

Why My Research Matters: A Reflection & Communication Tool

This tool is designed to help you reflect on the broader purpose of your research and communicate its value to non-research audiences, including community members, funders, policymakers, and others outside your field. It's okay if not every question feels easy to answer. The goal is to get you thinking.

The big picture: Why does this matter?

Imagine you are explaining your research to someone with no background in your field.

- What problem is your research trying to solve? What is at stake if this isn't addressed?
- In one sentence, why does this work matter to the world?



Audiences who care (or could care)

Think about the people your research could impact, directly or indirectly.

- Who might benefit from your findings (e.g., communities, patients, providers, policymakers)?
- How might your work affect their lives, health, or decisions?
- What would make this audience care about your work?



If your research vanished...

Imagine your research didn't exist – no funding, no findings, no follow-up.

- What would the field be missing? What gap would remain?
- What voices, questions, or perspectives might go unheard?



Your 'Why': Personal values behind the work

Think about what motivates you to do this work.

- What excites or energizes you about this research?
- What personal experiences, values, or commitments inform your focus?
- How does this project reflect what you care most about?



Words matter

The language we use shapes understanding and reflects our values.

- Identify and replace jargon or overly technical terms
- Remove or reframe any language that could be stigmatizing or exclusionary
- Use analogies or metaphors to create connections



Practice the pitch

Bring it all together. In 1–2 sentences, explain what your research is and why it matters. Imagine you're speaking to a community audience or someone you just met:

"I study ____, which matters because ____."



Bonus - Want feedback?

Share your pitch with a colleague, neighbor, friend, or community partner and ask:

What stands out? What is still unclear? Would you care about this? Why or why not?