to reach decisionmakers with accurate information	KT12

**ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT**

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Dedicated resources (staff, time, and money) to support knowledge translation efforts	KT16
An organizational culture of learning, with systems to collect, analyze, and synthesize data and expectations of and support for staff devoting time to acquire new knowledge	KT15, KT18
Responsibility for knowledge translation/policy communication included in job descriptions of designated staff	KT17

## ■ ILLUSTRATIVE CAPACITY- STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

- Organize trainings for researchers and knowledge brokers on conducting policy-relevant research and identifying and synthesizing data and research for policy communication
- Facilitate exchanges between data users and producers to define and review priority policy issues and available data
- Provide mentoring and support for policy champions to ensure they can access appropriate data and make effective presentations
- Conduct training for knowledge brokers to identify key information sources and develop effective policy communication materials
- Conduct training for media to seek, interpret, and incorporate relevant and high-quality data into reporting
- Develop coalition-building skills and relational abilities of researchers and advocates

## ■ RESOURCES

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Suggested citation: Health Policy Project. 2014. "Capacity Development Resource Guide: Knowledge Translation." Washington, DC: Futures Group, Health Policy Project.

ISBN: 978-1-59560-030-1

This resource guide is part of an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) suite of tools. The USAID-funded Health Policy Project developed the suite to help organizations assess and strengthen their capacity to contribute to improved health systems and health outcomes. The tools include an overview of the OCA approach, a facilitator guide, a series of capacity development resource guides, and a Capacity Indicators Catalog. The suite is available at [www.healthpolicyproject.com](http://www.healthpolicyproject.com).

The Health Policy Project is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development under Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-10-00067, beginning September 30, 2010. It is implemented by Futures Group, in collaboration with Plan International USA, Futures Institute, Partners in Population and Development, Africa Regional Office (PPD ARO), Population Reference Bureau (PRB), RTI International, and the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood (WRA).

The information provided in this document is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development.