

COMMUNICATING & REPORTING INFORMATION

Even though communicating and reporting is a critical component of any inquiry, research, or evaluation, there is often no upfront planning to ensure it is done effectively. Too often, we don't think of the communication and reporting aspects of our work until the end when we are rushing to complete a final report by a quickly approaching deadline. In reality, planning for communicating and reporting information should start at the beginning stages of any inquiry.

Communicating and reporting is sometimes considered **knowledge mobilization** – the moving of available knowledge into active use and bridging the gap between research and research users with the goal of improving outcomes.

Key considerations when communicating and reporting on information

1. There are many reasons why we do what we do! Consider the most appropriate purpose(s) for your inquiry that align best with the overall inquiry focus (e.g., building awareness, facilitating growth, demonstrating results, accountability).

2. Report often! Report information at many different points during and after an inquiry (e.g., interim reports, updates, summaries, final report).

3. Plan ahead! Create an outline/structure for your report before you begin writing.

4. Think outside the box! Consider different ways to represent information (e.g., newsletters, blogs, post cards, infographics, Facebook, PowerPoint, images, music, bit strips, briefs).

5. Write well! Spend time writing well in order to communicate your information in an accurate and interesting way. Use written devices (e.g., analogies, metaphors) to help get your point across.

See [Jeanne Hubelbank on Using Metaphors in Evaluation](#)

See [Jordan Slice on How Being a Creator Informs Being an Evaluator](#) The importance of clear communication and answering the questions stakeholders are interested in.

See [Gretchen Biesecker on Applying Structures of Good Stories to Reporting Data](#) Tips, software, and tools to use storytelling to report data.

6. Looks matter! Consider design, layout, audience interest, and different learning styles.

See [John Nash on Creating Outstanding Presentation Slides](#)

Use this [Data Visualization Checklist](#) as a guide for the development of high impact data visualizations.

Report writing

Although not an exhaustive list, the following are the main elements of any report:

purpose	response rate
methodology	details of analysis
definition of the population and how the sample was drawn	summary of findings
sample size	discussion
copies of materials used (e.g., questionnaires, consent forms)	

See [Judith Kallick Russell on Translating Findings Into Action](#) for ways to provide findings and recommendations in reports that can be easily translated into actions for stakeholders.



Innovative ideas for communicating and reporting information

Diagrammer™ A “visualization system” featuring over 4,000 PowerPoint-ready, downloadable, customizable diagrams that can be searched or filtered by relationship (flow, join, network, segment, or stack), style (2D or 3D), or number of nodes (1-8).

Jeanne Hubelbank on Assessing Audience or Client Knowledge in a Sweet Way

Nicole Vicinanza on Explaining Random Sampling to Stakeholders

LucidChart A web-based diagramming software that can help to organize thoughts, processes, and evaluation findings into an easy-to-use visual format. Share in real-time and save as PDF.

ThingLink An image interaction tool that allows you to add small icons with rich media tags to images which may be viewed on a website, embedded in a blog, infographic, etc.

Stephanie Evergreen’s Cookie Results Blog post on using food to get participants interested in evaluation findings using fortune cookies.

Susan Kistler on Innovative Reporting Sharing lessons from a project marrying street art, evaluation, infographics, technology, and community building.

Susan Kistler’s Chocolate Results Blog tutorial on making report wrappers and stickers for chocolates.

Wordle A tool to create “word clouds” from the text you provide.