Author’s response to reviews

Title: Measurement of the translation and impact from a childhood obesity trial program: rationale and protocol for a research impact assessment

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you to the reviewers and editor for their considered feedback which has helped us improve the manuscript. We address each point separately below.

Point-by-point response to reviewers

Reviewer #1: This is an interesting paper reporting on the rationale and protocol for research impact assessment. Minor comments for consideration by the authors below:

BACKGROUND

1) It would be useful in the background to provide further information and rationale for the use of the FAIT framework. For example, who developed the framework? what evidence is there to support it? how has it been used previously, has it been used in child obesity space previously?

Response -

Further information on the background and rationale for the application of FAI have been added to the background section lines 82-96.
2) Sentence commencing on line 97 is 6 lines long - this needs to be shortened to improve readability.

Response -

This specific sentence has been removed but the points are reworked into the paragraph commencing line 152.

METHODS

3) Data collection - it is unclear what interview data will be collected (overview of the interview topics to be covered would be helpful here) and why health economists will collect interview data.

Response -

The paragraph on general data collection methods for the study has been removed. In its place are more specific descriptions of the data collection methods for each of the study components. The researchers involved in the development and application of FAIT are staff at the Health Research Economics unit within the Medical Research Institute. Hence, the health research economists “health economists” will be directly involved in the interviews and impact assessment process.

4) Literature reviews - please provide justification for why the quality of the studies will not be assessed in the scooping reviews.

Response -

The exclusion of a quality assessment in the literature review is consistent with the method for conducting scoping reviews set by the Joanna Briggs Institute [REF The Joanna Briggs Institute: Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewers' Manual: 2015 edition/supplement. 2015]. We have included a reference to the JBI method in the manuscript.

5) Quantified metrics - it is unclear why the quantified metrics will be based on interviews with researchers only and not researchers and end users? Line 217-218 (page 9). It is likely that researchers may over-report or over estimate benefits given their vested interest in the research program outcomes compared to end users. This needs to be acknowledged as a potential limitation.

Response -

The authors agree that ideally end users would be included in the interviews. However, it is apparent from the GFK report (Wiggers et al, 2013) that an assessment of end-user engagement
can be adequately inferred from program records. For example, two quasi-experimental studies were conducted that compared the prevalence of organisational practices and services in two of the intervention settings: children’s services and schools. The involvement of end-users will explicitly be accounted for in the assessment.

The discussion in the revised manuscript has been amended to reflect the limitation from end-users being excluded from interviews.

6 ) Economic assessment - it is unclear in the economic assessment why 'expected' impact is being assessed rather than the 'actual' impact. Given this is a retrospective analysis, shouldn't the actual impact be known (in the short term at least?) given the formal funding for the research ended 7 years ago? Please clarify.

Response-

Agreed, this has been amended to realised impact.

DISCUSSION

The discussion should include an acknowledgement of the strengths and weakness of the proposed study and a clearer sense of how this study will contribute to the literature in the area of research translation (ie what gaps does it address, how does it add to previous studies).

Response-

The discussion has been expanded, see lines 392-416.

Reviewer 2: Steve Hanney, Co-Editor in Chief.

Reviewer 1’s comments should be addressed please, and there are a few further points that would further strengthen this interesting account of the application of a new model to measure the translation and impact of a major trial.

1. It would be useful to give a reference, or justification, for a discount rate of 3%.

Response-

Reference provided line 312, consistent with the discounting value recommended in the measurement of social return on investment.
2. It would be helpful for understanding the contribution that this study would make if you could kindly give at least an outline of what is already known about the impact as set out in the article by Wolfenden et al (2017) given as reference 9 and which I believe had already been published online when the current protocol was submitted (and the reference needs to be completed now please).

Response -

Further detail has been added in lines 157-163

3. Related to the above point, it would also help the reader if a somewhat fuller indication could be given of how it is intended that the impacts are going to be valued in the proposed cost benefit analysis.

Response-

Further detail has been added in lines 269-280 and 337-357

4. Reviewer 1 has requested that the Discussion be made fuller and include an acknowledgement of the strengths and weaknesses. As part of this it would be particularly helpful to set out more fully what are seen as the challenges to undertaking a cost benefit analysis.

Response-

The discussion has been expanded to reflect the anticipated challenges in lines 407-416.

5. Finally, and I realise this relates to my own work, it might be useful to clarify in relation to the three elements of the FAIT model, that the Payback Framework, which is included in relation to the first part of the FAIT model, has also been extensively applied (as have some other frameworks) through using narrative case studies. This point can be made without the need for an additional reference as one of the examples already given (ie reference 5) is an example where narrative case studies were organised around the Payback Framework in order to help identify factors (such as engagement with end-users) associated with successful translation.

Response-

Reference added and role of narratives clarified in lines 377-378