



**Communities
In Motion**



An Introduction to Knowledge Mobilization (KMb)

**A Resource Prepared for the
KHS Communities in Motion Project**

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Introduction

You've conducted your research and now you are ready to share it with the outside world! Time to think about developing a Knowledge Mobilization plan.

In its simplest terms, Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) refers to activities and processes that put knowledge into action. KmB is more than just publicizing research within research circles. Rather, KmB is centrally about connecting research/expertise and policy/practice in order to advance common understanding and positive change in our daily social lives. When we keep KmB a focal part of the research process from the beginning (i.e., when we are conceptualizing the design of our study) through to the end (i.e., when we are focused on disseminating our findings), we enrich the entire research process. KmB requires us to always question whom benefits from research and what are the best ways to communicate between research-producers and research-users.

This resource will introduce you to KmB and the KmB process in greater depth. In efforts to help you better translate and communicate your research, this resource will aim to address the following questions:

1. What is Knowledge Mobilization?
2. Why is Knowledge Mobilization important to consider?
3. Who is involved in Knowledge Mobilization activities?
4. What does Knowledge Mobilization entail?
5. What are Knowledge Mobilization best practices?
6. What does Knowledge Mobilization look like in action?
7. What are some Knowledge Mobilization resources at York University?

1. What is Knowledge Mobilization?

As noted above, in its simplest terms, Knowledge Mobilization (KmB) refers to activities and processes that put knowledge into action. The purpose of KmB is to add impact and value to the intellectual, social and economic outcomes of research, by ensuring connections between knowledge-developers and knowledge-users. Alternative names for KmB include knowledge translation, knowledge management, knowledge exchange, or knowledge transfer partnerships. Although there are some important differences between these terms and concepts, they are all focused on: 1) a two-way exchange that exists between the university and the community, and between researchers and research-users; and 2) the connections between research/knowledge and policy/practice.

For this report, we draw on the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC, 2015) formal definition of knowledge mobilization:

The reciprocal and complementary flow and uptake of research knowledge between researchers, knowledge brokers and knowledge users—both within and beyond academia—in such a way that may benefit users and create positive impacts within

Canada and/or internationally, and, ultimately, has the potential to enhance the profile, reach and impact of social sciences and humanities research.

2. Why is Knowledge Mobilization important to consider?

KMb adds value and impact to research. In addition to bringing new insight, ideas, and methods to an academic field, it can impact thinking and behaviours as well as initiate action outside of the academic field such as building service capacities and changing policy(ies). KMb is a dynamic process that flows in multiple directions. Furthermore, it is not specific to one type of research tradition or academic discipline, but spans across a range of disciplines (from the bio-sciences to the social sciences to arts and humanities) and sectors (e.g., academic, government, non-governmental, and private) (ResearchImpact, 2017).

3. Who is involved in Knowledge Mobilization Activities?

KMb brings together a range of stakeholders across disciplines, sectors and geographic borders. These individuals and groups may be involved throughout the research process, from inception to sharing the outcomes, or may come in at specific points in the research process in order to ensure connection between knowledge/expertise and policy/practice.

KMb stakeholders involve those who generate research and those who utilize research, including:

- University faculty, staff and students
- Professional researchers
- Community organizations
- Governmental and non-governmental agencies
- Private entities
- Policy makers
- Program developers

Within the formal KMb process, and particularly with large projects, Knowledge Brokers are another stakeholder group. Knowledge brokers are utilized to facilitate the KMb process as they link “decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they are able to better understand each other’s goals and professional cultures, influence each other’s work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision-making” (Lomas, 2007, p. 131). A Knowledge Broker’s role may include: creating relationships; supporting mutual understandings; facilitating the exchange of knowledge; and building capacity and supporting organizational change (Conklin, Lusk, Harris & Stolee, 2013; Dobbins, Robeson, Ciliska, Hanna, Cameron, O'Mara, & Mercer, 2009).

At York University, the *Knowledge Mobilization Unit (KMb Unit)* is a service unit that operates in this Knowledge Broker capacity. The mission of the unit is to:

- Build a culture of KMb
- Foster collaboration
- Support co-production of knowledge/research
- Connect policy and practice relevant research to decision-makers
- Develop and deliver tools for KMb

York University's KMb Unit has been a vocal leader on the issue of KMb and was a founder of the pan-Canadian KMb network, *ResearchImpact (RIR)* (<http://researchimpact.ca/>).

4. What Does KMb Entail?

KMb generally has three main phases: planning; implementation; and evaluation. Below, we explore each stage in greater depth to help you build, execute and measure the impact of your research strategy on policy and practice.

Planning

During the planning phase, you will want to set KMb objectives, determine who will be involved in the KMb project (e.g., knowledge brokers, stakeholders) and establish their role (Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2017; Phipps, 2017). The following are some questions to consider when developing your plan:

- What is/are the key message(s) of your research?
- Who would benefit from your research?
- How will the information be shared?
- Who can assist in sharing the information?

For example, imagine you have conducted research on ways with which to reduce concussion rates among athletes participating in contact sports. Based on your data and analysis, the key message from your research study is that wearing a mouth guard while playing contact sports can decrease an athlete's risk of a concussion. When thinking about the KMb process, you identify key groups who would benefit from this finding and this may include, for example, sport coaches, sports medicine clinicians, and administrators from relevant sport governing bodies (e.g., Rugby Canada). The next stage of the KMb process involves reaching out and engaging with representatives from those groups. This includes sending out easy-to-read, jargon-free executive summaries of your research study as well as organizing a one-day multi-stakeholder information session. Good news! Not only were those representatives interested in your research findings but they have also agreed to participate on an advisory group for the project.

Implementation

The implementation phase focuses on developing strategies for sharing the research. This includes: understanding your audience; obtaining resources; and determining which activities will be applied.

Understanding Your Audience

It is very important that you think about and design strategies that meet the needs of those who would benefit from your research. The following questions may help you in this task:

- Who is your audience?
- What are their interests and needs?
- What terms, concepts and language do they understand?
- What types of communication would be best for them?

Be aware that interests and needs may vary between different individuals and groups, so you may want to consider different strategies for each audience you may want to reach.

Obtaining Resources

How you execute your KMB plan will depend on the resources available to you. This includes your budget (e.g., for printing; translation services, etc.) and resources (e.g., website hosting and development, etc.).

Sharing the Information

There are various ways you can share your research, all which is dependent on the audience and the resources available to you. While not an exhaustive list, the following are some examples of the ways in which your research can be shared, both within academia and beyond (e.g., with end-users and service providers).

Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conference presentations• Peer reviewed journal articles• Books• Lectures
Non-Academic	<p><i>Products</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reports• Fact sheets• Press releases• Toolkits• E-newsletters <p><i>Events</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibits• Workshops (e.g. think tanks)• Conferences• Forums• Debates• Annual meetings• Media events

	<p><i>Networks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Websites • Online forum • Network push mechanisms (e.g. listserv)
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Evaluation

It is important to evaluate the impact of the research. For some projects, evaluation may be as simple as reviewing the number of reports distributed/requested, or the number of downloads from a website (Phipps, 2017). However, you may want to consider conducting more extensive post-research engagement, as it can give you a more detailed understanding of how your research has added value and influenced change among a population/group, which can lead to additional research opportunities (CHEO, 2014).

There are a growing number of KMb planning tools that allow people to effectively plan and account for KMb. Critical factors in the KMb planning cycle, like partnerships/engagement, goals/objectives, activities and impact/accountability are well covered in these tools. One resource which the KMb Unit at York is using regularly with researchers and their partners to plan for effective KMb was developed by the Ontario Centre for Excellence on Child and Youth Mental Health and is found here: <http://www.kmbtoolkit.ca/>

5. What are Best Practices for Knowledge Mobilization?

Conducting KMb activities can be a long and challenging process due to a number of factors, including time and financial constraints. Therefore, effective ways of communicating with people and within communities need to be considered in order to maximize the impact of your research.

The following are some tips for conducting KMb:

Diversify Approaches

- Consider using different communication methods for your audiences (e.g., media blasts and attending local events)

Actively Engage

- Building relationships across multiple levels (e.g., service providers and end-users)

Make it Accessible

- Frame the message in a way that can be understood (e.g., plain, jargon-free language)
- Consider different formats (e.g., large print, range of languages, audio)

Think Big

- Be creative, think outside the box (e.g., pop-up stands in public areas)

6. What does Knowledge Mobilization Look Like in Action?

Here are some examples of research from Kinesiology and Health Science that have a knowledge mobilization component within the field of Kinesiology and Health Science:

SCI Action Canada: Advancing Physical Activity Knowledge And Participation Among Canadians Living With Spinal Cord Injury (McMaster University)

- Based at McMaster University, SCI Action Canada is an ongoing, collaborative endeavour bringing together university-based researchers, knowledge mobilization specialists, support networks, service groups and community members focused on advancing physical activity, knowledge, and participation among Canadians living with spinal cord injury.
- <https://www.science.mcmaster.ca/kinesiology/78-sci-action-canada-1.html>

New Physical Activity And Sedentary Behaviour Child Care Accreditation Standards: Can it Get Kids Moving More and Sitting Less? (Alberta Centre for Active Living, in partnership with the University of Alberta)

- Highlights the steps in developing and implementing physical activity and sedentary behaviour accreditation standards in Alberta child care settings.
- https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer_public/b4/1d/b41d5bdf-c706-4d80-be0d-e329ca4e6fb9/2014-childcare-infographic-tabloid.pdf

Youth Diabetes Sports Camp: Mobilizing Knowledge for Exercise and Diabetes (York University)

- The York University Youth Diabetes Sports Camp developed a unique partnership between the youth participants and the research team that was focused on learning more about glucose regulation during exercise and the prevention of hypoglycemia. This research is the first of its kind to be tested outside of the laboratory, in a field setting. Besides the fun and excitement that the young campers got throughout the duration of the camp, they were also taught various strategies to help manage their diabetes and encouraged to share their experiences with other campers.
- <http://researchimpact.ca/youth-diabetes-sports-camp-mobilizing-knowledge-for-exercise-and-diabetes/>

7. What are Knowledge Mobilization Resources at York University

ResearchImpact

York University is one of the founding members of *ResearchImpact*, a pan-Canadian network of eleven universities committed to the development and sharing of knowledge mobilization strategies, services and tools. Currently, *ResearchImpact* is responsible for:

- Helping foster partnerships (e.g., community, government, etc.)
- Building capacity (e.g., learning opportunities, developing innovative solutions)
- Supporting projects (e.g., providing knowledge brokering)

For more information about *ResearchImpact* at York University, visit <http://researchimpact.ca/local-ri-units/york-university/>.

Additional Resources

Knowledge Mobilization

- Doing More with What you Know: Knowledge Mobilization Toolkit (<http://www.kmbtoolkit.ca>)
- The Canadian Knowledge Transfer and Exchange Community of Practice (<http://www.ktecop.ca>)
- Pathway to Impact, Research Councils UK (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts/>)
- Mapping the Impact of Research (https://www.mta.ca/uploadedFiles/Community/Research_and_creative/Research_Office/Mount_Allison_Connects/Institute_events/Mapping%20Impact%20of%20Research.pdf)
- Guide to Knowledge Translation Planning at CIHR: Integrated and End-of-Grant Approaches (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45321.html>)

Plain Language

- Plain Language Association International (<http://plainlanguagenetwork.org>)
- The Plain Language Action and Information Network (<http://www.plainlanguage.gov>)

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