



#### **Who Should Read**

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Chief Research Officers  
(CROs) and Their  
Communications Staff

Departmental and Central  
Communications Staff

# Research Communications Self-Assessment

A Tool for Evaluating Current Efforts and Identifying  
Areas for Improvement

## **Three Ways to Use This Tool**

1. Diagnose current research communications infrastructure to pinpoint opportunities for improvement
2. Distribute to colleagues to gather information about perceptions of research communications performance
3. Utilize recommended tactics to address critical gaps in research communications efforts and infrastructure

## Research Communications Self-Assessment

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Changing funding patterns mean that the long term growth of the research enterprise requires effective, strategic communications about the value of university-led research.

Yet, there are a variety of obstacles that make communicating about research challenging. Institutions need to communicate research to a much broader set of stakeholders who may have different interests, priorities, and levels of understanding. And faculty are not always effective at communicating their research to lay audiences.

### How to Use This Tool

CROs and their staff can use this tool to diagnose the current state of research communications on their campus and identify opportunities and tactics for improvement. For each statement on the following page, score your institution using the designated scale. Tabulate your results and compare them with other members of your team to pinpoint items that consistently scored low. Then, identify the corresponding tactic(s) from the University Research Forum's study on "Telling the Story of Research" to assist in making improvements.

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## Research Communications Self-Assessment

For each statement below, score your institution using the following scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, and 6=strongly agree. After doing so, calculate your total score and use the rubric on the following page to assess your current research communications infrastructure. Then compare results with your colleagues to identify lowest scoring statements and corresponding tactics for improvement.

Research Communications Statements	Your Score	Tactics
1	My institution has easy-to-use templated materials that help faculty and departments concisely communicate the value and impact of their research.	#1, #11
2	My institution has forums in place that allow communicators across campus (e.g., in the research office, in the central office, and in departments) to coordinate and collaborate with each other.	#2
3	My institution has knowledgeable communications staff dedicated to tracking and reporting on developments for key research areas and initiatives.	#3
4	My institution has communications staff that provide faculty with the support they need for engaging with the media.	#4
5	Research leaders (e.g., CROs, deans, provosts, presidents) actively voice support for faculty research communications (e.g., through a newsletter or monthly emails).	#5
6	My institution trains faculty to effectively communicate research to a lay audience (e.g., through seminars or workshops).	#6, #7
7	My institution identifies faculty who are successful communicators and leverages them to further our communications goals (e.g., offers them additional training, shares their efforts on social media or in campus newsletters).	#7
8	My institution utilizes targeted campaigns to send specific messages to specific audiences with a specific goal in mind (e.g., to the local community to gain research partners for a specific research project/area).	#8

## Research Communications Self-Assessment

Research Communications Statements (Cont.)		Your Score	Tactics
9	Our research website is visually engaging and easy for stakeholders to navigate (e.g., multiple photos, videos, infographics).		#9
10	Our research website provides information tailored to multiple audiences (e.g., researchers, students, industry partners).		#9
11	Our research website highlights our institution's unique research strengths and initiatives.		#9
12	Our research website includes meaningful metrics that communicate the broader impact of research on economic development and the local community (e.g., jobs created, lives saved, cures discovered).		#9
13	Our social media efforts effectively build followers and grow engagement.		#10
14	We track social media metrics (e.g., likes, retweets, shares) and use this data to inform our strategy.		#10
15	We create materials that concisely articulate the value and impact of our research in plain English.		#11
16	My institution hosts public events that effectively engage the local community with our research.		#12
17	My institution assesses the effectiveness of our research communications efforts (e.g., through email open rates, public perception surveys) and uses that data to improve our research communications strategy.		#13
<b>Total Score</b>			

## Research Communications Self-Assessment

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### Scoring Rubric

Your overall score provides you with a basic diagnosis of the current status of your research communications efforts and infrastructure.

- Over 85:** You have a strong research communications infrastructure but likely can still improve your efforts by making a few specific changes.
- 68-85:** You have a solid foundation for your research communications infrastructure but you may need some concentrated improvements.
- Under 68:** You have just begun to create and sustain your research communications infrastructure so you need to make broad improvements.

### Mapping to Tactics

To prioritize key areas for improvement, identify statements that you and your colleagues scored 3 or below. Each statement corresponds directly to a tactic outlined and explained in the University Research Forum's study on "Telling the Story of Research." Review and implement the corresponding tactic(s) to strengthen your research communications efforts and infrastructure.

1. Campaign-Based Templates
2. Purpose-Driven Templates
3. Beat Reporting
4. Faculty Feedback Protocols
5. Faculty Media Spotlight
6. Immersive Training
7. Faculty Leader Fellowship
8. Targeted Campaigns
9. Website Enhancement Audit
10. Social Media Improvement Guide
11. Compelling content Library
12. Community-Connected Events
13. Strategic Scorecard

### Next Steps

To access the complete research communications toolkit, visit [www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications](http://www.eab.com/urf/researchcommunications).

If you are unsure of what steps to take next or have a unique problem you would like to solve, contact your relationship manager to submit a question to Ask EAB or schedule an expert call with a representative from our team.