



Ten Tips for Conducting Implementation Research

Why conduct implementation research?

Health interventions often do not fully achieve their intended results, especially in low- and middle-income settings facing complex challenges. Implementation research (IR) provides evidence that health decision makers can use to:

- ▶ Understand what is and is not working in implementing health programs
- ▶ Uncover and adapt to the contextual factors affecting implementation success
- ▶ Test approaches that ensure people receive needed health interventions

Implementation research can help stakeholders solve implementation challenges and identify needed programmatic adaptations to maximize results, using context-specific research findings. Moreover, IR can produce timely findings that provide good value for the money when used to improve the effectiveness of program interventions, and in turn, improve health outcomes. Findings are generally relevant to, and used by, policymakers, program managers, practitioners, and donors.

What are the IR Tips?

The IR Tips include ten briefs laying out the most important considerations for planning and conducting IR that achieves the study objectives and generates actionable findings.

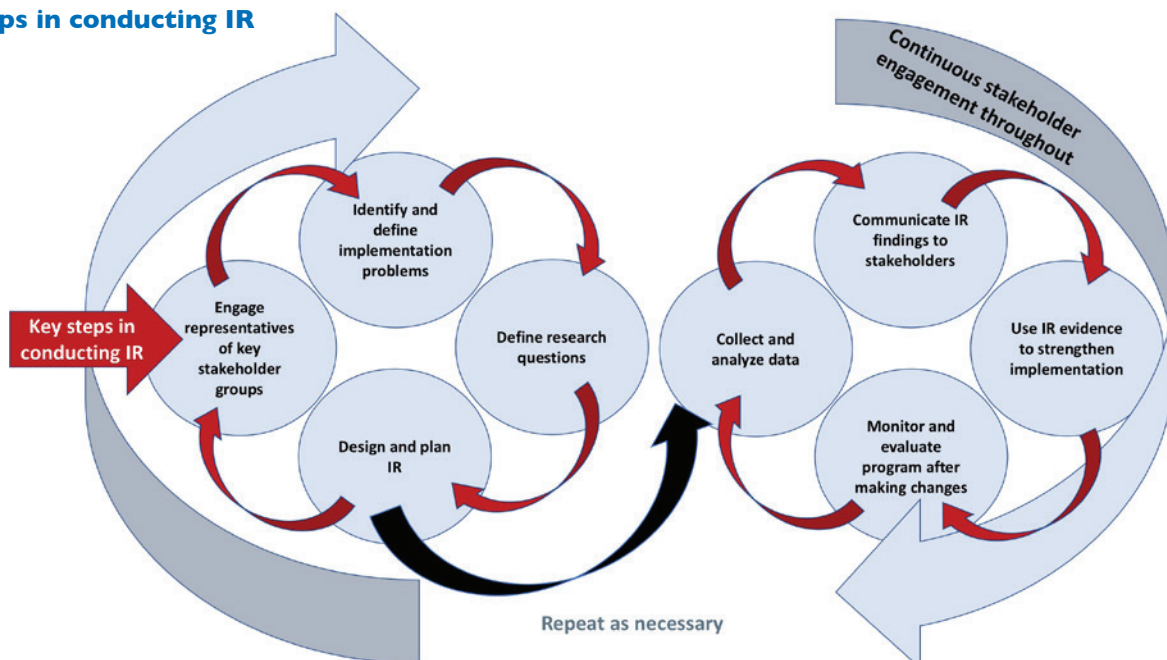
Who is the audience for the IR Tips?

These IR Tips were written for program planners and implementers in low- and middle- income countries who are planning to conduct IR or trying to decide whether IR is needed.











How can the IR Tips be useful to you?

The IR Tips are intended to guide decision makers to follow a systematic set of steps for conducting IR (see Figure), providing links to helpful resources along the way. Each IR Tip uses case examples to illustrate the material presented and includes links to guidance documents and planning tools to support the design and/or implementation of IR or the dissemination and use of study findings.

Key steps in conducting IR



Overview of the content of the IR Tips

	<p>IR Tip #1 - Introduction to IR: Real-time evidence to save lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IR focuses on processes and outcomes of program implementation, addresses challenges and bottlenecks, and involves relevant stakeholders ▶ IR allows decision makers to apply evidence from research conducted locally to solve problems at all levels of the health system ▶ IR leads to more effective implementation
	<p>IR Tip #2 - How does IR work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IR distinguishes between the intervention and the strategy used to implement it ▶ IR processes should be flexible and adapt to the complexity of local contexts ▶ Successful IR generates evidence that is used to improve implementation
	<p>IR Tip #3 - When to use IR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IR can be useful in some situations while other methods to strengthen programs may be more appropriate in other situations ▶ IR studies can vary greatly in size, scope, and cost and range from informal to very formal ▶ IR processes can be integrated with ongoing program or policy cycles or other data collection efforts
	<p>IR Tip #4 - Problem identification to guide IR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reviewing and comparing existing data helps clarify the magnitude of an implementation problem ▶ Engaging diverse stakeholders helps to identify and clarify implementation problems ▶ Regular data review processes provide an opportunity to identify implementation challenges that would be good for further investigation
	<p>IR Tip #5 - Engaging stakeholders to form an IR partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effectively engaging a diverse range of stakeholders contributes to a stronger IR effort and ensures that all relevant perspectives are included throughout the IR process ▶ Stakeholders can inform the IR methodology, contribute to data collection, help interpret and disseminate results, and support scale-up efforts ▶ An IR partnership should balance program knowledge, technical skills, decision-making, influence, and stakeholder representation
	<p>IR Tip #6 - Formulating IR questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IR answers why or how an implementation is (or is not) working ▶ IR can address many challenges you may be facing ▶ IR gives priority to questions that are urgent, actionable and can improve operations
	<p>IR Tip #7 - Selecting and using a framework to guide IR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A framework provides a roadmap for the development, management, and evaluation of interventions or implementation strategies ▶ Selection of an appropriate IR framework and the fine-tuning of the research objectives/ questions often occur iteratively ▶ Frameworks should guide all phases of the research process from start to finish
	<p>IR Tip #8 - Research design methods and ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Choice of study design for conducting your IR study depends on the research objectives and questions ▶ Understanding the ethical considerations and challenges related to IR is important during all phases of the study
	<p>IR Tip #9 - Process documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Process documentation records how and why 'changes' are happening during implementation of intervention strategies and provides real-time reflection on the project's theory of change ▶ Enhances learning around an intervention strategy's context, systems, conditions for and drivers of change ▶ Provides critical information for adapting and scaling effective intervention strategies
	<p>IR Tip #10 - Translating learning for action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dissemination of learning in real-time strengthens implementation, builds acceptance of change, ensures ownership, and can result in more sustained uptake ▶ Adaptive management helps systematize use of learning and respond to changes in the local context ▶ Multiple tools and approaches to translating and sharing learning must be matched with stakeholder audiences to communicate most effectively and to increase and accelerate impact