

www.chsrf.ca / www.fcrss.ca

IS RESEARCH WORKING FOR YOU?

A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR
HEALTH SERVICES MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ORGANIZATIONS



Canadian Health Services Research **Foundation**
Fondation canadienne de la recherche sur les services de santé

...making research work
...pour que la recherche porte ses fruits

OUR PURPOSE

VISION

Our vision is a strong Canadian healthcare system that is guided by solid, research-based management and policy decisions.

MISSION

To support evidence-based decision-making in the organization, management and delivery of health services through funding research, building capacity and transferring knowledge.

STRATEGY

To establish and foster linkages between decision makers (managers and policymakers) and researchers in the governance of the foundation and in the design and implementation of programs to support research, develop researchers and transfer knowledge.

This document is available on the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation web site www.chsrf.ca.

For more information on the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, contact the foundation at:

1565 Carling Avenue, Suite 700
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Z 8R1

E-mail: communications@chsrf.ca
Telephone: (613) 728-2238
Fax: (613) 728-3527

Ce document est disponible sur le site Web de la Fondation canadienne de la recherche sur les services de santé www.fcrss.ca.

Pour obtenir de plus amples renseignements sur la Fondation canadienne de la recherche sur les services de santé, communiquez avec la Fondation :

1565, avenue Carling, bureau 700
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1Z 8R1

Courriel : communications@fcrss.ca
Téléphone : (613) 728-2238
Télécopieur : (613) 728-3527

IS RESEARCH WORKING FOR YOU?

A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

WHY USE THIS TOOL?

In today's healthcare systems, it is essential for organizations to make the best use of an ever-growing body of research information. Provincial or territorial health ministries, hospitals, professional practices, long-term care organizations, or community health organizations can all gain significant advantages by using research in the right way.

This self-assessment tool from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation will help you identify how you gather and use research and where there is potential for improvement.

The foundation can assist in your assessment and discussions at any stage. Feel free to contact:

Senior Program Officer, Research Use
Canadian Health Services Research Foundation
1565 Carling Avenue, Suite 700
Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 8R1
Canada
Telephone: (613) 728-2238
Fax: (613) 728-3527
research.use@chsrf.ca

MAKING DECISIONS IN HEALTH SERVICES

Difficult financial, organizational, and resource decisions must be made by those who fund, organize, and set priorities in health services, by those who develop health policies, and by health services providers.

Today's healthcare systems are changing rapidly and decision makers face:

- a complex environment;
- vast quantities of information that are often contradictory and come from many different sources; and
- new demands for accountability.

ABOUT RESEARCH...

Research is one of many sources of information and data used in making decisions. In particular, *health services research* can help to:

- explain the need for certain decisions;
- show the reasons for choosing one of many competing arguments;
- increase confidence in decisions that are made; and
- help build consensus.

ABOUT SELF-ASSESSMENT...

Using this tool can help your organization determine:

- how research is currently being used;
- where research is located;
- the capacity within your organization to locate and use research;
- ideas for better use of research; and
- next steps your organization should consider.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS TOOL

Self-assessment will work best if:

- a group of decision makers and interested people in your organization works together on the answers, discussing them as you go along;
- the answers are collated and used for the second half of the tool called **Our Results: A Discussion Guide**; and
- you consider the suggestions in the “**What Next?**” section to use the results in an effective way.

ABOUT THIS TOOL...

There are four general areas of assessment.

1. **Acquire:** can your organization find and obtain the research findings it needs?
2. **Assess:** can your organization assess research findings to ensure they are reliable, relevant, and applicable to you?
3. **Adapt:** can your organization present the research to decision makers in a useful way?
4. **Apply:** are there skills, structures, processes, and a culture in your organization to promote and use research findings in decision-making?

Since this is an assessment, there are no right or wrong answers.

ABOUT THE RATINGS

The choice of ratings for each question varies, depending on the nature of the question.

In all cases, a rating of “1” means a low capacity or frequency of activity, while a “5” signifies something your organization is well-equipped to do or does often.

PART ONE: ACQUIRE

1.1 ARE WE ABLE TO ACQUIRE RESEARCH?

RATING

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

We have skilled staff for research.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has enough time for research.	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has the incentive to do research (it is used in our decision-making).	1	2	3	4	5
Our staff has the resources to do research.	1	2	3	4	5
We have arrangements with external experts who search for research, monitor research, or do research for us.	1	2	3	4	5

1.2 ARE WE LOOKING FOR RESEARCH IN THE RIGHT PLACES?

RATING

1 = Don't do 2 = Do poorly 3 = Do inconsistently 4 = Do with some consistency 5 = Do well

We look for research in journals (that is by subscription, Internet, or library access; examples are the <i>Journal of Health Services Research & Policy</i> and <i>Healthcare Quarterly</i>).	1	2	3	4	5
We look for research in non-journal reports (grey literature) by library, Internet access, or direct mailing from organizations such as ministries of health, the <i>Centre for Health Economics & Policy Analysis (CHEPA)</i> , or the <i>Centre for Health Services and Policy Research (CHSPR)</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
We look for research in databases by subscription or Internet access, such as the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Cochrane Collaboration, and citation indices.	1	2	3	4	5
We look for information on web sites (those that collate and/or evaluate sources) such as <i>Best Evidence</i> or <i>Bandolier</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
We work with researchers through formal and informal networking meetings with our staff.	1	2	3	4	5
We get involved with researchers as a host, decision-maker partner, or sponsor.	1	2	3	4	5
We learn from peers through informal and formal networks to exchange ideas, experiences, and best practices.	1	2	3	4	5

PART TWO: ASSESS

2.1 CAN WE TELL IF THE RESEARCH IS VALID AND OF HIGH QUALITY?

RATING

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Staff in our organization has critical appraisal skills and tools for evaluating the quality of methodology used in research.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

Staff in our organization has the critical appraisal skills to evaluate the reliability of specific research by identifying related evidence and comparing methods and results.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with external experts who use critical appraisal skills and tools to assess methodology and evidence reliability, and to compare methods and results.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

2.2 CAN WE TELL IF THE RESEARCH IS RELEVANT AND APPLICABLE?

RATING

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Our staff can relate our research to our organization and point out similarities and differences.	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with external experts to identify the relevant similarities and differences between what we do and what the research says.	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

PART THREE: ADAPT

3.1 CAN WE SUMMARIZE RESULTS IN A USER-FRIENDLY WAY?

RATING

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to present research results concisely and in accessible language.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to synthesize in one document all relevant research, along with information and analyses from other sources.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to link research results to key issues facing our decision makers.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has enough skilled staff with time, incentives, and resources **who use research communication skills to provide recommended actions to our decision makers.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with **external experts** who use research communication skills to **present research results concisely and in accessible language.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with **external experts** who use research communication skills to **synthesize in one document all relevant research, along with information and analyses from other sources.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with **external experts** who use research communication skills to **link research results to key issues facing our decision makers.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our organization has arrangements with **external experts** who use research communication skills to **provide recommended actions to our decision makers.**

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

PART FOUR: APPLY

4.1 DO WE LEAD BY EXAMPLE AND SHOW HOW WE VALUE RESEARCH USE?

RATING					
	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neither agree nor disagree	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
Using research is a priority in our organization.	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization has committed resources to ensure research is accessed, adapted, and applied in making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
Our organization ensures staff is involved in discussions on how research evidence relates to our main goals.	1	2	3	4	5
The management of our organization has clearly communicated our strategy and priorities so that those creating or monitoring research know what is needed in support of our goals.	1	2	3	4	5
We communicate internally in a way that ensures there is information exchanged across the entire organization.	1	2	3	4	5
Our corporate culture values and rewards flexibility, change, and continuous quality improvement with resources to support these values.	1	2	3	4	5

4.2 DO OUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES HAVE A PLACE FOR RESEARCH?

RATING					
	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neither agree nor disagree	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
When we make major decisions, we usually allow enough time to identify researchable questions and create/obtain, analyse, and consider research results and other evidence.	1	2	3	4	5
Our management team evaluates the feasibility of each option, including potential impact across the organization as well as on clients, partners, and other stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
Decision makers in our organization give formal consideration to any recommendations from staff who have developed or identified high-quality and relevant research.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders know when and how major decisions will be made.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders contribute evidence and know how that information will be used.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff who have provided evidence and analysis usually participate in decision-making discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant on-staff researchers are made part of decision-making discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders receive feedback on decisions, with a rationale for the decision.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and appropriate stakeholders are informed of how available evidence influenced the choices that were made in our organization.	1	2	3	4	5

OUR RESULTS: A DISCUSSION GUIDE

Based on the self-assessment, our organization should work on the following areas so that we can use research better to make informed decisions that help meet our goals and objectives:

1. Establish research as a priority in our organization (Check one)

We feel research in our organization should have:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Much higher priority | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat lower priority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat higher priority | <input type="checkbox"/> Much lower priority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The same priority | |

2. Integrate the use of research into the work of people in our organization (Check one)

We feel we need to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate research much more often | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate research slightly less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate research slightly more often | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate research much less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain our current level of integrating research | |

3. Encourage the use of research by our decision makers (Check one)

We feel our decision makers:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not use research at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Use research with some consistency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use research poorly | <input type="checkbox"/> Use research well/enough |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use research inconsistently | |

4. Increase our capacity for research

(Check all that apply. If you have more than one answer, please rate your needs from 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest priority.)

We need:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Skilled staff | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Incentives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Arrangements with external experts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Time | |

5. Acquisition of research

(Check all that apply. If you have more than one answer, please rate your needs from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest priority.)
We need better access to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Journals | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Web sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Non-journal reports (grey literature) | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Opportunities to work with researchers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Databases | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Learning from peers |

6. Assessment of research

(Check the one that is most appropriate or best describes your situation.)
We need to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to assess and adapt research | <input type="checkbox"/> Adapt and assess research a bit less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assess and adapt research more often | <input type="checkbox"/> Adapt and assess research much less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain our current ability to assess and adapt research | |

7. Linking of research results to key issues facing our decision makers

(Check the one that is most appropriate or best describes your situation.)
Our decision makers need to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to consider research in making decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider research a bit less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consider research more often in making decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider research much less often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain our current frequency of considering research | |

OUR QUESTIONS BASED ON OUR RESULTS

The results of this self-assessment tool will be used by the foundation to assist your organization in better targeting the information and resources you need.

These are sample questions that will fit many situations, but take time to write those specific to your organization based on the self-assessment exercise.

Our organization has the following questions about making research work for us.

1. How do we help our organization understand the importance of research?
2. How do we access skilled staff?
3. How do we access outside assistance with research?
4. What training is available in writing research summaries?
5. What case studies can we cite to emphasize the importance of research?
6. Is research acquisition costly?
7. What if we cannot afford research?

WHAT NEXT?

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation has a range of resources for managers and policy makers to find and use research. For example, we have an inventory of promising practices that show how other organizations have addressed similar challenges, and we organize workshops where research users can work with their peers to adapt these approaches to their own needs. The foundation also connects health-system managers and policy makers with the research — and the researchers — that can help them address key challenges.

For example, if your organization is interested in partnering on a research project, you may be interested in the foundation's guide on how to be a good research partner (www.chsrf.ca/other_documents/pdf/partner_e.pdf).

Or, if your organization is interested in providing skills to senior managers that enhance their ability to better use research in their daily work, you may be interested in the Executive Training for Research Application (EXTRA) program (www.chsrf.ca/extra/).

There are many other foundation resources that can help, and we can point you to what is available outside the foundation. To initiate a discussion about what you can do, please contact:

Senior Program Officer, Research Use
research.use@chsrf.ca
Tel: (613) 728-2238
Fax: (613) 728-3527