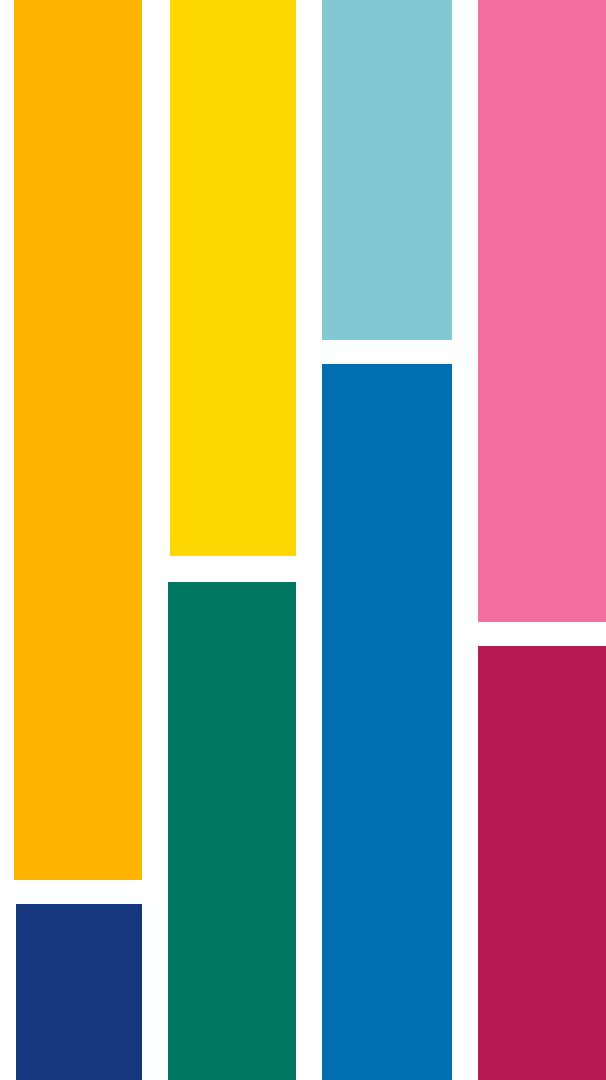


Evidence-informed decision-making: putting UDT insights at work



Session goals

- Understanding evidence-based policymaking
- Identifying the barriers and facilitators for evidence-based policymaking
- Devising strategies to use UDT as a tool for evidence-based policymaking

Agenda

1. Kick-off exercise
2. Evidence-based policymaking:
 1. Definition and constraints
 2. Barriers and facilitators
 3. Strategies
3. Exercise: focus on UDT Action Plans
4. Takeaways and conclusion

Kick-off exercise

- Work in pairs
 1. Tell a story about a case in which you convinced (or didn't convince) a politician or senior manager about a data-based initiative
 2. With your pair, identify the key elements for success / failure
 1. Share with the whole group

Evidence-based policymaking

Evidence-based policymaking: the need for more scientific and less ideological policy-making

vs. policymakers focus: “finding as much information as possible in a short space of time [...] to generate policy analysis and make policy quickly”

Context:

- Unpredictable policy-making environment
- Attention jumps from issue to issue
- Policy is made in networks (between policymakers and powerful actors)
- The ‘rules of the game’ take time to learn

Evidence-based policymaking

2 shortcuts used by policymakers:

- Rational: pursuing clear goals and prioritizing certain kinds and sources of information
- Irrational: drawing on emotions, gut feelings, beliefs, habits, and familiar reference points

Evidence-based policymaking vs. Policy-based evidence: “biased politicians decide first what they want to do, then cherry pick any evidence that backs up their case”.

Barriers and facilitators

'Cultural' barriers (Cairney and Oliver, 2016)

- Language and jargon
- Low incentives to engage
- Differing perceptions of scientific knowledge
- Need of researchers to challenge evidence (to ensure it is robust) vs policy-makers need to generate an image of policy certainty and reconcile evidence with well-established beliefs.
- Perception that policy-makers rely on personal experience, ad hoc links with experts, people they know and trust, and simple decision-making techniques and stories rather than state-of-the-art scientific knowledge.

+ Left-leaning, younger and/or female policy-makers → more likely to use research evidence (Oliver et al., 2014)

+ Competing pressures hinder evidence-based policy (Oliver et al., 2014):

- Political pressures
- Finances
- Media
- Vested interests and pressure/lobby groups

Open discussion

How does all of this relate to your experience?

Strategies

| Reduction of uncertainty (providing information) | Reduction of ambiguity (framing information) |
|---|---|
| “Package” the evidence well to make it easy to understand | Combining facts with emotional appeals |
| Manage realistic expectations for policy change | Telling simple stories that are easy to understand |
| Develop researcher-practitioner workshops | Interpreting new evidence through the lens of preexisting beliefs |
| Use intermediaries such as ‘knowledge brokers’ | Producing a policy solution that is both feasible and timely |
| Align research and policymaking timings | |

Focus on UDT Action Plans

Imagine you already have your UDT, which has produced the expected insights and information, and you have actually developed a policy proposal based on these data.

1. Who do you need to convince about this data-driven policy proposal?
2. What other actors are also involved in the decision?
3. What competing pressures/agendas may hinder your proposal?
4. What strategies can you use to overcome them?
 - How do you think this issue can be framed around a narrative that is compelling for your decision-makers?
 - How can you work with colleagues and other stakeholders to produce this narrative?

References

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