Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact on healthcare, policy and practice from thirty-six multi-project research programmes: findings from two reviews

Version: 0 Date: 25 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Simon Innvar

Reviewer's report:

Using a subgroup of studies from previous reviews is valuable and the inclusion criteria for doing so works well.

The paper is clear and mostly well structured. The methods, results and discussion sections build up to an answer to the stated objectives. I see few problems in publishing the paper as is, but the discussion section can be improved.

Recommendations for the discussion section:

1. Discussions with potential users and mechanisms: In the results section, page 7, the authors refer to an "extremely high impact …on policy" in Canada (100 percent) and Austria (97 percent), while in the Netherlands the impact was only 29 percent. This is one of the most remarkable results in the paper, but I find no discussion on this. On what, how, why, when and for whom do the results depend? Are they due to differences in "discussions with potential users" or "mechanisms" referred to by the authors at page 10? If this is not so, or if it is impossible to find such "mechanisms", the value of the results needs to be discussed in the well written and argued sections about the limitations of the review (page 8-9). Since "discussions with potential users" and "mechanisms" seem to be of high importance, the authors should include more about these results in the studies. How and why are discussions important, and what are the mechanisms? What might the results be if the only included studies were those where mechanisms were described in an explicit way?

2. The impact frameworks: It is not perfectly clear whether the impact frameworks, referred to on page 9ff, come from the studies included in the review or from a previous paper from four out of five of the authors of this review (reference number 8). Maybe it's both?
3. Standardisation (page 11-12): The authors seem to argue for more "standardisation in terms of [the research impact assessments'] timing and methods" (page 11), but the argumentation for this is thin, since "such standardisation can itself generate further difficulties" (page 12). What "methodological inconsistencies" and "strategic decisions" can be solved by standardisation?

If the Authors change their paper as I suggest, the level of interest will increase.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

'I declare that I have no competing interests'

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal