

Working with government to embed evidence in child welfare policy

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Objectives of presentation

- Briefly discuss the **role/importance of evidence** in child welfare policy-making
- Consider the **current state of evidence use** in child welfare policy-making
- Present **emerging ideas for next steps** in terms of:
 - 1) Increasing involvement at different steps in policy-making
 - 2) Developing a shared understanding of the value of evidence
 - 3) Establishing appropriate governance structures
 - 4) Providing guidance about our level of confidence in the evidence

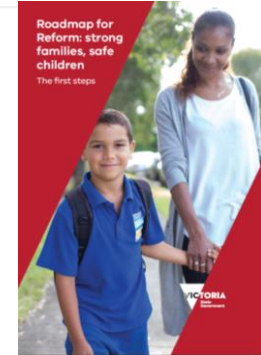
Where are we going?

Aim is to have evidence used as a ‘weighty justification’ in decision-making (Bédard & Ouimet, 2016)

- Policy-making is a democratic process
- Decisions partly depend on goals of policy-makers (Littell & Shlonsky, 2010)
- Evidence will improve children’s outcomes (and efficiency in reaching those outcomes)

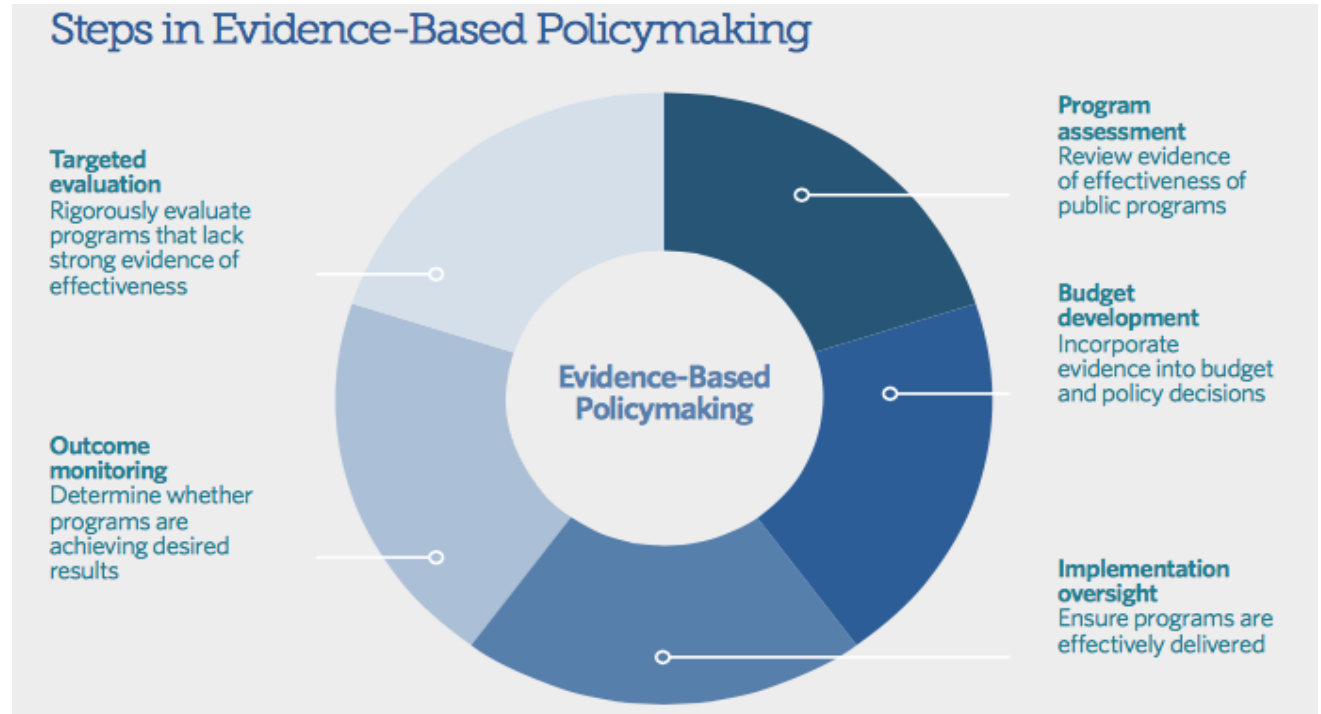
How are we going?

- **Relatively recent push** from government for evidence-based programs in child welfare
- Child welfare is a **high-visibility** and **high-risk** area
- **Evidence base** is largely underdeveloped:
 - Overall there's a lack of rigorous evidence in the area
 - Various clearinghouses now exist – using different methods and approaches
 - Effect sizes tend to be relatively small



How are we going? (cont.)

Tendency to be involved only at the 'targeted evaluation' stage

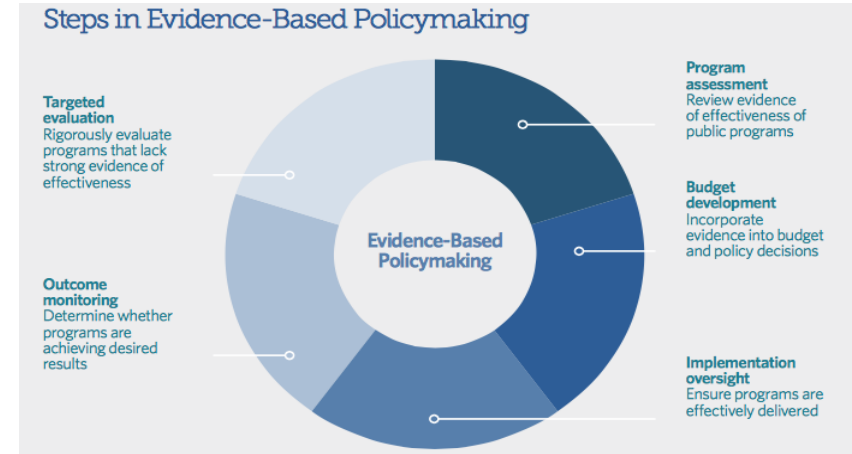


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What next?

1. Increasing involvement at different steps in policy-making

- Use **systematic reviews** and evidence synthesis to inform program assessment
- Use **implementation science** to support implementation process and provide oversight
- Use **outcomes-based measures** for outcome monitoring
- Refer to legislation and Treasury guidelines regarding **publication** of evaluation findings (e.g. *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*)



What next?

2. Develop a shared understanding of the value of evidence

- As much as possible, devote resources to the early (scoping) phases of a project to develop a shared understanding of the role and value of evidence
- Manage expectations about what the evidence may show and will not answer
- Engage with Executive and Minister/s to establish a shared understanding (methodology and publication)

3. Establish appropriate governance structures

- Aim for a **governance group** that can provide feedback (and visibility where appropriate)
- Also seek an **accessible individual** who can make decisions and provide regular input into design-issues
- Balance need for government input with **independence**

What next?

4. Provide guidance about our level of confidence in the evidence

- Clearly explain factors that lead to rigour
- Clearly explain the purpose of clearinghouses
- Provide some guidance regarding the implications of findings

Thankyou

For more information please contact

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References

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