

RAPID EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE

# REVIEWS

**BehaviourWorks**  
AUSTRALIA

## A FASTER WAY OF GATHERING EVIDENCE TO MAKE PROGRAM DECISIONS

Basing program decisions on research evidence, as opposed to supposition, can not only save organisations time and money, but help resolve tensions around which direction a behaviour change program should take.

While ideal, many decision-makers face barriers to gathering evidence, such as lack of skills and capacity plus, of course, the time and budgets required to conduct extensive reviews.

To ensure that program leaders have access to the latest research evidence pertaining to their specific challenge in a more timely and cost effective manner, BehaviourWorks Australia (BWA) now offers rapid evidence reviews.

These reviews, which follow a well-established methodology, provide actionable insights for teams to take forward and are sometimes accompanied by practice reviews, which explore how the identified problems are experienced in real-world settings.

BWA Rapid Reviews are a fee-based research service, which are tailored to organisational needs.

### WHEN TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

The traditional route to finding answers to complex research questions is the Systematic Review (SRs).

SRs provide an overview of all primary studies or trials pertaining to a particular research question and include explicit statements of objectives, materials and methods. Because they are so exhaustive, SRs are resource-intensive, taking anywhere from nine months to two years to complete.

While always recommended when time and budget allows, many organisations need a faster and more cost-effective route to finding answers, which is where the Rapid Reviews comes in.

### ABOUT RAPID REVIEWS

Rapid Reviews are an emerging method of efficiently synthesising research evidence within a short timeframe; anywhere from three to eight weeks. Researchers are able to achieve these short timeframes because Rapid Reviews focus on publications that have already reviewed a body of research evidence. In other words, they are an 'overview of reviews'.

By using an established method for gathering evidence and evaluating the quality of included reviews (see page over), BWA is able to ensure the rigour of the search is maintained. The outcome is a high-quality review that summarises the latest thinking on the topic and insights to support decision-making.

# RAPID EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE REVIEWS

## EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES

BehaviourWorks' researchers are trained to interrogate literature using both traditional and new methods.

In conducting Rapid Reviews, they draw upon an in-house database of more than 5,500 behaviour change research articles, as well as Monash University's extensive catalogue of research journals and databases that aggregate contemporary thinking in behaviour change across different disciplines, industry sectors and topics.

## LIMITATIONS

While Systematic Reviews and Rapid Reviews generally result in similar conclusions, the expedited nature of the Rapid Review creates an increased risk of not identifying relevant literature or insights that would be gained from a full Systematic Review.

Additionally, for complex issues not easily or immediately solvable; for example obesity or chronic disease management, it can be more efficient in the long term to do one 'living Systematic Review' (i.e., a systematic review that is kept up to date) rather than repeated Rapid Reviews over long time periods.



## THE PROCESS

Typically, Rapid Reviews are conducted in six stages.

### 1. Preparation

- plan the type of Rapid Review to be undertaken
- identify and refine a specific topic, research question and aims
- develop and refine the search terms, strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, databases, quality appraisal tools and extraction plan.

### 2. Search

- conduct searches on the selected databases and evaluate search yields
- download the records returned and import database files into screening software (e.g., Covidence).

### 3. Screening and selection

- screen paper title and abstracts based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, download full-text files for all relevant articles
- screen again using appropriate software and resolve disagreements.

### 4. Quality appraisal

- conduct a quality appraisal on the relevant papers.

### 5. Data extraction

- extract data from all relevant papers using extraction template and relevant software
- synthesis and write up

### 6. Generate a PRISMA diagram to summarise the review

- generate readable extraction tables
- write a narrative summary of findings using the extraction tables.

# RAPID EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE REVIEWS

## PRACTICE REVIEWS

While stand-alone Rapid Reviews have considerable value, commissioning organisations also have a lot to gain by asking, 'What's happening on the ground right now?'

Practice Reviews consist of structured one-on-one interviews with a small number of people who are actively involved in the issue at hand (i.e., policymakers, researchers, practitioners and project managers).

Practice Reviews can reveal invaluable information on how best-practice recommendations from research have played out in the real world, and what barriers to implementation have been faced.

BehaviourWorks' researchers are skilled in conducting interviews and extracting key themes from these interviews to describe how current practice reflects the evidence.

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Our Rapid Reviews are scaled according to the time and resources available to the commissioning agency. In general, organisations can expect the following outputs:

- executive summary
- detailed information on the methods, aims, search strategy, screening and selection process, as well as data extraction methods, quality appraisals and volume of literature searched

- information on the key characteristics of the studies identified, such as year, country, setting, number of studies, participants, intervention types
- 'real world' insights from those involved in developing and/or delivering strategies to address the problem under investigation
- evidence and practice findings, conclusions and behavioural insights, as well as discussion points for the commissioning agency to consider with respect to other research opportunities
- commentary on the implications of the review in the context of the commissioning agency.

The research team will also endeavour to publish the Rapid Reviews and/or Practice Reviews in a peer-reviewed journal.

## ASSOCIATED TOOLS

BehaviourWorks' Rapid Reviews are used as a key input to our Facilitated Dialogues, which bring stakeholders together to identify opportunities for action (see flyer on BWA website). These Facilitated Dialogues are also a key feature of the BehaviourWorks Method (below) a three-phase process for effectively unpacking problems, identifying and prioritising behaviours and trialling interventions.



For more information contact us via [behaviourworksaustralia.org](http://behaviourworksaustralia.org)