

# Syntheses for Policy Makers and Managers



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## WHY SYNTHESSES FOR POLICY?

- Limitations of systematic review methods to answer questions related to policy and management (questions beyond 'what works')
- Need to align rigor with issues related to the complex and messy decision-making process (i.e. timeliness, relevance, applicability)

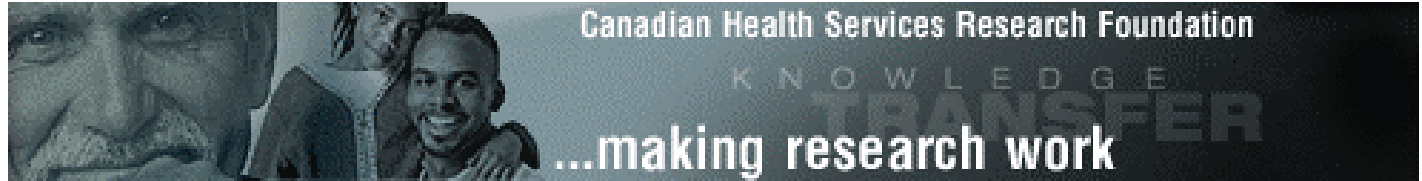
# DEFINITION?

## Components of a definition:

- Answers short-term (12-18 months) system-driven needs
- Brings together the best available evidence
- The investigation:
  - scientifically reviews academic and grey literature; and
  - scientifically reviews and/or collects expert/stakeholder opinion and other relevant data
- May provide guidance and recommendations to policy and management

## 9 FUNDED SYNTHESSES

- 1999
  - Capitation formulae for integrated health systems
  - Governance of integrated health systems
  - Policy and Capitation for integrated health systems
- 2001
  - Nursing workforce
- 2002
  - Continuity of care
  - Healthcare workplaces
- 2003
  - Primary healthcare
- 2005-06
  - Effective teamwork in healthcare
  - Nurse staffing and patient safety



# DEVELOPING THE SCIENCE OF SYNTHESIS (2003-2005)

- Discussions with our community
- Review of literature
- Teams (3) commissioned on methods of synthesis  
with UK NHS R&D Branch (SDO)
- Conference session on outstanding issues
- Workshop on best practice guidance for funding & doing syntheses  
with UK NHS R&D Branch (SDO) and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)



# DRAFT SYNTHESIS FRAMEWORK

## Decision Support

- clarify policy need (issue, timelines, etc.)

## Knowledge Support

- do scoping & determine research question
- investigate (scientifically collect and review evidence)
- provide main research findings

- interact (researchers with managers/policy-makers)

- identify guidance options
  - contextual factors that affect local application
  - benefits, harm/risks and costs
- determine recommendations (through deliberation)

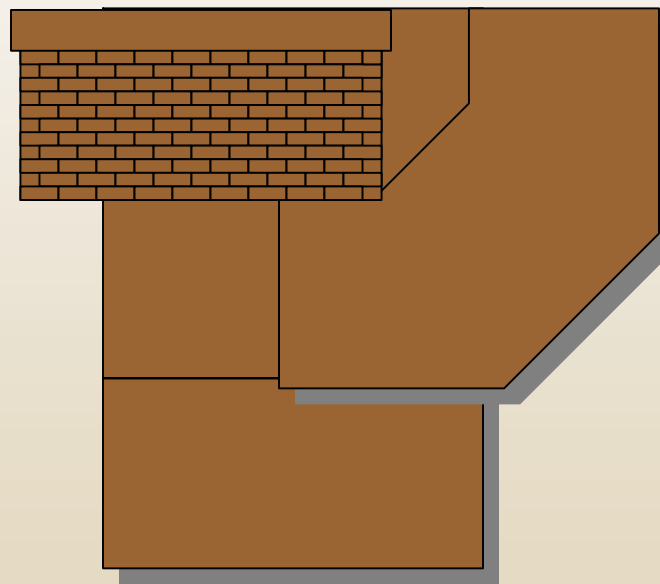
## KEY LESSONS

- Aim: Knowledge support/decision support? (*Mays et al. 2005*)
- Transparency in change is critical
- Feasibility: context & local applicability are key to decision support
- Factors influencing use: INTERACTIONS
- Communicating results: various audiences = multiple products & dissemination activities



# FRAMEWORK (CONT'D)

- Key Notion: flexibility in the framework

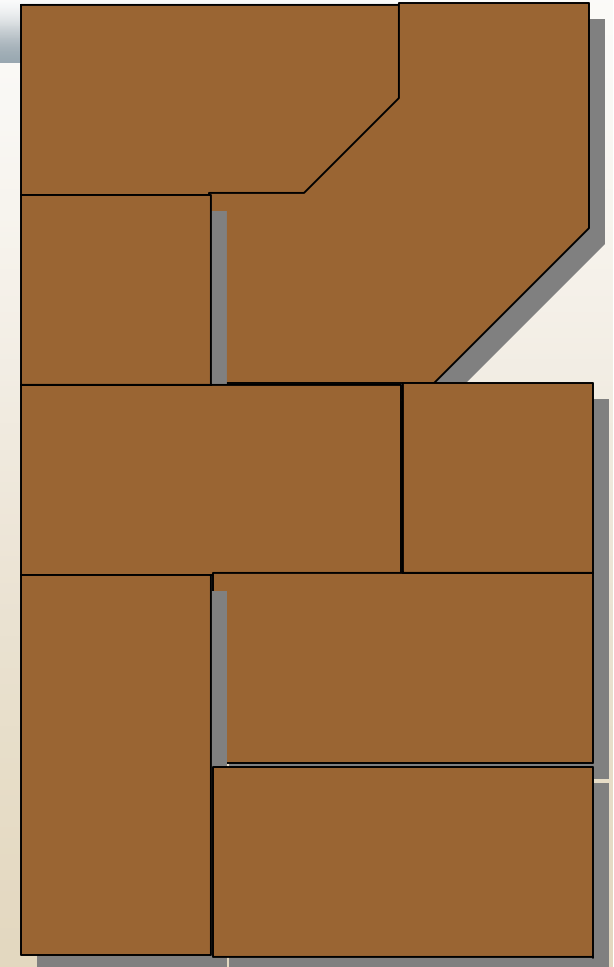




## FRAMEWORK (CONT'D)

### Considerations:

- The 'before' stuff (identify need)
  - Knowledge or decision support?
  - Who is asking? Timelines?
- The 'during' stuff (investigate)
  - Investigation: question, approaches, ...
  - Interactions: teleconference, roundtable, ...
  - Results: presentation & dissemination strategies
- The 'after' stuff (guidance)
  - How? Who? What?





## EXAMPLE:

### Nurse Staffing & Patient Safety (Dec '04-June '06)

- Define topic – consultation, meeting – issue stakeholders
- Define research project – roundtable – advisory board
- Select proposal – teleconference – merit review panel
- Focus work-in-progress – workshop – invest. & stakeholders
- Review research report – teleconference – peer review panel
- Determine policy recommendations – workshop – users & invest.
- Write final report – CHSRF
- Disseminate – various mechanisms – CHSRF & partners

## NEXT STEPS

- Better understand how to support decision-making:  
Which manager/policy-maker? When? Level & methods of involvement?
  - Session at our annual workshop (March): building strategies to get syntheses in the hands of health system managers and policy-makers
  - Manager & policy-maker 2-day workshops (Canada & UK, Spring): establish what is meant by effective decision maker support mechanisms
- Experiment – i.e. formally test the validity and value of alternate synthesis approaches, to further advance & identify best practices



Thank you

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