

## **Lesson 1: Use a broad definition of “robust evidence”**

Policy needs to be based on a broad definition of evidence that includes statistical data, as well as evidence from evaluation, monitoring and surveillance activities, citizens and stakeholders and formal research-based disciplines. Budgets and planning processes need to explicitly consider these different types so that there is a good balance of the types of evidence used to inform the policy process.

## **Lesson 2: Policy teams are responsible for managing their evidence base**

Designing and managing an evidence base for policy is not something that can be contracted out. Policy makers<sup>2</sup> are responsible for using evidence as effectively as possible to design, implement and monitor policies.

## **Lesson 3: Build the evidence base to serve all policy priorities**

An evidence base, for example in a ministry or local government, needs to be able to support all policy priorities. This means managing it to respond effectively to short-term needs; to anticipate, as far as possible, the likely longer-term needs; and to collect evidence in response to legal requirements. Assigning set percentages of the overall budget to these different categories may be helpful.

## **Lesson 4: Do not reinvent the wheel: derive value from the evidence you already have**

Policy makers face constant downward pressure on public sector budgets. The pressure to deliver value for money spent on evidence means that it is important not to reinvent the wheel. It is a good idea to review evidence that already exists before commissioning new evidence.

## **Lesson 5: Build relationships around evidence**

Many different organisations can contribute to the evidence base for any policy issue. These will include colleagues in other teams within the department, as well as people in other ministries, local government, universities, civil society organisations, non-government organisations, think tanks, donor organisations and many others. Involving them will ensure that your view of what is important does not become too narrow. As well as providing evidence, they can help plan, quality assure and interpret what the evidence means for what you are trying to achieve.

## **Lesson 6: Take a “whole organisation” approach to managing evidence**

Individual policy teams in departments can develop their own ways of managing their evidence base, with their own theme-based strategy. However, it is often hard to co-ordinate effectively between teams, which may result in gaps and overlaps in the evidence, and management inefficiencies. In order for a department to say that its approach to managing evidence is as coherent and efficient as possible, it is helpful to develop a whole organisation approach to managing evidence.

## **Lesson 7: Make evidence part of business as usual**

An evidence-based approach to policy making is truly embedded when it is an integral part of departmental business processes and when there is a clear relationship between evidence budgets and programme budgets.

## **Lesson 8: Leadership from senior management provides essential support to the process**

Senior managers are the people who send the signals to the rest of the organisation that a focus on evidence needs to be part of business as usual. There may be issues that can only be addressed at a departmental level, such as developing prioritisation criteria or setting budget categories for evidence. Their involvement in the process helps demonstrate how important it is to focus on evidence.



## **Lesson 9: Do not try to do everything at once**

Changing the way a government department does business can be a big challenge. It will require time to get it right. Commit to taking a whole organisation approach, but rather than setting out a detailed plan for the whole process, break it into smaller stages.

## **Lesson 10: Be aware of, but not scared of, the politics of evidence**

Many different people, in your ministry and in other organisations, will have an interest in how the evidence base is managed and for what purpose. It will be important to recognise the internal and external politics involved in taking a strategic approach to evidence. Consider how to ensure that these debates are transparent and allow contestation; producing an evidence strategy can help.

## **Lesson 11: Learn, adapt and share good practice**

Each organisation is different and what works for one will not necessarily work for another. Priorities, timescales, capabilities and budgets all need to be considered. The point of not trying to do everything all at once is to allow time to learn and adapt so that you can develop a strategic approach that works for your department. Identifying how you would apply each of these lessons to your own organisation is a helpful start. Sharing the practices that work for you will help others, and you may well be able to learn from them.