

Knowledge Mobilization Needs Assessment Planner

A how to guide for creating
a Knowledge Mobilization
Needs Assessment Survey
within your organization

About this Planner

This Knowledge Mobilization Needs Assessment Planner is meant to assist organizations by helping them assess the knowledge mobilization skills and needs of employees. Organizations can use the information gathered to develop knowledge mobilization training, support services and skills development in order to better equip employees and improve their ability to contribute to the knowledge mobilization agenda.

Collaborators

This Knowledge Mobilization Needs Assessment Planner was created in partnership with the [University of Ottawa](#) and [Research Impact Canada](#), derived from the [Knowledge Mobilization Needs Assessment Toolkit](#) authored by Marie Eve Girard at the University of Ottawa.

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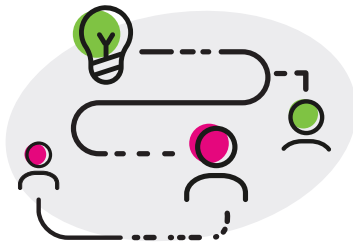
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Introduction



What is Knowledge Mobilization (KMb)?

KMb helps turn evidence into action. It brokers relationships between researchers and non-academic research partners and supports dissemination so that research and evidence can inform decisions about public policy, professional practice, and other applications. Common terms used to describe KMb or related activities include knowledge translation, knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange, social innovation, community engagement, and public engagement.

What is the KMb Needs Assessment Planner?

This KMb Needs Assessment Planner is meant to assist organizations and academic institutions to undertake a KMb needs assessment survey and to use the results of the survey to inform decisions and improvements in the organization's KMb capacity and support services. It contains guidelines, survey questions, and templates to adapt and use.

The main goals are to:

- share KMb assessment practices
- help organizations to better understand their researchers' capacity and perspective for KMb
- improve their level of support in this area

Why is a KMb Needs Assessment Planner important?

Research discoveries are not being applied to practice (1). To fill this gap, funding agencies are now expecting researchers to plan for KMb activities in the development of their research proposals (2–6). When knowledge users are seriously engaged with researchers in the research and KMb process, research has more positive impacts on policy and practice (7). Therefore, in order to successfully meet these challenges and increase the level of engagement of researchers in KMb activities, universities are now expected to support the KMb efforts of their researchers (8).

Why use the Planner?

This Planner will help organizations answer the following key questions:

- Is KMb important and why?
- What is the level of engagement in KMb?
- What are the facilitators and the barriers to KMb?
- What are the solutions to reduce the barriers to KMb?

How should I use the Planner?

This planner should be used as a guide to help an organization undertake a KMb needs assessment survey and to use the results of the survey to inform decisions and improvements in the organization's KMb support services. A sample survey is provided in the planner (Appendix A); however, the guide also includes information on how to create a survey if the one included does not meet the organization's needs.

Undertaking a knowledge mobilization needs assessment

OVERVIEW

Six to eight months should be dedicated to conducting a KMb needs assessment. Approximate timelines for each phase:

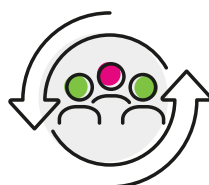
PHASE	APPROXIMATE TIMELINES
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Choose method and design



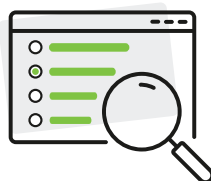
2 months

Pretest



1 month

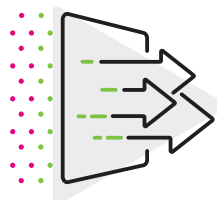
Implementation



Survey administration and data collection:
1 month

Data analysis: 1–2 months

Communication of results





1–2 months

Steps to completing a needs assessment

STEP 1: ➡ Choose your method

There are many methods to conduct a needs assessment. The choice of the method can vary according to the needs being assessed, the type of information required, the targeted population and time and resources available (9).

Questionnaire/survey, interviews and focus groups are three methods that can provide relevant information on the needs regarding KMb. See below for comparison of these 3 methods:

	QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY	INTERVIEWS	FOCUS GROUPS
PROS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-administered Cost of creation and administration is low Easy and quick for participants to use Provides both quantitative and qualitative data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides detailed information on barriers and facilitators to KMb Information collected can include perception and emotional reactions to the topic Using an interview guide can provide consistent data that can be compared to identify trends between participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides detailed information on barriers and facilitators to KMb Provides information on non-verbal behaviors as well as cognition Allows for a representation of a larger sample of the targeted population
CONS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging to design No control over the validity of the participant's answer A large sample is required to get reliable data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming Quality of data depends on the skills of interviewer or analyst to record and not interpret the responses of the participants Challenging to obtain enough interviews from different subgroups of the targeted population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming Challenging to ensure the discussion is not unduly influenced by more verbal members and that it allows for each member to be heard

This planner describes the survey design approach because of its cost-effectiveness, fast results and its ability to provide both qualitative and quantitative information.

STEP 2: ➡ Designing a Survey

Approach and methodology

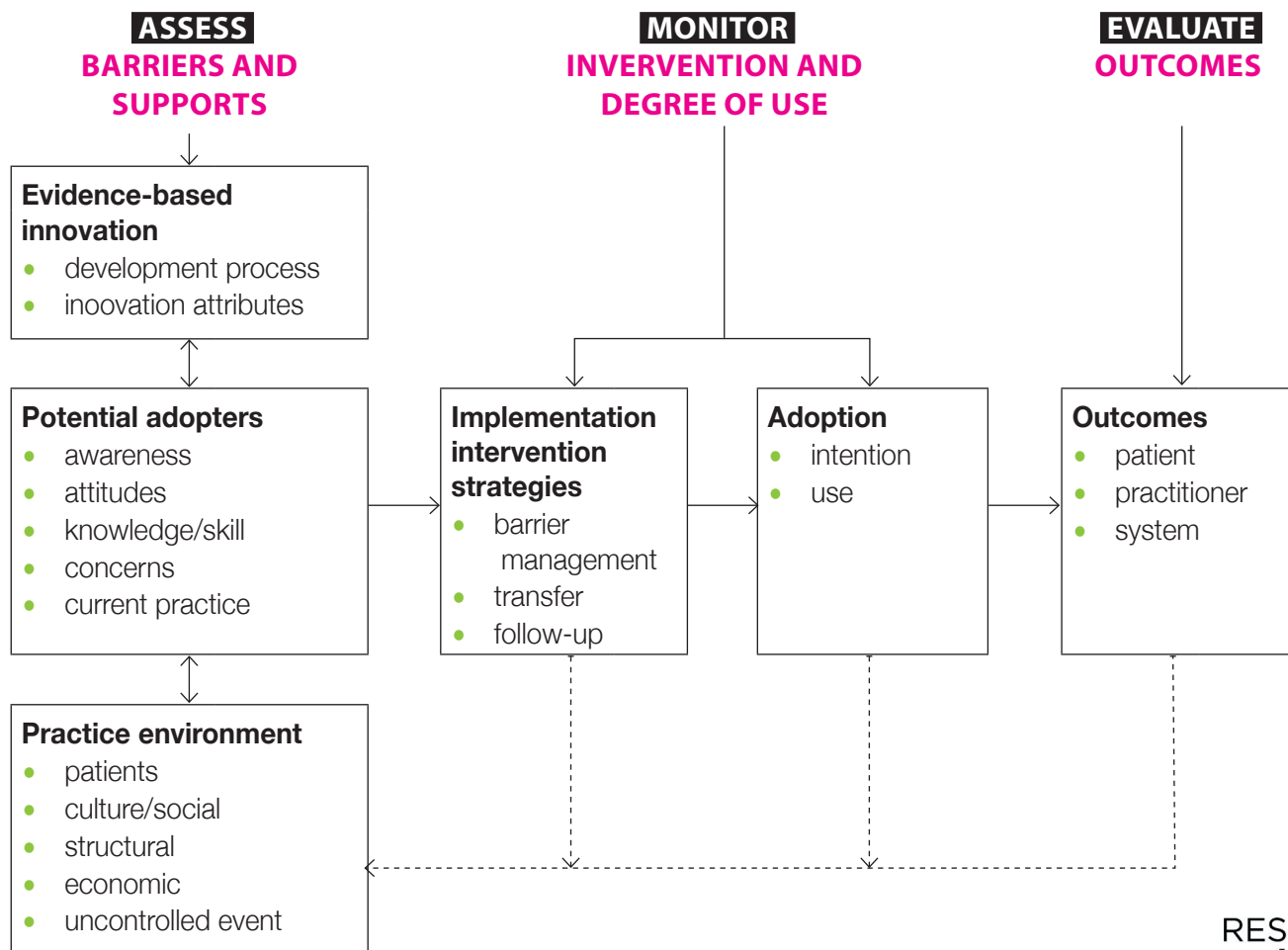


To help guide the process for your organization's needs assessment, it is recommended use a collaborative approach that involves different stakeholders and users from your organization in the design and promotion of the survey, analysis and communication of the results. This will help obtain the buy-in from your organization that is needed to promote participation in your survey.

When designing a survey, a conceptual model should guide the selection of your questions. As an example, the Ottawa Model of Research Use inspired the design of the survey included

in Appendix A (10). In this model (see Figure 1), the first step to understanding the level of engagement in practice change, is to assess the barriers to change. Barriers can be related to the change itself (for example, knowledge mobilization is irrelevant in some disciplines), to the adopters' attitudes, awareness, knowledge, skills and current level of practice and to the environment, such as the institution's culture, structure, economic situation, etc. Once the barriers are known, strategies and interventions to reduce these barriers can be identified, implemented and evaluated. The survey questions were designed to obtain information on each category of barrier.

Figure 1: Ottawa Model of Research Use



Survey characteristics

Consider the following when developing a survey (11-14):

- **Keep only relevant questions** – thus the importance of choosing a conceptual framework or model to guide selection and design of questions
- **Keep the survey short** – under 5 minutes or less than 30 questions to increase completion rates
- **Ensure there are no duplicate questions being asked**
- **Use a balanced mix of multiple-choice questions, scales and open-ended questions** – this can increase attention span of participants and increase completion rates
- **Follow a logical order** – more personal questions should be included at the end of the survey
- **Use adapted language and clearly formulated questions**
- **Preview and test the survey before implementation**

Before launching the survey, survey questions need to be reviewed by a team or a working group which includes potential users of the survey in order to identify issues and to address them before launching the survey.

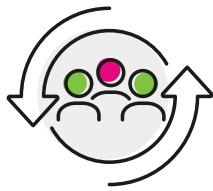
Confidentiality and anonymity

To ensure participants feel comfortable completing the survey, provide information on how the results will be used and assure participants that survey results will be anonymous. If the data you are collecting is only being used for organizational improvements, then it may not be necessary to get approval from a Research Ethics Board (REB). However, we encourage you to confirm this with your organizations REB before proceeding with your survey. An example of a consent form for this KMB needs assessment survey can be found in Appendix B.

Promotion and communication

A strong communication plan is essential to maximize the promotion and completion of the survey. Key things to consider are outlined below:

- A leader of your organization can send a compelling message that explains why this survey is important. A sample letter is included in Appendix C
- Send the survey link through different mediums (i.e., organization listserv, posted on organization website, and social media)
- Allow enough time for the promotion and completion of the survey
- Send reminders to the potential participants a few days before the end of the data collection period.



STEP 3:

➔ Pretest phase

Before launching the survey, conduct a pretest phase with a few potential participants to help identify comprehension, language, and administration issues.

Ask the pretesters to comment on:

- Language issues
- Length issues
- Format issues
- Comprehension issues

Once your survey has been pretested, make your final modifications and prepare for the implementation phase.

STEP 4: ➔ Implementation phase



The implementation phase includes survey administration, data collection, and the data analysis period

Survey administration options and tools

To maximize the number of participants and reduce the administrative cost of the survey, an online survey tool can be used.

Examples of some online survey tools available include: Survey Monkey, Lime Survey, Fluid Survey, Qualtrics, etc. Contact your organization's information technology office to get information about the licences available to you and to get training on the use of these tools, if needed.

Data Collection

The data collection period begins once you have sent the email invitations, including the link to the survey. One month is a reasonable period for participants to complete the survey, but additional time should be given if the participation rate is low or if some groups are underrepresented in the sample.

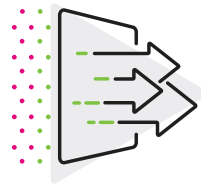
During that one-month period, you can do the following:

- Monitor participation and send reminders to specific groups if needed
- Send reminders to your potential participants before the end of the data collection period (approximately 10 days before the deadline)
- Decide if an extension period is needed to get an appropriate participation rate and good representation of your participants

Data Analysis

The online survey tool can be used to extract the data. A content analysis method can be used to analyze the responses to the open-ended questions. Content analysis means that the data needs to be coded and common themes identified. Themes should be structured around facilitators and barriers, as well as recommended strategies and solutions. You should easily be able to find recurrent themes and then use these themes to describe the most common issues or solutions identified by your participants.

STEP 5: ➔ Communication of the results



Once data analysis has been completed, results should be shared with your collaborators and your organization's stakeholders either in a report

or presentation. This report or presentation should summarize the highlights of the results using graphs, tables and quotes. These results

should be first presented to the working group members so they can help make recommendations to your stakeholders. When recommendations are agreed upon, the results and recommendations should be presented to your organization's leaders or stakeholders. The results could also be presented during a KMb event to your target population.

Top 10 tips to consider when doing a needs assessment

- Get buy-in from senior administration before the project starts and keep communication channels open
- Timing is key. Launching the survey around the same time that other KMb events are happening as it could increase motivation to participate
- Get KMb experts from your organization around the table
- Develop and test the survey with the users
- Keep the survey as short as possible and avoid being too repetitive
- Don't use complicated language or jargon and provide definitions if needed
- Allow enough time to prepare the survey and for the users to respond (six to eight months)
- Ensure that confidentiality of individual response is guaranteed
- Take actions on the key issues that emerge from the survey
- Make the connections between the results and the actions by communicating the results to institutional leaders

SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Lessons learned when conducting a needs assessment

In 2019, the University of Ottawa designed a KMb needs assessment survey to understand the extent to which its researchers engage in KMb, the barriers that limit their KMb efforts and how the University could better support them. The goal was to use the results of the survey to adapt existing services and to develop new strategies to better support KMb within institutions.

It was reported that the most important factors that made this assessment successful were:

- 1** → collaborating with experts in KMb and researchers (potential users- such as Faculty Vice Dean of Research, Director of KMb Research, etc.) in designing and testing the survey;
- 2** → elaborating the survey questions using a conceptual model, in this case the Ottawa Model of Research Use;
- 3** → developing and following a project plan and timeline; and,
- 4** → ensuring good communication channels with all the faculties and other stakeholders.

Through administering this survey tool University of Ottawa leaders learned that

almost 40% of participants had engaged in KMb activities outside academia three times or more in the last year.

The most frequent barriers identified by researchers were the lack of time and the lack of funding for KMb activities, followed by the institutions' lack of recognition, incentives and support for KMb. The most common solutions identified by researchers were for the institution to hire dedicated staff to support KMb and to provide researchers with more time and funding for KMb, open access publication and partnership building. The results of this needs assessment survey at the University of Ottawa guided the development of the institutional Knowledge Mobilization Strategy, which is an integral part of the university's strategic plan, [Transformation 2030](#).



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Appendix A: Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) Survey

The **[Insert the name of the office responsible for the survey]** is interested in improving knowledge mobilization (KMb) at the **[Insert the name of your institution]**. KMb is also known as knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, knowledge transfer and implementation science. **[Insert the name of your institution]** definition of knowledge mobilization is:

[Insert your institution's definition of knowledge mobilization]

1. How important is knowledge mobilization in your research?

1.
NOT
IMPORTANT

☐

2.
SLIGHTLY
IMPORTANT

☐

3.
MODERATELY
IMPORTANT

☐

4.
IMPORTANT

☐

5.
VERY
IMPORTANT

☐

2. Please help us understand why you selected the answer above:

3. How would you describe your level of experience with knowledge mobilization?

☐ BEGINNER

☐ INTERMEDIATE

☐ ADVANCED

☐ EXPERT

4. How frequently did you engage in the following activities in the past year?

	0 TIMES	1-2 TIMES	3-5 TIMES	6-10 TIMES	MORE THAN 10 TIMES
Academic publishing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops with academic participants (to exchange knowledge)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dissemination to non-academic audiences (Rapid research synthesis, digested summaries, guidelines, policy briefs, tools, artistic performance, graphic/visual art, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of media (Press releases, videos, podcasts, commentary in the newspapers or on television, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of social media to disseminate research (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advocacy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshops with non-academic participants (to exchange knowledge)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of social media to engage with knowledge users (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge user engagement in the research process (Research question/objectives development, research design development, data collection, data interpretation, result dissemination)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Co-produced knowledge mobilization leading to the application of knowledge (community of practice, toolkits, program and service design, policies, changes in practice, behaviour change, social innovation, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research capacity building for knowledge users (research training for knowledge users)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. In the past year, what type of audience did you primarily engage with to disseminate or co-create your research?

- ☐ Academic Sector/Peers
- ☐ Government (Federal, provincial and municipal)
- ☐ Other public sector (e.g., health, education organizations)
- ☐ Private sector and industry
- ☐ Not-for-profit organizations
- ☐ General public or targeted groups
- ☐ Other (Specify:_____)

6. What do you see as **facilitators** to dissemination of your research results outside academia?

1. _____
2. _____

7. What do you see as the **barriers** to dissemination of your research results outside academia?

1. _____
2. _____

8. For each barrier listed above, please provide a suggestion(s) for how to overcome these barriers

1. _____
2. _____

9. What do you see as **facilitators** to your success in co-creating research with knowledge users so as to increase the potential impact of your research?

1. _____
2. _____

10. What do you see as the **barriers** to your success in co-creating research with knowledge users so as to increase the potential impact of your research?

1. _____
2. _____

11. For each barrier listed above, please provide a suggestion(s) for how to overcome these barriers

1. _____
2. _____

12. What do you see as **organizational facilitators** to knowledge mobilization for **[Insert the name of your institution]** researchers?

1. _____
2. _____

13. What do you see as **organizational barriers** to knowledge mobilization for **[Insert the name of your institution]** researchers?

1. _____
2. _____

14. For each barrier listed above, please provide a suggestion(s) for how to overcome these barriers

1. _____
2. _____

15. What topics related to knowledge mobilization would you like to learn about to increase the impact of your research projects?

- ☐ How to write a KMb plan for a grant application
- ☐ How to write a KMb plan to maximize impact of an existing research project
- ☐ How to disseminate research results outside academia in the most effective way
- ☐ Tools available for doing KMb
- ☐ KMb frameworks and how to apply them
- ☐ Why, when and how to co-create research with knowledge users
- ☐ How to evaluate the impact of KMb activities
- ☐ Other, specify: _____

16. What could **[Insert the name of your institution]** do (changes, developments, resources) to facilitate your knowledge mobilization efforts?

17. What percentage of your time do you spend on research?

- ☐ 0-25% ☐ 25%-50% ☐ More than 50%

18. To which federal funding agency do you typically apply?

- ☐ CIHR ☐ NSERC ☐ SSHRC

19. What is your gender? (Statistics Canada, 2018)

- ☐ Male gender
☐ Female gender
☐ Gender Diverse
☐ I prefer not to answer this question

20. What Faculty is your primary affiliation? **[Insert below the names of your institution's faculties]**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Arts | <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Health Sciences |
| <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Civil Law | <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Medicine |
| <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Common Law | <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Science |
| <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Education | <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Social Sciences |
| <input type="radio"/> Faculty of Engineering | <input type="radio"/> Telfer School of Management |

21. What is your primary academic appointment?

- ☐ Assistant professor
☐ Associate professor
☐ Full professor
☐ Other: please specify: _____

22. What career stage are you in?

- ☐ Early career researcher (Less than 5 years since your first academic appointment)
☐ Mid-career researcher (5 to 10 years from your first academic appointment)
☐ Established researcher (More than 10 years from your first academic appointment)
☐ Other: please specify: _____

23. Do you have an affiliation with any of the [institution name] affiliated research institutes listed below? [Insert your own affiliated institution's name or remove question if not applicable]

- ☐ Bruyère Research Institute
- ☐ Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute
- ☐ Institut du Savoir Montfort
- ☐ Institute of Mental Health Research
- ☐ Ottawa Heart Institute Research Corporation
- ☐ Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

Please feel free to use this space to tell us anything you think we should know about knowledge mobilization.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B:

Knowledge Mobilization Survey – Consent Form

The [Insert the name of the office responsible for the survey] is launching a knowledge mobilization initiative to support [Insert the name of your institution] researchers in improving the impact of their research, and we are seeking your help in identifying the types of services and support that would meet your needs.

Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) refers to the dynamic and interactive process of promoting and facilitating the use of research. KMb encompasses a wide range of activities relating to the production and use of knowledge generated from research. These activities include knowledge synthesis, dissemination, and co-creation of research and its application by researchers and knowledge users.

Participation: If you wish to help us, please complete this brief online survey (which takes approximately 15 minutes to complete). Your decision to complete this survey will be taken as your consent to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. The survey will be available until [Insert the deadline date].

Purpose: This survey is designed to help us understand the extent to which you engage in knowledge mobilization, the barriers that limit your knowledge mobilization efforts and your suggestions about how the University can support you.

Benefits: Understanding researchers' perspectives on knowledge mobilization will allow the University to adapt existing services and to develop new strategies to better support researchers.

Risks: There are no known risks to participating.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The information that you will share will remain confidential and will be used solely for the purpose mentioned above. The only people who will have access to the research data will be the staff of [Insert the name of the service responsible for the survey] involved in the development of this survey. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them / when you have completed the survey.

Conservation of data: The data will be stored on a [Insert the name of the online tools you will use] server located in Canada. The response to the survey will be extracted from the servers once the data collection period is over and the downloaded Excel file will be password protected and saved on a secure server to which only the [Insert the name of the service responsible for data analysis] staff have access. The data will be deleted from the [Insert the name of the online tools you will use] server once it has all been retrieved. The Excel file will be kept for a period of five years at which time it will be deleted.

Information about the results: The findings of this survey may be shared with the **[Insert the name of your institution]** community or other universities and their networks.

If you have any questions or require more information about this survey, you may contact **[Insert name of a contact person and link email address]**.

Thank you for your collaboration!

Appendix C: Invitation Email Templates

Invitation to research administration members

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, **[Insert the name the office responsible for the survey]** is launching a knowledge mobilization initiative to support **[Insert the name of your institution]**. In order to inform the activities that we undertake, we have developed a short online survey for researchers to determine their needs regarding knowledge mobilization.

We will be launching the survey shortly through the **[Insert the name of your institution]** researcher listserv, and we ask that you circulate the link to the survey (below) to the researchers within your faculty to encourage them to participate. This survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and will be available until before **[Insert the deadline to complete the survey]**.

Link: **[Insert the link to the online survey]**

For any questions on the survey or the knowledge mobilization initiative, please contact **[Insert the name of the contact person and their email address]**.

Thank you for your help on this important initiative.



Invitation to research Faculty members

Dear Professor,

The **[Insert the name the office responsible for the survey]** is launching a knowledge mobilization initiative to support **[Insert the name of your institution]** researchers in improving the impact of their research, and we are seeking your help. You are invited to complete a short online survey to identify the types of services and support that would meet your needs regarding knowledge mobilization.

By completing the survey which should take you about 15 minutes, you will be helping us improve the services offered regarding knowledge mobilization at **[Insert the name of your institution]**. If you accept, please click on the link below and complete the survey before **[Insert the deadline to complete the survey]**.

Link: **[Insert the link to the online survey]**

For any questions on the survey or the knowledge mobilization initiative, please contact **[Insert the name of the contact person and their email address]**.

Thank you for your help on this important initiative.