

Dissemination Plan

[Note: This document is intended to supplement, not replace, instructions provided by funding agencies.]

Dissemination plans describe how you will share your research findings with academic and non-academic audiences. Plans should detail the type of information you will distribute, the methods you will use to share this information, the target audiences, and how you will measure the success of your dissemination efforts. The required elements of dissemination plans differ depending on the type of project proposals requested in solicitations. Below are three examples of dissemination plan guidelines.

Agency Examples

- **National Science Foundation (NSF):** “Proposals should identify the key elements of a communication plan, e.g., target audiences and identification of the channels, media, and, technologies appropriate for reaching specific audiences.”¹
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH):** “A specific plan must be provided to disseminate nationally any findings resulting from or materials developed under the auspices of the research education program, e.g., sharing course curricula and related materials via web postings, presentations at scientific meetings, workshops.”²
- According to **Institute of Education Sciences (IES)**, in your dissemination plan, you should first identify the audiences that you expect will be most likely to benefit from your research such as applied education researchers who may use your research and/or product in their education research or methods researchers who may develop it further or apply it in their methods development. Second, discuss the different ways in which you intend to reach these audiences through publications, presentations, websites, workshops, demonstrations, presentations, and products you expect to produce.³

Recommended Elements

- **Products:** Provide a brief description of what materials you will be disseminating (reports, newsletters, social media posts, etc.) and the methods you will use to disseminate this material (personal contact such as participation in a workshop or a presentation at a conference or broadcast such as a blogpost, press release, or journal article). Identify who will be responsible for disseminating the material and the frequency with which the findings will be disseminated (bi-monthly newsletters, updating a website each semester, etc.). The products you disseminate

¹ Example from [NSF 21-599 solicitation for Advancing Informal STEM Learning \(AISL\) Program](#)

² Example from an [NIH PAR-20-153 solicitation for NIH Science Education Partnership Award \(SEPA\)](#)

³ Paraphrased from an [IES CFDA 84.324 solicitation for Research Networks Program](#)

should highlight what is unique or stand out about your project. Consider whether your products contain sensitive information. If so, include precautions such as de-identification of data.

- **Audience:** Pinpoint who your findings will benefit. In general, the more specific your targeted audience is, the better. Determine where your target audience gets their information and use this outlet. You may need to adjust your language or provide real-world examples to effectively communicate your findings to your targeted audience.
- **Partnerships:** Leverage existing resources at Vanderbilt (see below), in your local community, and in your professional memberships. Consider how you can build relationships with individuals, organizations, or networks to help disseminate your findings. These relationships should be mutually beneficial.
- **Barriers:** Address potential pitfalls in your dissemination plan. Barriers could be in your ability to get the message out or in people's ability to receive, find, or use your information. Remember that posting the information online will not be effective for dissemination if people are not accessing it.
- **Evaluation:** How will you measure whether you are reaching your target audience? Consider measures such as web analytics (downloads) or social media (retweets or likes). How can you use your outcome measures to improve the effectiveness of your dissemination?
- **Sustainability:** What will be the lasting impact of your project? How will you continue to publicize your findings over time? Include plans to preserve or archive your information.

Vanderbilt University Resources

- **[Vanderbilt Communications](#):** The Vanderbilt Division of Communications broadly shares news about Vanderbilt University research using traditional, digital, and print communications. Communications maintains extensive relationships with the news media, a television news studio for faculty interviews with national and global television networks, promotes research on all of its digital channels including the Vanderbilt homepage, the Vanderbilt News webpage, and the Research News @ Vanderbilt webpage and e-newsletter, and actively shares research stories on all of its top-level social media channels, which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Communications also shares news of research through the university's flagship alumni magazine, Vanderbilt Magazine, as well as school-based publications and a monthly electronic e-newsletter that goes to all alumni.
- The following boilerplate language has been approved by Vanderbilt Communications for use in Dissemination Plans:
 - The Vanderbilt University Division of Communications leverages multiple traditional and digital channels to disseminate news and information about the work and discoveries of Vanderbilt researchers. These channels include all relevant Vanderbilt University websites, including vanderbilt.edu, news.vanderbilt.edu, news.vanderbilt.edu/research; monthly e-newsletters to alumni; the flagship alumni magazine Vanderbilt Magazine; distribution to external broadcast, digital and print media outlets globally, nationally and locally; promotion and facilitation of media interviews; and distribution via the university's social media channels. The Division of Communications also coordinates with communications

staff in each college and school to further amplify research news using individual college channels, including but not limited to the school or college website, the faculty member's individual or laboratory website, school or college e-newsletters and print publications; and school or college social media channels. Faculty members may contact the media officer in the Division of Communications assigned to their school to request assistance with dissemination at (615) 322-2706. Media officers also routinely contact deans, department chairs and individual faculty members proactively to identify new opportunities for dissemination.

- **VICTR Studios:** If you are conducting clinical or translational research, the Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (VICTR) can provide guidance on your dissemination plan. Log in to [StarBRITE](#) and review dissemination resources and clinic options.

References & Online Resources

- [AHRQ Dissemination Planning Tool](#)
- [Dissemination Toolkit from University of Regina](#)
- [Research Dissemination Plan Template from Virginia Commonwealth University](#)
- [CDC Workshop, "Creating an Effective Dissemination Plan"](#)