Evidence-informed policymaking: a conceptual framework

Narrative report articulating the conceptual framework developed for the FCDO Research Commissioning Centre (RCC) programme on evidence use in policymaking

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List of acronyms and initialisms

AG	Advisory group
BCURE	Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence
CGD	Centre for Global Development
DFID	Department for International Development
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EIPM	Evidence-informed policymaking
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FED	Regional Development grants (Peru)
IDI	Initiative Against Child Malnutrition
IDS	Institute for Development Studies
INEI	National Statistics Institute (Peru)
KTP	Knowledge translation platform
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
MCLCP	Mesa de Concertación de Lucha contra la Pobreza
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PACE	Pan-African Collective for Evidence
PASIC	Policy Action for Sustainable Intensification of Cropping Systems
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development Programme
RBB	Results-Based Budgeting
RCC	Research commissioning centre
RCT	Randomised controlled trial
UEA	University of East Anglia
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Summary and key features

- This conceptual framework offers an overarching framework for understanding the actors, relationships, and pathways through which evidence informs policy decisions. It combines four components:
  - **Evidence ecosystem**: a nested ecosystem involving three central actor groups: evidence producers, evidence users, and intermediaries. Individual actors are nested within institutions that operate in broader political and social systems.
  - **Pathways of change**: The framework identifies key dynamic, cyclical and mutually-reinforcing pathways through which evidence influences policy:
    - **Capabilities**: Enhancing individual and institutional abilities to generate, interpret, and apply evidence.
    - **Relationships and networks**: Creating and strengthening connections between evidence producers, intermediaries, users and other stakeholders.
    - **Structures and processes**: Enhancing institutional policies, processes, and infrastructures that support evidence use.
    - **Evidence culture**: Cultivating supportive values, beliefs, and norms that shape how evidence is perceived, understood, and used in policy contexts.

    Different contexts, institutional arrangements, and political systems may give rise to other pathways for evidence-to-policy processes that warrant further investigation.
  - **Contextual and moderating factors:** The framework acknowledges facilitating and inhibiting factors that influence the evidence ecosystem and the realisation of evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM). These include political interests, power relations, economic constraints, and socio-cultural norms and values.
  - **Outcomes**: The goal is to achieve EIPM, which is conceptualised in four domains:
    - **Conceptual outcomes**: Changing how policymakers conceptualise and understand policy issues and the intellectual frameworks they use.
    - **Attitudinal and behavioural Outcomes**: Shifting policymakers' willingness and propensity to engage with and utilise evidence.
    - **Procedural outcomes**: Influencing how policies are made, including through enhancing policy development, debate, and implementation.
    - **Content outcomes**: Changes to policy content informed by research evidence.

- Finally, we present two **case studies** of 1) Peru's results-based budgeting reform and 2) weather indexed agricultural insurance in Uganda, which successfully integrated evidence to improve policy outcomes. These provide illustrative practical examples of applying the framework to EIPM.

1 Evidence-informed policymaking - Introduction

A substantial corpus of academic literature has documented how research evidence influences and shapes policy decisions, establishing a growing field of study around evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM). EIPM entails incorporating evidence into the policymaking process at various stages of the policy cycle and different levels of government. This involves translating knowledge into policy decisions through multiple routes: from instrumental use, where evidence directly informs decisions, to conceptual use that gradually shapes understanding, to symbolic use, where evidence supports pre-existing positions (Weiss 1979; Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007).

Adopting EIPM in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) has followed a distinct trajectory. White (2019) identifies four distinct waves in the evolution of evidence use in policy: results-based management in the 1990s, the rise of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in the 2000s, the systematic review movement, and most recently, the emphasis on knowledge brokering. New methodological tools and institutional arrangements for generating and using evidence emerged during each wave, though they often built upon, rather than replaced, previous approaches.

In the context of this historical evolution, EIPM faces persistent challenges, including resource constraints affecting both evidence generation and implementation, limited institutional capacity for evidence synthesis and application, and complex political economies that can both help and impede evidence use (Head 2015). Global trends including the rise of authoritarianism, the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation, distrust of science, and the continued exclusion of marginalised voices provide a challenging context for EIPM (Mendizabal and Weyrauch 2024).

The evidence-policy interface literature features numerous frameworks serving different purposes. While some focus on conceptualising evidence-use mechanisms (Parkhurst et al. 2021; Tseng 2012; Langer, Tripney, and Gough 2016), others provide practical intervention guidance (Shaxson et al. 2021; Gaarder and Handel 2022; Court and Young 2006). Several frameworks examine institutional and contextual factors (Kuchenmüller et al. 2022; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016), with particular attention to capacity-building pathways (Vogel and Punton 2018), organisational readiness (Redman et al. 2015), and the biased use of evidence (Parkhurst 2016). Sector-specific frameworks have emerged in education (Rickinson et al. 2022) and health (Graham et al. 2006; Kuchenmüller et al. 2022; Parkhurst et al. 2021; Redman et al. 2015), while others address the broader policy-research interface (Bogenschneider, Day, and Parrott 2019; Langer and Weyrauch 2020; Oliver et al. 2022). These frameworks share common elements around institutional incentives, capacity development, and knowledge translation, though they differ in their theoretical depth and practical applicability. We also acknowledge a long-standing emphasis and academic work on citizen science and epistemic justice, although this falls out of the scope of this work - see, for example, Combaz, Connor, and Georgalakis (2023).

The institutionalisation of evidence use extends beyond mere technical capacity to access and apply evidence, but encompasses political and organisational dynamics. Political economy considerations—including power relationships, vested interests, and institutional incentives—often determine whether and how evidence influences policy decisions (Shaxson et al. 2021; Mecaskey et al. 2023; Jessani, Valmeekanathan, Babcock, and Ling 2020). Influences include both formal political structures (legislative processes, executive hierarchies) and informal

power networks (Jessani, Babcock, et al. 2018; Jessani, Boulay, and Bennett 2016) that shape policy priorities and decisions. Additionally, institutional factors such as budget cycles and allocation (Parkhurst et al. 2021), organisational context (Shaxson et al. 2016), power relations (Gaventa 2006), electoral timelines (Dodd et al. 2019), and bureaucratic procedures (Baum et al. 2019) create windows of opportunity or constraints for evidence uptake.

2 Background and rationale

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Research Commissioning Centre (RCC), a new initiative led by 3ie and the University of Birmingham with a global consortium of academic and practitioner partners to streamline research commissioning and enhance development policy impact, is commissioning a new programme of work on evidence use in policymaking from April 2025. To inform this work, we conducted a series of scoping activities, comprising: a rapid review of theoretical literature on EIPM, a systematic review conducted in partnership with the Pan-African Collective for Evidence (PACE) examining effective methods for increasing evidence use in policy decisions (Nduku et al. 2025), and consultations with key stakeholders across the evidence-to-policy spectrum. This work uncovered several gaps in the field:

- The space lacks a shared conceptual framework linking research evidence production, translation and use in policy and a common taxonomy of interventions.
- Previous research on the use of research evidence in policymaking has engaged in only a limited way with theory and the political economy of policymaking.
- Impact evaluations of innovations to increase the use of evidence are limited, particularly in LMICs.
- Policy impact is often inadequately defined in EIPM research, with a need to understand and develop appropriate indicators and outcome measures by which to assess evidence use in policymaking.

To support future scholarship in the EIPM field, the current work aims to provide a theoretical framing for researchers and an inventory of measures to support monitoring evidence use. The project had two key objectives:

1. Produce a conceptual framework linking the use of research evidence with policy processes and outcomes.
2. Review and appraise existing measures of evidence use and measures of constraining/facilitating conditions, mapped according to the framework.

The goal of developing a framework is to map out when, how and by whom evidence is used in policymaking[1] and identify areas of interest for measurement. It aimed to operationalise measurements for monitoring and evaluating the process of evidence use in public policy as well as identify gaps where new measures could be developed. Our inventory of evidence-use measures mapped onto the components of the conceptual framework (Objective 2) is described elsewhere (link to user guide) and can be explored here (insert link to inventory).

This document is intended to articulate the conceptual framework, help the reader navigate its components, and provide the basis for its development. We first describe the method for

[1] Please see definitions of key concepts below.

developing the framework and the assumptions underpinning it. This is followed by detailing the components in our framework, which include 1) actors, 2) pathways of change, 3) moderating and contextual factors, and 4) the ultimate outcome, EIPM. We conclude by presenting two case studies from Peru and Uganda to exemplify the system in motion.

3 Conceptual framework objectives

While numerous frameworks have emerged to understand research evidence use in policy processes and deliberations, a gap remains for an overarching approach that captures the evidence-to-policy processes and particularly its dynamic, non-linear nature. Existing frameworks tend to focus on specific pathways like capacity building, or factors like organisational readiness, or sector-specific applications, like health or education, rather than a more encompassing ecosystem view. This fragmentation in the literature, combined with the need to understand complex interactions between producers, intermediaries, and users within a wider system, calls for a framework that maps these multilayered relationships and processes analytically and visually.

A distinctive feature of this framework is its emphasis on measurable indicators and trackable pathways. For actor attributes, pathways of change, moderating and context factors, and outcomes in the framework, we identify indicators that can be used to monitor evidence use and the factors that facilitate or hinder it. These range from baseline actor characteristics (e.g., awareness of evidence sources), to intermediate outcomes (e.g., capacity to appraise research evidence), to EIPM outcome measures (e.g., use of research language in policy documents). The accompanying measures database also provides information on data collection methods and ratings of validity and reliability, to support systematic tracking of evidence influence across different timeframes and contexts.

This conceptual framework has been developed to shape a new programme of research on evidence use in policy by the FCDO RCC. As there can be no ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of the evidence-to-policy process, the purpose of our framework is to provide an overarching structure into which more nuanced models that apply these high-level concepts to specific contexts and types of policymaking can be nested. Recognising the complexity of evidence-to-policy pathways, its primary contribution lies in mapping measurable outcomes and trackable pathways, providing a practical tool for researchers and practitioners.

The scope of our framework is dictated by several key definitions and assumptions:

- To keep the scope of our framework manageable, and in recognition of FCDO and RCC’s role in commissioning research, our framework is primarily concerned with the role of **evidence generated from research**, by which we mean a systematic investigative process employed to increase or revise current knowledge. We recognise the value of other types of evidence on which policymakers draw, which are not addressed explicitly here, as well as an interplay between research and other forms of evidence.
- For the purpose of this project, **policymakers** refer to actors working in a government department at any level or branch of government, including ministers, senior staff and those working for them in key ministries and supporting agencies, and public administrators that either could or should contribute to a policy process. While our framework recognises a diversity of roles and mandates of policymaking actors vis-à-vis EIPM—for example, in distinguishing between civil servants and political

appointees as ecosystem actors—it does not attempt to differentiate evidence-to-policy responsibilities and pathways across these different roles. Our framework also does not address the use of evidence by frontline practitioners (doctors, teachers) or citizens outside government policy roles.

- **Evidence-informed policymaking** refers to the integration of evidence into policymaking at various levels or branches of governance and in various aspects of the policy process, from agenda-setting and policy formulation to policy decision-making and implementation.[2] We conceive of policy broadly to include governmental strategy or national planning, public sector investment decisions, programme implementation, legislation, reform, regulation, or similar. However, this framework does not focus on any specific stage of the policy process. We also recognise that evidence can be used for different purposes by policymakers (for example, instrumentally, to directly apply research findings to solve a specific problem, or strategically, to justify a pre-existing position), but our high-level framework does not distinguish between these.
- The **underlying premise** of the framework is that increased consideration and use of research evidence, alongside other forms of evidence, in policymaking processes results in more effective and efficient policy decisions, and ultimately better socio-economic outcomes. These downstream impacts are beyond the scope of our framework, but they would be important to explore in future research.

4 Method for developing the conceptual framework for EIPM

4.1 Search strategy, inclusion criteria and extraction

To ensure our framework is informed by established knowledge, we conducted a targeted review of existing frameworks that model the use of research evidence in public policy. This process involved identifying, screening, and extracting information on key components and applicability of relevant frameworks.

We employed a multi-step procedure to identify relevant frameworks to be used to develop our conceptual framework:

1. We identified 19 **key frameworks** from the systematic review on EIPM (Nduku et al. 2025) and wider scoping conducted as part of the wider RCC programme of work.
2. **Keyword searches** and snowballing on academic and grey databases. We developed Boolean search strings for use on two academic databases (EBSCO and Scopus). Next, we searched selected grey literature sources for theoretical works on EIPM. The list of think tanks and other resources was developed and shared with FCDO in the study plan before we began the search. To keep the project feasible within available timelines, it is not based on systematic or exhaustive search of literature but uses reasonable scoping and snowballing.
3. Finally, we **consulted with subject matter experts** to confirm our search methods and supplement identified resources.

[2] Due to its focus on government policymaking actors, the framework primarily focuses on how evidence informs policy formulation rather than downstream implementation but is not explicitly 'implementation-blind.'

Through this identification process, we aimed to ensure that our analysis captured a range of theoretical frameworks on the use of research evidence in policymaking. We applied the following inclusion criteria and extraction processes for screening the academic and grey literature results:

1. Inclusion criteria – To supplement the 19 frameworks already identified, we conducted title and abstract screening on the 929 academic studies from the keyword search. We excluded studies that proposed general theories of change or logic models. Instead, we focused on studies that presented theoretical frameworks of evidence use in policymaking. Here, we excluded 770 studies to end up with an additional 159 studies. The technical team then conducted full text screening and excluded a further 25 studies.
2. Data extraction – Given resource constraints and on the advice of the subject matter experts, we adopted a two-step augmented data extraction strategy. First, the team focused on the key frameworks and extracted the following relevant information for each paper: theoretical underpinnings, EIPM problem identified, actors, activities, solution for EIPM, empirical support, pathways, key components of the framework, underlying assumptions, moderators or barriers and facilitators and outcome description. The extraction sheet provided guides on each of these criteria to allow for comparability in the synthesis and the analytical phase. Second, we extracted information from included studies from academic and grey literature sources only if there was any additional insight on these aspects. The core technical team members led this restrictive, measured extraction. Subject matter experts provided additional references to supplement the identified literature pool.

Several methodological limitations warrant consideration. Papers discussing pathways or processes relevant to the conceptual framework may have been missed if they were not framed as frameworks. The English-language focus excluded contributions from other languages, while the academic focus potentially overlooked frameworks from practitioner communities.

4.2 Developing the conceptual framework

After extracting characteristics from the key frameworks in the first round, the core technical team and subject matter experts (collectively called the project team) began synthesising and developing visual maps to understand the EIPM system. Each iteration was reconciled and discussed among team members to ensure logical and theoretical consistency.

During this period, the RCC also set up an advisory group (AG) composed of senior academics and professionals who work on the topic to ensure a robust review process. After developing the first round of framework, the project team shared progress to date with the AG in a virtual workshop to gather comments and critical reviews. We also requested the AG for key additional literature.

The project team responded to the AG's feedback and considered all the additional recommendations to develop the current model. We reiterate here that we are not aiming to propose a one-size-fits-all or fully explanatory model on the topic. This was also underscored during the AG meeting. In line with suggestions, we propose a model that seeks to balance oversimplification and complexity of the EIPM ecosystem without sacrificing the model's theoretical tractability.

5 Explaining the conceptual framework

5.1 Components of the conceptual framework

Our framework conceptualises evidence use within a complex ecosystem of actors and institutions that engage in EIPM process. At its core, we understand the existence of a policy ecosystem comprising three main types of actors—evidence producers, intermediaries, and users—with roles that often overlap and intersect (Kuchenmüller et al. 2022; Langer and Weyrauch 2020; Bogenschneider 2020). While the framework does not attempt to capture every stakeholder involved in evidence-to-policy processes, it recognises that researchers, policymakers, and intermediaries operate within a broader ecosystem of relationships and influence EIPM (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016).

The evidence-to-policy process operates across multiple, interconnected levels that must be considered simultaneously (Bowen and Zwi 2005; Cormack et al. 2021). At the individual level, we examine the capacities of knowledge producers, policymakers, and intermediaries to generate, request, broker, interpret, and apply evidence, and the relationships between actors. At the organisational level, we consider institutional mechanisms, procedures, and cultures enabling or inhibiting evidence use – from knowledge management systems to incentive structures. The systemic dimension addresses broader ecosystem factors that shape evidence flows between producers and users, including the roles of international stakeholders, policy networks, cross-institutional partnerships, and national research systems.

The framework emphasises that real-world pathways of change usually do not follow a fixed sequence (non-linear), are dynamic, and span different levels (individuals, organisations, and systems) (Bowen and Zwi 2005; Cormack et al. 2021). It recognises that evidence can contribute to policy change through multiple channels, whether by shifting conceptual understanding, altering behaviours, modifying procedures, or directly influencing policy content (Langer, Tripney, and Gough 2016).

Finally, the framework positions external contextual factors as active forces in the evidence-to-policy process. Factors such as the political climate, public opinion, and vested interests, including corruption, may play important roles in either facilitating or impeding evidence-informed policymaking (Buckley et al. 2014; Cairney 2023; Dobrow et al. 2006; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016).

Our conceptual framework rests on several assumptions that should be made explicit. First, we assume that while evidence is necessary for improved policy outcomes, it is insufficient to achieve change on its own. Other factors, including political will and implementation capacity, play key roles in this process. Second, we assume that evidence influence occurs through multiple non-linear pathways simultaneously and in mutually reinforcing ways, rather than through simple linear processes. Third, we recognise that different types of evidence may be more or less influential in various contexts and policy domains. In that sense, our framework has limitations: it does not capture all possible evidence-to-policy pathways; it focuses primarily on formal rather than informal evidence influence and use; it does not explore differences by policy sector, model of government, or party system; its measurement approach may not capture subtle or long-term conceptual influences of evidence on policy thinking; and it does not aim specifically to explain evidence use across the later stages of the policy cycle (policy implementation and policy evaluation). Finally, we recognise that not all aspects of this ecosystem are measurable, trackable or even observable (without neglecting their

importance) for multiple reasons, for instance, the informality around the process. Some take longer than others to manifest. These assumptions and limitations should be considered when applying the model in specific contexts.

We now present each component of the full framework (Figure 1), starting from the network of actors in the evidence ecosystem and increasingly adding layers as our framework builds pathways of change through which the actors pass, and the external forces to which they are subject before achieving EIPM outcomes. Each section has an attached visual to indicate the relevant part of the framework we are describing, which follows and builds on the previous element.

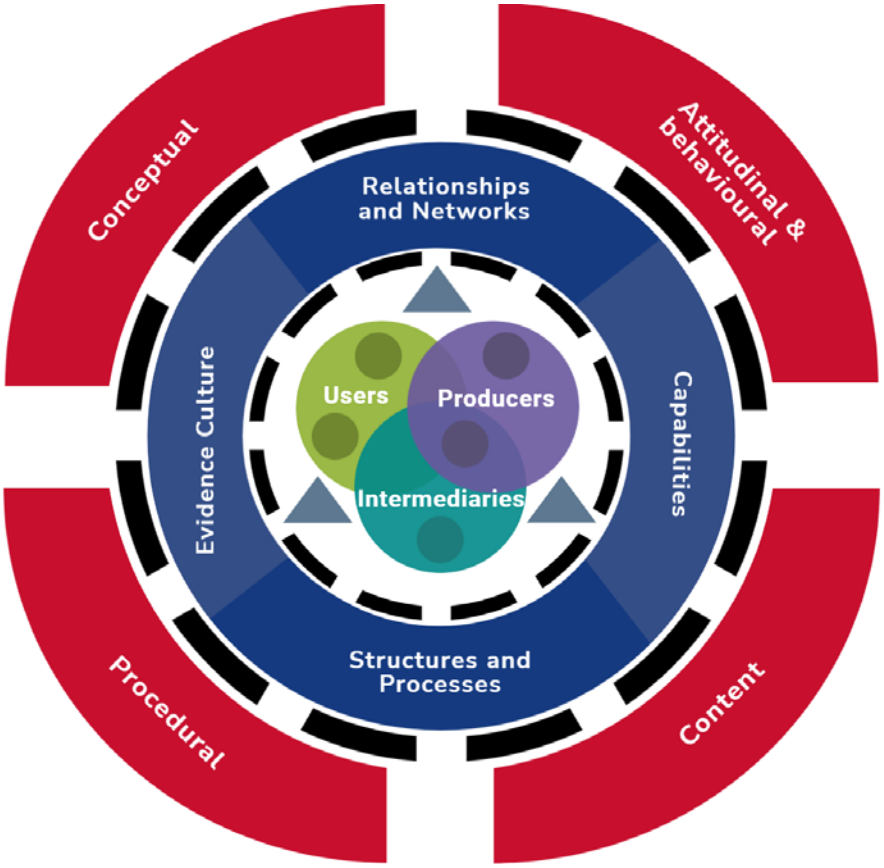

Figure 1: Full conceptual framework for EIPM

5.2 Actor ecosystem

The effective use of research findings depends on a number of factors. These include the robustness and relevance of the findings; how well they are communicated, interpreted, and adapted to policy contexts; and the extent to which agendas align. EIPM therefore requires coordinated efforts between a variety of actors in the evidence ecosystem.

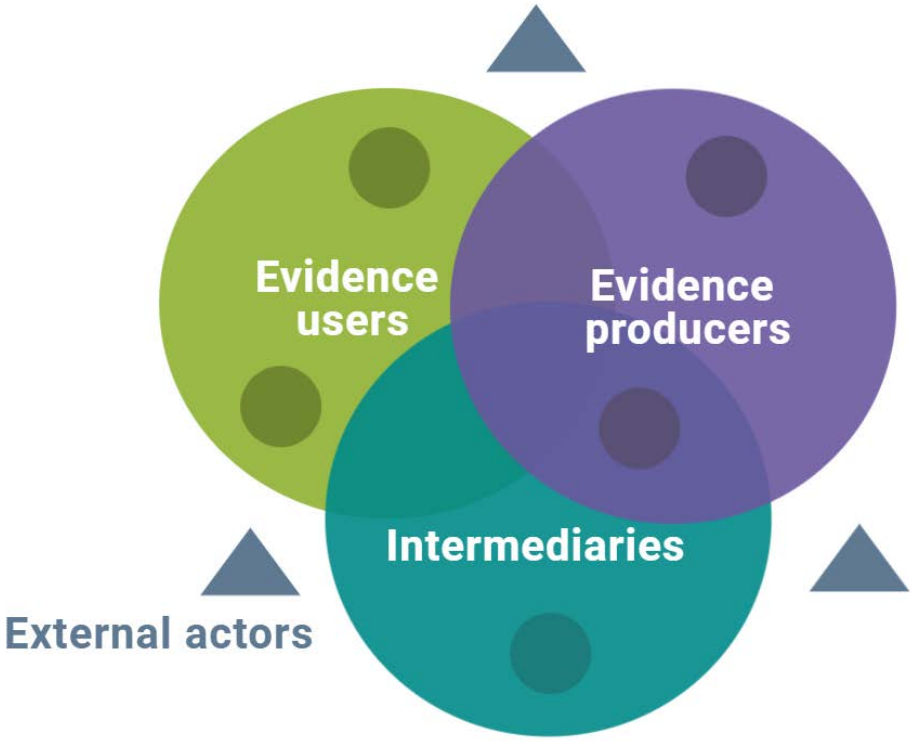

Figure 2: Actors nested in their institutions and system

The nested ecosystem model forms the centre of our framework. We conceptualise it as a series of overlapping circles (Figure 2) representing different actors: evidence producers (such as researchers), intermediaries (such as think tanks, knowledge translation platforms (KTPs), or embedded policy labs), and users (such as civil servants or elected officials). The three larger circles represent the institutional level of the evidence ecosystem in which individuals in each role (small circles) are nested.

Institutions are, in turn, nested within a larger system. The larger system includes the infrastructure that supports producing and accessing high-quality evidence—for example, evidence repositories, technical infrastructure, physical infrastructure, funding and resources (Oliver et al. 2022, Shaxson et al. 2021). We also recognise other actors, such as research funders, international financial institutions, or civil society organisations, who may influence evidence use for policy but play different roles to producers, intermediaries, and users. These actors are represented as triangles outside the Venn diagrams but can have an outsized role in influencing research to policy impact.

Within this ecosystem, each actor is characterised by particular attributes, which operate at different levels. These attributes form the crux of how actors behave within this ecosystem. EIPM relies heavily on the roles and characteristics of evidence producers, intermediaries and users who generate, synthesise, and translate evidence into actionable insights for policymaking. In the following sections, we describe the attributes of each set that facilitate evidence use before detailing the intersections and interplay between them. Section 5.4 considers the importance of the wider context in which these actors operate.

5.2.1 Evidence producers

EIPM relies on the production of high-quality research that informs policy decisions. Evidence producers, including academic researchers, research institutions, and NGOs, play a crucial

role in generating reliable, relevant, and accessible research that policymakers can use to shape policies effectively. Factors including research experience and technical expertise, communication skills, credibility and trust, professional background and partnerships, and epistemic preferences and biases collectively shape the capacity of knowledge producers to engage effectively with policymakers and other stakeholders.

The ability to produce high-quality, credible research is the defining characteristic of effective evidence producers. This directly depends on **individual research skills, capacity and technical expertise** in research design, innovation, data collection, and analysis. Weyrauch and colleagues (2016) stress the importance of background academic training and expertise in ensuring producers have the foundational skills necessary for rigorous research and evidence generation. Closely related to subject skills is the knowledge and **awareness of policy processes**. Researchers grounded in public policy realities are more likely to align their work with the potential priorities of policymakers (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Oliver et al. 2022; Stone and Maxwell 2004). Evidence that lacks direct relevance to policy challenges is less likely to be utilised effectively.

The ability to leverage technical skills and integrate evidence into policy processes depends on **communication** and **knowledge translation skills**. In that sense, the **cognitive action and ability** to turn research evidence into relevant, actionable frames and to communicate these effectively are fundamental (Satterfield et al. 2009; Stone and Maxwell 2004). Importantly, the underlying **credibility and trust** of the research and the researchers—which may be unrelated to research rigour—can influence policymakers' receptiveness to evidence, with engagement more likely when. producers are perceived as trustworthy and unbiased (Stone and Maxwell 2004; Vogel and Punton 2018; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Court and Young 2006).

At the institutional level, evidence producers operate within organisational structures and systems that significantly shape their ability to engage in policy-relevant research and knowledge translation. Research institutions' **reward and incentive systems** play a crucial role, for example, where traditional academic metrics prioritise peer-reviewed publications over policy engagement, potentially disincentivising sustained policy-oriented work. Other aspects include creating incentives for engagement with policymakers and other stakeholders, providing funding and fostering an institutional culture around engagement (Jessani, Siddiqi, et al. 2018). Institutional policies around workload allocation, promotion criteria, and resource distribution can either enable or constrain researchers' capacity to build long-term relationships with policymakers (Jessani, Valmeekanathan, Babcock, and Ling 2020).

Additionally, **organisational culture and leadership support** are vital: institutions that explicitly value and recognise policy engagement, provide dedicated resources for knowledge translation activities, and create formal mechanisms for policy outreach are more likely to foster effective evidence-to-policy relationships. Infrastructure and support systems, such as policy liaison offices, communications teams, and administrative backing for engagement activities, can further enable researchers to effectively connect their work with policy processes (Jessani, Boulay, and Bennett 2016).

5.2.2 Evidence users

Evidence users—focused here on policymakers (including elected officials, political appointees and public administrators)—operate in multifaceted decision-making contexts

characterised by time and resource constraints, political pressures, and bureaucratic requirements. Various individual-level traits of knowledge users support navigating this context and integrating evidence use into policymaking. These encompass knowledge, skills, confidence, motivation, and contextual alignment, collectively shaping policymakers' capacity to utilise evidence in decision-making processes (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Court and Young 2006; Oliver et al. 2022; Vogel and Punton 2018).

A critical characteristic of knowledge users in EIPM is their **ability to engage with and effectively interpret research**. Nutley and colleagues (2007) suggest that policymakers with higher levels of education, particularly those with training in research methodologies, are more adept at evaluating and integrating evidence. Similarly, prior experience may play a role in their ability to assess the credibility and applicability of evidence (Bogenschneider, Day, and Parrott 2019).

At a more behavioural level, **attitudes towards research** play a decisive role in determining how much evidence is utilised in policymaking. Policymakers vary in their epistemological stance towards evidence, with some demonstrating a strong preference for scientific rigour, and others prioritising experiential knowledge and political power considerations (Bawah, Biney, and Kyei 2022). Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors shape policymakers' motivation to use research. For instance, policymakers who view research as a valuable tool rather than an external imposition are more likely to use evidence effectively (Vogel and Punton 2018).

Policymakers' **cognitive biases and decision-making heuristics** similarly shape how they engage with evidence (Parkhurst 2017). Cairney (2019) argues that the circumstances under which policymakers operate—uncertainty, time constraints, information overload—lead to bounded rationality: as policymakers cannot process all available information comprehensively, they rely on heuristics, cognitive shortcuts, and selective interpretation of evidence to simplify complex policy issues.

A related factor here is the **control and power policymakers exercise over evidence uptake**. The literature on andragogy and policy learning suggests that the degree of control decision-makers have over framing the agenda significantly impacts their responsiveness to new evidence. Dunlop (2017) shows that when policymakers exercise strong control over their learning process, they may be more likely to selectively integrate or dismiss evidence based on their cognitive or ideological dispositions. The effectiveness of evidence-informed learning is thus contingent on the extent to which policymakers are open to external authority and willing to cede control over the framing of knowledge.

At the institutional level, **organisational culture, leadership, and incentive structures** further dictate how policymakers interpret and apply research (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Shaxson et al. 2016). Evidence champions within government institutions can foster a culture of evidence application and promote systematic engagement with research findings (Oliver et al. 2022). On the other hand, rigid administrative structures that prioritise precedent and compliance over adaptive, evidence-driven policy approaches can prevent policymakers from embracing new evidence when it emerges (Shaxson et al. 2021). Operational constraints around budgets and departmental business also influence evidence uptake (Shaxson et al. 2016; Shaxson et al. 2021), while deeply ingrained institutional norms can slow reform efforts and restrict the effective use of evidence (Nutley et al. 2007).

5.2.3 Intermediaries

Evidence intermediaries, also known as knowledge brokers, play a fundamental role in bridging the 'know-do' gap between evidence and policymaking. They are a heterogeneous group within the evidence ecosystem, with different objectives and operating models: they may be embedded within governments as individuals or within specialist units such as policy labs; hosted by universities, NGOs or foundations; or operate as independent organisations (Breckon and Boaz, 2023). They may focus primarily on interpreting and translating available evidence for policy; they may additionally fund or produce research or conduct capacity-strengthening initiatives with policymakers.

At their core, intermediaries serve as **interpreters and facilitators** (Ward, House, and Hamer 2009), ensuring that research findings are relevant and accessible to policymakers. With both **technical expertise** and **communication skills**, they act as 'linkage agents' who foster sustained engagement between research producers and policymakers and build trusted relationships to ensure that policymakers are more likely to utilise evidence (Ward, House, and Hamer 2009).

Effective intermediaries **navigate varied political and organisational contexts**, allowing them to cross complex governance structures. They are attuned to the constraints and priorities of policy environments, enabling them to adapt evidence to fit local needs and timelines without sacrificing its integrity (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007). Intermediaries bridge gaps by understanding these dynamics and strategically position evidence within politically feasible narratives (Ward, House, and Hamer 2009).

Intermediaries are typically **well-networked**, with skills in establishing strong relationships across different domains. **Institutional structures for knowledge exchange**, such as interactive platforms that connect policymakers with experts, may underpin the work of evidence intermediaries (Shaxson et al. 2021). Media actors can also play an intermediary role by disseminating research findings, raising public awareness, and holding policymakers accountable for EIPM.

Successful intermediaries support EIPM from a position of **credibility**, **autonomy** and **authority** (Bandola-Gill and Lyall 2017), which underpins both passive and active approaches to knowledge dissemination. MacKillop and colleagues (2023) discuss how the legitimacy of intermediary organisations derives from being academic and neutral at one end, to political and advisory on the other, depending on the context. They also recognise the selection role intermediaries play in defining how a problem is presented and understood by decision-makers and determining what evidence 'counts' for policymaking.

5.2.4 Actors external to the evidence ecosystem

Additional actors play an important role in influencing EIPM without directly producing, intermediating, or using research for policy, although there may be some overlap with these functions. Shown as entities outside the overlapping circles in the centre of the framework, these individuals and institutions—including local and international research funders, development partners, international financial institutions, and civil society organisations—can exert a powerful influence on both the generation and accessibility of evidence and how it is used in policy processes. Our evidence ecosystem underscores the importance of these external actors and the dynamic, interlinked relationship they have with evidence producers, intermediaries and users.

5.2.5 Overlaps

EIPM is a volatile, dynamic process in an often highly contested and unstable policy environment. The effective integration of evidence into policy is rarely dependent on the underlying strength of the research but primarily on the interplay between evidence producers, users and intermediaries and their wider context. Actors with their corresponding attributes do not work in isolation in the EIPM ecosystem, and many play complex, intersecting or overlapping roles. Figure 2 depicts these inter-actor relationships through the intersections between their characteristic sets at individual and institutional level. Relationships between actors, too, have characteristics attached to them. They serve as more than the transfer of information: their effectiveness in facilitating collaboration and dialogue is manifested by built trust, credibility, mutual benefit, and shared understanding and values.

Notably, these interdependencies may result from formal or informal interaction channels and network-level behaviours of the actors (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016) that may lead to unique forces forming their own pathways to EIPM. This may happen as a result of alignment of values and underlying beliefs (Court and Young 2003; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016), incentives (Lomas 2000; Shaxson 2016; Jessani, Valmeekanathan, Babcock, Ling, et al. 2020), collaborative frameworks that meet each other's needs (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Graham et al. 2006), shared understanding of policy priorities (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Georgalakis and Rose 2019), relationships driven by informality of connections that are a result of ethnicity, tribe, political party, or alma mater (Jessani, Siddiqi, et al. 2018; Jessani, Valmeekanathan, Babcock, Ling, et al. 2020), among others. All these characteristics interact with the broader systemic factors to determine the extent to which pathways to change are activated and evidence is used in policy decision-making.

5.3 Pathways of change

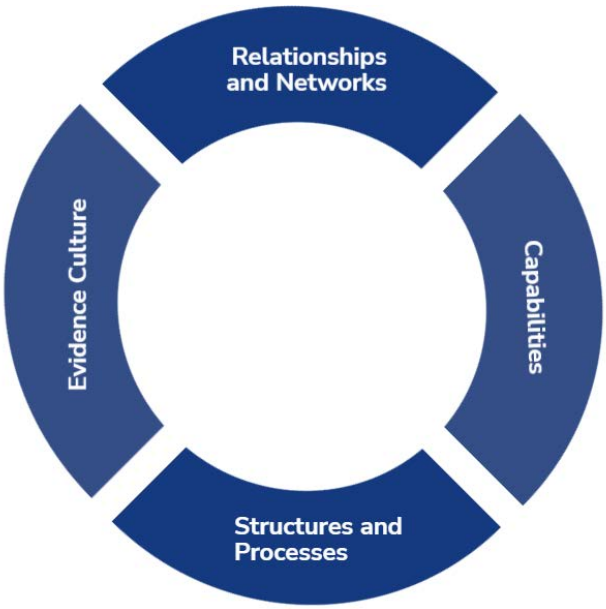

Figure 3: Pathways of change in the conceptual framework

Our framework employs pathways of change as a central concept to understand evidence-to-policy processes. While pathways are often described as mechanisms or channels, we conceptualise them as complex journeys of evidence flowing through interconnected actors and multiple levels (individuals and institutions). This understanding acknowledges both the transformative processes involved and the contextual factors that shape evidence translation into policy.

Building on established frameworks in the field (Parkhurst et al. 2021; Langer, Tripney, and Gough 2016), we conceptualise pathways of change in the evidence-to-policy ecosystem through five essential characteristics: **directionality** in how influence flows between actors and institutions (Kuchenmüller et al. 2022; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016); integrating **interconnected steps** rather than isolated activities (Vogel and Punton 2018). They also reflect **intentional actions** by specific actors operating within broader ecosystems (Langer, Tripney, and Gough 2016) and reveal **transformative potential** in reshaping evidence use in policy processes (Parkhurst et al. 2021).

Based on the literature and experts' experience, our analysis identified four main pathways through which evidence influences policy: capabilities, relationships and networks, structures and processes, and evidence culture. These pathways usually operate simultaneously and interact with each other within the evidence ecosystem (Figure 3).

5.3.1 Capabilities pathway

The **capabilities pathway** operates through multiple mechanisms that enhance individual and institutional abilities to generate, interpret, and apply evidence (Damba, Mtshali, and Chimbari 2022; Doshmangir et al. 2022). For evidence producers, this includes training programmes that build technical skills in research methods, data analysis, and evidence synthesis (Langer, Tripney, and Gough 2016). There is also a focus on soft skills, including relationship building, communication, diplomacy, and understanding the policy arena (Jessani, Kennedy, and Bennett 2016).

Beyond traditional training schemes including workshops and technical assistance, this pathway includes innovative methodologies like peer learning networks, embedded learning, mentorship programs and leadership development (Baumann and Wyss 2024; Damba, Mtshali, and Chimbari 2022; Doshmangir et al. 2022; Garavito et al. 2024; Hawkes et al. 2016; Hornby and Perera 2002; Rodríguez et al. 2021). These approaches provide ongoing support and guidance as individuals apply their new skills in real-world settings. Capacity enhancement and exchange efforts may be particularly impactful in contexts where institutional mechanisms for evidence use are weak (Vogel and Punton 2018)

The capabilities pathway extends beyond evidence producers to encompass intermediaries and users, each requiring distinct but complementary skill development. For intermediaries, capacity strengthening focuses on developing expertise in knowledge translation, stakeholder engagement, and strategic communication - essential skills for effectively bridging the research-policy divide. This includes building capabilities in synthesising complex research findings, adapting evidence for different audiences, and facilitating productive dialogue between researchers and policymakers (Doshmangir et al. 2022). For evidence users, capacity strengthening emphasises developing skills to appraise evidence critically, integrate multiple forms of knowledge into decision-making processes, and effectively commission and oversee research. This might include strengthening abilities to frame policy questions in ways

that can be informed by evidence, assessing the quality and relevance of research findings, and navigating competing forms of evidence (Hawkes et al. 2016; Vogel and Punton 2018).

The sustainability of capacity-strengthening efforts often depends on creating cascading effects within institutions, as suggested by Vogel & Punton (2018). This involves training trainers, developing internal champions, and establishing continuous learning and adaptation mechanisms. It also recognises that capacity development is a continuous process that requires long-term commitment, engagement and resources at both the individual and institutional levels.

5.3.2 Relationships and networks pathway

The **relationships and networks pathway** focuses on creating and strengthening connections between evidence producers, intermediaries, evidence users and other key stakeholders. This pathway recognises that effective evidence use depends on trust, credibility and mutual understanding (Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016; Vogel and Punton 2018).

Formal partnership arrangements, such as research-policy collaborations or visiting researcher programmes, create structured opportunities for knowledge exchange and co-production. Regular dialogues, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events can provide a forum for different actors to understand each other's needs, constraints, and working contexts (Bogenschneider, Day, and Parrott 2019), which help build trust and create a shared understanding of how evidence can effectively inform policy processes.

Engagement with civil society organisations, advocacy groups, and affected communities ensures that policy decisions are informed by a broad spectrum of perspectives and diverse knowledge streams (Shaxson et al. 2021). Participatory approaches can enhance the credibility of research and increase its relevance to real-world policy challenges (Oliver et al. 2022).

Beyond structured partnerships, informal relationships including personal networks can also drive evidence use (Jessani, Boulay, and Bennett 2016). Knowledge-sharing networks create opportunities for cross-sectoral learning and evidence exchange (Weyrauch et al. 2016).

The pathway emphasises long-term relationship development rather than one-off interactions (Langer and Weyrauch 2020; Weyrauch, Echt, and Suliman 2016).[3] This includes creating sustained partnerships between actors, establishing consultation mechanisms and developing joint research agendas.

5.3.3 Structures and processes pathway

Institutional mechanisms form the backbone of the **structures and processes** pathway, driving increased evidence uptake in policy processes. Key elements include the establishment of dedicated evidence units and knowledge management teams within government departments and other entities, evidence review procedures, and systematic approaches to incorporating evidence in policy decisions (Kattumuri 2015; Taddese 2021).

[3] We go beyond Weyrauch et al. (2016) as they understand relationships mainly as ‘flow of information’ (p. 35).

This pathway also relies heavily on underlying data systems. Organisations need robust knowledge management platforms, evidence repositories, and clear data-sharing protocols (Hawkes et al. 2016).

Developing policies and procedures to support EIPM forms another component. For example, Parkhurst et al. (2021) highlight the importance of developing guidelines for evidence use in policy development, establishing quality standards for evidence review, creating requirements for evidence consideration in policy proposals, and implementing monitoring systems to track evidence use. These formal structures serve multiple purposes: institutional memory, ensuring consistency in evidence-informed approaches, and allowing continuity in evidence-use even as personnel changes occur.

The pathway also addresses institutional strengthening initiatives, including developing internal systems for evidence management, establishing quality assurance processes, and creating mechanisms for knowledge sharing across departments (Hornby & Perera, 2002). It also addresses resource allocation and incentive structures, such as securing funding for evidence gathering and synthesis, creating incentives for evidence use, and establishing performance metrics that value evidence-informed decision-making (Hawkes et al. 2016; Parkhurst et al. 2021).

5.3.4 Evidence culture pathway

The **evidence culture** pathway addresses the underlying values, beliefs, and norms that shape how evidence is perceived, understood, and used in policy contexts (Doshmangir et al. 2022; Piddington, MacKillop, and Downe 2024). This pathway recognises that sustainable improvements in evidence use require organisational culture and professional identity shifts. This includes developing a shared understanding of what constitutes good evidence, building appreciation for different types of evidence, and fostering openness to evidence that challenges existing beliefs.

Leadership commitment is also important in cultural change, as emphasised in practical frameworks (Shaxson et al. 2021). This involves leaders actively championing evidence use, modelling evidence-informed decision-making, and creating expectations for evidence consideration in policy processes.

This pathway also emphasises building a learning culture within organisations. For example, Langer et al. (2016) highlight the importance of normalising evidence in everyday decision-making, encouraging critical thinking and questioning assumptions, and viewing policy development as an iterative process informed by evidence.

5.3.5 Additional pathways

While this framework identifies four main pathways through which evidence influences policy, we recognise that other pathways likely exist and warrant further investigation. The pathways presented here emerged from our review of the literature and stakeholder consultations, but they should not be considered exhaustive. We recognise, too, that there are other possible conceptualisations of different mechanisms, strategies and ideas about how evidence-informed change happens.[4] Different contexts, institutional arrangements, and political

[4] For instance, Georgalakis and Siregar (2023) classifies them as knowledge transfer, knowledge integration, knowledge brokering, knowledge system support.

systems may give rise to other distinct pathways for evidence-to-policy processes. Understanding how different pathways interact, overlap, and complement each other becomes important for developing more context-driven and comprehensive models of evidence-informed policymaking.

5.4 Moderating factors and contextual influences

Policy decision-making is inextricably linked to the social, political and economic context in which it occurs. Even when policymakers have access to timely and relevant evidence, technical capacity to interpret and apply it, and strong relationships with evidence producers and intermediaries, contextual pressures may inhibit—or, in some cases, enhance—EIPM. We define moderating factors as real-world conditions that affect—whether positively or negatively—how evidence is generated, communicated and used.

The black dotted bands in Figure 4 show how these factors influence the central evidence ecosystem—including what research is produced and how it is framed—and the transition from evidence to policy through the pathways of change.

We highlight the active role contextual factors play in shaping evidence generation, interpretation and use. While several frameworks emphasise research-policy linkages, institutional capacity, and political economy considerations, barriers to effective EIPM remain prevalent. Oliver et al. (2022) highlight that despite the expansion of research-policy engagement initiatives, many lack strategic coherence and evaluation mechanisms. The persistence of these challenges necessitates a deeper exploration of systemic limitations that hinder evidence integration into policymaking.

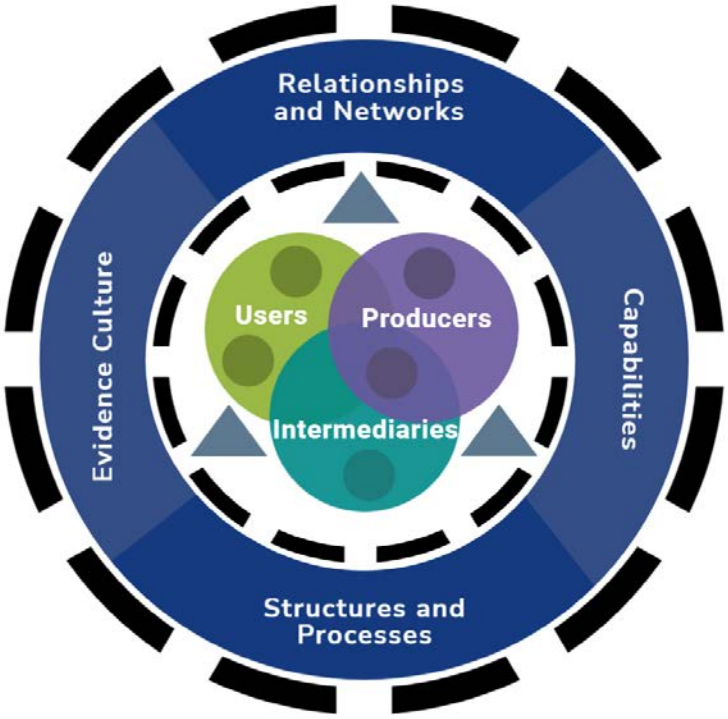

Figure 4: Moderating and contextual factors

The same varied factors can support or impede the integration of evidence into policymaking, depending on the context. This section provides examples of such inhibiting or facilitating

factors, but notably our list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive: different contextual settings may have different combinations or levels of influence.

5.4.1 Examples of factors

Political dynamics and economic constraints significantly influence the extent to which evidence is used in policymaking. Political actors often prioritise ideological narratives and short-term electoral gains over empirical evidence (Young and Court 2003; Young 2005). Political resistance to evidence-based approaches can stem from conflicting interests, pressure from advocacy groups, practical trade-offs and broader ideological commitments, limiting the willingness of policymakers to prioritise empirical research over political expediency.

Court and Young (2003) discuss how **policy windows**—moments when political, social, or economic factors converge—can create opportunities for integrating research into decision-making.[5] To maximise evidence impact, researchers and policymakers must actively identify and capitalise on these windows and align research-policy engagement efforts with the realities of political decision-making (Oliver et al. 2022). Effective stakeholder engagement strategies can help researchers position their findings within existing policy priorities, increasing the likelihood of adoption (Weyrauch et al. 2016). **External crises** such as disease outbreaks, extreme weather or natural hazards can also significantly influence the demand for and response to research evidence, for example by providing greater impetus for an evidence-informed policy response.

Socio-cultural norms and values shape perceptions of evidence credibility and legitimacy. Many engagement initiatives fail to address structural inequalities, leading to imbalanced representation in evidence-use discussions. Additionally, power imbalances within policymaking institutions may privilege certain forms of knowledge over others, limiting the diversity of perspectives that inform policy decisions (Oliver et al. 2022). **Power relations and patronage networks** further determine whose knowledge is considered legitimate in decision-making, while decision-making processes are influenced by historical and ideological factors that affect which forms of knowledge are considered valid (Shaxson et al 2021).

Weyrauch et al. (2016) note that **public demand** for evidence-based policies can incentivise governments to prioritise research in decision-making. The media can play a system-level role in shaping public perceptions and policymakers' understanding of issues, which may make it difficult to implement evidence-informed solutions that are unpopular or politically sensitive (Oliver et al. 2022). Public amplifying of misinformation, sensationalising policy debates, distrust of experts, and prioritising narratives that align with political or ideological interests rather than empirical evidence exert further pressure on the evidence-to-policy process.

[5] This is in line with Kingdon (1984) policy stream approach, which conceptualises policy formation as the result of the interaction of three independent 'streams'—the problem stream, policy stream, and politics stream. These streams operate separately but occasionally align, creating policy windows that facilitate policy change.

5.5 EIPM outcomes

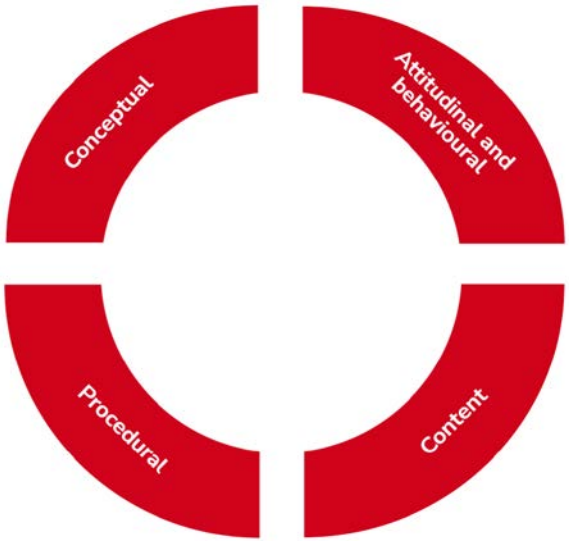

Figure 5: EIPM outcomes

EIPM outcomes represent the actual changes resulting from integrating evidence into public policy processes. Much of the literature has focused on two main approaches to understanding evidence use. The first approach centres on classifying types of research use, exemplified by Weiss's influential typology of instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic use (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007; Weiss 1979). The second examines the stages of the policy process where evidence can have influence, from agenda setting to implementation (Redman et al. 2015). In our framework, EIPM outcomes examine what changes occur when policymakers successfully engage with and apply evidence in their work (Echt and Young 2025; Shaxson 2016). These outcomes can range from subtle, long-term effects to direct, measurable changes, often manifest in multiple ways simultaneously across different levels of the policy system.

EIPM can lead to several distinct but interrelated types of outcomes (Figure 5). When policymakers engage with evidence, one fundamental change occurs in how they **conceptualise and understand policy issues** - what is often called a conceptual outcome. Evidence can reshape their intellectual frameworks and ways of thinking about problems and solutions. Similarly, evidence can drive shifts in **attitudes and behaviours** among decision-makers, leading to changes in their perceptions of the value of evidence or increased propensity to engage with evidence in policy discussions. Evidence also influences how policies are made through **procedural outcomes**, enhancing policy development, debate, and implementation processes. Finally, evidence can directly inform the **content** of new policies or the revision of existing ones, through content outcomes such as changes in legislation or resource allocation (Echt and Young 2025). While these outcomes might suggest a progression from thinking to action, they often occur simultaneously or in different sequences, reinforcing and influencing each other in complex ways. A content change might lead to new ways of thinking, just as changed attitudes might precede and enable new policy processes.

The production of evidence often yields its greatest impact through the interactive processes that surround it. In research-policy partnerships, significant learning and engagement frequently manifest as shifts in attitudes and behaviours among stakeholders, emerging well before the formal publication or dissemination of findings. This interactive dimension of

evidence generation creates transformative effects that precede—and sometimes transcend—the documented results themselves.

5.5.1 Conceptual outcomes

Conceptual outcomes represent fundamental shifts in understanding and thinking about policy issues due to the interaction with evidence (Albæk 1995; Burton 2006; Perera et al. 2022; Smith-Merry 2020) across stakeholders (producers, intermediaries and users). This type of outcome, often referred to as ‘enlightenment’ (Weiss 1979), occurs when research evidence is an input that influences policymakers' intellectual frameworks to comprehend problems and potential solutions. These changes in understanding can manifest in new ways of framing policy issues, different approaches to problem definition, or different perspectives on cause-and-effect relationships in policy interventions (Piddington, MacKillop, and Downe 2024). These outcomes will be connected to the capacity-building and relationship-building pathways.

5.5.2 Attitudinal and behavioural outcomes

Changes in attitudes and behaviours in policymakers represent a critical bridge between a conceptual understanding of policy issues and concrete policy action/solutions (Echt and Young 2025; Piddington, MacKillop, and Downe 2024). These outcomes manifest when evidence leads decision-makers to modify their stances on issues or alter their approaches to policymaking. This might include boosting receptivity to research evidence, greater willingness to engage with researchers, or increased openness to evidence-informed innovation in policy processes.

Attitudinal and behavioural shifts may create the conditions necessary for broader institutional change (Michie, van Stralen, and West 2011). For instance, when users/decision-makers demonstrate new behaviours—such as regularly seeking out evidence or engaging more collaboratively with stakeholders—this can potentially trigger and catalyse wider changes in organisational culture and practice around evidence use.

5.5.3 Procedural outcomes

Procedural outcomes focus on how evidence influences policymaking mechanisms and processes. These changes affect how policies are developed, debated, decided upon, and implemented. While they may not directly alter policy content, procedural outcomes can fundamentally reshape how evidence is integrated into policymaking processes (Blewden, Carroll, and Witten 2010; Weiss 1979).

These outcomes might include establishing new evidence review procedures, changes in how stakeholders are consulted, or modifications to how policy options are evaluated. While sometimes less visible than content changes, procedural outcomes can have far-reaching effects by institutionalising evidence use in policy processes.

Procedural outcomes also manifest within research-producing organisations, reflecting the bi-directional nature of evidence-to-policy processes. As evidence-to-policy relationships mature, research agendas and outputs tend to shift from being primarily investigator-driven to becoming more responsive to policy needs. This transformation is reflected in research design choices, methodological approaches, and the framing of findings. Researchers increasingly incorporate policy considerations from the outset, designing studies that address specific policy questions, generate actionable insights, and consider implementation feasibility. These

institutional adaptations in producer organisations work in tandem with changes in policy institutions to create dynamic feedback loops that strengthen the overall evidence ecosystem. When producer and user institutions adapt their procedures simultaneously, it reinforces the non-linear nature of EIPM.

5.5.4 Content outcomes

Content outcomes represent the most direct and observable impact of evidence on policy, manifesting in concrete changes to policy documents, legislation, or resource allocation decisions. These outcomes occur when research findings directly inform the development of new policies or the revision of existing ones, including plans and strategies. This resembles the instrumental use of research, which refers to the 'impact of research on policy and practice decisions' (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007, 36).

While content outcomes are often seen as the ultimate goal of EIPM, this conceptual framework acknowledges that they are frequently enabled by and intertwined with other types of outcomes. For example, the effectiveness and sustainability of content changes often depend on accompanying shifts in understanding, attitudes, and processes.

6 System in action

In this section, we present two retrospective case studies to illustrate a real-world application of the complete framework (Figure 1). The case studies are broken down to map onto each component of our framework to show different aspects of EIPM in action.

The goal of this section is to exemplify the identification of actors, pathways and outcomes and also explain how these components interact with each other in a non-linear dynamic process of using evidence in policy. On this occasion, we used two successful cases (in Peru and Uganda), although we could raise many other examples where challenges and barriers significantly hindered the use of evidence in policy processes.

6.1 Peru's Results-Based Budgeting reform: A case study

Background

Peru's Results-based Budgetary (RBB) reform, introduced in 2007, represents a significant shift in how evidence informed policy and budgeting decisions. The use of EIPM was at the heart of the reform as a mechanism to find the most effective public policies to challenge public policy problems. The reform emerged from a combination of political, technical and social forces, with child malnutrition serving as a political motivation in which *process* played a catalytic role in changing how public policy problems are addressed.

Key actors in the evidence ecosystem

Evidence producers	Evidence intermediaries	Evidence users
Ministry of Finance (MoF) research and technical teams	Mesa de Concertación de Lucha contra la Pobreza (MCLCP) - multi-stakeholder platform	Ministry of Finance budget teams
World Bank and international organisations providing analytical support	Initiative Against Child Malnutrition (IDI)	Ministry of Health planners and managers

National Statistics Institute (INEI)	Think tanks and civil society organisations	Subnational governments and health facilities
Academic researchers	International development partners (UNICEF, World Bank)	Congress and political leaders

Pathways of change

1. Capabilities pathway
   - Technical training for MoF staff in evidence assessment and results frameworks
   - Capacity building for regional officials in data collection and monitoring
   - Development of expertise in evidence-based program design
   - Training health workers in evidence-based interventions

2. Relationships and networks pathway
   - Creation of multi-stakeholder platforms like MCLCP
   - Regular dialogue between researchers, civil society and government
   - Establishment of coordination mechanisms across ministries
   - Building trust between national and subnational levels

3. Structures and processes pathway
   - Implementation of Strategic Budget Programmes (PPoR)
   - Development of integrated monitoring systems
   - Creation of evaluation frameworks and processes
   - Establishment of incentive mechanisms like Regional Development grants (FED) for regional governments.

4. Evidence culture pathway
   - Shift toward evidence-based decision making
   - Growing emphasis on results and outcomes
   - Development of collaborative culture across sectors
   - Increased value placed on data and evaluation

EIPM outcomes

1. Conceptual outcomes
- Better understanding of multi-dimensional policy challenges
- Recognition of the role of evidence in budget decisions
- Appreciation for integrated programme approaches
- Understanding of results-chain logic models

2. Attitudinal and behavioural outcomes
- Increased demand for evidence in planning
- Greater collaboration between sectors
- More systematic approach to programme design
- Regular use of data for management

3. Procedural outcomes
- Integration of evidence requirements in budget process
- Standardised evaluation procedures
- Regular review of programme effectiveness
- Evidence-based planning cycles

4. Content outcomes
- Creation of Strategic Budget Programmes
- Development of programme results frameworks
- Implementation of evidence-based interventions
- Revision of programme designs based on evaluations

Moderating factors

1. Political context
- Strong role of Ministry of Finance
- Support from President and Congress
- Ongoing decentralisation process
- Electoral cycles and transitions

2. Institutional environment
- Technical expertise in MoF
- Civil society engagement platforms
- Results monitoring systems
- International support and funding

3. Social and economic factors
- Economic growth period
- Public concern about child malnutrition
- Regional inequalities
- Service delivery constraints

Key results and evolution

The reform unfolded in three main phases:

1. Phase 1 (2007-2011)
- Introduction of RBB through budget law
- Creation of first Strategic Budget Programmes
- Focus on child malnutrition as a priority
- Building implementation systems

2. Phase 2 (2012-2018)
- Consolidation of programme structure
- Shift to a more sectoral approach
- Development of monitoring tools
- Implementation of incentives

3. Phase 3 (2019-present)
- Return to multi-sectoral focus

- Strengthening of evidence requirements
- Enhancement of evaluation systems
- Further institutional reforms

Lessons for application of the conceptual framework

The following points highlight how our conceptual framework components manifested in this case study. These observations are intended to illustrate the concepts from our theoretical framework in a practical context, rather than to suggest generalisable lessons that would apply across all settings:

1. **Multiple pathway integration:** This case demonstrated how success involved coordinated action across capacity strengthening, relationships and networks, structures and processes, and evidence culture.
2. **Evidence-policy interface:** The reform created specific mechanisms to systematically incorporate evidence into decision processes.
3. **Actor engagement:** This example shows how both top-down leadership and bottom-up participation contributed to the effectiveness of evidence use.
4. **Contextual enablers:** In this case, economic stability and political support created favorable conditions for reform implementation.
5. **Progressive implementation:** The phased approach in this instance allowed for learning and adaptation over time.

6.2 Uganda's weather index insurance reform: A case study

Background

In Uganda, around 70% of the population depends on smallholder agriculture. Farmers face extreme climate risks, including drought, erratic rainfall, and counterfeit agricultural inputs. Research between 2014 and 2016 on how farmers perceive and manage risk informed the design of a novel bundled agricultural insurance scheme. The scheme is predicted to protect no approximately 575,000 smallholder farmers by 2025 and has reshaped both policy and market landscapes in Uganda.

The information for this successful example of iterative research evidence brokering into national policymaking is drawn from submission of the researchers to the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the project page and the supporting blog.

Key actors in the evidence ecosystem

Evidence producers	Intermediaries	Evidence users
University of East Anglia (UEA) research team including economists and behavioural scientists	PASIC (Policy Action for Sustainable Intensification of Cropping Systems)	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)

The Field Lab Uganda	AT Uganda (agricultural innovation consultants)	Ugandan insurance firms and government policymakers
Research funder - DFID-ESRC Growth Research Programme (DEGRP)	Agricultural Insurance Consortium (AIC)	Parliamentary committees and regulatory bodies

Pathways of change

1. Capabilities pathway

- UEA research built a deep understanding of smallholder risk perceptions through economic experiments and field studies with nearly 3,000 farmers.
- Insurance companies trained and advised on tailoring weather insurance products to smallholder needs.
- Technical expertise developed in satellite-based index insurance and data analysis.

2. Relationships and networks pathway

- UEA researchers conducted over 50 consultations and workshops with farmers, insurers, district agricultural officers, national policymakers, and NGOs (2012–2015).
- Worked closely with PASIC, embedded within the Ministry of Agriculture, to co-develop feasible policy solutions.
- Co-production of recommendations increased the visibility and credibility of smallholder voices in policy spaces.

3. Structures and processes pathway

- A multi-stage, reflexive process of discussing project findings with local stakeholders, district agricultural officers and national policymakers to inform co-production of recommendations
- Project fed compelling evidence and analysis into existing structures and processes, responding flexibly to requests for information and advice

4. Evidence culture pathway

- Local informants helped interpret research findings, which were translated into local lessons before being turned into recommendations
- Policy briefs were developed in stages, testing provisional policy recommendations with different stakeholders
- Project analysis proposed using insurance as a policy instrument for enabling agricultural transformation.
- Multi-stakeholder dialogues legitimised the use of behavioural economics evidence in public policy.
- ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize acknowledged the initiative as a benchmark in translating research into enterprise and policy impact.

EIPM outcomes

1. Conceptual outcomes

- Shift in policy understanding: risk-sharing frameworks were reframed from informal mutual aid to formal, scalable insurance solutions.
- Agricultural productivity framed through the lens of behavioural economics and risk tolerance.

2. Attitudinal and behavioural outcomes
- Policymakers and insurance companies expressed openness to co-created, context-specific solutions.

3. Procedural outcomes
- Formal government policies mandated inclusion of weather index insurance in national agricultural planning.
- Created public-private coordination mechanisms (e.g., the Agriculture Insurance Consortium).

4. Content outcomes
- Direct incorporation of UEA findings into Uganda's *Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan 2015–2020*, recognising weather index insurance as a strategic priority.
- Government established a subsidised national Agricultural Insurance Scheme in 2016, partnering with 10 insurers.
- Systematic bundling of weather insurance with certified seed, fertilisers, and loans to reduce investment risks.

Moderating factors

1. Political context
- Strong government support for agriculture reform during the strategy period (2015–2020).
- Policymakers willing to act on locally-grounded research.

2. Institutional environment
- Established partnerships with credible intermediary actors (PASIC, AT Uganda).
- Funder alignment and support (DFID, ESRC, UEA impact accelerator grant).

3. Social and economic factors
- Climate volatility and high rural poverty made the insurance solution both urgent and broadly relevant.
- Growing digital access enabled mobile delivery of services.

Key results and evolution

1. 2004–2011: Research on farmer behaviour and risk preferences; publication of foundational studies

2. 2012–2015: Stakeholder engagement, co-production of policy recommendations at local and national level, advocacy workshops

3. 2015–2020: Inclusion of weather index insurance in government policy; launch of national insurance scheme

4. 2020–Present: Expansion of bundled insurance models via apps and village agents; demand projected to exceed 575,000 farmers by 2025.

As a result of this evidence-to-policy cycle there was an iterative but meaningful impact on livelihoods and economic outcomes.

Lessons for application of the conceptual framework

As for the example above, these observations are intended to illustrate the concepts from our conceptual framework in a practical context, rather than to suggest generalisable lessons that would apply across all policy settings:

1. **Inclusive stakeholder involvement and co-production is critical**: Iterative stakeholder engagement at all levels helped create practical, locally-relevant solutions. Both strong leadership from above and active grassroots engagement were essential for the project's effectiveness.

2. **Step-by-step iterative implementation:** Developing policy recommendations iteratively ensured national recommendations were locally informed. Rolling out the reform in stages enabled continuous learning, adjustment, and improvement throughout the process.

3. **Integrated approach across pathways:** Achieving success depended on aligning efforts across research, capacity development, relationship-building, institutional frameworks, and cultivating an evidence culture that values evidence.

4. **Intermediaries drive traction**: PASIC and AT Uganda played crucial roles in translating research into policy language and formats.

5. **Behavioural insights matter**: Understanding how smallholders perceive and respond to risk ensured lessons and recommendations were deeply informed by local realities.

6. **Scalable models work**: Mobile tech and satellite data enabled rapid expansion of the scheme.

7. **Supportive contextual factors:** A stable economy and backing from political leaders created a favourable environment for the initiative to take hold.

8. **Recognition matters**: International prizes helped legitimize the model and amplified potential impacts beyond Uganda.

7 Conclusion and future directions

This conceptual framework provides a high-level model for understanding and analysing EIPM as a complex, dynamic system rather than a linear process. By mapping the interactions

between actors, pathways, and outcomes, while accounting for contextual influences, the framework offers several important insights for future research and practice.

First, the framework highlights the need to move beyond simplistic measures of evidence use toward more nuanced approaches that capture changes across multiple levels—from individual capacities to institutional procedures to systemic shifts. This suggests that future research should employ mixed methods to track both observable indicators and subtle transformations in understanding and evidence use in policy.

Second, our framework emphasises the interconnected nature of different pathways to change. While capacity strengthening, relationship building, structural support, and fostering an evidence culture can be analysed separately, they function as mutually reinforcing elements in practice. Future studies should examine these interactions and identify which combinations of pathways are most effective in different contexts.

Third, the framework draws attention to the dynamic role of contextual factors in shaping evidence use. Rather than treating context as static background characteristics, research should investigate how political, institutional, and social factors actively influence evidence-to-policy processes. This includes examining how windows of opportunity emerge and how actors can effectively respond to changing circumstances.

Fourth, while our framework provides a high-level map of the evidence-to-policy ecosystem, it requires contextualisation for specific settings to develop a full theory of change. Future research could develop theories of change for particular policy domains, governance levels, or institutional contexts while maintaining connections to this overarching framework.

Finally, this framework points to the importance of taking a systems perspective when designing and evaluating interventions to promote evidence use. Rather than focusing on isolated components, research should examine how different elements of the system interact and evolve over time. This includes investigating both intended and unintended consequences of efforts to strengthen EIPM.

8 References

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Appendix 1: Evidence entry points

The integration of evidence into policymaking is a complex process influenced by multiple actors, diverse pathways, and various barriers and facilitators. Different entry points exist for evidence to inform policy processes. This section explores different entry points and trajectories through which evidence enters policymaking, and the actors, challenges and enablers that may shape the process. These are not exhaustive typologies, but simple illustrations of different evidence entry points that fully-developed theories of change can seek to accommodate.

Actors in the evidence ecosystem:

The policymaking process involves multiple stakeholders who may interact in various ways to produce, translate, and apply evidence. Each actor plays a crucial role in how evidence is gathered, interpreted, and ultimately used to guide policy decisions. Examples of evidence instigators used in the typologies below include:

1. Researchers and academics – Generate evidence through primary research and synthesis.

2. Policy analysts – Evaluate evidence to inform policy choices.

3. Crisis responders and rapid analysts – Quickly process data in emergency situations.

4. Collaborative networks – Composed of civil society, advocacy groups, and industry players engaging in joint research and policy discussions.

5. Evidence brokers and translators – Synthesise information, strategically frame evidence, and facilitate its integration into policy.

6. Funders and international organisations – Demand evidence, commission research, and push for direct application in policy.

Trajectories for evidence to enter policymaking:

Various potential trajectories exist through which evidence can inform policymaking. As illustrative examples, the **academic** path follows a structured process from research studies to formal decisions, but its extended duration may make it impractical for immediate policy needs. In contrast, the **crises scenario** prioritises rapid data collection and analysis to enable quick action in emergencies, often at the expense of long-term validation. The **collaborative network** path involves joint research and stakeholder dialogue, ensuring inclusivity but requiring consensus-building efforts. The **strong broker** path relies on the expert synthesis and strategic translation of multiple evidence sources, ensuring well-integrated policies but also giving power to select intermediaries. Meanwhile, the **strong public** trajectory emerges from direct evidence demands by the public or external stakeholders, leading to policies that reflect societal concerns but can be influenced by interest group biases.

At a more disaggregated level, they can be understood as:

Evidence instigator	Process	Key actors	Characteristics	Outcome
Academic	Research studies → Evidence review → Policy	Academics, government	Slow, rigorous, systematic, and often	Formal policy decisions based

	analysis → Formal decision	research bodies, policymakers	disconnected from immediate policy needs	on extensive academic inquiry
Crisis	Quick evidence → Fast analysis → Quick action	Emergency response teams, policy advisors, media, government officials	Rapid response to pressing issues with limited time for thorough analysis	Immediate policy interventions, sometimes with limited long-term validation
Collaborative network	Network input → Joint research → Group dialog → Team decision → Shared action	Civil society, think tanks, multidisciplinary experts, policymakers	Interactive, consensus-driven, reliant on stakeholder engagement	Policies that reflect diverse perspectives and community-driven priorities
Strong broker	Multiple evidence sources → Expert synthesis → Strategic translation → Policy integration	Knowledge brokers, international organisations, high-level policymakers	Strategic use of multiple evidence sources, selective framing of information	Well-integrated policies that are shaped by expert consensus and political feasibility
Strong public	Public demands evidence → Research responds → Policy application	Citizens, interest groups, service users, policymakers	Demand-driven evidence use, bottom-up influence on policy priorities	Policies that are directly shaped by public concerns and advocacy efforts

Numerous factors may moderate the integration of evidence into policymaking:

- Time constraints – Policymakers often must act quickly, limiting the ability to conduct comprehensive evidence reviews.
- Political influence, will, leadership and imbalance of power dynamics – Policies may be driven more by political ideologies and public opinion than by empirical evidence. Support from leadership and policymakers committed to data-driven governance can drive evidence-based decisions.
- Mismatched timelines – Academic research operates on long-term cycles, whereas policy decisions often require immediate action.
- Limited access to evidence – Policymakers may struggle to access relevant, clear, and synthesized research findings.
- Complexity of scientific evidence – Technical jargon and methodological details make it difficult for non-experts to interpret findings.
- Competing interests – Industry lobbying, advocacy groups, and bureaucratic inertia may distort evidence use.
- Low public engagement – If end users do not actively demand evidence-based policy, other factors may dominate decision-making.

- Existing knowledge translation mechanisms – Evidence brokers, policy briefings, and synthesized reports help make research findings more accessible.
- Institutionalised research-policy linkages – Establishing advisory committees, think tanks, and research units within government strengthens evidence use.
- Crisis-response frameworks – Pre-existing protocols for rapid evidence analysis improve decision-making during emergencies.
- Stakeholder engagement – Involving diverse groups in policy discussions ensures that evidence is socially relevant and politically acceptable.

Overcoming barriers such as political constraints, limited access to research, and misaligned timelines requires deliberate efforts to enhance knowledge translation, stakeholder engagement, and institutional capacity.