



# VCU COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Data Dissemination Framework

### **CONNECT: Community-Engaged, Community-Based Data Dissemination Framework**

Community-based data dissemination is a systematic process that is integral to research, particularly in community-engaged studies, but it is applicable to all researchers. The translation of research findings is often overlooked, yet it is critical for the uptake of treatments, the application of research discoveries, and the implementation of best practices. For faculty, the process of data dissemination is not only vital for impacting outcomes but also represents an essential component of scholarship.

*Scholarly Outputs.* Through a structured and community-focused dissemination process, researchers can generate a wide range of scholarly outputs. These may include peer-reviewed publications not only on the research findings themselves but also on the data dissemination process, the outcomes of dissemination efforts, and the methods used. For instance, researchers could publish on creative dissemination methods, how these approaches were developed in collaboration with the community, or the effectiveness of these strategies in reaching diverse audiences. Outputs could also include policy briefs, community presentations, and reports that focus on both the engagement process and the outcomes of dissemination efforts. Researchers are encouraged to think creatively about how community engagement can be translated into various forms of scholarship, recognizing that both the process and the results of data dissemination hold valuable potential for academic contributions. This approach allows for a broader impact of their work, aligning with scholarly objectives and advancing the reach of community-engaged research. These scholarly outputs not only contribute to advancing knowledge but also strengthen the connection between research and its practical application, reinforcing the value of data dissemination as an integral part of academic scholarship.

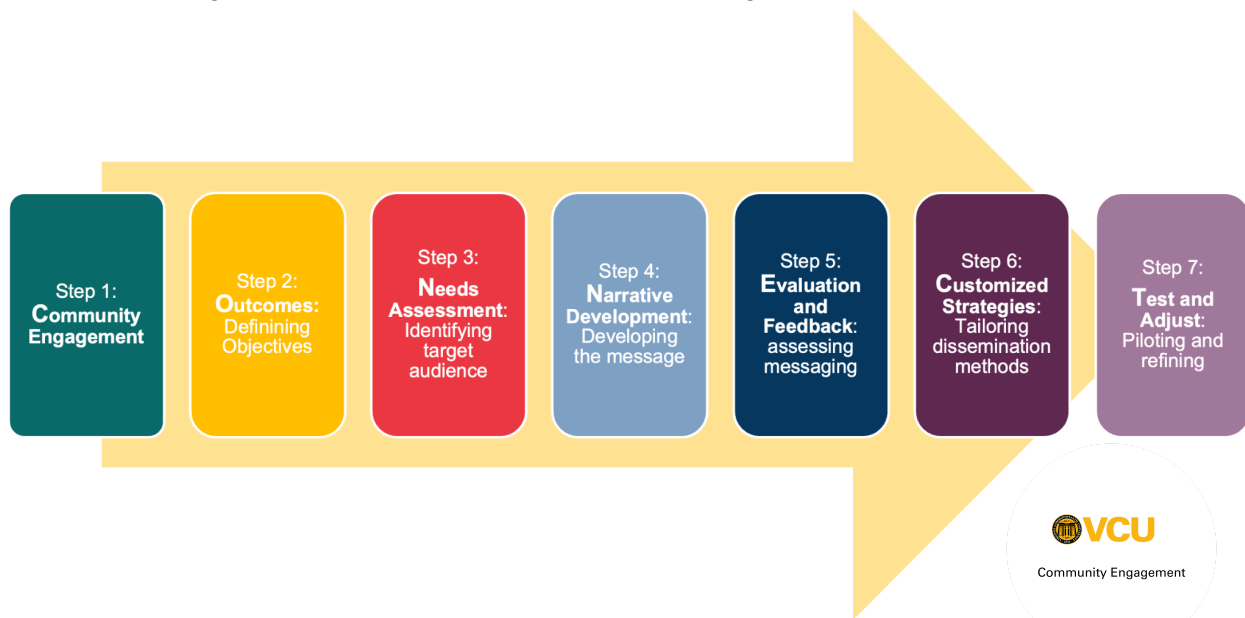
At VCU, community-based data dissemination aligns directly with *Quest 2028* and the university's commitment to fostering thriving communities. Working in partnership with communities to co-create knowledge and solutions, this approach contributes to sustainable, meaningful change and generates various scholarly outputs, such as peer-reviewed publications, community reports, educational tools, and policy recommendations. By recognizing data dissemination as a key scholarly activity, faculty across disciplines can not only enhance

their research's impact but also contribute to the university's goal of advancing equity and supporting thriving communities.

*Community Benefit of the Data Dissemination Process:* The data dissemination process is a critical part of the research continuum that directly benefits the community by closing the loop on research efforts. It serves as a way for researchers to be accountable to the community, ensuring that community members are informed about the outcomes of the research they were involved in. More importantly, it provides the community with the opportunity to offer feedback and guide the next steps of the project, fostering a cooperative and ongoing partnership.

By sharing results and engaging with the community, researchers help demonstrate the relevance of the research in addressing local issues, making the connection between research and real-world impact clear. This transparency can also encourage communities to see the value of participating in research, as they can witness firsthand how research outcomes can contribute to improving local challenges and enhance the quality of life.

The CONNECT Community-Based Data Dissemination Framework is designed to guide researchers in engaging stakeholders through a systematic, collaborative process aimed at achieving meaningful, action-oriented outcomes. This framework emphasizes that data dissemination is not merely the final step in research but an ongoing process that informs research questions, design, analysis, and next steps. By embedding community engagement throughout, researchers can align their findings with the needs and priorities of their target audience, driving more effective outcomes and addressing health disparities.



**1. Community Engagement:** The CONNECT framework prioritizes deep, meaningful engagement with community stakeholders. Rather than viewing the community as passive recipients, the framework ensures that stakeholders actively participate in shaping how data is communicated, ensuring the process is collaborative and relevant.

2. **Outcome Definition:** Researchers must clearly define the intended outcomes of their data dissemination efforts. This goes beyond information sharing—there should be a substantive, action-oriented goal, such as validating findings, uncovering additional concerns, or gathering contextual insights relevant to the community.

3. **Needs Assessment:** Conducting a needs assessment is essential for determining the most effective ways to reach and engage the target audience. This step involves understanding how the audience prefers to receive information, what formats work best, and the contexts in which they are most receptive, ensuring the dissemination strategies are tailored for maximum impact.

4. **Narrative Development:** Crafting a compelling, culturally relevant narrative is key to successful dissemination. The CONNECT framework focuses on translating complex research findings into clear, engaging stories that resonate with the audience. This narrative should be co-created with community input, ensuring that it aligns with their needs and priorities.

5. **Evaluation and Feedback:** Continuous community feedback is essential for assessing the effectiveness of dissemination efforts. The CONNECT framework encourages researchers to actively seek input from stakeholders, refining communication strategies to maintain relevance and ensure impactful engagement.

6. **Customized Strategies:** The framework supports the development of tailored dissemination strategies, ensuring that communication methods resonate with the specific needs of different audiences, such as patients, families, or healthcare providers. By incorporating creative and nontraditional approaches, the framework aims to make dissemination efforts more engaging and impactful.

7. **Test and Adjust:** The CONNECT framework encourages researchers to pilot their dissemination strategies with a subset of their target audience. This allows for iterative adjustments based on feedback, ensuring the final dissemination approach is as effective and responsive as possible.

The CONNECT framework offers researchers a structured and collaborative approach to data dissemination, ensuring that the process is mutually beneficial. It provides a tangible way for researchers to create scholarly outputs while being accountable to the community. Importantly, it also empowers community stakeholders to inform the research process, establishing a bidirectional loop that strengthens both research and community impact. Communities often express frustration when research comes in, collects data, and leaves without sharing results or engaging with them in meaningful ways. The CONNECT framework addresses this concern by transforming data dissemination into a systematic, partnership-driven process that goes beyond data extraction. It enables researchers to align their work more closely with community needs, guiding the next steps in research design, focus, and methodology. *The VCU Division of Community Engagement* stands ready to support researchers as they work through these steps to ensure impactful and accountable community partnerships.

Mosavel, M. (2024) **CONNECT: Community-Engaged, Community-Based Data Dissemination Framework**, Division of Community Engagement, Virginia Commonwealth University

