

GETTING EVIDENCE USED

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The quandary of getting research used in practice is an age old one. The siloing of empirical work away from the realities of policymaking creates a fragmented and inefficient path to insight for practice. In this brief, we ask how research and the evidence generated by that research comes to be used by public decision makers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Make knowledge discoverable

Science and the knowledge that is learned from it can only be useful if it is found by users when they need it. Outside of experts who are invested substantively in a topic and have deep wells of knowledge to draw upon, most individuals, especially public decision makers, will become temporary experts during the time which an issue has high relevance. Thus they will need to find credible information quickly and presented in language they can understand (Case, 2012; Dodson et al., 2015). To accomplish this:

- Create 1 page briefs of all sponsored research outputs that highlight policy implications and relevance –this could be incorporated as a requirement of the award but is better centrally done by professional writers in consultation with the scientists;
- Create a continuously maintained database that makes the policy briefs searchable, with links to the original research outputs on demand. It is also important that this database be easily found through search engine optimization so that decision makers and their staff have quick access (information pulls);

- Scan for issues of public importance and debate and bundle relevant issue briefs with a summative narrative for dissemination to relevant potential users (information pushes).

Recommendation 2: Bolster the role of intermediaries

Intermediaries play a key function in the knowledge ecosystem. They take difficult to understand science that was written for other scientists, bundle the studies, and create easy to understand narratives for a non-technical audience. Their skill in this role has been well documented. This also mitigates the ineffectiveness of researchers in promoting their own work to public decision makers. To enhance the role of intermediaries:

- Facilitate interaction between researchers and intermediaries to introduce producers (researchers) to intermediary users so that relationships are created, sources of empirical work are more easily identified, and each actor can maximize their role more effectively. This interaction can be both direct through face-to-face workshops, as well as indirect through bundling of one page narratives for use by intermediaries in their work;
- Create a pipeline of results from sponsored research to enable quick access to high quality studies for intermediaries. This can be done through partnerships and established relationships between organizations promoting science. These are the channels through which the information is shunted;
- Foster capacity building through intermediaries of both researchers on problem awareness and decision makers on use of evidence in policymaking.