

Identifying Metrics for Monitoring and Evaluating Impact of a Federally-Funded Research Communication Program



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Abstract

For any research program to have scientific and societal impact, its research products must be effectively communicated. The Common Fund of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funds and coordinates research programs that produce tools and resources to overcome key roadblocks and capitalize on emerging opportunities in biomedical research. Communication is vital to success of these programs because the products of research have no value if no one knows about them or how to use them. To address this need, the NIH Common Fund develops a communication plan for each program to ensure that internal and external audiences are informed about program status and outcomes. In this presentation, we focus on metrics needed to monitor and evaluate our research communication plans.

Past and Present Common Fund Programs



Goal of Common Fund Program Communication Plans

To increase awareness of Common Fund program opportunities, outcomes, and resources by scientists, NIH staff, Congress, and the interested public.

Target Audiences

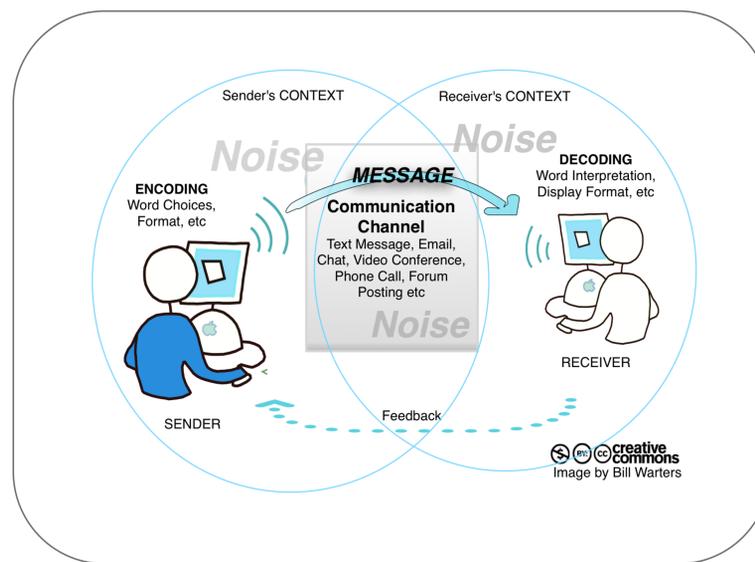


Communication Channels and Venues

- Program websites
- Social media platforms
- Email listservs/online discussion forums
- Scientific conferences/events
- Books/Flyers/brochures
- Presentation talking points/slides
- Webinars/teleconferences
- Media interviews
- Interactions with scientific societies
- Tutorials
- Press releases
- Congressional briefings

Challenges to Evaluating Communication Plans

- Difficult to measure direct cause-and-effect between communication and audience response
- Message may be short-lived
- Strategies and metrics evolve as the science program evolves
- Generally no Impact may be much later than expected
- Message does not rise to level of public opinion at large



For more information about the NIH Common Fund visit <https://commonfund.nih.gov/>

Evaluation Questions & Metrics

Communication Planning

To what extent does the communication strategy respond to the unique information needs of the target audiences?

- Type of audiences – primary and secondary
- Information needs of each audience
- Information needs at various stages of the program
- Information needs about research funding opportunities
- Information needs related to program-generated by the resources

Communication Output

What is delivered and how often?

- Press releases
- Conferences/ events
- Updates on website(s)
- Emails sent
- Reports (interim/final)
- Blogs
- Newsletters/briefs/bulletins/brochures
- Books/publications
- Webinars/teleconferences/presentations
- Social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)

Communication Outgrowth

Who potentially received the communication?

- Target audiences contacting the Common Fund
- Media clippings, contacts, inquiries
- Webinar/presentation attendance figures
- Website analytics
- Links to program webpage by other science and public websites
- Mention of the program by science or general media outlets

Communication Comprehension

What is the effect of the communication on target audiences?

- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Use of program outputs (resources/ tools/findings)
- Engagement/contacts with Common Fund staff