

# Public Policy Management:

## W11. Evidence based Policy Making

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Week	Main Topics	Key words
8	Law Making and its Actors	Democracy, Parliament, Assembly, Congress
9	Budget as a Part of Policy Cycle	Govt. Revenue and govt. expenditure, fiscal health
10	How Policy Makes Politics	nexus of policy and politics
11	Evidence-Based Policymaking	Evidence, research
12	Policy implementation	bureaucracy, Government officials
13	Evaluation of public policy	Goals, attainment
14	Public Policy Analysis	policy content analysis
15	Public Policy Analysis: Stakeholder Analysis	who, what and how
16	Public Policy Analysis: Cost- Benefit Analysis	costs, benefits, returns

# Recap previous weeks

- Institutional Foundations of Public Policy
- Law Making and its Actors
- Budget as a Part of Policy Cycle
- Outline of Week11: EB Policy-making
- **What is evidence-based policymaking?**
- Why evidence-based policymaking?
- How and why evidence-based policymaking is a growing trend
- Principles of evidence-based policymaking
- Why these principles are important?

# Outline of Week11: EB Policy-making

- EBPM framework to provide tips and strategies
- Key components of evidence-based policymaking:
  - Program assessment,
  - Budget development,
  - Implementation oversight,
  - Outcome monitoring, and
  - Targeted evaluation.
- Why EBP is not working?
- Conclusion

# What is evidence-based policymaking?

- Evidence-based policymaking has two goals: *to use what we already know* from program evaluation to make policy decisions and *to build more knowledge* to better inform future decisions.
- This approach prioritizes rigorous research findings, data, analytics, and evaluation of new innovations above anecdotes, ideology, marketing, and inertia around the status quo.
- Evidence-based policymaking can take many forms: using research findings to inform new policies or improve effectiveness of existing programs, supporting data collection and analysis for research and management, developing policies that incentivize the use of evidence, and so on.
- It has most frequently been applied to social and human services programs, but a wide variety of government programs could benefit from building and using evidence.

# What is evidence-based policymaking?

- The movement toward evidence-based policymaking has seen significant progress in recent years at the federal, state, and local levels. But these efforts are still nascent, and many government actors could strengthen their use of evidence-based approaches.
- Some public agencies lack the capacity, skills, or funding to effectively use and build evidence; others lack the commitment from agency leaders to thoroughly integrate evidence into decision making.
- We are encouraged, however, by the growing number of agencies that, with the support of political leaders and career public servants, are building a results-focused culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- In an era of intense partisanship and constrained public resources, evidence-based policymaking can help bridge the partisan political divide and support research-based debate about what outcomes we intend for.

# Overview

- Governments make budget and policy choices each year that have long-term effects on both their fiscal futures and the outcomes they deliver for constituents.
- Recognition is growing that policymakers can achieve substantially better results by using rigorous evidence to inform these decisions, enabling governments to select, fund, and operate public programs more strategically. Until now, however, no comprehensive road map has provided clear guidance on using this approach.
- This lecture is based on the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, which has developed a framework that governments can follow to build and support a system of evidence-based policymaking.
- Based on an extensive review of research and in-depth interviews with government officials, practitioners, and academic experts, the framework identifies steps that both the executive and legislative branches can take to drive the development, funding, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs.

# Why evidence-based policymaking?

- Evidence-based policymaking uses the best available research and information on program results to guide decisions at all stages of the policy process and in each branch of government.
- It identifies what works, highlights gaps where evidence of program effectiveness is lacking, enables policymakers to use evidence in budget and policy decisions, and relies on systems to monitor implementation and measure key outcomes, using the information to continually improve program performance. By taking this approach, governments can:
- **Reduce wasteful spending:** By using evidence on program outcomes to inform budget choices, policymakers can identify and eliminate ineffective programs, freeing up resources for other uses.
- **Expand innovative programs:** Requiring that new and untested programs undergo rigorous evaluation helps determine whether they work and identifies opportunities to target funding to innovative initiatives that deliver better outcomes to residents or reduce costs.
- **Strengthen accountability:** Collecting and reporting data on program operations and outcomes makes it easier to hold agencies, managers, and providers accountable for results.

# A new era in responsible governance

- Support is growing across the country for using evidence to inform policy and budget decisions and guide the implementation of programs, in good times as well as bad.
- Although the need to improve government performance has long been recognized, researchers from the Results First Initiative identified several factors that are driving renewed attention to this issue, including ongoing fiscal pressures, the increasing availability of data on program effectiveness, federal funding incentives, and state legislation that support—and in some cases require—the use of evidence-based programs and practices.
- Previous attempts to address these challenges by linking program performance to budget allocations—for example, performance-based budgeting—have met with limited success because of insufficient analytical capacity or limited data, among other reasons.
- Now, with better technology, easier access to data, and the ability to more accurately measure the performance and cost-effectiveness of government services, policymakers have an opportunity to put their jurisdictions on a sustained path of evidence-based decision-making.

# Ongoing fiscal pressures & Availability of Evidence

- In recent years, many govts. were forced to make major budget reductions due to revenue shortfalls that occurred during the Great Recession. Although some states have seen tax revenue rebound, others continue to confront tight budgets due to lagging revenue, increasing costs in areas viz., Medicaid, & other pressures.
- Many govts. (state and local) do face long-term fiscal challenges, such as meeting retirement benefit obligations. This has increased demands by policymakers for better information on the outcomes that programs deliver for constituents and better tools to identify activities that fail to deliver desired results.
- **Increasing availability of evidence on what works:** Over the past two decades, a growing body of research has evaluated the effectiveness of public programs.
- Multiple clearinghouses are compiling this information by reviewing and categorizing hundreds of research studies to identify effective and promising programs across a range of policy areas.
- Thus, policymakers have access to more information about what works than ever before. Govts. can avoid duplication of effort and use this evidence to inform their policy and budget decisions.

# Federal funding incentives

- Increasingly, federal grant recipients, including states and localities, are required to target federal funds to evidence-based programs.
- Since 2009, for example, the U.S. departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor have directed approximately \$5.5 billion to seven initiatives that support proven programs.
- Although they represent only a small percentage of total federal spending, these grants provide incentives for recipients to implement proven programs.
- These include the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund, which prioritizes education programs with strong evidence of effectiveness and evaluation of innovative programs; the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which requires grantees to direct 75 percent of federal dollars to evidence-based programs and to evaluate the impact on key outcomes; and the Workforce Innovation Fund, which supports projects that use data to design new approaches to improving employment and training outcomes.

# Growing interest from state leaders

- State policymakers are using legislation as a vehicle to encourage investment in programs that have been proved effective.
- These laws provide incentives for agencies to implement proven programs and help establish common standards with which to compare programs.
- State leaders are also using cost-benefit analysis to inform their policy and spending decisions.

# Four principles of evidence-based policymaking

- The potential for a golden era of evidence-based policymaking has never been greater. The increased availability of data, new investments in rigorous research, and a growing public focus on results have given policymakers expanded abilities to determine whether public investments achieve their intended outcomes and to make informed choices based on evaluations of social costs and benefits.
- Four principles of evidence-based policymaking that policymakers, agency heads, and other public leaders can use to improve results in the public sector. These principles represent the consensus of researchers and practitioners from different backgrounds who are interested in improving how policy decisions are made and how programs are managed. Our democratic process sets goals for policies and programs, and evidence-based policymaking is an important tool to help achieve those goals.
- These principles can serve as a foundation for a common policymaking framework. Although policymakers at different points on the ideological spectrum disagree on the proper size and scope of government services, all agree that the services government *does* provide should work well. An evidence-based policymaking framework may ultimately promote bipartisan collaboration in important policy areas.

# Principles of evidence-based policymaking

- These principles are guidelines that apply to policymaking at every level of government and reflect a consensus among researchers across the ideological spectrum.
- They create a set of core ideas that a range of stakeholders can champion to promote evidence-based policymaking.
- They also establish a foundation for the work of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Collaborative.
- **First Principles of Evidence-Based Policymaking**
- 1. Build and compile rigorous evidence about what works, including costs and benefits.
- 2. Monitor program delivery and use impact evaluation to measure program effectiveness.
- 3. Use rigorous evidence to improve programs, scale what works, and redirect funds away from consistently ineffective programs.
- 4. Encourage innovation and test new approaches

# Principle One: Build and compile rigorous evidence about what works, including costs and benefits

## DEFINING KEY TERMS

Evidence	The available body of facts and other information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid, in this case regarding the impacts of programs
Rigorous evidence about what works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The evidence produced by rigorous evaluations, such as randomized controlled trials and well-designed quasi-experimental studies, that measure program impact</li><li>• Impact is the net effect of a program relative to the status quo</li></ul>
Build evidence	To conduct research and evaluations to identify social programs and policies that produce desirable outcomes (e.g., educational skills attainment, improved health, economic mobility, and economic well-being) by employing a range of rigorous methodologies
Compile evidence	To assemble evaluations—in “what works” clearinghouses, for example—to clearly describe programs, the methodology by which they were evaluated, and their effects
Costs and benefits	To analyze how much a program or policy costs per outcome achieved (cost analysis) and, in some cases, also measure the monetary value of benefits produced by the program so that costs and benefits can be directly compared (cost-benefit analysis)

# Why is this first principle important?

- To make the best use of limited public resources and deliver better outcomes for taxpayers, it is necessary to *build evidence* about what works through research and evaluation.
- Many government-funded programs have not been rigorously evaluated for outcomes or effectiveness.
- The absence of rigorous evaluation does not necessarily mean that these programs are ineffective, but it does mean we are in the dark about their true impact.
- Subjecting programs and policies to *rigorous* evaluation is the best way to build evidence about what works. Programs that have undergone rigorous evaluation contribute to an evidence base and help us estimate the likely effects of scaling up programs.
- As with all areas of scientific inquiry, this evidence base is not static and is updated and expanded as new evidence is created.

# Why is this first principle important?

- Several other elements are critical to the evidence-building process. One is independence: evaluators must be impartial to ensure the validity and rigor of new evidence.
- Agency leaders can help evaluation staff identify the most relevant questions to examine, but the evaluation itself and the publication of results must be free of influence from program or political leadership that might have a vested interest in a particular outcome.
- Privacy must also be protected when using or sharing data, particularly administrative and statistical data containing personally identifiable information.
- Moreover, it is also important to *compile evidence* in ways that can be used by policymakers and practitioners in the field to select and implement programs proven effective.
- Online “clearinghouses” of research help users distinguish between programs with stronger or weaker evidence.

# Why is this first principle important?

- The building of an evidence base should focus not only on determining what works, but also on measuring the costs and benefits of interventions.
- Cost analysis measures the monetary costs of interventions per outcome achieved.
- It allows different interventions with the same goal to be directly compared in terms of cost efficiency.
- Another tool is cost-benefit analysis, which measures both the costs and benefits of programs to calculate a return on investment.
- Cost-benefit analysis can help policymakers compare the relative benefits of spending on programs with the same general goals (e.g., boosting school readiness) or programs with different goals (e.g., boosting school readiness versus reducing delinquency).
- Cost-benefit analysis models can help governments do more with limited resources.

# Principle Two: Monitor program delivery and use impact evaluation to measure program effectiveness

## DEFINING KEY TERMS

<b>Monitor program delivery</b>	To clearly define the key components of a program model and track the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of program service delivery through process evaluation and performance management
	To check whether services are delivered as intended, in terms of quantity and quality, and whether programs are meeting their goals
<b>Use impact evaluation to measure program effectiveness</b>	The systematic collection of information about a program to identify (or estimate) the specific contribution of that program to intended outcomes
	That specific contribution, in the language of evaluators, is known as a program's impact.

# Why is this Second principle important?

- There are two key elements to this principle: monitoring a program as it is delivered and evaluating the success of the program.
- Both steps are important for building knowledge about what works and acting on that knowledge (as discussed in principle three).
- *Monitoring program delivery* ensures basic accountability by making sure that programs operate as intended.
- Monitoring programs is also critical for identifying problems or opportunities for improvement in program delivery so that programs can continually improve.
- In cases where programs are replicating established models, program monitoring can help ensure fidelity to the model by tracking how well the new program is implementing the core characteristics or intentions of the original.
- ***Impact evaluation***, on the other hand, aims to answer a specific question: how are things different because of this program relative to the status quo that would have existed without it?
- Rigorous impact evaluation provides policymakers and program managers with hard evidence about what a program actually achieves or which versions of a program are more effective.

## Principle Three: Use rigorous evidence to improve programs, scale what works, and redirect funds away from consistently ineffective programs

### DEFINING KEY TERMS

Improve programs	To adapt a program so that it produces better results, particularly around participant outcomes
Scale what works	To take a program that has worked for one population and implement it in a larger population, a different population, or a population in a different context
Redirect funds	To defund a program that has failed to achieve desirable outcomes in favor of a program that is more effective or is likely to be more effective

# Why is this third principle important?

- Program evaluation is too often thought of as a “thumbs up or thumbs down” determination—does this program work or not? In reality, evaluation can also be an important tool for program *improvement*.
- For example, impact evaluation can test different approaches within the same program, such as when the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies compared the effects of two available strategies for preparing welfare recipients for employment.
- More broadly, findings from program evaluations can and should be used to refine program strategy and improve results.
- *Scaling* programs is another way to apply impact evaluations and is an important way to broaden the reach of approaches backed by strong evidence.
- A program proven effective in one neighborhood, for example, might be scaled up across a city. If shown to be effective across the city, the program might be further scaled up across the state.

# Why is this third principle important?

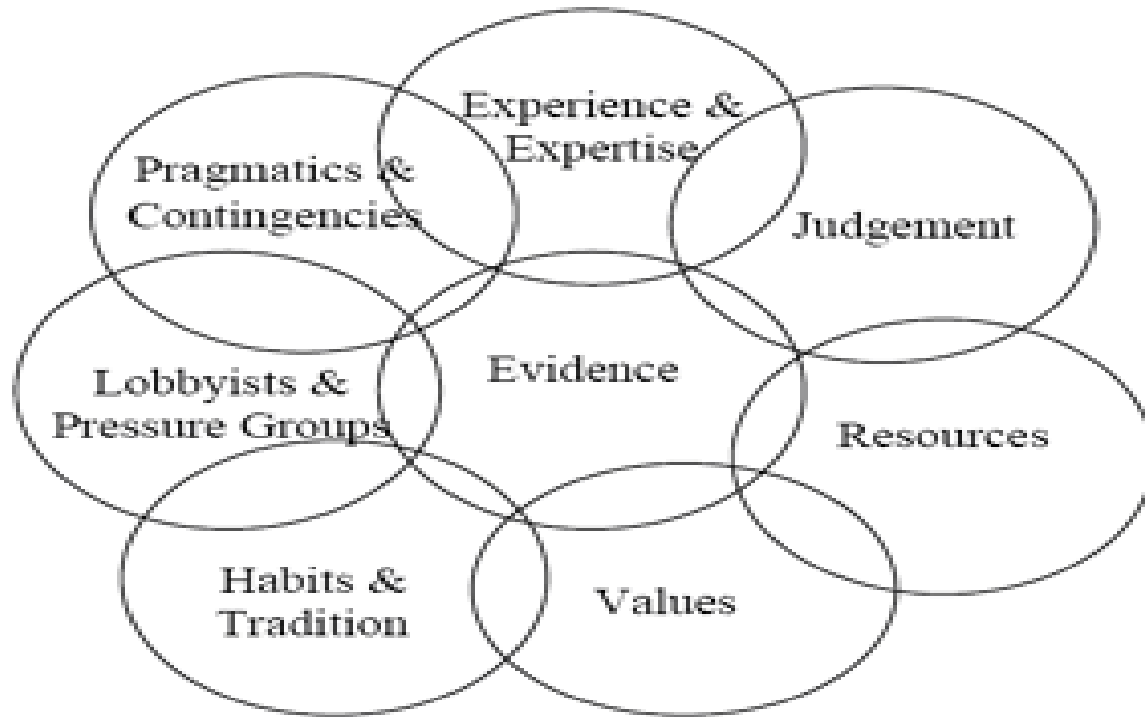
- Federal policymakers might also scale up evidence-based approaches across the nation. For example, the nationwide scaling of permanent supportive housing—a model with strong evidence—has helped drive a dramatic reduction in veterans experiencing homelessness.
- **Scaling programs** is not easy, but it is an important tool in helping local and federal policymakers realize the potential of evidence-based policymaking.
- However, even as programs are being scaled up and implemented in new settings, it is important to include an evaluation component to continue building evidence.
- For example, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program and the Home Visiting Program at the US Department of Health and Human Services are helping to scale up evidence-based approaches to new jurisdictions while using program evaluation to learn from these expanded efforts.
- Lessons from these initiatives can then inform broader policy efforts in the future.

# Principle Four: Encourage innovation and test new approaches

## DEFINING KEY TERMS

<b>Innovation</b>	Building on theory and existing research to develop new ways to address specific program or policy challenges
<b>Test new approaches</b>	To determine with rigorous evaluation whether new approaches actually work and achieve desired outcomes

# Factors influencing policymaking in Government



*Source: Davies (2004)*

# Key components of evidence-based policymaking

- Results First identified five key components that support a system of evidence-based policymaking (see Figure in the next slide).
- It was found that while many states have put one or more of these in place, none has developed a comprehensive approach across all branches of government.
- For each of the components, our framework includes specific steps that help to ensure successful implementation.
- Governments may lack capacity to implement all of the elements at once, but they can still strengthen their use of evidence based policymaking by focusing on particular features highlighted here.



# EBP Framework

- The framework has five key components, each with multiple steps that enable governments to make better choices through evidence-based policymaking:
- Program assessment,
- Budget development,
- Implementation oversight,
- Outcome monitoring, and
- Targeted evaluation.
- **Program assessment:** Systematically review available evidence on the effectiveness of public programs.
  - a. Develop an inventory of funded programs.
  - b. Categorize programs by their evidence of effectiveness.
  - c. Identify programs' potential return on investment.

# Budget development

- Incorporate evidence of program effectiveness into budget and policy decisions, giving funding priority to those that deliver a high return on investment of public funds.
- a. Integrate program performance information into the budget development process.
- b. Present information to policymakers in user-friendly formats that facilitate decision-making.
- c. Include relevant studies in budget hearings and committee meetings.
- d. Establish incentives for implementing evidence-based programs and practices.
- e. Build performance requirements into grants and contracts.

# Implementation Oversight & Outcome Monitoring

- Ensure that programs are effectively delivered and are faithful to their intended design.
  - a. Establish quality standards to govern program implementation.
  - b. Build and maintain capacity for ongoing quality improvement and monitoring of fidelity to program design.
  - c. Balance program fidelity requirements with local needs.
  - d. Conduct data-driven reviews to improve program performance.
- **Outcome monitoring:** Routinely measure and report outcome data to determine whether programs are achieving desired results.
  - a. Develop meaningful outcome measures for programs, agencies, and the community.
  - b. Conduct regular audits of systems for collecting and reporting performance data.
  - c. Regularly report performance data to policymakers.

# Targeted Evaluation

- Conduct rigorous evaluations of new and untested programs to ensure that they warrant continued funding.
- a. Leverage available resources to conduct evaluations.
- b. Target evaluations to high-priority programs.
- c. Make better use of administrative data—information typically collected for operational and compliance purposes—to enhance program evaluations.
- d. Require evaluations as a condition for continued funding for new initiatives.
- e. Develop a centralized repository for program evaluations.

# Program assessment

- Systematically review available evidence on the effectiveness of public programs Government leaders should develop an inventory of the programs they currently operate and then assess the available evidence of effectiveness and return on investment for each one.
- This provides important baseline information that enables government leaders to identify which programs are working and achieving high returns on taxpayer dollars, which need further evaluation, and which are not delivering expected outcomes.

# Develop an inventory of funded programs

- Many state and local governments do not have a complete catalog of the programs they fund, which is a necessary starting point for determining which are effective and which are not.
- Government leaders can require agencies to conduct a census to identify all publicly operated and contracted programs and collect standard information about each, including their funding levels, services delivered, and populations served.
- To help facilitate this process, governments often find it beneficial to develop a common definition of “program” to provide consistency across agencies.

# Categorize programs by their evidence of effectiveness

- Policymakers need clear information about the effectiveness of the programs they fund. By requiring agencies to categorize the programs they operate according to the rigor of their evidence of effectiveness, lawmakers and agency leaders can ensure they have access to the information they need to make this determination.
- A first step is to develop definitions for each category, based on the strength of evidence. For example, some states use “evidence-based programs,” which may be defined as requiring multiple evaluations that use rigorous methods such as randomized controlled trials.
- A second is “promising programs,” which may include those that have been evaluated and shown effective but through a less rigorous research design. State or local governments can use resources from national clearinghouses or other states in developing these definitions.
- Embedding such standards of evidence in statute can increase the likelihood that they will be enforced consistently and endure political changes.

# Identify programs' potential return on investment

- In addition to knowing whether programs have been rigorously evaluated, it is also important for government leaders to know if investing in them would generate enough benefits to justify their costs.
- Governments can use cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses to answer this question.
- These studies calculate the dollar value of the outcomes that different programs achieve and weigh them against the costs.
- Conducting such analyses requires technical expertise and extensive fiscal and outcome data and may not be practicable for all programs.
- When feasible, this approach enables governments to rank programs by their potential return on investment, providing policymakers with critical information on which alternatives can achieve the greatest returns for constituents.

# Budget development

- Incorporate evidence of program effectiveness into budget and policy decisions, giving funding priority to those that deliver a high return on investment of public funds
- For evidence-based policymaking to be successful, governments must systematically use evidence of program effectiveness to inform their processes for making budget and policy decisions.
- This requires regular communication between researchers, budget staff, and policymakers as well as the development of strong executive and legislative champions.
- Analytic results must be reported to policymakers in timely and accessible ways.

## Integrate program performance information into the budget development process

- Executive branch agencies should use performance information when developing their budgets to ensure funds are directed to programs that have strong evidence of effectiveness and away from those that are not delivering results.
- To accomplish this, agencies can develop output and outcome measures for all major programs and report those metrics in their budget requests. Agencies should develop numerical performance targets that can be used by policymakers to measure progress against key benchmarks and goals.
- For evidence-based programs, the targets should reflect outcomes predicted by research.
- A well-functioning performance measurement system can help governments decide where to pull back on funding as well as where to provide greater support.

## Present information to policymakers in user-friendly formats that facilitate decision-making

- To increase the likelihood that policymakers will use evidence to inform critical budget decisions, complex information must be presented in ways they can readily understand and act on.
- For any program, policymakers need answers to at least three important questions:
- **Is the program working?**
- **Do its benefits outweigh its costs?**
- **How does the program compare to alternative programs?**
- To provide this information, agencies can produce annual rankings that compare programs targeting similar outcomes based on effectiveness, cost, and benefits produced.
- When practicable, governments can use cost-benefit analyses to calculate a return on investment for each program, providing policymakers with data on how to best allocate resources to achieve each agency's goals

# Establish incentives for implementing evidence-based programs and practices

- Governments can use grant competitions to encourage adoption or expansion of evidence-based programs.
- Agencies can also partner with private philanthropies or businesses to scale up promising programs—those that demonstrate the potential to achieve a positive return on investment.
- Governments can also develop pay-for-success models and social impact bond agreements, both of which raise capital from private investors or philanthropic organizations to scale up programs that have the potential to achieve better outcomes and save the government money.

# Build performance requirements into grants and contracts

- When practicable, contracts and grants should include performance goals that encourage organizations to provide evidence-based programs and to implement those services as designed.
- To realize the benefits of performance-based contracts, program administrators should work closely with providers and program developers to create measures that accurately gauge performance, while striking a balance between the need for accountability and the importance of continuous quality improvement and increased capacity.
- These contracts need to be carefully crafted and monitored to protect against unintended consequences, such as creating incentives for providers to take only those clients most likely to succeed and to reject those considered high-risk.

# Implementation oversight

- Ensure that programs are effectively delivered and are faithful to their intended design
- The quality of program implementation can dramatically affect outcomes: Even the most effectively designed interventions can produce poor results when poorly run.
- To ensure proper implementation, governments should establish strong monitoring systems that assess all funded programs, including those administered by nongovernmental entities.
- This monitoring should ensure that evidence-based programs are carried out with fidelity to their design and incorporate the elements that are critical to their effectiveness, and it should include processes that improve quality by using information gathered through monitoring to make adjustments that improve performance.

# Implementation oversight

- Too often, program support and oversight is one of the first areas cut when budgets are tight, resulting in inadequate implementation and poor outcomes.
- To sustain the positive results, policymakers should include funding for support and monitoring in the base budgets of programs.
- Then, if budgets are reduced, effective services can still be delivered to high-need clients, which is preferable to serving more people ineffectively by poorly implemented programs.

# Establish quality standards to govern program implementation

- Broad-based implementation standards can promote the consistent delivery of high-quality services by providing baseline requirements for monitoring and oversight.
- These criteria should also be included in agency contracts to help ensure that providers understand and comply with expectations.
- Evidence-based programs frequently have detailed implementation manuals that managers can use to set quality standards.
- The standards address four key elements of quality assurance—program oversight, provider development and evaluation, corrective action, and ongoing outcome evaluation—and include protocols for hiring, staff training and assessment, and management and oversight of service delivery.

# Build and maintain capacity for ongoing quality improvement and monitoring of fidelity to program design

- Governments can support effective implementation by offering—or partnering with organizations that offer— training, technical assistance, and other services to program providers.
- They can also offer infrastructure support, including computer systems that facilitate data collection and outcome reporting.
- Some nationally recognized evidence-based programs also provide training or technical assistance services to assist implementation.
- Over time, providers build internal capacity for these operations and many continue to report data to the EPIS Center even after their initial funding has ended.
- These efforts have been highly beneficial. Ex Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) – after District Primary Education Program (DPEP) in India.

# Balance program fidelity requirements with local needs

- Many evidence-based programs have identified the key service elements that are critical to achieving desired outcomes but they also note that some services may need to be modified for local conditions.
- Administrators monitoring programs should ensure that key elements are implemented with fidelity while allowing other features to be adapted to meet community and cultural differences.
- Administrators, program developers, and service providers should work together to ensure that program adaptations do not negatively affect outcomes.
- However, administrators may adapt other services to local conditions and needs, which can vary across the state. “The goal is to meet communities where they are so that this is sustainable. Whatever we are building needs to be part of the community we are working with. We maintain the fidelity of the model, but ensure that it’s tailored to the community.”

# Conduct data-driven reviews to improve program performance

- Regularly scheduled data-driven performance management meetings enable agency and state leaders to discuss performance data, develop or refine performance objectives, identify areas for improvement, promote innovative strategies, foster coordination, and hold managers accountable for results.
- Agencies should hold similar meetings with their staffs and service providers to pinpoint opportunities for improvement and address performance barriers.
- This use of data has engendered a culture of organizational learning in which program managers and agency leaders discuss challenges and solve problems.

# Outcome monitoring

- Routinely measure and report outcome data to determine whether programs are achieving desired results
- Many governments have made significant investments to build and implement performance reporting systems, but these too often focus on outputs, such as the number of programs provided or clients served, rather than results, such as reduced recidivism or increased graduation rates, and are of limited use to policymakers.
- Governments should make sure that performance measurement systems collect and report essential outcome data for all major programs.

# Develop meaningful outcome measures for programs, agencies, and the community

- Performance monitoring systems should provide output and outcome data that meet the information needs of various stakeholders, including program administrators, policymakers, and constituents. For example:
- **Administrators can monitor operations by using data on program outputs, such as the number of families served, the percentage of families achieving program milestones, and the caseloads of field staff.**
- **Agency leaders can use intermediate outcome data to assess progress toward key goals, such as reducing the percentage of participating mothers who deliver low-birth-weight babies.**
- **Policymakers and constituents can use measures that gauge long-term trends, such as the percentage of children graduating from high school, to determine whether public programs are achieving their overall objectives.**

# Develop meaningful outcome measures for programs, agencies, and the community

- Agencies can also visit the national clearinghouses to identify the outcomes predicted for various programs by rigorous research and use those findings to set performance targets for funded programs.
- Governments can require programs that lack strong evidence of effectiveness to develop theories of change or logic models that specify their expected results and can then use this information to establish outcome measures and performance targets for those programs.
- Performance measures also should periodically be examined to ensure they still serve as reliable indicators of success.
- For contracted services, governments should ensure that providers collect and report common outcome metrics so that officials can compare performance and aggregate the overall program effects.

# Conduct regular audits of systems for collecting and reporting performance data

- Effective performance measurement systems should be user-friendly and provide data that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders.
- Even the best-designed system, however, will be of little value if the reported data are inaccurate or misleading. Governments should provide training to agency staff and contracted providers on how to collect, analyze, and report performance data, and develop processes for regularly verifying that these data are accurate.
- Performance measurement systems can easily fall into disuse without strong leadership supporting them or adequate training for providers and agency personnel.
- The audit noted that many statutory processes were no longer being followed and that reported information was not being used to inform budget decisions.
- It also noted that “State agencies have all of this data but do not necessarily have the tools or the skill set to analyze the data and use it for performance management purposes.”

# Regularly report performance data to policymakers

- Performance data can be a valuable tool for managing, overseeing, and assessing the value of programs, but it is critical to provide the information to policymakers on a regular basis, in easy-to-digest formats that highlight key findings, and readily translate to budget and policy decision-making.
- Several state and local governments have developed report card systems that focus on agency or program performance on key outcomes.
- Report card data are often reported through public websites and may be presented to policymakers through regular hearings and meetings.
- Data dashboards, interactive business tools that display a set of performance indicators, can also be beneficial in tracking and focusing on high-level outcomes in real time.

# Leverage available resources to conduct evaluations

- Almost all states have offices that conduct program evaluations and performance audits, and these can provide unbiased information to help policymakers assess program effectiveness.
- Governments should develop an inventory of their resources and dedicate at least a portion of them to conducting rigorous outcome evaluations.
- For example, legislative audit and research offices can be a critical resource in conducting independent program evaluations, but historically much of their work has focused on assessing compliance and management issues rather than outcomes.
- Legislators can work with these offices as they set their research agendas to identify opportunities to dedicate a larger portion of their resources to determining whether programs are achieving desired results.

# Target evaluations to high-priority programs

- No government has the capacity to regularly evaluate all of its funded programs, so it is important to set priorities. Governments can develop a list of programs to be evaluated, weighing factors such as the program's purpose, existing evidence of effectiveness, spending level, potential for cost savings, and risk of poor outcomes.
- Make better use of administrative data—information typically collected for operational and compliance purposes—to enhance program evaluations
- Over the past decade, researchers have made significant advances in using existing data sources to conduct rigorous program evaluations, for example, linking education, child welfare, and juvenile and criminal justice records to determine child outcomes.
- Because much of this information is already collected for other administrative purposes, the costs are much lower than more traditional program evaluations.

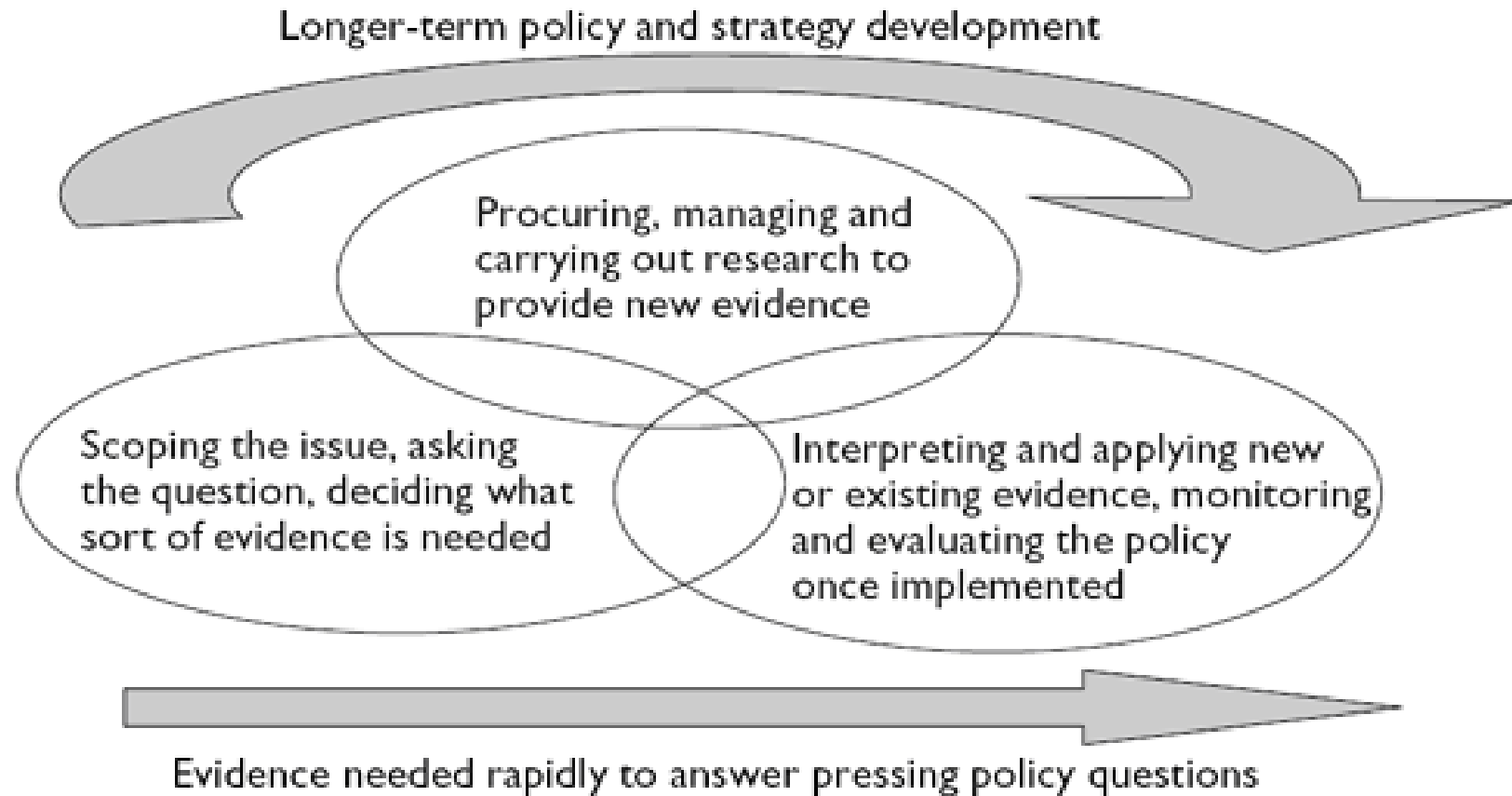
# Require evaluations as a condition for continued funding for new initiatives

- Governments frequently operate small-scale programs as a way to test innovations before fully implementing them.
- When designing these programs, governments should specify the desired results to help managers and evaluators focus on specific objectives, and before financial support is renewed, outcome studies should be required to determine whether tested programs are effective.
- In New York City, the Center for Economic Opportunity requires rigorous evaluations of all pilot programs to determine whether they were effective in achieving one or more of three primary goals: reducing poverty, encouraging savings, or empowering low-income workers to advance their careers.
- Center staff oversee monitoring and evaluation activities, working in partnership with city agencies and external research organizations.
- The center uses the results to help determine whether to expand or discontinue each program.

# Develop a centralized repository for program evaluations

- As noted earlier, several national research clearinghouses are reviewing studies to identify what works in public programming across policy areas.
- Governments can support these efforts by designating a central entity to house the studies they conduct and requiring all agencies to submit copies of outcome evaluations and performance audits.
- This agency or unit should screen the reports, identify significant outcome findings, and incorporate the information into a comprehensive list of local programs.
- Governments can also report these studies to the national research clearinghouses to help expand the available knowledge base and help governments across the country more effectively direct funding to programs that have demonstrated strong results for residents.

# The flow of evidence in the policy process



Source: Shaxson (2005)

# Why EBP is not working?

- 1. *Experience, Expertise and Judgement* – Human and intellectual capital, tacit knowledge;
- 2. *Resources* – Policymaking and implementation occurs in the context of finite (usually declining) resources, indicating some kind of cost-benefit exercise;
- 3. *Values* – These include ideological and political beliefs. Values are strong driving forces behind policymaking and often influence the end result;
- 4. *Habit and Tradition* – Important features which often defy rational explanation in the twenty-first century;
- 5. *Lobbyists, Pressure Groups and Consultants* – This category also includes think tanks, opinion leaders and the media, all of whom are major influencing powers;
- 6. *Pragmatics and Contingencies* – of political life, such as timetables, parliamentary terms, capacities of institutions and unanticipated contingencies. Although these factors do not necessarily stand against EBP in principle, they do not compliment the strategic EBP approach.

# To Conclude

- Government leaders are increasingly using rigorous evidence to identify policies and programs that work and are cost-effective.
- To date, however, policymakers had no comprehensive road map to guide them in this endeavor.
- The framework presented in this lecture to identify the steps that all levels and branches of government can take to build and support a system of evidence-based policymaking for strategically selecting, funding, operating, monitoring, and evaluating public programs that deliver the best returns on taxpayer investments.
- Evidence-based policy is a critical resource as we strive to meet nation's most important challenges while ensuring that public funds are used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

# To conclude

- It is a tool to help government learn what works. Of course, evidence and research will not be the only factor in policy decisions.
- Rather, the goal is to give evidence of program effectiveness a seat at the table when decisions are being made.
- The principles presented here are basic building blocks in that process.
- They can be applied at every level of government and at various points in the policymaking process, including the testing of new approaches, improvement of existing programs, identification of ineffective programs, and scaling of programs with strong evidence.
- Incorporating the principles of evidence-based policymaking into decision making on a regular basis will improve the effectiveness of government programs and help solve the nation's social problems.

# References:

- Evidence-based Policymaking Collaborative , (2016), Principles of Evidence-Based Policymaking, Urban Institute, Brookings, AEI, PEW and MacArthur Foundation, available at [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99739/principles\\_of\\_evidence-based\\_policymaking.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99739/principles_of_evidence-based_policymaking.pdf)
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# What Next?

- Policy implementation