



Evidence Check

Informing policy and programs with
evidence from research

saxinstitute

Introduction

About the Sax Institute

The Sax Institute is a national leader in promoting the use of research evidence in health policy. An independent, non-profit organisation, the Institute aims to be a bridge between health researchers and policy makers, enabling them to work more closely together for the health benefit of all Australians. We developed the Evidence Check process in conjunction with NSW Health.

What is an Evidence Check review?

An Evidence Check review is a synthesis, summary and analysis of the best and most relevant research evidence to inform policy making and program development. Evidence Check is used by a range of agencies, including government and statutory agencies, non-government organisations, and other policy making agencies.

When to use Evidence Check

Evidence Check is a useful tool for:

- Deciding whether to proceed with a new policy or program
- Developing a new policy or program
- Informing policy and reviewing programs.

Evidence Check can help answer crucial questions such as:

- Have the policies or programs under consideration been implemented or evaluated elsewhere?
- Is there any evidence that the policy or program will work?
- Is this evidence reliable?
- Are there any gaps in the evidence?
- If there are several options for a policy or program, does the evidence support one over the others?

An Evidence Check review can also provide a researcher's opinion on which strategies might be the most effective (including cost effective) in meeting the agency's needs.

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Why use Evidence Check?

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Evidence Check has several advantages over commissioning reviews directly or undertaking in-house reviews:

Knowledge brokering

Through knowledge brokering, the Sax Institute acts as a bridge between policy makers and researchers. The knowledge brokering process involves clarifying the policy issues and translating them into researchable questions. This ensures the review addresses the right questions and provides relevant information to meet the agency's needs. Sax Institute knowledge brokers have extensive experience at a senior level in both policy and research and have completed the Institute's knowledge broker training.

Experienced researcher network

The Sax Institute membership comprises more than 30 public health and health services research groups and universities. We also manage the Researcher Accessible Database for Allocation of Reviews (RADAR), which represents a network of highly qualified and experienced individual researchers selected on their track record of high-quality research.

Policy-friendly research formats

Evidence Check reviews are tailored to meet the needs of the commissioning agency. They typically include an executive summary including key messages, are an agreed length, and are written in language suited to a policy audience.

Contract management

The Sax Institute manages contractual arrangements with the commissioning agencies and researchers.

Information that meets agency needs

The Institute works with researchers to deliver a review with the depth and scope required within agency timeframes and budgets, in a format and language that best suits the policy audience. Draft reviews are provided to agencies for comment, any required changes are made by the researchers and a final report is then delivered.

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Evidence Check Process

01

Knowledge brokering

- Agency completes Evidence Check commissioning tool
- Knowledge brokering session facilitated by Sax Institute
- Research questions and proposal agreed between Sax Institute, knowledge broker and agency

02

Identifying expertise

- Sax Institute identifies suitable researchers
- Commissioning agency selects researcher

03

Contracting

- Costs, timelines, reporting requirements, format and publishing arrangements are agreed
- Sax Institute manages contracts between:
 - Sax Institute and commissioning agency
 - Sax Institute and researcher

04

Delivery and publication of the report

- Draft report provided to agency for review
- Researcher finalises report
- Final report submitted to agency
- Publication if approved

Elements of an Evidence Check Review

Analysis of research need – The Commissioning Tool

This analysis is undertaken using the Commissioning Tool – a questionnaire completed by an agency to help clarify the research questions it would like answered and the type of review that will best meet its needs.

Knowledge brokering session

The Sax Institute facilitates a knowledge brokering session between the agency and an experienced knowledge broker. Using the Commissioning Tool as a starting point, the knowledge broker clarifies the relevant policy issues and translates them into researchable questions.

Based on the information gathered from both the commissioning tool and the knowledge brokering session, the knowledge broker prepares a proposal for the agency's approval.

Identifying a researcher

The Institute uses a number of methods to identify suitable researchers:

- A search is done of our RADAR database
- Expressions of interest are sought from member organisations
- An announcement is posted on the Institute's website
- We contact individual researchers directly based on recommendations.

Are Evidence Check reviews only for health?

The Sax Institute's mission is to improve Australian health, health services and programs, and our expertise and interest lie in areas linked to health. Many agencies deal with health-related issues, and the Sax Institute undertakes work for several organisations.

Our rapid reviews have covered broad topic areas such as health systems, population health, chronic disease and consumer participation.

Examples of our reviews include:

- Models of care for people with chronic pain
- Interactive electronic media interventions targeting adolescents for preventing obesity
- Underlying causes and effects of injury in Aboriginal populations.

“There are various publication options that generally meet the needs of all parties.”

Further information

To commission an Evidence Check review or ask a question about the process, please contact:

The Knowledge Exchange Program

T +61 2 9188 9500

E knowledge.exchange@saxinstitute.org.au

Publication of Evidence Check reviews

The Sax Institute encourages publication of Evidence Check reviews in line with the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research. However, Evidence Check reviews can contain confidential information. Whether to publish is discussed and agreed early in the process. There are various publication options that generally meet the needs of all parties.



Evidence Check reviews can be important pieces of work that contribute to knowledge and have wide application.

