



2021 PEP annual conference

Workshop:

Best practices for policy engagement

Session 2: Designing research to fit policy needs

May 19

Marjorie Alain

PEP Director of Communications and M&E

Session 2 - Contents

- ❖ **Science and policy:** a complicated relationship
- ❖ **Understanding policy needs**
- ❖ **What do policymakers need to know**
- ❖ **Your PEP policy paper**



Why are we here?

Evidence-informed policymaking – the objective of your PEP project

- **PEP research aims to inform policy**

PEP commitment to
GAC in CCWG initiative

- Providing evidence that is both:

- **Reliable** (scientifically-sound)

Scientific training +
mentorship

- **Contextualised :**

- From a local perspective

This training + **policy
outreach mentorship**

- Addressing COUNTRY-SPECIFIC POLICY NEEDS / QUESTIONS



Why are we here?

Purpose of this workshop:

- **Make sure your PEP research answers actual policy questions**

PEP requirements from grantees:

- **Identify and consult with stakeholders**
 - PEP requires stakeholder analysis and periodic reports
- **Develop a (parallel) policy paper analysis**
 - Starting with a policy context analysis, to clarify the key policy questions to address



Why are we here?

Structure of this workshop:

- **Session 1:** Understanding policy processes
- **Session 2: Designing research to address actual policy needs**
- **Session 3:** Designing an effective policy engagement strategy



Science and policy: a complicated relationship

The tale of “two communities”

Like in any relationship.. **it's mainly a “communication problem”**

Science and policy **“don't speak the same language”**

- Not just **in terms of “technical jargon”**, which is ALWAYS a problem with academics
- But also **in terms of “PRIORITIES”**...



Science and policy: a complicated relationship



Babu Rahman, 2017 – UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

How to make research more useful to government officials

“Whereas academics’ value lies in illuminating complexity, civil servants are assessed on their **ability to simplify complex issues down to the key components necessary to make a decision.**”

“What (policymakers) want from research is NOT:

‘It’s complicated’ or ‘Here’s the answer’.

What they want is **comparative work highlighting a range of possible solutions..”**

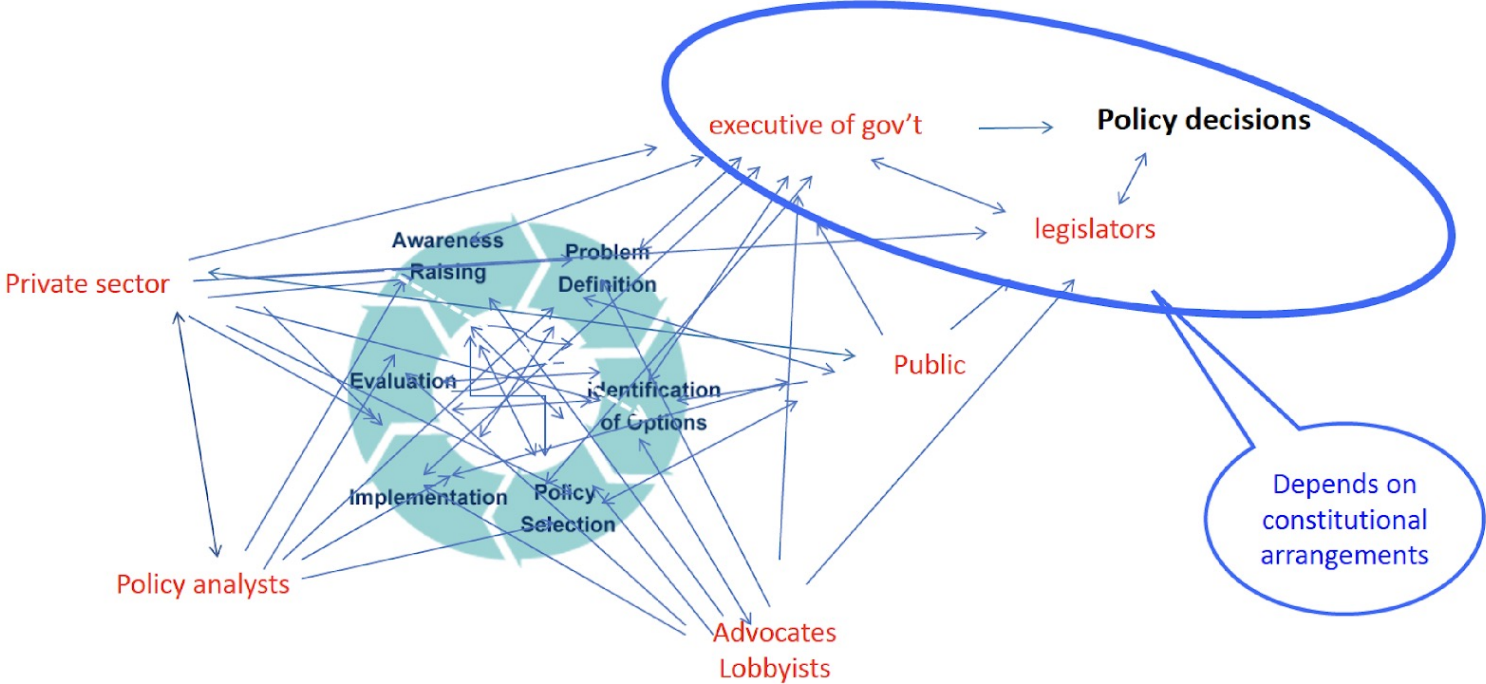
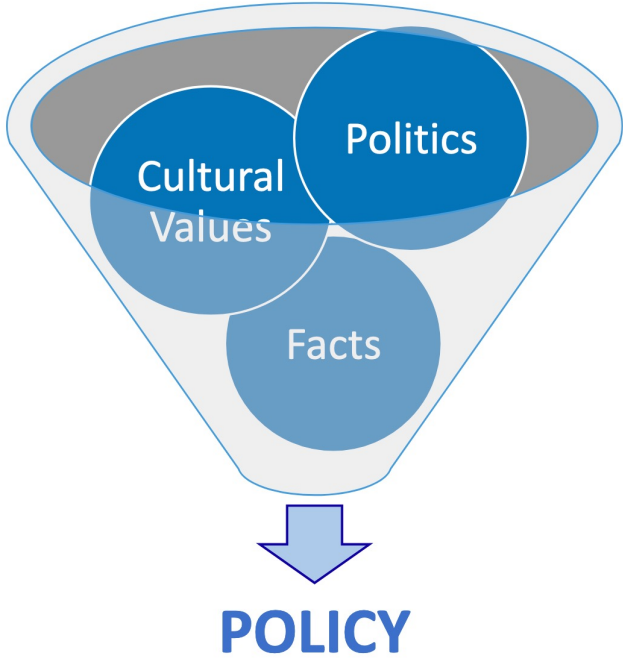


Science and policy: a complicated relationship

	POLICY	ACADEMIC
Mission/objective	Find solutions and actions to “change the world”	Produce knowledge, spur more ideas/questions to “explain the world”
Talking to	Decision-makers, or the general public	Scholars
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear & concise• Linked to “action”/solution• Account for broader context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhaustive, relates to literature• Descriptive• Focused on “one piece of the puzzle”
Timeline	Short deadline and time-sensitive	Long or no deadline
Success criteria	“Right”, (cost-)effective, actionable and applicable	Novel, exact, generalizable
Incentives	Successful interventions, political capital	More research, publication, (academic) acknowledgement

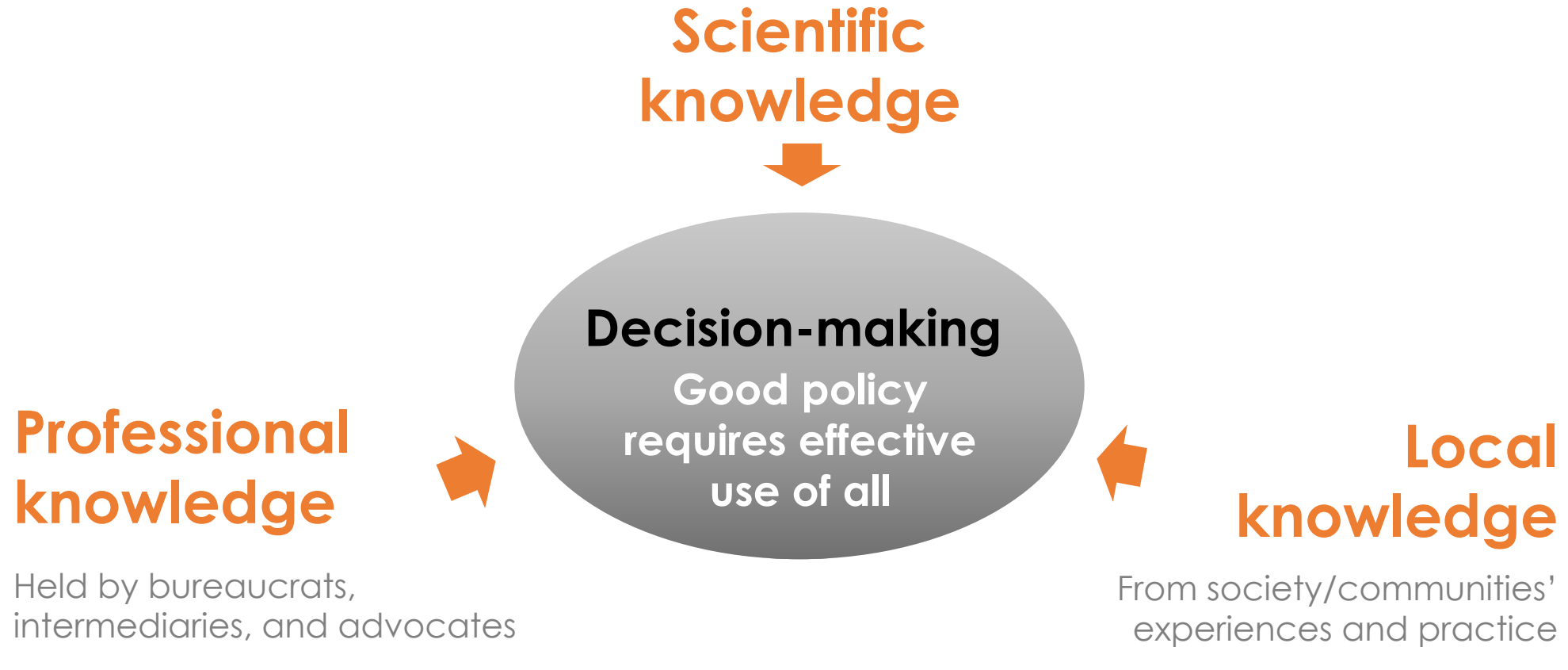
Science and policy: a complicated relationship

The **relative influence of scientific evidence**
VS other factors/inputs in policymaking:



Science and policy: a complicated relationship

The **relative influence of scientific evidence**
VS other factors/inputs in policymaking:



Science and policy: a complicated relationship

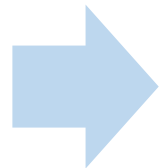
The **relative influence of scientific evidence**
VS other factors/inputs in policymaking:

Wide range of **political, stakeholder and value considerations** that:

- are outside the scope of science
- must be incorporated by the (multiple) actors involved in the policy advisory process.



Better **understanding**
these considerations
can help



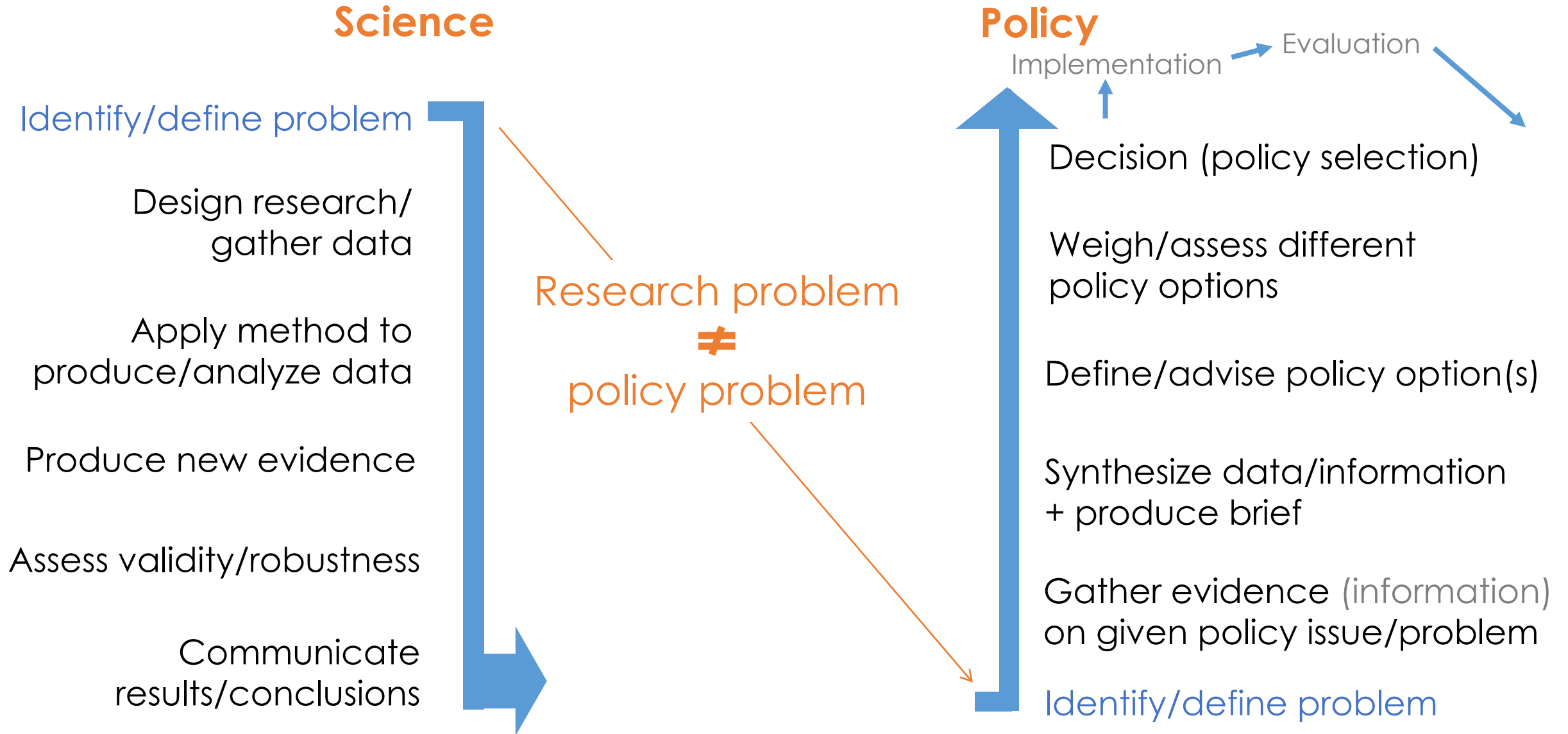
**ALIGN RESEARCH &
COMMUNICATE
EVIDENCE**



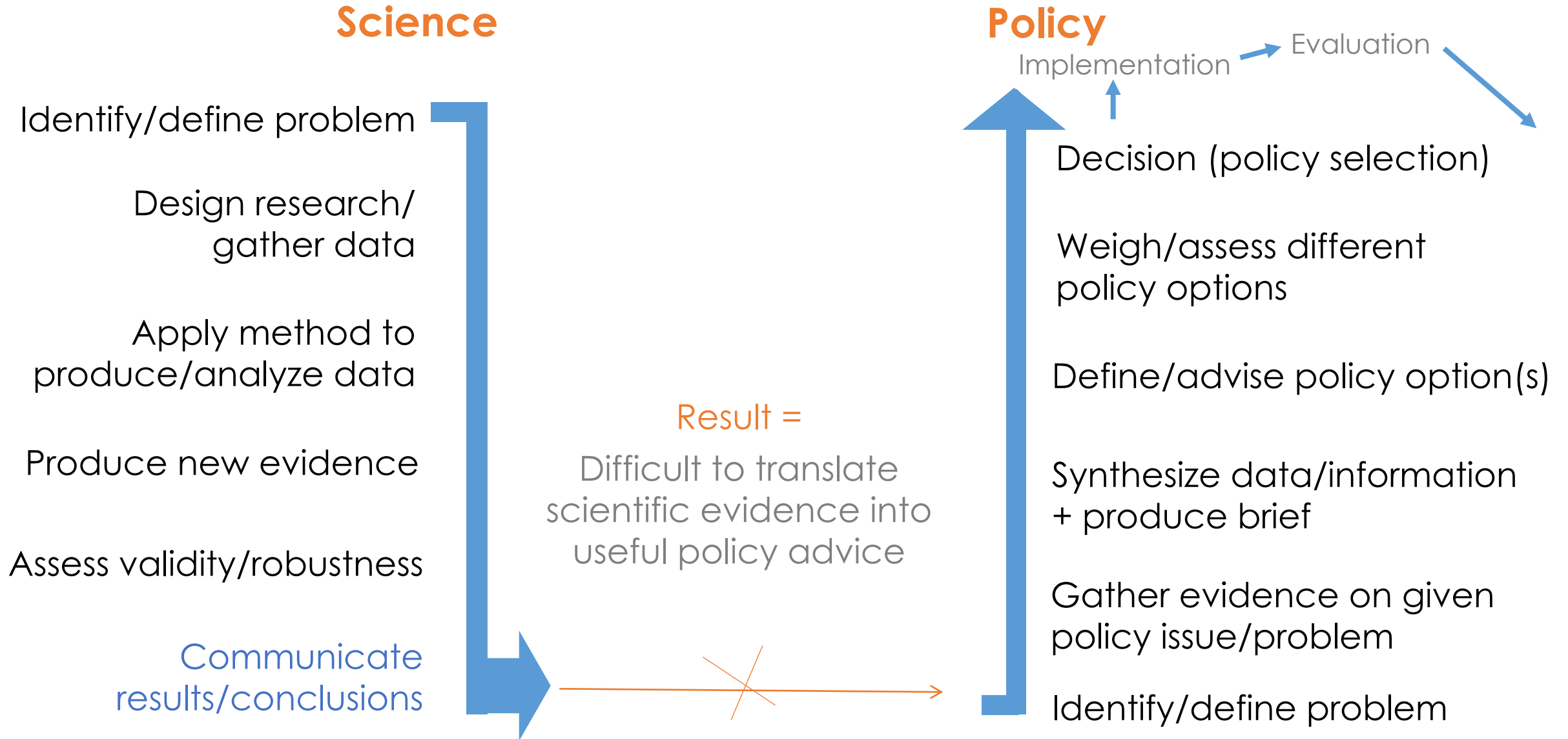
in a way
that speaks
to **POLICY NEEDS**



Science and policy: a complicated relationship



Science and policy: a complicated relationship



Science and policy: a complicated relationship

Science

Identify/define problem

Design research/
gather data

Apply method to
produce/analyze data

Produce new evidence

Assess validity/robustness

Communicate
results/conclusions

Policy

Implementation → Evaluation

Decision (policy selection)

Weigh/assess different
policy options

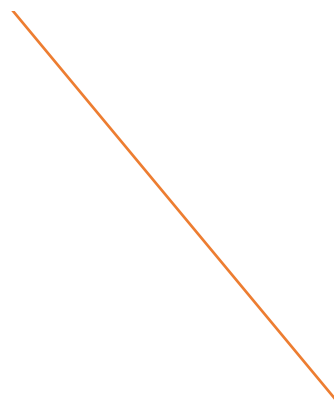
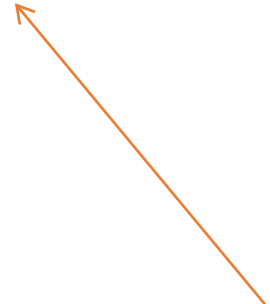
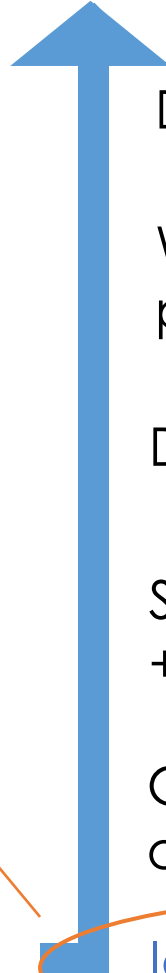
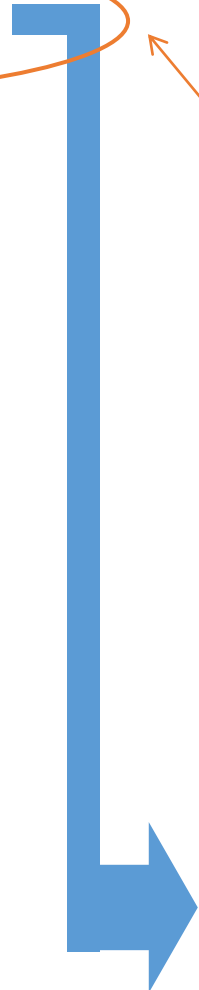
Define/advise policy option(s)

Synthesize data/information
+ produce brief

Gather evidence (information)
on given policy issue/problem

Identify/define problem

Should inform

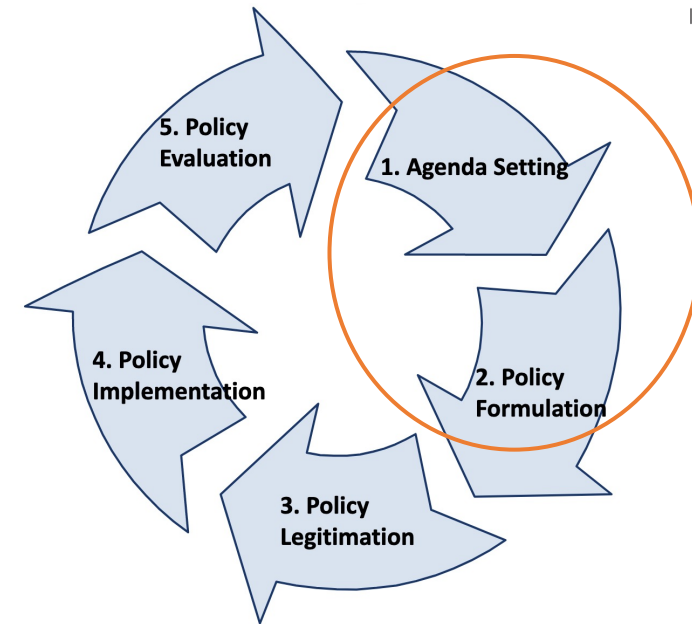


Science and policy: a complicated relationship

The various roles of science in policy

- **identify** problems
- **measure** their magnitude and seriousness
- **review** alternative policy interventions
- **assess** the likely consequences of policy actions (ex-ante)
- **evaluate** what, in fact, results from policy (ex-post)

New problem??



Different uses = different “policy questions”

Must understand the type of question to provide the right type of answer



Science and policy: a complicated relationship



“For policy makers to *do science* better, scientists need to *do policy* better.”

Chris Tyler, Director of UK Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology

The complicated relationship between science and policy



“Communications are adequate if they **reach people with the information that they need** in a form that they can use.”

Baruch Fischhoff, 2011

Applying the science of communication to the communication of science



What can be done from the science/research side?

Adapt research **DESIGN & COMMUNICATION**
to better address policy needs

Step #1:
UNDERSTAND POLICY NEEDS



Understanding policy needs

Policy

Evidence gap

Science



Understanding policy needs

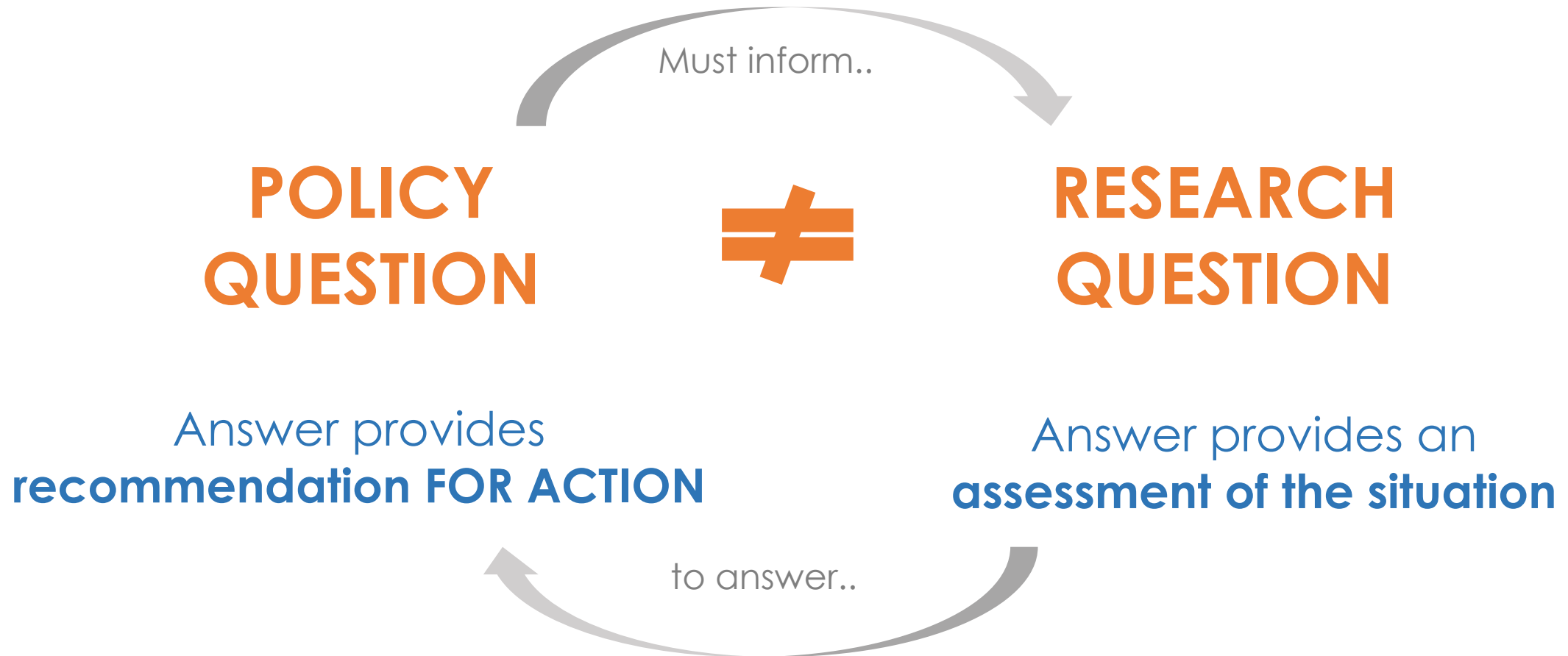
Researchers must:

1. Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)
in order to...
2. Position research/evidence into **existing policy options/strategies**
in order to...
3. Produce practical/**useful recommendations** for policymakers



Understanding policy needs

1. Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)



Understanding policy needs

1. Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)

What are the effects of non-farm diversification on rural women's income?

Research or policy?



Understanding policy needs

1. Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)

**What type of intervention can effectively
contribute to improving rural women's income?**

Research or policy?



Understanding policy needs

1. Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)

Policy question

Must inform..

What type of intervention to improve rural women's income?

What type = must compare **options**

How do policymakers assess/compare policy options? What criteria?



Research question

Effects of non-farm diversification on rural women's income?

Sufficient to inform policy decision?

Non-farm diversification = **1 option**

Right question?



What do policymakers need to know? **Criteria**

Usual criteria to assess “good policy”

EFFECTS	Effectiveness	Does the policy achieve the desired outcomes?
	Unintended effects	Are there unintended effects to consider?
	Equity	What are the effects for different population groups? How do they affect equity?
APPLICA-TION	Cost	What are the costs/budget implications?
	Feasibility	Is this policy technically viable/feasible?
	Acceptability	How is this policy perceived by (priority) stakeholders?

What do policymakers need to know? **Criteria**

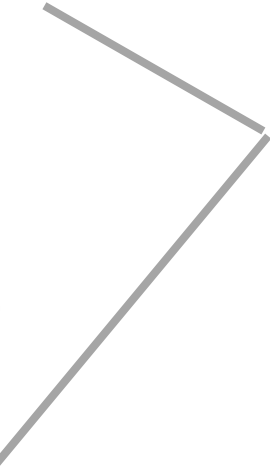
Research evidence usually informs 1-2 criteria, but NEVER THE FULL PICTURE

EFFECTS	Effectiveness	Does the policy achieve the desired outcomes?
	Unintended effects	Are there unintended effects to consider?
	Equity	What are the effects for different population groups? How do they affect equity?
APPLICA-TION	Cost	What are the costs/budget implications?
	Feasibility	Is this policy technically viable/feasible?
	Acceptability	How is this policy perceived by (priority) stakeholders?

What do policymakers need to know? **Criteria**

And research largely tends to **overlook the “practical” constraints** of policymaking

EFFECTS	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
APPLICA-TION	Cost
	Feasibility
	Acceptability



= **cost-effectiveness**
= **efficiency**

major consideration for Gov,
yet rarely part of scientific assessment



Is it applicable/realistic??



What do policymakers need to know?

Babu Rahman, 2017

How to make research more useful to government officials

*“What (policymakers) want from research is (...) **comparative work highlighting a range of possible solutions..”***

**Comparing
options!**

Brick et al., 2018

Winners and losers: Communicating the potential impacts of policies

*“Decision-makers need communications that succinctly **describe potential harms and benefits of different options”***



What do policymakers need to know? Options

Questions that decision-makers always have

Gluckman, 2019

- Why do we have to do something now? Why is it a **priority**?
 - What is the (political) risk of doing or not doing something?
- Have we got the **OPTION** that meets our broader needs?
 - Who will it benefit? Does it benefit priority stakeholders?
 - What are the risks and to whom?
 - How does it **compare with other options**?
- What will it **cost**? (vs “benefits”)



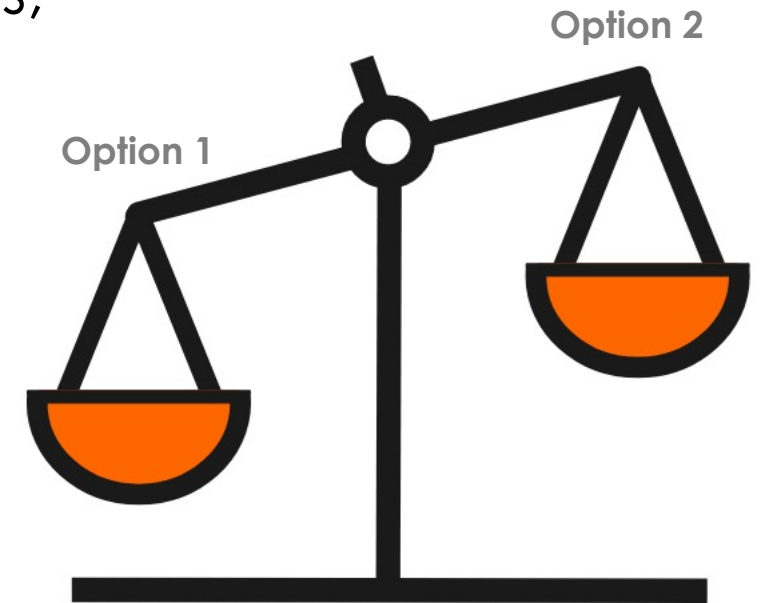
What do policymakers need to know? Options

When **designing research** aimed at informing policy, or preparing to **communicate findings** to policy users, must remember that:

Decision = choice = options

= need to compare options!!

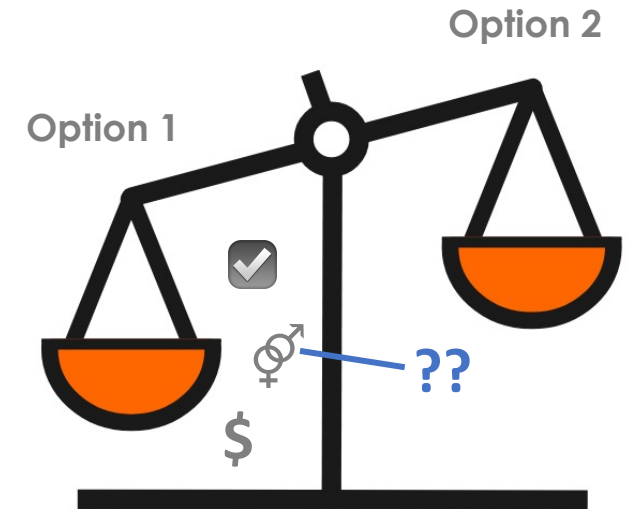
A policy decision will be made by **weighing the pros & cons**, or harms & benefits of the different options



What do policymakers need to know? Options

4 questions to ask before defining research questions/objectives




- #1: What “**decision**” do you wish to inform?
- #2: What are the **options** likely to be considered in this decision process?
- #3: What are the **key criteria** that would be used to evaluate/compare the options?
- #4: What type of **evidence** is missing to help inform this evaluation?



What do policymakers need to know?

Difference between “COMMUNICATING RESEARCH RESULTS”

Option 1

EFFECTS	Effectiveness	
	Unintended effects	
	Equity	
APPLICA-TION	Cost	??
	Feasibility	??
	Acceptability	??



What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE**”

EFFECTS	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
APPLICA-TION	Cost / efficiency
	Feasibility
	Acceptability

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
		??
	??	

If not possible to research all, then..

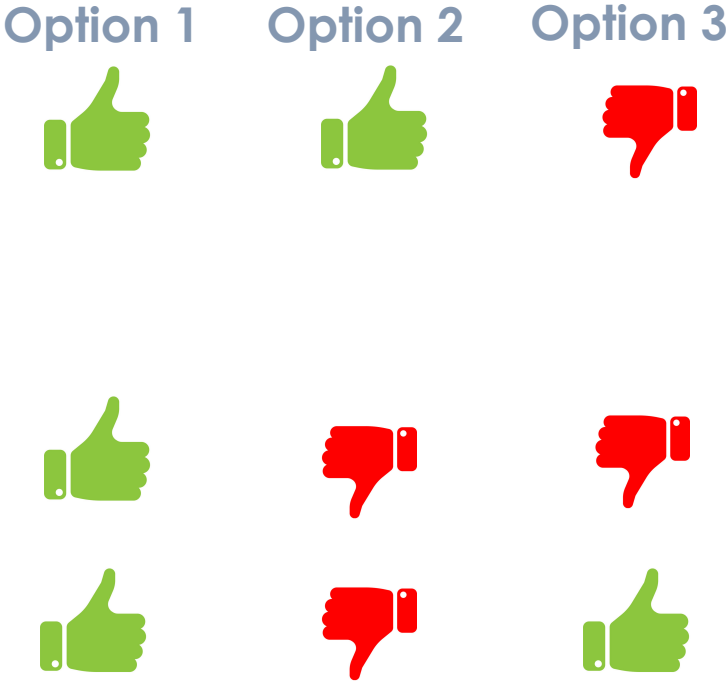
Should also be able/ ready to communicate uncertainty..



What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE**”

EFFECTS	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
APPLICA-TION	Cost / efficiency
	Feasibility
	Acceptability



If not possible to research all, then..

Identify and focus on - **PRIORITIES**



What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE**”

EFFECTS	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
APPLICA-TION	Cost / efficiency
	Feasibility
	Acceptability

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
	??	

If not possible to research all, then..

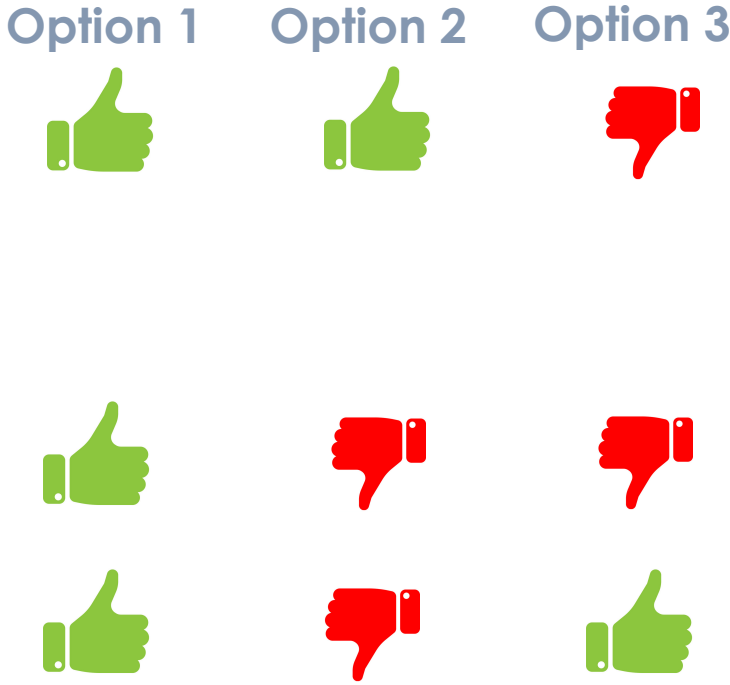
Identify and focus on
- **KEY EVIDENCE GAPS**



What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE**”

EFFECTS	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
APPLICA-TION	Cost / efficiency
	Feasibility
	Acceptability



Don't underestimate the importance of **COST-EFFECTIVENESS**

A basic “**cost-benefit analysis**” can be a very powerful policy argument..



What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE**”

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
EFFECTS	Effectiveness			
	Unintended effects			
	Equity			
APPLICATION	Cost	\$\$		
	Feasibility			
	Acceptability			

New in PEP research:
 Must provide information about the
 “**cost implications**” of the
 recommended policy intervention



What can be done from the science/research side?

Adapt research **DESIGN & COMMUNICATION**
to better address policy needs

Step #2:
POSITION YOUR RESEARCH



Your PEP policy paper

STRUCTURE

- **Problem** - importance
- **Options** available / considered
- **Criteria** to assess options
- **Evaluation** - comparing options based on criteria
- **Recommendation** + roadmap



Part 1 –
interim stage
(December)



Part 2 –
final stage
(May 2022?)

Your PEP policy paper – Part 1 (December)

STRUCTURE – PROBLEM

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Why do we have to do something **now**? Why is it a **priority**?

- What is the (political) risk of doing or not doing something?



CONTEXT MATTERS!

Interest in issues that are important “NOW”

- Media – public perceptions
- Commitments – electoral cycle
- Especially for constituencies/core supporters

Your PEP policy paper – Part 1 (December)

STRUCTURE – OPTIONS

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our broader needs?

1) What are the options available to address this problem?

- Current policy
- Policy alternative/change under consideration by Gov (**CONSULT!**)
- Other alternatives? – based on literature, or other countries..



Your PEP policy paper – Part 1 (December)

STRUCTURE – CRITERIA

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our **broader needs**?

1) What are the options available to address this problem?

2) On the basis of which criteria can we evaluate/compare options?

- Effectiveness, equity, efficiency...
- Consider:
 - Government priorities & constraints – budget, commitments..
 - Which can you realistically assess / find information about?

Your PEP policy paper – Part 1 (December)

STRUCTURE – CRITERIA

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our **broader needs**?

1) What are the options available to address this problem?

2) On the basis of which criteria can we evaluate/compare options?

= Framework of analysis



Your PEP policy paper – Part 2 (May 2022)

STRUCTURE – EVALUATION

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our **broader needs**?

- 1) What are the options available to address this problem?
- 2) On the basis of which criteria can we evaluate/compare options?



3) Assess criteria and use results to compare options

What will it **cost**?



Your PEP policy paper – Part 2 (May 2022)

Assess as many criteria as POSSIBLE...

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
EFFECTS	Effectiveness			
	Unintended effects			
	Equity			
APPLICATION	Cost / efficiency			
	Feasibility			
	Acceptability			

- Your research

- Consultations
- Literature

- Find info on costs **and analyse!**

Policy paper = parallel ANALYSIS



Your PEP policy paper – Part 2 (May 2022)

STRUCTURE – RECOMMENDATION

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
EFFECTS	Effectiveness			
	Unintended effects			
	Equity			
APPLICATION	Cost / efficiency			
	Feasibility			
	Acceptability			

Best option



Your PEP policy paper – Part 2 (May 2022)

STRUCTURE – RECOMMENDATION

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our **broader needs**?

- 1) What are the options available to address this problem?
- 2) On the basis of which criteria can we evaluate/compare options?
- 3) Assess criteria and use results to compare options
- 4) Identify best option (What will it **cost**?)**

Your PEP policy paper – Part 2 (May 2022)

STRUCTURE – RECOMMENDATION

Questions that decision-makers always have...

Have we got the option that meets our **broader needs**?

- 1) What are the options available to address this problem?
- 2) On the basis of which criteria can we evaluate/compare options?
- 3) Assess criteria and use results to compare options

4) Identify best option

5) How do we implement?

Propose a roadmap for success..

Consultations, data gathering, further analysis

Your PEP policy paper

STRUCTURE

- **Problem** - importance
 - **Options** available / considered
 - **Criteria** to assess options
 - **Evaluation** - comparing options based on criteria
 - **Recommendation** + roadmap
-
- Part 1 –**
interim stage
(December)
- Part 2 –**
final stage
(May 2022)

Assignment – for tomorrow (May 20)

Slide 5 – Identify your project's POLICY vs RESEARCH questions



How will your research/evidence contribute
to informing a specific policy decision/process?



Policy VS research questions...

How can we mitigate the impact of climate change on food security?

Policy

Research

What are the effects of crop diversification on household food security in a context of rainfall shocks?

How do climate-related shocks affect women's intra-household bargaining power?

Research

Policy

How can the current climate resilience strategy be adapted to mitigate effects of climate shocks on girls' education?



Thank you !

Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

partnership for
economic
policy



pep

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