

Reporting Research Impact: The Importance of Narratives

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Research stories matter

As research administrators, we do need to fill in financial reports such as F300/301s for Tri-council, for example. Numbers, budget, and accounting matters. So do stories!

It is important to track the stories of impact that emerge from robust research across an institution. **How to best track and report?** Allow researchers to 'tell their story' in text, photo, and video, too, using easy-to-access tools or forms.

Why story-tell the research? It is the best way to get the research 'out there.' With permissions, we share their stories and images on internal news channels, list-serves, social media, and even with CBC! Research story telling allows us to learn about important research endeavors in and around our community and beyond.

How to gather research stories?

Make the gathering metrics and telling research narratives **as easy as possible** for busy researchers!

At RDP, we built a user-friendly **final reporting form** for researchers to fill in within 3 months of their completion date for internal NSERC Mobilize funding.

When to send the form and reporting expectations? We send them the form when they are awarded the research funding so that they know what to expect in terms of what to report on. If a student is hired for the research project, this could be one of their 'to dos' – to track the details over the duration of the project. Research administrators can tailor the form to the specific funding agency requirements or gather information for in-house reporting.

Some sample areas to gather details; include common metrics such as:

1. Principal Investigator(s) name(s) and info
2. Type/source of funding received
3. Title of the research project
4. Project start date
5. Project end date
6. Course release required or not
7. Team members including # of students involved and their roles
8. # of participants and their roles
9. Equipment needed for project (some funders like to know this!)
10. Where dissemination happened so far or planned for future
11. Community partners involved / Growing future research partnerships
12. Research Story (the fun part)
13. Photos or video (more fun!)

After forms are submitted by the researchers, the research office and/or marketing team summarizes, edits, and gets the principal investigator's input prior to publishing the story on socials, for example.

Example research narrative from an internal NSERC Mobilize-funded project at RDP:

Research Team: Principal Investigator, Dr. Gregory Wells, with community partner Kaleidoscope XR, and two student research assistants along with students from a Research Methods class at RDP.

Title: **Virtual Reality Dementia Simulation: Active Learning Pilot Project**



Stepping Into the Mind: A Groundbreaking Dementia Simulation Pilot

Project: This innovative pilot project explored how immersive technology can transform empathy and understanding in dementia care. By placing RDP students directly 'in the shoes' of individuals living with dementia—through both traditional sensory simulations and cutting-edge virtual reality (VR)—the study aimed to refine the design and procedures for a future full-scale research initiative.

Student Involvement: Students from a Research Methods class were both researchers and participants in a unique experiential learning exercise. They role-played as individuals with dementia and caregivers, using either traditional tools (like goggles, headphones, and gloves) or a VR headset powered by **Kaleidoscope XR's Caregiver VR** platform.

Key Insights & Outcomes

VR vs. Traditional Simulation: Students found both methods emotionally powerful, but VR offered a more convincing and immersive experience.

Student-Led Innovation: A student research assistant helped develop the VR script and trained peers to the Caregiver VR platform.

Real-World Challenges: Tech hurdles like Wi-Fi limitations and varying comfort levels with VR revealed important considerations for future research.

Lessons Learned: From battery life to classroom adaptability, the pilot surfaced practical insights to streamline future implementation.

Empathy in Action: The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire proved to be a reliable tool for measuring shifts in understanding before and after simulations.

Conclusion: This pilot research project didn't just test cool VR equipment—it sparked a deeper conversation about empathy as well as revealing possibilities in preparing future caregivers working in dementia care.

Reference to the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire:

Spreg R.N., McKinnon M.C., Mar R.A., & Levine B. (2009). The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire: Scale development and initial validation of a factor-analytic solution to multiple empathy measures. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. 91(1), 62-71.