Supplementary File 7
Thematic Analysis of ES Definitions

Theme	Definition	Sub-Theme	Studies % (n)	Examples
Instrument of discovery	A system for achieving a result	Mechanism	81% (17) [29, 44, 70, 65, 68, 73, 82, 84, 93, 96, 110, 112, 114, 119, 127, 153, 158]	"a review", "a mixed-method tool", "an objective review" "cross sectional surveys", "tools", "an integral process", "an effective tool", "a research approach", "a tool", "a method", "a research method", "a rapid review", "needs-assessment tool"
	The acquisition of new knowledge through the process of inquiry	Learning	71% (15) [29, 44, 65, 68, 70, 73, 82, 93, 96, 110, 114, 119, 121, 127, 153]	"to search for important cues about how the world is changing and how these changes are likely to affect your organization", "a popular method of effectively determining the health care needs of communities", " to identify emerging issues", "the new process understood in the context of the ecosystem", "identify risks and opportunities", "review of the environmental factors that influence an organization", "to identify contexts and shifts", "information about events, trends and relationships in an organization's external environment", "to identify the new, the unexpected and the emerging interventions, issues and challenges health", "produces important insights on current trends and occurrences", "to determine the benefits, needs and efficiencies of practices", "used to foster knowledge translation in primary care", "assess strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities for improvement", "raise awareness of issues", "develop insight"

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Forward-looking	Anticipating or making provision for the future; progressive		71% (15) [29, 65, 68, 70, 73, 82, 84, 93, 96, 110, 112, 114, 119, 121, 127]	"future course of action", "to identify emerging issues", "future course of action", "the new process", "identify risks and opportunities, tailor strategic plans, or design programs", "factors that influence an organization", "may inform future planning", "in planning for the future", "emerging", "to enable strategic action", "future practices", "improving and developing", "opportunities for improvement", "plan for the future, develop interventions", "avoiding potential problems and implementing useful solutions", "inform strategic planning, provide evidence about the direction of a field", "to guide the direction", " initiate a project or funding opportunity", "leading to evidence-based solutions"
Knowledge synthesis	An attempt to summarize all pertinent information on a specific topic or question		48% (10) [29, 84, 93, 96, 112, 114, 116, 121, 127, 153]	"data acquisition and use of information about events, trends and relationships", "current relevant evidence base across a range of sources ", "retrieving and organizing data from a wide variety of fields", "the identification and synthesis of evidence", "publicly available information is gathered systematically and is used to evaluate", "identifying, retrieving, and organizing information", "to consolidate information", "to consolidate information", "gathering information…to supplement the results", "generate a map", "to identify and collate a large body of information", "diverse types of knowledge"

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Decision-making	Making choices from two or more alternatives for the purpose of achieving a preferred outcome		43% (9) [29, 65, 68, 84, 93, 114, 119, 127, 153]	"inform future planning", "in planning for the future", "planning", "planning and decision-making processes", "to enable health decision making", "evaluate(d)", "to foster knowledge translation in primary care", "assist in health decision-making", "to facilitate with strategic planning and decision-making", "analyze information to guide the direction"