

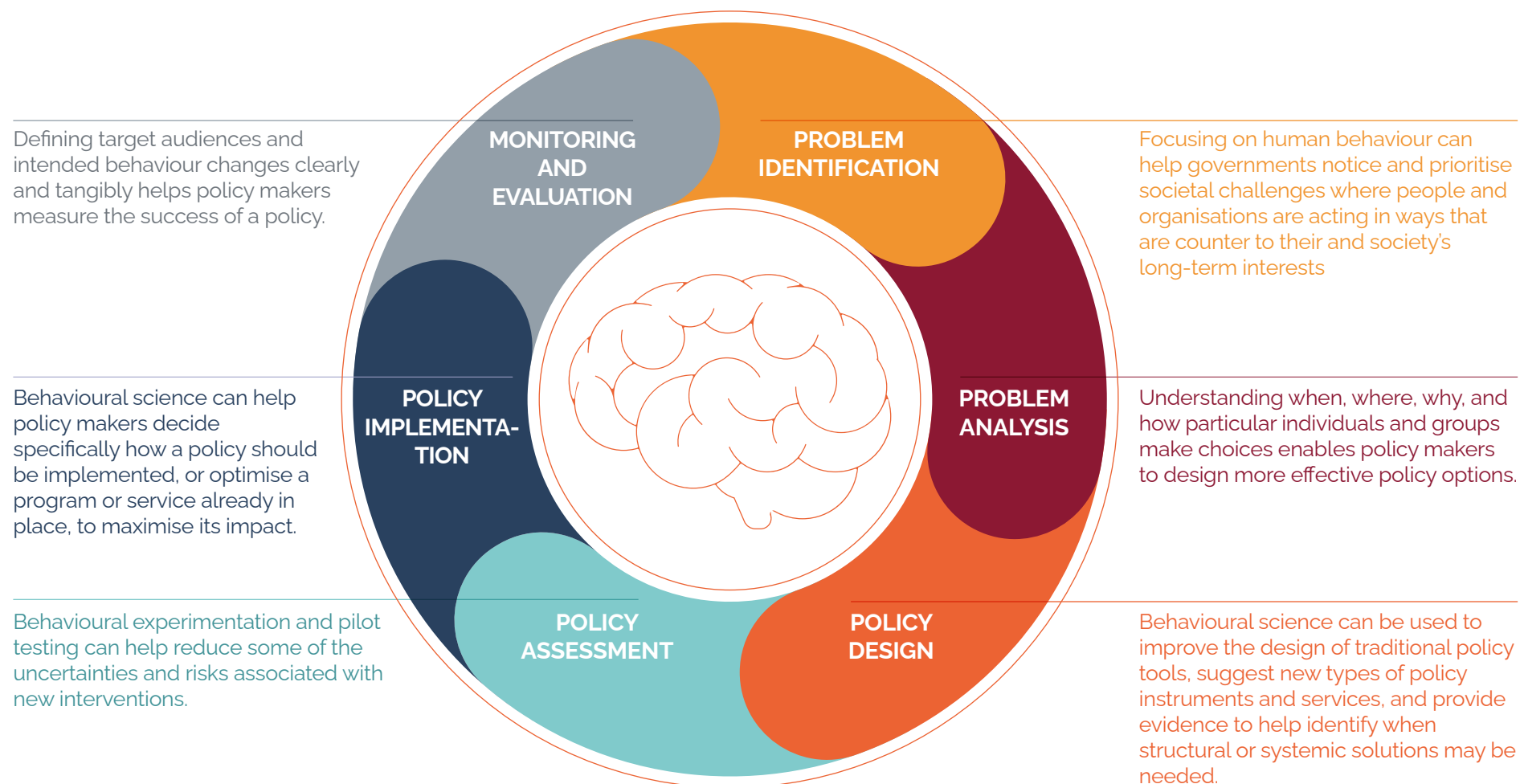
LOGIC

Good Practice Principles for Mainstreaming Behavioural Public Policy

Why Behavioural Public Policy?

Many, if not most, issues that governments might seek to address involve human behaviour in some way. Recognising the importance of people's behaviour to policy work, governments around the world have increasingly augmented their policy making practice with behavioural science insights and methods an approach known as **behavioural public policy**.

Behavioural public policy can provide value at each stage of the policy process:

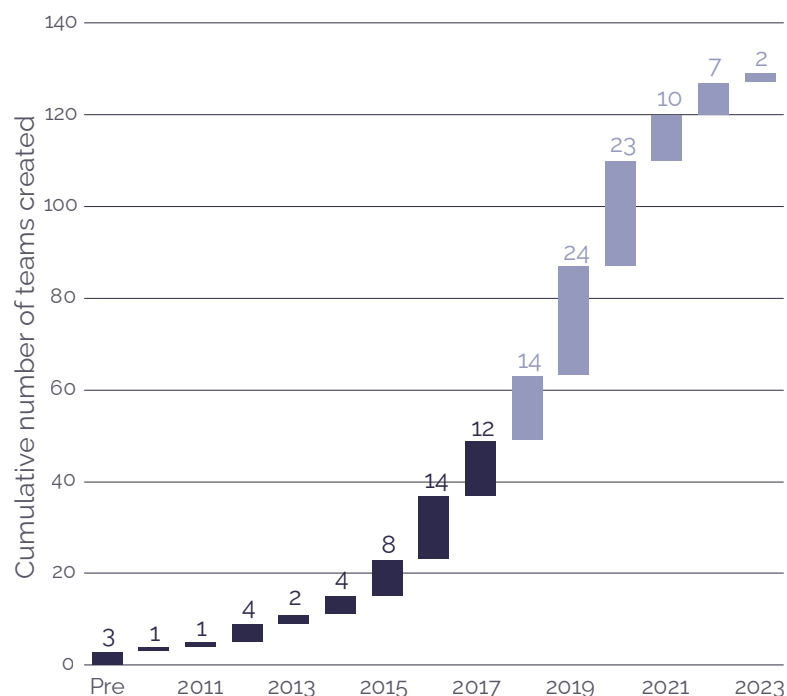


Behavioural Public Policy Across the Globe

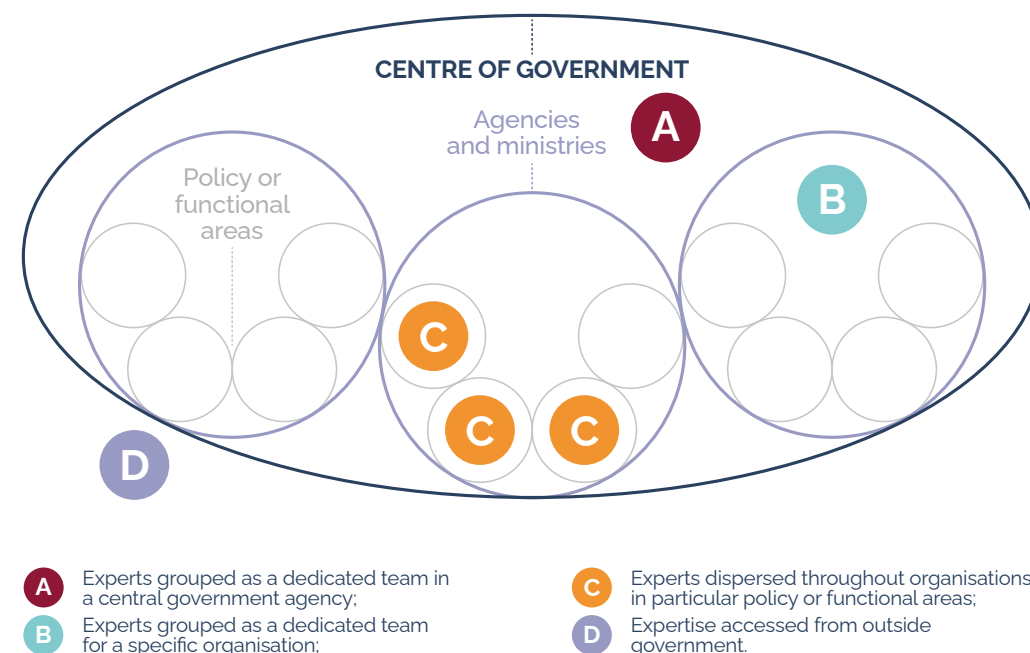
Since the emergence of the first behavioural science teams around 2010, many more have emerged around the world. While varying in missions, models, and methodologies, they share the common goal of enhancing our understanding of 'what makes people tick' and how we might use this information for the betterment of policy and society.

The practice of behavioural science in governments worldwide has grown steadily. A broader range of countries are setting up behavioural science functions and many countries now have multiple teams and functions set up in various government organisations throughout their public administrations.

Data from recent OECD surveys also shows that about half of these teams were created in the last six years



Countries are operating with different institutional arrangements for their behavioural science capabilities



Good Practice Principles

This document provides actionable advice to governments seeking to incorporate behavioural science as part of standard policy making practices. The 14 good practice principles are organised in five dimensions:



These principles were co-developed with members of the **OECD Network of Behavioural Insights Experts in Government** and are based on practices that policy makers and behavioural science experts have found to be effective over time.

This highlights document summarizes a larger report which can be found [here](#). In the full report, the good practice principles are developed in more detail using data from multiple OECD surveys and case studies from governments in different stages of the mainstreaming journey are presented.

Leadership **LOGIC**

The actions and words of influential leaders can be critical drivers of uptake of behavioural science evidence in policy making. Senior leaders in government can advocate for a people-centred approach and request a robust evidence base, and managers can actively build this mindset in their organisations.

1. ENCOURAGE EXPLICITLY

Senior leaders request and advocate for behavioural science when relevant.



In the **United States**, a 2021 Presidential Memorandum for heads of executives departments and agencies has driven demand for evidence and experimentation within the policy making community, helping promote an empirical culture and mindset.



In **Türkiye**, a pilot behavioural science project was opened and closed at formal events that included speeches from the relevant minister, resulting in substantial media coverage. The minister personally participated in an introductory video produced for a website integral to the pilot project.

HOW DO SENIOR LEADERS TALK ABOUT BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE PUBLICLY AND INTERNALLY?

- ☒ Do senior leaders mention the importance of people-centred, evidence-informed policy making in public speeches, publications, and external communications?
- ☒ Do senior leaders mention the importance of people-centred, evidence-informed policy making in internal communications to staff?
- ☒ Do senior leaders promote specific behavioural science projects, such as attending launch events or distributing final reports?
- ☒ Do senior leaders appropriately advocate for behavioural science evidence in policy conversations and forums?
- ☒ Are senior leaders using their influence and authority to institute the systemic changes necessary to embed behavioural science methods and insights into business-as-usual policy making practice?
- ☒ Are senior leaders consulting with or including behavioural science experts during the policy making process?

2. ENGAGE WITH LEADERS

Managers build and maintain senior leaders' support for behavioural science.



In **Canada**, federal ministers receive mandate letters from the prime minister that outline their priorities. In-house behavioural scientists, in conjunction with colleagues across their federal departments and agencies, scope behavioural science projects that can support and advance those priorities, which contribute to building senior leadership support.



In the state of Victoria in **Australia**, government officials took the opportunity of a change of government in 2014 to propose a new focus on behavioural public policy, among other ideas for public sector reform.

HOW DO MANAGERS TALK TO THEIR LEADERS ABOUT BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE?

- ☒ What strategies are in place to build and maintain the support of senior leaders?
- ☒ Are managers raising the use of behavioural science with senior leaders, such as through standalone briefings or in the context of particular policy challenges?
- ☒ How aligned are the behavioural science activities underway with senior leaders' mandates or government priorities?

L Objectives G I C

Governments can include behavioural science in their strategic plans and monitor this over time. A formal definition of how a behavioural perspective can help deliver a government's strategic objectives can motivate and guide policy makers' choices. The strategy can consider using behavioural science for both external policy (involving citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders) and internal policy (the processes and mechanisms of public administration itself).

3. DEFINE STRATEGY

Senior leaders and managers define how behavioural science can and should help the government deliver its strategic objectives.



In **Australia**, the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) has a mission statement that connects its daily activities with the strategic objectives of the central agency where it is located. BETA proactively proposes behavioural science activities that support the delivery of key government priorities. BETA has also conducted 'Opportunity Scans' within particular policy portfolios and departments, helping to identify policy issues that would particularly benefit from a behavioural perspective.

HOW HAS THE GOVERNMENT OR ORGANISATION DEFINED AND PRIORITISED ITS USE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE?

- ☒ How is behavioural science discussed in the government's strategies and plans?
- ☒ Is there a plan specifying where and how behavioural science is relevant to the government's priorities?
- ☒ Has there been a comprehensive assessment of the organisation's behavioural science capabilities and opportunities?
- ☒ Has the government considered how behavioural science can complement and augment other people-centred, evidence-informed approaches to policy making?
- ☒ Is there a plan to use behavioural science for shorter-term and longer-term results?

4. MONITOR IMPACT

Managers monitor the use of behavioural science evidence and its impact on government policy to enable iteration and improvement.



In the **Netherlands**, the cross government behavioural insights network sends reports to parliament about experimentally tested interventions every two years. This report is actively shared with senior leaders across the government.

HOW ARE BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACTS MONITORED OVER TIME?

- ☒ Is the government or organisation tracking the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of behavioural science activities?
- ☒ Are there specific metrics or indicators that are used to assess the success of behavioural science-informed initiatives?
- ☒ Is behavioural science evidence cited in official documents that justify particular policy options?
- ☒ Is human behaviour considered as part of policy makers' problem definition and analysis?

5. LOOK INTERNALLY

Senior leaders and managers encourage the use of behavioural science in designing and improving internal organisational processes, rules, and incentives.



Canada has a dedicated team in the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer that focuses on applying behavioural science to people management and the future of work across the federal public service. This team has conducted a series of behavioural science initiatives ranging from increasing digital workplace skills acquisition to developing tools to improve team cohesion in a hybrid work environment.

HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT OR ORGANISATION BALANCING THE USE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE FOR EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL POLICY MAKING?

- ☒ Are behavioural science insights and methods considered when designing or improving organisational processes?

LO Governance IC

A clear and well-defined accountability structure around how resources and efforts are managed and organised can help a government more efficiently and effectively embed behavioural science into policy making procedures and practices. Governments can clearly allocate the responsibilities for mainstreaming behavioural public policy and fund associated activities appropriately.

6. ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

Senior leaders clearly allocate the responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural science and establish lines of accountability.



In **Türkiye's** Ministry of Trade, a central team was given sole responsibility for helping other parts of the organisation embed behavioural science into their policy making. They established an academic advisory group to assist with promoting behavioural science and building capability among policy makers.



In the **United Kingdom's** international aid agency in 2014, senior leaders created a position responsible for the organisation's adoption of behavioural science. The function has now expanded as part of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, and a senior steering group of government officials shape the direction of priority behavioural science initiatives.

HOW ARE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINSTREAMING BEHAVIOURAL PUBLIC POLICY HELD TO ACCOUNT?

- ☒ Who is responsible for promoting the adoption of behavioural science insights and methods?
- ☒ What oversight or accountability mechanisms help ensure progress on mainstreaming behavioural public policy?
- ☒ Is the performance of senior leaders assessed on their consideration of behavioural science evidence?
- ☒ Are there regular reviews or structured exchanges among managers about the government's adoption of behavioural science?

7. RESOURCE SUFFICIENTLY

Senior leaders and managers mobilise sufficient resources to ensure policy advice is informed by relevant and reliable behavioural science evidence.



In **Australia**, the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) works across all policy topics. The central department that hosts BETA funds its staff costs, as well as some operational expenses such as ethical reviews and data management tools. Within particular projects, partner agencies cover other practical expenses, such as research recruitment costs and translations.



The staff in **Germany's** central behavioural science team are funded by the Federal Chancellery, while ministries and authorities cover project costs. This approach ensures low barriers for ministries to initially access existing evidence from behavioural science. However funding, tendering, and contracting create some administrative burden for larger projects to create original evidence.

HOW ARE RESOURCES MOBILISED TO ENABLE THE USE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE?

- ☒ What resources are devoted to using behavioural science?
- ☒ What is the source of resources for behavioural science, such as central government, line agencies, external bodies?
- ☒ How are behavioural science resources spent, such as in-house staff, external partners, operational expenses?
- ☒ Are the resources devoted to behavioural science diverse and agile enough to respond to a variety of policy areas and methodological approaches?
- ☒ Are the resources devoted to behavioural science stable and secure over time?

LOG Integration C

Partners, stakeholders, and structures can form an enabling environment for behavioural public policy that makes relevant evidence more likely to be sought, produced, and heeded. Governments can build behavioural considerations into standard policy processes and guidelines, and adopt behavioural science responsibly and openly to build citizens' trust. They can also develop processes and structures for behavioural data collection that enable more efficient and effective problem diagnosis and solution development.

8. EMBED IN PROCESSES

Managers integrate behavioural science into standard guidelines and procedures for policy development, implementation, and evaluation.



In the **Netherlands**, it is a mandatory requirement for policy makers to take into account citizens' capacity to act as intended as part of their regulatory impact assessments. This requirement encourages the consideration and generation of behavioural science evidence

HOW IS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE INCORPORATED INTO STANDARD POLICY MAKING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES?

- ☒ To what extent do standard policy making procedures and frameworks encourage policy makers to adopt a behavioural science lens?
- ☒ Are there formal standards or official requirements that make it obligatory for policy makers to consider behavioural science evidence?
- ☒ Is behavioural science embedded in relevant procedures at all stages of policy development, implementation, and evaluation?
- ☒ Do policy makers regularly cite behavioural science evidence when making formal arguments and proposals for policy options?
- ☒ What are the consequences for policy makers for not considering behavioural science evidence?
- ☒ Are managers or senior leaders required to communicate or report on their generation and use of behavioural science evidence?

9. ACT RESPONSIBLY AND OPENLY

Managers ensure behavioural science is applied responsibly, openly, and with high integrity standards to build and maintain policy makers' and citizens' trust.



In the **United States**, the Office of Evaluation Science, which is the central dedicated team working on evaluation and behavioural science, publishes all of its evaluation results. It has also committed to publishing all pre-analysis plans.

HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT OR ORGANISATION ENSURING THE RESPONSIBLE AND OPEN USE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE?

- ☒ How well informed is the public discussion about the government's use of behavioural science?
- ☒ How transparent is the government about how it embeds behavioural science insights and methods into policy making?
- ☒ How much of the behavioural science work conducted to inform policy decisions is available to the public?
- ☒ What mechanisms are in place to ensure the integrity of the behavioural science evidence, methods, and experts that inform policy making?
- ☒ What guidelines and procedures are in place to ensure ethical conduct in the production and application of behavioural science evidence?
- ☒ How are stakeholders, citizens, and marginalised groups involved in the production and application of behavioural science evidence?

10. CREATE DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

Managers support processes and structures for data collection and analysis that make it easier to diagnose behavioural issues and evaluate policy options.



The **Norwegian** Tax Administration has built a platform that enables in-house behavioural science experts to implement nudges and digital prompts in real time while taxpayers are filing their tax declarations.

HOW ARE DATA STRUCTURES BUILT AND MANAGED TO ENABLE BEHAVIOURAL DIAGNOSIS AND TESTING?

- ☒ How easy is it for behavioural science experts to access the administrative and behavioural data they need to produce policy-relevant evidence?
- ☒ How do behavioural science experts leverage existing data structures to assist in their work?
- ☒ To what extent are behavioural science experts collaborating with the government's broader efforts to build data architecture and infrastructure to drive evidence-informed policy?

LOGIC Capability

Behavioural public policy entails a complex body of knowledge and an array of evidence generation methods. The craft of policy making is similarly nuanced. But policy makers can know how to approach a policy problem in a people-centred, evidence-informed way, and have sustainable and ready access to behavioural science experts. Governments can also establish mechanisms to bring behavioural science evidence into the policy process in a way that is relevant and useful, and to share knowledge and practices among practitioners.

11. BUILD BROAD LITERACY

Managers build policy makers' capability to apply a behavioural science lens to their work.



In **France**, the dedicated team of behavioural science experts at the centre of government has collaborated with major French universities to build a pipeline of future policy makers with relevant behavioural science skills.

HOW FAMILIAR ARE POLICY MAKERS WITH WHEN AND HOW TO USE BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE INSIGHTS AND METHODS?

- ☒ Do policy makers know how to analyse a problem from a behavioural perspective?
- ☒ Are policy makers familiar with simple, readily applicable tools and frameworks that help them adopt a behavioural lens?
- ☒ Do policy makers and managers understand when and how behavioural science can be useful for their policy making practice?
- ☒ How is behavioural science incorporated into post-secondary education and professional development programs for policy makers?

13. BROKER KNOWLEDGE

Managers ensure that behavioural science evidence can be useful to inform policy making processes through quality brokerage.



In the **Netherlands**, specific staff members have been allocated the task of encouraging behavioural science experts to work together with policy makers. To help policy makers experience fewer barriers to include a behavioural science approach, they share best practices and enhance tools for the mandatory requirement to take into account citizens' capacity to act.

HOW IS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE EVIDENCE MADE TO BE USEFUL IN THE POLICY PROCESS?

- ☒ Are there individuals or institutions with a mandate for brokering behavioural science evidence into the policy system?
- ☒ How is behavioural science evidence disseminated to policy makers and decision makers?
- ☒ Are findings and insights from behavioural science communicated clearly?
- ☒ Is the behavioural science evidence that is sought or commissioned made applicable to policy decisions?

12. ACCESS EXPERTISE

Managers develop sustainable ways for policy makers to access behavioural science expertise.



In the **United States**, the Office of Evaluation Sciences has brought on behavioural scientists seconded part-time or full-time from academic institutions and non-profit organisations to serve as project managers, technical advisors, and analysts.

HOW CAN POLICY MAKERS ACCESS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE EXPERTISE?

- ☒ How are in-house behavioural science experts organised, structured, and managed?
- ☒ How can behavioural science experts draw on the range of scientific and government-related skills necessary to produce relevant and impactful evidence?
- ☒ Are policy makers familiar with what behavioural science expertise is available to them and how to access them?

14. SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Managers build mechanisms for dissemination and knowledge sharing, such as networks of behavioural science experts and supporters.



In **Argentina**, behavioural science experts in government have established a common network with partners in academic institutions and research organisations to share knowledge and connect researchers with policy makers.

HOW IS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE SHARED ACROSS THE GOVERNMENT?

- ☒ How do in-house behavioural science experts exchange knowledge and experiences amongst themselves?
- ☒ Do behavioural science experts across government have access to a shared portal or repository for sharing knowledge?
- ☒ Can policy makers and behavioural science experts readily access examples of previous behavioural science work done in government?



LOGIC Across the Mainstreaming Journey

The growth of a government organisation in applying behavioural public policy can be seen as the movement from a situation where behavioural science is never used, to an ideally mature state where it is used to inform government decisions whenever relevant.

The table below provides suggestions and ideas for the kinds of activities that governments could conduct at each stage of the mainstreaming journey.

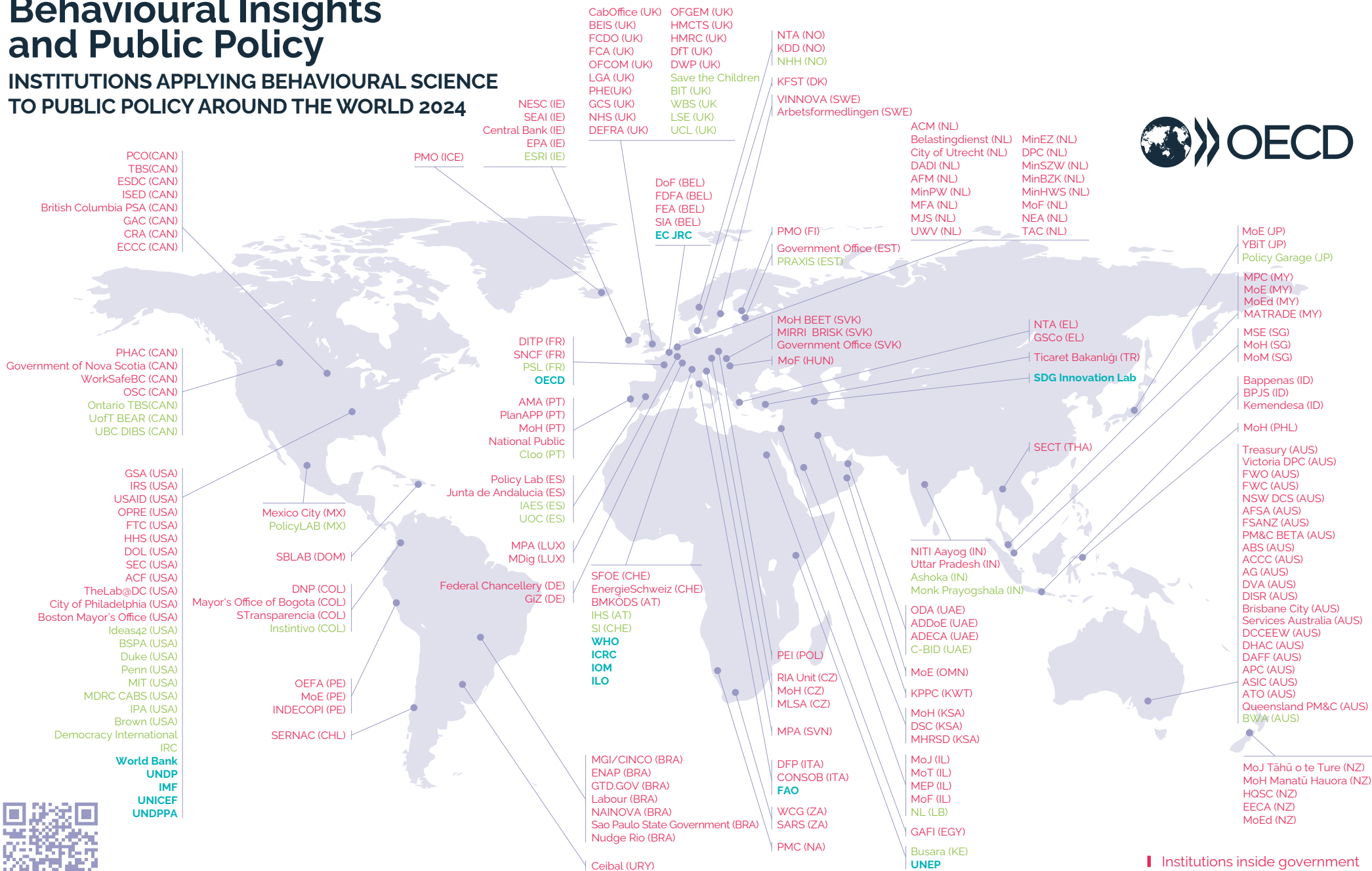
	EMERGING	GROWING	MATURING
Leadership	- Launch a new effort with a visible statement from senior leaders. - Present case studies to senior leaders to make the case for dedicated resources.	Expand a coalition of champions throughout the policy system.	Build behavioural science into regular briefings of incoming leaders.
Objectives	Identify priority focus that lend themselves to a behavioural approach, considering the government's agenda and what has been successful elsewhere.	- Release a dedicated strategy for behavioural public policy that seeks both 'quick wins' and a longer-term vision. - Expand the topics approached from a behavioural lens to include internal processes and external policies and services.	Integrate behavioural public policy into plans and strategies at all levels as part of business-as-usual.
Governance	- Allocate the mandate for driving the change management process to a person or team. - Give a dedicated team of in-house experts an initial funding window. - Seek resources from external funding bodies.	Use accountability structures and funding arrangements to encourage policy makers to collaborate with behavioural science experts.	Revisit how behavioural science evidence is governed and funded to ensure coherence with other evidence generation practices and approaches.
Integration	- Audit what behavioural data is available on prioritised topics. - Agree on ethical principles and draw on existing risk management protocols.	- Add simple checkboxes to consider behavioural science to policy processes. - Consolidate ethical procedures that are appropriate for the context. - Build bespoke data structures to build evidence on priority topics.	- Build a people-centred, evidence-informed approach into the government's expected practices, standards, and guidelines for policy making. - Explore new ways to engage citizens in research methods and policy design. - Build behavioural outcome measures into the government's standard data collection activities.
Capability	- Promote the value of a behavioural lens to build policy makers' interest. - Partner with external experts on projects. - Focus the skills of an in-house team on communications, policy making, knowledge brokerage, and change management. - Create a network of behavioural science experts across the government.	- Build policy makers' capability to identify when they need expert support. - Encourage external experts to build the capability of government employees. - Access a wider range of more advanced research skills. - Expand networks of supporters across the policy community.	Optimise the balance of internal and external expertise through partnerships and networks.

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Behavioural Insights and Public Policy

INSTITUTIONS APPLYING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TO PUBLIC POLICY AROUND THE WORLD 2024



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