**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Setting strategy for system change: Using concept mapping to prioritise national action for chronic disease prevention.

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 12 Apr 2017

**Reviewer:** Richard Osborne

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HRPS-D-16-00150

This is an important body of research using a method that has great potential.

The categories of respondents are described in sufficient detail to inform the reader. The sorting of clusters is strongly influenced by the level of activity a professional/person engages in, i.e., a senior manager or above is required to engage in macro issues and tends to be a 'clumper' whereas a field worker/practitioner who has to engage at the micro level (and is aware of what really works on the ground) is likely to group statements with finer distinctions. There appears to be sufficient number of statements, and sorters, to be able to extract fine and overall distinctions from the data to guide program development. The 'clumpers' are extremely important, as they potentially provide overview and allow higher order patterns to be more easily observed. Overall it is very difficult to follow the text on who participated. Can you construct a table for this?

The authors need to present and carefully organize the clusters/themes that emerged. Currently the manuscript presents results on Importance/Feasibility too early, without careful establishment of the clusters and key themes, and the cogency of the content. The content of the clusters doesn't match the titles especially well, there is substantial overlap across some. While the statistics might suggest 12 clusters, the fit from the statement content clearly suggests more work can be and should be done. For example, the first cluster 'Intersectorial partnerships' is clearly related to many items the cluster in its closest proximity, 'Governance'. E.g., statements 16 (…whole of government…) and 44 (health-in-all-policy) are quintessential intersectorial issues. These two clusters probably should be joined. Where the software puts lines around a cluster isn't fixed-stronger qualitative work is required. This is the most important part of this paper and has the potential to influence national policy. There are many examples in the literature, particularly from Australian researchers, who have used concept mapping to develop robust conceptual models that have then been found to be robust internationally. However, from the 100s we have done, the initial data driven model requires careful qualitative refinement to generate a convincing model. See Rosas & Ridings, Evaluation and Program Planning, Volume 60, 1 February 2017, Pages 265-276.
More other work could be undertaken with map interpretation. The left hand side of the map seems to cover 'actions that need to be taken' with a range of specific micro actions, the primary care, to funding structures. The bottom appears to cover environments… further work could be done to explore potential causal directions between clusters. The data collected are important and could be more useful to readers with further refinements.

Please include the stress values for individual statements in table 1 so that how well fitting each item is within its proposed cluster. Clearly, many statements do not fit thematically in a cluster. Part of this is likely to be due to many statements being so complex and multifactorial. When a statement has more than one theme in it, respondents have difficulty placing it in a group. This is a weakness in the data and needs to be discussed. The cluster "Evidence, Feedback and Learning" is clearly a strong example in the data - many very long complex statements not usually suitable for Concept Mapping.

Fig 6 is not very user friendly, given the challenge a reader would have in matching the statements to the cluster, then to group.

The Discussion is interesting, but doesn't clearly respond to the complex data presented in the manuscript. Once the map and clusters are cleaned but, the value of the work and how this national consultation can contribute to national policy though operationalizing the proposed framework is a key discussion point.

Minor:

The importance and feasibility data were not collected with 5-decimal accuracy! Reduce to 1 decimal place please.

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