

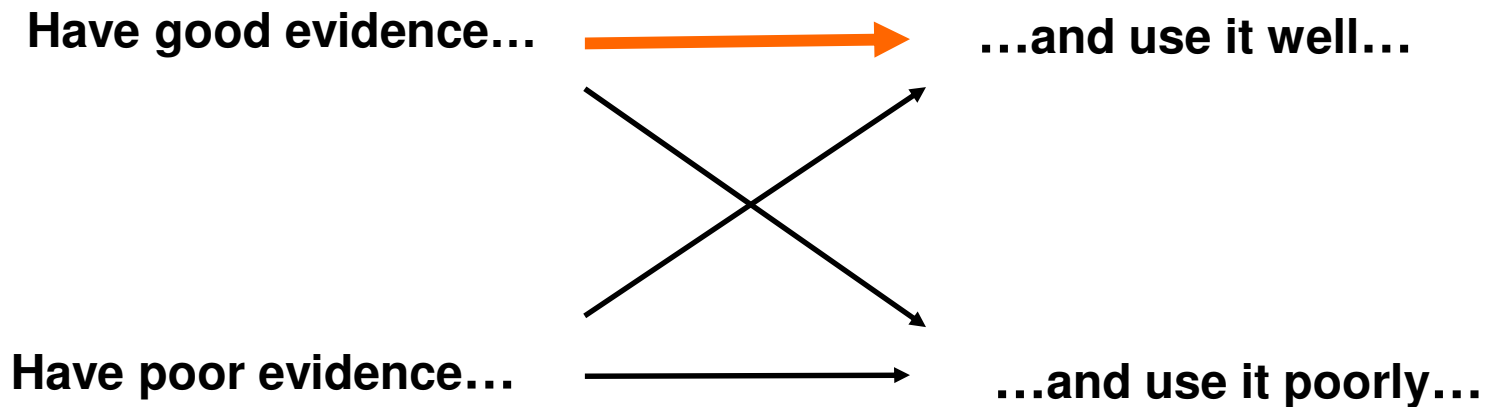
Evidence-based policy making: what's the question?

Louise Shaxson
Delta Partnership



Evidence-based policymaking is not a complex idea:

There are policies that:



Several questions:

1. What is an evidence base for policy?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes it robust?
4. How should we use it?

First question:

1. What is an evidence base for policy?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes it robust?
4. How should we use it?

An evidence base for policy consists of:

- **Data**: statistics, trend data
 - *Where were we? Where are we now?*
- **Analytical evidence**: helping to build the reasoning about how to reach policy goals
 - *How might we get there? How could we measure and monitor progress?*
- Evidence from **stakeholder opinion**: understanding what citizens want
 - *What are the wants and needs? Whose voice counts?*

Evidence and knowledge

- How we use this evidence depends on how we synthesise it with our **expertise** and **experience**.
- This turns it into **knowledge** which helps us move towards the achievement of our goals – in this case **policy goals**
- But policy goals change and the evidence changes
- So our **knowledge** of what the evidence base tells us about how to reach those goals is context-dependent and time-limited
- Which means we need to think about the **flow** as well as the **stock** of evidence

Second question:

1. What is an evidence base for policy?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes the evidence base robust?
4. How should we use an evidence base?

Evidence-based policy making

Think about demand and supply:

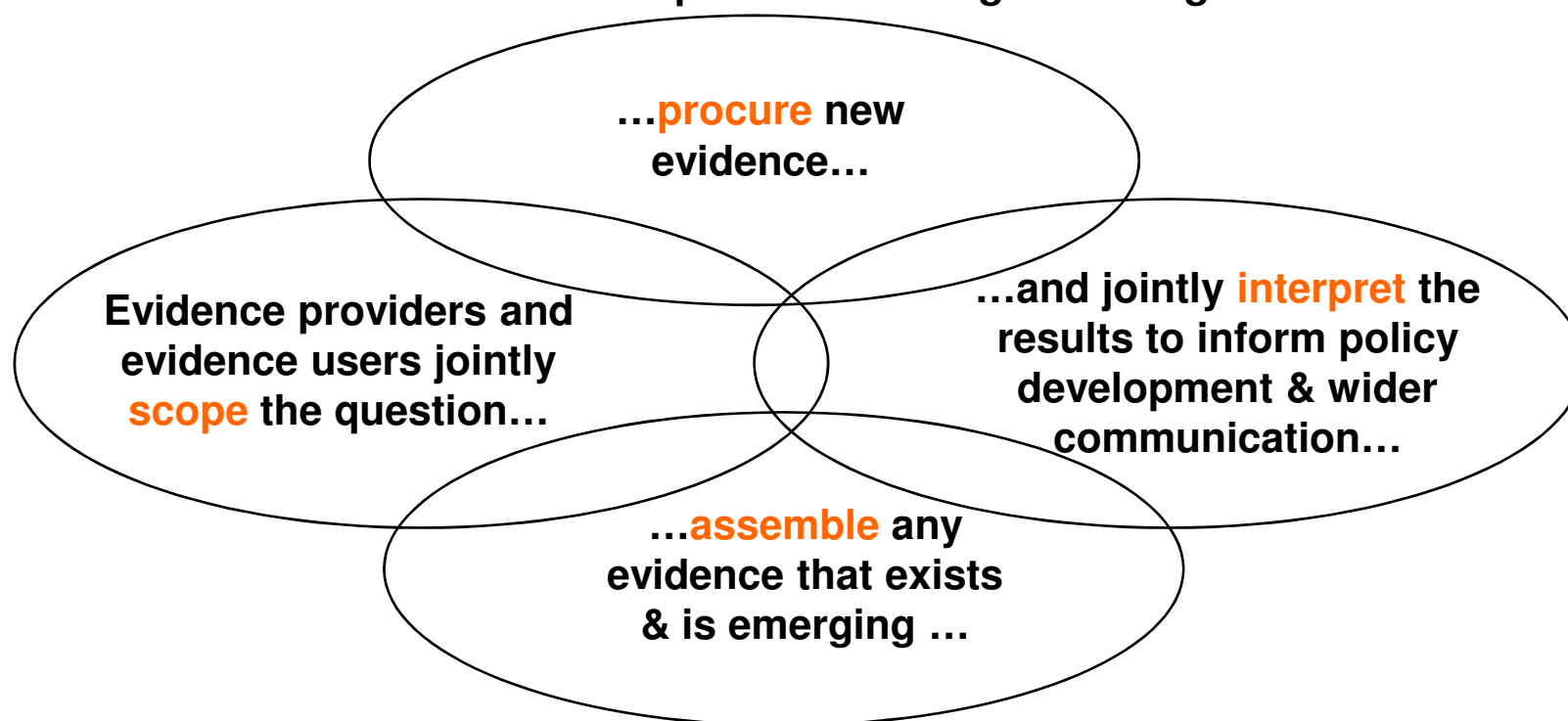
- The supply of evidence can come from many different sources
- The demand for evidence for policy is shaped by the policy goals
- So policy teams are responsible for the scope of the evidence base used for formulating policy
- Research organisations are (partly) responsible for the supply of robust evidence
- What are the processes which reconcile supply and demand of evidence for policy?

Policymakers need to address several issues:

- What do we need to know?
- What do we currently know?
- What do others know?
- What does this mean in terms of the policy goals we are trying to achieve?

Reconciling supply and demand: the four key functions of ebpm

A longer time frame allows evidence from primary research to complement existing knowledge.



A shorter time frame means that secondary research and evidence networks will be more cost-effective.



Third question:

1. What is an evidence base for policy?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes the evidence base robust?
4. How should we use an evidence base?

There is no single high point of robust evidence: instead -

- Is the evidence **credible**?
- Is it **objective**? How can we account for the effects of bias?
- Is it **reliable** enough to be used for monitoring and evaluation?
- Can we **generalise** from the evidence, into other areas / industries / time horizons?
- Is the evidence well rooted in an understanding of the broader **context**?

Fourth question:

1. What is an evidence base for policy?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes the evidence base robust?
4. How should we use an evidence base?

Reconciling supply and demand by (1):

- **Scoping** the policy questions
 - Make clear links between policy and the evidence base: develop a transparent structure which gives researchers a clear indication of the big issues
 - Senior policymakers need to have oversight of the evidence base
- **Assembling** existing and emerging evidence
 - Make better use of secondary analysis before procuring new evidence
 - Make better use of networks, work with delivery partners, look across research domains for evidence

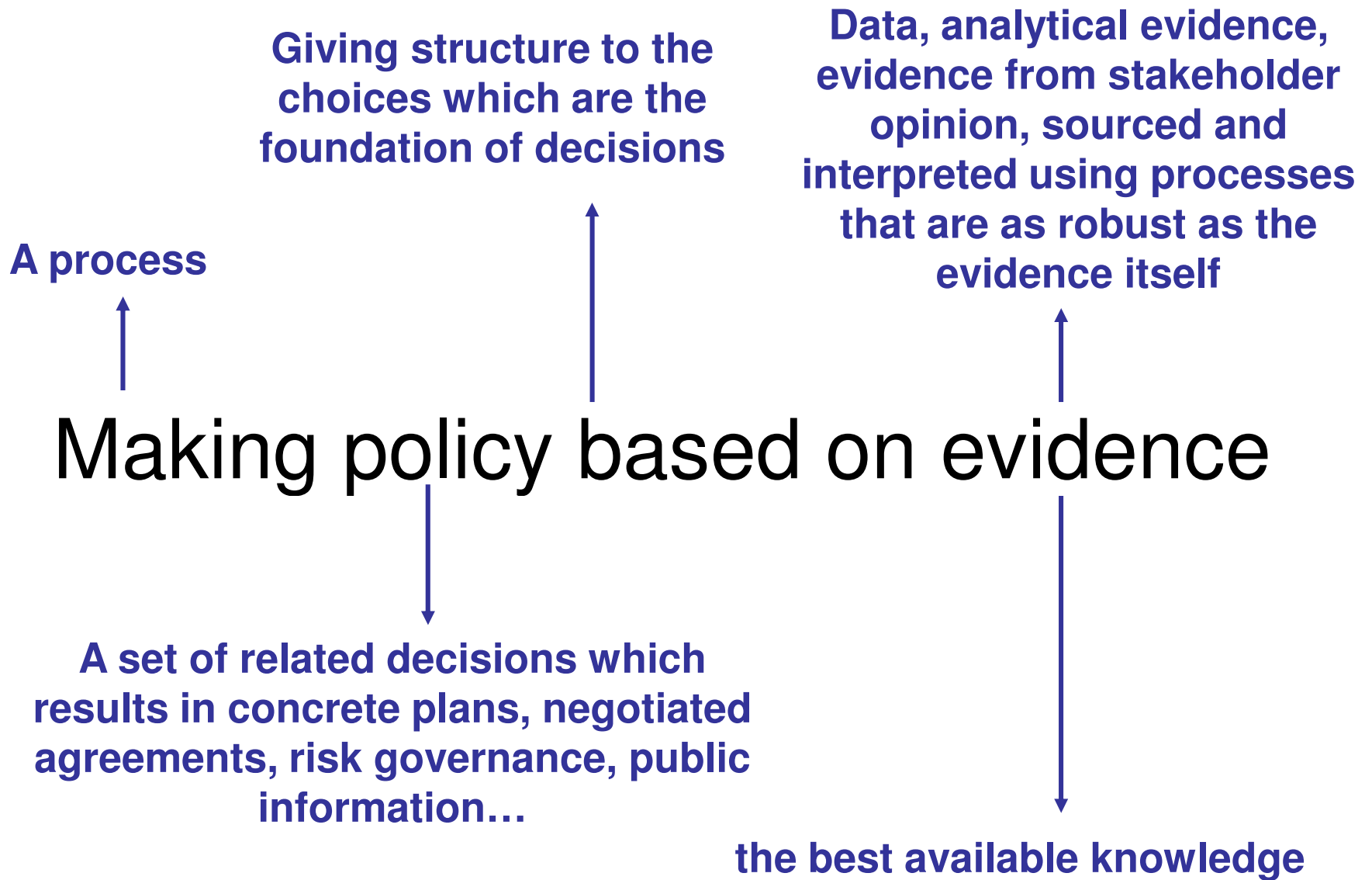
Reconciling supply and demand by (2):

- **Procuring** new evidence to the highest standard
 - Keep up to date with international guidance on the provision of science advice
 - Help research organisations plan by being clear about LT evidence needs
- **Interpreting** the evidence to add value to it
 - Communication is vital: make sure the evidence read by asking for *short* research reports
 - Add time to ends of projects for interpretation: it adds value to what has been commissioned
 - Spend time interpreting risk and uncertainty

Summary question:

1. What does an evidence base look like?
2. Who owns it?
3. What makes it robust?
4. How should we use it?
5. What is evidence-based policymaking?

Evidence-based policy making



Giving **structure** to the **choices** which are the foundation of decisions

Data, analytical evidence, evidence from stakeholder opinion, sourced and interpreted **using** processes that are as robust as the evidence itself

A **process**

Making policy based on evidence

A set of related **decisions** which results in concrete plans, negotiated agreements, risk governance, public information...

the **best available knowledge**

Evidence-based policy making

A process of structuring choices for decision-makers using the best available knowledge

Thank you!

Any questions...?

