Publishing Your Work in Peer-Reviewed Journals:

A Guide for Implementers:

This guide is intended for implementers who want to understand the benefits of publishing and the questions they should consider as they pursue publication. It can be used as a discussion guide or to outline decisions that need to be made at different points during the publishing process.

Step 1. Deciding Whether or Not to Publish:

- Could this project result in a new theory, method, or evidence? If so, implementers should always discuss the possibility of publishing. Publishing can help shape government and donor strategy and disseminate best practice.

- What is the goal of publication? To reach donors with evidence to inform funding? Summarize best practices for other implementers? Propose a new conceptual framework to guide programming? Understanding the goal of publication can help make the case internally and to funders why publishing is an important goal.

- Is IRB approval needed for publication? This should be considered at the very beginning of the project and must be pursued for any work that could be considered human subject research. Most peer-reviewed publications require evidence of IRB review or exemption.

- Have you considered the necessary financial, time, and human resources for publishing? Resources could include IRB review fees, fees to publish in open-source journals, external writing or editorial support, and staff time to write a manuscript as well as to respond to reviewer comments.

Step 2. Establishing the process:

- Who will be responsible for coordinating the conceptualization, writing, and submission of the manuscript? Who will be an author on the manuscript? Will additional support be needed to get the manuscript over the finish line? These questions should be codified in an **authorship agreement** (see Databoom example). Before starting the writing process, an authorship agreement should be in place. This ensures that roles and responsibilities are clear, credit and level of effort are established from the beginning, and procedures for resolving any conflicts are established.

- What is the timeline for manuscript development and publication? Are there events, like conferences, or other key dissemination opportunities where you could promote your publication? Speak to your fellow authors, colleagues, and anyone you would consider to be a target user of your manuscript about what events or dissemination opportunities they might be attending to identify potential venues for promotion.

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Step 3. Conceptualizing and writing the manuscript:

- Who is the audience for your manuscript? What are the key decisions you're trying to influence? Do you want to influence funding decisions? Drive policy change? Shape best practice? The answers to these questions will influence which journals to target, how to frame your research question, and which dissemination opportunities to pursue.

- What is your research question? Can the scope of the question be addressed in one manuscript? Or does it need to be narrowed down to fit within the limits of one manuscript? Consider the breadth of your project and the findings. Rather than whittling down the implications of your results, you may consider writing multiple manuscripts. Conversely, consider what is truly a new or important finding — it's likely you can be more concise than you originally thought.

- What's new about your research question? Does it fill gaps in knowledge? How will your manuscript expand the field in which you work? If necessary, review recent publications to see if your research question is truly novel.

- What are the key findings you want to convey? How can these findings be highlighted to make the points clear? Can they be summarized in tables, charts, or other visualizations? What's your number one takeaway and how do you want to highlight it? It's always helpful to have a few visualizations and key takeaways that can be pulled out and highlighted after publication to promote your article. Additionally, your findings might lend themselves well to a table or other tool that can be a quick reference for implementers, funders, and others.

- What are your target journals? Is publishing in an open-source journal a priority or a donor requirement? Which journals target the audience you want to reach? What are the word limits for the journals under consideration? Is there a limit to the number of authors that can be included? Make sure you understand the constraints you'll be working under so you can focus the team's efforts on the most important content to feature and reduce the editorial and formatting burden during submission.

Step 4. Promoting your article:

- Are there opportunities to promote your publication while you're working on it? What hooks can you use to ensure that your article is disseminated widely (and not just at the end)? Publishing shouldn't be seen as an end in and of itself. It's an opportunity to influence policy and funding or shape best practices. You should definitely promote your work and build excitement to use it.

- Once your article is published, how will you get your audience to read it? Are there topical conferences, commemorative days, or other events that can be used to roll out the article and encourage readership? Consider the most advantageous time to spotlight the issues you've identified in your article. Prepare collateral in advance so your message is compelling and clear.

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- Could you make some of the material freely available on your organization's website without violating copyright; for example, share the scales, models, data, tools, or annotated bibliography? Making work freely available to your audience can increase the likelihood of use and cross promotion.

- What other promotional opportunities can be used to reach different audiences? Is it possible to host a webinar, publish a plain language blog post, write an op-ed or a commentary, produce social media or other formats? Be creative and recognize that your audience is likely to be best reached by different and multiple formats.

- Which professional connections can authors leverage to promote the article? Can they cross promote the article on other websites? Through their own social media or professional pages? Make use of your networks to build awareness of your article and the great work you have to share.

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