

Citizen engagement in evidence synthesis

Insights from McMaster Forum Citizen Panel for Evidence Synthesis citizen partners



Recruitment & onboarding

- Citizen partners value:
 - reviewing the detailed “researcher request form” that includes why the synthesis is being done, how it will be used (if known), their role, and timelines
 - engaging in virtual onboarding sessions that allow them to meet the research team, discuss the project scope and process, review their engage in each step, and ask questions
- Communicating with citizen partners is enhanced by prioritizing openness and valuing diverse perspectives, and avoiding using acronyms and highly technical language



During the synthesis

- Citizen partners prefer:
 - providing feedback via a shared document where they can view feedback from other citizen partners (with clear instructions on how to share comments in the shared document)
 - having a small number of questions and prompts (both generic for any evidence synthesis and specific to the topic addressed) to guide their review of the evidence synthesis
- Providing resources and training are essential for supporting citizens to provide meaningful feedback and possible optional training opportunities



Dissemination

- Important to provide:
 - feedback from the research team on citizens’ comments, and including an explanation for why some comments were not used is especially helpful for improving citizen engagement
 - acknowledgement of citizen contributions in the final report
 - a final project update, including a link to the report when published
 - a clear and easy process for compensation



A final note to research teams

- Emphasize that:
 - citizen engagement is feasible, valuable, and impactful, even in short timelines
 - lived experience provides unique insights, identifies gaps, and improves communication
 - collaboration should be open and exploratory—don’t assume limitations
 - multidirectional learning is important—citizens bring real expertise

Citizen partners’ key words to describe their experiences of participating in evidence syntheses
(27 April 2026)



We are grateful to our citizen partners for sharing their experiences and their insights about meaningful engagement in evidence syntheses.



Health Forum



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