WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

FROM RESEARCH TO POLICY AND BACK: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

MARCH 19-20, 2024
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

A significant body of theory and research on the use of research evidence (URE) in policymaking–specifically, regarding when, how, and under what conditions research is used and what it takes to improve research use in policy–has been accumulating for nearly five decades. Building on a seminal set of studies that described and analyzed URE in a range of policy settings, URE scholarship has evolved in recent years to consider strategies for promoting the routine and normalized use of research in these settings. As a result, the field made significant progress on identifying mechanisms for improving URE in policymaking processes, producing a collection of valuable resources for advancing research and practice in this area (e.g., URE methods repository, edited volumes, and an online library of resources), and support a growing community of researchers, practitioners, users of research, funders, and other stakeholders from diverse fields and sectors who are strongly committed to improving URE in public policymaking at all levels. With the growing momentum toward improving relationships between research and policy—in academia, government, the public sector, and philanthropy, to name a few—there is a significant opportunity to connect and synergize discrete initiatives and investments by consolidating and synthesizing knowledge regarding models, measures, and outcomes of connecting research with policy and policy with research, both directly and indirectly (via intermediaries).

A logical next step is the development of an actionable research agenda for the URE field that builds on current knowledge while also broadening and diversifying the pools of knowledge, expertise, experiences, perspectives and values that informs this work by engaging with scholars, practitioners, and thought leaders from disciplines and fields that have not been well represented within the URE community (e.g., design and information technology fields). An actionable research agenda would focus on revisiting key assumptions about URE in policy, including some that are idealized or largely misguided; clarifying and contextualizing key constructs (e.g., 'evidence', 'use', 'actionable knowledge', etc.); delineating the range of processes, causal mechanisms, and factors—and their dynamic interactions—that underlie URE in policymaking and positioning them in relation to individual, organizational, and institutional policy decision-making processes; and determining the range and most likely outcomes of interventions to improve URE in policy, including measures and indicators of impact. Some immediate and tangible synergetic outcomes of pursuing this actionable research agenda include the development and refinement of robust analytical tools (e.g., frameworks and logic models); a growing repository of replicable, valid and reliable methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed, and critical) for mapping, tracking, analyzing, and evaluating URE in policy; the formulation of new and more focused research questions with direct implications to URE-related theory and practice; and a platform for systematically comparing interventions and testing new applications or innovative tools for connecting research with policy (e.g., AI-based tools). The availability of such products is critically important for guiding informed decisions regarding programs or interventions for promoting URE in policy that are a good match to users' needs and capabilities, the policy context, and constraints on decisions such as time, available resources, and politics. They are equally important for guiding decisions regarding sound investments in building and sustaining an infrastructure that supports robust science-policy connections. Lastly and importantly, a synergetic effort of this type is necessary for eliminating the potential for eco-chambers to form in the field as it matures and to engaging more intently and meaningfully in conversations about critical cross-cutting themes at the intersection of theory, research, and practice such as valid forms of knowledge, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ethical aspects of promoting URE in policy as a critical vehicle for aligning URE work with larger and urgent social issues.

WORKSHOP AIMS

The workshop was held on March 19 and 20, 2024 both in-person and virtually on the campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. A copy of the agenda, list of participants, and participants biographies are included in the Appendix. **The primary goal of the workshop was to develop an actionable research agenda for synthesizing, synergizing, and advancing current scholarship and practice regarding URE in policy that points the field forward and outlines the kinds of questions, practices, and tools that would advance research on research use**. The specific aims of this collaborative venture were:

(1) Identify, characterize, and classify existing models, frameworks, and/or approaches for improving URE in policymaking;

(2) Collect and compare theories of action underlying different models/strategies and identify key facilitators, barriers, and conditions/contingencies relevant to the successful implementation of each model/strategy. If relevant, consider alignment of existing models/strategies with theories of the policy process (multiple streams framework, advocacy coalition framework, punctuated equilibrium theory, and policy feedback theory) and decision-making theories;

(3) Collect, compare, and evaluate key measures and indicators of research use that are appropriate for the policymaking context (including revisiting and clarifying 'evidence' and 'use' in this context) and that could be added to the existing [use of research evidence methods repository](#);

(4) Identify robust pathways of effects (direct and indirect) and realistic outcomes (near- and long-term) of URE in policymaking; and

(5) Suggest approaches, strategies, and practices for promoting greater research democratization and equity-centered policymaking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Taylor Scott, Director, Research Translation Platform, Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative, Pennsylvania State University

Max Crowley, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University
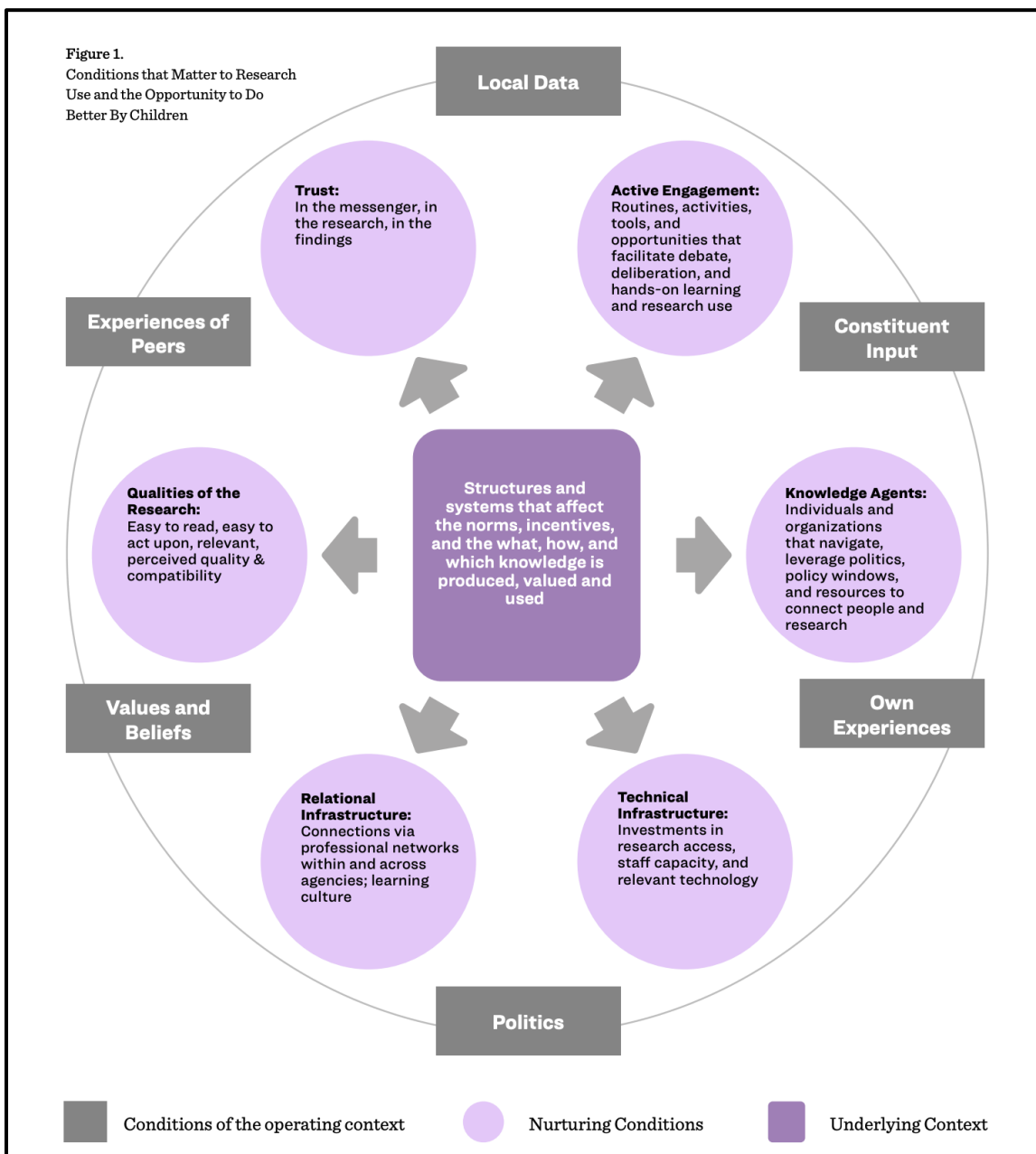
In her opening remarks, **Kim DuMont** (Senior Vice President, Programs, William T. Grant Foundation), underscored that social science research can contribute to better outcomes for children when it is used to inform the allocation of resources, the design of policy, and the implementation of practice. This includes studies involving qualitative and participatory methods that elevate lived experience and provide needed insights for the design and implementation of policy. Improving the use of research evidence is a major focus area of the Foundation and is motivated by the following question: given the potential of research to do better by children and their families, what strategies encourage routine uses of research in policy and practice in ways that benefit young people?

According to DuMont, three actions are needed to bolster effective strategies for improving research use: (1) strategies should be informed by what we already know from URE research on conditions that facilitate use of ideas and findings from research; (2) they must be situated in context , i.e., the structures and systems, including resources, norms, and routines, that enable or impede URE in policy; and (3) they ought to be mindful of the underlying conditions that affect what research ideas are funded, how the research is conducted, who conducts the research, and who is likely to benefit or be harmed if research is used. At the same time, they must also respect the multiple forms of evidence and expertise necessary to provide consequential insights to guide policy and implementation.

She noted next that prior studies that describe how and under what conditions research is used set the stage for action and the design of strategies to improve URE in policy and practice and shared a framework she conceived for organizing recent findings about conditions associated with research use (see figure below). Nurturing conditions can be organized in six clusters: qualities of the available research; relational infrastructure; technical and logistical infrastructure; mechanisms for knowledge exchange; research evidence navigators; and trust. Research use is contingent upon the perceived credibility and authoritativeness of research evidence, as well as its perceived relevance, feasibility, and compatibility with decision-makers' own theories of change. Research use is also frequently embedded in the structure of relationships and degree of trust among policy stakeholders and often involves active brokerage by a diverse range of intermediaries who enable and regulate knowledge exchange in the policy context. Lastly, research use is also enabled by robust technical and logistical infrastructures, including supportive leadership, culture, and routines. Beyond these, URE in policy also depends on the operating context (values, politics, competition, resource constraints, etc.) and underlying conditions such as opportunity structures and systemic biases.

DuMont concluded by noting that given what we know about the myriad and complexity of conditions that influence URE in policy, it is reasonable to expect that strategies for promoting research become more comprehensive and multi-pronged. We need strategies that intentionally nurture conditions that support the use of research evidence while also being mindful of underlying forces and operating contexts. Getting there requires further evolution and maturation of the science of URE, which is what this workshop aims to achieve.

Figure 1.
Conditions that Matter to Research Use and the Opportunity to Do Better By Children

Local Data

Trust: In the messenger, in the research, in the findings

Active Engagement: Routines, activities, tools, and opportunities that facilitate debate, deliberation, and hands-on learning and research use

Experiences of Peers

Constituent Input

Qualities of the Research: Easy to read, easy to act upon, relevant, perceived quality & compatibility

Structures and systems that affect the norms, incentives, and the what, how, and which knowledge is produced, valued and used

Knowledge Agents: Individuals and organizations that navigate, leverage politics, policy windows, and resources to connect people and research

Values and Beliefs

Own Experiences

Relational Infrastructure: Connections via professional networks within and across agencies; learning culture

Technical Infrastructure: Investments in research access, staff capacity, and relevant technology

Politics

■ Conditions of the operating context ● Nurturing Conditions ■ Underlying Context

Source: DuMont, K. (2024). *Doing better by children: Studying ways to fully leverage ideas and findings from research*. William T. Grant Foundation.

SESSION I: MAPPING THE TERRAIN: MODELS AND MECHANISMS FOR CONNECTING RESEARCH AND POLICY

PANEL: USING RESEARCH FOR EQUITABLE POLICYMAKING

The first panel brought together **Sofia Bahena** (University of Texas at San Antonio), **Denisa Gandara** (University of Texas at Austin), and **Courtnee Melton-Fant** (University of Memphis), with **Taylor Scott** (Pennsylvania State University) as moderator, to share research-based insights and experiences regarding use of research evidence to promote equitable policymaking. The conversation centered on three questions:

1. How do you think about equitable policymaking in your area of research? (e.g. representation, resources, outcomes)
2. Based on your area of research, what sorts of research translation strategies or models are relevant for advancing equitable policymaking?
3. What don't we know yet? What kinds of research questions do you have in the way of developing or testing strategies / models that advance equitable policymaking?

Scott facilitated the panel and provided opening remarks about the conceptualization of equity for research, engagement, and policymaking (see graphic below). The continuum of scholarly activities spans between the production of research and its translation of decision-makers, and thus there are varied considerations for enhancing equity across these phases of knowledge production and mobilization. The ways in which academia values evidence with and for marginalized communities affects the type of research that gets produced and uplifted in the public domain. The authentic partnerships and influence of marginalized communities in the research and dissemination process is also an important conduit for centering the voices of persons of color and making meaningful research and interpreting implications. Structural solutions to inequities require addressing barriers and needs of marginalized communities throughout the research and policy process.

The panel discussed multiple types of experiences that are relevant to scholars of color engaging in public policy with particular attention to barriers in both academic institutions in addition to marginalizing experiences that occur in policymaking spaces. Melton-Fant shared her experiences as a Black woman who interacted with a lawmaker who made an overt assumption about her political identity based on her racial identity, which was felt as dismissive since the policymaker assumed she favored a different ideology than he held. Racialized politics furthers implicit biases that interfere with the ability of scholars of color to build trusting relationships with decision makers in a political context. Bahena reflected on her work with immigrant populations and working through community-based intermediary organizations to lift the voices of constituents and how the effect of community organizing can also be hindered by the marginalization by advocates who have an immigrant status.

Gandara shared her interest in understanding policymakers' value and demand of evidence created by scholars of color. She discussed findings from her research regarding BIPOC scholars feeling overlooked, discriminated against, or otherwise dismissed in privileged spaces. Melton-Fant reflected on the demand for research evidence among legislators with whom she's interacted and noted that the most prolific user of evidence she worked with is a Black female legislator who uses research evidence to defend her position and credibility of her ideas. Scott remarked on findings of a study she conducted indicating that female legislators are more open to engaging with research evidence than male legislators. The panel reflected on whether equity-centered research evidence also empowers policymakers who hold marginalized identities.

The panel also contemplated the ways in which research evidence related to racial equity is marginalized in the policymaking process and within research institutions. The demand for evidence that speaks to the needs of racially minoritized communities may be downplayed in the political process. For instance, Bahena remarked on the need to view evidence through the lens of marginalized populations to provide context on the experiences within communities. More inclusive policies should draw upon evidence specific to affected communities since discriminatory practices have historically been justified by a misuse of evidence. There are also important considerations about institutional barriers within research institutions that disproportionately affect BIPOC scholars. Gandara's work has especially highlighted how the pressures on BIPOC scholars within the academy discourage their representation in policy because of the time demands

required of both tenure track expectations and extraordinary demands for service that create a "minority tax", which leaves little time available for navigating complex and marginalizing political environments.
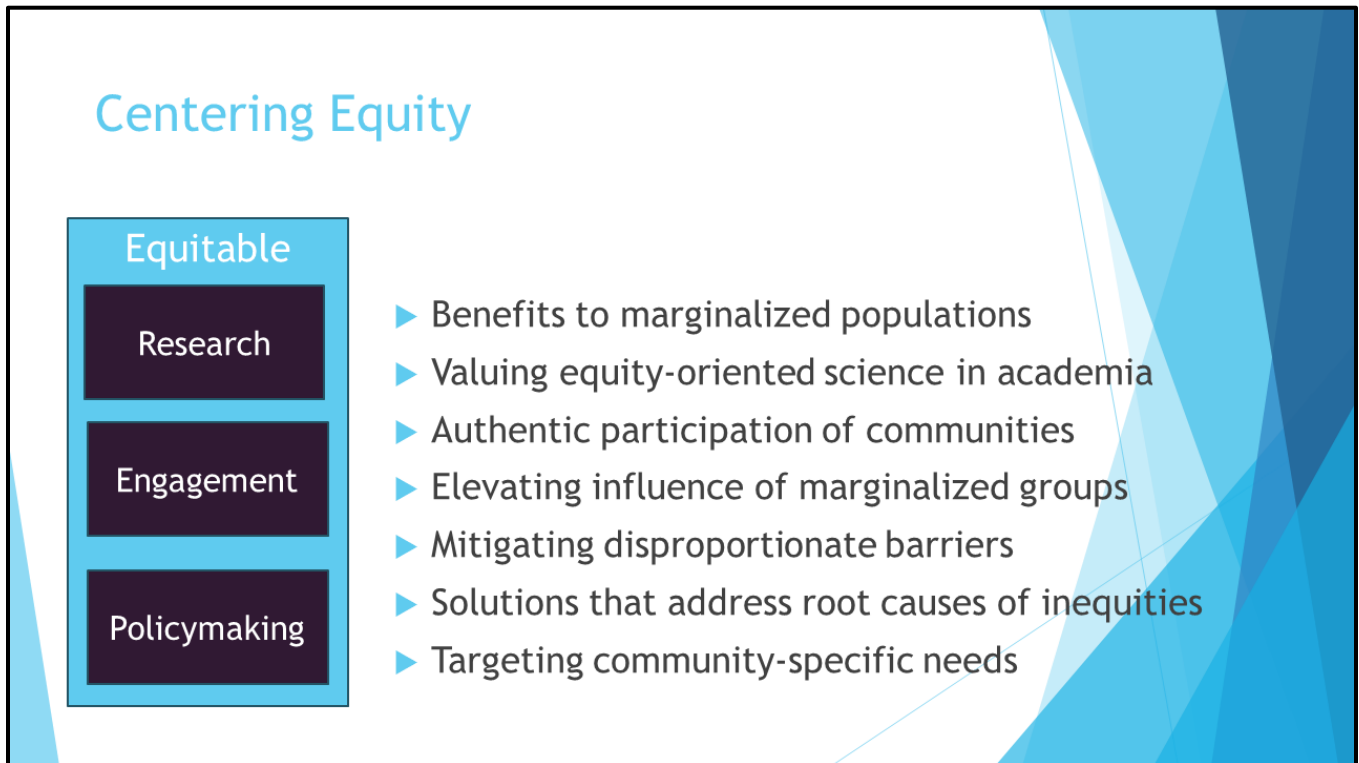
Source: Presentation by Taylor Scott, March 19, 2024

USE OF RESEARCH IN POLICY: BROADENING THE LENS, SHARPENING THE FOCUS

This presentation by the co-organizers introduced participants to the central themes of the workshop: (1) formulating an actionable agenda for advancing the science of URE and (2) suggesting effective mechanisms, structures, and investments for promoting institutionalizing research evidence use in public policymaking processes. **Itzhak Yanovitzky** (Rutgers University) started by offering some observations regarding the state of URE research. He noted that we already know a great deal about the use of research evidence (URE) in policy, including the *what* (the various sources, types, and forms of evidence considered in policymaking and the value placed on different evidence), the *who* (the range of actors involved, their roles, and their capacity, motivations, and power to influence URE in policy; the *why* (the diverse range of needs, goals, and routines that motivate URE in policy); the how (the processes and mechanisms—cognitive, social/relational, institutional—that encourage or enable URE in policy); and the when (the myriad contextual factors and conditions—e.g., systems, structures, culture, and incentives—that facilitate or impede URE in the public policymaking context). Collectively, this body of scholarship consistently demonstrated that use of evidence in policy is complex, dynamic, and strategic, which significantly complicates the task of synthesizing research findings across studies as well as assessing and comparing the impact of interventions to improve URE in policy.

To achieve greater coherence and promote critical reflection and synthesis of diverse pools of URE knowledge, Yanovitzky argues, it is imperative to compare different strategies in terms of underlying theories

of action, agree on a robust set of performance and impact measures, and form a good sense of the investments needed in improving the conditions that enable and support successful implementation of evidence-informed policies. A reasonable first step is to produce a classification or taxonomy of current strategies for improving URE in policy for the purpose of comparing underlying assumptions, intervention rationale (theories of action), implementation, and impact. To this end, he suggested five metaphors for clustering URE intervention strategies (see figure below).

A TAXONOMY OF INTERVENTION APPROACHES

METAPHOR	INTERVENTION RATIONALE	STRATEGIES
Two-communities metaphor	Researchers can more effectively connect research with policy if they better understand and adapt to policymakers' culture and routines and seek to build trust between the two communities.	-Science communication training -Opportunities for direct engagement
Market metaphor	Closing gaps between supply (available research) and demand (research policymakers need); competition (other inputs) and inaccessibility of research to policymakers merit investments in improving the "product" (but not also marketing it).	-Research synthesis/translation -Passive/active dissemination -Production of timely/relevant research
Brokerage metaphor	Leverage intermediaries to enhance flow of research inputs to policymakers and collect feedback (passive brokering) and/or filter, synthesize, package, and disseminate research findings (active brokerage). Brokers can be internal or external.	-Evidence clearinghouses/portals -Policymaker-researcher matchmaking -Knowledge brokerage -Research-based partnerships
System metaphor	Establish or rearrange exiting (sub)systems to build/improve capacity (internal or external, via networks and partnerships) to acquire and use relevant research and/or improve interorganizational sharing of research and coordination of research activities (e.g., evaluation).	-Organizational rearrangement -Promote a culture of evidence use -Build internal research capacity -Partner with a knowledge network
Policy dialogue metaphor	Introduce research into conversations among stakeholders regarding policy matters to raise issues, propose policy solutions, and facilitate agreement or consensus, if possible, on evidence-informed policies.	-Co-production of research -Collaborations with journalists -Policy advocacy

Source: presentation by Itzhak Yanovitzky, March 19, 2024

According to Yanovitzky, key challenges to advancing the science underlying URE include:

- Lack of agreement/convergence regarding definition, conceptualization, and operationalization of key constructs (e.g., 'use' and 'evidence'), outcomes, and impact indicators.
- Insufficient theoretical/conceptual clarity regarding underlying processes/mechanisms that explain variations in evidence use in policy (e.g., agentic vs. structural accounts).
- Difficulty modeling complex associations and causal chains (including across levels and over time) with limited data.
- No standard approach to accounting for the effect of contextual factors and diverse settings.
- Some methodologies and measures for tracking and assessing URE are still evolving.
- Absence of agreed-upon benchmarks and indicators for assessing performance and impact of interventions.
- Significant potential for bias (from choice of research questions to interpretation of findings and conclusions).

He concluded his remarks by recognizing the significant opportunity to advance this work by bridging pools of disciplinary and practice-based knowledge and systematically mapping, analyzing, assessing, and critically reflecting on what we know and what we don't. To do this we must concurrently ***broaden the lens***

by inviting contributions from additional research disciplines and fields and seeking ways to actively connect with and learn from practitioner and other pools of relevant experience-based knowledge and ***sharpen the focus***, i.e., advancing the science underlying URE by asking pointed questions about causal mechanisms, processes, and structures for improving URE in policy and settling on appropriate frameworks, methods and measures for studying these questions without disenfranchising certain perspectives or methodologies.

Taylor Scott (Pennsylvania State University) continued the discussion by suggesting several potential venues for advancing research and practice of improving URE in policy: (1) centering equity in policy, practice, and research; (2) expanding the disciplinary tent and incorporating knowledge produced by policy practitioners; (3) situating URE strategies in the broader evidence ecosystem; and (4) considering models and approaches to institutionalization and scaling of effective practice.

Regarding centering equity, she proposed adopting a two-pronged approach: (1) improving authentic engagement with communities (especially, with vulnerable populations) to identify and respond to needs and collaborate on the formulation and implementation of effective and equitable policies that address root causes of inequities; and (2) promote and institutionalize engaged research practices in academia and among other producers of research.

Next, according to Scott, efforts to advance scholarship and practice of URE in policy can benefit from more active engagement of URE scholars with theories, methods, and research insights from diverse disciplinary fields, some of which remain underrepresented in URE scholarship (see figure below). Cross-fertilization can be enhanced by considering points of convergence and divergence (for example, concerning definitions of constructs and approaches for promoting evidence-informed policies) to identify opportunities to advance URE scholarship while at the same time actively seeking opportunities to increase the visibility of URE scholarship to other fields with overlapping mission and scholarly interest. Similarly, there may be considerable value in advancing URE research by more systematically engaging with practitioners' knowledge and professional experiences, e.g., policy advocates, policy fellows, intermediaries, and policy networks to form a more nuanced understanding of mechanisms, factors, and conditions for connecting research with policy and policy with research, as well as potentially effective practices that can be more rigorously tested and evaluated via research.

Scott also highlighted the imperative of situating strategies for improving URE in policy in the context of the broader ecosystem of actors, structures, interests, and facilitators/constraints involved in connecting policymakers with relevant, timely, and actionable research evidence. She argued that the typical supply-side (or researcher-initiated) paradigm often leads to a "dusty shelf" problem: research-based knowledge that never get used. And if the shelf is dusty, then so is our thinking about improving URE in policy. It is critical to recognize that users live in a different world and are looking for new discoveries from research to help them solve current challenges. For such a match to occur, she suggested, research products and strategies for engaging users with research ought to be user-centered, and by extension, so does URE-focused research. Adequate engaged research practices include listening to end-users' interests and questions; valuing community knowledge; partnering on data collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination; and investing substantial time and effort in relationship development. For Scott, a key question for URE research is what makes for a nimble and adaptive URE strategy that is effective for promoting evidence-informed policymaking at different levels of policy and across operating contexts?

Source: Presentation by Taylor Scott, March 19, 2024

Max Crowley (Pennsylvania State University) turned participants' attention to the topic of scaling and institutionalizing evidenced-based URE strategies. To this end, he shared the case study of the research-to-policy collaboration (RPC) model. The RPC model was developed in response to a call-to-action from federal commissions and the scientific community. It was motivated by the notion that what is already known about interventions for structural and behavioral change can be used to improve the use of evidence in policymaking, and that evidence-based URE strategies can be potentially scaled and institutionalized. The RPC model (depicted in the figure below) brings together research professionals and lawmakers to collaborate on the design of evidence-informed policy. The application of the model involves identifying legislative priorities and opportunities for leveraging evidence-based strategies through interviews with legislative staff, coalesce a Rapid Response Network comprised of individuals with research expertise related to legislative priorities; and supporting legislative offices by coordinating a response to legislative needs or inquiries.

Crowley provided an overview of the development and refinement of the RPC model through multiple tests from pilot testing en route to institutionalization from 2013-2023. He underscored the importance of building a robust evidence base regarding the efficacy of a URE intervention as a prerequisite to scaling as well as considering the logistical aspects of successful implementation such as technical support and training. Two notable observations regarding the path to institutionalization of the RPC model are the challenge of securing continuous funding for the iterative development and testing (which may require support from multiple funders) and the importance of building partnerships with other actors in the URE space.
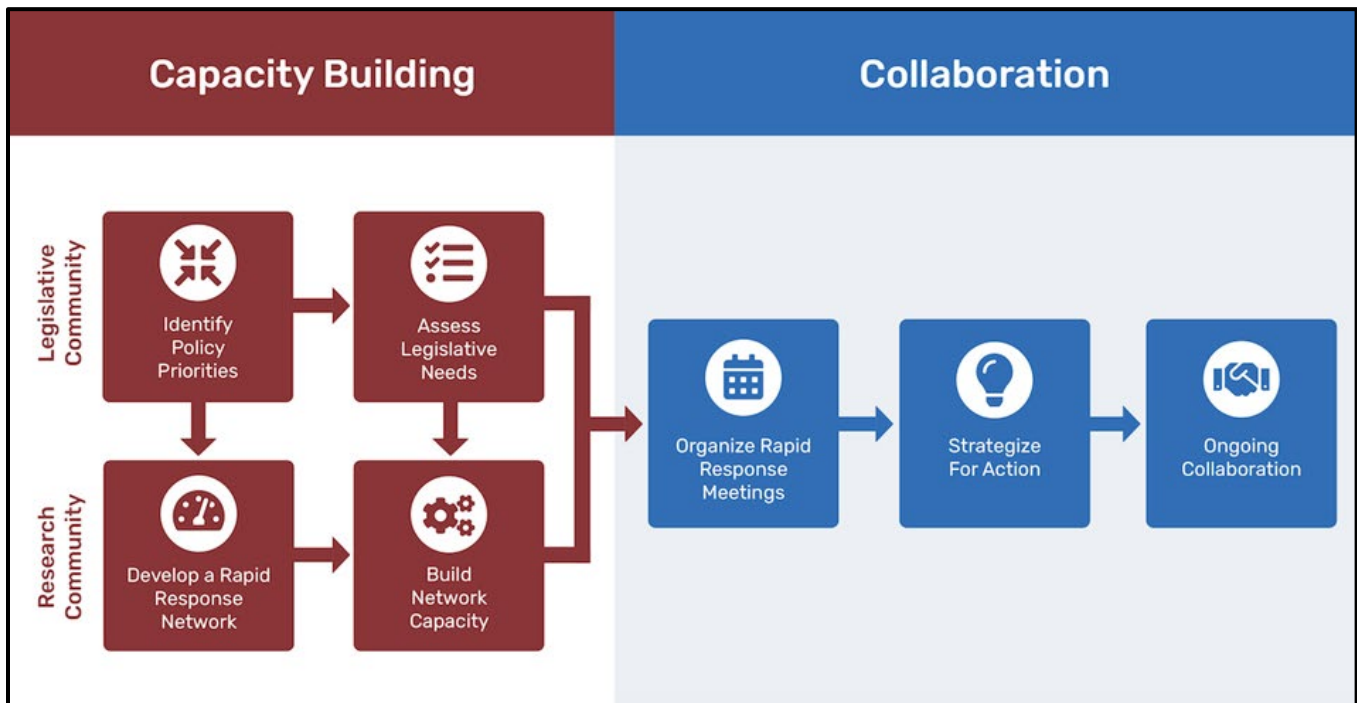
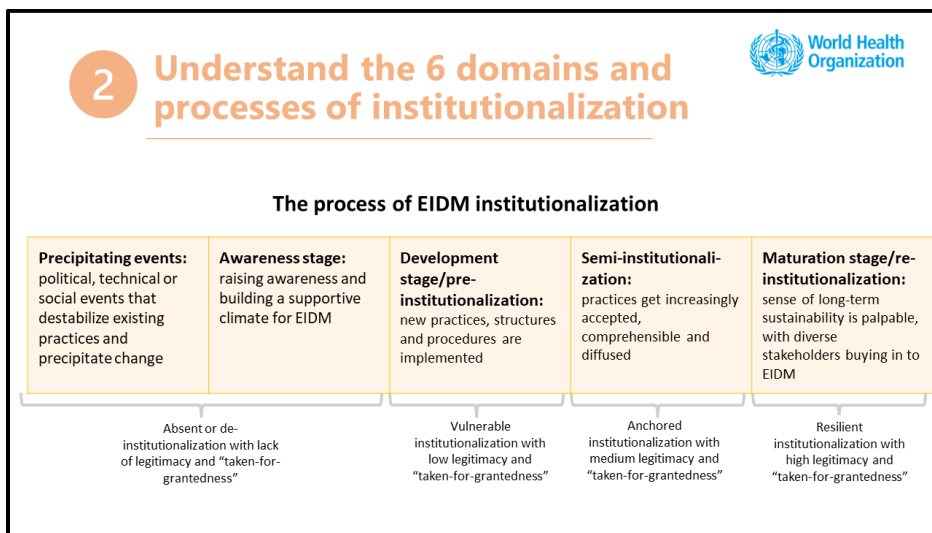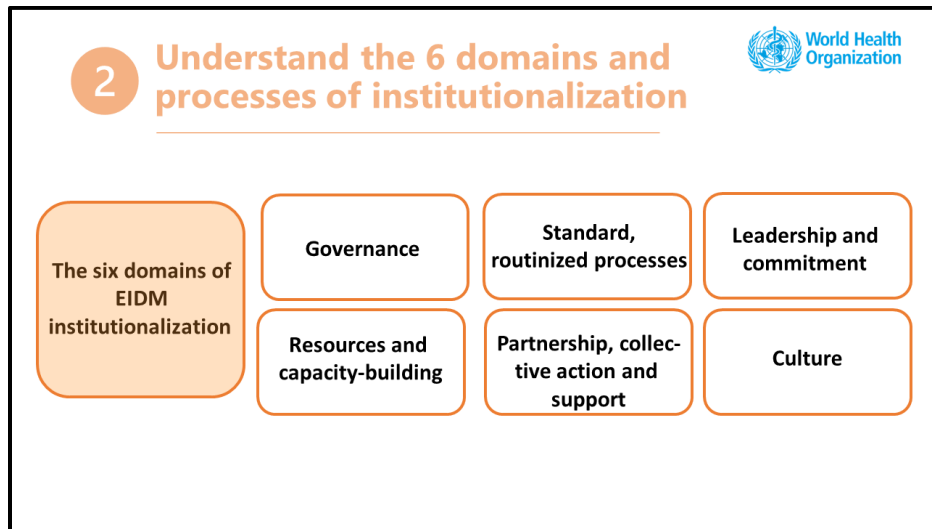Source: Presentation by Max Crowley, March 19, 2024

ROUTINIZING THE USE OF EVIDENCE IN POLICY – WHAT IS NEEDED?

Tanja Kuchenmüller (Unit Head, Evidence to Policy and Impact, Research for Health, Science Division, World Health Organization) shared insights from the experience of the WHO's Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet). Her presentation focused on efforts to promote the systematic use of research evidence in policymaking to improve health systems through a networked structure. Given considerable variations in the resources and circumstances of different countries, a networked structure can be instrumental in increasing knowledge translation capacity and leadership at country level to strengthen crisis resilience and emergency preparedness. EVIPNet institutionalizes knowledge translation through multisectoral research advisory bodies called knowledge translation platforms, which are operational in four WHO regions and more than 50 countries.

Kuchenmüller offered EVIPNet's definition of institutionalization of evidence use as the "process and outcome of (re-)creating, maintaining and reinforcing norms, regulations, and standard practices that, based on collective meaning and values, actions as well as endowment of resources, allow evidence to become—over time—a legitimate and taken-for-granted part of health policymaking." Institutionalization relies on building relationships and interactions between producers and users of research evidence as well as building knowledge translation (KT) capacity. She distinguished among four primary approaches to building KT capacity—push, user pull, exchange, and system integration—with the latter being the most conducive to institutionalization of evidence use at the system-level. EVIPNet's process of promoting evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) institutionalization aims to achieve four objectives: (1) prompt discussion and engagement with the concepts of institutionalization of EIPM; (2) support countries with

tools for situation analysis of the evidence ecosystem; (3) highlight the domains, competencies, and processes for making evidence use a routine in policy-making; and (4) offer a list of key actions for embedding EIPM in a local context and for tracking institutionalization progress. The six domains and processes of institutionalization targeted for change and the process for promoting institutionalization are depicted in the figures below.

Source: Presentation by Tanja Kuchenmüller, March 19, 2024

Kuchenmüller concluded her presentation by underscoring the importance of building resilient evidence ecosystems in the face of multiple threats, including political ones. EVIPNet's experience points to several critical sources of resilience including (1) well defined roles, mandates and processes protected by normative frameworks; (2) partnerships with civil servants with strong analytical and relational capacities; (3) engagement of stakeholders to support use of evidence; and (4) capacity to produce or provide scientific evidence with a high epistemic status. Cross-evidence ecosystem partnerships can be an effective mechanism for building such resilience.

BREAKOUT SESSION: THEORIES OF ACTION

This breakout session centered on the topic of theories of action or how strategies for promoting URE in policy can be expected to work. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- What are the hypothesized core principles of effective research translation and policy practice?
- How do we operationalize core principles of effective policy practice?
- What are the ways in which effective translation practices can be monitored and evaluated at an institutional level?
- How do we effectively translate URE research about effective practice? (i.e., who is the target audience, what are the key ingredients for knowledge transfer, how do we know it is working)

Participants identified several strategies that are routinely used to promote URE in policy including: research push (dissemination and translation) and targeting (e.g., champions, committee chairs); user pull (e.g., evidence clearinghouses, rapid response mechanisms); embedding researchers in national and local government agencies (e.g., policy fellows); knowledge brokerage by intermediaries; research-based collaborations or partnerships; and evidence co-production. Some noted that strategies that "respect" the underlying policymaking process and /or draw on a more nuanced (cross-disciplinary) understanding this process tend to be more effective than typical research dissemination approaches. At the same time, there was a general agreement that practice-based approaches (e.g., of the type employed by lobbyists, policy advocates, etc.) are not adequately represented in current URE scholarship to inform sound theories of action. In addition, existing theories of action largely ignore potential unintended effects of URE strategies (e.g., potential to result in inequitable policy solutions or allocation of resources to address problems) and ought to consider systemic biases and inequities in representation and political power regarding the acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence in policy.

Regarding core principles, several participants observed that effective approaches to improving URE in policy are strategic in nature. This means both that they are formulated and implemented following a strategic planning process (i.e., clear goals and specific objectives, informed choice of a target audience, realistic theory of action, etc.) and are also adapted to match the political nature of policymaking, including clearly articulating the value proposition of URE to stakeholders relative to policy outcomes and shared values (e.g., quality improvement), situating evidence in the local policy context, and avoiding partisan politics to the extent possible (e.g., infusing equity into policy debates without referencing equality). In addition, URE strategies are most effective when they are ultimately institutionalized (both on the research producer side and the user side); touch-and-go type of strategies cannot lead to sustainable URE in the long run. Effective engagement with stakeholders throughout the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating URE interventions was also mentioned as a core principle of effective strategies. Key features of effective engagement noted include active listening, openness, empathy, trust, transparency, honest exchange, and reciprocity.

Lastly, there was a discussion of the resources and structures needed to enable effective URE strategies. Core components noted by participants include provision of robust URE promotion training to graduate students and early career scholars; investments in internal capacity-building both on the research producer side (e.g., engaged research capacity in universities, robust data infrastructure for producing relevant and timely actionable research for use in policy) and the research user side (e.g., data literacy tools, technical assistance, etc.); and supportive and committed leadership.

This breakout session focused on research designs and methods for facilitating comparative evaluations of URE improvement strategies' efficacy. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- How can we strengthen our ability to draw causal inferences that interventions to improve URE are efficacious and effective? (e.g., what is the role of experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies and that of ethnographic and qualitative methodologies?)
- How can we optimize intervention components within larger studies? (i.e., how can we increase the potency of intervention activities through optimization? what areas are targets for optimization – e.g., communication, process, individual-level, structural, and organizational?)
- How can we design evaluations to study issues of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness within our interventions?

Participants agreed on the value of conducting different types of studies – e.g., discovery (exploratory), implementation, and dissemination-focused –- for drawing plausible causal inference regarding the efficacy of URE improvement strategies. They noted that answering questions regarding how (direct and mediated causal mechanisms) and when (under which conditions and circumstances, or moderators) a particular URE strategy works is as important to establishing robust causal evidence of efficacy and effectiveness as demonstrating effect on research use. In addition to probing mediation and moderation of effects on use, rigorous evaluations of URE improvement strategies may also consider effects at different levels, for example, effects on changing organizational norms and routines (e.g., effects on culture of evidence use) and/or improving a system's capacity to use research evidence (e.g., research literacy, technical assistance, data collection tools, etc.). Some suggested that whereas the application of mixed methods has become a standard practice in URE research, the goal of using mixed methods should not be limited to the triangulation of findings but also to critically assessing key assumptions of the underlying theory of action and/or probing the efficacy of the various components of the intervention. Participants agreed that rigorous evaluations of URE improvement interventions should go beyond effects on URE to consider effects on outcomes of URE such as actual policy decisions, deliberations, and actions. Doing so will allow to assess the influence, if any, of URE on the policymaking process relative to other inputs and sources of influence; but it may require the application of advanced statistical procedures (e.g., confounder control techniques such as propensity scoring or instrumental variable) for drawing sound causal inference regarding efficacy and effectiveness. At the same time, participants were rather ambiguous regarding potential convergence on a standard set of evaluation criteria and operational definitions of variables across studies given variations in intervention goals, underlying causal mechanisms, contexts, and unique circumstances of each application.

Reflecting on the question of optimization, several participants linked optimization to results of prior trials (i.e., seeking to optimize intervention components that proved to be efficacious in repeated trials), whereas others perceived optimization as being driven by insights gained from dynamically tracking and assessing implementation (i.e., conducting process evaluation) and tweaking or adapting components of an intervention as needed to optimize the overall efficacy and effectiveness of the intervention. It was suggested that the scaling potential of an intervention should not be assessed based on replicability alone but also (or primarily) based on transportability (i.e., the potential of the intervention to be equally efficacious and effective across policy contexts, levels, and user populations), and that methods for conducting transportability analysis already exists in other fields and can be adapted to the URE context. An additional benefit of using transportability as a standard for comparing the efficacy and effectiveness of URE

strategies is that transportability assessment naturally invites consideration of relevant evaluation dimensions and criteria from the perspective of practitioners tasked with implementation as opposed to the perspective of developers and users alone.

Regarding the centering of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in evaluation designs, participants emphasized the importance of engagement with users of research evidence as well as with stakeholders likely to be impacted by a particular policy to guide decisions regarding all aspects of the evaluation (i.e., goals, research design, methodology, measurement, analysis, interpretation of findings, and conclusions). Special consideration should be given to who benefits and who may be adversely impacted by the evaluation. Asked about the operational and practical implications of DEI centering, several participants proposed that a stakeholder engagement component (pre, during, and post intervention) be an integral component of evaluation plans and that the procedure for doing this well should be the focus of research on effective URE interventions.

BREAKOUT SESSION: MEASUREMENT AND MODELING

This breakout session focused on measurement of key constructs and modeling of relationships between URE and outcomes. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- What are appropriate measures or indicators of 'evidence use' in policymaking? Are proxy measures (e.g., access to evidence) appropriate (valid and reliable) for assessing use?
- Is the common distinction among instrumental, conceptual, and political use of evidence sufficient for capturing all theoretically and practically-important variations in 'use' – for example, should 'use' be measured on a continuum (e.g., ranging from infrequent or ad-hoc use to habitual use) and/or be weighted by quality (e.g., degree of thoughtful/informed use)?
- What are hypothesized outcomes of 'evidence use' in policymaking? cognitive (e.g., awareness, comprehension/understanding, beliefs/attitudes/judgements, etc.), relational (e.g., trust, affinity, etc.), system (e.g., culture of evidence use), political (e.g., reaching agreement or compromise), other?
- How is 'evidence use' expected to be associated with outcomes (i.e., what casual mechanisms explain the effect of use on outcomes)?

Participants agreed from the outset that measurement of evidence use in policy should be grounded in actual practices as opposed to normative expectations or prescriptions. They also agreed that any consequential use of research evidence in policy is necessarily routinized, in part because use of evidence in this setting has been shown to be both motivated and bounded by institutional norms and routines, but also because routine use of research is necessary (even if insufficient) for producing evidence-informed policies. In addition, a case was made regarding the imperative of not confounding measures of 'use' with antecedents of use (e.g., capacity, access, and motivations) or outcomes of use (e.g., evidence-informed decisions).

From there, the discussion gravitated toward validity and reliability of measures of research evidence use. Two important criteria were raised: first, that any valid and reliable measure of 'use' ought to capture actual practice or practices, including any variations in practice(s); and second, that it ought to be logically connected (via plausible causal inference) to outcomes of use (e.g., being able to access research does not

necessarily imply use of research). Recognizing, in addition, that use of research evidence in policy depends on context (e.g., policy level, phase of policymaking cycle, and organizational culture and resources to support research use), it may not be feasible to rely on a singular conception and operationalization of 'use' for generating a valid and reliable measure of this construct across users and contexts. It was suggested that a sensible workaround is to adopt a flexible conception of 'use' that can be adapted to context. For some participants this meant focusing measurement on user behavior (i.e., consumption and/or exchange of research evidence) with relevant dimensions of 'use' being a user's degree and quality of engagement with research evidence (e.g., type, diversity, and quality of research evidence considered; time and effort invested in processing and critically assessing relevance and applicability of research evidence), the purpose for which research is used (i.e., instrumental, conceptual, or political use), and whether use encompasses sharing or exchanging with others. Other participants noted that 'use' is more appropriately operationalized and measured as a process, involving a series of sequential decisions and actions, beginning with acquisition of research evidence (i.e., type and source of research evidence acquired; balance between research and non-research evidence engaged; active seeking of research vs. passive receipt), through filtering and selection of evidence (i.e., selection criteria applied and their relative weight), and to timing and goal of use relative to the policymaking cycle (i.e., agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy deliberation, and policy evaluation, as well as political or strategic uses of research evidence to persuade, mobilize support, increase or decrease ambiguity regarding policy, etc.). Several concerns were raised regarding this approach being too linear to match 'use' in reality (since users of research evidence may skip one or more steps in this sequence, e.g., when acquisition and selection of research evidence is handled by intermediaries), potentially based on the unrealistic assumption that users are objective, deliberate and thoughtful regarding use of research evidence, and too complex (and expensive) to implement.

Ultimately, there was no agreement regarding the best approach for moving forward with the conceptualization and operationalization of use, although several participants suggested that the typical approach to assessing use in URE research–namely, tracking references to research evidence in official policy documents or based on policymakers' accounts–may be the optimal approach because it produces the most proximal evidence of 'use' that matters to explaining outcomes. Participants also wondered about the added value of investing in developing quality assessment measures of research evidence use if quality of use is not systematically or predictably associated with effects on policy (including, being contested on political grounds).

SESSION III: EFFECTS AND OUTCOMES OF APPROACHES FOR FACILITATING RESEARCH USE IN POLICY

PANEL: MAKING THE CASE FOR RESEARCH ON THE USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE

The second panel of the workshop brought together **Elizabeth Day** (University of Oregon), **Anna Dulencin** (Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University), **Diana Epstein** (U.S. Office of Management and Budget), **Bev Holmes** (Michael Smith Health Research BC), and **Angela Bednarek** (The Pew Charitable Trusts), with **Kathryn Oliver** (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) as moderator, to exchange experiences and perspectives regarding successful URE interventions and the evidence base for claiming success. Panelists were invited to share an example of a successful URE approach and offer reflections, responding to the following prompts:

- What was the goal of the initiative?
- How do we know it 'worked'? What does success look like for this initiative? How did you measure or evaluate these outcomes?
- Given these demonstrable successes, why aren't we implementing these elsewhere? What challenges are there to scaling these approaches?

Day provided an overview of the Family Impact Seminars (FIS) program, originally developed by Karen Bogenschneider. FIS convenes state policymakers and connects them with experts to share research evidence and discuss policy issues impacting families. The program has an extensive track record of successful implementation from the past three decades across over 30 U.S. states and territories. The success of the program has been assessed in multiple ways, including findings from qualitative interviews with participating policymakers regarding the intellectual and practical value of the research evidence and nonpartisan expert advice provided, and participating policymakers' use of research evidence in speeches and proposed legislation. Scaling up FIS requires a robust logistical infrastructure and trained personnel, which can be challenging on a grant-based funding model.

Dulencin oversees the Rutgers Eagleton Science and Politics Fellowship program, a year-long, full-time fellowship for doctoral-level scientists, engineers, and healthcare professionals in New Jersey state government. During the one-year program, Science Fellows participate in the political process and support New Jersey state government officials in making evidence-based decisions in public policy areas involving science, engineering, and technology. Through this work, they develop an understanding of state government and learn how to build careers in public service. Fellows enter the program as a cohort (from 5-10 fellows) and participate in monthly meetings with the program's leadership, interact with guest speakers, and benefit from professional development and mentorship opportunities. The success of the program is assessed in multiple ways: regular checks with fellows (including a weekly journal reflection) and feedback from supervisors; direct accounts of how fellows work contributed to specific policies; the percentage of fellows who are offered a position at state government at the end of their fellowship (75% to date); and interest from policymakers in expanding the program, including secured placements and committed state funding to support several fellowships. A handful of similar programs exist nationally (e.g., AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowship) and in a few other states (e.g., California's CCST Science & Technology Policy Fellows program), and it'd be interesting to compare the success of these programs (including indicators of success). Stable sources of funding and strong interest and commitment from policymakers are necessary to scaling this model.

Epstein described the process of building system wide URE capacity in the U.S. government. The Evidence Team at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which she leads, is task with guiding the implementation of the [Evidence Act](#) and provide technical assistance on activities and initiatives involving evaluation. This work is focused on how data, research, and evaluation are currently used to build evidence and improve public programs and policies, and how to strengthen evidence-building to inform program and policy design and implementation. According to Epstein, "where evidence is strong, we should act on it; where evidence is suggestive, we should consider it; and where evidence is weak, we should build the knowledge to support better decisions in the future." The goal is to build and institutionalize capacity of government agencies to become critical consumers of research evidence, conduct evaluations, and utilize new tools and methods (e.g., rapid-cycle iterative evaluation designs, administrative data, behavioral insights, etc.) when appropriate. This effort utilizes a learning agenda approach, which is a process by which agencies act collaboratively across program, performance, and evaluation offices to identify critical

questions that, when answered, should help agencies work more effectively and develop an answer to those questions. A tangible product is a portfolio of evidence obtained from the synthesis and integration of diverse sources and types of evidence to produce a comprehensive picture of how a program is operating and the impacts that it may or may not be having and that can support informed decisions throughout the policymaking and budgeting process. Evidence of success she referenced include clarifying the qualifications, role, and responsibilities of agencies evaluation officers and establishing the Evaluation Officer Council comprised of evaluation officers across agencies to exchange information and collaborate on building evaluation capacity; learning agendas, capacity assessments for statistics, research, evaluation, and other analysis, and annual evaluation plans produced by each agency; and the development of a Federal Evaluation Toolkit and other user-friendly technical assistance resources. Epstein noted that limited staff capacity to generate and use evidence is a major barrier to institutionalization and underscored the importance of establishing or identifying high-quality staff training opportunities in evaluation. She wondered how scholarship around the use of research evidence can inform how we learn and continue to improve the design of training opportunities.

Holmes reflected on the challenge of institutionalizing URE in complex systems. She noted that contextual factors such as data infrastructure, organizational culture and routines, and the role of power and politics are key to bringing evidence into policy. Initiatives to improve URE in policy too often attempt to control or manipulate context, which cause them to fail, rather than seeking to engage key stakeholders or leverage existing relationships. As a funder, the Michael Smith Health Research BC is investing in several strategic areas: (1) institutionalizing mechanisms, structures, and practices for co-production of research evidence ("there needs to be much better connection between those who produce evidence and those who use evidence"); (2) attracting, retaining, and training knowledge transfer specialists; (3) changing the reward systems for researchers to encourage research needed to solve big societal challenges and building relationships with stakeholders; and (4) sponsoring evidence production that addresses systemic inequities. Ultimately impact is measured in relation to system-level improvement (e.g., learning systems), workforce development, and systemic change in health and wellness outcomes that mitigate historical and current inequities. Per Homes, the primary challenge to institutionalizing URE is one of having in place knowledge production and transfer systems that are sufficiently nimble and adaptive to address policy challenges that emerge from changing contexts and real-world circumstances.

Bednarek reviewed efforts by the Transforming Evidence Funders Network (TEFN), a group of public and private funders working across a wide range of issue areas and geographies, to increase the likelihood that research investments contribute to better and more equitable policies and outcomes. Two critical goals of TEFN are to foster a coordinated evidence ecosystem that align supply of and demand for evidence and catalyze the institutional changes required for a more dynamic, equitable, and collaborative evidence ecosystem. According to Bednarek, funders may facilitate progress on these goals by reconsidering and/or modifying existing funding practices from identifying funding priorities and setting expectations through funding criteria, through assessing and selecting proposals for funding, and to supporting implementation and evaluating impact. This only works if funders are committed to collaborating and coordinating on producing solutions to complex problems by drawing on a wide array of knowledge, evidence, and expertise, and invest in building and sustaining research-focused partnerships. She noted that impact is tricky to assess but generally involves some type of a system and/or a process change such as constitution of knowledge networks and partnerships for improving flow and exchange of knowledge, established collaboration structures and mechanisms (e.g., research-practice partnerships), and incentives for doing this work. System and process-focused outcomes can be challenging to assess and compare, but they also

invite a richer, deeper, assessment of impact. To do this well, it is critical to provide long-term, flexible funding to allow grantees the time and flexibility to identify effective and workable approaches to improving URE at scale.

Oliver, noting that these and other examples of successful programs for improving URE in public policymaking suggest that we already know a great deal about what works and what is needed to support these efforts, posed a question to the panel about what else we need to know from research on URE that is missing or that we are not very confident about. Several themes emerged from the discussion that followed:

- The evidence base for supporting claims regarding the efficacy of interventions to improve URE is still lacking. For one, research on URE rarely assesses the impact, if any, of research evidence use on outcomes. This is true regarding both proximal outcomes (e.g., effects on legislation, policy design, and policy implementation) and distal outcomes (i.e., effects on public problems), with little clarity or agreement regarding definitions and measures of outcomes (since outcomes vary by context, complexity, and users' own definition of outcomes/impact) as well as regarding alternative explanations for observed effects. For another, potential unintended effects of URE in policymaking are rarely considered in evaluations, further complicating making claims regarding effectiveness.
- There has been little systematic research to advance conceptualization and operationalization of several key ideas or constructs regarding conditions that improve URE in policy (e.g., culture of evidence use, institutionalization, etc.) as well as of performance indicators/benchmarks assumed to be important for improving research evidence use in policy (e.g., quality of research evidence use, actionability, etc.).
- There is a lack of research regarding transportability (moving from demonstrating efficacy of an intervention to establishing effectiveness beyond a single demonstration or trial), transferability (successful application of an intervention across settings, users, and time), and adaptivity (flexibility of application) of effective URE interventions. Much of the current URE evidence base is drawn from a collection of case studies with very few, if any, replications, and studies that compare the efficacy of two or more strategies in improving URE in policy are virtually nonexistent. Due to the underutilization of existing measures of URE and the absence of standard measures of URE outcomes, conducting meta-analyses of findings reported across interventions is not feasible. Consequently, it is not possible to predict with confidence which intervention strategy may be optimal for a particular group of users and/or a particular setting. It is also not clear what is needed to support context adaptations or build a robust and sustainable URE capacity.
- Research that evaluates and compares potentially effective strategies for communicating with diverse audiences about the value proposition of URE as well as strategies for stimulating a dialogue among key stakeholders regarding the importance of investments in building URE capacity and a trained workforce is urgently needed to guide efforts to elevate attention and promote broad interest in URE research.

BREAKOUT SESSION: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL PATHWAYS AND EFFECTS

This breakout session focused on individual-level pathways and effects of URE on policymaking. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- What are the factors that motivate, incentivize, or hinder individual-level URE by policymakers? What factors impact scholarly policy engagement?

- What proximal outcomes do these actors achieve as evidence-based policy champions and/or policy entrepreneurs?
- What makes these actors more or less effective, given an assumption of system change inertia, and doing what's possible within existing systems?
- What are the strategies that could shift individual attitudes, values, or behaviors toward "bridging the gap"?

Participants reflected on the importance of situating URE by policymakers in the context of the policymaking process, including norms and routines, that may facilitate or hinder URE in this context. Some also suggested that competencies needed for individual URE (e.g., research and data literacy, data analysis skills, etc.) do not necessarily transfer to the policymaking context, in part because such competencies reside with research intermediaries inside and outside the system, but also due to politics and political uses of evidence. In addition, policymakers' motivations to use research evidence do not neatly fit with the common distinction between instrumental and conceptual use because policymakers' attribute different value to different sources and types of evidence given their values, predispositions, and political agenda. This may cause them to prefer non-research evidence over research evidence in some circumstances (e.g., constituents' opinions regarding proposed policies), and to weigh more heavily some attributes or characteristics of evidence over others (e.g., emotion-evoking evidence over scientific rigor). In general, URE research on barriers and facilitators to research evidence use in policymaking has been mostly conceived from a perspective that expects URE by policymakers to resemble URE by scientists and it is critical to revisit and update current conceptions moving forward.

The discussion next turned to research intermediaries and how they may be effective regarding improving URE in policymaking. Research translation and engagement competencies, nuanced knowledge and understanding of policymaking processes, and listening were recognized as necessary skills of effective intermediaries in addition to relationship-building. An additional critical skill mentioned is the ability to identify and act on opportunities and policy windows to connect policymakers with relevant research. However, opportunities for individuals to acquire and develop such skills are currently limited. Three key barriers were noted to attracting and training individuals to be effective research intermediaries. First, a robust demand (jobs) for trained research intermediaries in government, legislatures, and other policymaking settings is yet to emerge. To facilitate demand, it is necessary to clearly articulate the value proposition of such positions and share success stories, as well as launch effective advocacy efforts for creating such positions and career tracks. Second, structured and diverse training opportunities for delivering a pedagogically-sound, competency-based curriculum do not currently exist, even within academic institutions (e.g., in the form of degree or certificate programs). This seems to be primarily due to the interdisciplinary nature of this work, as well as the range of diverse skills involved in effective knowledge brokerage, that are not taught by a particular disciplines or field. Motivation for academic institutions to develop and offer such programs may increase if they are aligned with clear career tracks and a robust demand (see previous point). However, this should not preclude ongoing efforts to develop and test an effective curriculum and training modules via experimentation and testing. Third, a professional learning and practice community of the type available to scholars and practitioners in related fields (e.g., research-practice partnerships and the dissemination and implementation field) is not well formed in the URE field but is likely valuable for supporting professional development and synergizing work that advances URE scholarship and practice. The Transforming Evidence (https://transforming-evidence.org/) was created for this purpose and may be enhanced via institutionalized partnerships with similar initiatives, e.g., WHO's

Evidence Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet), J-PAL's evidence to policy, the Bipartisan Policy Center's Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, etc. A complementary strategy may be seeking formalized connections (e.g., interest groups) with established professional associations in related fields (e.g., AcademyHealth).

BREAKOUT SESSION: ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL PATHWAYS AND EFFECTS

This breakout session focused on organizational-level factors and effects of URE on policymaking. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- What are the key activities for achieving organizational or partnership level effects (i.e., active ingredients)?
- What infrastructure is necessary to support those activities?
- What are the proximal and distal outcomes from organizational and partnership interventions to improve URE?

Participants noted from the outset that a productive discussion of organizational factors and their association with effects of URE on policymaking ought to be pragmatic rather than center on ideal-type models. Organizational culture and leadership committed to evidence-informed policymaking were highlighted as important facilitators as well as intentional efforts to mainstream URE via integration in organizational routines, standards, and incentive structures. System complexity can present a major barrier to successful integration, unless URE is institutionalized and coordinated across sectors and domains. Such capacity may not already exist in most complex organizations (particularly, when organizational structure is siloed), and therefore may require access to external expertise and supports. This does not preclude, however, the need for internal capacity in organizations (e.g., technical assistance) to support URE by individuals and units.

Effective collaborations and partnerships were noted as a strategy for building and improving URE capacity in systems and organizations. Strategic partnerships may be key to advancing URE in policymaking because they can leverage diverse and complementary expertise, resources, and established relationships with stakeholders needed to promote URE in the policymaking context that is considerably more complex (multi-actor, multi-level, political, etc.) than URE in practice or problem-solving contexts. There is no clear or even a single model for forming URE-focused strategic partnerships, although it may be useful to consider efficacious models used in other fields (including potentially those used in the business sector). Further, it may not be possible to form and sustain collaborations and partnerships for improving URE in policymaking based on shared interests alone. There are considerable costs and risks associated and little, if any incentives. It is necessary to offer a compelling value proposition for such collaborations and partnerships, which may be difficult given the limited available evidence regarding the efficacy and effectiveness of URE interventions more generally. External incentives or mandates (e.g., from policymakers) may be needed, as well as equitable distribution of benefits to partners and collaborators that are guaranteed via formalized agreements. Funders have an important role in this space, not merely by restructuring incentives for collaborations, but also by creating an open access ecosystem that significantly decreases the cost of obtaining and using evidence-based approaches and tools.

This breakout session focused on system-level factors and effects of URE on policymaking. The questions guiding the conversation were:

- What approaches to institutionalization of evidence use in systems (e.g., organizational change, capacity-building, networks and partnerships, etc.) have been tested and evaluated? What is the state of evidence regarding their efficacy?
- What are key outcomes or indicators of institutionalization of evidence use in systems (e.g., roles and responsibilities, routines, resources/incentives, culture, etc.)?
- What is the best approach for benchmarking performance or progress on institutionalization of evidence use in systems? Is there a single evolution trajectory in this regard?

Participants started the conversation by referring to different configurations and attributes of policymaking systems. One key question raised was regarding system boundaries. The common conception of boundaries in the URE literature is based on level of policymaking (e.g., local, state, national, global) but level per se may be less consequential to improving URE in policymaking than underlying system structure and dynamics. Regarding structure, whether a system is centralized and controlled by a handful of powerful actors or is decentralized and complex (i.e., with many actors and multiple levels of policymaking involved) can be expected to impact URE because structure determines the functions of sub-systems and how they relate to one another, and by extension, policy decisionmakers capacity, motivation, and opportunities to acquire, interpret, and use relevant and timely research evidence. However, as traditional evidence and policymaking systems continue to evolve into larger ecosystems, system boundaries now extend beyond formal organizational structures and hierarchies and are increasingly defined by the structure of relationships among actors (e.g., networks, partnerships, etc.). This presents a challenge to URE scholars and practitioners since complete and accurate system mapping and analysis is a critical step in developing and implementing interventions designed to improve system capacity, motivation (e.g., incentives, supportive culture), and opportunities for evidence-informed policymaking. The URE field has produced several robust methodologies and tools for mapping and analyzing system boundaries (e.g., networks analysis, evidence use routines, etc.; examples can be found at https://uremethods.org/) but realizing their full potential requires grounding in system theories or frameworks of URE in policymaking, which are noticeably absent from the current literature but are necessary moving forward for identifying critical properties or attributes of structure that support or hinder URE in systems regardless of level of policymaking.

In addition to structure, it is clear that system dynamics plays a critical role in facilitating or hindering URE. For example, a competition dynamic may interfere with knowledge transfer and coordination among units or sub-systems compared to a collaboration dynamic but may also act to incentivize URE for gaining an edge. Similarly, leadership and organizational culture that is open to change and continued improvement may value URE more than leaders who perceive URE as potential threat to them or the organization. Whereas considerable attention is given to URE capacity building via the creation or modification of structures, there has been less attention from the URE community to system dynamics as a potential target of cost-effective URE interventions, e.g., how to promote a culture of evidence use. Here too it is necessary to ground future research on the effects of system dynamics on improving URE in policymaking in robust theories, frameworks, and methodologies, potentially drawing on relevant work from fields such systems dynamics that are not yet represented in URE scholarship.

Reflecting on the roles of URE scholars and funders in this space, participants agreed that the most productive focus of efforts to improve system-wide URE is to leverage existing structures and dynamics to the degree possible and/or fill existing gaps in system capacity. For example, seeking to integrate URE into existing routines is likely more effective than creating or introducing new routines, as is identifying and addressing bottlenecks that emerge from mapping and analyzing system dynamics. At the same time, it may be necessary to build, bridge, or support capacity for performing critical functions needed to improve URE in policymaking such as coordination, trained workforce, and cost-cutting subsidies (e.g., facilitating open access to research and/or technical assistance), and directing resources there may yield better return on investments. There was a shared sense that this can be accomplished via partnerships among URE stakeholders, academic institutions and funders in particular, with universities potentially taking a leading role regarding research translation and workforce development, but this may not be feasible given existing constraints.

SESSION IV: WHAT'S NEXT FOR RESEARCH ON USE OF RESEARCH IN POLICY?

EVIDENCE IN POLICY: TOWARD AN ACTIONABLE RESEARCH AGENDA

The closing session invited participants to reflect on their shared learning experience and offer thoughts regarding research questions and actionable plans for advancing research on improving URE in policymaking and transferring this knowledge into practice. The contributions participants made can are organized according to the themes below.

Clarifying Definitions, Measures, and Mechanisms of URE in Policymaking

This theme was a major focus of the workshop and participants appreciated the progress made in terms of delineating both areas of alignment and disalignment on definitions, measures, and mechanisms across models, applications, and settings previously explored in the URE literature and those that are yet to be systematically explored. There was a general agreement that specific definitions, measures, and mechanisms of URE in policymaking vary by users, organizational goals, and policymaking context and ought to "respect" the underlying policymaking process and reflect actual practices. Therefore, converging on a standard or universal conception and measurement of 'use' in the policymaking context makes little sense, and a better approach is to make efforts to understand 'use' from the perspective of users. It was noted in addition that URE is more likely to be associated with evidence-informed policymaking when it is routinized in policy decisionmaking practices and systems. Thus, converging on the conceptualization and operationalization of URE as routinized use of evidence (research and non-research) has a significant potential to advance scholarship and practice in the field. At the same time, considerable ambiguity remains regarding definitions, measures, and mechanisms of URE at the organizational and system levels (e.g., culture of evidence use). This ambiguity extends to the underlying mechanisms and processes that connect URE with outcomes and impact on policy, and clarifying this ambiguity is an important priority area for future research in the field. Examples of research questions proposed are:

- How do various research/entities define 'research use' and other related concepts? How much variability exists regarding definitions?
- How is URE in policy used well (e.g., doesn't create harm)? How do policymakers define/assess successful evidence use and impact?
- How can research evidence be used to facilitate conversations among policy stakeholders?

- What are core components of all existing URE initiatives across policy levels (local, state, national, global)? What strategies work for whom under what circumstances?
- How do we design and evaluate a feedback mechanism concerning evidence and URE (e.g., process evaluation)?
- How to best measure the use and impact of research in policy given that it may be difficult to predict outcomes and/or users may have their own definition of outcomes/impact?
- What research designs are optimal for capturing improvements to policy/practice following URE?
- How do we measure a culture of research use in policy? What impact does having a culture of research use have on the effectiveness of policy or solving problems we care about in the world? What organizational factors influence a culture of research use? What does 'culture of research use' mean to policymakers?
- How do we conceptualize and operationalize the institutionalization of URE? What are benchmarks of institutionalization?

<u>Equity-Centered URE Research and Policymaking</u>

The topic of centering equity in URE research and policymaking was another major focus of this workshop. Research and evidence democratization as well as active advocacy for equitable policies were noted as two actionable domains that ought to be prioritized by URE research. A strong sentiment was expressed in favor of moving beyond current prescriptions regarding equity-centering (i.e., what *should* be done) toward actionable practices (i.e., *how* to improve equity-centering). The conversation focused on three relevant aspects: (1) research practices and data, (2) co-design and co-production of policy-relevant research evidence, and (3) effective support and advocacy from the URE community. Regarding research and data, it may be useful to compile and communicate a clear set of principles and ethical guidelines, a checklist of a sort, that URE and policymaking researchers can implement when developing and executing research projects. The same also applies to benchmarks for assessing data equity (e.g., diversity, inclusion, representation, adequate sample size, etc.), data usability (including access and ease of use by non-scientists), and usefulness to policymakers and the community. Regarding co-design and co-production of equity-centered and democratized research evidence, there is an urgent need for research-based guidance regarding effective structures, mechanisms, and supports for forming and sustaining these types of collaborations while avoiding common pitfalls and potential harms, beginning with assessing the utility of existing models of engaged research (e.g., CBPR, RPPs, etc.) for this purpose. Regarding effective advocacy and supports for equity-centering in both research practices and public policymaking, it was suggested that funders have an important role in incentivizing research that is equity-centered through shifting funding priorities and rewriting RFPs to explicitly require adherence to basic data equity standards and promote greater accountability regarding usability and usefulness of research to diverse policy stakeholders. URE researchers can actively promote this agenda by being deliberate and transparent about policy implications of research findings and aiming to inform aspects or phases of the policymaking process (e.g., equitable implementation of policies) that are most consequential in this regard. Examples of research questions proposed are:

- What administrative data are available to measure equitable policymaking? How can these measures be validated for change sensitivity for future intervention research?
- How do we measure and improve commitment to equitable policymaking in government?
- How do we test whether community-engaged research is more likely to be used in policymaking and practice?

- How can URE research draw attention and promote action on policy matters that are important to marginalized groups?
- Are strategies that promote equity-centered research in policymaking more or less effective depending on researcher identity and or policymaker identity?
- Can theories of racialized institutions can be extended beyond legislative spaces to include the many players involved in policy implementation?
- In what ways can changes in research institutions improve equity among BIPOC scholars, including the recognition and policy impact of their work?

<u>Enhancing the Impact of URE Research</u>

Participants were asked to reflect on ways to expand the use of URE research evidence beyond the URE field. A range of potential end-users of URE evidence were identified, including scholars and practitioners of knowledge translation, dissemination and implementation, and evidence-informed policymaking; policy advocacy and global/intergovernmental groups; legislators and policymakers at all levels of policymaking; leaders in government; university leaders, and funders. Key potential contributions of URE research identified by participants include contributions to theory (e.g., a more complete and nuanced understanding of structures, mechanisms, processes, and conditions that support evidence-informed policymaking); contributions to methodology (e.g., methods for tracking, assessing, and analyzing use of evidence at the individual, organizational, and system levels and across policy settings); contributions to evidence-based practice (e.g., successful models and interventions for connecting research with policymaking); and contributions to changes on the research production and supply side (e.g., the nature, scope, emphasis, and supply of timely and relevant research available to inform policy). First, however, it seems necessary to clearly articulate and communicate the value proposition of URE research. This may be accomplished by maintaining living evidence of impact summaries and a portfolio of success stories to engage potential audiences. Efforts to connect insights from URE research to work done in other fields (e.g., D&I, translational science, public administration, global health policy, etc.) via targeted publications and conference presentations may aid this effort, as would seeking opportunities to involve scholars from these fields in URE research. Adopting a "URE research in service of policymakers and communities" stance, including collaborating more closely with policy stakeholders to identify and answer research questions of interest, can also be expected to enhance the direct impact of this work. Lastly, there is an opportunity to connect URE research to the growing interest in engaged research in universities and the research community more broadly, with funders serving as a catalyst for moving forward with this agenda. Examples of research questions proposed are:

- How do we make the growing body of URE scholarship more accessible to others?
- How do we explain how URE leads to better population outcomes?
- Can we increase the value of URE/RT via evidence of population impact, action, and/or communicating success stories?
- How do we move past a focus on relational interventions to produce collaborations?
- Is there evidence that successful URE interventions are transportable across policymaking contexts and settings? If not, what is needed to produce such evidence?
- Is it possible to pursue context adaptations of interventions based on readiness and capacities?
- What evidence and values are elevated by URE research?
- How does implementation science and URE bolster each other?
- How do we get institutions (e.g., higher education) to see URE as important and a priority?

- What are the effects of funders' priorities (e.g., RFAs) on promoting URE to a wider audience?

<u>Building and Expanding the URE Research Pipeline</u>

The last topic discussed was ensuring the future growth and evolution of the URE field building on the current momentum. The discussion here highlighted the need to attract scholars from diverse disciplines and fields to URE research and provide them with the necessary training. It was noted that there are already several initiatives to attract early-career scholars (e.g., fellowships, post-doctoral positions, and WT Grant's early-career reviewer program), but these opportunities do not currently align with academic, government, or nonprofit sector positions and career tracks. Given the interdisciplinary nature of URE research, convergence in the field regarding core competencies required of URE researchers remains elusive, as are training opportunities that fit within current degree or certification programs in universities. A sensible step forward is to synergize the knowledge and experience regarding the how-to of URE research that has accumulated in the field to identify a list of core and advanced competencies, map the landscape of available training to assess and fill critical gaps, and leverage networks of scholars and research partnerships to provide mentoring as well as supervised training opportunities. Increased funding for large, multidisciplinary, and team-based projects may be needed to attract interest and involvement of more senior scholars (potentially building on an existing model such as NIH's Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) Program). Examples of research questions proposed are:

- How do we increase awareness of URE roles (e.g., policy scholar, evidence champion, user of evidence)?
- At the individual level, how do we get more researchers/practitioners invested in URE? What are the foundational URE competencies that training should be centered on?
- What is the current landscape of URE training at universities (undergrad and grad)?
- What groups or stakeholders need to be in communication with each other to foster investments in the future growth of URE research?
- How can practitioners be paired or matched with URE researchers who can help them design high quality evaluations of existing practices?

CLOSING REMARKS

Anupreet (Anu) Sidhu delivered brief closing remarks on behalf of the William T. Grant Foundation. She started by thanking the organizers of the workshop (Itzhak, Taylor and Max), their teams, and all the participants and the staff at the event space. She highlighted the usefulness of the metaphors/taxonomy of URE interventions shared during the opening presentation in making the accumulating body of URE research more accessible to newer audiences and facilitating inter/multi-disciplinary research. She noted that listening to Taylor and Max share their audacious RPC journey was empowering and made a strong case for scaling this work and adapting it to different settings. Talking about future directions from the perspective of the Foundation, Anu discussed the imperative of translating what we know from research on URE to impact on youth outcomes. In particular, work that has tested and shown the impact of strategies to improve the use of research evidence among decisionmakers should now move to consider and test if improved research use translates into improved outcomes for children and youth.

Evidence in Policy Workshop
Heldrich Hotel & Conference Center, New Brunswick, NJ
March 19-20, 2024

Meeting Goals

- Systematically map and assess current scholarship regarding strategies, mechanisms, measures, and outcomes of efforts to facilitate evidence-informed policymaking.
- Develop an actionable research agenda for advancing current scholarship and practice on this topic.
- Suggest approaches, strategies, and practices for promoting greater research democratization and equity-centered policymaking.

AGENDA

March 18, 2024 (optional)

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.   Reception, Christopher's Restaurant & Bar, Lobby Level

Day 1: March 19, 2024 *(Neilson Room, Second Floor)*

Zoom Link (Virtual Attendees):
https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/94733493816?pwd=TUNZSWtDY3hvOHptWlZNdTVEYTR6Zz09 (ID: 947 3349 3816)

8:00 – 8:45 a.m.   Breakfast, Christopher's Restaurant, Lobby Level

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.   Welcome and Opening Remarks

Kim DuMont, Senior Vice President, Programs, William T. Grant Foundation

Session I:

Mapping the Terrain: Models and Mechanisms for Connecting Research and Policy

9:00 – 9:45 a.m.   Panel Discussion: Using Research for Equitable Policymaking

- *Sofia Bahena*, *Denisa Gandara*, and *Courtnee Melton-Fant* (discussants)
- *Taylor Scott* (moderator)

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.   Break (refreshment station located outside of the meeting room)

10:30 a.m. – noon   Use of Research in Policy: Broadening the Lens, Sharpening the Focus

- *Itzhak Yanovitzky*, *Taylor Scott*, and *Max Crowley* (presenters)
- Round Robin Discussion (*all*)

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.   Lunch, Christopher's Restaurant, Lobby Level

Session II:

Theories, Methods and Measures for Studying and Assessing Research Use in Policy

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.	Routinizing the Use of Evidence in Policy – What Is Needed?
	Tanja Kuchenmüller, Unit Head, Evidence to Policy and Impact, Research for Health, Science Division, World Health Organization

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.   Breakout Sessions

- Table 1: Theories of action (Facilitator: Taylor Scott)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/93946415050 (Meeting ID: 939 4641 5050)

- Table 2: Research/evaluation designs and methods (Facilitator: Max Crowley)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/681682380 (Meeting ID: 681 682 380)

- Table 3: Measurement and modeling (Facilitator: Itzhak Yanovitzky)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/95682080922 (Meeting ID: 956 8208 0922)

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.   Break (refreshment station located outside of the meeting room)

3:15 – 4:00 p.m.   Breakout Reports + Group Discussion of Theories, Methods, and Measures

4:00 – 4:30 p.m.   Reflections on Day 1 and Adjournment

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.   Dinner, Segal Room, Second Floor

Day 2: March 20, 2024 *(Neilson Room, Second Floor)*

Zoom Link (Virtual Attendees):
https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/94733493816?pwd=TUNZSWtDY3hvOHptWlZNdTVEYTR6Zz09 (ID: 947 3349 3816)

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.   Breakfast, Christopher's Restaurant, Lobby Level

Session III:

Effects and Outcomes of Approaches for Facilitating Research Use in Policy

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.   Panel Discussion: Making the Case for Research on the Use of Research Evidence

- *Elizabeth Day*, *Anna Dulencin*, *Diana Epstein*, *Bev Holmes*, and *Angela Bednarek* (discussants)
- *Kathryn Oliver* (moderator)

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.   Break (refreshment station located outside of the meeting room)

10:15 – 11:30 a.m.   Breakout Sessions
- Table 1: Individual-level pathways and effects (Facilitator: Taylor Scott)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/93946415050 (Meeting ID: 939 4641 5050)

- Table 2: Organizational/partnership-level pathways and effects (Facilitator: Max Crowley)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/681682380 (Meeting ID: 681 682 380)

- Table 3: System(s)-level pathways and effects (Facilitator: Itzhak Yanovitzky)
  Zoom: https://psu.zoom.us/j/95682080922 (Meeting ID: 956 8208 0922)

11:30 a.m. – noon   Breakout Reports + Group Discussion of Effects and Outcomes

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.   Lunch, Christopher's Restaurant, Lobby Level

Session IV:

What's Next for Research on Use of Research in Policy?

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.   Evidence in Policy: Toward an Actionable Research Agenda
- Round robin discussion of research gaps and opportunities
- Ideation/incubation of near-term research projects

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.   Concluding remarks, plan for deliverables, and adjournment

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APRYL ALEXANDER

Dr. Apryl Alexander is the Metrolina Distinguished Scholar in Health and Public Policy at UNC Charlotte. She also serves as Director of the UNC Charlotte Violence Prevention Center. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Florida Institute of Technology with concentrations in forensic psychology and child and family therapy. Dr. Alexander's research and clinical work focus on violence and victimization, human sexuality, and trauma-informed and culturally informed practice. She is an award-winning researcher, and her work has been published in several leading journals. Dr. Alexander has been interviewed by numerous media outlets, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *NBC Nightly News*, about her research and advocacy work. Recently, she received the 2021 Lorraine Williams Greene Award for Social Justice from Division 18, 2022 Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring awards from SPSSI and AP-LS, and the 2022 Dr. Sarah Burgamy Citizen Psychologist Award from the Colorado Psychological Association. Dr. Alexander also enjoys bringing psychology to the public through popular media. She is a frequent presenter at various Comic Cons and has previously contributed to *The Joker Psychology: Evil Clowns and the Women Who Love Them* and *Black Panther Psychology: Hidden Kingdoms*.

ELYSE AURBACH

As Director for Public Engagement & Research Impacts in the University of Michigan's Office of Research, Elyse Aurbach develops strategy and oversees a team to support university faculty in their public engagement efforts. As a Civic Science Fellow with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, she leads a multi-institutional project to understand how different institutional contexts support scholars interested in public engagement and equity work and provide tools and strategies for those support networks to improve. Prior to joining the Office of Research and APLU teams, Aurbach served as Public Engagement Lead with the Center for Academic Innovation, overseeing the center's role in a Presidential strategic focus area on faculty public engagement. She also previously pursued a double-life as a scientist studying the neurobiological underpinnings of major depression and leading a number of projects to improve science communication and public engagement, including developing and teaching communication courses in person and online and Co-Bossing with Nerd Nite Ann Arbor, and co-founding and directing RELATE, a science communication and public engagement organization. Aurbach was a NSF Graduate Research Fellow, a finalist for the AAAS Early Career Award for Public Engagement with Science, and an ARIS Fellow. Aurbach holds a PhD in neuroscience.

SOFIA BAHENA

Sofía Bahena, Ed.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Her overarching research agenda is to address structural educational inequities by strengthening the connection between education research and policy. Specifically, she aims to promote greater access to, and success in, higher education of under-represented youth in the United States. Dr. Bahena has experience working at advocacy organizations focusing on federal and state level policies; collaborating with English/Spanish bilingual communities, parents, and families; and conducting both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Most recently, she completed a visiting fellowship at the Center for Educational Efficacy, Excellence, and Equity (E4 Center), a research-practice-provider partnership housed at Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy. Dr. Bahena holds a B.A. in business administration and sociology from Trinity University (San Antonio, TX) and an Ed.M. in human development and psychology and Ed.D. in cultures, communities, and education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

ANGELA BEDNAREK

Angela Bednarek, Ph.D., directs the Evidence Project at Pew and co-founded and leads the Transforming Evidence Funders Network, a global, cross-sectoral network of public and private funders driving change in how research and evidence are produced, mobilized and used for societal impact across a wide range of issue areas. She has published and presented widely on improving the connections between research, policy, and practice. She serves on the U.S. National Academy of Sciences Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication Research and Practice, the Alliance for Living Evidence council, and the Research Advisory Council for the Partnership for Public Service. Before joining Pew, Bednarek was a foreign affairs officer and AAAS diplomacy fellow in the U.S. State Department's Office of Environmental Policy and a fellow at the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Bednarek holds a doctorate in biology from the University of Pennsylvania.

SUSANNA CAMPBELL

Susanna P. Campbell is Provost Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Policy and Global Security, School of International Service (SIS) and Director of the Research on International Policy Implementation Lab (RIPIL) at American University. Her research examines research-to-policy translation as well as interactions between international and domestic actors in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, addressing debates in the statebuilding, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, international aid, global governance, and foreign policy literatures. She uses mixed-method research designs and has conducted extensive fieldwork in conflict-affected countries, including Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Sudan, and East Timor. Her research has been supported by awards from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, US National Science Foundation, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Swedish and Dutch governments, and the United Nations.

MAX CROWLEY

Dr. Crowley is Professor of Human Development, Family Studies & Public Policy at Pennsylvania State University and Director of the Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative (EIC). He is a prevention scientist investigating how to optimize investments in healthy development and well-being. This work sits at the intersection of social policy, prevention science and public finance. His program of research is motivated by a desire to increase the use of cost-effective, evidence-based preventive strategies to improve the lives of children and families. To accomplish this, his work aims to (1) strengthen methods for benefit-cost analyses of preventive interventions, (2) optimize prevention strategies' impact and (3) develop best practices for how to translate these investments into evidence-based policy. In this manner, he seeks to not only understand the costs and benefits of prevention but aim to develop better interventions and encourage them to be disseminated widely.
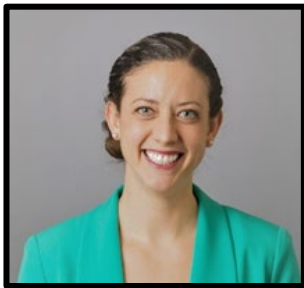
ELIZABETH DAY

Elizabeth Day is a Research Assistant Professor with the HEDCO Institute for Evidence-Based Educational Practice at the University of Oregon. Her research focuses on understanding best practices for connecting research, practice, and policy. Her particular area of focus is on the use of evidence syntheses in social policy and educational practice. Day is also a Visiting Lecturer for Cornell University's School of Public Policy where she teaches a course on knowledge mobilization.

ANNA DULENCIN

Anna Dulencin is the director of the Eagleton Science and Politics Program at Rutgers University which aims to bridge science with government and politics through a number of initiatives, including a fellowship for post-doc STEM and health professionals which places them as science advisors into New Jersey State government. The Program also organizes workshops for scientists and engineers exploring topics at the intersection of science and politics, effective communication with policymakers, and understanding of the political processes and structures and how to navigate them with impact. Additionally, the Program maintains a publicly accessible database of all STEM and health professionals who serve as elected members of US state legislatures. Dulencin is also a visiting scientist in the Department of Biochemistry studying infant microbiome. She received her PhD in neuroscience from the Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

KIM DUMONT

Kim DuMont previously worked from 2011-2020 as program officer and then senior program officer at the William T. Grant Foundation. She was instrumental in the reshaping of our focus on the use of research evidence, the launch of our focus on reducing inequality, and the development and implementation of the Institutional Challenge Grant program. Before returning to the Foundation as Senior Vice President of Program in 2022, Kim was the inaugural Vice President and Managing Director of the Equity Initiative at the American Institutes for Research, which aims to contribute to society through substantive and systemic improvement in the lives of workers, students, and communities. Informed by Foundation-supported work on the use of research evidence, she built strong, strategic partnerships inside and outside of AIR, and oversaw the design and implementation of an ambitious portfolio of research and technical assistance work on viable solutions for addressing segregation and its harmful consequences. Earlier in her career, Kim worked as a research scientist at New York State Office of Children and Family Services and on the research faculty at New Jersey Medical School. Recently, she completed her term on the board of directors for the Society for Prevention Research. In all roles, Kim has sought research-informed approaches to disrupt and redirect practices and policies that contribute to inequities.

DIANA EPSTEIN

Diana Epstein is the Evidence Team Lead at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), where she leads efforts to promote evidence building and use across the Federal Government. In this role, she and her team serve as internal experts on program evaluation within OMB and the Executive Office of the President, lead implementation of Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, chair the interagency Evaluation Officer Council, and provide support and technical assistance on evaluation and evidence activities across a range of Federal agencies and government functions. Before joining OMB in 2016, Diana was a research and evaluation manager at the Corporation for National and Community Service and a program evaluator and policy analyst at Abt Associates, the American Institutes for Research, and the RAND Corporation. She has a BS in applied math-biology from Brown University, an MPP from UC Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in policy analysis from the Pardee RAND Graduate School.

DENISA GÁNDARA

Denisa Gándara serves as an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at The University of Texas at Austin. Her research, primarily focusing on higher education finance, policy, and politics, is dedicated to advancing populations traditionally underserved in higher education. Gándara's work has garnered support from various sources, including the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, the Ford Foundation, the William T. Grant Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and the American Educational Research Association. She was appointed by President Joe Biden to the National Board for Education Sciences and serves on the Board of Directors for the Institute for Higher Education Policy. Gándara earned her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education.

LOUISE GERAGHTY

Louise Geraghty is the Government Partnerships Lead at J-PAL North America, where she develops and oversees strategy around connecting researchers in the J-PAL network with state and local governments. Programs she manages include the State and Local Innovation Initiative and the LEVER project, a joint effort with Results for America focused on building capacity around evidence and evaluation with state and local governments. Louise holds a master's degree in public policy (MPP) from the Harris School at the University of Chicago.

BEV HOLMES

Bev Homes, President & CEO of Michael Smith Health Research BC, is a health research system leader with expertise and experience in and passion for the funding, production and use of research evidence to improve health. She sits on research advisory groups across Canada and internationally, is an associate editor at *Implementation Science Communications* and participates in the National Alliance of Provincial Health Research Organizations. An adjunct professor at SFU's Faculty of Health Sciences and UBC's School of Population and Public Health, Bev is also a Chartered Director (Degroote School of Business, McMaster University), and a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. She has held a number of management positions in non-profit agencies. Bev received her MA and PhD from SFU's School of Communication. She and partner have four children and two grandchildren; they gratefully make their homes on the traditional, unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) First Nations.

TANJA KUCHENMÜLLER

Tanja Kuchenmüller, M.A., M.Sc, coordinates the Evidence to Policy and Impact unit in the Research for Health Department, Science Division, at World Health Organization Headquarters. The unit has the dual mandate of (1) strengthening country capacity in generating, translating and using the best available research evidence in policies and practice, and (2) providing leadership on policies in research to ensure access and scale-up. Until July 2020, she coordinated the Knowledge Management, Evidence and Research for Policy-Making unit; Division of Information, Evidence, Research and Innovation at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, encompassing the following regional networks and initiatives: the Evidence-informed Policy Network (EVIPNet), Health Evidence Network (HEN), European Health Research Network (EHRN) and other health research and evidence-informed policy-making related areas, such as the European Advisory Committee on Health Research (EACHR). Previously, she worked for and eventually led the WHO Initiative to Estimate the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases at WHO Headquarters (2006-12). Prior to her career at WHO, Tanja worked in the HIV/AIDS area for the United Nations Development Programme in New York and for the German Development Service in Mali and Germany.

ADAM SETH LEVINE

Adam Seth Levine is the SNF Agora Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management in the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins. Two key questions he studies are when do ordinary citizens become engaged in civic life, and with what impact? and how do people with diverse forms of expertise, such as researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, collaborate to tackle problems? In March 2024 his second book offering new arguments and data on these questions, *Collaborate Now! How Expertise Becomes Useful in Civic Life*, will be published by Cambridge University Press. He has also published in a variety of political science, public health, transportation planning, climate change, communication, law, and economics journals. He is president and co-founder of research4impact, a nonprofit that creates puts many of his research findings into practice by creating powerful new collaborative relationships between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

COURTNEE MELTON-FANT

Courtnee Melton-Fant, PhD, MS, is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Health Systems Management and Policy. Before joining the University of Memphis, Dr. Melton-Fant worked for a state-level public policy research center providing information and analysis to policymakers, the media, and the general public. Dr. Melton-Fant has experience conducting both academic and non-academic research ranging from clinical trials and health outcomes to analysis of state-level health care reforms for policymakers and advocacy groups. Her research interests include state- and local-level public policy, health outcomes, and racial health inequities. She is particularly interested in how broad-based public policies can be used as tools to improve the health of populations. Her research has been funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, the William T. Grant Foundation, and the Commonwealth Fund.

JAMILA MICHENER

Jamila Michener is an associate professor of Government and Public Policy at Cornell University. She studies poverty, racial inequality, and public policy, with a particular focus on health and housing. She is author of the award-winning book, *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics*. She is inaugural director of the Center for Racial Justice and Equitable Futures, Associate Dean for Public Engagement at the Brooks School of Public Policy, co-director of the Politics of Race, Immigration, Class and Ethnicity (PRICE) research initiative, and board chair of the Cornell Prison Education Program.

KATHRYN OLIVER

Kathryn Oliver is Professor of Evidence and Policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Since 2012, Kathryn has worked in health studies, public health, sociology and engineering departments to study the production and use of evidence in policy. She is a founding director of Transforming Evidence, a global initiative to promote cross-disciplinary learning and research about evidence production and use, and between 2019-2023 was seconded to the UK government to advise and test approaches to promote evidence use in policy using the Areas of Research Interest.

GEORGE PESTA

Dr. George B. Pesta is the Director of the Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research in the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University (FSU). He has worked in the fields of juvenile justice, corrections, and education for the past 25 years. His research and publications have focused on translational criminology, corrections, schools and delinquency, and the effectiveness of juvenile justice programs.

JONATHAN PURTLE

Jonathan Purtle is Associate Professor of Public Health Policy & Management and Director of Policy Research at NYU's Global Center for Implementation Science. His work examines questions such as how research evidence can be most effectively communicated to policymakers and is used in policymaking processes, how social and political contexts affect policymaking and policy implementation, and how the implementation of policies "on the books" can be improved in practice. Dr. Purtle's work has been consistently funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). His research is regularly published in journals such as *Implementation Science*, *Psychiatric Services*, *The Milbank Quarterly*, and *Annual Review of Public Health*. He was awarded the 2018 Champion of Evidence-Based Interventions Award from the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies for his work on evidence use in mental health policymaking.

ANUPREET SIDHU

Anupreet Sidhu is a Program Officer with the William T. Grant Foundation. Anupreet directs the foundation's portfolio of studies to improve the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth. She works with other funders to grow the field of study on the use of research evidence, including contributing to planning for meetings of the Transforming Evidence Network. Anupreet completed her postdoctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where her research focused on the intersection of regulatory science, health communication, and program evaluation. She received her PhD in health behavior research from Keck School of Medicine at the University of California.

TAYLOR SCOTT

Dr. Taylor Scott is situated at the intersection of research and policy by both leading research translation strategies and evaluating their impact. She is a community-based program evaluator by training and has worked closely with decision makers to use research evidence in the real world for over a decade. As Director of Research Translation in the Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative at Penn State University, she consults on various strategies for bridging research and policy and leads scholarly research that sheds light on the best practices for research translation, science communication, and facilitating productive interactions between researchers and policymakers. As a Co-director of the Research-to-Policy Collaboration, she directs activities that broker connections between researchers and legislative offices.

SARAH CUSWORTH WALKER

Sarah Cusworth Walker, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine where she founded the CoLab for Community and Behavioral Health Policy and directs the Evidence-Based Practice Institute, a legislatively-established center focused on promoting effective children's mental health treatment. Dr. Walker's lab studies methods of integrating knowledge and expertise from science and practice communities to improve population behavioral health. She received a Health Equity award with her colleague, Kevin Williams, in 2019 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a Champion for Change award in 2014 from the MacArthur Foundation.

ITZHAK YANOVITZKY

Itzhak Yanovitzky (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania) is Professor of Communication (primary appointment) and Public Health (secondary appointment) and Chair of the SC&I Health and Wellness Faculty Cluster at Rutgers University. He is an expert in the areas of behavior change communication, public policymaking, translational research, and program evaluation. Professor Yanovitzky's program of research explores effective mechanisms for facilitating use of evidence in policy and practice and building the capacity of communities to apply communication strategies and tools to promote population health. He has an extensive experience partnering with collaborators across academic disciplines and sectors to address a range of public health problems, including most recently efforts to address the opioid epidemic and the rising toll of youth depression and suicide. Professor Yanovitzky is the immediate past chair of the Health Communication Division of the International Communication Association and a member of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine's Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication.