# The funders' view

## Why do funders want to see findings communicated beyond the research community?

" We hope to bring about change and to do that we need to put good evidence into the right hands. It's all about impact.

**Darshan Patel**
Senior Research Manager, the Health Foundation

The driver for communicating findings beyond the academic and research community is impact. Researchers and funders both want to drive positive change. Research can bring greater evidence or insight to policy, practitioner and public audiences; funders want researchers to demonstrate that they can target and engage those audiences in their findings.

As a secondary factor, the Research Excellence Framework requires academic institutions to demonstrate how their research activities achieve wider impact – that is, an effect on, change to, or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond academia.

" We know that the most beautifully conducted research does not automatically lead to changes in practice or policy. Funders feel a strong obligation to get the best value from the awards they make and that means having robust plans for how you will communicate those findings to the audiences that matter most.

**Dr Natalie Armstrong**
Professor of Healthcare Improvement Research (with several years' service on funding panels assessing health-related research applications)

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# What are funders looking for in research communications?

Funders have identified the following as communications approaches that they would like to see reflected more in funding applications and research communications.

A proactive approach to communications and as great a commitment to appropriate dissemination as to research quality.

An accurate indication of the time and resource required to communicate findings to priority audiences.

A strategic communications approach: a demonstration of strategic analysis and efficient, targeted use of communications resources.

**Develop your communications strategy with a template**

Analysis and identification of the potential audiences for research findings at the outset of a study.

**Find out how to identify and prioritise audiences**

Making more of the opportunities to engage with key audiences during the course of a study, not just when findings are available.

**Read case study 1 in Influencing a policy audience**

Employing communications channels that are focused on target audiences' needs – rather than falling back on those that are familiar and/or already used by the research team.

**Read a guide to communications channels**

Thoughtful adaptation of the format, language, content and messaging around findings for key audiences.

**Find out how to create messages for different audiences**

" We do not expect researchers to be able to communicate with everyone, all the time. However, knowing who your audiences are will help when planning a communications strategy. It will also make implementation of your dissemination strategy quicker and more impactful.

**Neha Issar-Brown**
Programme Manager (Population and Systems Medicine Board), Medical Research Council

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