

# RESEARCH USE IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

This report presents the results from a rapid review of the literature on knowledge mobilization (KMb) and research use in education, with a particular focus on postsecondary education and workforce training contexts. Specifically, the review seeks to concentrate on the: (i) contextual factors that influence use or non-use by knowledge users; (ii) KMb strategies associated with increased research use by knowledge users; and (iii) evaluation of KMb efforts.

*The report is supported by the Ascendium Education Group.*

## **Context**

This review was completed in response to a request from members of the Ascendium senior leadership team. They were contemplating how to best mobilize evidence-based resources in order to facilitate use amongst higher education and workforce training decision makers, practitioners, and policymakers. In addition, they were interested in learning how to evaluate their various KMb efforts. Representatives from Ascendium approached the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) to participate in the SREE Summer Fellow Program – a program wherein SREE student members address pressing questions over a ten-week period to produce informative and actionable findings.

## **Research Design and Methods**

The rapid review was informed by the Cochrane methods manual for rapid reviews. Six education-focused research databases were searched, in particular reports produced from 2000 to 2021 by using relevant terms. The search was supplemented with a general Internet search and hand searched of recent tables of contents of 10 prominent journals that publish education

research. Covidence was used to screen citations, abstracts, and full-text studies, while NVivo software was used for the analysis of documents included in the review.

## Findings

A total of 34 documents were included in the review, of which 27 were peer-reviewed articles. Most of the research used qualitative approaches (n=19) and were published in the United States (n=18). A risk of bias assessment revealed that the quality of the studies was mixed, with some studies making causal claims from descriptive data. The results of this rapid review found that research use (or non-use) is influenced by individual, organizational, and system-level factors. Further, KMb strategies associated with use included: using professional and social networks, understanding policy processes and timelines, persuasion through narrative, and social perspective taking. Finally, one KMb evaluation tool was uncovered as a result of the review.

## Recommendations

Based on findings from the review, five recommendations were developed to support Ascendium and other knowledge brokering organizations to improve their knowledge mobilization efforts and research uptake by stakeholders in postsecondary education and workforce training.

1. Build or Expand Professional Networks to Facilitate KMb
2. Build or Expand Social Media Networks
3. Leverage Policy Processes and Timelines
4. Engage in Perspective-taking and Storytelling
5. Use the KMb Matrix Tool to Evaluate KMb Efforts

## What Do Knowledge Brokers Do?

- Facilitating connections among diverse stakeholders and supporting collaboration.
- Increasing awareness of the empirical evidence on a topic.
- Increasing accessibility to research by tailoring products to particular audiences.
- Using research to galvanize policy priorities or change.
- Increasing engagement with research content through making it appeal through translation and multi-media strategies.
- Assisting to build strategic KMb plans and processes or evaluating existing programs or practices.
- Consulting to provide assistance to implement KMb initiatives or interventions.
- Facilitating professional learning and skill development around KMb and evidence-based.