

GUIDANCE ON DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS

Student Research Grant (SRG) Awardees are expected to maximise the benefits of their research by sharing their findings with a wide audience and keeping MSC informed of their plans.

Why disseminate?

It is important for researchers to think about how to disseminate their research findings outside of traditional scientific publications. Getting research published in peer-reviewed journals should be part of the main research goals but sadly not all journals are open access. Research can often sit behind a paywall making it inaccessible to practitioners with little time or financial resource. Researchers should always think about how to communicate their research to their desired target audience outside of the traditional scientific methods. Some journals even offer an [altmetric score](#) ranking papers by how well they are picked up through alternative communication channels such as traditional (e.g. news websites) or non-traditional media (e.g. social media). This can be beneficial when showcasing the impact of research for jobs or funding applications.

What does the MSC expect?

As a condition of the grant, SRG Awardees are expected to:

1. submit a progress report to MSC midway through their project as well as a final report at the end, which must include both a scientific report and a non-technical lay summary along with any supporting communication assets such as images, videos etc.
2. share their research findings with a wider audience and keep MSC informed of their plans.
3. provide the MSC with timely contributions towards any Q&A, blog or social media posts relating to their project or the SRG as a whole.

In addition to the above, SRG Awardees are encouraged to disseminate their research findings through their own channels and the channels of their host organisation. They must notify MSC in advance of any plans to communicate their research and share copies of the communication.

SRG Awardees must acknowledge MSC's support on all communications associated with the project and use the following text: "made possible through the Student Research Grants, part of the Ocean Stewardship Fund program of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). The MSC has not reviewed this content". The MSC's corporate logo (not ecolabel) may be used in conjunction with this text only and can be supplied on request for this purpose.

For social media posts, SRG Awardees should try and include the following hashtag: #OceanStewardshipFund and tag @MSCecolabel on social media platforms, where possible.

Things to consider when developing a dissemination plan

There is no specific rule for disseminating research findings; every project is different and will interest different people. Good dissemination is simply sharing the right messages with the right people in the right way that maximises impact. Planning ahead is crucial to this but so is the ability to adapt and capitalise on emerging opportunities during a project.

AIMS

What is the overall objective: to increase understanding or awareness of an issue or inform policy/best practice? How will success be measured?

AUDIENCES

Who are the primary and secondary audiences for the research? Who will benefit from the research and who might it interest? Is there a particular audience that the research is hoping to inform/influence? Find out where these individuals go to for information and, if possible, their current views and perceptions related to the project area. SRG projects are likely to benefit/interest the following:

- academics and students
- fisheries and organisations working with fisheries on becoming more sustainable
- marine conservation groups and organisations
- science journalists and bloggers
- members of the public who are interested in conservation and sustainability
- ...and the MSC, of course!

MESSAGES

What is the main message around the hypothesis/findings and how does this relate to the intended audiences? What are the reactions that will demonstrate impact? Consider the language and level of detail needed for each audience and type of reaction. An academic looking to understand the methodology and possibly expand on the research will require more detailed and technical information than a journalist looking for key points to add to a general article on sustainability. Fisheries and organisations working with fisheries on sustainable practices may require technical but concise details on the research findings. Make sure to consider any potential controversies associated with the project area and address these in the key messages.

CHANNELS

Use the communication channels that are most frequently used by the intended audiences, especially for information related to the project area. Consider the key messages and whether they are suitable for these channels in terms of the level of detail and content. Explore the information and views recently communicated on these channels to ensure the project findings will be well-received. What communication assets (images, videos etc.) have been generated by the project and can these be used? Potential channels are:

- science journals
- scientific conferences (poster or oral presentation)

- science magazines
- national/international press
- press releases
- websites
- social media/blogs
- fisheries/conservation special interest group forums

TIMING

Dissemination shouldn't just take place after a project. Plan to engage audiences from the start in order to build interest in the research so that when the results are published, they will achieve maximum impact. Look at the project plan and identify any milestones that might generate interesting news or stories. Find out whether there are any upcoming activities such as conferences, international awareness days, special interest group meetings or public engagement events (online or face-to-face) that will offer good opportunities to share findings. Consider frequency of updates needed as well to maintain momentum. Good times to communicate are when:

- receiving the grant and/or starting the project
- about to go on a field study or testing new equipment
- results start coming through or there is a research breakthrough
- there is interesting material generated such as images, videos etc.
- about to publish in a scientific journal or press release
- being featured in a press article or blog
- been invited to present at a forum

SUPPORT

There is a lot of support available out there to support dissemination of research. Find out whether there's any communications expertise within the team, and liaise closely with the University's press office and communications departments to make sure they are aware of the project and can plan any supporting activity. Keep the MSC informed of any communication plans as well, as the MSC may be able to help amplify the reach and impact of the research. Think about other partners and influencers in the community who might also help to amplify the message.

Where applicable, the MSC may ask Awardees to present their project and its findings in a relevant forum (special interest group meeting, trade conference, hospitality event organised by the MSC etc.) Awardees are also encouraged to seek their own opportunities to present their project at a scientific conference, workshop or meeting.

Word of caution

Think carefully about any risks inherent in communicating the research, whether there might be any intellectual property issues and how it might be perceived by intended audiences. Be prepared for any debate resulting from dissemination and be upfront with the limitations of the research. If in doubt, the MSC would be happy to discuss.



How will the MSC use the SRG project reports?

The MSC is keen to share the benefits of projects funded by the SRG and may include information from the project reports in its own periodic public reports as well as press releases and other public communications. Furthermore, the MSC may use any images or videos submitted in SRG reports as it sees fit but will acknowledge copyright as appropriate.

Contact

Please contact OSF@msc.org to inform MSC of any communication plans or to ask for some advice on disseminating research findings.