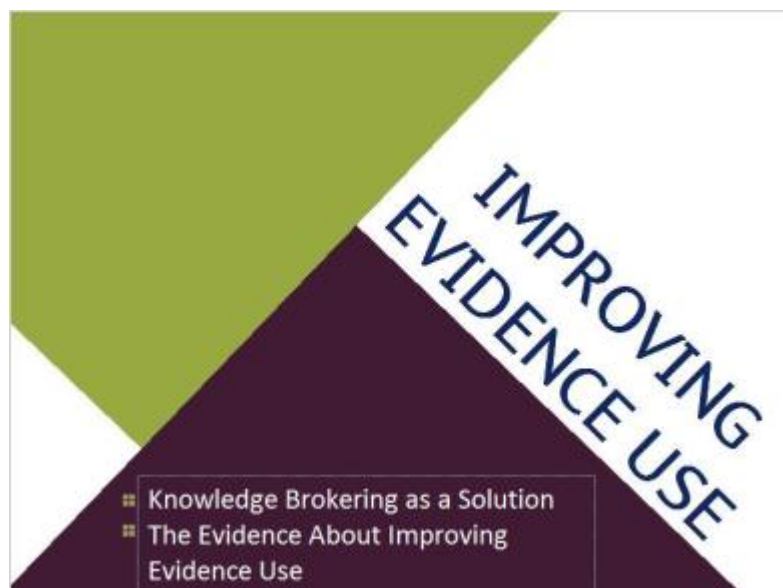


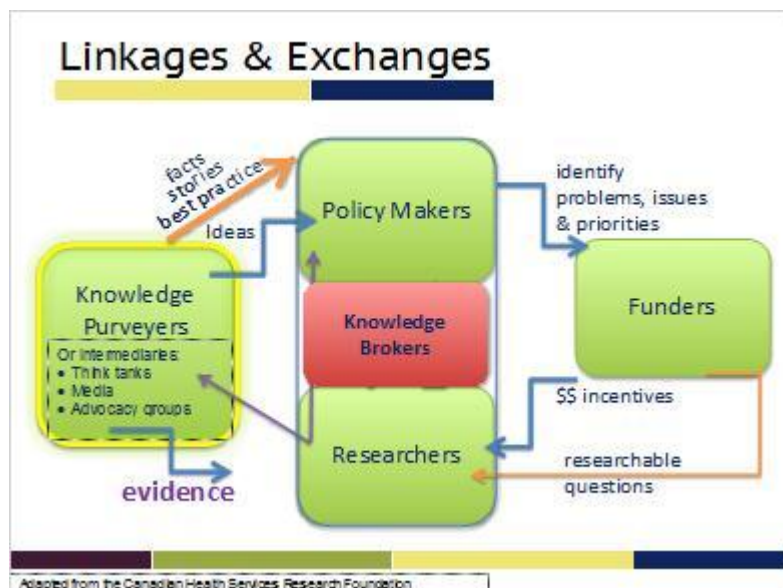
Improving Evidence Use



In the last section of this course you explored some models that explain how research and policy are linked.

Now let's talk about some solutions, and how to improve evidence use.....

Linkages & Exchanges

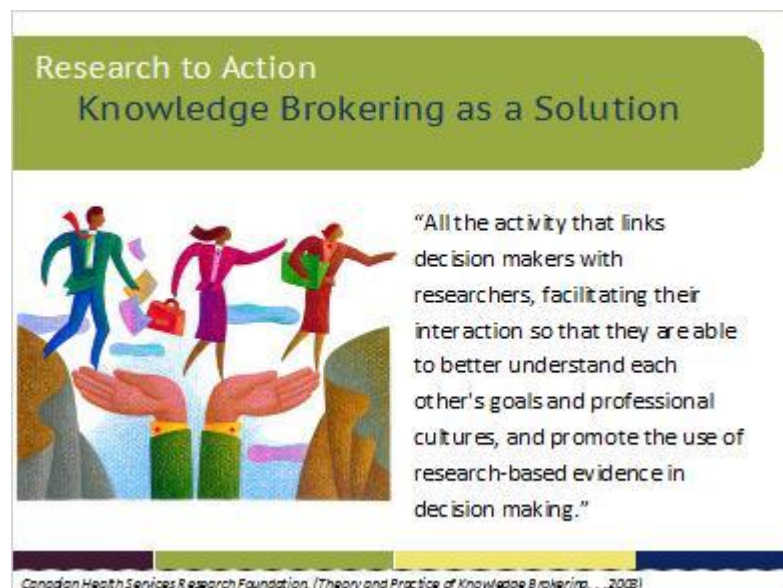


Let's look at the linkages and exchanges diagram again.

All those people who were in the knowledge purveyor group are also evidence providers.

An important implication of this model is that evidence is best used when the communication between these four different groups of people flows smoothly. This creates a very important role for what are known as intermediaries. Intermediaries are people who translate and bridge the differences between researchers and decision makers. This is also known as knowledge brokering.

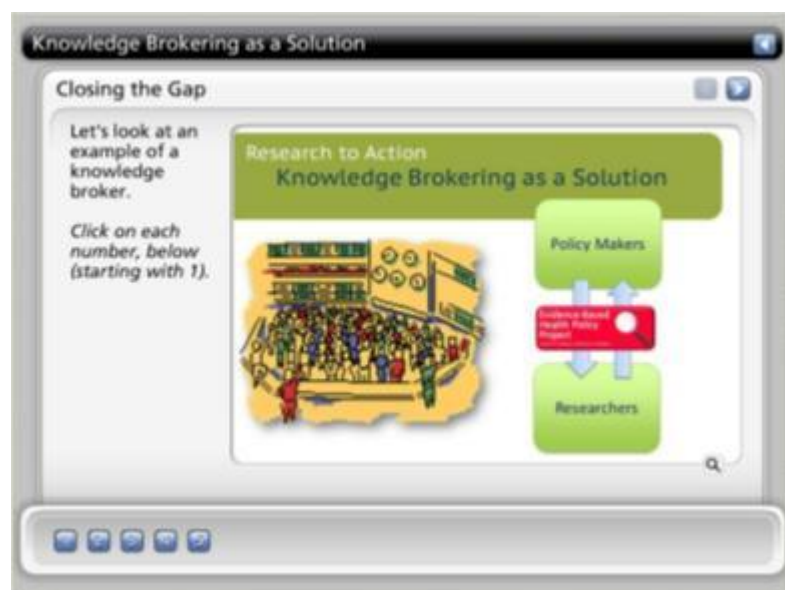
Knowledge Brokering as a Solution



Again, Jonathan Lomas, from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, describes knowledge brokering as "All of the activity that links decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they are better able to understand each other's goals and professional cultures, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision making."

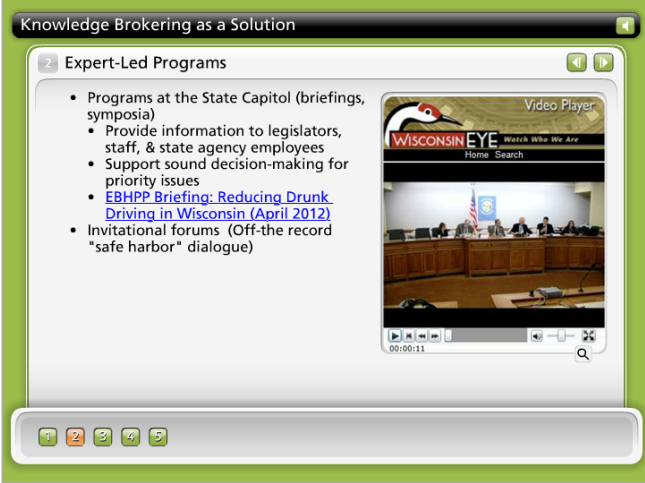
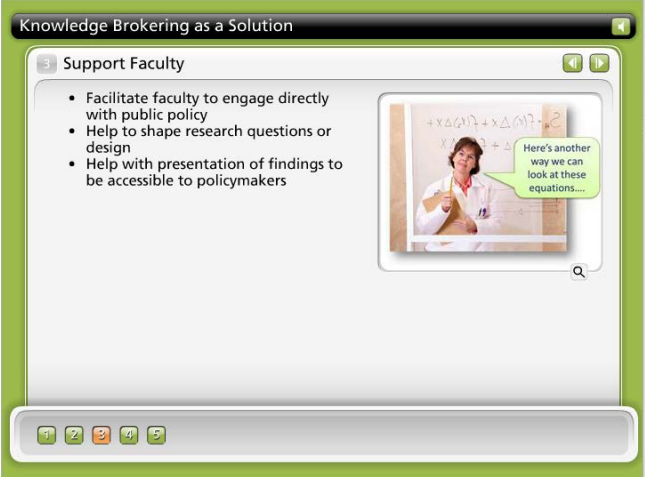
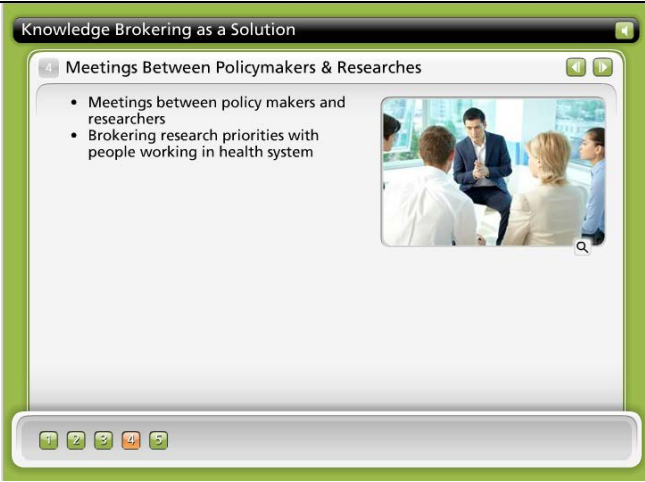
Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, (Theory and Practice of Knowledge Brokering. . .2003)

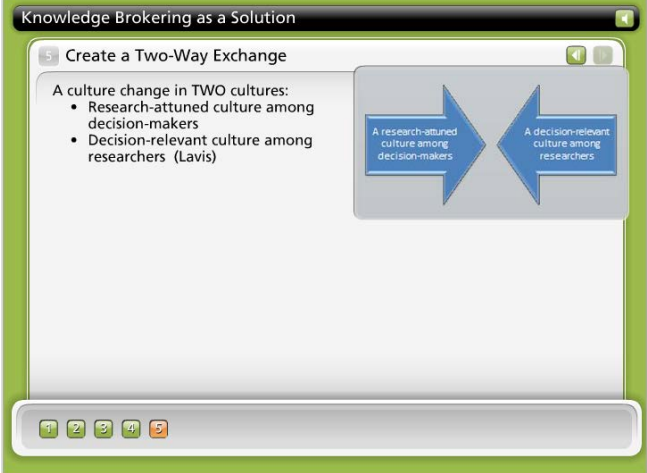
Knowledge Brokering as a Solution interaction



Here is where the Evidence-Based Health Policy Project comes in. We are intermediaries - or knowledge brokers.

| Knowledge Brokering as a Solution | (Interaction) |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | <h3 data-bbox="821 1020 1443 1056">The Evidence-Based Health Policy Project</h3> <p data-bbox="821 1108 1443 1272">We facilitate interactions between policy makers and decision makers. Let's look at some examples of what we do, to help explain the role of knowledge brokers.</p> <p data-bbox="821 1325 1443 1501">Photo by UW-Madison, University Communications; © Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System (Capitol/lake Photo by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison); (Bascom Hall Photo by: Bryce Richter).</p> |

| Knowledge Brokering as a Solution (Interaction) | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Expert-Led Programs</p> <p>We conduct expert-led programs at the State Capitol that provide legislators, staff, and state agency employees with timely, factual information to support sound decision making. Program topics either address priority issues raised in the legislature or broader, on-going policy issues.</p> <p>If topics are very sensitive, we convene invitational forums for off-the-record safe harbor dialogue.</p> <p>You can click on the link to check out a briefing on Reducing Drunk Driving that the EBHPP facilitated in April of 2012.</p> |
|  | <p>Support Faculty</p> <p>We support faculty who are conducting policy relevant work and want to engage more directly with state-level health care policy by helping them shape their research questions or design and especially the presentation of their findings in ways which are accessible to policy makers.</p> |
|  | <p>Meetings Between Policymakers & Researchers</p> <p>We also convene individual meetings between legislators and researchers with common policy interests. These meetings provide opportunities for them to learn from each other, and pave the way for on-going collaboration.</p> <p>I think it is especially important for academics to be able to meet with the people</p> |

| Knowledge Brokering as a Solution | (Interaction) |
|---|---|
| | <p>who are funding and implementing health programs on the ground. Only when researchers truly understand those peoples' needs, can they really reshape the way they think about their research in a much more community engaged way - and in a much more useful way.</p> <p>By the same token, once a legislator has had such a discussion, when the researcher does bring their work back, the legislator is much more likely to find it meets their needs - and are therefore, much more likely to use it.</p> |
|  <p>Knowledge Brokering as a Solution</p> <p>5 Create a Two-Way Exchange</p> <p>A culture change in TWO cultures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research-attuned culture among decision-makers • Decision-relevant culture among researchers (Lavis) <p>A research-attuned culture among decision-makers</p> <p>A decision-relevant culture among researchers</p> | <p>Create a Two-Way Exchange</p> <p>The important part here is creating a two-way exchange. Our goal is a culture change in two cultures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To paraphrase John Lavis, one of the leading academics of knowledge exchange and transfer in public policymaking, we want to create a research-attuned culture among decision-makers; • and a decision-relevant culture among researchers. |

Critical Caveat



Once you get past the rational model of the policy process, most sophisticated models of the policy process highlight to various degrees the roles of values in decision making. We have already pointed out that evidence competes with other concerns. And we are going to increasingly start talking about values as we move forward from here. So, it is crucial to remember this important caveat:

Value choices are not the same as informational needs. So,

- Decision makers will often face questions about priorities (what ought to be).
- If key information is missing, research can shed some light on the options.
- BUT - and it is very important to keep this in mind: research alone can never tell a decision maker which choice they prefer.

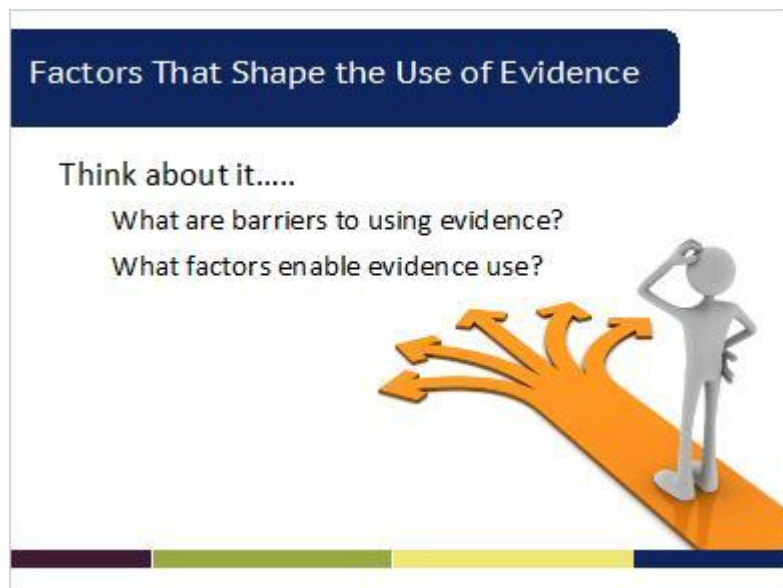
This raises some very key issues about communication strategies, and further raises the question of where the line is between presenting information and advocating for a position.

Evidence About Improving Evidence Use



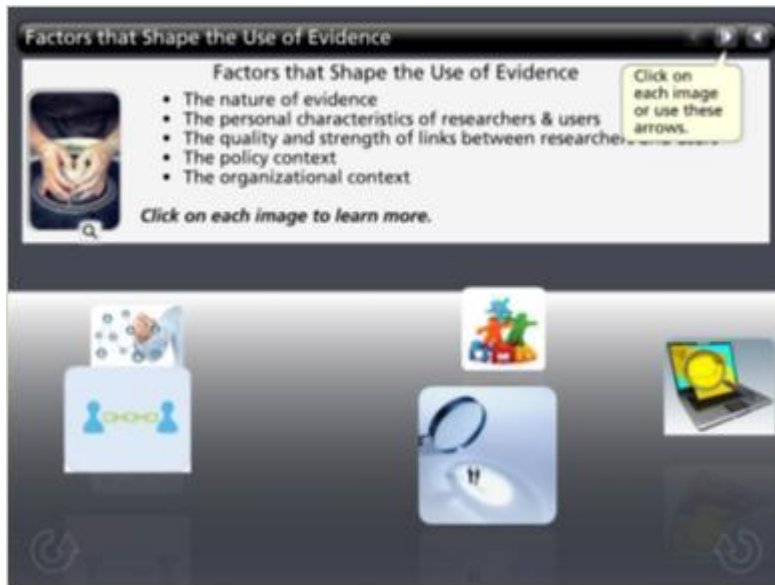
So, let's summarize what we know from the literature about the factors that shape the use of research.

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence



There is a rather large literature on this topic, most of which focus on the “user” side. According to policymakers' own accounts, what are the barriers to evidence use and what factors enable evidence use?

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence interaction

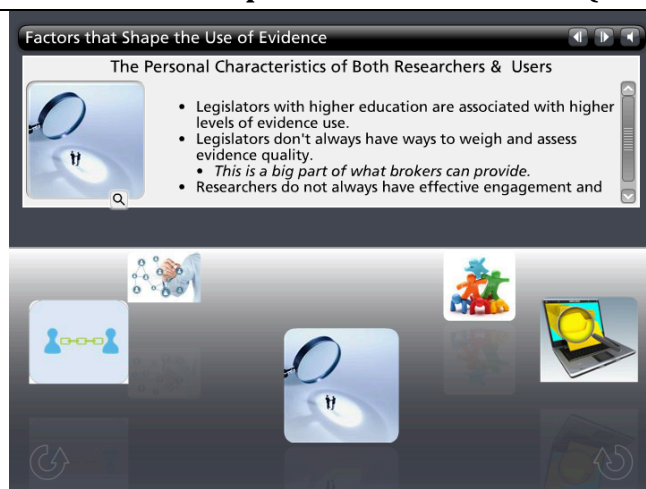


These factors can be broken down into several basic categories:

- The nature of the evidence;
- The personal characteristics of both researchers and users;
- The quality and strength of the links between researchers and users;
- The policy context, and
- The organizational context.

Let's look at each of these factors. Click on an image to learn more.

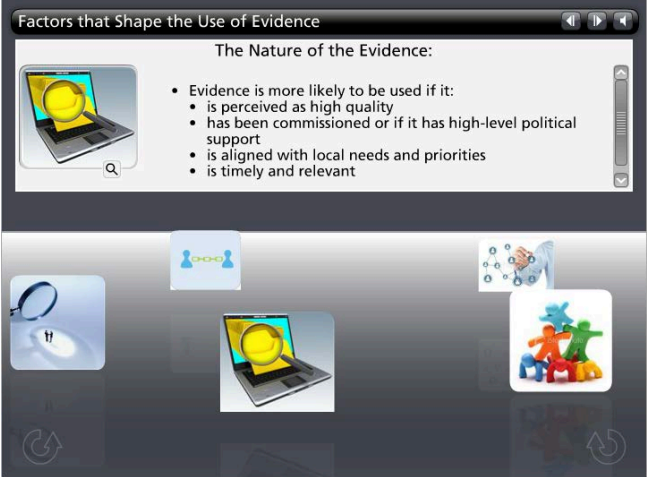
Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence (Interaction)



The personal characteristics of both researchers and users:

When you consider the personal characteristics of both researchers and users - there is some empirical evidence that:

- Higher levels of legislator education are associated with higher levels of evidence use. This might be because not all legislators have the skills to interpret or appraise the evidence they are given, which can certainly limit its use. This is a problem we may need to solve at the ballot

| Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence (Interaction) | |
|--|---|
| | <p>box - being smart should be a political asset, not a liability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my experience, legislators have tons of evidence at their disposal. What they don't have are ways to weigh and assess its quality. This is a big part of what brokers can provide. • On the researcher side, researchers do not always have effective engagement and dissemination skills. |
|  | <p>The nature of the evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers are more likely to use evidence that they perceive as high-quality, that comes from a credible source, and has findings that are clear and uncontested. • There is good support for the idea that evidence is more likely to be used if it has been commissioned (probably because there is already legislator-buy-in for the product) or if it has high-level political support. • Not surprisingly, evidence which is aligned with local needs and priorities, is timely and relevant, and that is user-friendly is more likely to be used. |

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence (Interaction)

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence

The Policy Context

Context is important - but you have the least control over it. Evidence is more likely to be used when:

- It is aligned with current ideology and political interests
- The findings fit with existing ways of thinking, acting, or widely accepted information.

Policy Context

The policy context is clearly extremely important, but is probably the thing you have the least control over.

- Policy makers are not passive recipients of evidence, but rather view it through the lens of previous experiences, knowledge, values, and ideology.
- So, this may be disheartening, BUT evidence is more likely to be used when it is:
- Aligned with current ideology and political interests; and
- The findings fit with existing ways of thinking, acting, or widely accepted information;

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence

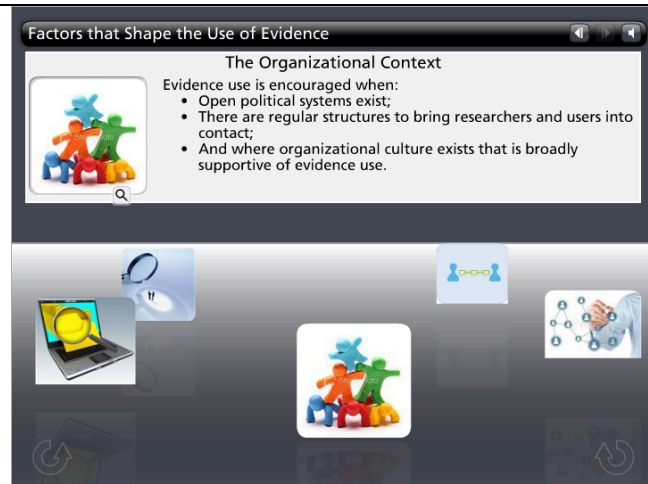
The Quality & Strength of the Links Between Researchers & Users

- Direct links are crucial; face-to-face interactions work best.
- A two-way exchange of information is most likely to encourage evidence use.
- Knowledge brokers can play an effective role in helping to establish these important links.

The quality and strength of the links between researchers and users are important:

- Direct links are crucial and face-to-face interactions work best to improve the use of evidence;
- As we've already discussed, a 2-way exchange of information is most likely to encourage evidence use.
- Knowledge brokers can play an effective role in helping to establish these important links.

Factors that Shape the Use of Evidence (Interaction)



The Organizational Context

Other organizational features matter too.

Evidence use is encouraged when:

- Open political systems exist;
- There are regular structures to bring researchers and users into contact;
- And where organizational culture exists that is broadly supportive of evidence use.

This is actually an area where those of you in leadership positions (or moving into leadership positions) can have an impact. You can help develop cultures that are open to and supportive of evidence use in your own organization's work.

Implications



The slide features a dark blue header with the word 'Implications' in white. Below the header is a photograph of a person's hands, wearing a dark apron, shaping a piece of light-colored clay on a pottery wheel. To the right of the photograph is a list of five questions in a light green font:

- Subjective or objective?
- User-friendly
- Establish relationships
- What about values?
- Does evidence matter?

I would like to identify a few key implications of the factors that shape the use of evidence.

First, what constitutes high-quality evidence and credible sources are obviously subjective. It is the policymaker who makes this decision, not the researcher.

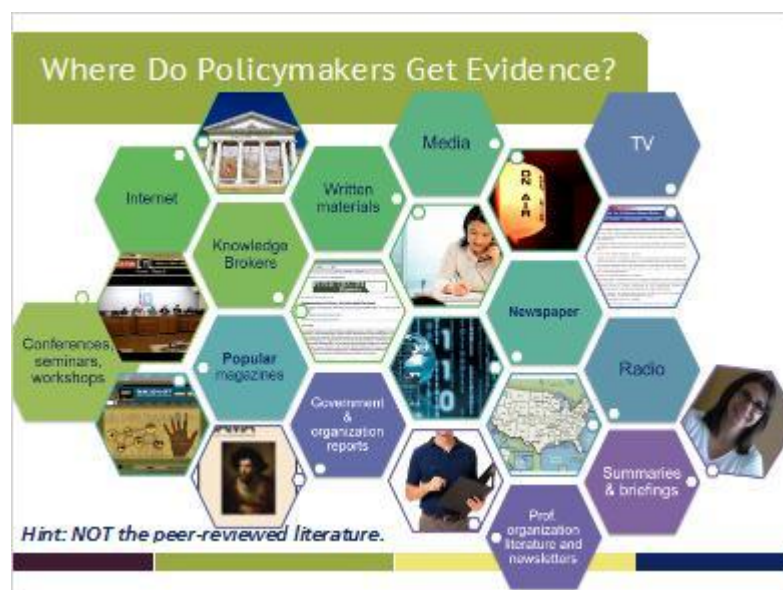
Every effort to make evidence user-friendly is worth it.

Establishing relationships between researchers and decision makers is very important. Using knowledge brokers can really help bridge gaps.

Values matter, and therefore the ability to communicate values matter.

Finally, one provocative question. Some have suggested that if the evidence that gets used is that which is aligned with the prevailing political and ideological wind, then isn't the evidence-based policy agenda inherently conservative? Doesn't it reinforce what people already believe and intend to do?

Where do Policymakers Get Evidence?



Let's shift a little from factors shaping the use of evidence to look at where decision makers get their information.

One Hint: It is NOT from the peer-reviewed literature.

Policy makers get their evidence from a wide variety of places. And, according to the conceptual use of evidence, knowledge accumulates over time to greater impact. So, there are many places and ways to disseminate evidence.

Getting Your Evidence to Policymakers

Getting Your Evidence to Policymakers

- Testify at hearing
- Visit in office
- Use media
 - Letter to the editor
 - Op-ed
 - Interview
- Write for a professional or organizational newsletter, issue brief

Persuasive Communication is Critical

You can visit legislators in their office. You can go singly or in a group to have a persuasive

meeting and talk about your evidence and its implications for policy.

You can use the media.

You can write a letter to the editor or op-ed piece;

You can be interviewed on the radio or television;

Or you can go to editorial boards and interview with them and hope that they will write something.

You can write a short article or thought-piece -- a user-friendly piece for a professional and organizational newsletter or an issue brief. Legislators say that they read these.

Whichever of these tasks you take, persuasive communication is really critical and this is where I really want to turn for the remainder of our time - to a discussion of how to communicate effectively.

Next Steps



Please continue with the next segment of the course. We'll continue the discussion about communication, and focus on how to frame or reframe messages.