



Advancing knowledge,
shaping policy, inspiring practice

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Research communications and policy briefs

Nick Scott, CDKN Workshop

13 September 2011

RAPID's work on influencing policy

Our lessons



6 lessons from our work

Policy processes
and social
realities are
complex

Research plays a
minor role in
policy and
practice

But it is possible
for research to
play a role

Must understand
landscape

Policy and social
entrepreneurs
need a set of
skills

Intent is
necessary!



Policy makers do not...

Identify the problem



Commission research



Analyse the results



Choose the best option



Establish the policy

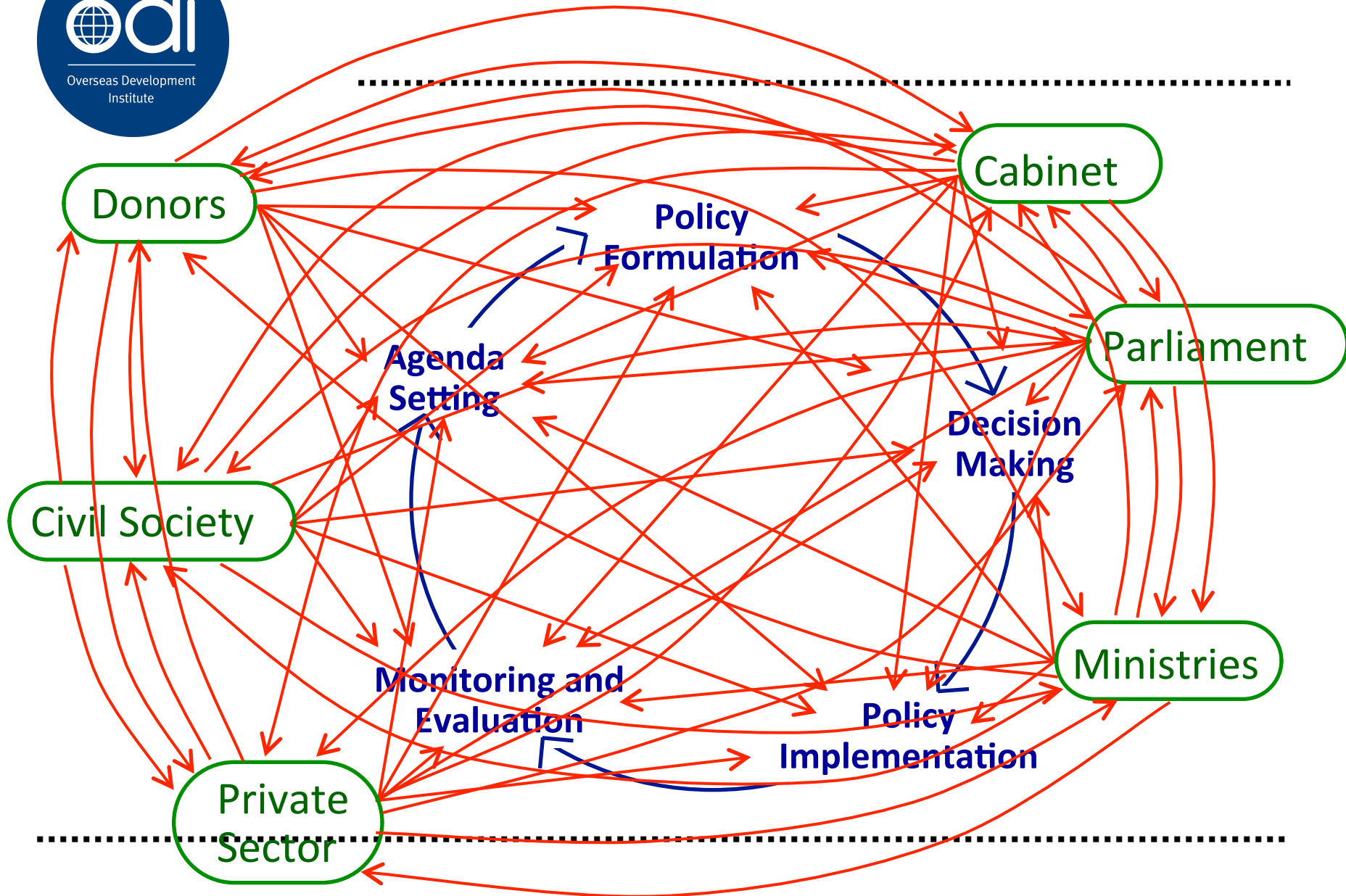


Implement the policy

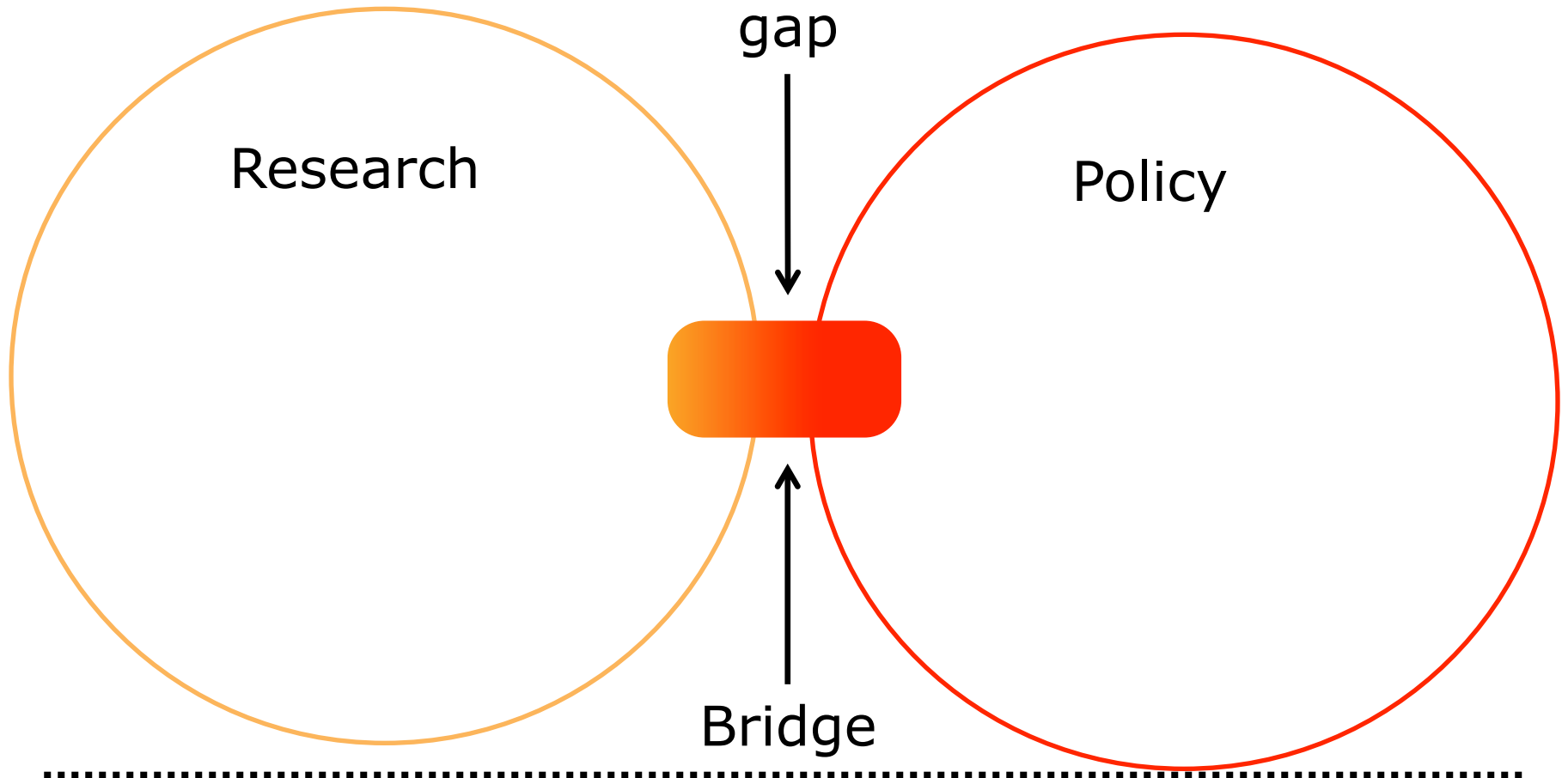


Evaluation

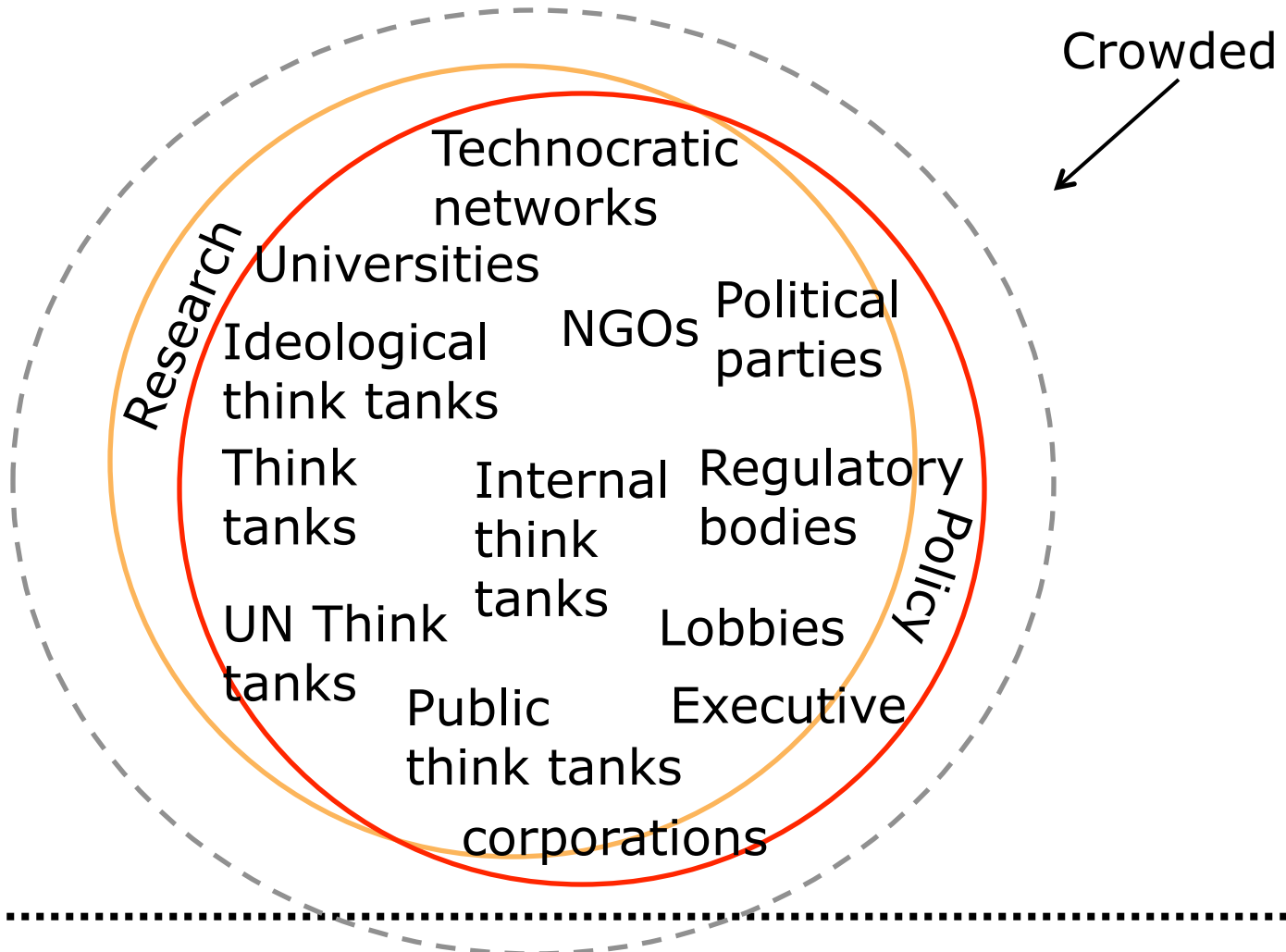
Policy processes are...



The gap between research and policy



No gap between research and policy



The six lessons

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Policy makers are...

...practically incapable of using evidence because of the 5 Ss...

- Speed
 - Superficiality
 - Spin
 - Secrecy
 - Scientific Ignorance
-



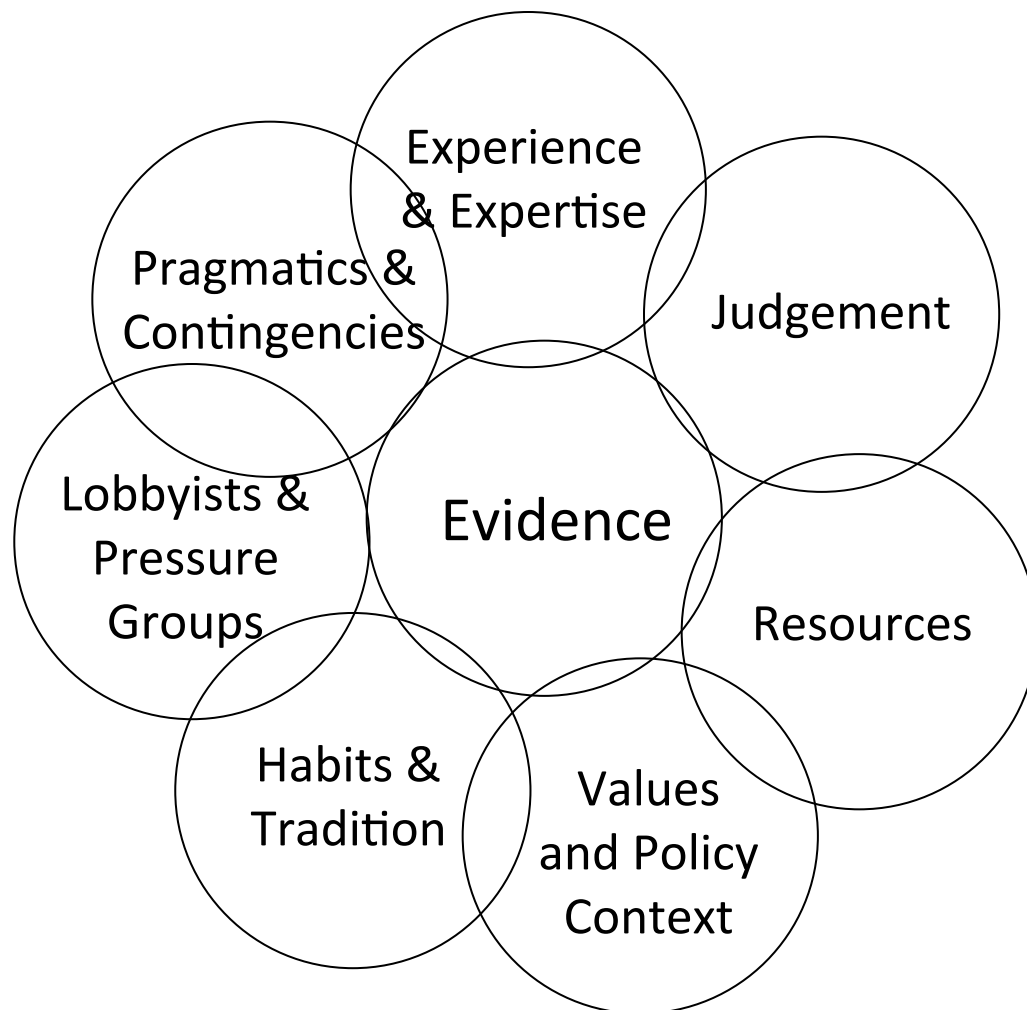
Vincent Cable – Lib.
Democrat MP &
Secretary of State for
Business



Different notions of evidence

Researchers	Policy makers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scientific' (Context free)• Proven empirically• Theoretically driven• As long as it takes• Caveats and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colloquial (Contextual)• Anything that seems reasonable• Policy relevant• Timely• Clear Message

There are many factors



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Example: health care in Tanzania

“The results of household disease surveys informed processes of health service reform which contributed to a 43 and 46 per cent reduction in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in two districts in rural Tanzania.”





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An analytical framework

External Influences

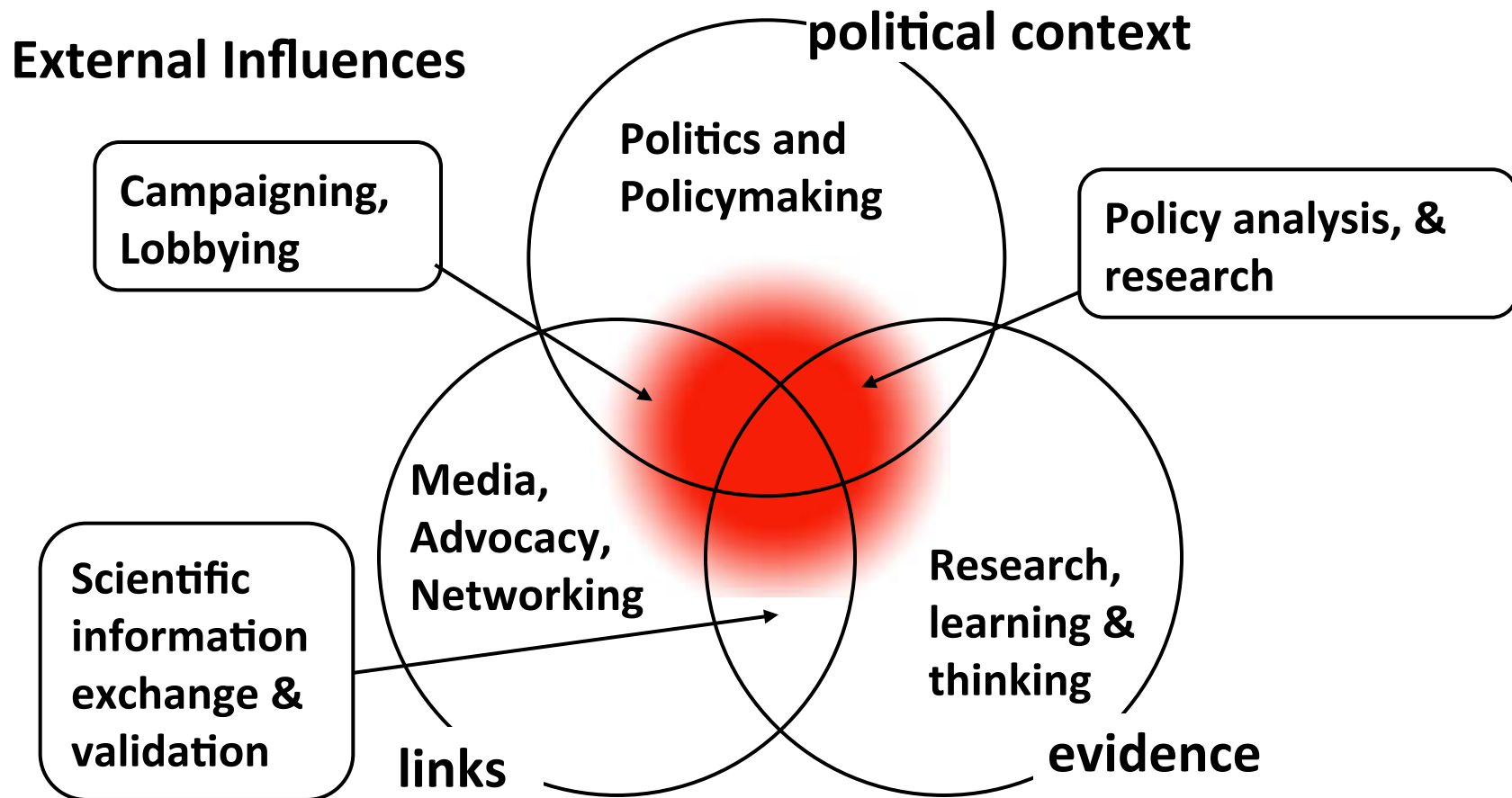
Socio-economic and cultural influences, donor policies etc

The **political context** – political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change etc.

The **links** between policy and research communities – networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge etc.

The **evidence** – credibility, the degree it challenges received wisdom, research approaches and methodology, simplicity of the message, how it is packaged etc

A practical framework



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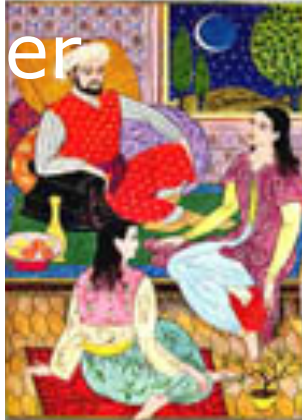
Must understand
landscape

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skills

Intent is
necessary!

Policy and social entrepreneurs

Storyteller



Networker



Engineer



Researcher



Fixer





The six lessons

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Conclusions

To improve impact, may need to:

- focus more on policy
 - establish different incentives
 - establish different systems
 - spend more on communications
 - engage with different actors
 - produce different products
 - be ready to seize unexpected policy opportunities and move very fast
-

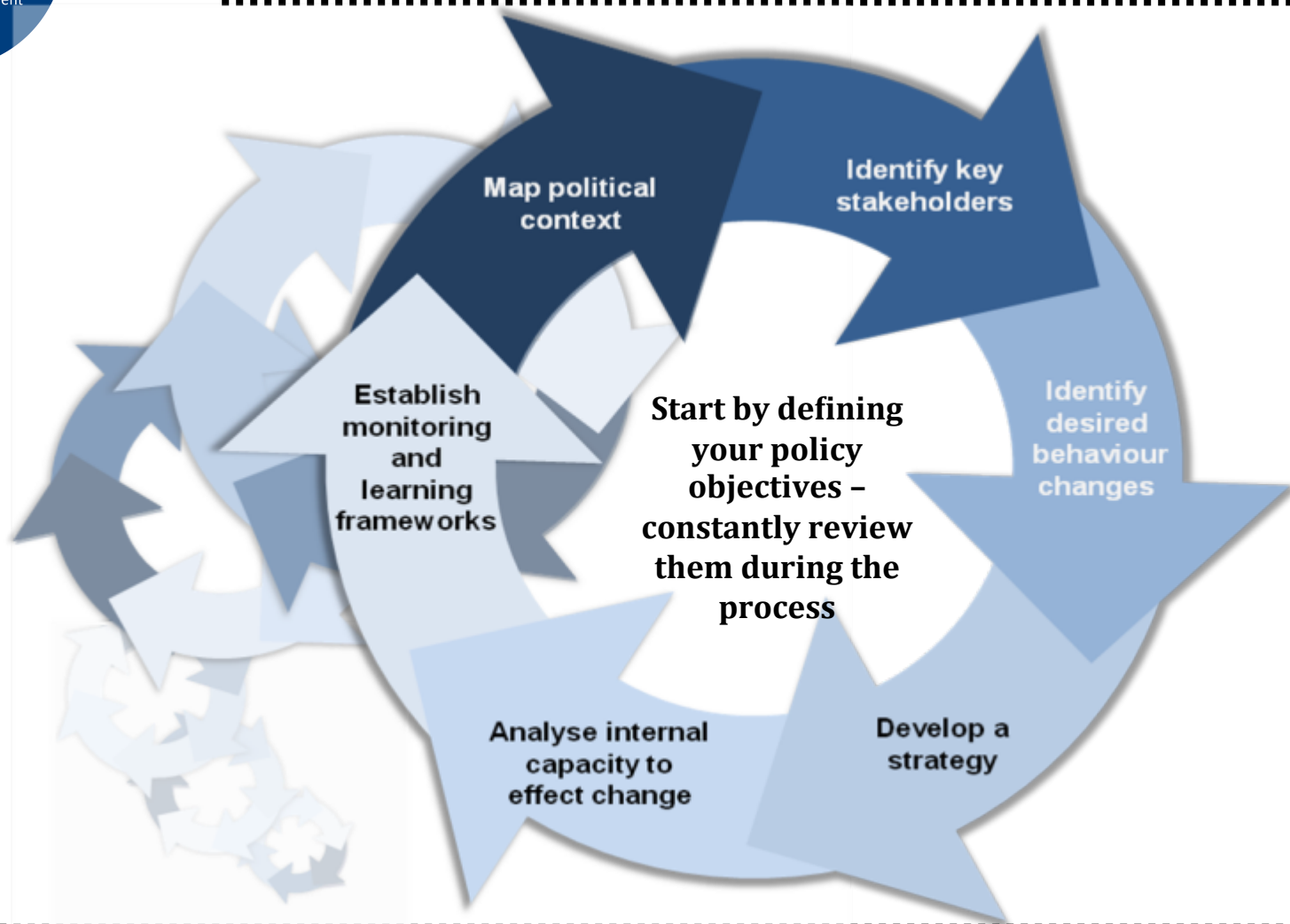
Question and answer session



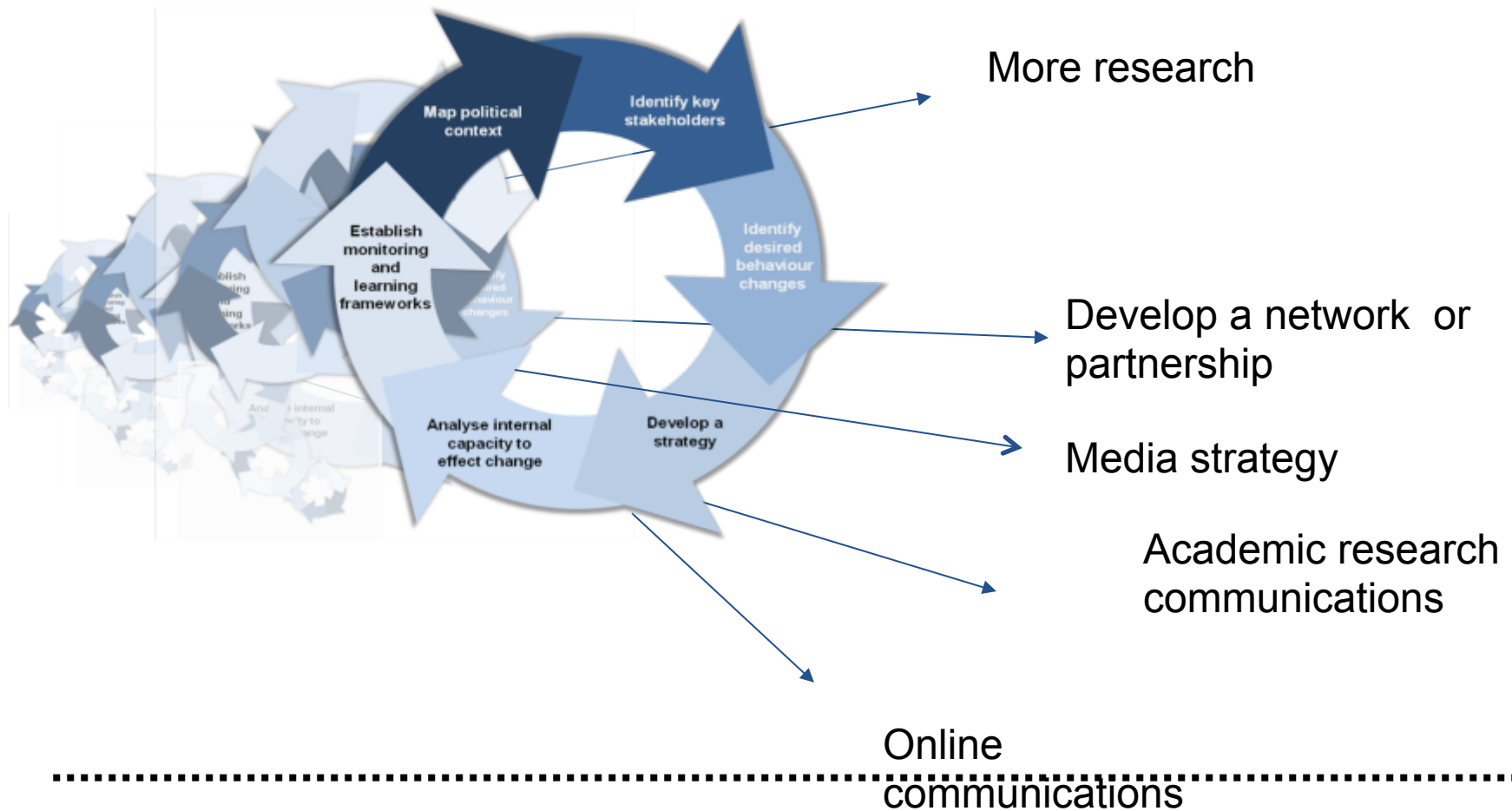
Image: Leo Reynolds

So now what?

RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach



It's not just blogs – influencing approaches





And what you are aiming for

*Discursive
changes*

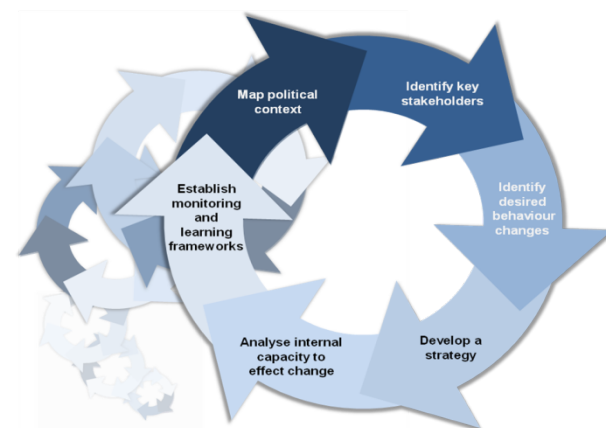
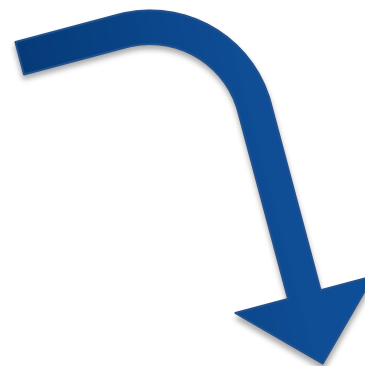
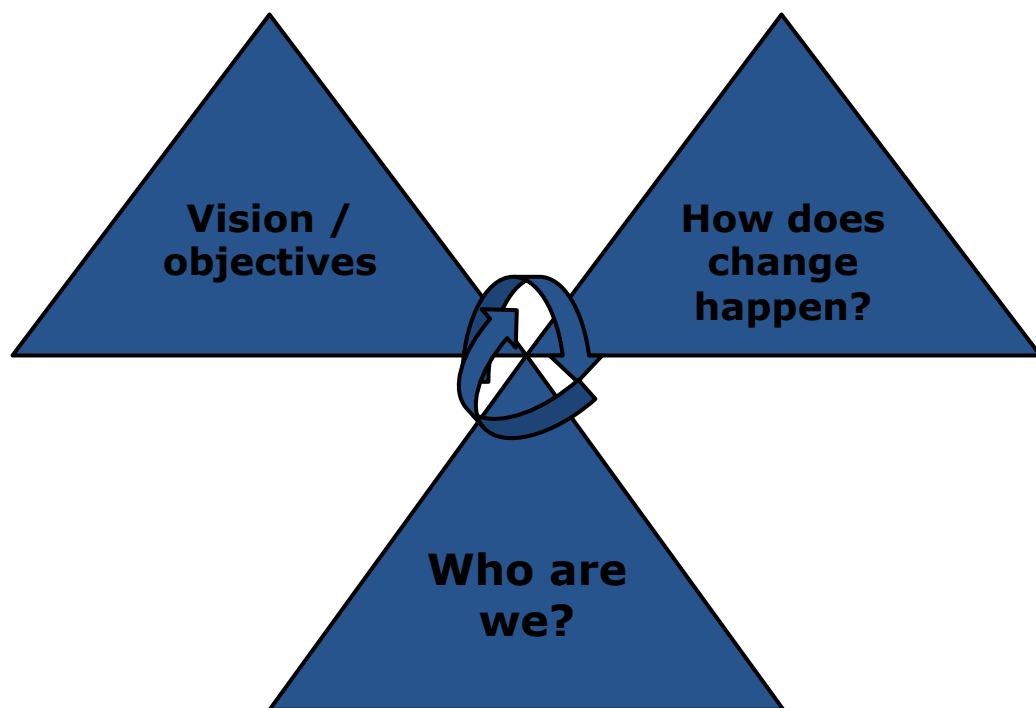
*Procedural
changes*

*Content
changes*

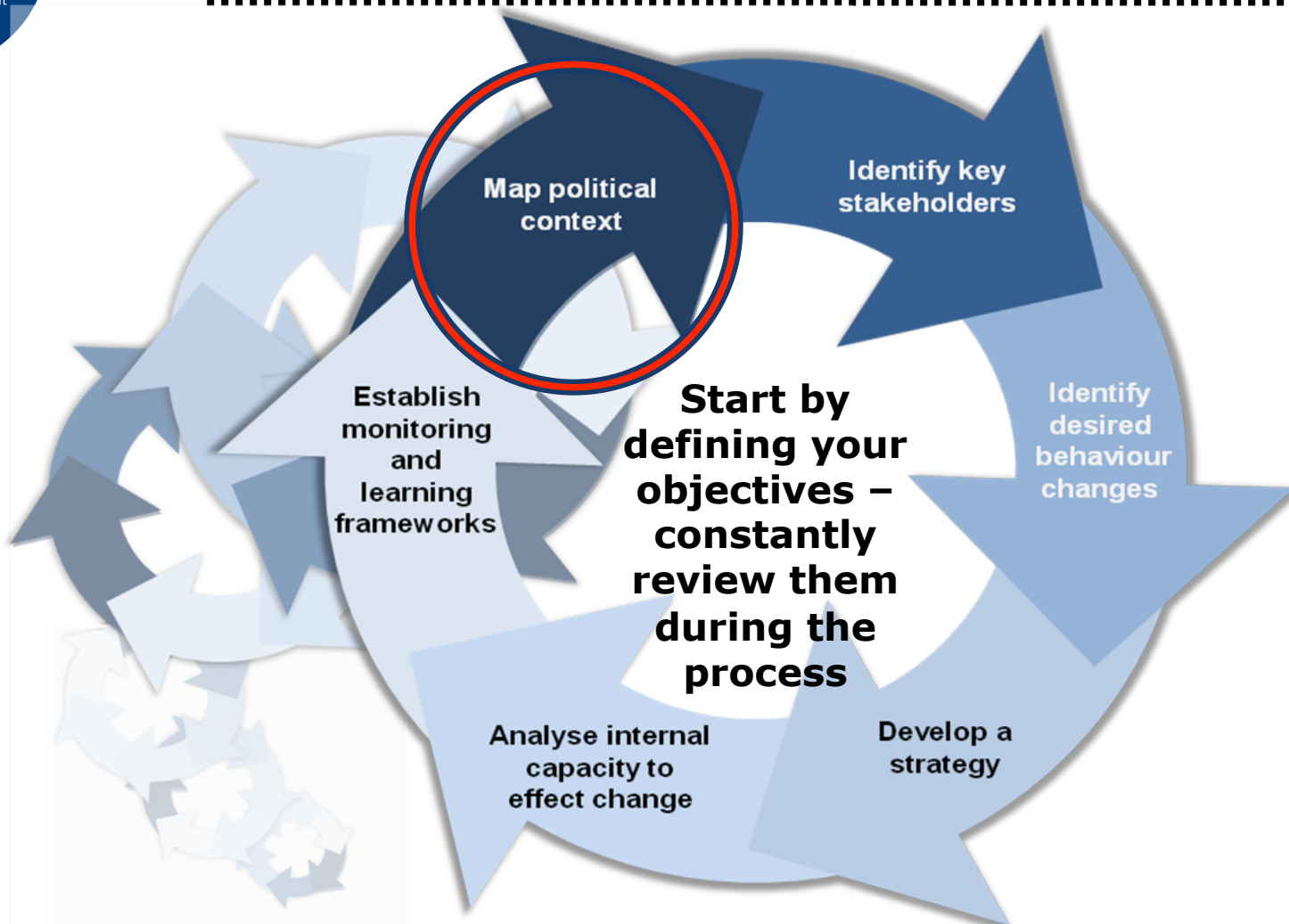
*Attitudinal
changes*

*Behavioural
changes*

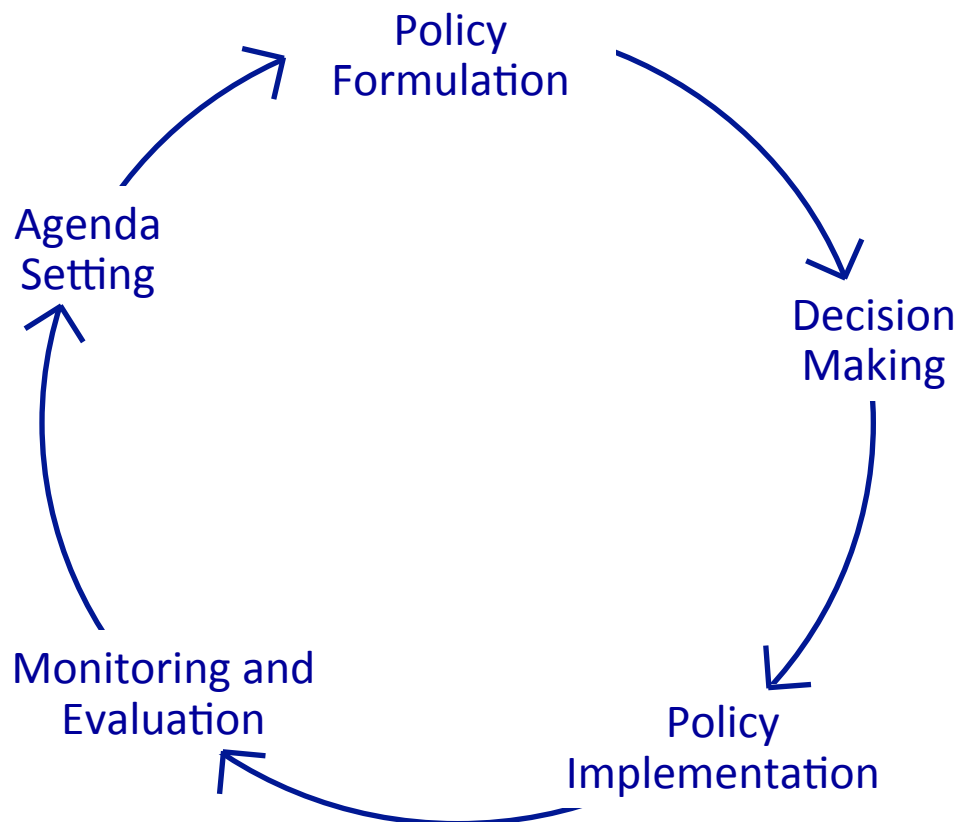
A step zero



The steps



The importance of the policy cycle



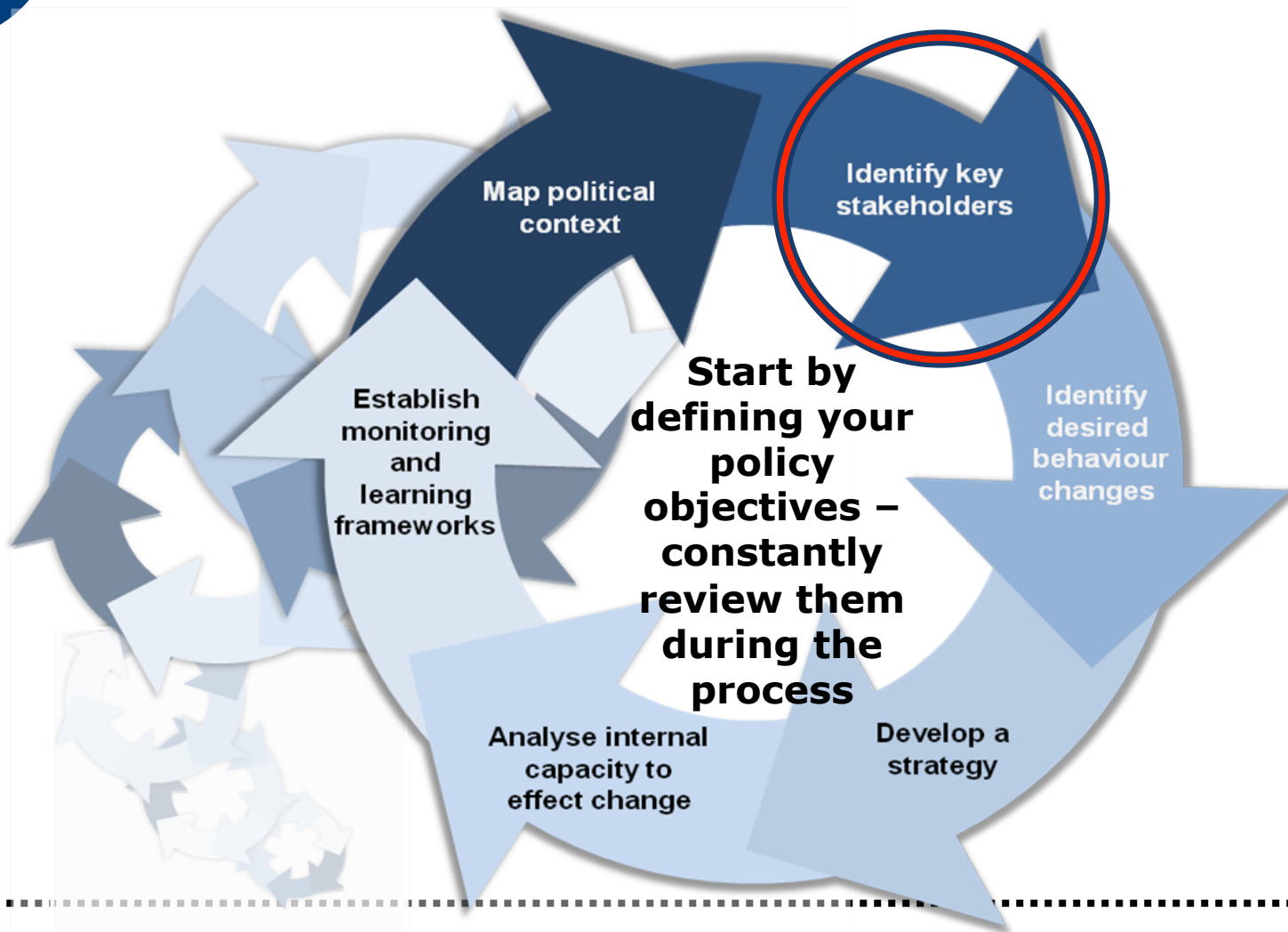


You need to know the detail

“Government runs in part, on the basis of **memos**. If a SD or DD official, or an analyst at the CIEA or the NSC, has your study in front of him and open at the time he is writing his own **memo** to the secretary or the director or perhaps the president himself –if, in short, he is using your ideas and analysis at the time he writes his own **memo**- then you have influence. If your study is not open in front of him, or worse, you do not even know who the responsible official is, you do not have influence. It is as simple as that.”

Howard Wiarda quoted by Abelson D. E., 2006

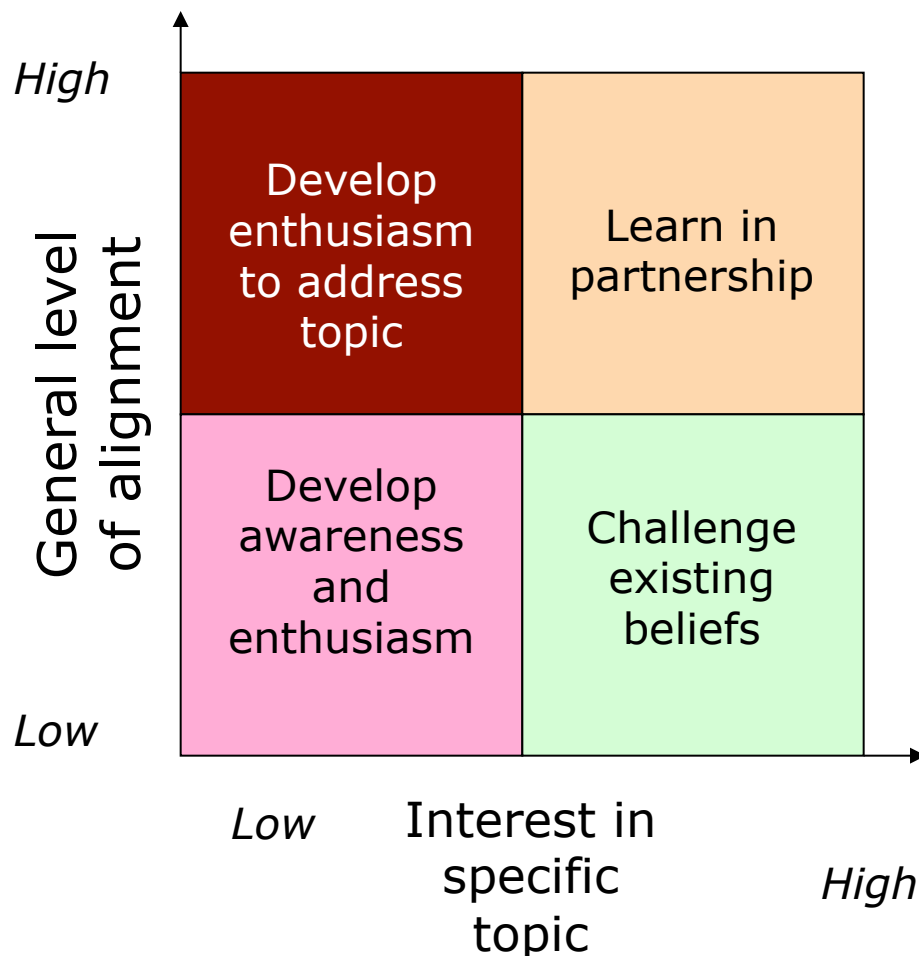
The steps

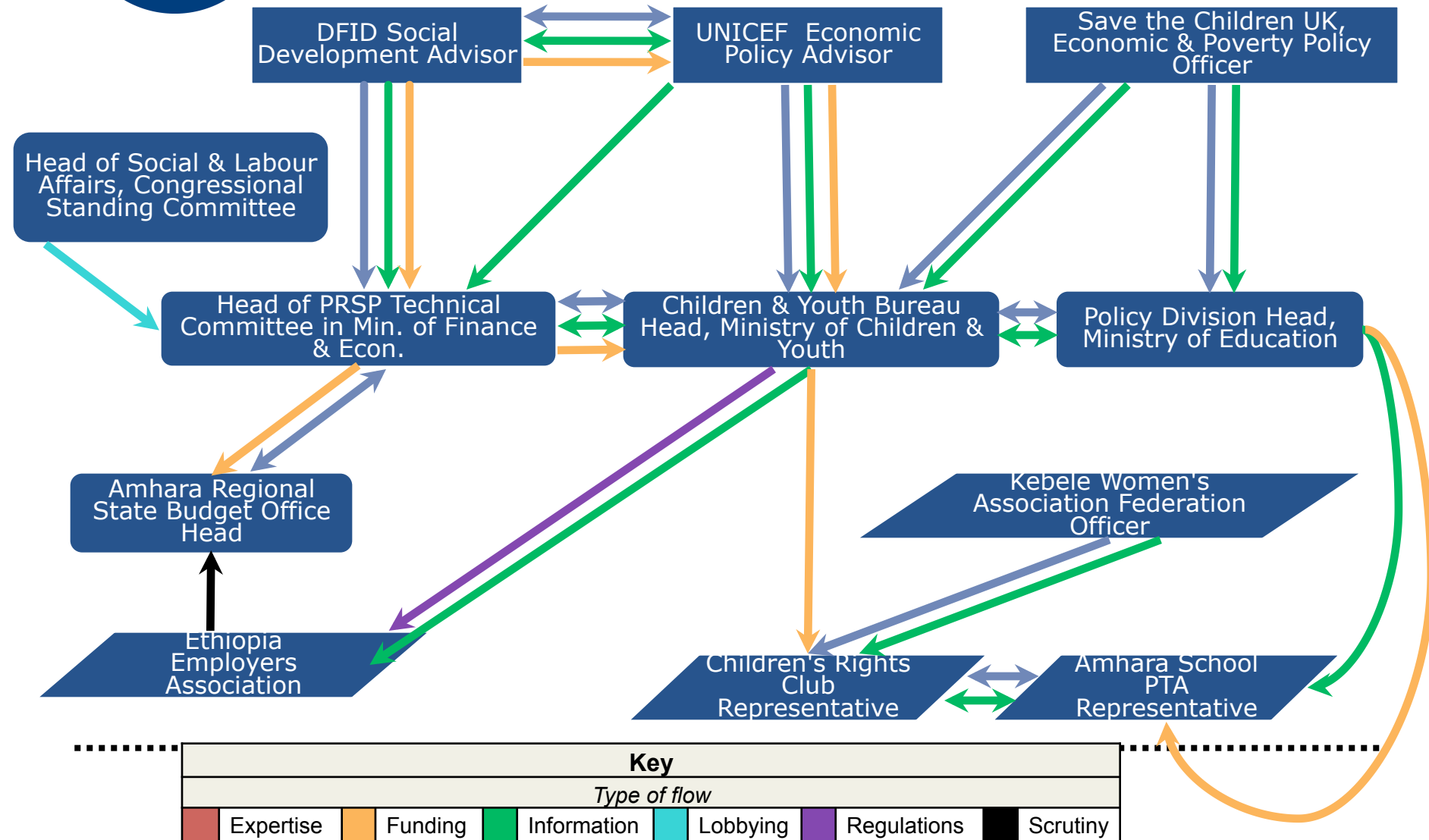


Identifying audiences

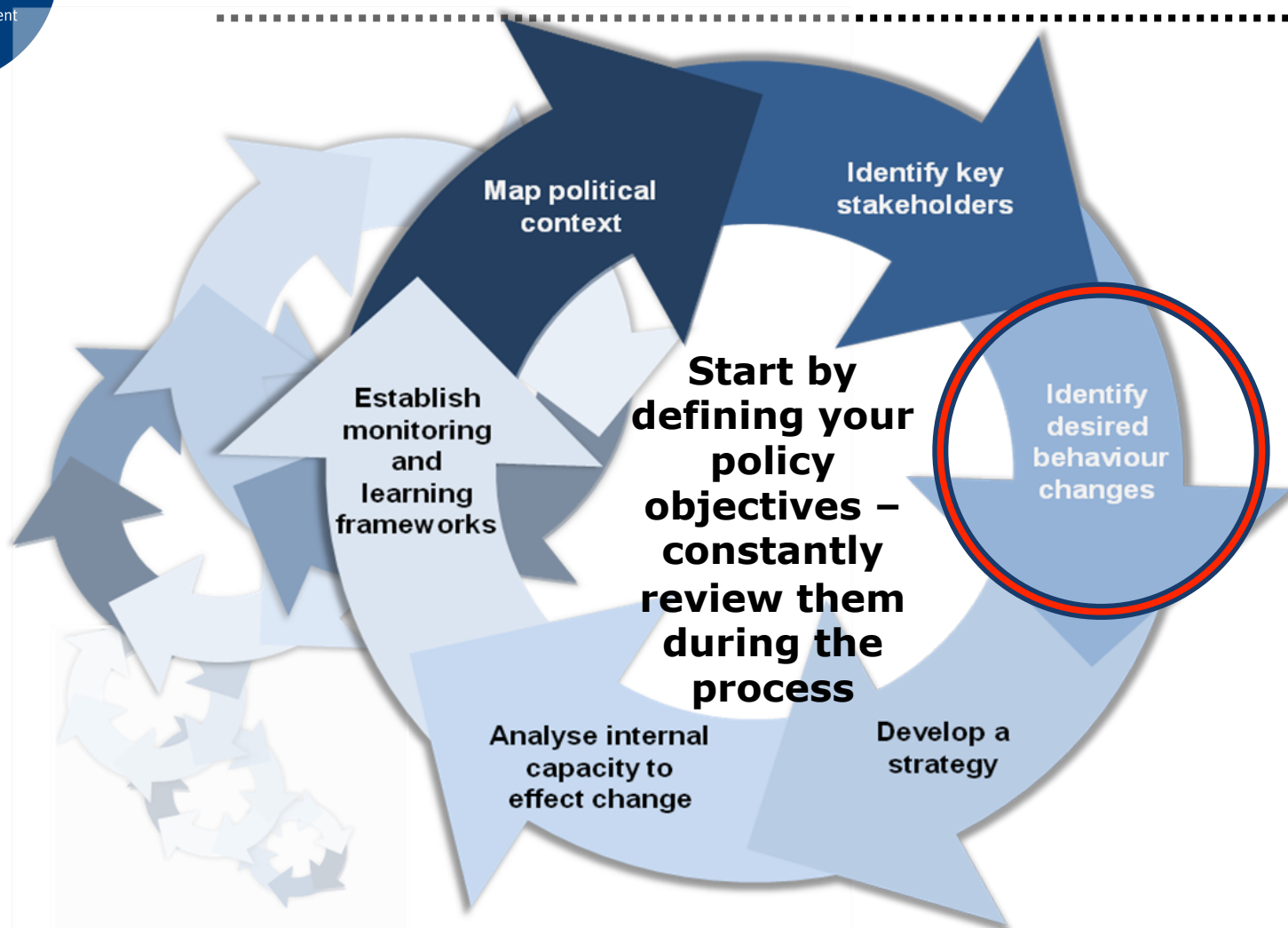
AIIM Matrix

1. Identify all stakeholders
2. Map them onto the alignment / interest matrix
3. Identify who has power
4. Identify who you can influence

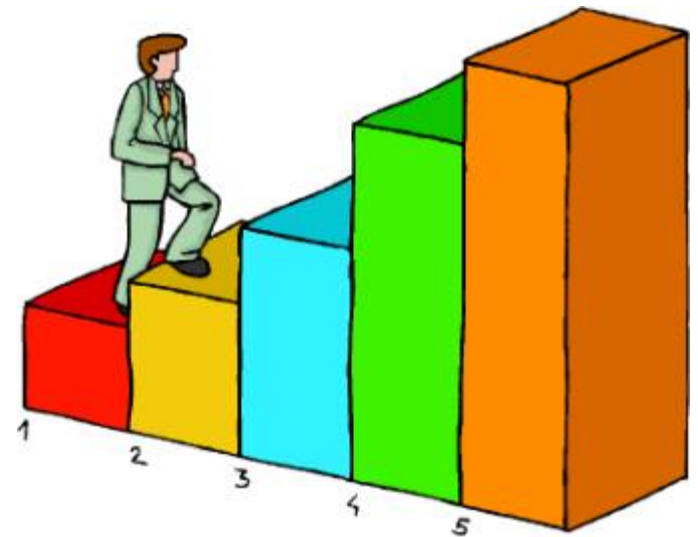




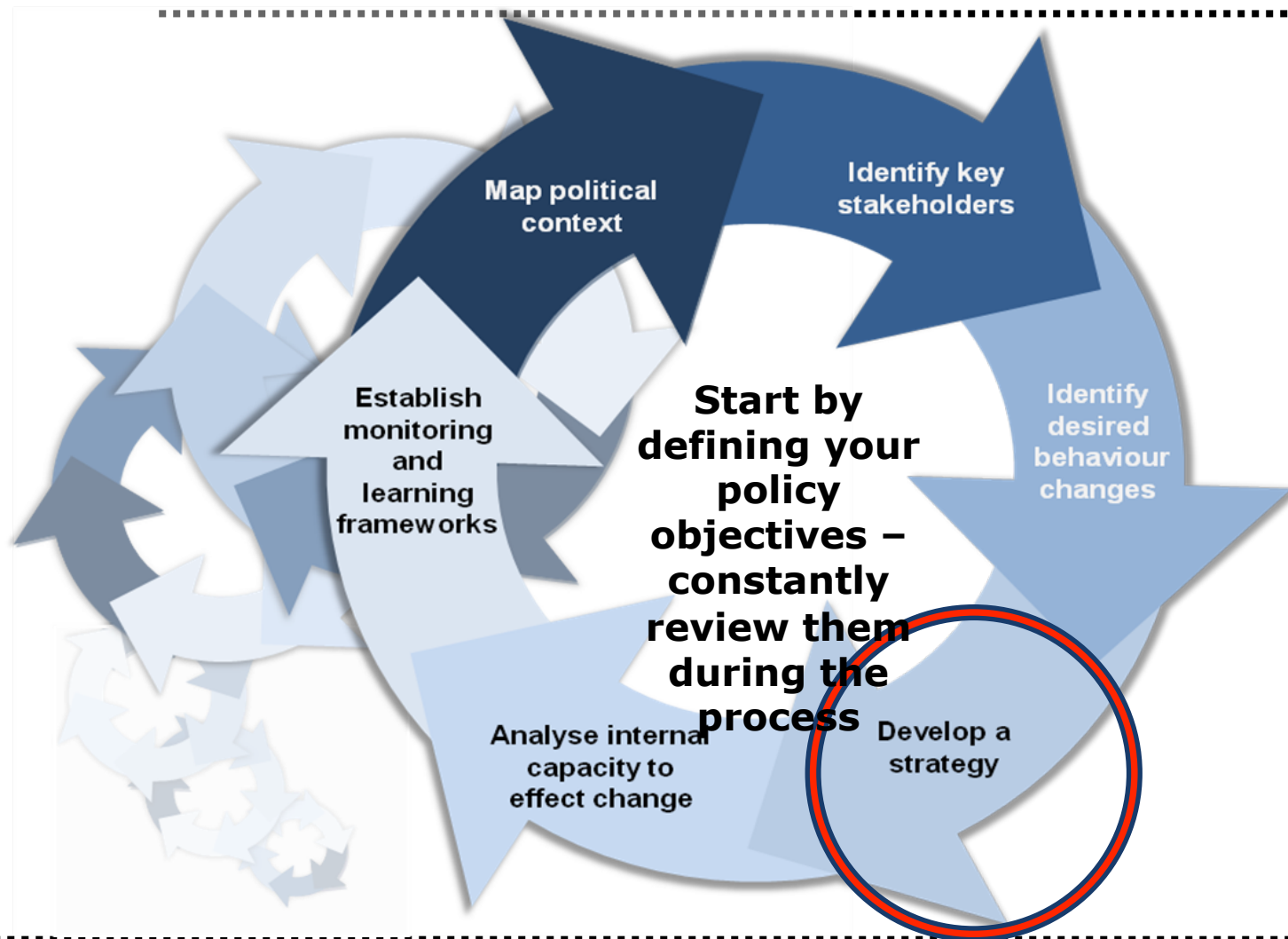
The steps



- Move from initial to more profound changes in behaviour
- Show transformation in a single boundary partner
- More informative than a single indicator

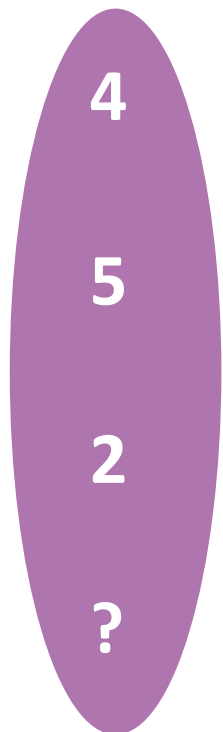


The steps



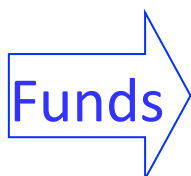
Force Field Analysis

Your influence
on the force

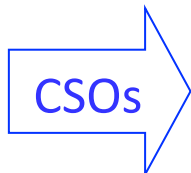


Positive forces

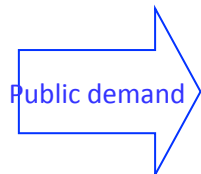
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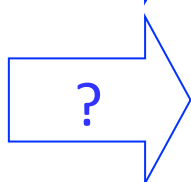
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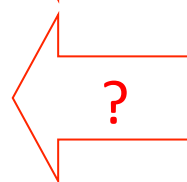
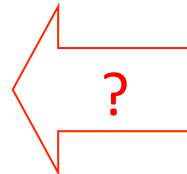
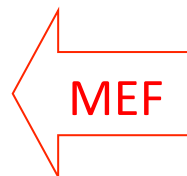
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Plan:

Minister of
Trade puts
forward pro-
poor trade and
complementary
policy
programme to
the cabinet by
April 2008

Negative forces



5

*

3

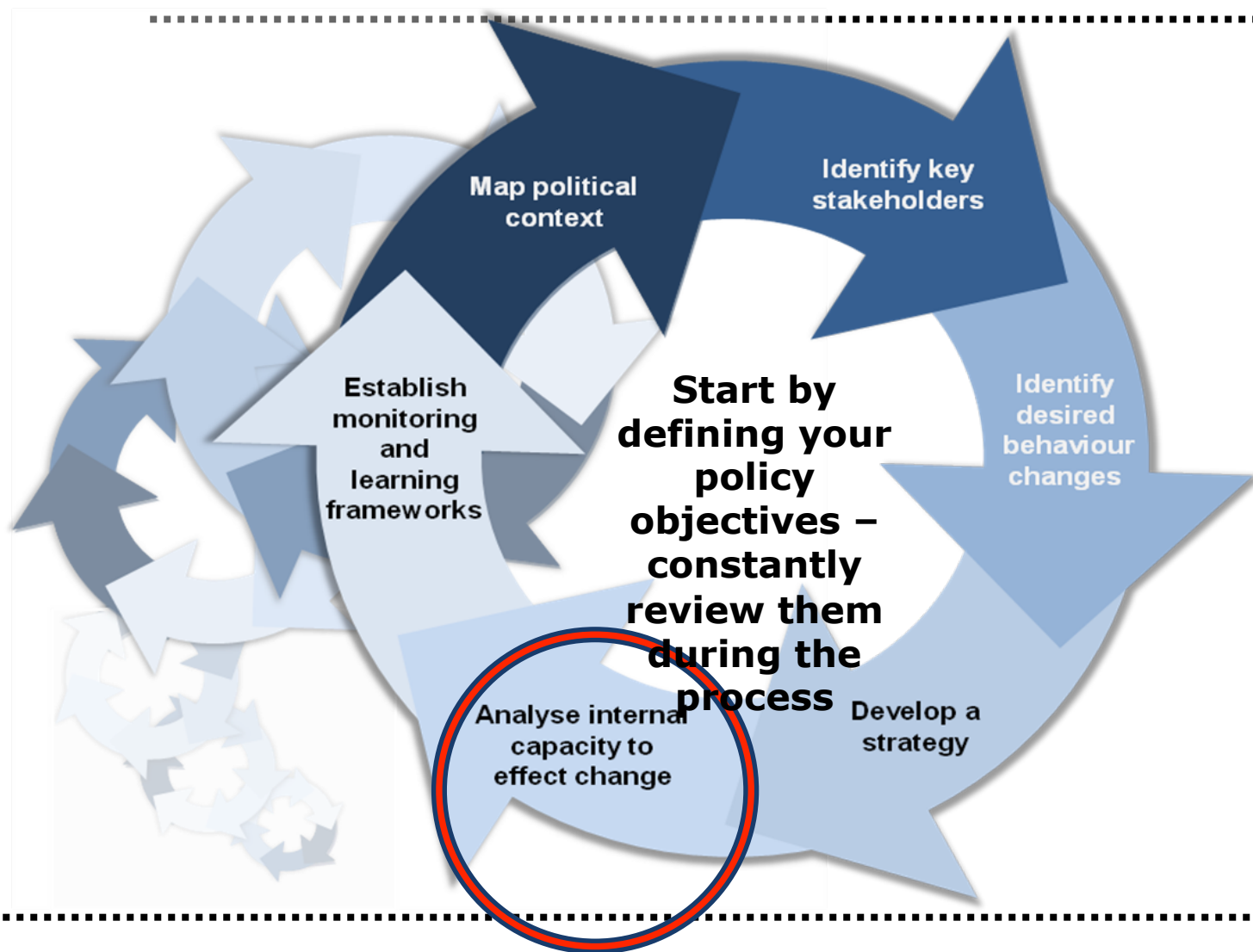
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?

Your influence
on the force



Assessing internal capacity

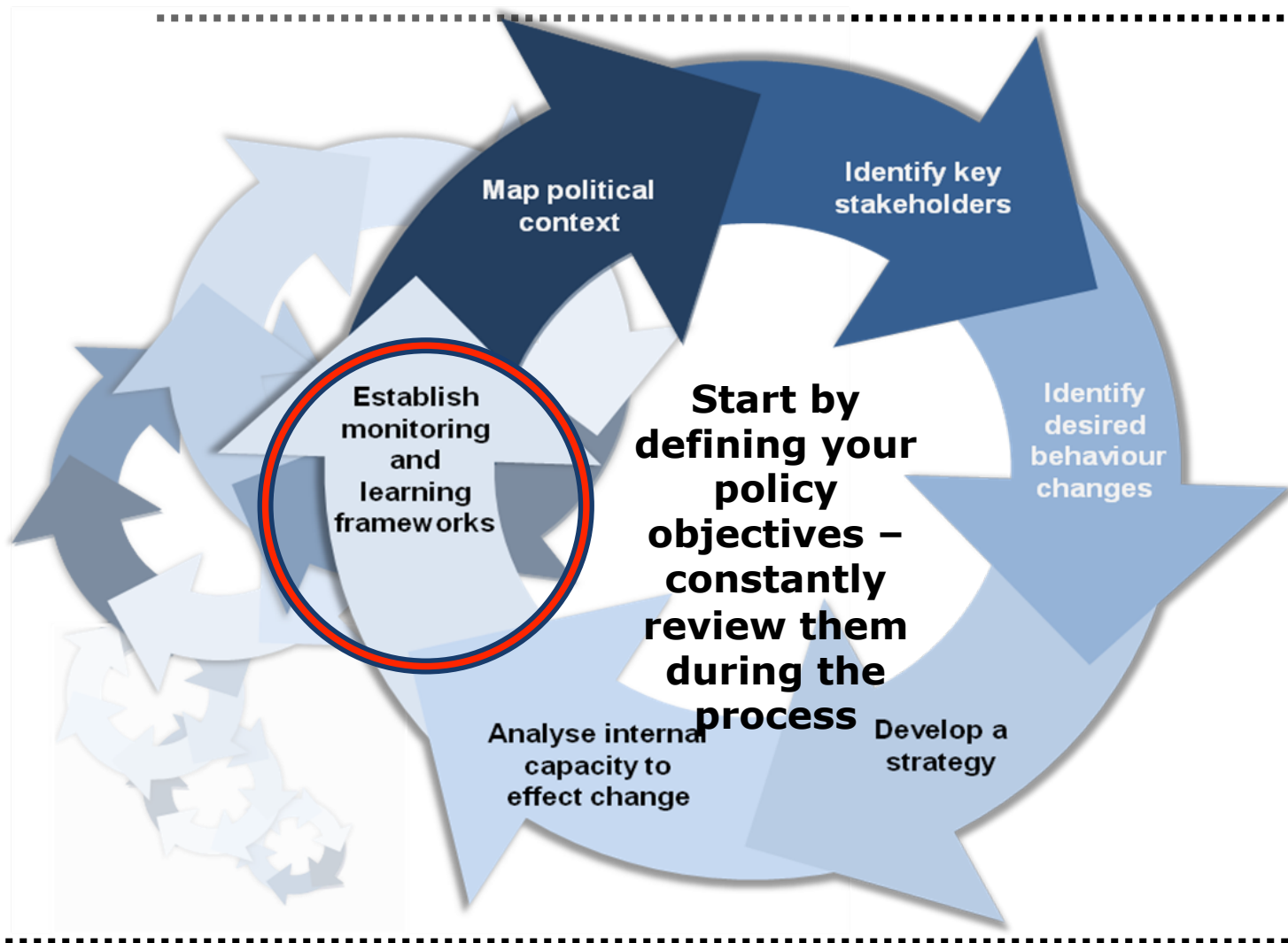


SWOT Analysis

- What type of policy influencing skills and capacities do we have?
- In what areas have our staff used them more effectively?
- Who are our strongest allies?
- When have they worked with us?
- Are there any windows of opportunity?
- What can affect our ability to influence policy?

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Monitoring and Evaluating



Stories of change

1. Situation
2. A change or challenge
3. Action
4. Result
5. Lesson

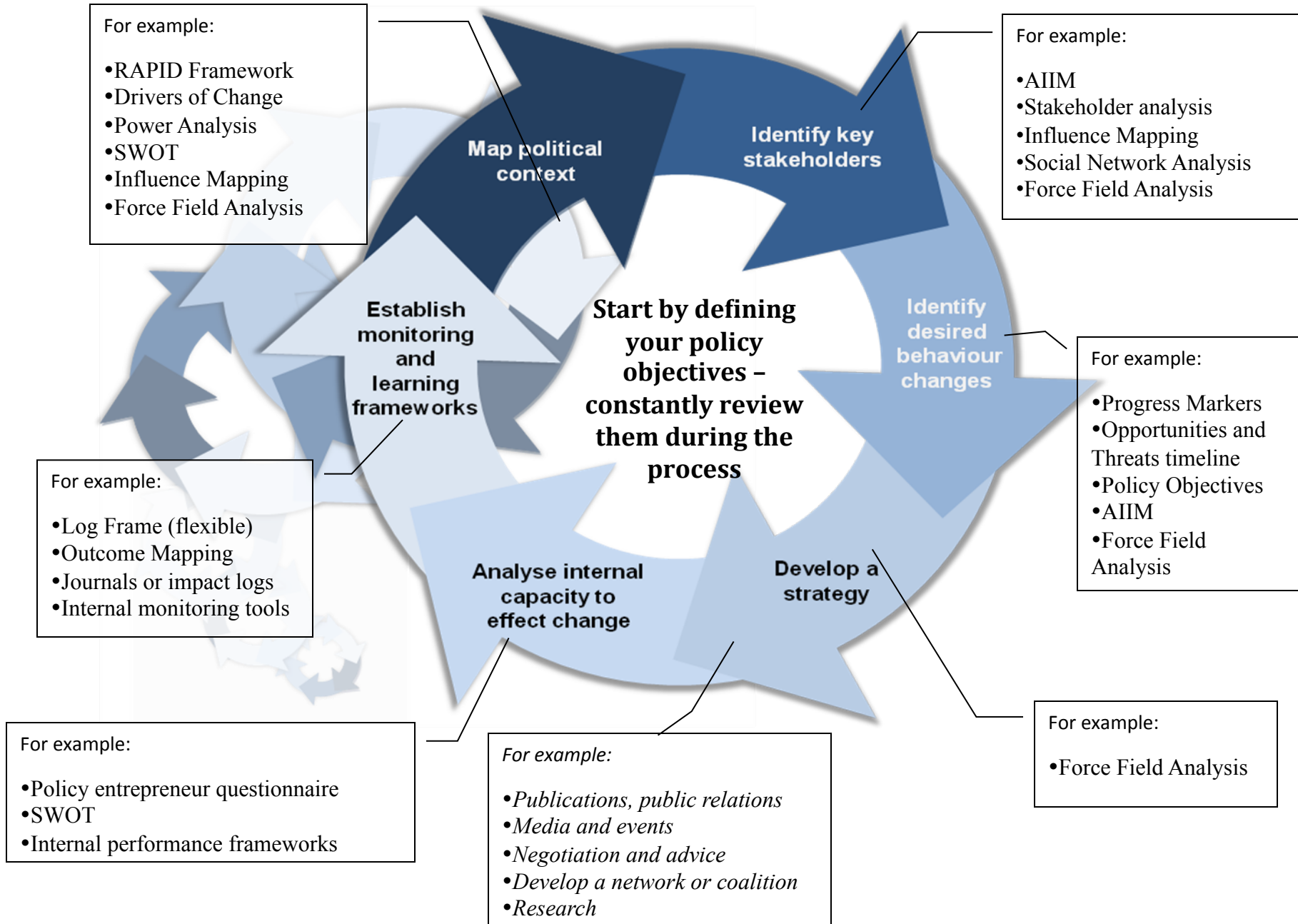


An after action review asks 4 simple questions:

- **What was supposed to happen?**
- **What actually happened?**
- **Why was there a difference?**
- **What can we learn from it?**



15 minute team debrief, conducted in a “rank-free” environment.



Alignment, influence, interest matrix



Additional materials on policy influence

- Evidence based policy in development network

www.ebpdn.org

- Overall information on policy influence

www.onthinkanks.org

- RAPID Programme

www.odi.org.uk/rapid

- M&E of research influence

www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1751.pdf

- Outcome Mapping

www.outcomemapping.ca

Policy Briefs as a research communication tool

Evaluating some policy briefs



Preparing policy briefs: an exercise

- You have been given a Policy Brief. **DON'T LOOK YET!**
- When we say '**GO**', you will have TWO MINUTES to read through the policy brief (you may want to take notes)
- After five minutes, hide the Policy Brief again...



Preparing policy briefs: an exercise

- Note down (in groups) the answers to the following questions (**five minutes – no peeping**):
 - What issue is the policy brief aiming to change, validate or inform on?
 - What recommendations are made?
 - Who do you think is the audience for this brief?
 - Are there any style or content issues you notice?
- Each group will present their answers (2.5 minutes/group)

Tea and coffee break



Constructing a line of argument

CAN YOU COME BACK WITH THAT
3 YEAR STUDY SUMMARISED IN SIX
BULLET POINTS IN POWERPOINT





Planning policy briefs: presenting your argument

- **What do you want to say, and to whom?**
 - Summarise the **main point**, argument or line of reasoning into **one or two clear** and accessible **sentences**
 - Messaging is about **prioritisation**, not about **'dumbing down'**
 - Messages should be both **clear and consistent**, and should **tell a coherent story**
-

Planning policy briefs: presenting your argument





The elevator pitch



Exercise

The elevator pitch tool

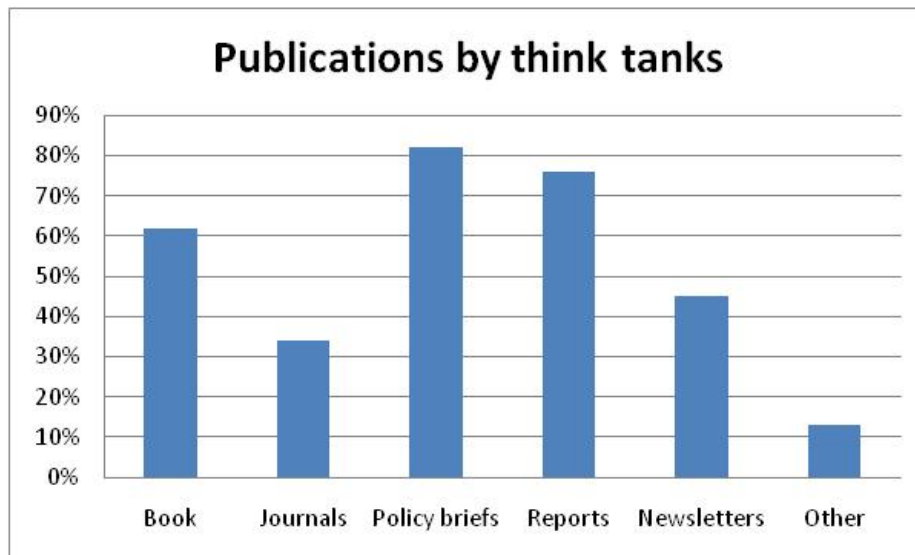
- Write your 3 key messages (5 minutes)
 - Split into pairs – one of you is a policy maker that you meet in the lift, going from the 1st to the 12th floor. You have 2 minutes to pitch your key messages. Switch. (4 minutes – 2 minutes each)
-

Planning policy briefs

Increasing impact by identifying audience, objectives, messages, authors, context and wider communications plans

Becoming familiar with policy briefs

- Policy Briefs are the most popular form of publication in think tanks. Why? Because they can help bridge the large gaps between the research and policy communities



Source: CIPPEC and
GDN's Comparative
Analysis of think
tanks in Asia, Africa
and Latin America



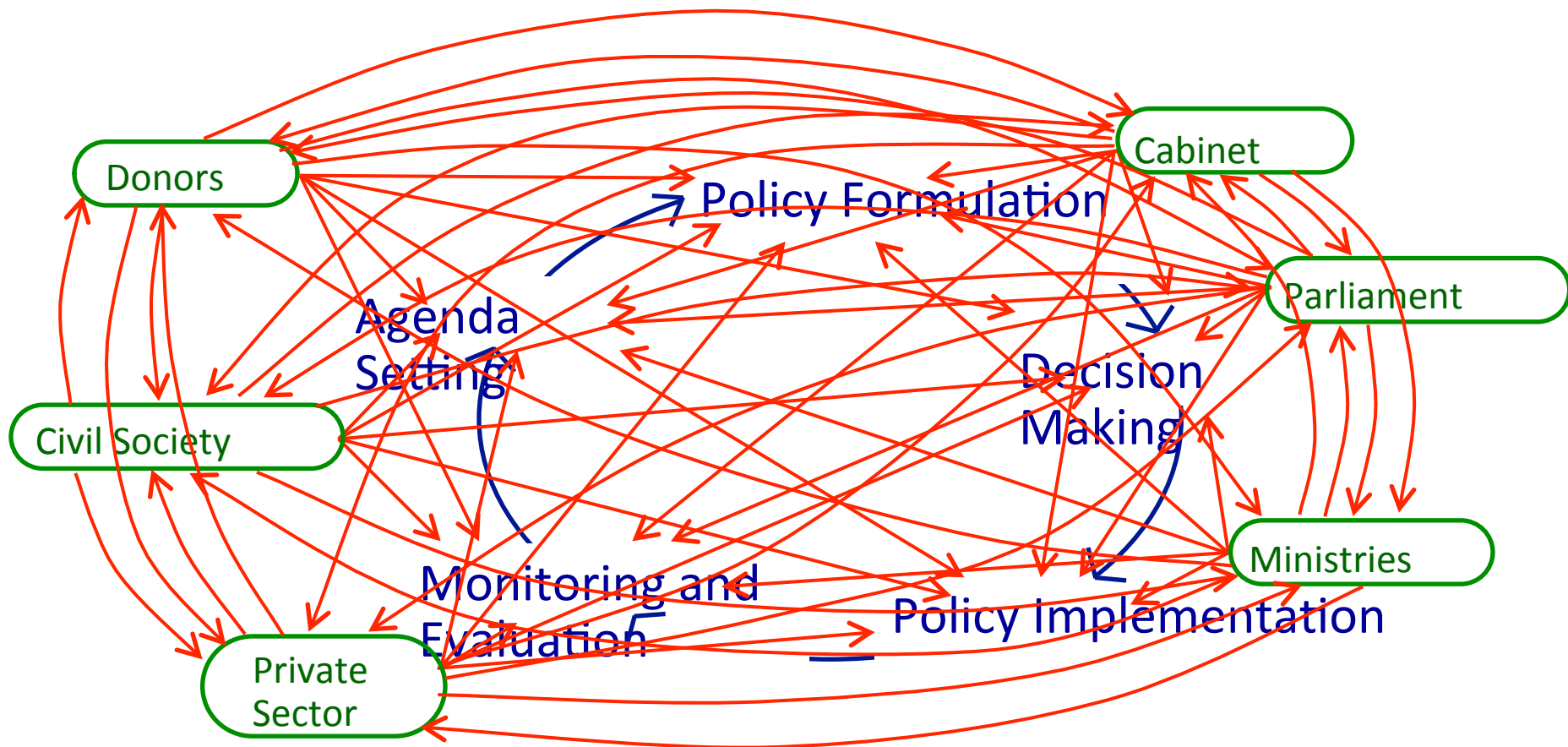
Becoming familiar with policy briefs: types of policy briefs

- Different types of policy briefs:
 - Policy Briefs as a memo
 - Policy Briefs as a publication
 - Policy Briefs as a marketing tool / handout
 - Policy Briefs as a targeted research summary
 - What type of policy brief developed can depend on the **objectives** and **messages** of a piece/pieces of research (for example, your evaluations), the **audience** identified, the **authors** of the brief, the specific **context** the work is undertaken in and what **other communications activities** are being planned.
-

Planning policy briefs: considering the objectives

Analyse an issue / put an issue in the public agenda	Recommend on an issue / advocacy
Describes a problem or situation, analyses causes and points out options to improve the situation.	Gives a clear opinion on a specific relevant topic in a particular moment and proposes a certain action
Presents alternatives to solution without suggesting the best one; offering costs and benefits from each alternative.	Shows the author position as proposes a solution from a group of different alternatives and rejects the other options with arguments.
Is oriented to a general audience (technical concepts explained)	Is oriented to an expert audience

Planning policy briefs: considering the context





Planning policy briefs: considering the audience

- Who is the brief aimed at?
- Does the audience know us?
- How much does the target audience know about the issue?
- How do they perceive the issue?
- What questions do need answers to?
- How open are they to your message(s)?

Common audiences

Non-academic / non-specialist

Decision-makers who may have varying degrees of expertise on a given issue

In certain cases may target practitioners

Not usually general public

The shoes of your audience

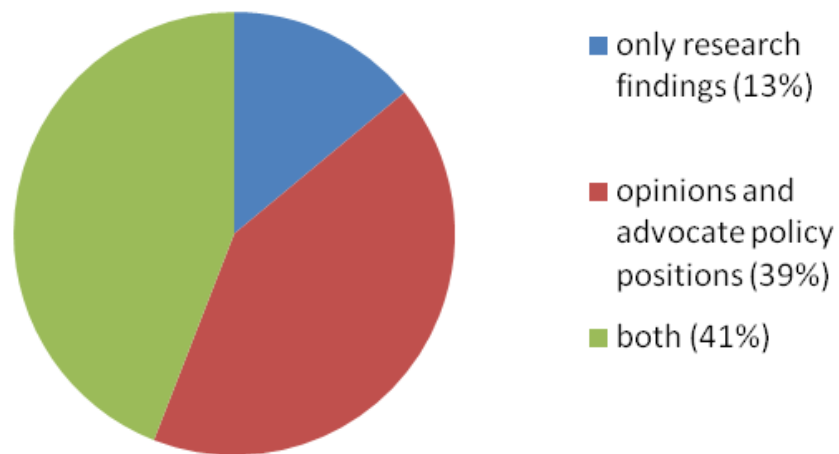


Planning policy briefs: considering the audience

Policy-makers views:

- Do present evidence-informed opinions
- Don't shy away from opinion and value judgements
- But signpost which content is *subjective* and which is *objective*

Scientists should provide...



Planning policy briefs: considering the authors

- What do we know?
- What are institutional limitations (knowledge, messaging)?
- What are our areas of credibility?
 - The writers
 - The organisation

Types of author(s)

Researchers

Policy-oriented research
institutes

Think tanks

Civil society organisations

Advocacy organisations

International NGOs

Multilateral organisations

Government bodies

Networks/ coalitions of any of
the above



Planning policy briefs: choosing structure and content

- Potential sections of a policy brief, and some reasons to include them:
 - **Executive summary** (allow people to see argument without getting put off by length: interest them to read on)
 - **Title** (punchy to attract attention or descriptive to highlight specific issue being tackled)
 - **Introduction** (explain importance of issue, create curiosity about the brief)
 - **Policy options and costings** (show the problem and alternatives has been fully considered)
-



Planning policy briefs: structure and content

- Executive statement (10%)
- Introduction (10-15%)
- Methodology (5-10%)
- Results and conclusions (30%)
- Implications or Recommendations (30%)
- References and useful resources (10%)

Note: Policy briefs are two, **four** or a MAXIMUM of eight pages in length (that's around 1200, 2200 or 4000 words)



Planning policy briefs: structure and content – executive summary

- Designed to give an overview of the content of the brief
 - Should contain ALL standard elements of a policy brief
 - Emphasis on capturing the attention of the reader
 - Appears on the first page
 - Usually written last
-

This policy brief outlines actions the Tunisian government can take to reduce the remaining barriers to entry, exit and competition in the Tunisian manufacturing industries, with the aim of stimulating a greater dynamism and flexibility than the market has yet to achieve. It concludes that policies should be considered to:

- Work with Statistics bureaus to develop and collect information on entry and exit and other indicators of firm dynamics.
- Reduce entry barriers by developing market access and increasing the access of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to financial resources.

‘Entry and Exit Dynamics and Economic Performance in Tunisian Manufacturing Industries’, University of Tunis 2009



Planning policy briefs: structure and content – introduction

- Designed to capture the attention of the reader
 - Explains the importance/ urgency of the issue
 - Creates curiosity about the rest of the brief
 - Gives a brief overview of the conclusions or the direction of the rest of the brief
 - Outlines the structure for the rest of the brief
-

The increased fear of a pandemic at the current time is due to the fact that the H5N1 strain causing the outbreak is capable of mutating rapidly and acquiring genes from viruses infecting other animal species, including humans. If the new virus contained sufficient human influenza virus genes, direct transmission from one person to another (human-to-human) could occur, heralding a possible influenza pandemic. The current H5N1 strain causes high mortality among humans, with mortality rates exceeding 50 per cent in most countries.

AN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL RESPONSE TO THE THREAT OF A PANDEMIC UN ESCAP Issue N.1 2005



Planning policy briefs: choosing structure and content

- Potential sections of a policy brief, and some reasons to include them:
 - **Results and conclusions** (highlight evidence base)
 - **Implications or recommendations** (offer direct or indirect areas for action)
 - **Methodology** (can convey authority, credibility, weight and tone)
 - **References** and **useful resources** (highlight evidence base and offer routes for further reading)



Planning policy briefs: structure and content – results & conclusions

- Designed as an overview of the findings/ facts
 - Constructed around the line(s) of argument behind the policy recommendations
 - Move between general and specific information
 - Base conclusions on evidence, data and findings
 - Make clear, balanced and defensible assertions
-

Do The Electric Fences Work?

Overall, it was found that although the electric fencing does help...it is not capable of completely eliminating conflict. In each ... area...technical as well as socioeconomic factors affect... success. Technical failures mainly affected the early fences...Other problems resulted from failure to take into account elephant behavior and distribution patterns.

Elephants and Electric Fences: A Study From Sri Lanka. EEPSEA 2005-PB11



Planning policy briefs: structure and content – methodology

TIPS and TRICKS

- This section is not always applicable – make sure it's relevant before including it
- Avoid overly technical language
- Highlight unique methods or data collection
- Focus on methodological issues related to the main messages/ recommendations

- Designed to strengthen the credibility of the brief by explaining how the findings and recommendations were arrived at.
 - Might include:
 - Description of the issue and context of the investigation
 - Description of the research and analysis activities
 - What methods were used to conduct the study?
 - Who undertook the data collection and analysis?
-



Planning policy briefs: structure, content – implications / recommendations

Implications

- What policy changes or actions do the results point to?
- Supported by evidence
- Must be actionable
- Less direct than recommendations
- Useful when advice not requested or not welcome

Recommendations

- What does the researcher think should happen?
 - Supported by evidence
 - Must be actionable
 - Describe clearly what should happen next
 - State as precise steps
-



Planning policy briefs: structure, content – reference and useful resources

- Especially when synthesising information from multiple sources, always cite them appropriately and be sure to add a list of references
 - Include seminal works in the area so those looking for information can easily find out more on the topic
 - Good opportunity to direct readers to other resources produced by the same author/organisation/ network
-

Planning policy briefs: the role of design

- Format & design can:
 - **Engage people** to pick a policy brief up (photographs, pull quotes)
 - **Highlight crucial information** (title and topic, recommendation or key points, sidebars)
 - **Separate content**, such as core and additional text (for example, methodology and case studies)
 - **Convey authority** (by styling of through branding and use of logos)
 - **Show information in different ways** (for example, graphs and charts)





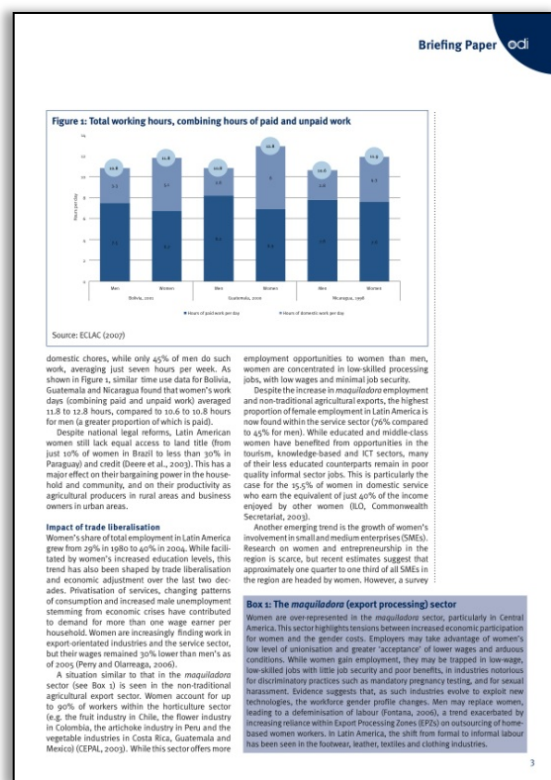
Planning policy briefs: structure and content - photographs

- 'A picture is worth a thousand words!'
- Bold, vibrant colours can help attract readers
- Can be used to make the issue more real or personal
- **Respect copyrights**, but explore the Creative Commons
 - In the 'Advanced Search' on www.flickr.com, you can limit your searches to CC photos only!
 - Can also search on <http://flickrcc.bluemountains.net/>



Planning policy briefs: structure and content - graphs and charts

- Present information in a clear, memorable way
- Particularly good for highlighting general trends or significant differences
- Should go beyond information provided in the text to give a more complete picture





Planning policy briefs: structure and content - text boxes

- A chance to tell stories to help the reader connect with the issue
 - Useful if there is only enough room in the main text to remain at a general level
 - May be used to call attention to a bulleted list
 - A good place to add extra information that is not critical to the main text but aids in the overall understanding of it
-



Planning policy briefs: structure and content - pull quotes

- Help reiterate key points or messages
- Can be placed in the middle of the text/page itself or put in the sidebar



Planning policy briefs: structure and content - side bars

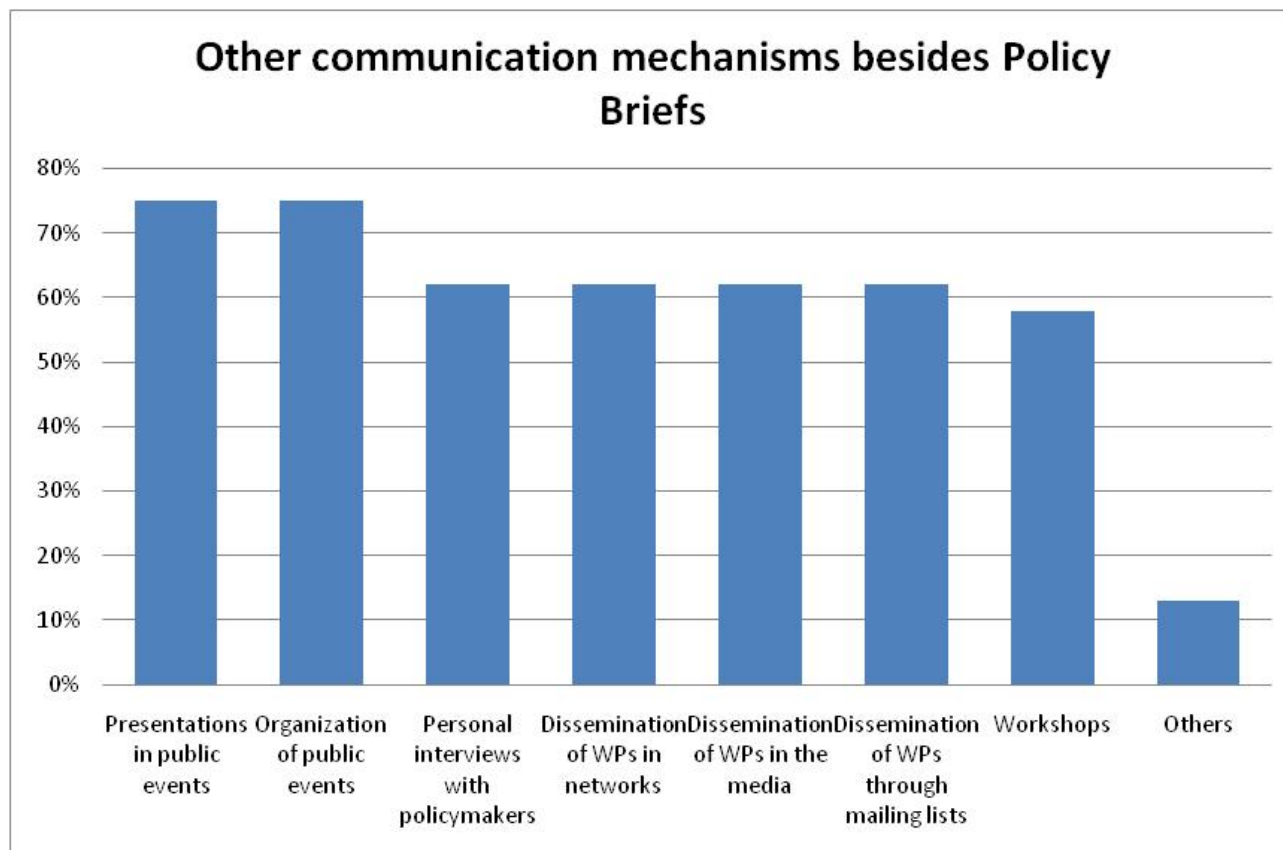
- Although not necessary, sidebars can be a useful way of physically framing the text and giving shape to the document



- Also useful for including extra information such as:
 - Description of the project, organisation or publication
 - Copyright and contact information
 - Pull quotes and Useful resources
-

Planning policy briefs: communications activities

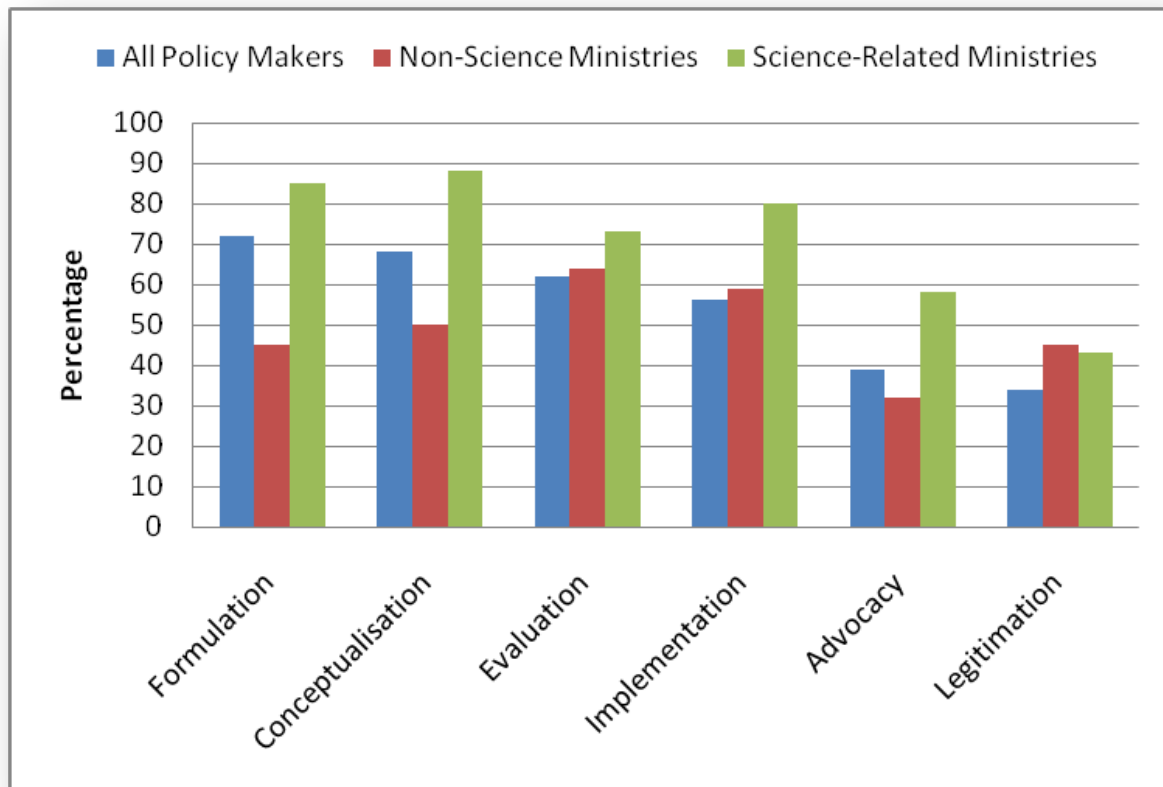
- Policy Briefs are one of many communications tools



Source: CIPPEC and GDN's Comparative Analysis of think tanks in Asia, Africa and Latin America

Planning policy briefs: communications activities

- Timing is important
- When do policy-makers use scientific information in the policy cycle?





The views presented here are those of the speakers, and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI or our partners.

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