Author’s response to reviews

Title: How do organisations implement research impact assessment (RIA) principles and good practice? A narrative review and exploratory study of four international research funding and administrative organisations

Authors:

Adam Kamenetzky (adam.kamenetzky@nihr.ac.uk)
Saba Hinrichs-Krapels (saba.hinrichs@kcl.ac.uk)

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Review of: "How do research organisations implement research impact assessment (RIA) principles and good practice? A narrative review and exploratory study of four international funders. HRPS-D-19-00165R1

Thank you for your resubmission and revision. I can see that you have improved several aspects based on the reviewers' comments. The manuscript is clear, interesting and well written. However, I have some issues left that can improve the rigor and transparency of the research. I will elaborate on these issues below.

We thank the reviewer for their supportive and helpful comments and have made the following revisions that we hope further improves the rigour and transparency of the research and the manuscript itself.

Background
1. Line 72. The Journal name is wrong, please check the reference and change the journal name in accordance.

R1. Noted and amended accordingly, with thanks.

Methods
2. Lines 219-221. You write that you grouped the findings under three broad domains. However, this structure is not used when reporting findings. I think it would be easier for the reader to understand if you would actually follow this structure when reporting findings. In this way the reader would get a clear picture of knowledge and gaps concerning structures, processes and outcomes.

R2. We thank the reviewer for this helpful suggestion and have restructured this section of the results (lines 267 onwards) to bring our reporting of findings from the narrative review in line with the three domains of focus used throughout the rest of the analysis. In doing so we felt it would be helpful to provide a little more detail of what is reported against each domain in each of the included studies (lines 277 onwards), which we hope provides helpful insights to the reader, particularly concerning knowledge to be derived from and gaps of the published literature.
3. Line 246 and onwards. You write that you used semi-structured interviews based on a topic guide and that your approach was inductive. However, your topic guide is based on Donabedian domains, and thus I cannot see in which way your approach was inductive and explorative. Please clarify.

4. Line 250. You write that you based your analysis on grounded theory, but you do not have any references to grounded theory. Also, I have difficulties to see how your approach is grounded theory as you started with Donabedian domains and collected data based on those domains, your findings report on Donabedian domains and some subcategories and in the end, you do not develop any theory. Please clarify how you define grounded theory. I don't think that you need to use grounded theory but if you decide to do this more explanation on how you define and build grounded theory is needed.

&R3. We apologise for any confusion relating to these lines in the methods (lines 244-254) and have now updated these to reflect our use of the Donabedian approach throughout.

Findings

1. Line 288, Table 2. Not sure why you state the anticipated/implied focus of future reporting. For me this is confusing and does not add anything to the findings. Also, you do not comment these grey areas somehow in the findings. Please reconsider goal of showing these and if needed explain more in the findings.

&R4. We have updated Table 2 and provided further structure and detail in our writeup of findings of the narrative review as suggested by the reviewer, which we hope is helpful for the reader in this regard (also see response R2).

2. All findings. You state that your ethics approval hinders you of showing which funder said what. I understand that you need to comply with your ethics approval. However, I still think that the rigor of this study could be increased tremendously if you could somehow show that your data actually is used in the findings section and supports your arguments. Your sample size is small and thus this issue becomes even more important. One way to do this is to indicate only funder 1, 2, 3 or 4 when you write funder, interviewee etc. I don't think you would compromise your ethics by doing this. You actually reveal some of the funders in lines 436 when you write larger funders we interviewed… Also, you reveal the health research funders on line 442 and onwards.

&R5. We thank the reviewer for this thoughtful suggestion and have revisited each instance of where we present findings from the interviews (line 399 onwards) to clarify links to source data and the origins of quotes, as recommended. We have also taken this opportunity to be more consistent in our use of language throughout the manuscript, referring to ‘research organisations’ (as defined lines 53-54) unless findings or recommendations are specific to funders.