



CANADIAN COUNCIL
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The use of evidence to inform policy in political contexts

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Outline

- Why do we need policy?
- What is good public policy?
- What is politics?
- What is the contribution of research to policy?
- What factors increase or diminish the consideration of research in policy formation?
- How can investigators increase the impact of their research on public policy?

Why do we need policy?

“Policy is a fairly stable, but modifiable, line of action aimed at securing an optimal adjustment of the conflict between different goods, all of which must be pursued, but which taken together cannot all be maximized.” (Green, 2002)

What is good public policy

- In democracies, politics is the process of adjustment by which conflicts concerning different values (goods) are resolved.
- Neither research nor policy analysis will resolve the conflicts that arise because of value differences or because of differing value priorities.
- Societies need a commitment to a process for resolving such differences. In democratic societies, such differences are resolved through a process of electoral politics.

What is politics?

“Politics is the system we have for attaching values to facts.”

Carol Weiss

What is the contribution of research to policy?

The purpose of research and policy analysis is to elevate the discussion of the available policy options.

What factors diminish or increase the consideration of research in policy formation?

- The issue is of crisis proportion and must be addressed immediately.
- The issue is too value laden (too politicized).
- Those in power have a fixed position on the issue.

How can investigators increase the impact of their research on public policy?

- Express the research in plain language.
- Bring a human face to the research.
- Ensure the research is widely circulated.
- Demonstrate the applicability of the research to a real problem facing the decision-maker(s).
- Show how the research relates to the values of those making the decision(s).
- Ensure that the cost of implementing the research is known and reasonable
- Ensure the research has credible champions.