

**Brief #1:**  
**Practitioners Often Connect at *Moments of Transition***

By: Adam Seth Levine (President of research4impact and Assoc Prof of Government at Cornell)  
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**Background:** In early 2018 I reached out to several practitioners' listservs and invited them to share problems they were facing in their work in which they thought research might be helpful. In response I would match them with a social scientist one-on-one. I targeted listservs composed of non-partisan, non-profit organizations with a mission to remedy social ills. 37 practitioners responded over several months.

Based on these requests I identified four reasons why nonprofit practitioners want to engage with social scientists: 1) to receive an overview of a research literature, 2) to help make an immediate evidence-based decision, 3) to gain ideas about how to measure impact, and 4) to collaborate on a new project (see here for more details: [www.r4impact.org/how-it-works](http://www.r4impact.org/how-it-works)).

**Main Finding:** These requests also help answer another important question: *When do practitioners find social science valuable?* One perspective is that, at least in principle, they are always open to learning more about research. An alternative is that their availability varies over time as the nature of their work and/or personal circumstances change.

Here I measured whether practitioners were going through a *moment of transition*. Moments of transition arose because the practitioner was part of a new initiative at their organization and/or because they had just started a new job or gained a new responsibility. Those not facing a moment of transition were not in a new position and cited a long-standing organizational goal in which research would be helpful.

As shown below, most of the 37 practitioners that reached out were facing a moment of transition. That was especially the case among those looking to collaborate with a researcher, and less so among those looking to gain ideas about how to measure the impact of their work. In the latter cases I observed such desires arose from long-standing internal pressures to gain better metrics. Going forward, these results provide important evidence for outreach efforts aiming to connect researchers and practitioners.

*Proportion of Practitioners Facing a Moment of Transition*  
(For everyone, and by goal; N=37)

All practitioners	68%
Goal 1: To receive an overview of a large research literature	70%
Goal 2: To help make an immediate evidence-based decision	67%
Goal 3: To gain ideas about how to measure impact	29%
Goal 4: To collaborate with a researcher on a new project	100%

Check out [www.r4impact.org/how-it-works](http://www.r4impact.org/how-it-works) for more on what we're learning about researcher-practitioner relationships!