Mobilizing Knowledge for Wicked Problems: Lessons Learned from Gender-Based Violence Research

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Today's Talk

- Knowledge mobilization (KMb)
  - what's all the fuss?
  - why should you care?
- Lessons learned from partnered research
- Proposed solutions
- Q & A

PreVAiL
Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan Research Network

dv@worknet

EQUIP Health Care
Research to Equip Health Care for Equity

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Knowledge Mobilization

(KMb, or KT(E), Innovation, Commercialization…)

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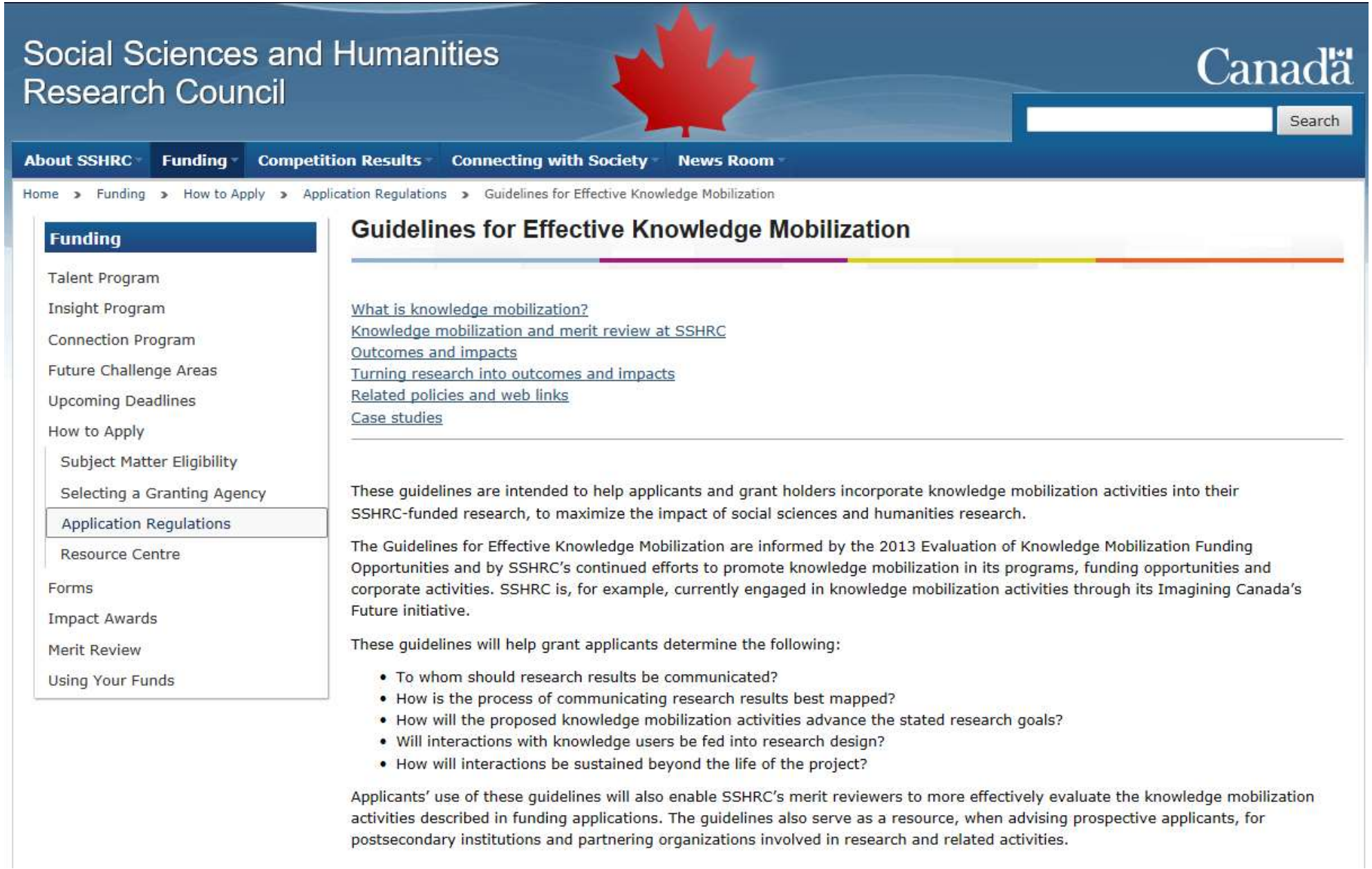
Researcher imperatives



Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

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Funding

- Talent Program
- Insight Program
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- Future Challenge Areas
- Upcoming Deadlines
- How to Apply
  - Subject Matter Eligibility
  - Selecting a Granting Agency
  - Application Regulations
  - Resource Centre
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- Impact Awards
- Merit Review
- Using Your Funds

Guidelines for Effective Knowledge Mobilization

What is knowledge mobilization?
Knowledge mobilization and merit review at SSHRC
Outcomes and impacts
Turning research into outcomes and impacts
Related policies and web links
Case studies

These guidelines are intended to help applicants and grant holders incorporate knowledge mobilization activities into their SSHRC-funded research, to maximize the impact of social sciences and humanities research.

The Guidelines for Effective Knowledge Mobilization are informed by the 2013 Evaluation of Knowledge Mobilization Funding Opportunities and by SSHRC's continued efforts to promote knowledge mobilization in its programs, funding opportunities and corporate activities. SSHRC is, for example, currently engaged in knowledge mobilization activities through its Imagining Canada's Future initiative.

These guidelines will help grant applicants determine the following:

- To whom should research results be communicated?
- How is the process of communicating research results best mapped?
- How will the proposed knowledge mobilization activities advance the stated research goals?
- Will interactions with knowledge users be fed into research design?
- How will interactions be sustained beyond the life of the project?

Applicants' use of these guidelines will also enable SSHRC's merit reviewers to more effectively evaluate the knowledge mobilization activities described in funding applications. The guidelines also serve as a resource, when advising prospective applicants, for postsecondary institutions and partnering organizations involved in research and related activities.

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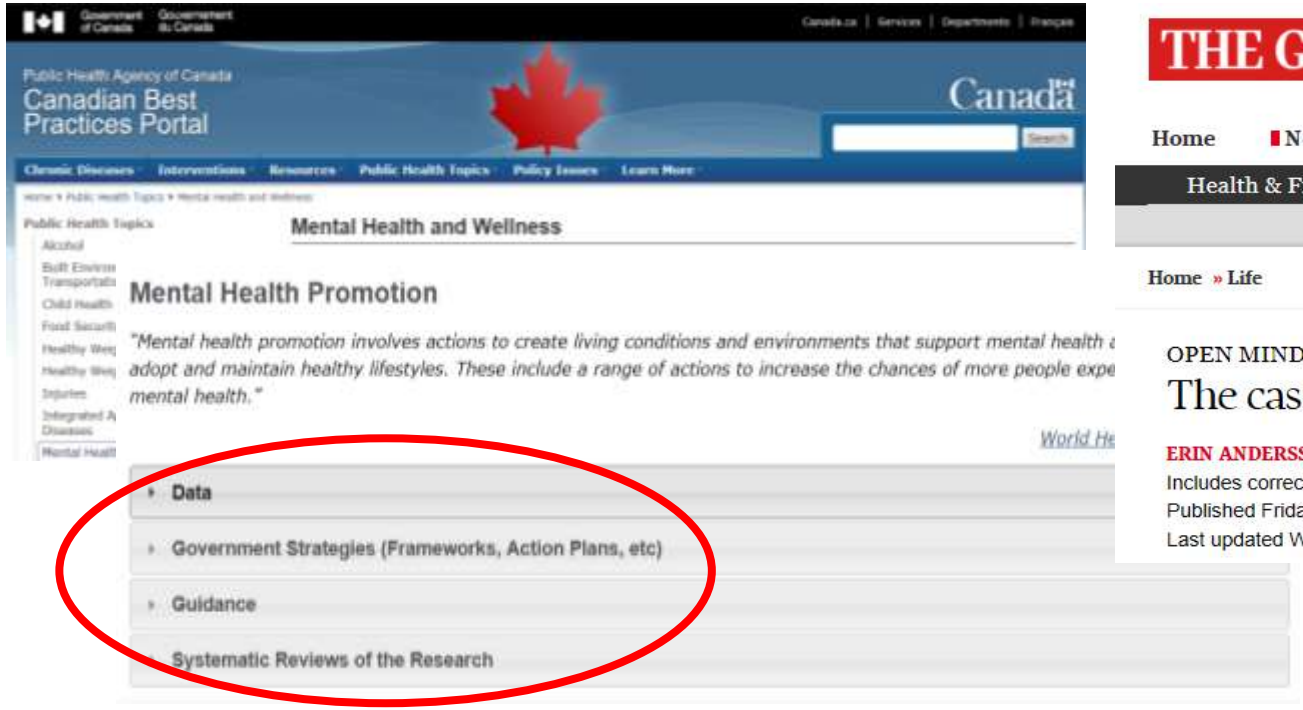
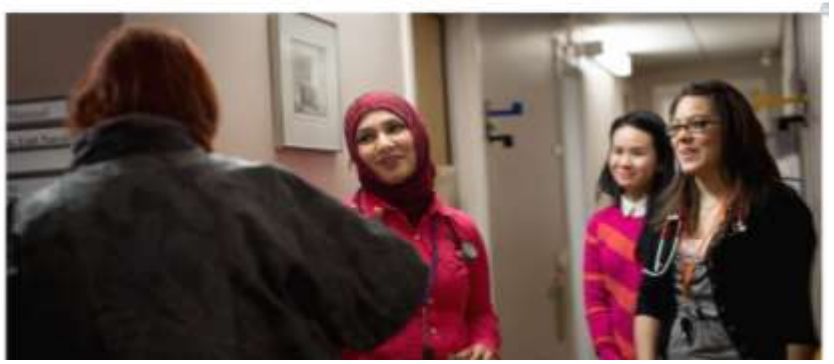
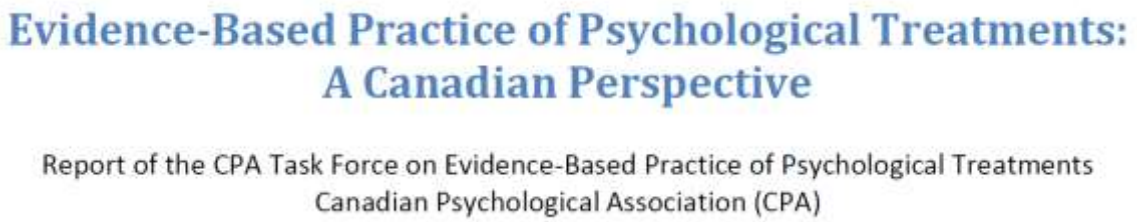
User imperatives

Evidence-based everything!







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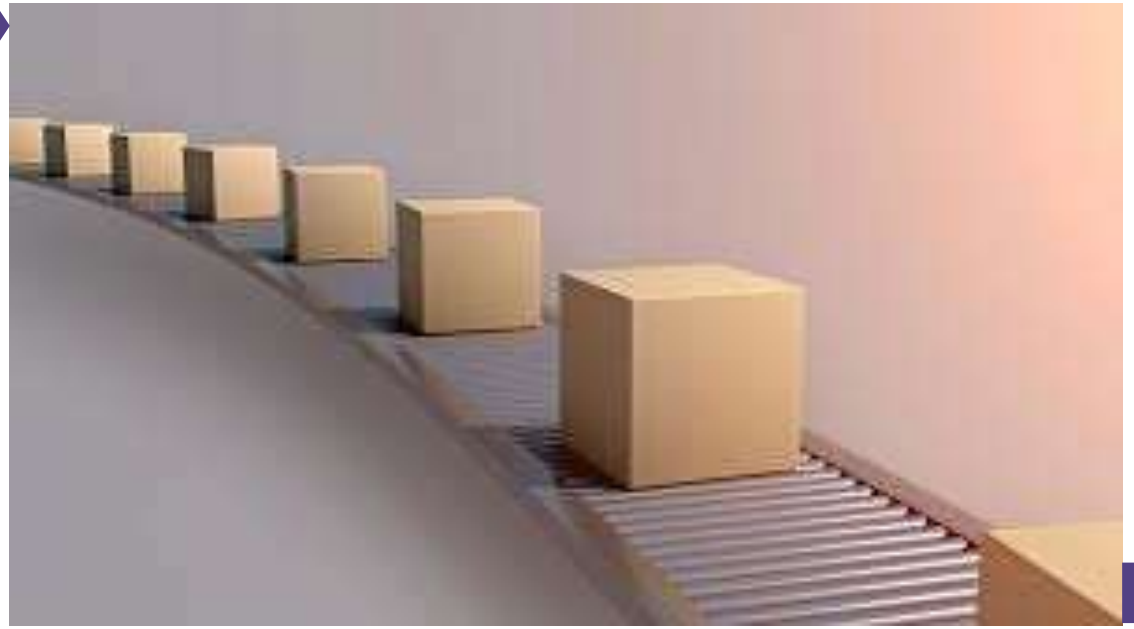
Getting “knowledge to action” sounds easy...

Producer



User

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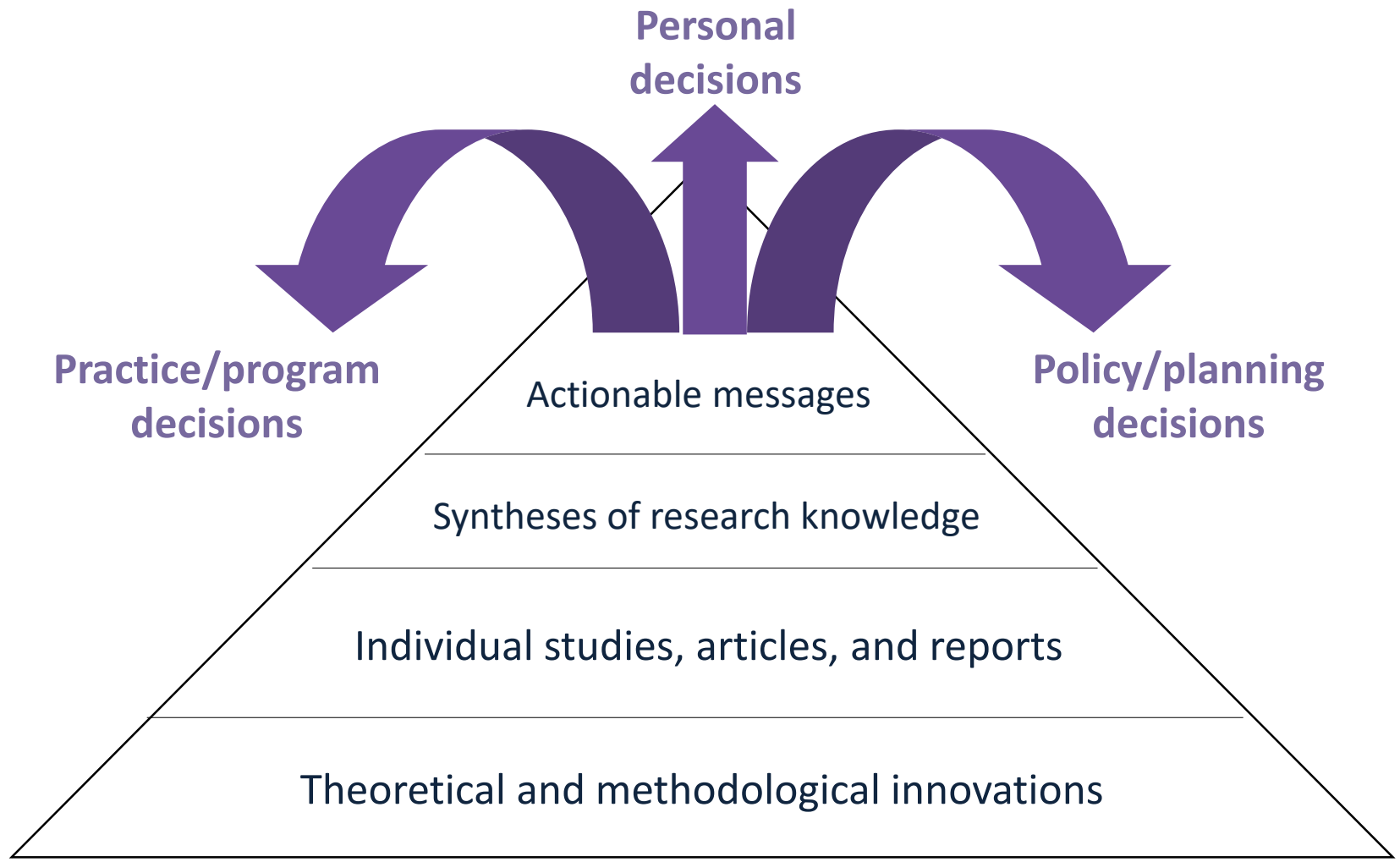
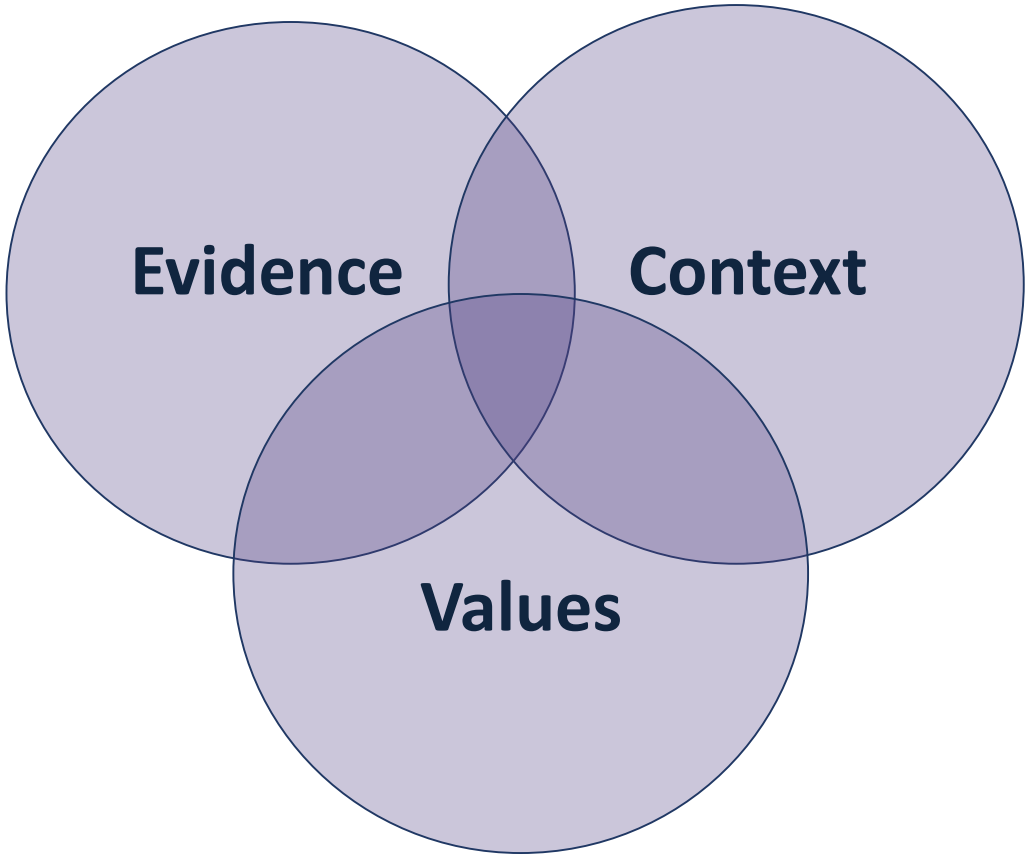
Research Evidence Pyramid



Adapted from J. Lavis: http://www.healthservicesconference.com.au/presentations/j_lavis.pdf

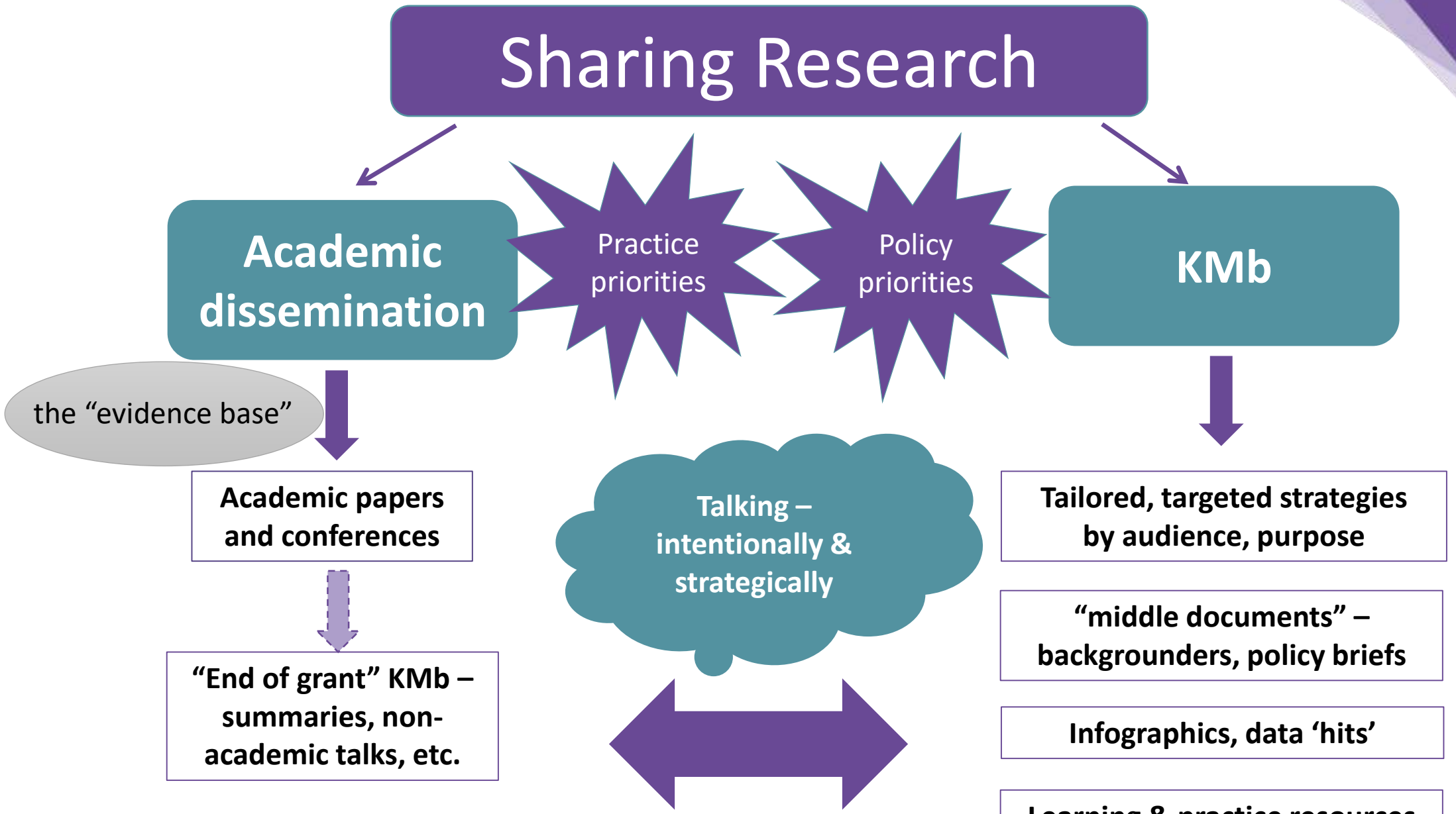
The assumption



But…

- “Producer”-side challenges
  - the research “cycle” - time and incentives
- “User”-side challenges
  - timelines, information overload, resources/access, skills
- Lack of well-articulated intermediary roles, responsibilities & resources
- Research (and other knowledge) can be used in many ways, not all of it predictable or intended
  - instrumental
  - conceptual
  - symbolic

Sharing Research



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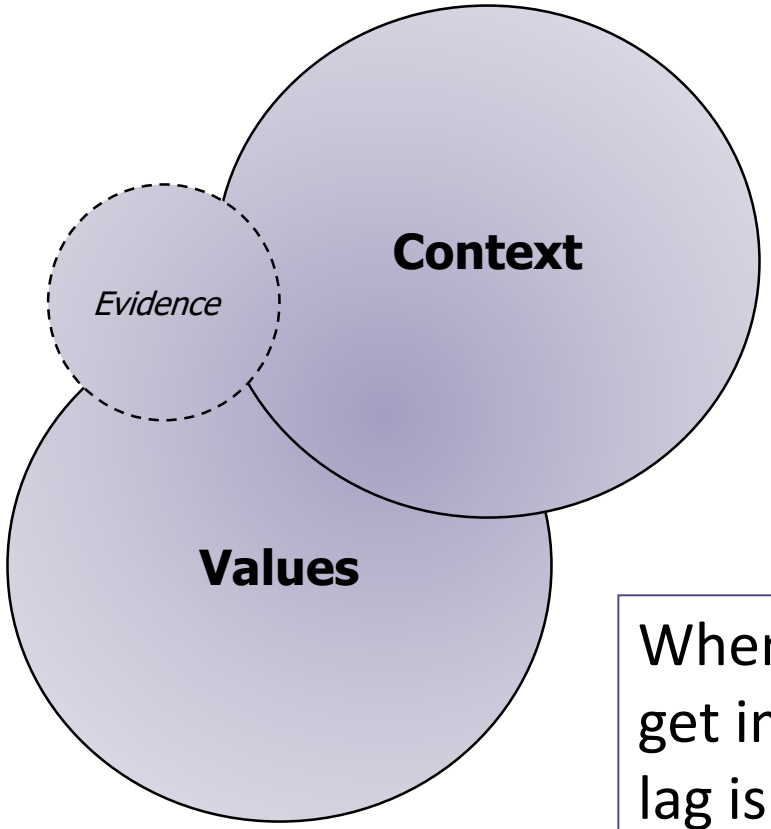
The reality for many practice & policy decisions

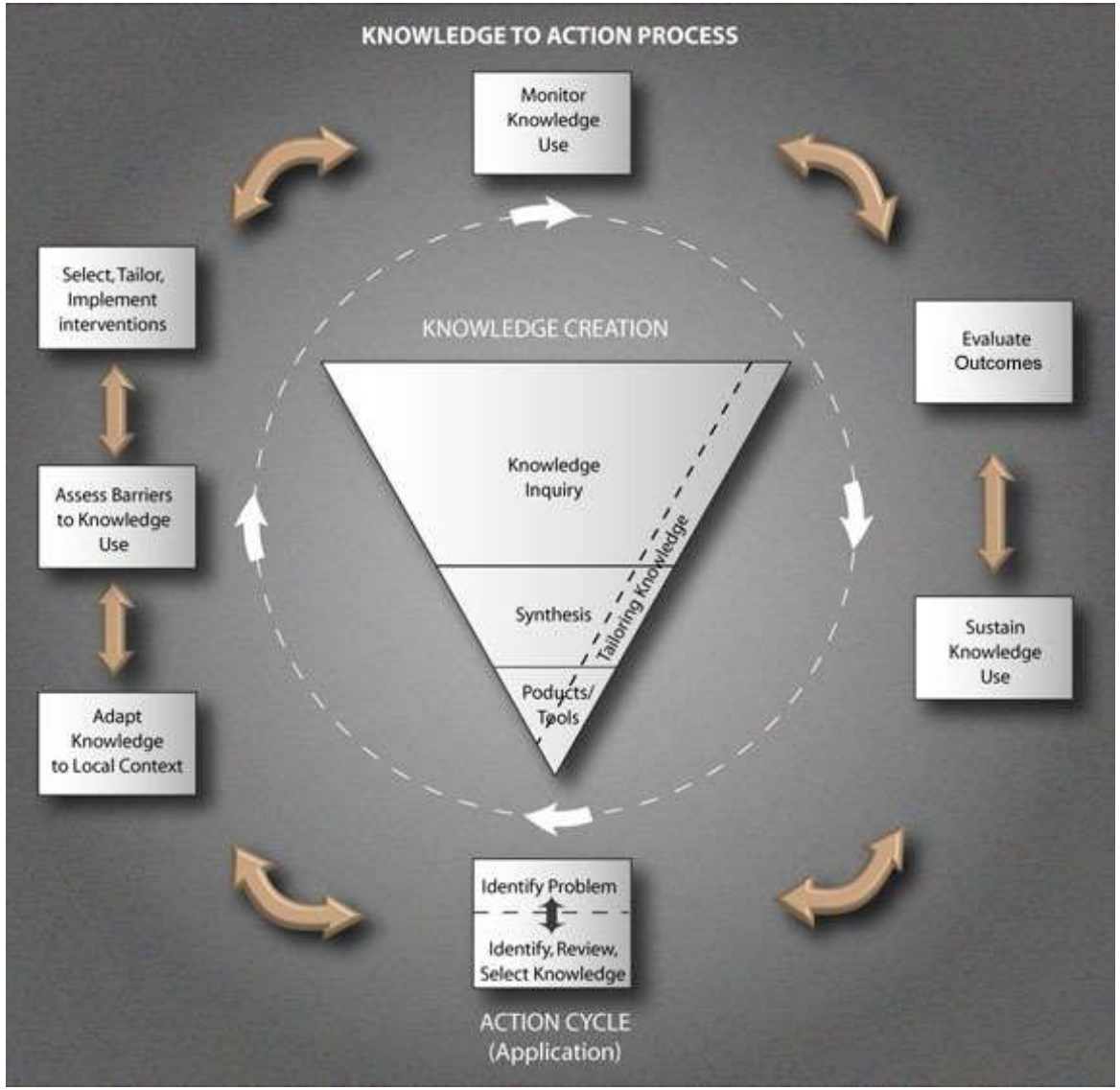


When new (clinical) evidence does get implemented, the average time lag is ~17 years (Morris et al., JRSM, 2011)

Models

1. Producer-push (diffusion, dissemination)
2. User-pull (utilization/implementation, CPE)
3. Exchange/integrated ("KTE/iKT", also, KMb)
    - relationships are built & nurtured
    - researchers help build capacity for decision-makers to use research (and vice versa)
    - decision-makers help identify priorities
    - co-production ensures relevance and buy-in

Maybe not so easy after all….



Added work *and* complexity for both researchers *and* knowledge users

Graham et al., 2006 see https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/chp.47

Lessons learned

Lesson 1:
‘Evidence’ is only one kind of knowledge

Fig from: Jacobs et al. (2012). Prev Chronic Dis. 9:110324.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd9.110324

Mis-matches between ‘the evidence’ and the policy/practice context

- Cognitive (and other) dissonance
- Malleability of evidence

Sibbald, Wathen, et al. (2017). A qualitative study of challenges and opportunities in mobilising research knowledge on violence against women. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 49(1), 5–15.

Wathen et al. (2013). Exploring the uptake and framing of research evidence on universal screening for partner violence against women: A KT case study. *Health Research Policy & Systems*, 11:13. DOI: 10.1186/1478-4505-11-13.

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Lesson 2:
Working together - “3Ts” of partnership

Talk (Listen): Relationships need meaningful interaction

- face-to-face dialogue, supported by phone and e-comms

Trust: True partnerships are based on mutual respect

- recognition and negotiation of different, sometimes competing, priorities, timelines; **values** alignment (up-front)

Time: All of this takes time and effort

- partnership processes, resources built-in, not an after-thought

Wathen et al. (2011). Talk, trust and time: A longitudinal case study evaluating knowledge translation and exchange processes in research on violence against women. *Implementation Science,* 6:102. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-6-102

Lesson 3: KMb isn't tidy

- KMb is essentially a human process: iterative, non-linear, messy
  - planning is important, but need to be flexible, opportunistic
- Timing and fit
  - "windows" can open (and close) quickly
  - the right evidence at the right time (with the right partners)
- Context is key
  - tailoring; intended and unintended consequences
- Problem complexity/"wickedness" exacerbates messiness
  - more time and effort required
  - honest appraisal of what success (& failure) look like

Lesson 4:
We need paradigm shifts

- A focus on ‘evidence-based’ processes fundamentally changes the way research *and* policy/practice are done; it’s nearly impossible to:
  - pre-determine your approaches, budgets, timelines AND be responsive to everyone’s needs and contexts
  - be truly innovative WITHOUT being disruptive
- Fit between the ‘evidence imperative’ and funding agency rules, academic culture, bureaucratic processes (not good).
- Where is the space for curiosity-driven research?

Proposed solutions

Impactful KMb takes time, skill & resources; not everyone enjoys or is good at this kind of work

- trained (and funded) intermediaries; interaction opportunities, etc.

Systems need to recognize, reward, fund and evaluate KMb

- producer & user supports and incentives; shift in funder mindset

For wicked problems like GBV:

- develop consistent, persuasive evidence-base integrating various knowledges, incl. lived/living experience
- examine harmful systems and structures (e.g., policies, protocols)
- evaluate coordination of policies & services; be trauma- & violence-informed
- ensure that contextual adaptations are authentic
- key messages framed as narratives grounded in VALUES
- expect, and embrace, DISRUPTION

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