

Brief #6:
**Do researchers share new information
or just tell practitioners what they already know?**

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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).

Main Finding: When practitioners first learn about the matches we do at r4i, one question that sometimes arises is whether it's worth taking the time to speak with a researcher – are the researchers providing new information, or are they just telling practitioners what they already know (perhaps based on personal experiences, intuition, previous exposure to research, etc.)?

Here I use the 2018 data to help answer this question, focusing specifically on the practitioners that were looking for an overview of a research literature (which was 20 of 37 practitioners). After the conversations took place I followed-up with them to see if they gained new and useful information addressing their current needs (and, if not, I would match them with another researcher).

Only one practitioner responded by saying that she was already familiar with the research they talked about. And, nevertheless, she described the conversation as "reassuring" because it signaled that she wasn't missing anything big (and also underscored to her and the researcher she spoke with that there is still a lot to learn about the topic!).

Did researchers share new info?
(N=20; only includes practitioners seeking an overview of a research literature)

Proportion of practitioners who reported that they were already familiar with the research discussed during the conversation	5%
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Check out www.r4impact.org/how-it-works for more on what we're learning about researcher-practitioner relationships!