

# Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

## Project Dissemination Guide



**STEP**

Scotland's Tertiary  
Enhancement Programme



Scotland's Tertiary  
Quality Enhancement  
Framework



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba



**cdn**  
College Development Network

# Project Dissemination Guide

## Overview

As part of STEP, we will be asking each project team to develop a dissemination plan to ensure that each project's output – whether research, resources, events, or a combination – is understood, used, and sustained across the sector. This is essential to the long-term success of both the individual projects and the wider STEP programme.

Dissemination means describing and making results available for use. It helps you connect with target audiences, inspire change, share learning, and celebrate achievement. Done well, it encourages collaboration, drives real impact, and supports the adoption of outputs across the sector.

Effective dissemination keeps key stakeholders engaged - from internal partners and collaborators to the wider STEP Network and sector decision-makers. It ensures visibility, builds momentum, and creates space for feedback and shared learning.

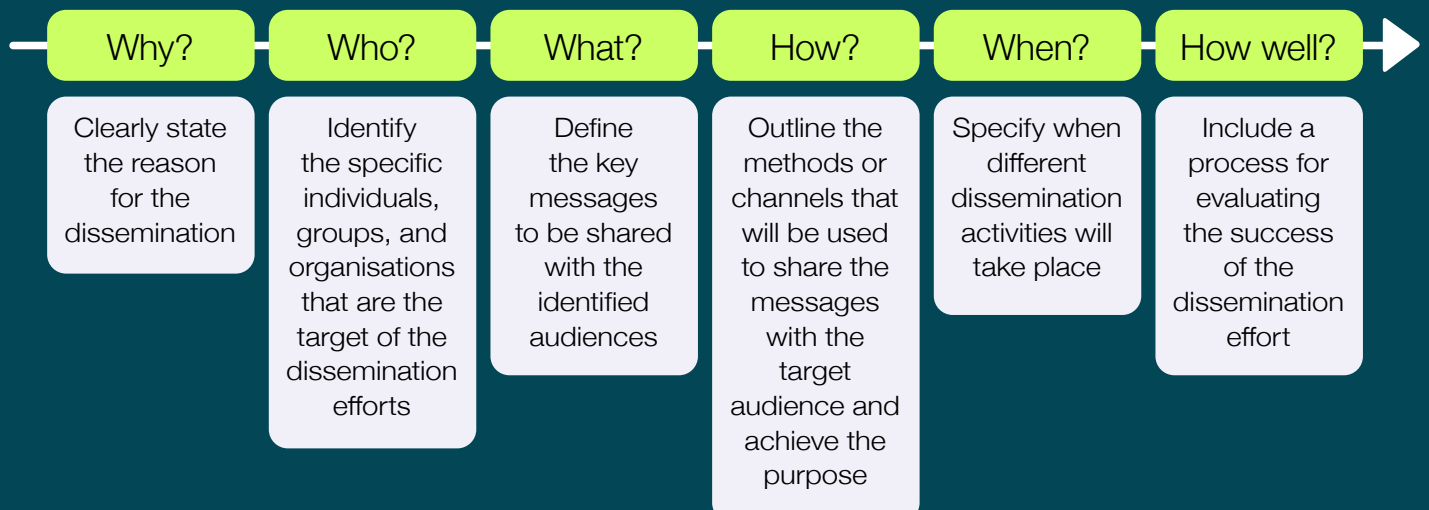
## Purpose of Project Dissemination Plan

Your dissemination plan should set out a clear purpose, supporting or informing the use of your project's outputs. This could include:

- Raising awareness about the project
- Informing the community about the findings
- Engaging with the community to get input and feedback
- Promoting the project's outputs and results

Clarifying your purpose early on will shape your audience, messaging, methods, and timing.

## STEP Dissemination Plan Flow Chart



# Developing your Project Dissemination Plan

Your dissemination plan should address the following:

■ **Purpose (Why):** Clearly state the reason for dissemination. Go beyond the requirement and think about why it matters – is it to raise awareness of a theme, inform a particular group, engage stakeholders, or support the implementation of your project outputs? This clarity will shape the rest of your plan.

■ **Audience (Who):** Identify who you want to reach. Start with a stakeholder analysis to identify those with an interest in or who may be affected by the project. Audiences may include:

- Practitioners within partner institutions
- Staff across the wider tertiary sector
- The STEP Network
- Senior managers and policymakers
- Sector agencies or international bodies

Think broadly and consider accessibility for all audiences.

■ **Message (What):** What do your audiences need to know? Define key messages that are simple, targeted, and factually accurate.

■ **Methods (How):** Outline the methods or channels you'll use to share your messages and achieve your aims. STEP will support some routes (e.g. newsletters, events), so do include these, but also consider:

- Blogs, videos, infographics
- Podcasts or webinars
- Social media or discussion forums
- Academic or sector publications

Choose formats suited to your audience and consider accessibility and inclusion throughout.

■ **Timing (When):** The plan should specify when different dissemination activities will take place, considering the project's progress and the timescales and requirements of the STEP programme. You might focus on awareness early in the project and move towards promoting outputs and implementation later. It's also important to be mindful of the time commitments and schedules of the recipients to ensure that the dissemination activities achieve their purpose.

■ **Evaluation (How Well):** A dissemination plan should include a process for evaluating the success of the dissemination effort to determine if the strategy was effective. This could include:

- Website or social media metrics
- Feedback forms or surveys
- Event attendance data
- Citations or publication reach

In summary, a good dissemination plan acts as a guide explaining **why** the project outputs are being shared, **what** information is being conveyed, **who** needs to receive it, **how** it will be communicated, and **when** these activities will occur, alongside a mechanism to assess its effectiveness.

# Embedding Inclusion and Accessibility

Ensuring that your dissemination is inclusive and accessible from the outset is not only best practice – it's essential for maximising the impact and reach of your project.

STEP encourages all project teams to consider accessibility and inclusion as fundamental aspects of their communication and dissemination approach.

To support this, we recommend using the **SCULPT framework**. SCULPT stands for:

- **Structure:** Use clear headings, bullets, and logical flow
- **Colour and Contrast:** Ensure text is readable against backgrounds
- **Use of Images:** Add alt text and ensure visuals add meaning
- **Links:** Use descriptive text (not “click here”)
- **Plain English:** Avoid jargon and write in a clear, simple, and direct style
- **Tables:** Use only for data, not layout, and ensure it is screen-reader friendly

You should apply SCULPT principles to all outputs including presentations, reports, visuals, videos, and social media.

Also consider:

- Offering materials in multiple formats (e.g. transcripts, captions)
- Including a diverse range of voices
- Involving learners or staff with lived experience

Inclusive design from the outset means your messages will be understood, not just seen.





# Communicating Effectively

To ensure your dissemination plan is impactful, it's essential to communicate clearly, concisely, and in a way that resonates with your audience. Here are key techniques and best practices for crafting clear messages:

## ■ Keep it simple

Use clear, accessible language and avoid unnecessary jargon. The goal is to ensure your message is easy to understand for all audiences.

## ■ Target your messaging

Tailor your message to each audience. While the core message remains the same, it's important to adapt it to meet the specific needs and interests of different groups.

## ■ Make it actionable

Ensure the audience knows what actions to take after receiving the message. If the purpose is to encourage a specific action, be explicit about what you want them to do.

## ■ Check your facts

Ensure the accuracy of your information and use plain language to improve the overall clarity of your message.

## ■ Choose the right method

Select dissemination methods that are familiar to your target audience and easy for them to access. This increases the likelihood that the message will be received and understood.



## ■ Structure content logically

Use headings, bullet points, and clear organisation in written materials to enhance readability and highlight key messages.

## ■ Use visuals

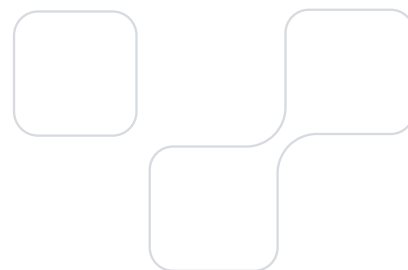
Incorporate accessible, relevant visuals (e.g., infographics) to simplify complex information and support your message.

## ■ Be concise

Keep content short and focused to maintain the audience's attention, especially in digital communications.



By following these practices, you can ensure your messages are clear, structured, and inclusive, helping your dissemination efforts be more effective and impactful.



# Evaluating the Impact

Evaluation helps you learn what worked, and what didn't. While overall STEP evaluation will be handled separately, you should still assess your own activities.

## Steps for Evaluation

### ■ Set SMART Objectives

These objectives provide a benchmark against which the impact can be assessed.

**SMART** Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic, Time-bound

### ■ Choose Performance Indicators

These can be quantitative or qualitative criteria that measure the success of the communication activity. The choice of indicators should be directly linked to the communication objectives. Examples of performance indicators include:

- Website metrics (e.g., number of visitors, time spent on the site)
- Engagement metrics on social media (e.g., reach, impressions, likes, comments, shares)
- Feedback from participants through evaluation questionnaires after events or training sessions
- Event attendance numbers, both physical and online
- Citation counts for publications

### ■ Monitor and Reflect

Think about evaluation as a continuous process, not just a one-off.

- **Before:** Set your goals and choose indicators.
- **During:** Monitor performance to gain live feedback (especially for digital methods).
- **After:** Assess and reflect on how well your dissemination worked.

Evaluating your activities enables ongoing improvement and ensures project outcomes are communicated clearly and achieve their purpose.

## Summary

STEP project teams are required to produce an effective dissemination plan. This should include:

- A clear purpose
- A well-defined audience
- Simple, actionable messages
- A mix of appropriate methods
- A realistic timeline
- An evaluation approach
- Inclusive and accessible design



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