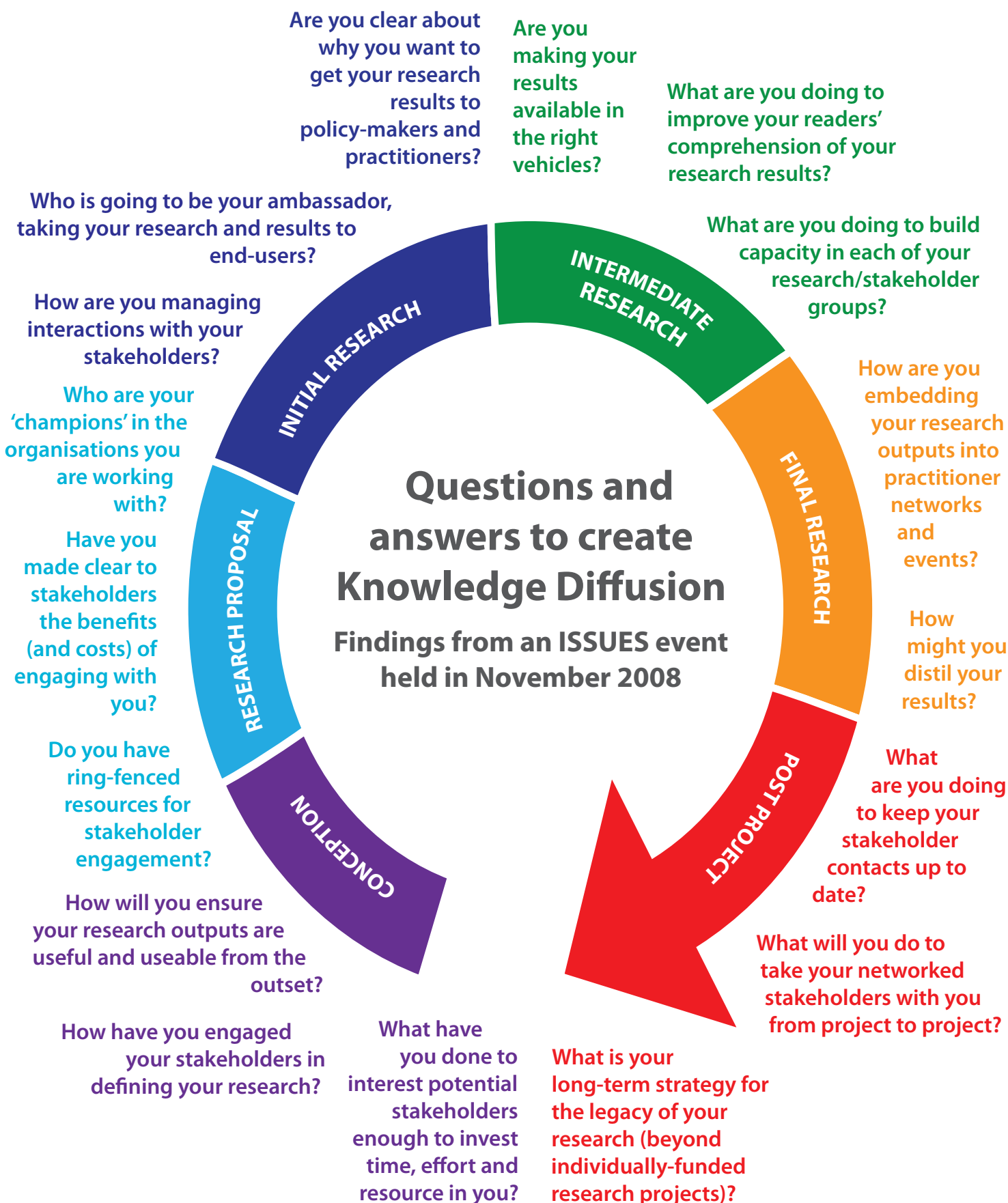


Knowledge Exchange in the Research Cycle



This leaflet summarises the key messages from the ISSUES Knowledge Exchange event held in November 2008, distilled from interactive exercises, discussions and presentations. A set of questions for each stage of the research cycle has been used to frame comments and observations (see front cover). The text gives a flavour of the issues discussed and we hope it will stimulate further discussion about knowledge exchange.

CONCEPTION

What have you done to interest potential stakeholders enough to invest time, effort and resources in you?

Involve stakeholders from the start

You need to involve people from the start if you want really good engagement with them throughout the project. This may be difficult, as you need a quite well-developed sense of where research is going before people will be interested. – *SUE Researcher*

How have you engaged your stakeholders in defining your research?

Using stakeholders as a sounding board for research focus

Stakeholders are key in research design – they help identify the need for research, whether the research is ‘fit for purpose’ and whether it is feasible or not. – *SUE Researcher*

How will you ensure your research outputs are useful and useable from the outset?

Understand your audience

Think about who you’re talking to, what they are interested in and what language they talk. What are the benefits to the stakeholders of engaging with you? – *SUE Researcher*

It is very important to understand your audience through background research to understand research needs and areas to focus on – this can be done through a scoping study. – *Interactive Exercise*

Co-creation of knowledge

It may be hard to involve end-users in research. However, if you do, then ‘co-creation’ of knowledge can improve the relevance of the research and increase likelihood of uptake. – *ISSUES Researcher*

Have you made clear to stakeholders the benefits (and costs) of engaging with you?

What level and types of commitment are you actually asking of your stakeholders?

Consider who you’re involving in your research, what they are interested in and what the benefits are to them if they engage with you. A well-developed sense of where research is going will encourage potential partners to come on board. – *SUE Researcher*

Build a consensus with your stakeholders

How engaged are your stakeholders with defining the short and long term goals of the project? The more input they have the more involved they will feel, and the more likely they are to stay involved. – *ISSUES Researcher*

Help stakeholders realise the real benefit of working with you

If industrial partners are just token, they won’t get much back, but if they get real benefit they’ll stay engaged. This may be easier for small, focused projects. Larger ones can benefit from having expert panels for each research area. – *SUE Researcher*

How are you managing interactions with your stakeholders?

Pull versus push approach

Networks are built on familiarity and trust. The ‘pull’ approach (building trust, having a presence, providing an evidence base) often works better than the ‘push’ approach (e.g. steering committee meetings). – *SUE Researcher*

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

INITIAL RESEARCH

Ring-fence your resources for stakeholder engagement. Some ideas:

- Consider budgeting for seconding a student to government or industry.
- Consider using external expertise for dissemination, but be aware of the cost.
- Bear in mind that any external expertise should be from an appropriate organisation, which may be difficult for broader projects.

Keep stakeholders informed

Send monthly e-mail bulletins to stakeholders on project progress. Regular contact keeps stakeholders involved at every step. – *Interactive Exercise*

Give stakeholders an opportunity to participate, build ownership of the project

Bad engagement can be detrimental to a project! Make sure that stakeholders do not feel patronised or alienated. Where local people have been engaged in a process they can take ownership and feel proud – *SUE Researcher*

Who is going to be your ambassador (or 'active carrier'), taking your research and results to end-users? (e.g. by networking and attending meetings)

'The best advocates for research are the people who produce it.' – *SUE Researcher*

Take a pro-active approach

Pursue options for active engagement with stakeholders. For example, consider having a member of the research team as an 'embedded expert' with relevant policy-makers. – *SUE Researcher*

Continuity of the 'carrier' (ambassador)

Ensure you have considered your 'ambassador' leaving and set up systems to retain their contacts. Have a second person who could take over in case your main ambassador leaves. – *ISSUES Researcher*

Are you clear about why you want to get your research results to policy-makers and practitioners?

Three main questions to ask yourself before approaching practitioners in central government – *End user involved in policy making*

Why do you want to contact policy makers?

Do you want to contact policymakers for support, to influence policy or to access their networks? Let policymakers know what policies your research relates to. Try to use intermediary bodies like CAGE or the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

Who do you want to get to?

Find the right policy officials through year books, or via a switchboard and ask who the right person is (it will change). Policy officials want to know who has expertise in different fields as they bring experts in to advise them at different stages.

How are you going to get your information to us?

Most policy makers don't have time to read abstracts. Use practice oriented networks like 'info4local' and ensure email titles are succinct and to the point. Remember policy officials usually want conclusions first, and then they need to know that these are backed up by evidence.

Are you making your results available in the right vehicles (e.g. practitioner orientated networks and journals)?**Dissemination through different lenses**

Research needs to be looked at academically in order to be published in journals. Then it needs to be looked at under a completely different lens in order for it to be translated for different audiences. – *SUE Researcher*

Use electronic media

Additional ideas for effective dissemination from researchers: Interactive CD-ROM portal with links, interactive blogs, commissioning a video around case studies. – *Interactive Exercise*

Professional Institution publications

Aim technical journal papers at Professional Institution publications rather than pure research journals. – *ISSUES Researcher*

What are you doing to improve your readers' comprehension of your results (language and interpretation)? What are you doing to build capacity in stakeholder groups?**Secondments**

Secondments are a very good way of increasing awareness about research. They also increase the versatility and understanding of researchers and open up dialogue between researcher and their end-user audiences. – *Interactive Exercise*

Be aware that end-users are often not 'research capacity ready'

Many end-users are not 'research capacity ready'. We need to build their understanding of research just as we need to develop our own abilities and the way we communicate. – *SUE Researcher*

What do end users want?

What are we (local authority stakeholders) looking for? Outputs and research findings that are relevance, 'palatable' and understandable. We need to hear from advocates of the research who can show us why we might be interested in their findings. – *End user from policy*

How might you distil your results (e.g. into a 'Headlines Flyer' or similar?)**Distil your research into three main points – Why? Who? How?**

1. Why is the research/findings/tool useful? 2. Who is it useful to? 3. How can it be used by your audience? – *End user from policy*

Make it easy and attractive to read

Hire a professional writer/editor to distil your results down into a page – use photographs and a 'jazzy' title. – *Interactive Exercise*

Imagine you have 40 seconds to 'sell' your project findings. What would you say if you were in a lift for four floors with Hazel Blears? – *End user from policy*

What is your long-term strategy for the legacy of your research (beyond individually-funded research projects)?**Embed results with stakeholders**

Set up a permanent exhibition in venues situated in case study areas such as local firms and community venues. – *SUE Researcher*

Outcomes rather than outputs

We all need to move away from looking at the outputs of research to looking at eventual outcomes – what will result from this research, what could change because of it? – *ISSUES Researcher*

Knowledge is in people

The legacy of a Consortium is often the experienced researchers it trains and produces at the end of four years. – *SUE Researcher*

Acknowledgements

ISSUES would like to thank all those who took part in our event on 10th November and whose presentations and contributions to discussions contributed to the learning and knowledge exchange on the day.

This graphic on the front cover of this brochure illustrates some key aspects for researchers to consider to ensure that research has an impact in the world beyond academia and was developed during the ISSUES event in November 2008. The questions were formulated by Ian Cooper (Eclipse Research Consultants/ISSUES Steering Group) as a means of encapsulating the key points about knowledge exchange put forward by presenters at this event. The research-cycle questions shown provide an informal framework to good practice in Knowledge Exchange for researchers. More information about the event, speakers and presentations are on our website www.urbansustainabilityexchange.org.uk.

This Brochure was produced by the ISSUES Team in December 2008.

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