



Through interactive events—such as the Research for Development (R4D) conference in Uganda in 2019—LASER PULSE brings together diverse researchers and practitioners to collaborate on innovative research solutions to development challenges. *Photo courtesy of Purdue University*

Embedded Research Translation

OVERVIEW

Research Translation, a concept that broadly means applying research to practice, can be leveraged to harness evidence to address complex challenges in international development. The LASER PULSE program affirms that research translation is most effective if it is embedded across all phases of the research project from identifying the research topic to disseminating the findings for broader impact and scale.

Central to LASER PULSE's approach to research translation is its ability to bridge researchers, thought leaders, innovators and scientists with practitioners doing the work on the ground—including actors from nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and government—around the same development targets. Recognizing that research translation is an iterative and collaborative process, LASER PULSE promotes a model in which development solutions are derived through a codevelopment process between practitioners and researchers.

WHAT IS LASER PULSE?

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries. A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,000+ researchers and development practitioners in 74 countries. LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

Once these key actors are connected, Embedded Research Translation serves as the means for collaborating to find research solutions for development challenges.

LASER PULSE defines Embedded Research Translation as an **iterative co-design process among academics, practitioners and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge**. Underpinning this approach are four pillars: Partnership, process, product and dissemination (Figure 1).

THE LASER PULSE MODEL

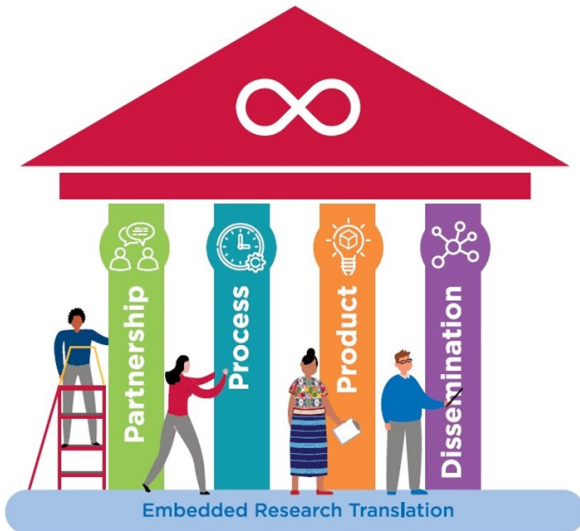


Figure 1: Four pillars of Embedded Research Translation

- **Partnership:** By integrating translation partners early and throughout the research collaboration, the model ensures that the research solution is custom-generated for the development challenge, and the outcomes are more readily adapted and applied by practitioners.
- **Process:** Through establishing a collaborative partnership process, the researcher and practitioner team ensure they have a solid foundation on which to work together effectively on development research.
- **Product:** The model emphasizes that while innovative and evidence-based research is important, it ultimately needs to result in a co-designed translation product that informs policy and/or practice. Translation products—such as briefs, training guides and videos—should lead to changes or recommendations in legal, funding, accountability, feasibility or implementation mechanisms.
- **Dissemination:** LASER PULSE seeks not only to increase research capacity, output and translation, but also research dissemination and use. Including a dissemination plan enables wider application and scale-up beyond the initial translation partnership and toward a larger uptake of relevant findings in the field or region.

EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION MODEL

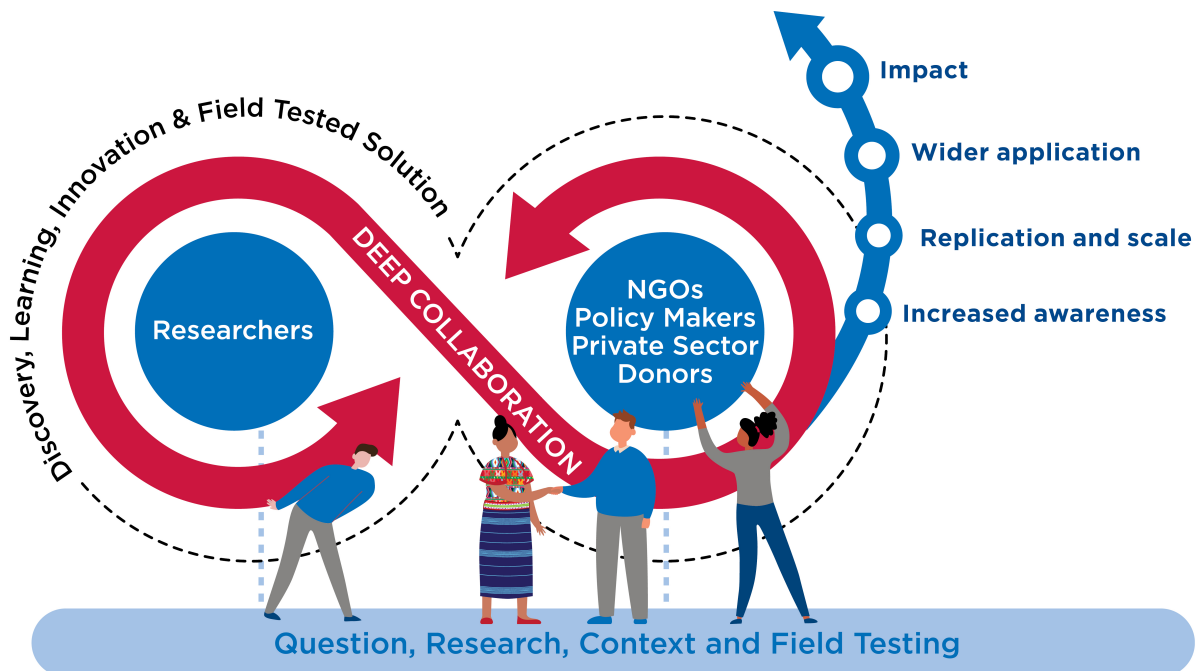


Figure 2. LASER PULSE's Embedded Research Translation model is rooted in deep collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and follows an iterative process from discovery, to field-tested solution, to wider application, and finally to impact.

EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION IN PRACTICE

LASER PULSE believes innovation and discovery can occur in research laboratories and in the field, as well as through the learning process throughout the implementation and scaling phases. Pathways to innovative, field-tested solutions are reinforced through deep collaboration with the stakeholders closest to the development challenge and, more specifically, practitioners working to solve it (Figure 2).

LASER PULSE strengthens the capacity of practitioners to navigate the world of research and for researchers to become more deeply aware and integrated into the programming and policy spheres of development. It integrates Embedded Research Translation across all its activities to ensure research is translated into policy and practice for development impact by:

- facilitating connection between researcher and practitioner stakeholders (public, private, non-profit) via the LASER PULSE network
- ensuring that research for development (R4D) conferences and virtual workshops are engaging and accessible to both researchers and practitioners
- supporting the deep collaboration between researchers and practitioners through awarding competitive grants and USAID buy-ins
- working with researchers to ensure that research results are adapted into formats that practitioners can easily understand and use
- supporting the dissemination of translated research products to encourage scale and wider application

MEASUREMENT OF EMBEDDED RESEARCH TRANSLATION

Through biannual surveys and interviews with the practitioners and researchers on the project teams, LASER PULSE monitors the progress, outcomes, and impacts of all funded projects. In particular, the program measures the effectiveness of the research collaborations, the impact on changes to policies or practices, and the transformative changes to development research practices. LASER PULSE anticipates that the research-driven solutions created through the application of the ERT model will continue to have impact beyond the time frame of the program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LASER PULSE is committed to delivering practical, research-driven solutions to global development challenges by building the capacity of researchers and practitioners to collaborate more effectively. Additional resources and opportunities for engagement around Embedded Research Translation include:

- [Introduction to Embedded Research Translation Training](#). *Free course.*
- [Promising Practices for Embedded Research Translation](#): *A toolkit to improve partnerships, processes, products, and dissemination.*
- [Embedded Research Translation Stakeholder Analysis](#). *Guidance and templates for stakeholder map and engagement plan.*
- [Guiding Questions to Plan for Research Translation](#): *A workbook to develop a research translation strategy, an implementation plan, and a monitoring and evaluation plan.*
- [LASER PULSE Translation Tools & Templates](#). *Digital tools, templates, and trainings to support research translation.*
- [Research Translation for International Development](#): *A literature review, framework, and guide to developing a research translation strategy. (forthcoming 2023)*
- [LASER PULSE Practitioner-Researcher Toolkit](#). *Blindspots in collaborations, discussion guide, & resource materials to improve research partnerships. (forthcoming 2023)*
- [LASER PULSE Network](#). *Join to connect.*

CONTACT

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