

**Brief #3:****When they connect with researchers, are practitioners time-sensitive?**

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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 they connect with researchers, are practitioners time-sensitive?* Traditionally one of the biggest obstacles to building relationships between researchers and practitioners is different time scales -- nonprofits' "focus is urgent, immediate, and often in response to events...moving quickly and loudly" whereas "academics work to a different rhythm".<sup>1</sup>

The requests for matchmaking in some ways echo this concern and in some ways do not. Overall, very few of the practitioners (16%) expressed any time sensitivity, yet it varied depending upon their goals. Of the 37 practitioners, 3 faced near-term decisions and wanted to use research to ensure these decisions were evidence-based. All of them expressed time-sensitivity. Beyond these three, the most frequent time-sensitive requests arose when practitioners were interested in collaborating with a researcher on a new project. These practitioners had funding in place and staff time already allocated, and faced a specific timeline for getting the collaboration off the ground. Overall, however, these data show how practitioners are often *not* time-sensitive when interacting with researchers.

*Proportion of Practitioners Expressing Time-Sensitivity (For everyone, and by goal; N=37)*

<i>All practitioners</i>	<i>16%</i>
<i>Goal 1: To receive an overview of a large research literature</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>Goal 2: To make an immediate evidence-based decision</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Goal 3: To gain ideas about how to measure impact</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>Goal 4: To collaborate with a researcher on a new project</i>	<i>44%</i>

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!

<sup>1</sup> Green, Duncan. 2017. "The NGO-Academia Interface." Impact of Social Sciences Blog: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/79530/>. Accessed September 19, 2018.