Research-to-policy translation competency tool for health researchers

Nieva Jr., R.F., Silva, M.E.C., Ligot, J.T.D., Dawal, J.G., Alonzo, G.A.R., Dorog, V.N., and Tamondong, A.R.S.

Description	This Research-to-Policy Translation Competency for Health Researchers Resource Guide highlights the critical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that health researchers should possess if they want to equip themselves with the skills to translate their research into policy successfully.
Scope	The tool outlines the collective set of competencies desired for researchers working at the science-policy interface. It consists of three (3) general competency clusters. Each cluster comprises several specific competencies, constituting the foundational competencies for research-to-policy translation. **Knowledge of health research-to-policy translation process** Understanding data relevance and policy development **Policy Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration** Engaging and consulting stakeholders **Strategic Policy Communication** Framing issues and tailoring messages
Relevance to policy	Policies informed by evidence and demonstrated impact are more likely to lead to effective resource allocation and achieving public health goals. However, there is often a gap between available research,

	data, and policymaking. Enhancing the capacity of researchers to seek, understand, translate, communicate, and promote evidence will strengthen public health policymaking and ultimately improve public health outcomes.
Who can use the tool?	**Health Researchers**:
	Whether early-career or advanced health researchers, help identify career paths, skill gaps, and training needs.
	Once the health researchers have identified their priorities and interests, they can use this information to guide them in discussing them with their supervisor, mentor, or institutions, choosing learning opportunities that will help them reach their goals and meet the requirements for continuing competence in research-to-policy translation.
	Institutions (academic institutions, health consortia, hospitals, research organizations):
	Assess the extent to which health researchers are being trained in research-to-policy translation and evaluate institutional support for professional development, such as skills training and career advancement opportunities, practices, and enable staff development.
	Ensures consistency of funding policies, promotes capacity building, and facilitates collaboration across sectors to support research-to-policy translation competency for researchers.
Process of how the tool was developed	The initial tool was developed based on analysis of relevant literature and data generated from interviews, focus groups with researchers and stakeholders. The tool was presented to the researchers and representatives from academic institutions, regional health research and development consortia, and national agencies. It was then revised based on the feedback from the stakeholders.

Health Researchers' competencies in research-to-policy translation

Instructions: This self-assessment tool is designed to help you assess your knowledge and skill level in the research-to-policy translation competencies. Read each competency component and check the appropriate column to indicate your answer.

At the end of each domain, there is a place to write any comments you have. For example, if you feel like an expert but may still want training or learning opportunities in a particular skill, please enter those comments in the comments section. You could note that in the comments if you feel more confident about some aspects of the skill and less confident about others. Additionally, if particular

areas are highly relevant or less relevant for your job, you may wish to note those. This information can help you determine where to emphasize building knowledge and skills.

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
1. Knowledge of the health research-to-policy translation process				
1.1. Understanding the policy relevance of the data Knows current data and research findings relevant to specific policy issues	*Recognizes the value of finding the policy relevance of the data* *Understands that not all research should be translated into policy.*	*Can articulate specific policy implications of research findings.*	*Has experience applying research to inform or influence policy.*	
1.2. Knowledge of policy development Demonstrates knowledge of the policy processes, including key influences, stages, mechanisms, and political structure	*Aware of the stages of the policy process and key actors.*	*Can describe how policies are developed and the role of research in each stage.*	*Has participated in or contributed to an actual policy development process.*	
1.3. Understanding of relevant policy agenda and priorities Identifies and understands current policy priorities and issues that need to be adopted or changed	*Aware of relevant policy issues and policy priorities related to the research*	*Can link research findings to health-related policy agenda/priorities using an appropriate approach*	*Has experience assessing evidence needs in view of emerging policy challenges*	

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
1.4. Knowledge of policy audience and institutions Familiarity with government structures, regulatory frameworks, and policy development timelines	*Understands the importance of identifying the policy stakeholders, institutions and mandates in research-to-policy translation.*	*Can map policy stakeholders and institutions relevant to their research.*	*Has experience mapping stakeholders in the completed project*	
1.5. Understanding the Health System Demonstrates knowledge of health system structures, including decentralization, administrative functions, and pathways for research to influence policy within institutional and governance frameworks.	*Aware of health system components (e.g., devolution, key policy actors across health systems levels).*	*Able to apply system knowledge to assess policy pathways for research uptake.*	*Has experience navigating or collaborating within the system to influence policy.*	
2. Strategic Policy Communication				
2.1. Policy issue/problem framing Skill in positioning research within current policy priorities and public discourse	*Understand the value of issue framing in research-to-policy translation.*	*Can frame issues considering feasibility, sustainability, and stakeholder interest.*	*Applied issue framing in policy advocacy initiatives*	

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
2.2. Tailoring messages for diverse audiences Extract, interpret, summarize, and translate data into non-technical language.	*Aware of the need to modify messages (i.e. language, terminology) for target audiences.*	*Can summarize and translate data for varied groups.*	*Has successfully communicated research across diverse stakeholder groups.*	
2.3. Speaking with impact Uses narratives and storytelling to foster audience engagement and enhance message retention.	*Understands that storytelling enhances communication.*	*Uses narratives and storytelling to engage and persuade.*	*Has influenced decisions through evidence-based storytelling.*	
2.4. Engaging with media and influencers Work with journalists/media and others who disseminate information to reach decision-makers through appropriate communication channels.	*Understands traditional vs. new media; role of influencers.*	*Prepares media-friendly messages and briefers.*	*Worked with or created content for impactful media/influencer engagements.*	
2.5. Political sensitivity Can handle politically sensitive topics around their research area and communicate with them per the administration's policy.	*Recognizes policy is political; it must be handled carefully.*	*Frames messages to navigate political landscapes with integrity.*	*Successfully engaged in sensitive issues while maintaining evidence.*	

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
2.6. Writing for policymakers Develop concise policy briefs, op-eds, and presentations for decision-makers.	*Knows what policy briefs and op-eds are.*	*Can write concise, targeted policy briefs and memos.*	*Produced materials directly used in policymaking.*	
2.7. Monitoring and evaluation of knowledge translation efforts Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge translation efforts to determine their contributions to policy outcomes and the lessons learned to improve future activities.	*Understands that research-to-policy strategies must be evaluated.*	*Applies tools to measure knowledge translation success.*	*Led or contributed to research-to-policy evaluations that shaped future advocacy.*	
3. Policy Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration				
3.1. Policy stakeholder mapping Ability to map key stakeholders, power dynamics, and decision-making processes in relevant policy arenas	*Aware of the importance of policy stakeholders mapping.*	*Can map how relevant stakeholders and power interact in systems (e.g., LGUs, DOH, NGOs).*	*Used stakeholder mapping in actual policy engagement efforts.*	

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
3.2. Policy stakeholder engagement strategy Collaborate with stakeholders to identify data and research findings relevant to the policy process	*Understands basic engagement channels and timing.*	*Tailors strategies based on stakeholder roles, power, and readiness.*	*Led or supported successful stakeholder engagement influencing uptake.*	
3.3. Knowledge brokering Serve as the "knowledge broker" between other researchers and policymakers and encourage the participation of various stakeholders in the research and policy processes	*Is aware of the functions/roles of a knowledge broker.*	*Can link researchers and policymakers through research-to-policy initiatives*	*Co-developed research-to-policy initiatives as knowledge broker.*	
3.4. Convening and sustaining communities of practice (CoP) Develop trust and maintain constructive links with various policy stakeholders, including communities, decision-makers, and peer organizations.	*Knows what a CoP is and its value.*	*Co-facilitates learning exchanges with networks.*	*Organized or sustained a CoP supporting research-policy interface.*	
3.5. Documentation and Measurement of Engagement	*Aware of the importance of tracking*	*Can document and report stakeholder interactions with*	*Evaluated engagement outcomes using tools (e.g., policy tracking,*	

Competency cluster	Foundational (Level 1)	Intermediate (Level 2)	Advanced (Level 3)	Remarks
	Basic awareness / identification	Application / articulation	Demonstrated experience	
Demonstrates the ability to record, monitor, and evaluate stakeholder engagement efforts using appropriate tools and indicators (e.g., meeting records, MOUs, legislative tracking, feedback surveys).	*engagement (e.g., MOUs).*	*metrics.*	*feedback).*	

Recommended Capacity Building Support

The table below presents the recommended training support for researchers based on the gaps identified in the assessment tool. Training offers a way to begin building knowledge and skills in the research-to-policy translation competency areas that health researchers have identified as priorities. Various organizations, such as government agencies, academic institutions, public health training centers, and nonprofit organizations, may provide relevant training.

Identified competency gaps	Suggested training interventions

● Limited understanding of the research-to-policy translation
  ○ If the average score for the first competency cluster shows level 1 or below, the assessment indicates a significant gap in research-to-policy translation awareness
	● Training in knowledge translation and research-to-policy translation with the following training content
	  ● Principles of research-to-policy translation
	  ● Policy development process with a particular focus on the Philippine context
	  ● Political structure, government agencies, and institutional mandates
	  ● Philippine health system and structure

● Limited exposure to research-to-policy translation ○ If the average score for the first competency cluster shows level 2 or below, the	● Mentoring and coaching support for researchers with limited experience. ● Exposure to research-to-policy translation activities, such as

assessment indicates a significant gap in research-to-policy translation experience	policy fora, meetings, etc.

● Limited knowledge of strategic policy communication
  ○ If the average score for the second competency cluster shows level 1 or below, the assessment indicates a significant gap in strategic policy communication awareness
	● Strategic policy communication training with the following content
	  ● Principles of strategic communication
	  ● Issue framing
	  ● Message strategy
	  ● Communication channel identification
	  ● Policy paper writing
	  ● Monitoring and evaluation

● Limited experience in policy communication ○ If the average score for the first competency cluster shows level 2 or below, the assessment indicates a significant gap in experience in relation to strategic policy communication.	● Mentoring and coaching support for researchers with limited experience.
● Limited understanding of stakeholder engagement and collaboration related to research-to-policy translation ○ If the average score for the last competency cluster shows level 1 or below, the assessment indicates a significant gap in stakeholder engagement and collaboration awareness	● Mentoring and coaching support for researchers with limited experience. ● Coalition-building skills and relational abilities of researchers and advocates ● Exposure to research-to-policy translation activities, such as policy fora, meetings, etc.

References

Damba, F. U., Mtshali, N. G., & Chimbari, M. J. (2022). Barriers and facilitators of translating health research findings into policy in sub-Saharan Africa: a scoping review. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 9*(1), 1-15.

Hinchcliff, R., Ivers, R. Q., Poulos, R., & Senserrick, T. (2010). Utilization of research in policymaking for graduated driver licensing. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(11), 2052-2058.

Kothari, A., & Wathen, C. N. (2017). Integrated knowledge translation: digging deeper, moving forward. *J Epidemiol Community Health, 71*(6), 619-623.

Langlois, E. V., Becerril Montekio, V., Young, T., Song, K., Alcalde-Rabanal, J., & Tran, N. (2016). Enhancing evidence-informed policymaking in complex health systems: lessons from multi-site collaborative approaches. Health research policy and systems, 14, 1-11.

Majdzadeh, R., Sadighi, J., Nejat, S., Mahani, A. S., & Gholami, J. (2008). Knowledge translation for research utilization: design of a knowledge translation model at Tehran University of Medical Sciences. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 28*(4), 270-277.

Mwendera, C. A., De Jager, C., Longwe, H., Phiri, K., Hongoro, C., & Mutero, C. M. (2016). Facilitating factors and barriers to malaria research utilization for policy development in Malawi. *Malaria journal, 15*, 1-11.

Nieva, R.F., Jr., et al. (2025). Development of health research-to-policy translation competencies among researchers. Unpublished manuscript. DOST-PCHRD.

Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. *BMC health services research, 14*, 1-12.
Orem, J. N., Mafigiri, D. K., Marchal, B., Ssengooba, F., Macq, J., & Criel, B. (2012). Research, evidence and policymaking: the perspectives of policy actors on improving uptake of evidence in health policy development and implementation in Uganda. *BMC Public Health, 12*, 1-16.

Oxman, A. D., Lewin, S., Lavis, J. N., & Fretheim, A. (2009). SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking (STP) 15: Engaging the public in evidence-informed policymaking. *Health research policy and systems, 7*, 1-9.

Tricco, A. C., Zarin, W., Rios, P., Straus, S. E., & Langlois, E. V. (2016). Barriers, facilitators, strategies and outcomes to engaging policymakers, healthcare managers and policy analysts in knowledge synthesis: a scoping review protocol. *BMJ open, 6*(12), e013929.