THE MANDARIN

The Policy Playbook

Bending the arc of policy towards public good

A practical guide for the design, delivery and adaptive management of policies for maximum efficacy and greatest possible public good.

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Executive summary

Policies are like the operating system for society: shaping, defining and used to uphold our rights and obligations, the rules we live by, which investments are prioritised, and how a country or nation is governed. But policies come in several distinct forms. For example, political parties campaign on their policy goals and, when elected, try to implement their policy agenda, often seeking policy advice from departments. At the same time, there is a relatively persistent legal framework of foundational policies including legislation, regulations and of course the constitution. All of which are higher in authority than the government of the day, and provide the legal mandate, guardrails, separations of power and operational authorities for the public sector. Public institutions manage a raft of operational policies, rules and whole of government frameworks that are meant to fill the gaps and deliver the intended outcomes from all of the above in consistent and high integrity ways. And we are all, more or less, subject to a whole range of international policies. Public servants need a way to consider and work effectively with and across each of these distinct forms of policy.

The very existence of a public sector also provides critical framing for how public institutions, and by extension, how public servants and public policy making should operate. The general public reasonably expects public institutions to work in their favour. When they work well, people should benefit. Public institutions provide certainty, stability, standards, regulation of markets and the economy, and a variety of other mechanisms and services to support people when they need it, enabling a fair, free and prosperous society. This context shapes an expectation that policies and policymaking should also deliver and drive meaningful public good.

The goal of this playbook is threefold:

1. to enable a clear and shared approach to different categories of policy, enabling all public servants to proactively and confidently advise, iterate, deliver and innovate with policy, engaging the right authorities and mechanisms for the right form of policy at the right time.

2. to thoroughly modernise how policy is conceived of, designed, delivered and managed, ensuring an adaptive, impactful, humane, sensory, evidence-driven and participatory approach to realising the intended policy outcomes. All while delivering the maximum and measurable public good within the legitimate constraints of legal, constitutional and legislated authorities.

3. to support all public servants to be confident stewards in ensuring that the arc of policy is always bent towards the greatest possible public good. This involves public sector leadership leaning into their delegations, delivering trustworthy and high integrity institutional mandates, while actively balancing and protecting the necessary tension that emerges in serving the government, the parliament and the people.

In this playbook, we have taken a practical approach to policymaking in the public sector, not just by defining it in a meaningful and actionable way, but also by describing how to bring policies to life and make them measurable, impactful and adaptive. We have referred to and included practical resources and used a tone intended to be easy to read and encouraging.

We've written for an international audience, but realise that our Australian experience and real world illustrative examples guide our assumptions and language. We encourage international readers to use the rights permitted by the CC-BY licence to create localised versions.

This playbook is meant to be used as a support and reference rather than be read cover to cover. It has 3 sections:

1. **Frameworks**—where you'll find definitions, methods and a "journey-based" approach to policy preparation, implementation and continuous improvements, including some handy templates to help.

2. **Fitness**—the mindsets, skills and tools needed to deliver great policy outcomes over time.

3. **Foundations**—provides some history and general knowledge about the special context of the public sector, including how this context should inform the behaviours and conduct of public servants day to day, not just to deliver policy outcomes, but to maintain trust, confidence in, and perceived legitimacy of public institutions.

To the public servants reading this, thank you for your service. We hope you find this helpful. When public sectors work well, everyone benefits. When they work badly, everyone suffers. So the work you do every day matters to the community we serve; please make it count.

For our part, this playbook is meant to be part of a toolkit to support public servants to make and deliver better policies and policy outcomes. We will continue to improve and evolve this resource over time. We follow a "practice what you preach" methodology, and have deliberately adopted an iterative approach to the development and deployment of the playbook using the combined wisdom of multiple sources, often in a scattered manner but always with practical focus and purpose. This is meant to invite and gather interaction, feedback and continuous improvement from users and readers. We welcome contributions for subsequent versions.

A playbook comprises clearly recorded and detailed instructions, guidance, strategies, or "plays" to meet specific situations, duties, or opportunities. If a handbook can be thought of as the expression of the "rules of the game", a playbook is what you use to consider "strategies for winning at the game". This allows multiple players to consistently and confidently follow shared processes, enabling consistency, quality, efficiency, and repeatable success. New public servants can use the Frameworks section to onboard faster with followable instructions and contextual and cultural foundations cooked into the tools, process frameworks and models offered. The Fitness section provides ways of thinking and working to support effective policymaking. Some public servants might appreciate the history and context found in the Foundations section. The sensemaking and creative guides in the playbook may summarise what you already do, or present new options and improvements, including how you might scale or tailor policy options with better intention and care.

Our audience is primarily public servants who are essential agents of a very large public sector ecosystem, in which all public servants have a role to

play in creating and enacting policy outcomes. They must be ethically fit, intellectually robust and skillfully adept, able to simultaneously deliver anchored, calm and trusted security and reliability. They must also respond proactively and innovatively to shifting circumstances that are often rapidly changing with volatile turbulence and complexity. All of this while confidently being stewards for delivering public good. The Fitness section helps support this element by providing guidance on the mindsets, skills and tools needed for a modern public service.

This playbook is therefore purposely meant to be used in a number of different ways. You could begin in the middle and read only a few sections, getting instructions on a particularly relevant “play” that is preoccupying you. Or you might attempt to move through the text in whatever way makes sense to you. Perhaps from the end to the beginning, perhaps reading “all over the place”, or alternatively pursuing a traditional path from beginning to end. Whichever the manner of takeup, the idea is that you get a feel for the overarching strategies and possibilities at your disposal as you engage in bringing policies to life. At the end of the day, public servants have to exercise their own discretion and judgement in confidently exercising their authority. This playbook helps you to do this well in real-time, actively, thoughtfully, and prudentially as stewards for sustainable, ethical and lawful public good of the communities you serve.

Quick-start guide: how to use this playbook

Who should use this playbook

This playbook is designed for:

- **Policy professionals** working in government, think tanks, or advocacy organizations
- **Public servants** seeking to understand and better contribute to policy design, implementation and outcomes
- **Students and researchers** studying public policy and governance
- **Civil society leaders** engaging with policy processes
- **Anyone interested** in how policy works and how to influence it for public good.

What each main section covers

The playbook is organized into 3 key sections:

- **Frameworks:** Core concepts, definitions, categories, the policy journey and a step by step guide for delivering policy outcomes, with practical templates and resources you can use in your own work. Also includes guidance on evidence, continual evaluation, managing risk dynamically and working with Ministers and their offices.
- **Fitness:** The mindset, skills and tools needed for adaptively delivering effective policy.
- **Foundations:** Useful history on policymaking in Australia and the unique characteristics of the Australian "Washminster" system of government and how it should inform the behaviours and approach taken by public servants in Australia.

Step-by-step approach for first-time users

To get the most out of this playbook, you could choose to:

- **Start with the frameworks:** Read the introductory sections to build a practical foundation in policy concepts and terminology.
- **Identify your focus area:** Determine which policy type(s) (foundational, political, operational or international) is most relevant to your work.
- **Explore and consider the policy journey as a holistic model for your work, and how you can contribute to the journey as a whole to deliver the intended policy outcomes:** Follow the detailed walkthroughs that match your interests or current projects.
- **Review decision-making structures:** Understand who holds authority and how decisions flow in your area of focus.
- **Apply the public good framework:** use evidence and continual evaluation to assess existing policies or design new ones using the tools provided.
- **Utilise templates and tools:** to put concepts into practice.

Tips for navigating and getting the most value

- **Use as a reference:** You don't need to read cover-to-cover; jump to sections relevant to your current needs.
- **Follow cross-references:** Links throughout the document connect related concepts and examples.
- **Study the diagrams:** Visual representations help clarify complex policy structures and processes.
- **Engage with examples:** Real-world case studies illustrate how concepts apply in practice.
- **Bookmark key sections:** Mark pages you'll return to frequently for quick reference.

- **Adapt to your context:** While examples may be specific, principles can be applied across different settings.
- **Share and discuss:** Use this playbook as a common language with colleagues and stakeholders.

Where to find interactive templates and resources

Throughout the playbook, we encourage you to look for:

- **Template sections:** Clearly marked areas with downloadable or fillable frameworks.
- **Resource boxes:** Highlighted sections with links to additional tools and readings.
- **Appendices:** End-of-document collection of all templates, - checklists, and reference materials.
- **Online companion materials:** Digital resources referenced throughout the text for deeper exploration.

Ready to begin? Go to the next section to dive into policy frameworks or jump to the topic, policy type or context most relevant to your current work.

Frameworks

Introduction

This chapter includes working definitions, practical tools, models, templates, and a holistic step-by-step guide to an adaptive "**policy journey**" approach to help you track and proactively design, deliver and manage policies end to end.

We also have included guidance on:

- evidence
- continual evaluation
- dynamic risk management
- policymaking during crises
- how to work effectively (and appropriately) with Ministers and their offices
- how to establish effective, sustainable policy partnerships.

We encourage you to also read the Fitness chapter, so you can explore the mindsets and ways of working that best sets you (and your policy) up for success.

Understanding Public Good

Throughout this playbook, we often use the term "public good".
It is important to clarify what we mean by the term so that everyone is speaking the same language. Public good has a very specific definition to economists. In economics, a public good is a product or service featuring non-excludability and non-rivalrous properties. This means that people can't be stopped from consuming or using the good and that one person's

use does not diminish its availability to others' usage of the good or service. Some traditional examples used to illustrate this economic version of a public good are national defense, clean air and public parks.

A challenge to public goods from an economics perspective is the presence of the free rider problem and market failure. People benefit from the good or service but have no incentive to pay for it because they could logically enjoy the benefits, as a free-rider, and let someone else pay. This creates an inability for private sector providers to produce or charge for the good. As a result, these goods and services represent market failure in that they don't lead to efficient resource allocation and will be under-provided or not provided at all without external intervention. Together, this means public goods usually have to either be provided directly by the state itself or heavily subsidised.

In addition to economic definitions, there are also a plethora of philosophical positions attached to the notion of public good. Sometimes public goods are contrasted with private goods by determining whether a particular activity or product is located in the public sector or in the private sector. This sectoral distinction brings into focus the particular actions or resources that take place in the so-called public square as opposed to those located more appropriately in the private arena, whether that's in private sector settings or in civil society.

This leads to the discussions that take place about public good as a form of public interest test. That is, what constitutes the general welfare of a community as a whole, as opposed to individual or smaller private group interests? There are a whole range of philosophical frameworks that attempt to ponder and map this dimension of what constitutes a public good. We are not going to go into the range of ethical theories, but we recognise the diversity of thoughts and ideas that apply to thinking and action about collective societal benefits and outcomes.

This is all helpful information to know when talking about public goods from economic and philosophical perspectives, but it is not what we mean when we refer to the term throughout this playbook. Instead, we are referring to a more expansive and dynamic view of public good. When we use the term in the playbook we are proposing that there is no single definition of public good. We see it as tethered to context in each and every instance of policymaking. As such, there is no shortcut or cookie-cutter recipe to determine it.

***Public good** in a public policy sense must be tied to values, cultures, history and the context of the community you are serving.*

It is dynamic, not static, because each policymaking exercise, country or historical period can yield different framings and calculations of what constitutes the public good for that particular time, place and community. This takes time and optimally gets the relevant public involved in the process. As you read this playbook, we encourage you to adopt our use of the term. We encourage you to avoid making assumptions about the public good, but instead take time and include your public in determining what it considers to be its "good".

Our pragmatic attitude to the idea of "public good" is perhaps not surprising given our practical focus for this playbook and our origins in Australia, where we feature a particularly pragmatic outlook to policymaking (see Foundations section). We acknowledge that this particular approach may not sit well with theorists or even with other practitioners. Nevertheless, we invite discussion and debate about it as we journey together through policymaking as a way to create and encourage a more perpetually dynamic, rather than set-and-forget, method to how we enact policy.

The policy definition and operating model issue

"Policy" is possibly one of the world's most misunderstood, misrepresented and misguided terms. It's simultaneously blamed for problems and revered as the solution, even though 10 people would have 10 different ideas of what policy actually is. Countless academics and experts have struggled to specify a meaningful universal definition, and in doing so, have created a range of generic definitions, spawning even more ambiguity and unpredictability in policy design and delivery.

For example, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines policy as "a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual" (Oxford, 2024). Cambridge (2025) tells us policy is "a set of ideas or a plan of what

to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organisation, a government, or a political party". Merriam-Webster (2025) suggests "a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures, especially of a governmental body". All of these could cover a broad range of scenarios, from two people agreeing on a napkin scribble, to a political speech, a security protocol, or an operational guide on how to maintain your oven. For people who need to develop, implement or manage policies in any organisation, a little more clarity and pragmatism is required.

In the context of government and the public sector, policies are a daily part of every public servants' job. But only a select cohort have the word in their job title, and the inherent ambiguity of the term can create avoidable challenges on authorities, accountabilities, mandates and constraints, creating further ambiguity in operations and delivery. *The Australian Policy Handbook* (Althaus et al. 2013, p246) defines policy as "a statement of government intent, and its implementation through the use of policy instruments", a narrow definition that only acknowledges political policy, creating in practice two problematic consequences: a working assumption that political policy is the highest authority; and a deferral of delegated authority to politics. When "policy" is used explicitly to refer to the intentions of the government of the day, it leads to some strange or confusing behaviours in the public sector. Senior executives may assume all policies are the domain and authority of a minister's office, losing sight of the higher order policies found in the constitutional and legal frameworks of the jurisdiction and the operational policies which are within their authority as departmental senior executives. An assumption that all policies come from the minister can undermine the agency of public servants to exercise their operational and delegated decision-making, which in turn can impact departmental productivity and innovation.

Policy has also increasingly been developed by process oriented generalist methods, where:

- evaluation of the past is valued over co-design, exploration or testing in the present
- generalist skills are prioritised over domain expertise, experience or engagement

- policies are designed without substantial input from the very people who need to understand or implement them, let alone those who would be affected.

This "generalist" approach to policymaking has led to policies becoming increasingly vague, principles based, impractical to implement and inconsistently applied. This creates uncertainty and impost on the broader economy, often while not delivering on the actual policy intent (known as "policy drift").

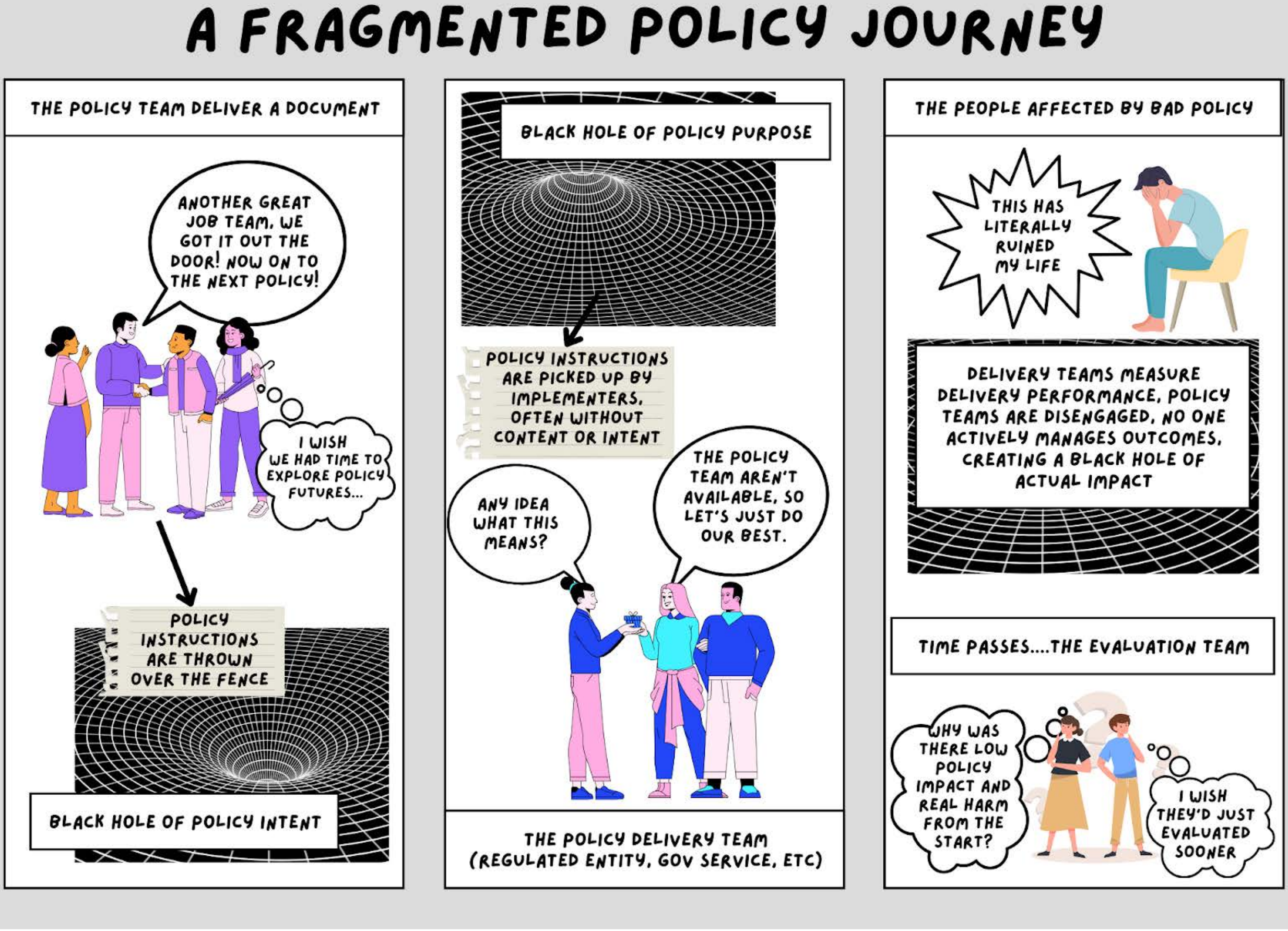
The separation of policy design from policy implementation—introduced through reforms in the 1990s—exacerbated the issue by creating a model where no one owns the whole policy lifecycle. The policy intent and assumptions are frozen in time. Policies are then designed by one team and implemented by another, creating a barrier and friction to policy improvement, and a challenge to adjusting policy settings in response to the realities of policy delivery or a changing policy environment. In this fragmented, brittle and stagnant operating model, policy development is framed as a purely conceptual exercise, compromising the ability of implementation teams to both contribute to the original policy design, or to offer the insight and expertise needed to address issues as they inevitably arise.

Even the best designed policy settings will need to evolve as the conditions and environment changes over time, ideally drawing on input and ongoing feedback from those affected with real and ongoing measurement of the intended and unintended public and policy impacts.

It is important, arguably essential, for all public servants, regardless of their role or level, to understand the policy environment in which they work. This means understanding:

- policy intent and institutional purpose, which helps everyone to be more impactful by providing shared and commonly understood goals and outcome objectives
- the rules and constraints of their institution, to ensure they don't overstep their delegated authority or accountabilities
- all the relevant policies to their work (and their relevant authorities), which also helps to ensure a responsible and balanced relationship with ministers and their offices

- their delegated authorities, to help public servants more confidently innovate and proactively deliver on their delegations without politicising the public sector
- different policy modalities, to enable public servants to engage, advise and work with the right authorities at the right time.



Let us begin by establishing a practical and useful definition of policy for the public sector.

Defining policy: practical categories for the public sector

There are essentially four types of policy in the public sector, differentiated by their function, authority and modality:

1. **Foundational Policy**—the legal policy environment, including legislation, regulation and the constitution.

2. **Political Policy**—the stated agenda of the elected Government

3. **Operational Policy**—the internal, delegated and other public sector rules for how departments operate

4. **International Policy**—the external rules and/or obligations that the jurisdiction is subject to.

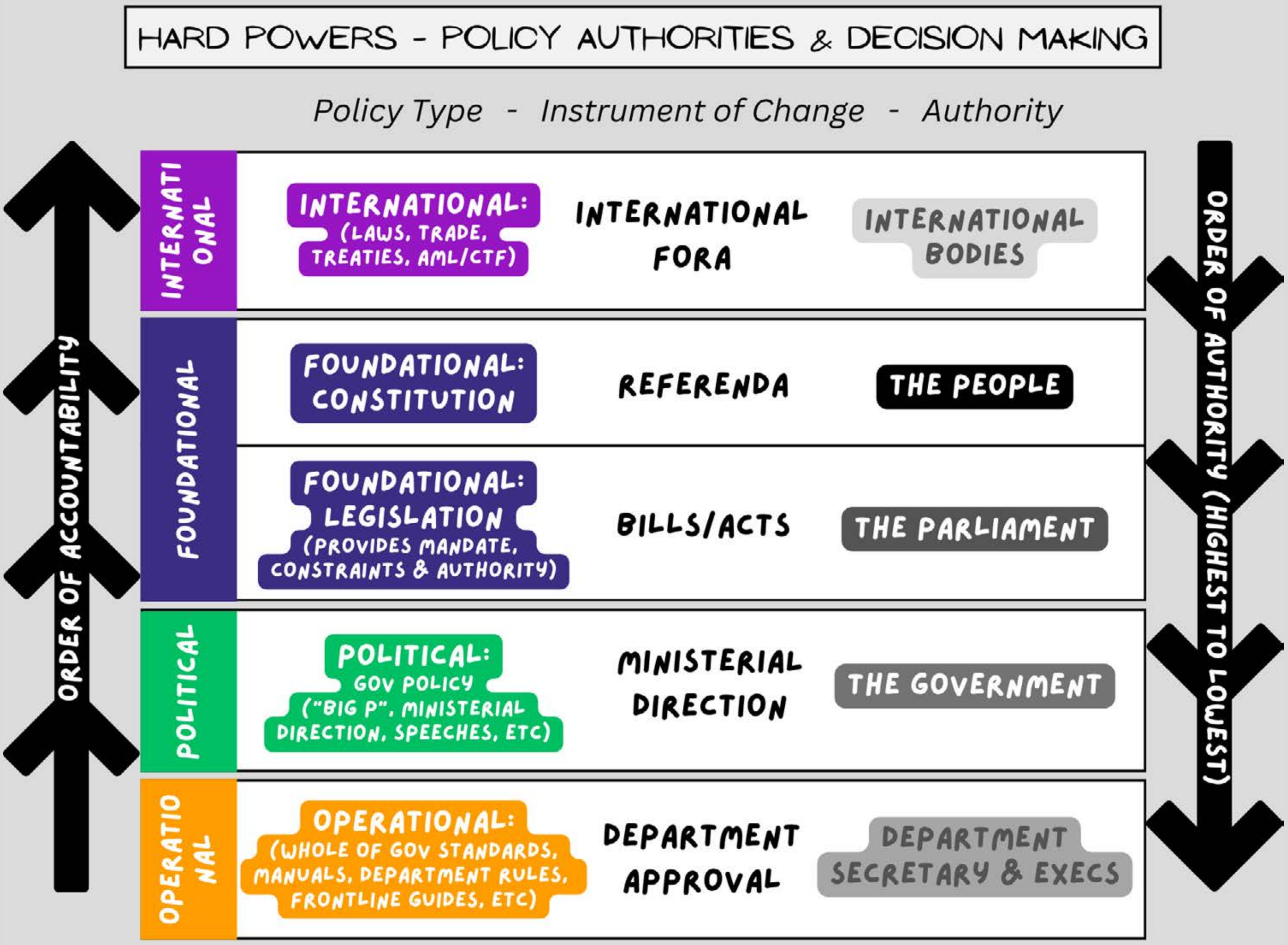
The table below outlines the difference in function, authority/ownership and their different modalities for change.

	FUNCTION	AUTHORITY AND OWNERSHIP	MODALITY FOR CHANGE
Foundational Policy	The legal, constitutional, legislative and regulatory framework, which provides context, framing, obligations, structure, accountabilities and delegated authorities of the system of government, including portfolio legislation for departments.	The Parliament has authority to make new legislation and regulation, and the Judiciary has ultimate authority for interpreting and ensuring Foundational Policies are lawful and within the Constitutional authority of the Parliament.	Constitutional amendments have special rules. In Australia this requires a referendum, making Constitutional change rare. New legislation or regulation can be proposed by any member of Parliament but a majority vote is required, so Foundational Policies tend to be driven by the Government of the day.
Political Policy	Often referred to as "Big P Policy", Political Policy refers to the directions and intention of the Government of the day, via respective Ministers (or political appointees). All Political Policy is (or should be) subject to and constrained by the authorities, limitations and mandates defined in Foundational Policy and law.	The Government of the day (or otherwise authoritative entity that controls government) has authority on Political Policy. Political Policy is developed, directed and/or overseen by Ministers or representatives of political leadership. Departments often provide advice in this process.	Political Policies might be written, spoken or announced in speeches. They can direct program efforts, authorised decision making, investments, and can include legislative ambitions. Once legislation or regulation is passed by the Parliament, these particular Political Policies move into Foundational Policy.
Operational Policy	Operational Policy covers all the operational rules, strategies, procedures and authorities delegated to the public sector, both at a whole of government level (e.g. cloud, HR, etc) and departmental (e.g. delegated rules), and are also subject to Foundational Policies.	Central agency heads have authority for whole of government Operational Policies, and department heads have authority for departmental Operational Policies, including procedures not defined at a whole of government level and matters delegated in legislation.	Departments and central agencies design operational policies within their delegated authorities, with department/agency heads or delegated senior executives developing, directing and/or overseeing Operational Policy design and implementation.
International Policy	International Policy refers to international agreements, rules or frameworks that the government has agreed to or are obliged to abide by. Examples include trade, security, sanctions, anti-money laundering etc. Be aware of international policies, including which ones are binding (or not) to inform your policy work and journey.	International Policies have many owners, but their authority is shaped by the Government of the day, generally upheld by subsequent Governments. Some are upheld by international entities (e.g. International Criminal Court). In Australia, International Policies are found in the **Australian Treaties Database**.	International Policy is often developed collaboratively through international bodies and/or partners, but sometimes can be unilaterally established. The Department of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) has domestic responsibility for managing and engaging in International Policy initiatives, so engage with them as required.

These policy categories also differ in the hierarchy of authority. Different jurisdictions have different legal constructs and differing levels of authority delegations, so rather than generalising (and running the risk of policy ambiguity), we have used Australia in our example below to show how the different categories can intersect, and to demonstrate a real world hierarchy of policy authority and accountability.

Whatever form of policy you are working on or responsible for you should take the time to understand where in the hierarchy the policy sits, what other policies it is superior or inferior to (in authority), and who has accountability for decision making, so you can confidently operate and innovate within your delegations. It is also important to engage the correct change mechanism and decision maker, and to not push upwards what is within your departmental policy authorities. It is useful to be aware of any relevant international policies, so you don't accidentally create a conflict between domestic and foreign policy settings, such as can be found in procurement policies or trade.

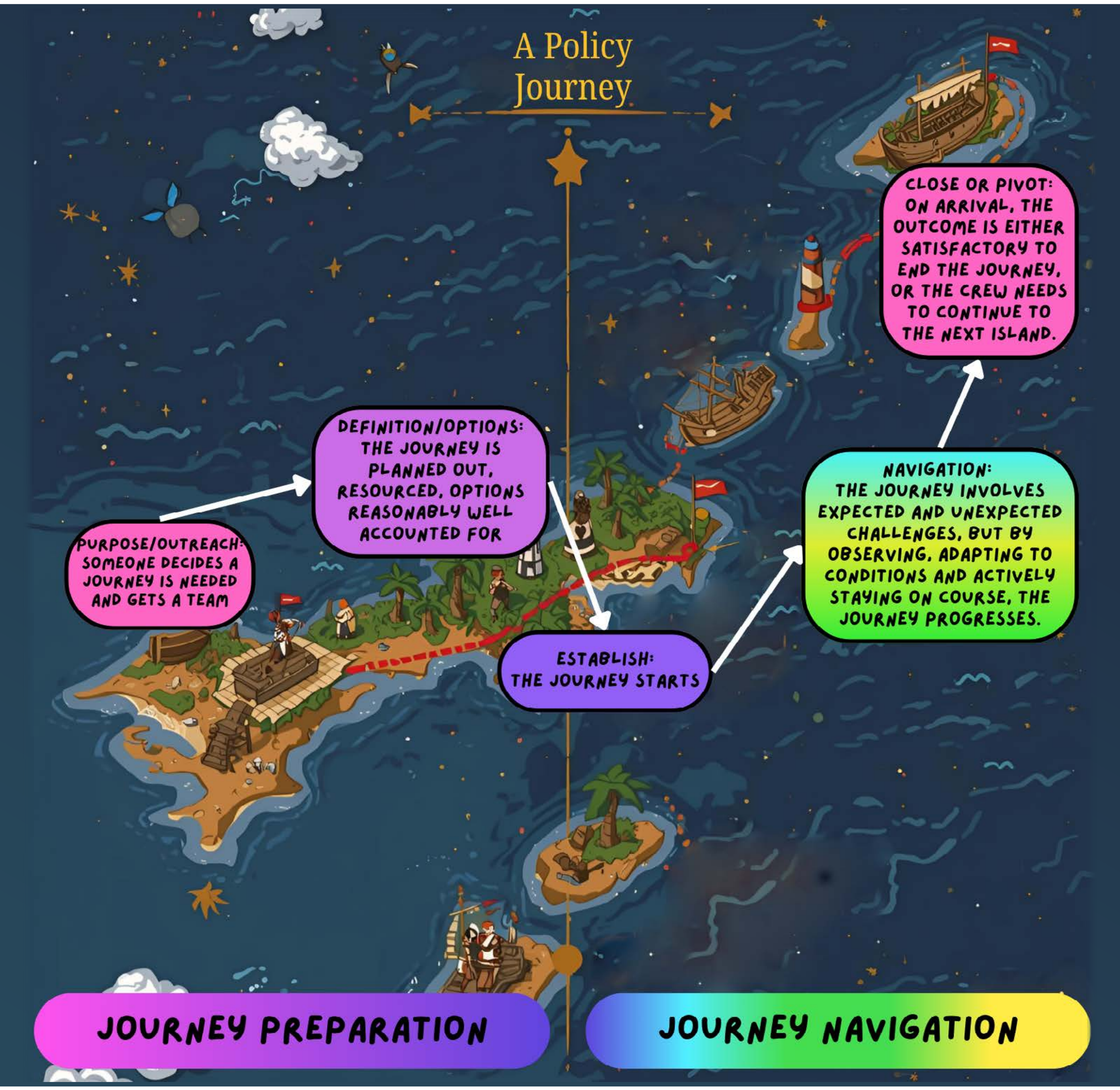
There can be a tendency to assume that no policy can be developed without input from, and approval by, a minister's Office. What this table demonstrates is that while this is true for some forms of policy, it is not true for all. There are entire categories of policy which sit firmly within the agency of the parliament or the departments themselves—this is both a responsibility and a privilege to be confidently exercised.



The policy journey

When we use the mental model of **policy-as-a-journey** rather than policy-as-an-artefact, we have a better chance of delivering impactful and effective policies. A journey mindset naturally adopts an outcomes based delivery approach that is capable of and willing to adapt as required. One of the challenges with the policy-as-an-artefact mindset is that policy design risks becoming distant from reality, and a set and forget exercise. Policy delivery is considered simply the process of implementing what was written, which fails when implementation inevitably finds unexpected variables or other “unknown unknowns”.

So what does a **policy journey** look like, and how can it help public servants drive better policy outcomes? Well, to get into this mindset, let's consider a real journey, by boat! If you had been tasked with mapping the world, or finding new goods for trading, or establishing friendly diplomatic relations with a far away island, how would you go about planning and delivering such a journey?

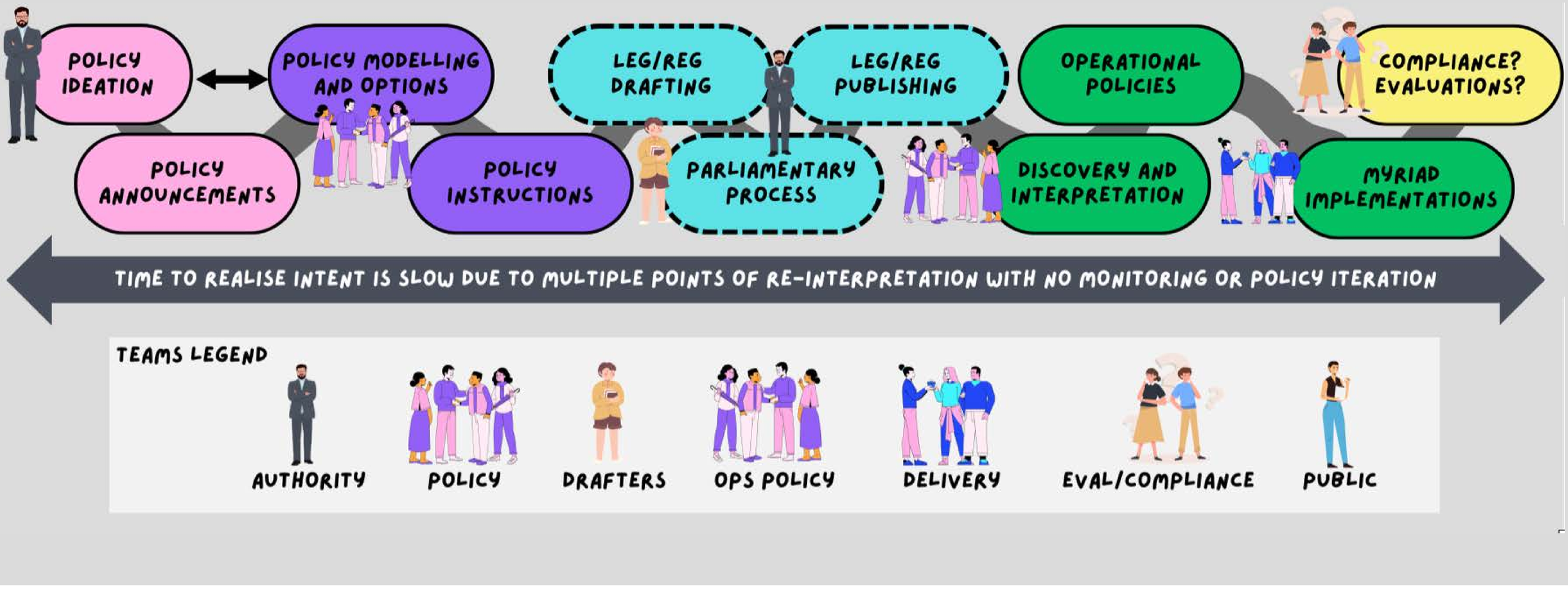


In broad terms any journey has a combination of preparation and implementation, each complementing the other, but both part of the one overarching activity. Any real journey is more obviously complex than this (and our metaphor obviously skips a few assumptions about having conducted journeys before), but there are a few key concepts that the journey approach helps us to keep in mind:

- Preparation includes the opportunity to question or change destination or purpose, or to cancel entirely.
- Unless a reason to cancel the journey is found, preparation should always be considered only a precursor to implementation, not something to do for the sake of it. The parallel here is where some policy teams produce a policy document and consider the job done, where they should consider implementation of the policy the actual definition of “done”.
- Navigation without preparation creates effort at random without purpose or direction.
- While the destination may be clear and relatively unchanging, the method to get there must be flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances, including weather and emerging unintended incidents or conditions.
- There needs to be a regular opportunity to assess the destination, and perhaps change it or cancel the journey. What if the desired destination is found to be impractical or undesirable? What if the conditions become untenable or harmful?

So what does a typical policy journey look like? Some policy types require parliamentary endorsement, some don’t, but there are a few common steps with different teams involved. Below is a typical legacy policy journey.

A legacy, fragmented public policy journey



A legacy policy approach is fragmented, with different people involved at different steps, largely disconnected from each other. This requires a lot of guesswork and everyone just doing their part, usually without the ability to inform or bring their experience or expertise to other steps. It is also very slow to realise a policy outcome.

There can be a tendency to be comfortable with the idea that policy is merely a research, design or writing process, producing a written "policy product". However, it must be remembered that policy isn't real unless it has an impact and (ideally) changes lives for the better. Therefore, every person who is involved in developing and implementing policy should be focused on the measurable, meaningful and intended change in the community or broader society. This starts with public servants taking a holistic approach to policy and everyone playing their part, not just those with policy in their job title.

The key to improving the policy quality and efficacy lies in applying the lessons learned from our journey metaphor:

- A policy journey can similarly be thought of as two interconnected phases: **preparation** and **navigation** (noting that preparation does not equal design).
- Most policy journeys also involve a few ceremonies and/or celebrations with the community across the life of the policy, such as announcing the journey, launching the navigation phase, and arrival at the destination. These are opportunities to share knowledge, create responsibility and accountability dimensions, and attract and engage public support, partnerships and buy-in. All good lessons for policymaking.perhaps change it or cancel the journey. What if the desired destination is found to be impractical or undesirable? What if the conditions become untenable or harmful?
- **Policy preparation** in the framing of a journey involves:
    - Understanding the journey (policy) context, origin, rationale, source.
    - Defining the destination (purpose).

- Establishing the right crew and engaging stakeholders for the journey. You need a multi-disciplinary crew to prepare and later implement. Some people might only be on part of the journey, but some should persist throughout the whole policy lifecycle. Your stakeholders might include the people who funded or commissioned the journey, the crew, or those who stand to benefit.

    - Exploring the feasibility of the journey including posing curious questions and challenging the mode of transport and available resources set against the likely conditions and journey payoff. This means identifying whether a policy is needed and potential interventions and approaches.

    - Ideally testing the equipment (interventions) ahead of setting sail.

    - Securing the authority and resources for the journey from the appropriate decision maker(s), setting up the journey for success.

- **Policy navigation** in the framing of a journey then involves:

    - Ensuring crew readiness: ensure the team have the right skills, authority to make decisions and engage broadly throughout implementation.

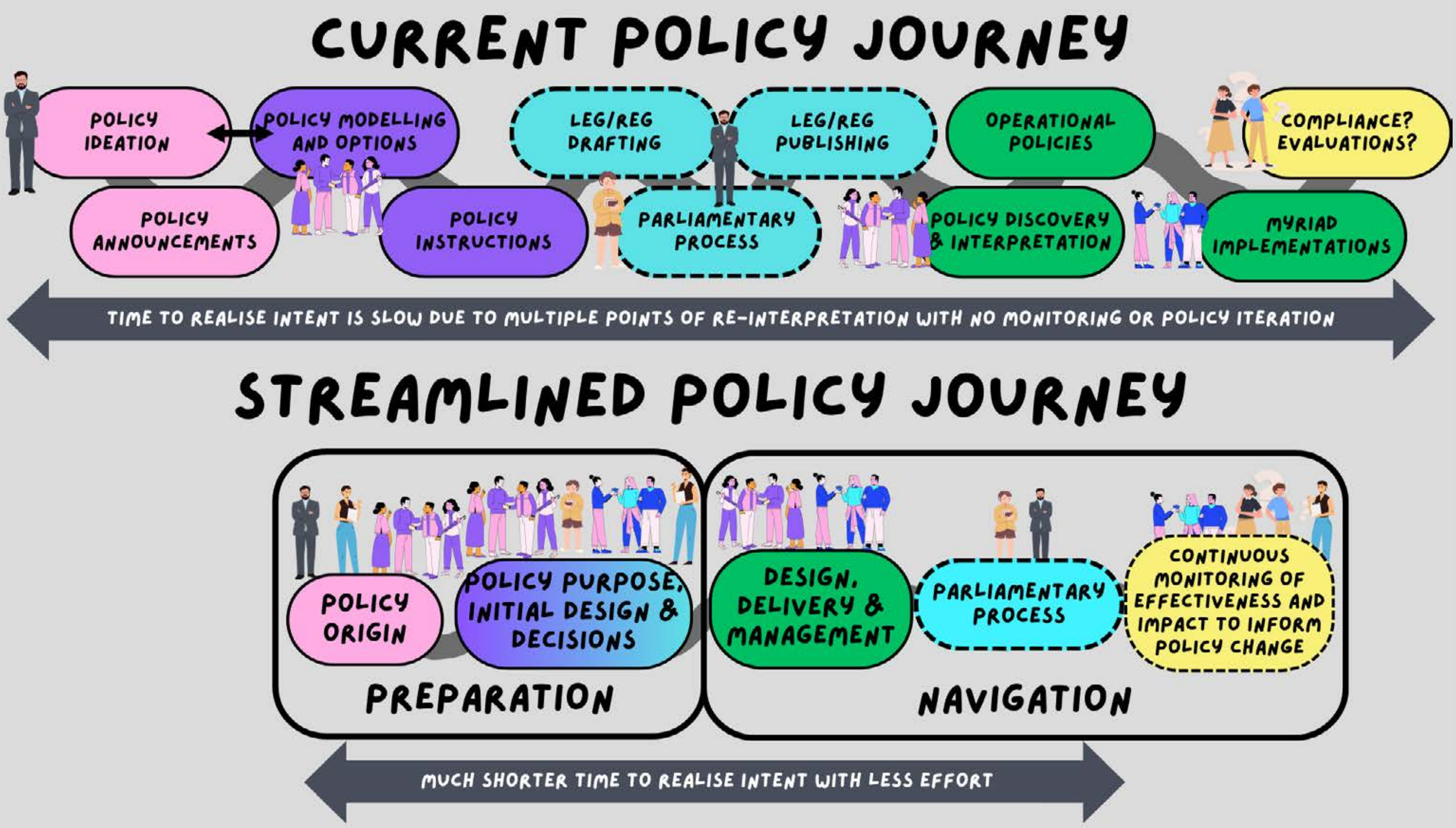
    - Setting sail: starting with policy interventions identified in preparation.

    - Proactively navigating through whatever comes: design and delivery of interventions, adaptive management, continuous exploration of policy interventions, which will need to change over time based on what works.Continuous monitoring of conditions and journey progress.

    - Assessment of whether to end the journey, return home or continue onwards once the destination (impact) is reached or found to be unattainable.

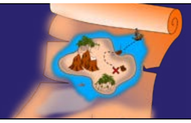
    - In any case, communicating journey outcomes to those back home.

Below is a simplified, modern and streamlined policy journey, which applies the two journey phases, and shifts some of the design work into the implementation phase. If the policy involves a parliamentary process this is part of the navigation phase. Foundational Policy is both part of the environment and constraints you are working within, but also a potential output from a policy journey.



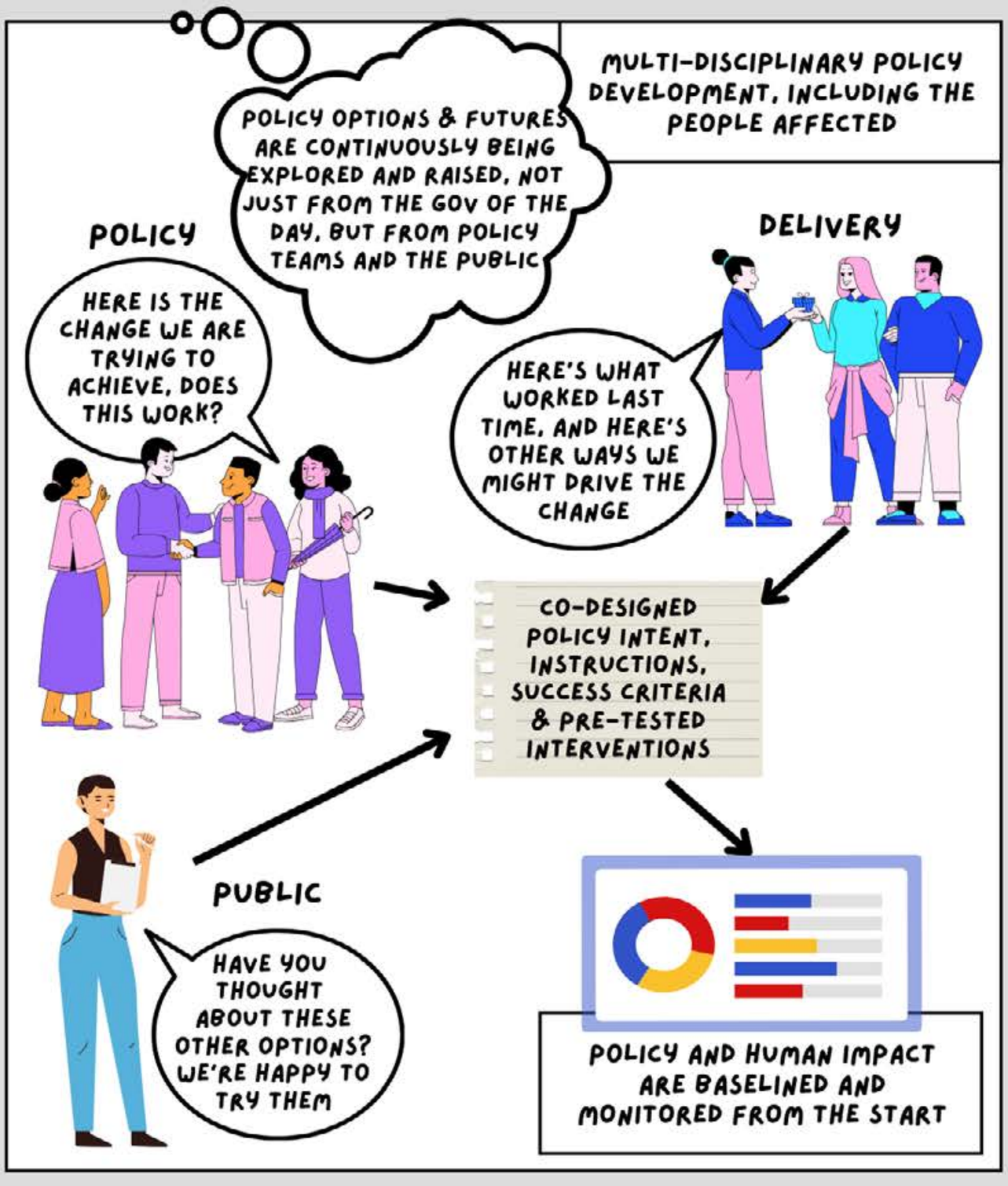
An integrated, adaptive approach to managing the entire policy journey brings diverse and domain-specific expertise into the process. All participants work with the same systems and data, and contribute to the ongoing improvement and optimisation of policy settings and interventions through continuous design and feedback loops.

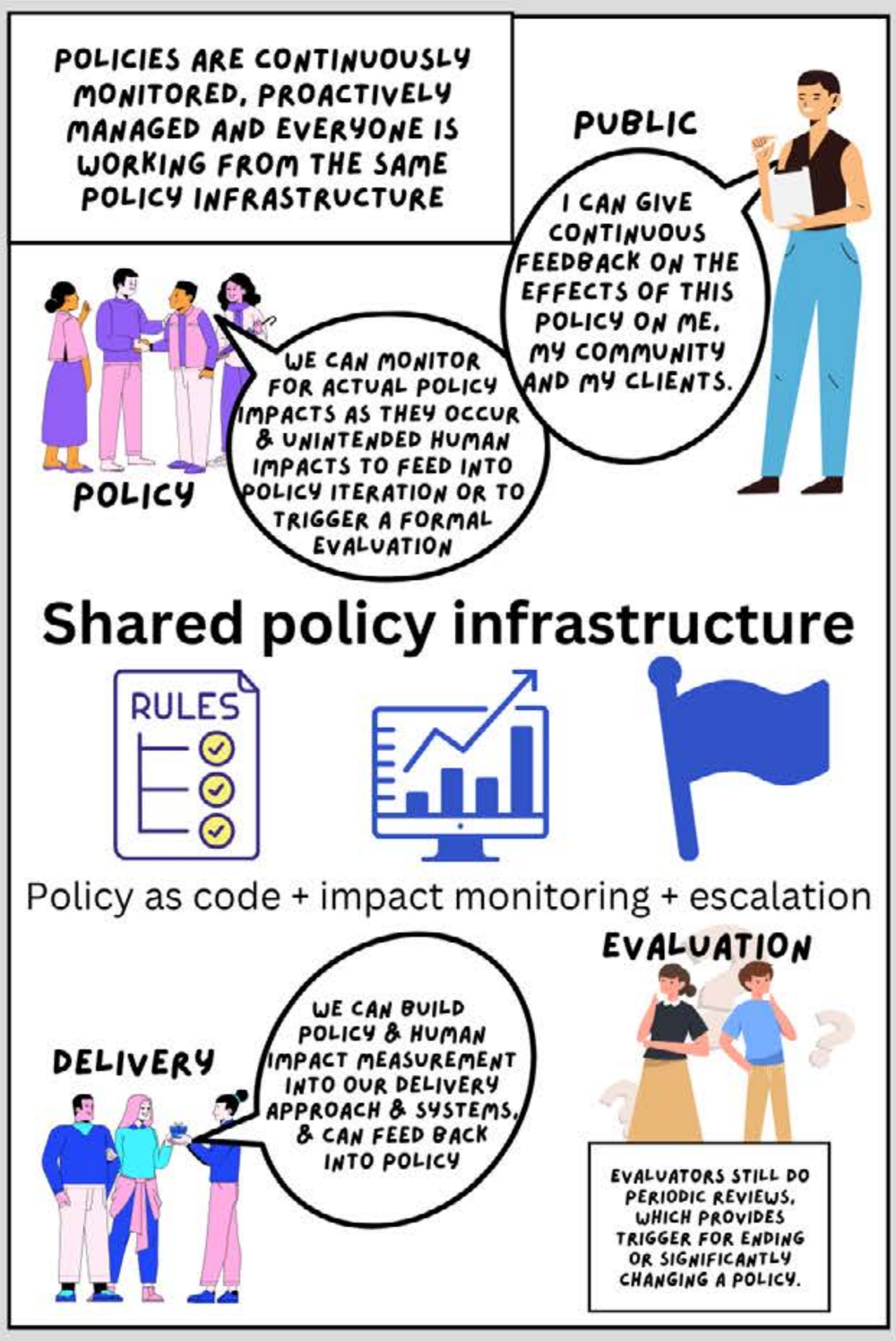
Of course, each policy type has some additional **journey characteristics** worth understanding and being aware of, outlined in the table on the next page.

Policy Type	 Preparation	 Navigation	 Additional considerations
Foundational Policy	Might be commissioned as part of a Political, Operational or International Policy program, but only progresses with support from Parliament. Often a legislative or regulatory response is called for prior to policy preparation, but it is important to still undertake a preparation phase to validate intent and suitability. New Foundational Policies should be part of a broad suite of complementary interventions. Preparation should involve identifying personas, scenarios and life events that would trigger a policy response, both to test against and to holistically model the policy environment.	Navigation (including drafting) of legislation and regulation should be test driven, ideally with a machine readable reference implementation tested with policy consumers during public consultation to identify any unexpected issues. It is important to ensure enough flexibility in the regime for the policy authority to iterate/update policy settings as needed after parliamentary ratification. For instance, the legislation might delegate rules or variables to be managed by a department, or might codify regular updates like benefits rates, or could refer to a reference implementation held outside the legislation. Monitoring and analysis of adoption and impact is critical to drive policy efficacy, and to mitigate any unexpected issues or conflicts over time. It's also helpful to not codify conditions that limit implementation, such as physical signatures.	Once ratified, Foundational Policies don't fundamentally change very often in most jurisdictions (apart from variable changes in some), but new ones are added regularly. For this reason, it is recommended to create a digital twin of the Foundational Policies you are responsible for (see Policy twins in the Fitness chapter), and the ones that intersect with your portfolio based on your personas, scenarios and relevant life events. This will help you model, monitor and prepare for intersecting policy complexity, and to help ensure new policies don't contradict, undermine or duplicate existing rules. Without this visibility, increased regulatory and legislative burden is inevitable, affecting policy efficacy and creating unintended consequences.
Political Policy	Often led by a Minister and their office, usually with Departmental support. The origin is usually political or in response to a public problem, often with an assumed solution in mind. The job of the public servant is to understand the policy intent and provide well analysed, frank and fearless advice on all options, and the broader policy context, constraints and opportunities. Their job is not to simply transcribe or find evidence for pre-defined political solutions.	Ministers (and staff) often want to play a role in implementation and may or may not have specific authorities or decision making defined in Foundational Policy, so it is important to establish a good partnership that delivers on the policy intent without overstepping the delegated and codified boundaries of authority. It's also important to ensure the authority gained in preparation enables modification of the policy solutions so as to remain focused on policy efficacy, not solution delivery for the sake of delivery.	Tends to change with a change of government, sometimes even when working well. Public servants should be prepared to provide clear, evidence-based advice to incoming governments. Even effective and beneficial political policies are unsustainable in the long term unless they are codified into the broader system, ideally in new Foundational Policy, or as amendments to the purpose and mandate of public institutions.
Operational Policy	The need for new Operational Policies might come from a gap being identified, a change in operations, department structure or mandate, or from an extrinsic change, such as new technology or threat. Similar to above, it is worth identifying personas, scenarios and potentially life events that would invoke the Operational Policy, both as a way to test and identify the broader policy landscape so as to avoid contradictions or duplication.	Domain specific operational policies, such as specific identity requirements for accessing social services or tax rulings, are usually added or modified to optimise operations. Sometimes new operational policy is simply a means to improve consistency of good practice across the jurisdiction, such as a style guide or AI policy. Most operational policy should be within the delegated authority of the Department head and senior executives, but it is worth being aware of relevant foundational policies as there might be specific operational authority with the Minister, such as visa decisions.	Operational policies are critical to the smooth, equitable and effective implementation of policy intent and institutional purpose. So it is important to ensure operational policy teams are well supported, highly engaged and collaborative. They will also need an adaptive and evidence driven operating model for continuous improvement of operational policies in response to continuous change, so they can be confident in leveraging departmental authorities as required.
International Policy	These policies originate from international sources. Adoption of International Policies likely intersects with foreign policy goals and relationships. We don't address this policy type in this guide as it is highly variable, but policy teams should be aware of any relevant international policies.	Navigation of International Policies is usually in how the jurisdiction ratifies, adopts, adapts and manages them over time. International Policies may turn up in domestic settings, such as international trade requirements found in procurement rules. For this reason, it is important to maintain referenceability to relevant international policies, so that as international policies change, we aren't left with orphaned policy settings.	Due to the variability of adherence and authorities to different international policies, you would likely benefit from engagement with the relevant department of foreign affairs if there is a strong interconnectedness between your policy work and any international policies.

The “journey” approach to policy provides a mental model to proactively plan for and deliver policy outcomes in a more holistic, effective, collaborative and end-to-end way. In the next chapter, we apply this approach in a step by step guide to delivering great policy outcomes.

END TO END & ADAPTIVE POLICY MANAGEMENT





A step by step guide to delivering great policy (outcomes)

In this chapter we provide practical guidance on the steps and ingredients required to deliver great policy outcomes, applicable to all policy types. We have split the policy journey described earlier into two distinct phases:

- Phase 1: Preparation (establishing policy purpose and authority) which involves: Context (before starting); Purpose; Outreach; Definition; Options; Trial (if possible) and obtaining a clear decision (authority)

- Phase 2: Navigation (ongoing policy design, delivery and management) which includes Establish; Policy Management (continuous Test-Driven Design, Approval and Launch); and eventually, Policy Finalisation (to end, pivot or continue).

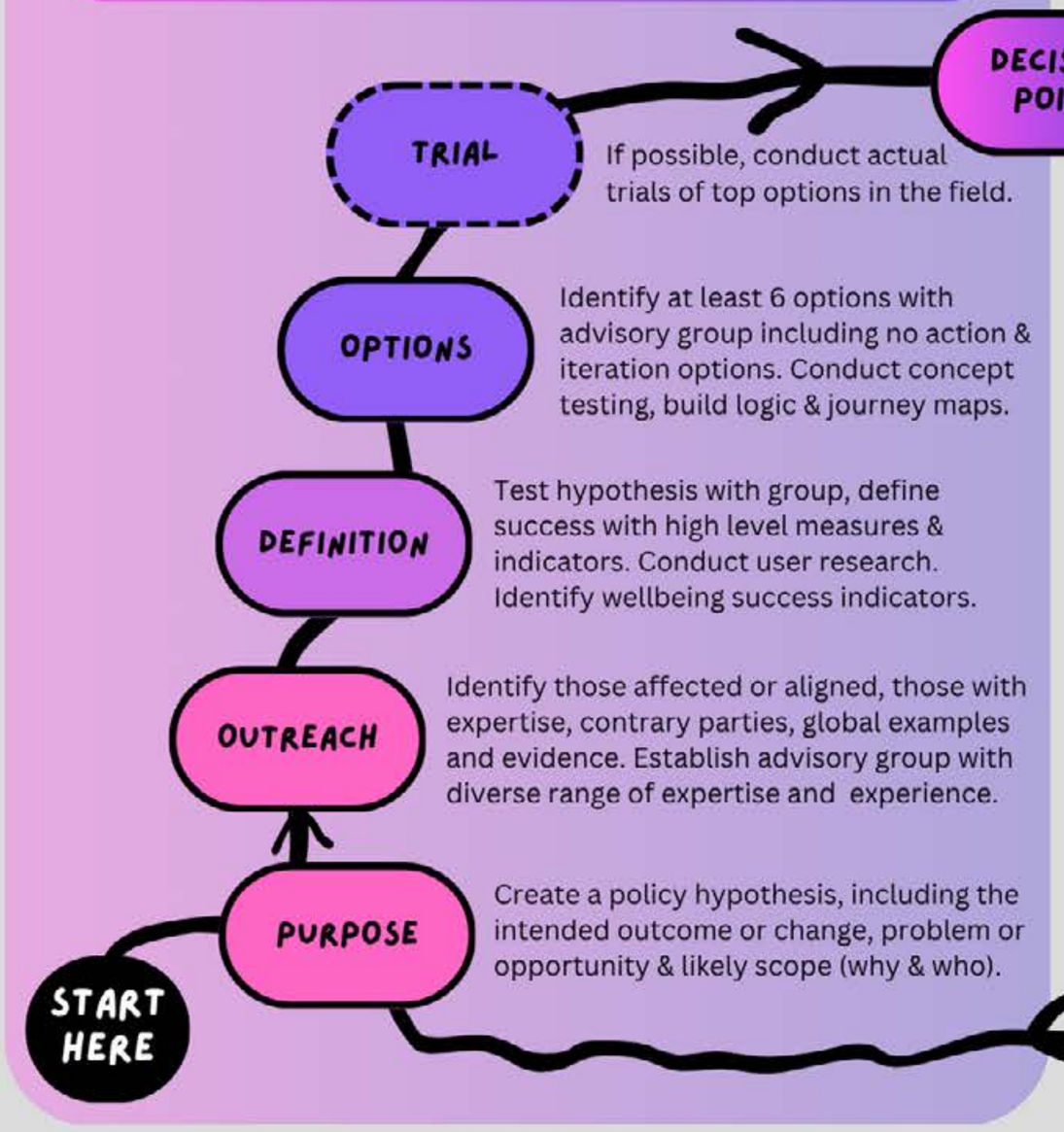
We have intentionally kept the majority of policy design work as part of Phase 2, so as to avoid the common mistake of a single point in time approach to the design of the policy settings, and to ensure a continuous exploration and optimisation of policy settings and proactive scaling up and down of policy interventions over the entire policy lifecycle. You can find a range of useful mindsets, skills and tools in the Fitness chapter to support you.

Below is a diagram of the two phases, which also shows how policy design and delivery is continuously evolving until it either ends in a decision point to either close the policy, continue as is, or to rejig the authority/purpose if the policy needs a fundamental change.

ADAPTIVE POLICY MANAGEMENT

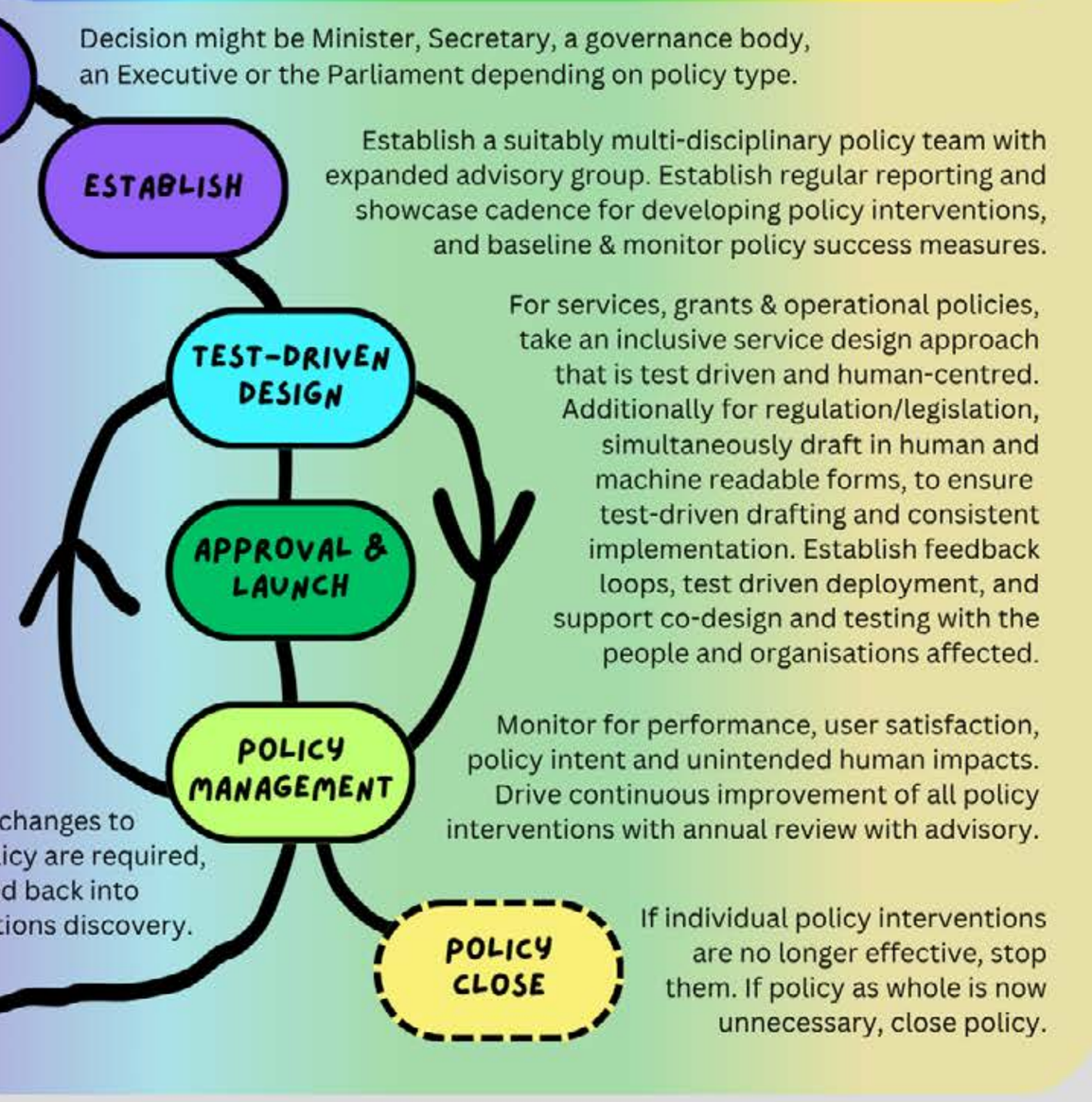
PHASE 1: POLICY PREPARATION
TO PLAN PURPOSE & AUTHORITY

GOAL: TO ESTABLISH A CLEAR AND MEASURABLE POLICY OUTCOME, BACKED BY HYPOTHESIS LED EXPLORATION, EVIDENCE AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE



PHASE 2: POLICY NAVIGATION
CONTINUOUS POLICY DESIGN & DELIVERY

GOAL: TO DEVELOP, MANAGE AND OPTIMISE OVER TIME RELEVANT AND TEST DRIVEN POLICY INTERVENTIONS THAT DEMONSTRABLY SUPPORT AND DRIVE THE POLICY OUTCOME.



As with our policy journey, the key to delivering great policy outcomes is to stay outcomes focused, grounded in reality and as cooperative and open as possible, both in process and in mindset. Whatever your policy type, and whatever you have been asked to do, it is your responsibility to be a steward for sustainable, ethical and lawful public good, and to ensure a properly evidence-based, inclusive and equitable approach to the whole policy lifecycle.

Phase 1: Preparation– Policy purpose and authority

The goal of this phase is to establish a clear and measurable policy intent, backed by hypothesis-led exploration, research and multi-disciplinary collaboration (with community and with experts, to bring values, experience and expertise to the process), leading to a decision point by the relevant authority to progress to implementation. The policy instruments identified (and ideally tested) in this phase are simply the starting point for implementation, not the only or final policy instruments. Throughout the implementation phase, policy interventions should be constantly tested, explored, added and removed to maximise and optimise the intended policy outcomes. The small upfront cost of test-driven policy design, and of monitoring for impact to inform ongoing policy optimisation, are far less costly than guess-driven design and static implementation that is not outcomes driven or responsive to real world effects.

1.1 Context

Before you even start thinking about the policy itself, take a moment to review and reflect upon the context of your work in three specific ways.

1. What is the **jurisdictional context** of this policy? Consider what authorities are relevant, the broader policy context (including any relevant Foundational or International Policies) and what other jurisdictions may have an intersecting interest. This should inform and provide some useful inputs to when you start planning out the policy purpose and authority (phase 1). For those in Australia (federal, state/territory and local), please see the latter chapter on Washminster to understand how the jurisdictional context should shape your actions and efforts as a public servant.

2. Consider and understand the **policy trigger**, that is, the reason for this work commencing. Is it in response to an urgent issue (for example, COVID-19, national security)? A political or ministerial imperative? A response to a market failure (such as, electricity grid issues, banking

failures) or economic/social emerging issue (for example, rising unemployment, housing crisis)? Or is it a proactive policy agenda trying to anticipate and capitalise on an opportunity (such as, AI economy, quantum)? You want to try to understand why ***this*** policy response has been prioritised above other agendas, as this will help you to understand the intrinsic and extrinsic pressures, players and stakes involved. This will help you to shape a meaningful policy response in a timely way, that has a chance of a sustainable public good and long term impact.

3. Identify any **potential existing initiatives** by exploring all relevant policies (including legislation and regulation) that are likely to intersect with, depend upon, complement or contradict your intended policy outcome, revisiting regularly. Even a quick initial environmental scan might identify a policy or program that already achieves or is intended to achieve the same high level outcome, and it might be worth modifying that program rather than starting up a whole new policy agenda. A suitable home for the agenda might exist in another area (or another department). Even if there isn't a holistic approach or willingness to extend that program to this outcome, it is still worthwhile providing this advice to the relevant decision maker before starting something new, as it may provide an opportunity to deliver the policy agenda more efficiently and/or effectively, or to partner and avoid duplicative policy efforts.

Document your answers to these for future reference and to ensure the knowledge is accessible to everyone involved in the whole policy lifecycle, including previous policy attempts or interventions which haven't worked, to ensure these learnings inform future policy delivery. See the Evidence section for more ideas and guidance on finding and using good evidence for policy.

It is worth noting, you will rarely, if ever, have full jurisdiction over the entire policy environment for your policy agenda, and may not even have full jurisdiction over your entire policy journey. This heightens the need to identify and collaborate with parallel policy actors early, and coordinate as best you can to achieve the policy objectives. Distributed policymaking is common across jurisdictions in Australia and requires coordination, alignment and power sharing between departments and/or jurisdictions.

It is also worth considering when you want or need to engage in genuine power sharing and partnership in policy areas with communities, especially where governments have to authentically shift towards greater self-determination (for example, in Indigenous affairs).

1.2 Purpose/Intent

Create a policy purpose statement, including the intended outcome or change, problem or opportunity being addressed, the likely scope, partners and who will benefit and why. Actively try to differentiate the policy intent from solutions. Try to ensure any proposed solutions are put to the side, and treated as only potential at this stage, not assumed as effective or suitable until they can be tested. Especially in the case where new regulation or legislation is being proposed—we can't yet assume legislation or regulation are the right mechanisms until we go through a robust process of understanding the purpose/intent, and conducting analysis of what is feasible and desirable. This process also provides a means to identify and table any assumptions which can be tested throughout the policy preparation.

The policy purpose sets the north star for the entire program of work, which in turn provides the basis for improving, scaling up or stopping policy interventions into the future. The policy team should also define a future state that is clearly and measurably different (and better) than today. Any policy agenda that cannot identify an intended future state should seriously consider the need for a policy at all.

At this stage, the policy purpose and future state created should be treated as a hypothesis, something to test and be flexible about throughout the policy preparation phase. Once the hypothetical purpose/intent statement is developed and after authority is established, it should be clear, relatively unchanging and confidently applied over the life of the policy, used to guide and support change and decision making throughout the navigation phase. If significant change to the purpose is required in the life of the policy, it is helpful to return to this purpose/intent step.

The Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas (in Policy Journey Templates at the end of this chapter) provides a useful tool for exploring and capturing purpose, as well as the raw assumptions and ingredients of your policy.

1.3 Outreach

With the draft purpose/intent statement in hand, you should be able to identify those who will be affected, aligned to, experts on, or acting in contradiction to your purpose. Map out the relevant policy actors (using the Actors Environment Map in Policy Journey Templates), taking into account those affected by the policy purpose as necessarily high importance. This map should be revisited throughout the policy journey as new actors are identified, as there will always be unknown unknowns.

Extend the policy team to include a reasonable representation and diversity of expertise and experience (including if possible, those affected by the policy) to robustly test the purpose hypothesis and assumptions. Establish or leverage a policy advisory group with a diverse range of relevant expertise and experience, ideally a group that is aligned on the policy purpose and intent. An advisory group that is independent to the policy team provides a helpful review mechanism, a check and balance for what the policy team produces, and a useful means to help surface, sequence, pace and cushion the loss or disappointment that is inevitable for someone somewhere entangled in the policy domain who will not benefit or will not be aligned with policy purpose and intent. If possible, work in the open (publicly) throughout the process, so as to attract peer review, ideas and relevant expertise over time from a broader audience, creating transparency and opportunities to attract partners, build public trust and support from the community.

The extended policy team should also look for global examples, evidence and organisations that have had similar policy intent/purpose, to see what has worked or not in other jurisdictions. This will also identify relevant external bodies and independent experts that might be useful to engage with or test ideas down the track. You can add new ideas and insights to the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas throughout the process.

1.4 Definition

Now that you have a multi-disciplinary policy team in place with a wide range of expertise at hand, you can start testing your hypothesised policy purpose/intent, success criteria and assumptions with the people identified throughout the outreach stage. Identify and develop a range

of policy personas and relevant user/life journeys (see templates), and conduct user research with a representative range of people (and organisations) who are either likely to be affected by the policy, or who will need to implement the policy.

The primary goal is to produce clearly defined, tested and evidenced foundations for the policy, with new insights being added to the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas. Your policy purpose statement should be tested, and probably improved. Throughout navigation you should also be able to identify:

- the likely population(s) who will be affected by the policy
- the success metrics
- potential harms or conflicts to watch for
- potential policy interventions
- he feasibility, desirability and sustainability of the policy intent and position
- the best partnerships and
- a sustainable (naturally motivated) model for policy coordination

1.5 Options

Once you have your definition, it's time to investigate your policy's options or interventions.

1. Test the hypothesised solutions and interventions with the advisory group and actors identified throughout the outreach step, and identify at least six strategically differentiated options for decision makers, including a "no action" option, and where possible, options to extend existing programs or policies where they are relevant or aligned in purpose, even from outside the portfolio or jurisdiction.

    Note: public servants need to resist the temptation (or pressure) to only offer one acceptable option amidst a cluster of undesirable or unfeasible ones. All options presented should be feasible and aligned to the intended policy impact, with

analysis of pros and cons, public good, likely impact, etc.
There will be occasions where the best advice is no action:
perhaps the policy intention itself is unlawful or harmful.
This is when public servants most need to exercise stewardship
and provide this advice without fear or favour.

2. Conduct concept testing, and apply the potential options to the personas and user/life journey maps developed earlier.

3. Create a **Policy Intervention/Solution Lean Canvas** for each proposed intervention (there may be one or several interventions in an option) to describe the likely timing, resourcing, actors and comparative analysis.

4. Document the preferred options based on best likely measurable realisation of the policy purpose, balanced against the best possible public good (applying a wellbeing framework can help this to be a measurable but broad approach). It is possible the policy impact might be achieved through a detrimental impact on public good, so it is important to present the potential negative impact so that decision makers don't choose the policy outcome option where it would have a predictably negative public impact. This phase should also involve some early costings of different options and the management of the policy agenda as a whole, taking different coordination/collaboration models into account.

5. Ensure relevant or requisite authorities are explored and defined as part of policy options and decision making, such that the policy team (or other relevant party) has what they need to confidently and adaptively deliver on the policy intent throughout the Policy Navigation Phase.

1.6 Trial(s)

If possible, conduct actual trials of top options identified with real people, or collect evidence of trials that have been done in the past that might be relevant and time-and-context appropriate.

1.7 Decision point

At this point, or indeed at any later point for those who inherit policies, here are some useful questions to test preparedness and to support policy implementation and outcomes.

- What happens when/if it is realised the policy settings are wrong or ineffective?
- Will the policy implementation team have the delegated authority they need to proactively manage and optimise policy settings over time?
- What independent oversight mechanisms exist and how is this independence maintained over time and throughout political or operational pressures?
- With the benefit of policy planning, what are the ideal skills and capabilities needed for this specific policy team?How has stewardship and public good been built into the policy planning?
- How sensitive is this policy area, and what is needed to uphold public trust and confidence in the public sector?
- How can the "policy team" best interact with the environment (partners, vendors, stakeholders, politics/Minister, government/ parliament/people)?

Once you've had a final chance to consider these questions—and take any necessary action—you are ready to secure a decision and, if relevant, the authority to move forward.

The policy authority depends on the policy type, so ensure you are proposing options to the appropriate authority for your policy type. The decision maker might be a Minister, Secretary, a governance body or a Senior Executive, which will also determine the mechanism to secure a decision and authority.

Preparation phase templates

Templates are meant to help guide your thinking and work, but should never be treated as outcomes themselves. We encourage you to use these templates to help create clarity, identify your assumptions and any areas of ambiguity, and to engage with a broad range of stakeholders to test (and adapt) your approach throughout, complemented by initial and ongoing testing.

Please find some templates and tools after the chapter on Phase 2 to assist you, including:

- The Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas template (for ideating on purpose/intent)
- The Policy Interventions/Solutions Lean Canvas template (for designing specific solutions)
- An Actors Environment Map template (for outreach to identify relevant parties)
- An Actors Intent Map template (for mapping the values, factions, losses, loyalties, pain points and incentives)
- Policy Intent Scenarios template (to test and articulate intended outcomes)
- Policy Personas template (to create a representation of real people affected, their needs, aspirations, challenges and ideal outcomes from the policy agenda)
- User/life Journeys template (to identify user/organisation needs and existing policies).

The **Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas** and the **Policy Interventions/Solutions Lean Canvas** templates for Google Docs (tabs 1 and 2) and **all other templates** (from Canva) are available online for free reuse. We also recommend you check out policy templates from organisations like The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (the **TACSI toolkit**) Nesta (**Map the Gap**) and the **doteveryone's consequence scanning kit**.

Phase 2: Navigation–Policy design, delivery and management

The goal of this phase is to start implementing and realising the policy intention, starting with the options and authority established in preparation, with a proactive and continuously evolving approach to the design, development, implementation and optimisation of policy instruments and interventions. The policy team should be authorised and capable of taking a "portfolio" approach to policy management, which enables the ability to scale up and down different policy interventions over time based on what is effective. The portfolio approach is complemented by adaptive policy management, to continuously innovate and explore new potential interventions, and to confidently and measurably drive the intended policy outcome.

2.1 Establish

Now that we are into policy navigation, we need to ensure we have a suitably skilled, motivated and multi-disciplinary policy team with an expanded advisory group to help review, oversee and govern how the policy is implemented in the real world. A good policy team would purposefully incorporate the "design and delivery" capabilities critical for adaptive and innovative policy navigation, because the original intent and aspects of the policy are never fully tested until implementation begins. Thus, the delivery of the policy provides an opportunity to test the policy design and approach in a real world context, and begin adapting as the inevitable unexpected consequences emerge.

The policy team also needs to establish a regular reporting and showcase cadence (to demonstrate progress, share insights and test ideas with stakeholders), and to establish a baseline and monitoring of policy success measures. This is also a good time to establish feedback loops (staff, public, partners, stakeholders) so that any expertise and experience can be leveraged, and unintended impacts have a chance of being identified and mitigated in a timely manner.

Finally, the policy team need to establish a programmatic approach that maintains proportionality in resourcing and capacity for:

1. implementing policy interventions/solutions

2. monitoring, measuring and continual evaluation of policy efficacy (see the Continual Policy Evaluation chapter)

3. continuous exploration, engagement and experimentation with new policy interventions that keep pace with change, and adapt to new threats and opportunities.

If the policy team is unable to maintain all three of these activities, they run the risk of policy stagnation, decreasing policy efficacy and the inability to identify, manage or mitigate any positive or negative unintended impacts

2.2 Policy management: Continuous monitoring, testing, design and iteration

When thinking about adaptive policy management, we need to shift from the idea that what you're aiming to do is apply the policy positions developed in Phase 1 with absolute blind fidelity. Instead, you should treat Phase 1 as a starting point, which will necessarily need to be adapted and updated as the policy design and interventions interact with the real world.

You should **begin** by implementing the best evidenced policy intervention(s) identified in your policy preparation.

Implementation should be supported by a process which involves regular engagement with policy authorities, stakeholders and affected parties to guide and prioritise improvements throughout the policy lifecycle. This process should also monitor for performance, user satisfaction, policy intent and any unintended impacts (human, environmental, societal, etc).

The feedback that emerges should drive continuous improvement of all policy interventions, and could perhaps be further supported by regular review with advisory group(s), stakeholders and policy actors, with a cadence suitable to the policy, for example annually.

The policy team should proactively measure and regularly review the effectiveness of different policy interventions, and how effectively the policy purpose is being met, with options to scale different or new policy interventions up and down as needed over the life of the policy. New options for policy interventions will emerge over time, so the policy team need enough authority and delegated decision making to pursue, implement and adapt policy interventions as required.

For new regulation or legislation, involve people who are likely to have to implement the legislation or regulations in their organisations and business systems. A digital economy needs digital rules, and if public institutions don't provide a digital reference implementation of those rules, then public servants are asking and expecting those who need to implement the rules to figure it out for themselves. This creates inefficiency, inconsistency, a "minimum viable compliance" approach, and an inequity issue, where large organisations can better afford to comply than small to medium sized organisations. If you take an approach that simultaneously drafts in both human and machine readable (computer code) formats, you can produce better rules that are actionable and more effective by ensuring clarity where consistency is important (prescriptive rules) and judgement where it is actually useful (principles based rules). This process should result in an authoritative human readable draft of the legislation/regulation to take to the Parliament, as well as a reasonably reliable reference implementation for testing and for ease of adoption by relevant entities, resulting in streamlined compliance by policy consumers. For more information on digital drafting, please see the "Better Rules: rules as code" chapter.

2.3 Finalisation: Policy change or closure

The policy team should have a regular cadence of reviewing the policy effectiveness with policy authorities, stakeholders and those affected, and where significant changes to purpose or authority are identified, the policy may need to return to phase 1 policy definition and decision making. Where individual policy interventions are found to be no longer effective or to have unacceptable consequences, they should be scaled down or stopped.

If the policy program achieves its purpose, or is no longer deemed necessary, the policy agenda should be closed down in collaboration with the policy authority, stakeholders and parties affected.

In either case, the policy team should communicate clearly the change to stakeholders and those impacted.

Navigation phase templates

- Return regularly to the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas to maintain an outcomes based focus and prioritisation, to test your assumptions, to update pertinent information or to sanity check new ideas or interventions against the original purpose.
- Use dashboards, monitoring and reporting to proactively manage policy interventions, both individually and as a program. Most departments will have an internal data capability and tooling that you can leverage. If not, ensure you have some data skills in your policy team.

Policy journey templates

The templates are listed below and can beaccessed via the provided links or on the following pages.

The **Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas v0.5a** supports your work in defining the overarching policy purpose, future state and framing of your agenda, without getting bogged down in specific solutions too early. Based on LEAN methodology, attribution to Dave Moskovitz (CC-SA).

The **Policy Intervention/Solution Lean Canvas v0.5b** is used for each individual intervention/solution. This is helpful during the preparation phase to design initial interventions/solutions (after the purpose definition) to secure decision making and authority, and then again throughout policy navigation to review/design new interventions over time. The template is **here** (second tab) with attribution to Dave Moskovitz (CC-SA).

An **Actors Environment Map** is a little more involved than a typical stakeholder map, because it explicitly includes the people affected by policy, who should be thought of as of high influence, as their needs, experience and values should be engaged in shaping the policy. Many traditional stakeholder maps often involve everyone except those who are affected, which undervalues the necessity of involving them in policy development.

An **Actors Intention Map** provides a quick way to identify relevant information about policy actors, to support you in understanding and engaging with them effectively throughout the policy journey.

Policy Intent Scenarios are worth doing prior to and separately to the development of personas and journey mapping, as they provide an articulation of the intended policy impact, a means to flush out and table policy assumptions, and a mechanism to check back against when exploring the broad range of personas and other intersecting policies throughout the journey mapping exercise. It is likely your Policy intent scenarios will evolve through the process, so don't see them as static. A template and example is below.

Policy Personas help keep your policy grounded in the real needs of people. Create enough personas to ensure a reasonable representation of the people/organisations affected. The template below helps to explore, understand and capture personas, ideally with public input.

User/life Journeys help to identify policies or programs that might complement or contradict your intended outcome, and provide a means to design effective and streamlined interventions. A journey should be based on the person or organisation affected, not your policy or department. For example, a new social benefit for parents would benefit from mapping the journey of having a child/family. A new grant for small businesses would benefit from mapping the journey of a small business. Below is a simple template to guide your efforts in journey mapping.

The Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas

https://leanpolicy.org/ v0.5a by Dave Moskovitz dave@mosk.nz
updates by Pia Andrews pia.c.andrews@gmail.com

Policy/Program Name:

Canvas Owner(s):

Date:

Version:

Intention/Purpose

A simple articulation of policy purpose and/or intent of this policy.

Examples: to address the emerging issue of children presenting at hospital with vape/nicotine injuries. Or to ensure Australia is competitive in the global AI industry, etc.

Intended Future State

A simple articulation of the future state target with a range of key metrics & indicators that show how the intended future state is different from today.

Examples: zero children are presenting with vape or nicotine injuries to hospital. Or the Australian AI sector is generating $xb in revenue and a top 10 globally competitive export sector.

Assumptions (to test)

As you work through the entire preparation phase, it is useful to explicitly identify and document any assumptions that arise so you can test them and not accidentally build ineffective policies or programs.

Examples: it is assumed if people knew about the health dangers of smoking or smoking/vaping, that they would stop. It is assumed more AI startups would improve adoption with productivity gains.

Partners & Challengers

Who is the authority to own this policy outcome, and a list of potential support and delivery partners. Who wants this policy agenda to succeed (naturally motivated), and who wants it to fail (challengers)?

Examples: health organisations, parents, schools, border organisations are naturally motivated, whereas criminals who profit from illicit tobacco are challengers. Tech sector org, AI SMEs, trade and foreign affairs, academic and research sector, education sector are partners.

Benefits & Realisation

A list of who is affected by and who benefits from the policy agenda, and what benefits are measurable.
Examples: primary beneficiaries would be children and their families, followed by health organisations. Or primary beneficiaries would be the AI sector, followed by the domestic economy.

Potential Interventions

A list of historical and hypothetical interventions to test and strategy for ongoing interventions identification.
Examples: criminalisation of vapes/illicit tobacco supply, border controls and public education. Or AI sector investment, safety standards, Australian AI trade delegations, R&D and training.

Whole of Program Costs & Resources Required

Estimates of the cost and required to deliver the minimum possible policy intent, with options that scale. Shouldn't go deeply into individual policy interventions/solutions.

Risks, Threats & Remediations

Overarching risks to the intent, organisation, beneficiaries and partners, including potential threats to plan for, and potential remediations to include. Shouldn't go deeply into individual policy interventions/solutions.

The Public Policy Lean Canvas (or Policy Lean Canvas) is adapted from the Lean Canvas by Ash Maurya
The Lean Canvas is adapted from The Business Model Canvas by Alex Osterwalder (www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas)

Excel implementation by: Neos Chronos Limited (http://neoschronos.com/)

The Intervention/Solution Lean Canvas

Intervention/Solution Name:

Associated Policy/Program Name:

Date:

Version:

https://leanpolicy.org/ v0.5b by Dave Moskovitz dave@mosk.nz
updates by Pia Andrews pia.c.andrews@gmail.com

Intended Impact of the Solution

Here you should document and articulate how this particularly policy intervention (solution) should help drive the intended policy outcome, and to what level?

Benefits & Realisation

A list of who is affected by and who benefits from this particular policy intervention/solution, and what those benefits are.

Complementary & Contradictory Interventions

What other policy interventions (solutions) already exist that either complement or contradict this intervention, and how will that be designed for and managed over time.

Assumptions (to test)

Capture assumptions as you go to test throughout the policy preparation and navigation phases.

Partners & Delivery

Who can help this intervention/solution to be successful? Who is naturally aligned and contradictory? Who has the capabilities? Who is already doing something similar who might be a good partner?

Dependencies & Assurance

What does this intervention/solution rely upon? Infrastructure, supply chains, compliance, etc. Whatever dependencies exist, what assurance and mechanisms are you planning for to ensure no single point of failure, and backups to dependencies?

Costs & Resources Required

Estimates of the cost and required to deliver this solution, including costing for ongoing monitoring, continuous innovation and optimisation, and the close out costs for when/if the solution proves ineffective at driving the policy intent.

Risks, Impact, Threats & Remediations Analysis

What could go wrong with this solution? What guardrails are needed to keep it effective and ethical? What monitoring and baselining is needed to be in place? What feedback loops exist to draw upon?

The Public Policy Lean Canvas (or Policy Lean Canvas) is adapted from the Lean Canvas by Ash Maurya
The Lean Canvas is adapted from The Business Model Canvas by Alex Osterwalder (www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas)

Excel implementation by: Neos Chronos Limited (http://neoschronos.com/)

Environment mapping: personas, actors, stakeholders

HIGH

Power

Keep Satisfied (engagement, visibility, reporting)	**Manage Closely** (ensure real impacts drive decisions)
(Would likely include all senior or political decision makers who are not responsible for or are unaffected by the policy)	(Would likely include senior or political decision makers responsible for and/or affected by policy program)
Monitor & Manage (pre-empt, report, feedback loops)	**Keep Informed & Engaged** (especially highly affected)
(Would likely include those uninvolved or unaffected in the policy program, but with ideas, opinions to share)	(Would likely include all personas affected by policy program)

LOW

Influence (and affected)

HIGH

Actor intention mapping template

Who?

Who is the relevant Actor? Include some characteristics and if relevant, examples. Why is this actor relevant to the policy agenda? What interests/needs do they have? Are they naturally aligned to the policy objective, or naturally opposed?

Alliances

Who is the Actor allied with, or aligned to? How might this affect their engagement or participation?

Potential Gains

What are the potential gains or benefits might the policy agenda create for this actor?

Potential Pains

What "pain" or challenges might the policy agenda create for this actor?

Value to the Policy

What experience, expertise, insights, or resources does the actor potentially bring to the policy agency? What would their best case participation look like, initially and on an ongoing basis?

Engagement Approach

Considering all other characteristics of this Actor, how could you most effectively and seamlessly engage them throughout the policy journey?

Policy intention template

Who?

Who is this scenario about and their assumed characteristics

When & How?

When and how would this policy ideally apply

Outcome?

What is the (ideally measurable) outcome for this person/organisation

Policy intention example

Who?

A single parent, where all children are over the age of 1, is able and willing to return to work but needs childcare.

(Note: this is a good example where a scenario assumption might be disproven through research and engagement with the community.).

When & How?

Once (and if) the child(ren) are able to comfortably attend daycare or school, the policy response provides guaranteed placement so the parent can work. It will include new investment, quotas and public services.

Outcome?

The single parent is able to return to work with the right supports in place, and the child(ren) are achieving the educational and wellbeing targets.

Policy persona template

Persona 1
Add a name and representative image,

Key Attribute

Add context and adjectives to describe this persona

Short Description

Add phrases to bring this persona to life

Needs

Add the persona's reasons for taking this particular journey

Challenges

Add pain points or potential frustrations facing this persona

Opportunities

Add ways that your policy program might address the pain points

Mapping relevant user/life journeys

Journey name: *(make it holistic, for example, starting a business, having a baby):*

	Add the first journey phase here	Add subsequent journey phase here	Add subsequent journey phase here	Add subsequent journey phase here	Add or remove journey phases as required
User Actions (Activities)	Add an activity that your customer does for each phase	Add your thought here	Add your thought here	Add your thought here	Add your thought here
Touchpoints (Interaction Points)	Add a touchpoint like email, website, or store for each phase				
Existing or Relevant Policies or Services	Note the policies, services and their respective organisations				
Experience (Mood Meter)	*(Move the dots up and down)* For each phase, add possible user sentiments in "quotations"	DELIGHTED / NEUTRAL / FRUSTRATED			
Possible Solutions (Opportunities to improve experience)	Add an idea for each phase here				

Practical policy workshops

Below are a range of simple policy workshops to help you coordinate and collaborate throughout the policy journey.

WORKSHOP TITLE	PURPOSE	BEST FOR
a. Policy Sprint Workshop	Rapidly develop a policy proposal	Team ideation and project kick-off
b. Stakeholder Mapping Simulation	Analyze and prioritize stakeholders	Community engagement/ complex projects
c. Impact Assessment Roleplay	Evaluate proposals from diverse angles	Multi-disciplinary teams
d. Scenario Planning Exercise	Prepare for uncertainty	Strategic planning, risk management
e. Policy Pitch and Critique	Build pitching and feedback skills	Presentations, internal review
f. Lessons Learned Retrospective	Reflect and improve	Project close-out, team learning
g. Problem Tree Analysis	Diagnose root causes	Early-stage problem exploration
h. Ethical Challenge Hotseat	Respond to dilemmas	Integrity and values training
i. Metrics and Measurement Hackathon	Define success metrics	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
j. The Pre-Mortem	Risk-assessment by scenario	A creative way to manage policy risk

a. Policy sprint workshop

Group Size: 4–8 | **Timing:** 2–3 hours

Tips: Use creative constraints (e.g. budget, legal) to add a challenge and to look at policies another way.

Purpose:

- Kick-start creative thinking and build a draft policy proposal under time pressure.

Learning Outcomes:

- Synthesize policy issues, stakeholders, and solutions rapidly.
- Practice teamwork and concise communication.

Materials/Prep:

- Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas (from Policy journey templates)
- Timer
- Whiteboard/virtual collaboration tool

Process:

1. Assign teams and give each a policy topic.

2. Teams use the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas to define the policy purpose, intended future state (and how it is different from now), stakeholdersn and partners, intended benefits, and potential solutions/interventions (don't worry about resourcing and risks for this exercise) (1 hour).

3. 15-minute internal review by another team.

4. Pitch the policy proposal back to the group (or to an external group if time allows) to get some early feedback (30 mins).

5. Debrief on learnings and adaptations (15 mins).

Debrief Prompts:

- What surprised you?
- What frameworks helped?
- What would you do differently?

b. Stakeholder mapping simulation

Group Size: 3–6 | **Timing:** 1 hour

Tips: Use real or hypothetical examples

Purpose:

- Build empathy and skill in understanding stakeholder landscapes.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify missing voices and conflicting interests.
- Use mapping tools to inform policy design.

Materials/Prep:

- A stakeholder or environment map template (from Policy journey templates)
- Sample policy scenario

Process:

1. Present scenario and context.
2. Map stakeholder identities, interests, and influence.
3. Rank and overlay potential conflicts and alliances.
4. Share group map and discuss.
5. Across your team, get individuals to adopt a persona to talk from that perspective about the issue as an empathy exercise. Use this input later to establish an Actor Intention Map for each identified stakeholder category or persona.

Debrief Prompts:

- Whose voice is most and least represented?
- How might these voices help shape the policy?
- How might you change your engagement approach based on the map?

c. Impact assessment roleplay

Group Size: 4–10 | **Timing:** 60-90 minutes

Tips: Rotate roles in repeat sessions

Purpose:

- Practice evaluating a proposal from different disciplinary perspectives.

Learning Outcomes:

- See policy impacts through multiple lenses.
- Build persuasion and compromise skills.

Materials/Prep:

- Policy proposal draft (the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas is fine, or whatever format you already have your policy proposal in)
- Role cards for participants (post-it notes are fine, pre-marked with different lenses. We recommend the following, but feel free to be creative:
  - Environmental, Community Impact, Vulnerable Populations, Economic Prosperity (may be worth representing big and small businesses separately), National Security, Public Safety, Social Justice, International Context.

Process:

1. Assign each participant a role.
2. Review the proposal, noting impacts from your perspective.
3. Present key concerns and recommendations.
4. Group discussion to reconcile perspectives and draft a unified assessment.

Debrief Prompts:

- What bias did your role introduce?
- How did you resolve conflicting priorities?

d. Scenario sprint exercise

Group Size: 3–8 | **Timing:** 1-2 hours

Tips: Encourage "wild card" scenario creation.

Purpose:

- Prepare teams to anticipate and respond to uncertainty.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop future-focused thinking.
- Identify risks and strategies for adaptation.

Materials/Prep:

- Future scenarios (pre-written or created during group brainstorm, you can use the Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas first section as a guide)
- Policy Intention template (from Policy journey templates)

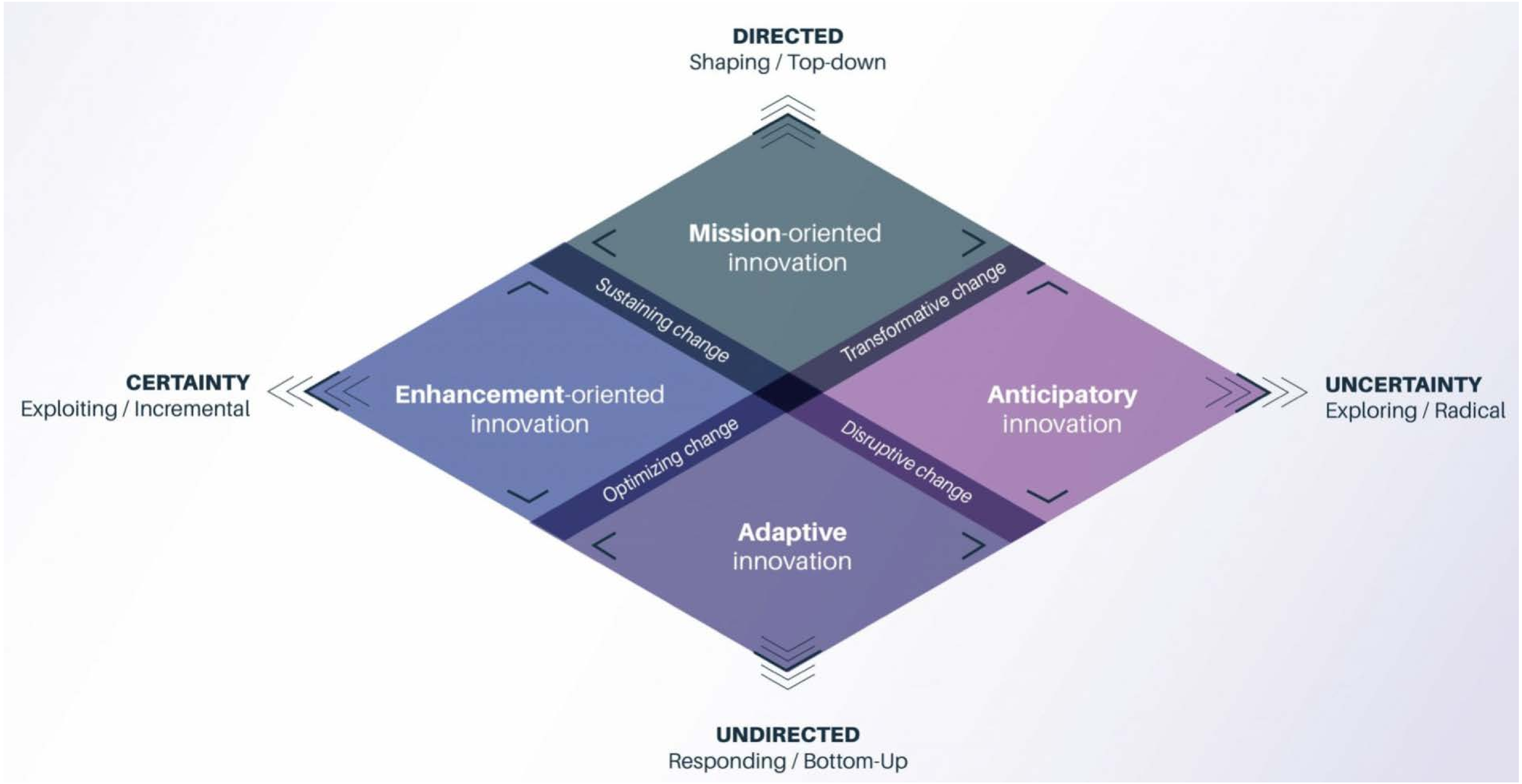
Process:

1. Teams select or receive a policy topic.
2. Create 4–5 plausible future scenarios (including desirable and undesirable ones).
3. Map how the policy might adapt or fail under each scenario, using the Policy Intention template to flesh out intended impact for groups affected by the policy.
4. Identify any "no regrets" actions and risk mitigation strategies.

Debrief Prompts:

- Which scenario felt most desirable, which felt more plausible?
- What gaps did you find in your original policy?
- What additional scenarios should be further explored, and with whom?

Note: we recommend you use the **OPSI Innovation Facets** to support future scenarios.
You should be able to identify future states that are anticipatory, certainty, top down and bottom up.



e. Policy pitch and critique

Group Size: 2-6 | **Timing:** 1-2 hours

Tips: Try "Shark Tank" or "Dragon's Den" formats for energy.

Purpose:

- Build concise communication skills and structured feedback capacity.

Learning Outcomes:

- Craft clear, short policy pitches.
- Deliver and receive constructive criticism.

Materials/Prep:

- Pitch template or slide deck - you can google "pitch deck" for any number of templates. Consider the sort of information shared by startups or inventors pitching their ideas on TV.
- Panel (internal or guest)

Process:

1. Teams develop a short, 5-minute policy pitch using a pitch deck template.
2. Present to panel or group for feedback. Ideally there would be at least a few outsiders to the policy domain.
3. The panel/group scores each pitch with the criteria below, giving a score out of 10 for each:
   a) Clear alignment on the policy intent (impact and desirability)
   b) Feasibility (demonstrates how the policy might be implemented)
   c) Reflects different stakeholder and community needs (diversity and inclusion)
   d) Context (demonstrates knowledge of the policy environment, with ideas how to navigate and engage with the environment)
   e) Flair (high quality communication that convinces)
   f) Teams refine and re-present, if desired.

Debrief Prompts:

- What made feedback useful?
- How can you use critiques to strengthen proposals?
- What surprised you in the feedback?

f. Lessons learned retrospective

Group Size: Any | **Timing:** 45–75 minutes

Tips: Use this after every major policy cycle.

Purpose:

- Foster continuous improvement and knowledge sharing.

Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze successes and failures methodically.
- Document insights for future projects.

Materials/Prep:

- Policy Lessons Retrospective worksheet (see next page)
- Post-it notes/whiteboard

Process:

1. As all individuals to use post-it notes to capture what went well, what didn't, and areas for improvement.
2. Group clusters by themes (e.g. communication, process, stakeholder management).
3. Document actions for next time.
4. Share summary with wider organisation

Debrief Prompts:

- Which change will most improve your next project?
- What should be shared across teams?

The **Policy Lessons Retrospective template** helps your team to think critically, constructively and to share insights and learning about what is working, what isn't, and what actions could be adopted moving forward.

Policy Lessons Retrospective

Date:
Policy:

1. What went well? — 10 MINUTES

Group similar ideas together and discuss.

2. What didn't go well? — 10 MINUTES

Group similar ideas together and discuss.

3. Insights and lessons? — 10 MINUTES

Share the lessons/insights, learning from each other.

4. Actions to take forward — 10 MINUTES

Translate ideas into action items.

Action item:
Owner:
Due date:

g. Problem tree analysis

Group Size: 2-8 | **Timing:** 1 hour

Tips: Compare trees across teams for insight.

Purpose:

- Diagnose problems and identify root causes visually.

Learning Outcomes:

- Clarify the real drivers of issues.
- Identify targeted interventions.

Materials/Prep:

- Problem tree template (see next page)
- Coloured pens

Process:

1. Define central policy issue.
2. Map branches: root causes below, effects above.
3. Explore connections and intervention points.
4. Share trees and discuss most actionable points.

Debrief Prompts:

- What root cause surprised you?
- Which intervention might have the best leverage?

The **Problem Tree template** helps your team to deconstruct and differentiate between causes and symptoms, working towards a clearer understanding of the core problem (or opportunity) to solve. This mitigates the risk of policy only addressing a symptom or cause without changing the outcome/impact.

Problem tree template

Symptoms?

What are symptoms of the problem, the end result or impact of the core problem or causes?

Core problem?

Through the exercise of identifying symptoms and causes you should be able to eventually identify a core problem to solve.

Causes?

What conditions, pressures or other causes have led to, are feeding or exacerbating the symptoms?

h. Ethical challenge hotseat

Group Size: 3-10 | **Timing:** 30-60 minutes

Tips: Use real, recent dilemmas if possible.

Purpose:

- Prepare teams to handle ethical dilemmas under pressure.

Learning Outcomes:

- Make defensible decisions with limited info.
- Use frameworks for ethical reasoning.

Materials/Prep:

- Dilemma scenarios (describe or draw randomly)

Process:

1. Give the team time to create some ethical dilemma scenarios.
2. Present an ethical policy dilemma to an individual or group.
3. Give limited time to identify choices and defend a decision.
4. Compare solutions and rationales as a team.
5. Reflect on process and frameworks

Debrief Prompts:

- Where did values conflict?
- How can frameworks guide future choices?

i. Metrics and measurement hackathon

Group Size: 3-10 | **Timing:** 1-2 hours

Tips: Gamify with prizes for innovative metrics.

Purpose:

- Build hands-on skills in policy evaluation and
- data-driven improvement

Learning Outcomes:

- Design robust metrics and KPIs.
- Plan for data collection and review.

Materials/Prep:

- Policy case study

Process:

1. Teams select a policy initiative.
2. Define clear, measurable outcomes (the impact intended effectiveness of the policy agenda).
3. Identify key outputs from the relevant policy solutions/ interventions, and how they contribute directly or indirectly to the outcomes. Where outcomes are not clearly served by any outputs, identify potential new policy solutions/interventions.
4. Map data sources and monitoring plans for outcomes and outputs, including who owns what.
5. Identify targets for outcomes and outputs, KPIs and rationale.
6. Peer review to refine metrics.

Debrief Prompts:

- Which metric(s) are most essential?
- What challenges could arise in measurement?
- What counter-indicators exist that could be monitored?
- What outputs might contradict outcomes and how might you ensure outputs don't become more important that outcomes?
- Who monitors outcomes and are they independent enough from output owners to provide strategic advice to senior leaders?

j. The Pre-Mortem

Group Size: Any | **Timing:** 1 hour

Tips: Encourage participants to be creative in their destruction.

Purpose:

- Create a list of risks in a way that escapes groupthink and is not overly driven by the plan

Learning Outcomes:

- Risk management.
- Creative thinking.

Materials/Prep:

- Timer
- Whiteboard and post-it notes/virtual collaboration tool
- Simple risk matrix (4 squares: major and low consequence; by likely and unlikely)
- Existing policy risk assessment

Process:

1. Set the scene: Your policy implementation has gone horribly wrong. The dismal results are featured on the front page news, or it has fallen so flat that you are not serving anyone. The minister is demanding answers.

2. Set a timer. Everyone writes out all the ways they can think of that the policy has gone wrong. (10 minutes).

3. Group like disasters together and then rank them according to a simple risk matrix. (10 minutes)

4. Review your risk assessment, are all the high-risk scenarios captured? Discuss how you can treat the risks.

5. Update your risk assessment and debrief.

Debrief Prompts:

- Was there a common theme to your newly identified risks?
- Were there any gaps in your initial risk assessment that surprised you?

Evidence for effective policy

Throughout the entire policymaking journey it is important to move beyond limited assumptions about what counts as evidence.

Rigorous, evidence-informed policymaking remains essential to effective policymaking. Public servants must ground their policy advice and program design in robust evidence to ensure government interventions are effective, accountable, and serve the public good. However, our understanding of what constitutes valid evidence has evolved significantly, particularly as we confront complex, place-based challenges that demand local knowledge and contextual understanding. Althaus (2020, p. 510) argues that the quest for evidence-based policymaking has sometimes created an unhelpful "disconnection between evidence and argument" when in reality, public servants need both technical knowledge and the capacity for persuasive reasoning that connects empirical information with human values and community needs. Rather than viewing evidence simply as objective facts separate from values, effective policymaking recognises that evidence and values are inherently connected—the challenge is not to eliminate values from policy analysis, but to make explicit how different forms of knowledge help us understand complex problems and identify promising solutions.

Traditional western hierarchies of evidence—with systematic reviews and randomised controlled trials at the apex, descending through expert opinion to anecdotal observation at the base—emerged from specific Enlightenment-era philosophical assumptions that privileged reductionist, compartmentalised, and quantitative approaches. While valuable in certain contexts like clinical medicine, these hierarchies struggle to accommodate holistic, place-based, relational, and qualitative understandings when applied universally across all policy domains. They favour knowledge that can be decontextualised and expressed quantitatively, inadvertently excluding legitimate forms of local, experiential, and culturally-embedded knowledge.

As policy challenges become increasingly complex—addressing climate change, regional inequality, social cohesion, and community resilience—the limitations of narrow frameworks become apparent. Place-based

policymaking recognises that effective solutions must be tailored to local contexts, cultures, economies, and relationships, requiring us to privilege local knowledge alongside broader evidence bases. The importance of contextual knowledge has been demonstrated across diverse settings: from Indigenous land management practices that successfully address biodiversity and bushfire challenges, to ground-level information from Ukrainian communities that proves essential for humanitarian response and cannot be replaced by satellite imagery or distant analysis alone.

Public servants must develop sophisticated frameworks for incorporating diverse evidence sources while maintaining critical discernment. This means recognizing that different communities and cultures have developed legitimate systems for producing, validating, and transmitting knowledge (Althaus, 2020)—whether through oral tradition, embodied practice, community memory, or local expertise. Knowledge may be expressed through different mediums and privilege different values: relationality over extraction, ongoing responsibility over one-time consultation, holistic understanding over compartmentalised analysis. Incorporating such evidence requires institutional reforms including genuine co-design partnerships, respecting community agency over knowledge sharing, and valuing local expertise (Althaus, 2020). However, epistemological openness must be balanced with rigorous critical analysis, particularly in an era of misinformation, disinformation, and deliberate manipulation. The challenge is remaining open to non-traditional evidence sources while asking: Who holds this knowledge? How was it generated and validated? What power dynamics are at play? Is this shared in good faith? Does it align with or contradict other reliable sources? Public servants must be vigilant against fake news and coordinated disinformation campaigns masquerading as "local knowledge" or "alternative perspectives".

A path forward is toward what Althaus (2020, p. 190) calls "contextual public administration"—being attentive to culture, context, and timing while celebrating multiple types of knowledge as holding value. The antidote to misinformation is not retreating into narrow scientism, but cultivating broader evidence literacy that recognises multiple valid knowledge systems while developing critical capacity to distinguish genuine wisdom from manufactured narratives. This does not mean abandoning rigorous standards or accepting all claims uncritically—

rather, it means expanding our definition of rigor to include different forms of validity and recognising that the best policy emerges when diverse knowledge systems inform each other (Althaus, 2020). For place-based initiatives, environmental management, health, justice, regional development, and many other domains, incorporating diverse forms of evidence is essential for effective, legitimate, and sustainable outcomes. We suggest public servants should approach this work with both intellectual humility and genuine curiosity, recognising that respectfully and critically engaging with local and diverse knowledge can transform our capacity to address complex policy challenges.

One practical tool for operationalising contextual public administration's approach to diverse forms of evidence is the Impact Gaps Canvas, developed by Daniela Papi-Thornton at Oxford's Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (Papi-Thornton, n.d.). The canvas provides a structured framework that explicitly values multiple types of evidence and knowledge systems when understanding policy challenges. In mapping the challenge landscape, it requires public servants to consider not only quantifiable impacts but also systems dynamics, power relationships (who holds the status quo in place), historical context, and potential unintended consequences—forms of evidence often excluded from traditional hierarchies. When mapping the solutions landscape, the canvas directs attention to practitioner knowledge, community experience of what has and hasn't worked, and the relational connections between efforts (Papi-Thornton, n.d.). This approach directly addresses Althaus's (2020) critique that narrow evidence frameworks favour decontextualised, quantitative knowledge while inadvertently excluding legitimate forms of local, experiential, and culturally-embedded understanding.

The Impact Gaps Canvas embodies contextual public administration by treating evidence gathering as inherently place-based and systems-oriented rather than universal and reductionist. At the macro level, it asks public servants to identify what knowledge is missing across entire policy ecosystems, whose voices are absent from problem definitions, and how diverse evidence sources and solution efforts might be better connected and learned from (Papi-Thornton, n.d.). At the micro level, it encourages deep exploration of why specific initiatives failed—often revealing gaps in understanding local contexts, community needs, or cultural factors that traditional evidence hierarchies might dismiss as "anecdotal."

By systematically mapping challenges, solutions, and gaps through this multi-evidence lens, public servants can make more informed decisions that honor both technical knowledge and local wisdom, scientific analysis and community experience. This tool exemplifies how expanding our definition of rigor to include different forms of validity—oral tradition, embodied practice, relationship-based knowledge, and place-specific understanding—leads to more effective and legitimate policy outcomes (Althaus, 2020; Papi-Thornton, n.d.).

Continual policy evaluation —a practitioner's guide

Authors: Dennis Petrie, Anna Zhu and Pia Andrews, September 2025

How and when do we know that policy is working the way it is intended to? Historically, evaluation of policy in Australia usually occurs as a once-off exercise, long after implementation. Consequently, the magnitude of benefits--or in some cases, harms—are not known until it is too late, and certain sections of the population may end up worse off than if the policy had never been implemented at all.

With recent advances in data availability and statistical methods, this has changed. Now, it is possible to continually evaluate the impacts of policy change and to subsequently adapt or pivot policy where necessary. In other words, we can regularly monitor the performance of policy reforms over time and assess whether or not they are working as intended.

What is continual policy evaluation?

In many ways, undertaking continual policy evaluation is like running clinical trials for a new drug or medical device. First, we have a social or economic ill that needs to be treated, and so we start to think about possible treatments—in other words, new policy instruments. Once we have a treatment that we think will work, we begin rolling it out to a small section of the population—a "pilot study"—to see if the proposed policy works to effectively treat our identified problem.

During this time, we monitor the study group for potential side effects that we did not necessarily expect to arise; these are our "unintended consequences". If such negative side effects do arise, we can tailor and temper the policy until it works in the way that was envisaged, while bending the arc of policy towards public good. Furthermore, if we see that our treatment has worked the way it was intended to, we can begin to roll it out to the wider population so that everyone can enjoy the benefits.

The most important element of this process is policy adaptation in response to potentially harmful consequences of the policy's implementation (Swanson et al., 2010). By monitoring policy in real-time, we can pivot the direction or scope of policy when we know that it is not working as intended.

To use another metaphor, think of this like a traffic light system. When we observe negative effects of a policy fomenting, we issue a red light: we must stop, wait, and prepare for when we know it will be safe to start moving forward with policy implementation again. When we are not exactly certain about policy impacts, we use an amber light, giving us the time to wait and see how policy impacts evolve before rolling them out to the wider public. Finally, when we see clear and objective signs of policy success we shine the green light to indicate that policy roll-out should move forward, such that all Australians can benefit, noting that what works in one context will not necessarily work in another, meaning that local adaptation will be necessary.

Why do we need to do continual policy evaluation?

Evaluation is crucial for providing an objective and robust base of evidence to substantiate the decisions made by government. Without a clear cut and evidenced need for policy implementation, policymakers may lose a degree of credibility, or indeed, implement the wrong policies entirely.

Regular and consistent policy evaluation is critical to making sure that the policy intent remains valid, that policies work as intended, and that they have not generated any unintended consequences for the people theyhave not generated any unintended consequences for the people they affect.

Policymakers, academics, and the wider public all want to implement the best policy which provides the greatest benefit for the broadest possible cross-section of the population. Similarly, everyone obviously wants to avoid policy which carries negative consequences. However, such negative consequences may not be foreseen when policy is crafted and implemented. Indeed, recent research in both international and Australian contexts has illustrated that often there arise unintended consequences as a result of behavioural, environmental, or other factors that were not necessarily accounted for in the evaluation process (Swanson et al., 2010; Broadway and Zhu, 2023).

Continual policy evaluation can fix this problem in several ways. Firstly, by tracking policy impacts in real-time, we can know in the present—not some far-off future—whether or not certain policies actually work. This allows governments (and public institutions) to be more adaptable and responsive to the needs of its people, particularly if a certain policy produces unintended consequences. Moreover, it creates incentives to measure policy outcomes rather than leaving it as a black box for fear of political backlash. Secondly, the "pilot study" phase of evaluation can ensure that only properly tried and tested policies are rolled out to the general public. This is particularly important in a world of over-spending and under-delivering: by conducting smaller-scale studies of the impacts of a policy first, we can ensure that we do not roll out a bad (and potentially expensive) program to the wider population without really knowing its broader effects. Thirdly, continual policy evaluation can give policymakers the confidence to push forward with new ideas even if they may carry some risk because they know that regular monitoring of policy outcomes will provide a "safety net" to catch any unintended consequences. This can revolutionise the policy process, allowing greater scope for novel and innovative approaches to improving the lives of all Australians and people in Australia.

So important is the role of evaluation in government that many jurisdictions have now set up registries of policy evaluation to publicly display the evidence base that the choice of policy depends on. The UK, for example, has launched an Evaluation Taskforce and published a registry of policy evaluation documents for public programs, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that "evidence and evaluation sits at the heart of spending decisions". In the Australian context, there is also clear

appreciation of the need for robust policy evaluation practices. In 2021, the government launched the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, which aims to "embed a culture of evaluation and learning from experience to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery". This ideal is now further bolstered by the establishment of the Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE), a central body embedded in the Treasury which collaborates with individual evaluation units across various government departments and agencies.

The ACE exists to increase the volume, quality, and use of evaluation evidence in the Australian Public Service. ACE focuses on using causal evaluation tools such as Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) or other causal inference methods where an RCT is not feasible. As an example of recent work, the ACE and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) are testing whether mutual-obligation requirements affect how quickly a study of 30,000 jobseekers find work. For more information see Copley at al. 2025. Such policy evaluations could also be complemented by a practice of continuous evaluation throughout the entire policy lifecycle. For example, it could continuously recruit and/or it could feed back directly into the program as it gradually builds evidence and to ensure optimal policy implementation.

How much evidence is "enough" evidence in order to adapt policy?

Policy evaluation often faces the problem of being unable to disentangle the impacts of a certain policy from wider changes in the environment or from changes to human behaviour. Indeed, it is very easy to fall into the trap of taking some observable change in behaviour or outcomes to be attributable solely to policy, and to ignore the many spinning cogs of society that operate in the background. Such changes may be entirely spurious or an artefact of the available data and modelling approaches

This problem is particularly pronounced when we are testing for many changes at the same time or looking for a certain "signal" of policy impact across a long period of time. This is called "multiple hypothesis testing". When we make many inferences from data simultaneously there is an increasing likelihood—attributable entirely to chance—that we observe

a statistically significant change when no such change has actually occurred. These are "false positives". In other words, as we test for more and more outcomes, the possibility for such false positives to occur naturally increases, and so we may make incorrect inferences based on our results. Thus, we need some way of knowing—with greater certainty—if a policy actually has worked in the way we intended it to. For that, we need robust causal evidence of its impact. Such assessment requires more advanced statistical techniques and large quantities of data, but advancements across both of these realms have certainly made routine policy evaluation an easier task in recent years. By employing such methods and data, we can ensure that our policy evaluations are reflective of real-world impacts rather than just statistical chance.

A more straightforward way to establish if a policy causally affects or contributes to behaviour is to build in impact evaluation principles before the start of a program. As an example, we could measure pre-treatment outcomes before implementing the policy, or build in randomisation or quasi-experimental identification into policies up-front rather than leaving it up to evaluators to find a design that is "good-enough".

What is possible in Australia?

It is only in the relatively recent past that the Australian data ecosystem has developed sufficiently to allow for focused analysis of individual-level outcomes on a regular basis. In macroeconomic analysis, real-time tracking and forecasting is often more feasible, as high-frequency data available across a wide range of macroeconomic variables allows for more regular analyses of trends and identification of oncoming challenges. Indeed, this area of research—known as "Nowcasting" has burgeoned since the Great Recession, and was particularly important during the pandemic (Giannone et al., 2008; Bańbura et al., 2013). A recent Australian example is Hartigan and Rosewall (2024).

When dealing with public policy that affects individuals on a more micro-level, however, both retrospective and predictive modelling have historically fallen short due to data limitations. For example, the Census of Population and Housing—which provides much of the demographic data required for a considered analysis of socio-economic dynamics in

Australia—is only conducted every five years. Similarly, the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey—which collects valuable information about economic and personal well-being, labour market dynamics and family life—is available only on an annual basis. Thus, by the time we are able to evaluate policy with the relevant contemporary data, the effects of the policy (whether positive or negative) have likely already bedded in.

However, the potential of continual policy evaluation in Australia has been enhanced in recent years thanks to significant advances in the availability of granular administrative data available both through government and industry channels. Of particular note, in 2015 the Australian Bureau of Statistics established the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP), a secure data asset which combines and structures multiple streams of data from across the various arms of government. Re-branded in 2023 as the Person-Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA), the dataset now offers comprehensive insight into health, education, government payments, income and taxation, employment, and population demographics over time in Australia, with data available from as early as 2006. As such, it is an incredibly useful tool for assessing the efficacy and efficiency of policy over the past two decades, as well as contemporary policy reforms that are being enacted.

As of September 2025, there are more than 250 active research projects which draw upon PLIDA data to inform evaluation of policy. Such projects investigate a broad array of outcomes with various data on income and taxation (using ATO data), healthcare usage and outcomes (through Medicare data), and demographic change (using Census data), amongst a variety of others. The Board of PLIDA and the ABS also update and link new datasets as necessary when there is evidence of a potential public benefit. This includes integrating new datasets available via the private sector, such as through the insurance and private healthcare sectors. Continued input of data from both the public and private sectors will further strengthen the data asset in the future, allowing for even more exciting options for policy evaluation to paint a fuller picture of Australian socio-economic dynamics.

Conclusions

The implementation of continual policy evaluation requires an almost entirely new policy infrastructure in Australia, as well as contributions of knowledge, data, and methods from an interdisciplinary cohort of researchers, policymakers, and industry partners. However, successful implementation of continual evaluation has the potential to revolutionise the way in which policy is formulated and implemented, leading to benefits for the entire Australian population. In the future, it is envisaged that almost all policy reforms will be subject to rigorous and objective evaluation on an ongoing basis to ensure that Australians are guided towards the best possible outcomes.

Moreover, continual policy evaluation should be viewed partly as a tool for understanding our society. As Nobel Prize winning economist Elinor Ostrom (2005) argues, to understand anything we need to learn what it does, how and why it works, how to create or modify it, and eventually how to convey that knowledge to others. Continual policy evaluation provides the tools by which we can better understand Australia, its people, and the way our society interacts.

Policymaking during crises and emergencies

Sometimes policymaking is in response to something urgent, like a crisis or natural disaster, and it is worth learning from emergency policymaking experience now so you can be better prepared in that moment. Below is a cheat sheet for urgent policy development, based on deep experience of policymakers who have had to actually deliver policy responses during real and dangerous crises.

In the urgent moment

So how does one deal with a situation where an issue has come up—the minister wants advice in two days. What is the best process—when the full process can’t be followed? How can the options be rapidly developed for

urgent requests but still high enough quality and integrity to be effective? Given the higher risk of rapid response, how should urgent policy interventions be implemented so as to actively monitor and manage unintended consequences?

There has increasingly been a mentality of "pick a winner" rather than providing options with urgent requests. This is dangerous as it removes the possibility of weighing up options that may be better, even when there are different risks or opportunities. Even if directed to explore only one option, you should provide options based on the best evidence available to you, for the best possible policy response and decision making in a crisis.

Urgent **policy preparation:**

- Take the time to know your portfolio area more generally, so most topics don't entirely surprise or scare you if and when they come up unexpectedly.

- Get clear on the request—no third hand chat. Gain access to the original requests or chat directly to the Minister's office so you can be clear on the outcome, problem to be solved and the constraints or any direction from the Minister and their office.

- Take a little time to actually think about and through the process—it feels terrible but if it is a two day briefing, sign-out will be a day in most places. Organise time in the diaries of decision makers so there aren't unnecessary delays.

- Consider who might be useful to talk to e.g. the institutional knowledge person, someone from the sector (if allowed to).
  Are there past reports that are relevant?

- Look at evidence, past reports, data, international literature reviews. Even if you only get an hour—something is better than nothing. What has the sector, the media, the public said about a topic?

- Pick up the phone to people that can help or have knowledge or experience to help inform your options or test your assumptions.

- Write a simple structure for the briefing, for example: what was asked, what we know about the situation, data, past reports etc, what are the broad options.

- Do a simple pros and cons table of options—noting risks, assumptions or other things that would need to be explored.
- Discuss the broad options, limitations on time, potential solutions or directions to explore further or better process or engagement or if required recommended option, map out steps to truly explore options (unless it really is a quick fix issue).
- Try to ensure any options chosen carry with them enough authority to rapidly deliver and pivot if or when things don't quite work as hoped.

The Adaptive Policy Lean Canvas might be a helpful framework to work through as you follow these steps through the policy preparation.

Urgent **policy navigation:**

- Make sure any policy options chosen to be delivered are monitored, even lightly is better than not at all, to try to see what is working (or not), keeping an eye out for unintended consequences.
- Report regularly (sometimes daily is needed, depending on the emergency) on both the issue and the effectiveness of the policy response. This is not about trying to give good news, it is critical for decision makers to know as quickly as possible if a policy response is not working so they can try something else.
- Be prepared to change your advice based on new evidence, new insights and what is happening on the ground.

Preparing in "peacetime" to ensure good policy in a crisis

Good policy starts in peacetime. We hear all sorts of excuses from policy shops that they can't be proactive, that there isn't any or enough data, however there is no good reason to not prepare, because there are never perfect conditions for good policy. Some things you can do today to help you prepare for tomorrow include:

- Using AI to find meta analysis or recent literature reviews on key topics in a portfolio likely to come up. Having a good knowledge of

what is happening overseas can be a good go to when looking for options quickly.

- Add relevant resources to a shared document for the whole team to contribute to, for ease of reference and reuse when needed.
- Conduct regular group exercises based on your portfolio. An old-fashioned environmental scan + gaming type session (e.g. what is wrong, what could go wrong) in addition to where we are going. Make it over nice coffee—two things at once.
- Identify what has been done before—ask people that have been around for a while, search political announcements for the last 20 years—what has been tried, what has failed etc.
- Have a 20 minute team competition to find the most innovative/ effective policy options to a problem within a portfolio. Winner gets a crazy cat picture or chocolate bar.
- Think ahead about in particular areas or organisations who would be good to engage with/ or co-design on particular policy areas.
- Identify what data is held in your organisation and your national statistical organisation might have (like the Australian Bureau of Statistics or Stats NZ) that relates to your portfolio? Who else might have relevant data? Meet data people and teams to talk about your challenges and likely issues, not just to find solutions but to build relationships and get them thinking ahead of time for when there is an urgent need.

On this last point, it doesn't need to be a big deal to meet another team. It takes probably an hour to arrange a meet and greet with a data team—allowing half an hour on the policy people saying what they are working on and half an hour for the data people to say what is possible. If data people know what the policy people are working on—they can have a think about what data or insights they have or could get, and can be active support for good policy. You simply need to make a little time to prioritise this kind of informal engagement to enable evidence-based policy.

Creating the conditions for evidence-based policy, even when urgent

Karen Joyce, New Zealand Government

I mentored a group of young policy professionals at the Ministry of Social Development. I promised them, despite the craziness of a high priority and Prime Minister-led busy work programme, Wednesday at 9.00am to 10.00am were non-negotiable training/learning time. It is always possible to set aside time if something is seen as valuable and one looks across a diary for "less busy" times. Policy shops too often get in cycles of urgency which they feel they can't step out of. In this constant urgency, brainstorming advice becomes the norm and there is little to no evidence basis when that happens, so it should not be the norm. It is useful and important to consider and implement the small and manageable things a busy policy shop can do to help everyone get out of the cycle of craziness and towards doing good evidence based policy.

Risk management with adaptive policy delivery

It is important to see risk management as a continuous and dynamic process, rather than as a once off or periodic exercise. Dynamic risk management goes hand in hand with continual evaluation, as it means keeping a finger on the pulse of new and unexpected risks, and proactively mitigating them as they emerge. You need to ensure you have enough decision making authority and flexibility in your operating model to not just identify and monitor risks, but to proactively mitigate them as circumstances change. You should not require a new funding proposal or policy change to mitigate emergent risks, though it is important to keep the relevant authorities informed and to engage them where new authorities are required. This means being clear on who has decision making authority for your policy program and relevant interventions, and to make sure you have a clear protocol for escalation and access if and when required.

The following high level guides provide the basics to risk management for your policy agenda, but you should also invite your departmental risk experts and domain specific risk professionals into the process. These basics are complemented by the same mindset, skills and tools used for continual evaluation, including data-driven and continuous risk monitoring, modelling, escalation and a combination of real time tools and risk management as a continuous practice.

Our thanks to Donald S. Williams and Pierre Skorich for their contributions below on risk.

Risk Policy and risk—the art of making the complex simple

Author: Donald S. Williams.

A policy is raised to achieve outcomes. Risk is the "effect of uncertainty on objectives" (ISO 31000). Risk management of the policy is required during both the Policy Preparation Phase and the Policy Navigation Phase. Risk must be managed at two levels:

1. The whole of policy level: assessing and managing risk for the overarching policy objectives (usually at a program or portfolio level).

2. Individual interventions level: assessing and managing risk for all individual policy interventions (often a project level).

Consideration must be given to what is uncertain:

- what could change
- why it might change
- how the change could be recognised particularly in the early stages
- the effect on the intended outcomes
- whether the effect is beneficial, detrimental or potentially both.

The risk is managed by deciding if it is to be encouraged, for beneficial outcomes, or minimised for detrimental outcomes. What factors, external and internal to the organisation, can be influenced to:

- change the likelihood of the risk occurring
- maximising or minimising the consequences should the risk be realised
- avoiding the risk by not undertaking the action.

The key to the process is understanding the context in which the policy, and hence risks, exist:

- not just the context visible to the particular manager but the larger organisational and societal context
- seriously considering the effects and implications of the outcomes of policy in the broad context
- objectively determining the balance between beneficial and detrimental outcomes
- recognising risk analysis is consideration of “what if” and is not dealing in certainties
- being willing to make decisions, or recommendations to the decision makers, based on the risk assessment.

Risk management techniques, tools and skills are available from many sources. It is critical that any risk management process be firmly focused on the real outcomes that will be affected by the uncertainty.

Dynamic risk management

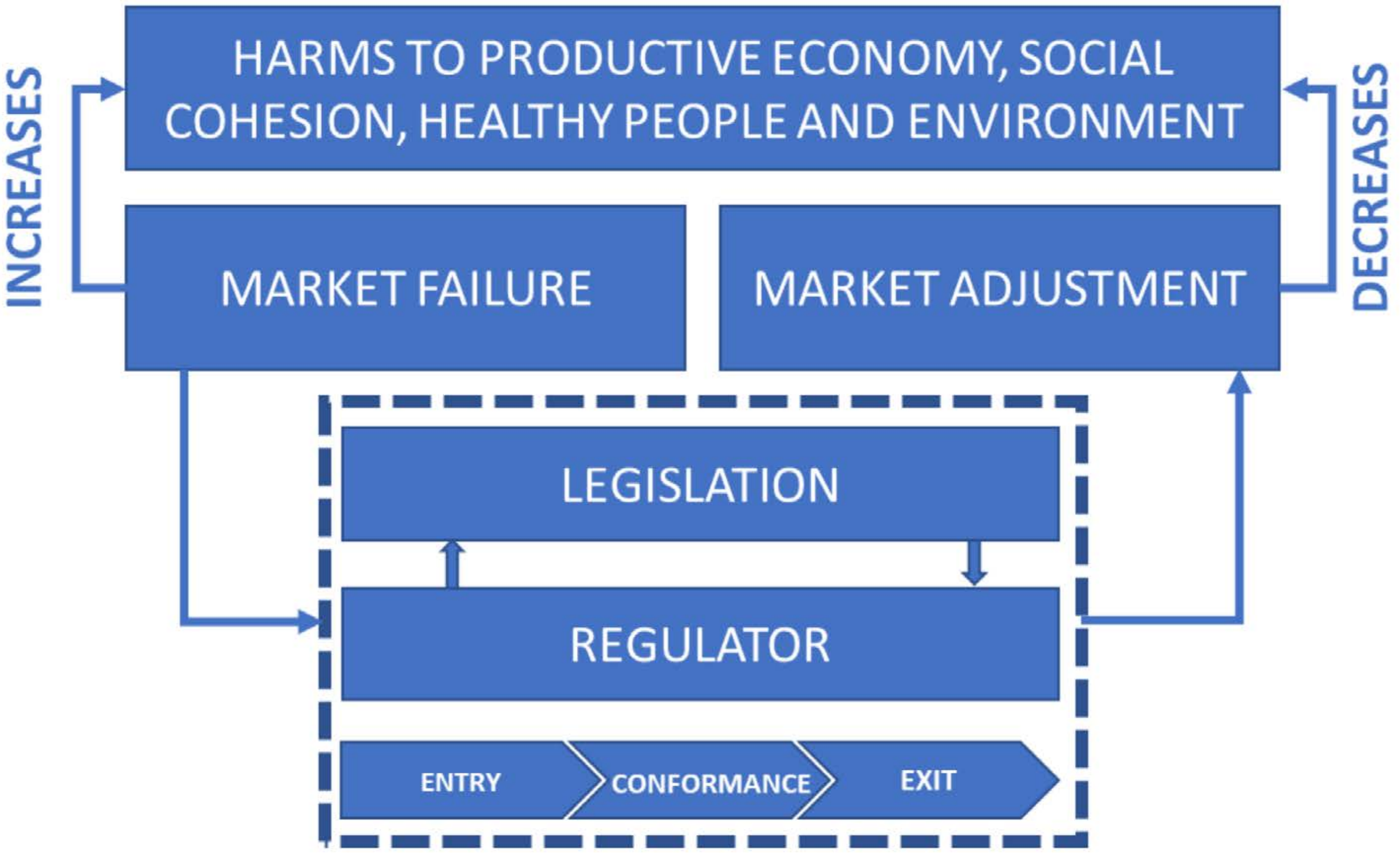
Author: Pierre Skorich

What is risk?

All organisations, across every facet of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, have finite resources to manage their operations and deliver value. Such constraints mean that it is critical that resources be invested in the things that really matter, while foregoing those that create less or no value. This is acutely the case for public servants due to the source of resources flowing from tax revenue.

The International Standards Organisation in ISO31000 defines risk as "the effect of uncertainty on objectives". We make good decisions about allocating our resource effort by considering the relative risks and applying resources to the issues which are going to impact most on those objectives.

At a strategic level, government always has the same objectives: to protect and preserve a productive economy, promote social cohesion, safeguard healthy people and a healthy environment. "Policy problems" can then be seen as "uncertainties" that may impact on those objectives.



Dynamic risk assessment recognises the fact that our world exists in a constant state of flux meaning that risk assessment cannot be a set and forget exercise, it needs to be continuous to create policy and resource allocation which is adaptive to change.

There are several levels of risk assessment which public sector organisations need to be adept at to create and administer good policy. The example below considers risk in the biosecurity context.

POLICY / LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC RISK DRIVERS

The macro drivers for strategic risk – A Strategic Threat Assessment analyses assessing whether these drivers are staying the same or changing

STRATEGIC RISK

A structured and documented description of the very few strategic risks and their drivers enables us to determine what interventions are needed and in which markets

LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS, INCENTIVES AND POWERS

Legislative obligations and incentives (e.g. permissions and grants) drive changes in behaviour in the market to address the policy problem

COMPLIANCE RISK DRIVERS

Compliance risk drivers are *knowledge, capability* and *motivation,* they determine whether the actors in the market are likely to behave in a way that mitigates the strategic risk

COMPLIANCE RISK

A structured and documented description of the compliance risk enables us to determine the best preventative, detective and responsive controls to manage and promote compliance

COMPLIANCE CONTROLS

The physical compliance controls such as education, inspection, anomaly detection, profiling, tactical intelligence and enforcement.

INTERNAL QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE CONTROLS

The mechanisms to maintain and assure the quality of controls and to assess their performance in terms of *efficiency, cost effectiveness* and *effectiveness.*

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Strategic Analysis identifies the megatrends and makes judgments about their impact on the systemic drivers for Biosecurity risk

STRATEGIC ANALYTICS

The Strategic Analysis can be converted into data to which analytical models can be applied to identify changes in drivers and their impact on operations and transactions

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Strategic Analysis and Analytics direct resources towards the highest threat/risk to identify supply chains and behaviours which threaten compliance.

OPERATIONAL ANALYTICS

The operational analysis can be converted into data to which profiling and anomaly detection models can be applied to identify real or perceived instances of non-compliance.

TACTICAL ANALYSIS

The operational analytics (as well as other channels) can identify non-compliance, to which tactical analysis can unravel and identify the case specifics for biosecurity and/or non-compliance response

BUSINESS ANALYTICS

Business Analytics measures the quality and performance of risk controls relative to the risk drivers they are intended to address.

The first is **strategic risk**, which considers and assesses the macro-level risks which are of national significance. These risks are driven by major changes happening around the globe which can be described as PESTELO: Political, Economic, Scientific, Technological, Environmental, Legal and Organisational[1].

These major factors impact on whether our policy frameworks remain fit for purpose in our changing world and equally whether our administration of those policies through regulation and programmes is maintaining pace with emerging pressures.

The CSIRO published a report: *Our Future World: Global megatrends impacting the way we live over coming decades* (Hajkowicz and Naughtin). These "megatrends" are trajectories of change that typically unfold over years or decades and have the potential for substantial and transformative impact.

Image from Global megatrends, the 2022 revision, CSIRO

1.PESTELO framework originally developed by Harvard professor Francis Aguilar in 1967.

Megatrends can provide a source of insight on how strategic risks will change in response to significant trajectories of change.

Operational risk describes the specific instantiation of a strategic risk. In the context of government interventions which are often regulatory in nature, we often see this present itself as "compliance risk", the risk that regulated entities will not comply with the obligations set on them to manage a policy problem. These compliance risks need to be assessed dynamically, as entities change and shift their behaviours or try to evade controls. Importantly, the strategic drivers will also be responsible for changes in compliance behaviours, for example in response to changing economic conditions.

As we continuously undertake our risk assessments, it is therefore important to keep in mind the relationships between the strategic and operational risk drivers.

Tactical risk describes the risk that presents itself on a day-to-day basis, affecting short term goals and activities. This type of risk is managed at the coal-face by public servants.

Finally, **enterprise risk** describes the range of risks that affect the performance of the organisation itself, for example quality risk, workplace health and safety risk, integrity risk. These risks impact on the ability of organisations to deliver their business.

Risk and control

Assessing risk is not enough. Identified risks need to be mitigated and we do this through "controls". There are three broad typologies of controls to manage risks:

- Preventative controls: which stop a risk event from occurring
- Detective controls: which detect either a risk event which is going to occur or one that has occurred
- Responsive controls: which respond to a risk event once it has occurred, generally to mitigate the consequences of the risk.

Controls have to be implemented to genuinely be a control. An internal policy or document is not a real control as it does not have the effect of mitigating risk until it has been implemented and is followed. It is useful therefore to see controls as synonymous with organisational "capabilities"—the functions that make the organisation able to do things. For example, Education is a capability that may prevent compliance risk, by informing a regulated entity about what it needs to do to comply with a legislative framework.

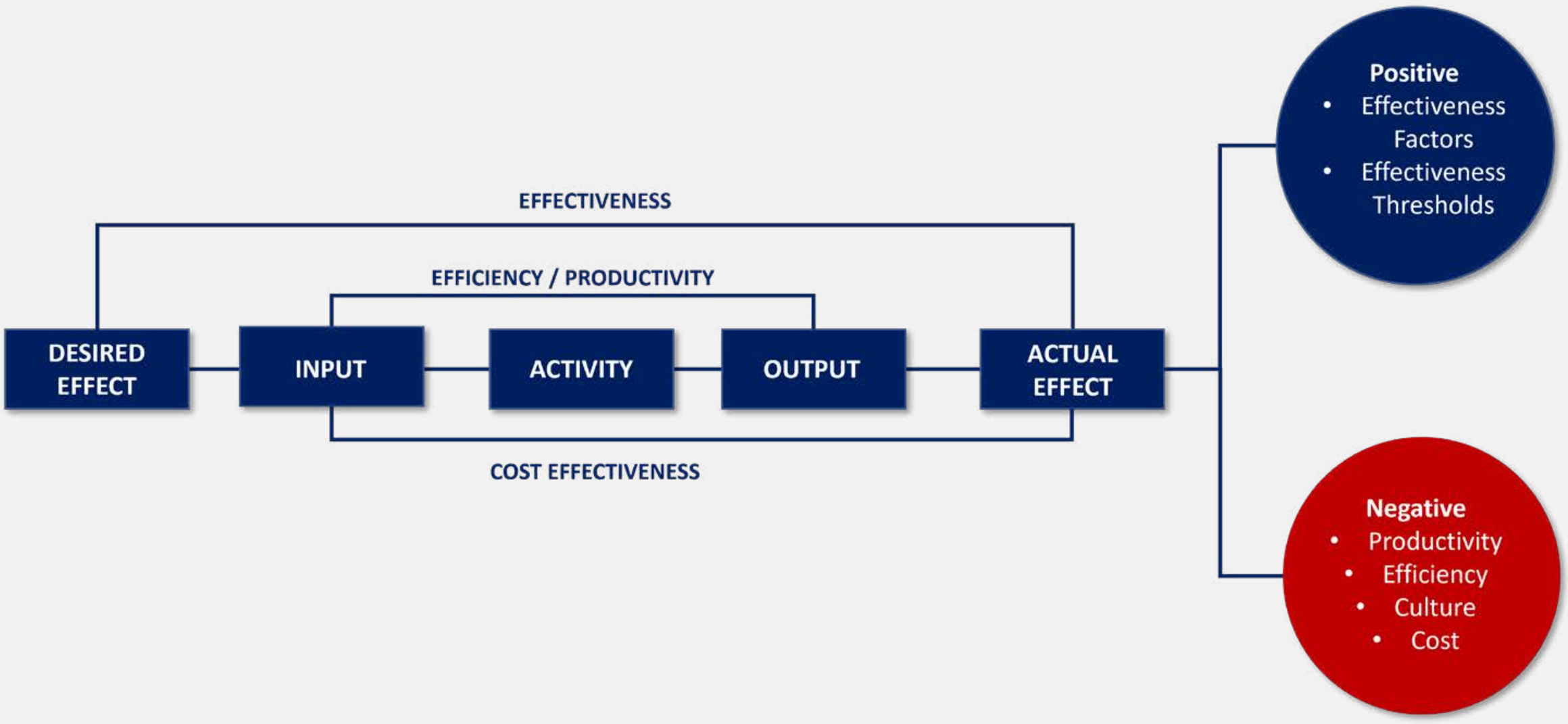
Capabilities are made up of a set of fundamental inputs, which can be described in different ways, but most easily as People, Process, Information and Technology. These inputs are things that create cost and this brings us back to the relationship between dynamic risk and allocation of resources.

When we are investing in these risk controls we need to consider two things:

- Are we (still) investing in the right things?—that is, are they effective?
- Are we still investing in things right?—that is, are they efficient and cost effective?

The final element of our dynamic risk model is the controls on quality and performance that we put within the organisation. These controls could justify a chapter in their own right, so we will concentrate on a few elements. The diagram below shows how to think about these elements, effectiveness is about whether the actual effect of the control matches the desired effect, while efficiency is about how much investment we need to put in to operate it, and cost effectiveness is whether the cost is worth it when considering the actual effect.

Dynamic risk assessment is not just thinking about the upsides of our interventions and how to protect them, it is also important to consider the downsides of policy interventions—for example will they hamper productivity, create new costs, or impact on vulnerable people.



What makes this dynamic?

The dynamic element of this model is that risks at all levels throughout the model from strategic, to compliance, to tactical and enterprise need to be continually assessed and reassessed. Where the characteristics of the risk have changed this may mean that our interventions are no longer fit for purpose and therefore our policy settings, legislation, regulatory strategies and performance expectations may need to be changed or swapped out for new and more effective interventions. Without these kinds of changes our policies can become stale and anachronistic, responding to problems that no longer exist while failing to keep pace with new and emerging challenges.

Balancing principles and prescription in policymaking

Whether you are producing new legislation, an operational policy or even advice to a minister, you want to get the balance right when it comes to prescription and principles. Policy professionals and teams should avoid zealotry towards one or the other of these approaches, and should instead

take an evidence based and test driven approach to leveraging both as needed. Most legislation/regulation domains benefit from a combination of prescriptive and principle based rules.

Below is a high level mental model for the benefits and challenges of each, and when to use:

	PRINCIPLES	PRESCRIPTIONS
Best used...	Where judgement is important.	Where consistency is important.
Benefits	Can be useful where there is ambiguity, enables flexibility in implementation.	Cheaper and easier to implement (particularly if there is a reference implementation).
Challenges	Expensive, slow and inconsistent in implementation. Favours incumbents and large, well funded organisations.	Can be limiting where in domains where there is continuous change.
Assurance	Hard to assure as highly interpretive. Assurance can be supported by case studies and reference scenarios.	Easier to assure, as conditional compliance should be clearer. Assurance can be supported by prescriptive scenarios with expected results and a reference implementation.
Examples *(illustrative only)*	Regulated entities need to report on a best effort basis.	Regulated entities need to report all transactions over $10,000.00 Applicants must have been in the country for 5 years, must have no criminal convictions, and must not have travelled to a prohibited country within 5 years of the date of application.

Working with ministers

Working with ministers and their staff can be quite daunting for public servants, and it is important to ensure you are engaging appropriately so as to maintain balance and integrity, not just for yourself, but for the program, your public institution, and to maintain public trust, confidence and perceived legitimacy of the public sector more broadly. There are no shortcuts or cheat codes for this. The discomfort of serving your minister as well as serving the broader public (and parliament) is part of your job as a public servant, one that you and others will have to maintain

as ministers change over time. So the starting point is to realise that you don't just serve a minister. You don't just serve the public either. You serve your mandate: that is, the legal and constitutional authorities and accountabilities delegated to your department.

This isn't to say you shouldn't have a good relationship with your minister and their office. Public servants should strive to understand, anticipate and engage with their minister(s) and ministerial staff, but should do so from a perspective of enthusiastic, confident professional partnership and mutual respect, not one of passive subservience. It is in maintaining a professional relationship grounded by an approach of long term stewardship and advocacy of values and evidence-based public good, that this relationship can maintain the balance and integrity required for trustworthy and sustainably good public administration.

Below is some guidance to best understanding, working with and maintaining a balanced and professional relationship with your minister and their office.

Understand the relevant ministerial and departmental authorities and context

The most important framework that should define your relationship with your minister(s) starts with Foundational Policy. In Foundational Policy, you should be able to identify what legal authorities sit with the department and what sits with the minister or any other policy actor(s). This activity is benefited by the assistance of your legal team, policy experts and with constitutional and legislative expertise from outside your department, drawing from any relevant case law and from independent academic expertise. Independent views are important in this mix so you don't unintentionally become too influenced by any of the many motivations from different actors in your space.

There are two areas of Foundational Policy to consider:

- **Whole of government Foundational Policies**—including the constitutional delegations of authority and separations of power, whole of government policies like privacy, procurement, regulations

(in the Australian Government this includes the Australian Constitution, the Public Service Act, the Privacy Act, the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act).

- **Portfolio or domain specific Foundational Policies**—most departments will be a range of legislation and/or regulations that they are responsible for, which provides context, authorities, accountabilities, delegation of decision making and more. Often (but not always), there will be specific responsibilities allocated to a minister (such as decision making on a special visa) and specific responsibilities allocated to a secretary/department Head. Either of these can formally delegate responsibilities through other instruments, so you need to be aware of any further formal delegations beyond the portfolio legislation/regulation.

Every portfolio will have a range of legislation and regulations that define both the whole of jurisdiction and the portfolio specific role and authorities of the minister(s) you work with.

Of course, if you have already established a pattern for how you work with your current minister, you may find it hard to change this pattern until there is some extrinsic opportunity to do so. Changes in government or a new minister provides an opportunity to reset your relationship and realign it to your actual authorities. Of course, your minister will have their own ideas on how they should work with you, but part of your job as a responsible public servant and steward is to be clear and consistent in how the relationship best works, and it is important to advise (and hold the line) for where where accountabilities are clearly defined.

Be proactive, mission oriented and innovative

While it is true that there are always some ministers who have little regard for public servants or the public sector writ large, the best thing you can do to build their confidence is to be proactive, bring your ideas, insights, evidence and innovative approaches to the table. If they don't want to hear them, you have at least demonstrated you are capable, and might open up meaningful discussion and opportunities to better drive policy and public outcomes.

Most ministers will understand that there is deep expertise and policy experience in the departments of their portfolio, so consider how you can demonstrate that expertise and experience. Bring experts from your department to meet with the minister and their staff for deep policy and program discussions and exploration of what is possible. Establish and foster long term engagement with experts and experience from outside your department to bring into policymaking and ministerial engagements, demonstrating your value as part of society, not separate to it. Use your delegated authority and departmental budget to innovate, experiment, engage and to deliver test-driven solutions where you have authority, or to bring to the minister where they have authority or where they are the pathway to authority.

The more proactive you are in delivering on your mandate and the Foundational and Operational Policies you have carriage of, the more you will build trust and confidence in the minister's office. If you are dealing with a genuinely aggressive or undermining minister or ministerial office, remember to not simply give up your authority, because what might be a little easier today will create ripples into the future. There will always be ministers (and advisors) who want to assume more authority than they should, or who genuinely misunderstand (or don't care) about maintaining a healthy (and lawful) balance of authority. Hold your space, calmly, professionally, confidently, and support your minister the best you can without undermining your role or legally delegated authorities as a public servant, nor the integrity or trustworthiness of your public institution.

Finally, you should be always leaning in to your authorities to deliver policy outcomes and public value. Innovation isn't a business case, it should be your "business as usual", with all programs having a little capacity to continuously explore, improve and optimise the program and policy settings for better outcomes. You should not need (nor seek) ministerial permission for what is in your authority. You can certainly inform or engage with the minister and their office, but once you start abdicating your authorities and delegated decision making to the minister, you start to lose the critical balance which is necessary for a high integrity, highly effective and highly trusted public institution.

Actively serve the government of the day, the parliament and the people

As a public servant, you sometimes (often!) feel like you are being pulled in different directions. On the one hand this is normal, as public servants serve many purposes and changing leadership over time, but this makes it incredibly important to find ways to maintain your professional and personal balance, so you can confidently exercise your authorities and sustainably navigate these pressures with stewardship, always bending the arc of policy towards public good.

Beyond your mandate, there is a useful balance found in intentionally striving to equally serve three masters of the public sector: the government, the parliament, and the people.

This framing is explicit in the Public Service Act of the Australian Government, however the approach is equally applicable to many public sectors, including state, territory and local governments.

When you work in the public sector, it can be challenging to pursue genuine "good" in the face of high pressure expediency. Evidence driven approaches—like service/system design, holistic or future policy proposals, science, or data analytics—can be hard to sustain in the face of top down directives unless there is a clear process, demand and support for what is actually needed and what actually works (especially if the evidence is in conflict with the direction given). In the case of public sectors, the stakes and pressures are especially high because many people are affected by good or bad work, and high pressure expediency could be from budget changes, politics, habitual reactivism or a genuine crisis.

So, how can you maintain enough balance to provide a solid foundation for sustainably achieving "good" outcomes when undertaking public service? We often hear about the importance of an apolitical public sector, but what does that mean day to day—and what do you need for yourself to be comfortable performing that role?

Who are the three masters?

The ***Public Service Act 1999*** laid out as its first **main objective** "to establish an apolitical public service that is efficient and effective in serving the **Government**, the **Parliament** and the **Australian public**". This bold objective provides the basis for a mental model that can help public servants maintain the balance needed to deliver sustained and long term policy outcomes and public good, while maintaining trust with all parties in the face of high pressure work environments and constant change.

Even in public sectors that don't codify this concept, it is still a healthy model to apply.

Although the articulation of these three masters became less obvious in subsequent public sector legislation in Australia, it remains front andcentre on the **APSC Integrity and Code of Conduct** information. This mindset makes it possible to always bring the work of public servants back to a purpose driven and balanced approach. One that serves the government of the day (after all, they are our elected representatives), but does not do so blindly or at the cost of oversight or the public good, while maintaining the confidence and support of the broader parliamentary system.

If we were to consider these three masters like the legs of a stool, then we are most stable when we have equal pressure and responsiveness to all three. Many of the challenges we face in public sectors today trace back to that balance at various times being too skewed towards any one leg at the cost of the other two.

How do we best serve all three

Public servants can best **serve the government** by taking the time to understand the government intentions and provide frank, fearless and evidence based advice on all options, including discussion on what is desirable, legal, technically feasible and socially/economically viable. Most ministers are interested in ideas, expertise and the realities faced, particularly when trying to implement their policies or ideas. They also want to hear about new challenges and opportunities, which are often

most obvious at the coalface of service delivery, regulation or policy development. They want to know risks and "bad" news so they have a chance to do something about it. And they certainly want to know about associated costs. Proactiveness is both necessary and appropriate which requires the confidence to look ahead and develop new policy options and to innovate where there is delegated policy authority to meet future challenges and opportunities, ideally engaged with the public. There is an important role for the public service to provide a trusted and apolitical voice in the public domain. There is also a significant amount of public sector work and efforts where the direction is defined by legislation, the constitution, case law, international crises, emergency response efforts or indeed, by the needs and values of the communities we serve. This means even just on any given day, there is an active balancing act required to conduct our work.

Whilst there is great scope for innovation and ground up proposals from the public sector, public servants don't have unfettered rights to divert their effort away from their institutional mandate or ministerial directions that have been reasonably and lawfully given to them. At the same time, the majority of the work of public sectors is usually not affected by changing government policies, as there is so much established in legislation, the constitution or existing operations, so there is a lot of scope to apply an innovative, evidence based and values driven approach to the work, accountable to, but less affected by, changing policy landscapes. So public servants should also not feel they can't do ANYTHING without the say so of their minister. Indeed, it is in day to day implementation and administration of our public sectors that there is great scope for further evidence-driven approaches, apolitical balance, innovation and participatory approaches.

In public sectors you often hear people talk about the "front page test" whereby people are encouraged to consider how their actions would look on the front page of the news. We have often seen this applied through purely a political lens rather than a public good lens, as there is sometimes more pressure to not embarrass a minister than there is to genuinely address the challenge. When the heads of departments are perceived as political appointees, this can erode practical and cooperative apolitical engagement with parliamentary processes and with the public. So serving the government must be continually balanced and not perceived or actually at the cost of serving the public and Parliament.

Public servants can best **serve the parliament** in two key ways: 1) by embracing the usefulness of parliamentary oversight; and 2) by engaging with the parliament as the "doing" arm of the legislature. For oversight, public officials need to be able to justify to the parliament (through Senate Estimates, committees and other parliamentary oversight mechanisms) how a policy or program was implemented, what advice was given, the outcomes and how money was spent. As for the legislature, the parliament is responsible for debating, improving and assuring all new legislation and laws, so the public sector can assist with providing appropriate facts, modelling tools, evidence, statistics and options to support the best possible legislative outcomes. Of course, sometimes these responsibilities can be subjected to political theatre, but there are important points of intersection between the public sector and parliament and it is the job of public servants to occupy this space calmly, professionally and from a balanced position of evidence, to always help ensure the best public outcome prevails.

It is also important to be confident in presenting facts to the parliament and oversight mechanisms (like Senate Estimates, Parliamentary Inquiries or Royal Commissions). It is not appropriate for public servants to comment on Political Policy, but they are expected to confidently comment on Foundational, Operational and International Policies, and to also clearly and openly represent how they are implementing (and advising) on Political Policy.

Just to be clear, best public outcomes are not necessarily the same as the outcome desired by the minister, the public institution or the individual public servant. It is helpful to instead focus on evidence based and measurable public outcomes from different perspectives, ideally taking into account the diversity of needs across the community.

Finally, public servants can best **serve the Australian public** by engaging the community in developing user-centred or test driven policy options, for designing better services, identifying social/economic interventions, or myriad other opportunities to engage people in developing the services and laws they rely on. Equally important to serving the community is proactively being accountable to the Australian people and ensuring the best possible public good is a helpful lens to apply to all public sector work. Forget the front page test, how would your mum, dad or grandma feel

about it? How will future generations assess it and can you defend it and on what grounds? How can you engage the public throughout to ensure their expertise, experience and expectations are part of the process? How can you work in the open, so that you are always inviting peer review, feedback and participation in the process?

Expanding “us” to all three masters

Another part of this mental model is to actively consider all three “masters” as necessary and helpful (in different and sometimes challenging ways) to ensuring the best work and outcomes from the public sector. When it is framed, even subtly, as “the minister and us” versus the world, things can fall out of balance. We suggest that genuinely seeing the parliament and Australian public as partners in the work of the public sector naturally leads to better outcomes, engagement, openness, peer review, robustness and a better balance for maintaining a values driven and evidence based approach.

If all public servants were to at least consider the government, the parliament and the Australian public as our three genuine masters that we should **try** to serve in as balanced a way as possible, it provides three (3) key benefits:

1. a helpful internal balance against becoming either politicised or rebellious, which provides a stronger and more sustainable foundation upon which we can serve all three without being perceived as swinging any way at the cost of the othe,rs

2. a greater perception (from all three masters) of being the trusted, professional, expert, apolitical, evidence based and values drive voice in the room, which grows trust in government services, law, regulation and legislation

3. a naturally more robust basis for engagement with a greater breadth of skills, expertise and experience to draw into the important work of policy and legislation, regulation, taxation, service delivery and other critical functions of the public sector.

In conclusion, trying to equally serve all three masters provides the best and most sustainable possibility for serving any of them well. This balancing act helps to maintain a sustained equilibrium and stable foundation for effectively progressing evidence based work that is values and purpose driven, while maintaining a working trust with all parties. When trust is lost or damaged with any of the three, it doesn't just hurt in the short term, it hurts perceived legitimacy.

Ultimately, it is in the day to day efforts and actions of public servants that this counts most. It is in what you choose to do that you demonstrate your values and the sort of public servant you are. So **choose** carefully, because your work is important, and it affects everyone.

Policy partnerships: maintain balance and engagement

When public servants work collaboratively with the broader community, especially with individuals and organisations that are naturally aligned and motivated for the same policy outcome, then everyone can do their part for the good of society.

Public servants should carefully consider which policy actors are systemically aligned or misaligned with the policy goal, which can in turn inform how to engage most constructively.

For instance, a scientist/researcher/academic is naturally motivated to produce an explainable, repeatable and peer-reviewed result, whereas a for-profit entity is naturally motivated to produce something that a customer is willing to pay for. Politicians (particularly in Australia, where ministers are also elected representatives) might be personally motivated to act in what they consider the best interests of the community, but are systemically incentivised to do things that help them get elected. Natural motivations are intrinsic both at an individual level, and at a structural and functional level. Structural incentives generally outlast, influence or can even nullify the natural motivations of individuals, so it is important to ensure the systemic incentives of a department or policy program is designed to reinforce and incentivise the intended policy purpose, which in

the case of public institutions might be anything from a robust democracy to a safe and equitable society. Public servants might individually be motivated to deliver policy outcomes and public good, but if the structures and systems around them are built to prioritise efficiencies or political objectives, then individual natural motivations can become hampered, day to day.

So what might a sustainable and mutually reinforcing governance ecosystem look like, one built on and designed to manage the natural motivations of all actors? It would need to have the right range of actors, motivated in mutually reinforcing ways, working sustainably, with the right tensions maintained such that the natural motivation of any one entity (or category) doesn't overshadow the rest of the system. Ideally, a program, policy or public institution would proactively understand:

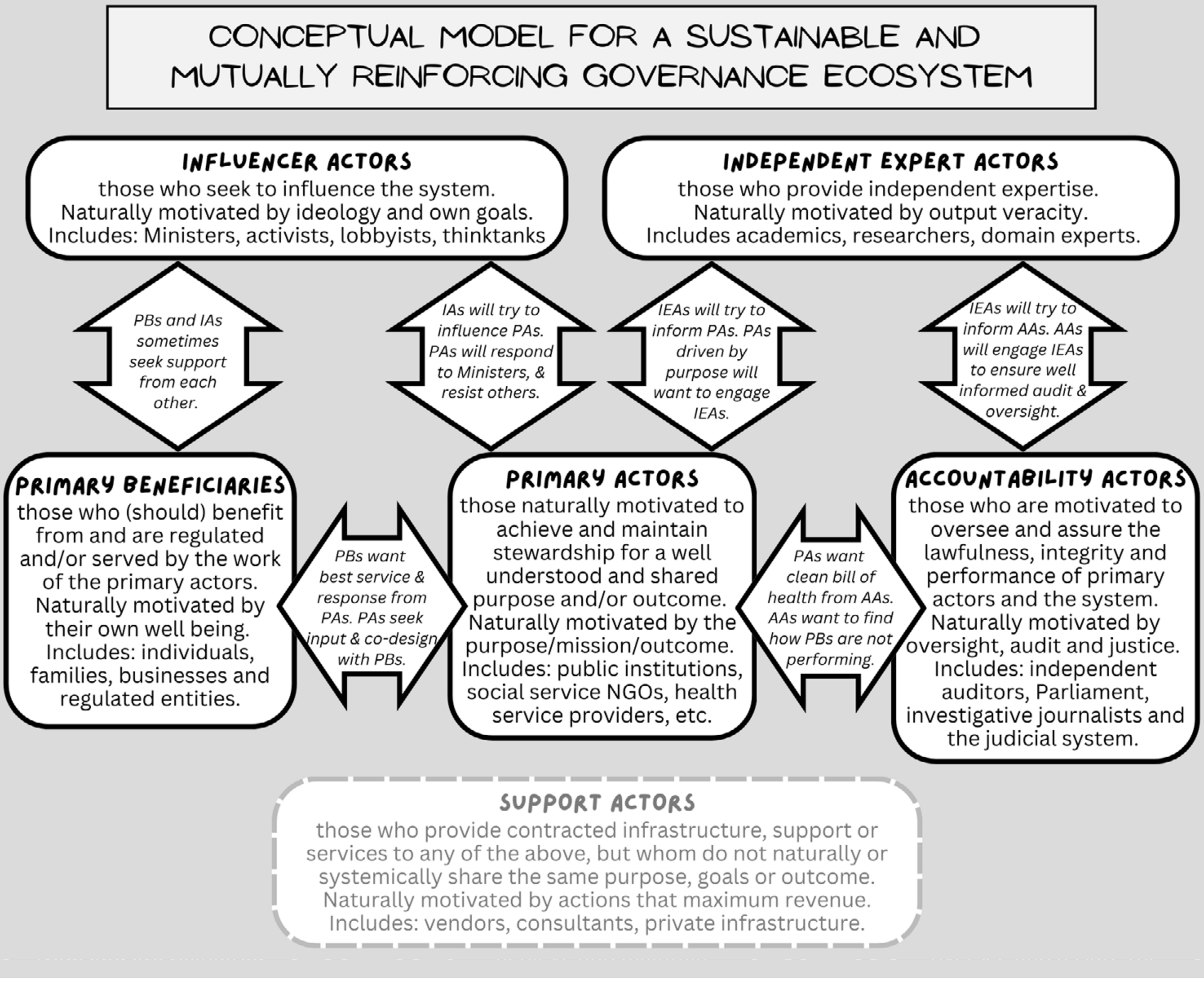
- **Primary actors**—the entities and people who are naturally motivated to achieve and maintain stewardship for a well understood and shared purpose and/or outcome. Includes public institutions, social service non-government organisations, health providers.

- **Primary beneficiaries**—the people and entities who benefit from and are regulated/served by the work of the primary actors, and are naturally motivated by their own well being, including individuals, families, businesses and regulated entities.

- **Independent expert actors**—the entities and people who provide independent and parallel expertise and evidence-based advice, made free of fear or favour, where the natural motivation is the veracity of the expertise itself. Includes academics, researchers, universities and research institutions, and some domain experts in the community (active or retired).

- **Accountability actors**—the entities and people who are motivated to oversee and ensure the lawfulness, integrity, performance and accountability of the primary actors. Includes independent auditors (ideally not the same actors providing support services), the parliament (and related oversight mechanisms such as Senate Committees and Royal Commissions), the fourth estate and the judicial system.

- **Influencer actors**—the entities and people who are naturally motivated to influence the system, directly (ministers, Cabinet, parliament) or indirectly (activists, thinktanks, lobbyists, unions).



- **Support actors**—the contracted entities that provide infrastructure, support and services to any of the above, but do not naturally and systemically share the same purpose or outcome.

Below is a conceptual diagram for how these actors and their natural motivations can complement and maintain appropriate tensions to support a sustainable approach to any purpose or outcome.

The key to understanding and applying the model above is not to simply map the actors in each category, but to establish and maintain the most appropriate mechanisms for how each is engaged, on an ongoing basis, as part of the resourcing and operating model for that department, program or policy.

Fitness

When addressing a policy or strategy challenge, individuals respond differently. Each person examines the situation based on their strengths and comfort levels, approaching it accordingly. For instance, some may consider their mindset and ask how the policy should be viewed, what has been done previously, and how to approach it differently or similarly. Another individual might focus on their skills, such as economics, data analysis, policy writing, or interpersonal abilities, applying these assets to the policy challenge. Additionally, there are always numerous and evolving tools available for policymaking. So policy fitness required these three distinct layers: **mindset, skillset, and toolset**.

The challenge and opportunity lie in utilising all three layers effectively. In this new era of policy development, it is essential to determine which mindsets make a difference in the policymaking process, the necessary skill sets (including experiential skills), and the appropriate tool sets. Although not exhaustive, this combination of mindsets, skill sets, and tool sets serves as a starting point for creating value in policy endeavors.

An adaptive mindset—shaping the world, not merely observing it

Embracing a new approach to designing and delivering policy requires new processes, new tools, and new skills. However, shifting the way we do things will never on its own be sufficient; we also need new ways of being—new values, beliefs and values which guide how public servants do their work.

Image by Alex Carebi

In order to bring about the shifts we've described above, we need new mindsets or mental models. In their paper *The Water of Systems Change*, John Kania, Mark Kramer and Peter Senge describe mental models as follows:

> *"Habits of thought - deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk."*

The table below offers some ideas around the kinds of mindset shifts required:

WORKSHOP TITLE	PURPOSE
"If I follow a good process, I will be able to implement a policy with absolute fidelity"	"I need a process, which I will hold lightly, in order to respond to new information and circumstances as they arise"
"I can control outcomes"	"I can create the conditions for good outcomes to emerge"
"Evidence and data will enable me to comprehensively understand the situation"	"We can never fully understand a complex system, so the evidence and data will support an ongoing process of learning and course correction"
"The role of government is to know the answers and deliver programs"	"The role of the government is to build relationships and partner with others, or give the work back to those best placed, to do the work that needs to be done"
"Not knowing is weakness"	"Humility is power"

How do you shift mindsets? There are many ways. Kania, Kramer and Senge highlight the role that narrative plays in supporting a shift in mental models. Disrupting dominant narratives can be a powerful way to begin shifting people's mindsets. Donella Meadows, who uses the language of mindsets and paradigms interchangeably, offers the following:

> "So how do you change paradigms?…you keep pointing at the anomalies and failures in the old paradigm, you keep coming yourself, and loudly and with assurance from the new one, you insert people with the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. You don't waste time with reactionaries; rather you work with active change agents and with the vast middle ground of people who are open-minded."

We also know that there is a bi-directional relationship between shifts in ways of doing and being. Mindsets often shift when people experiment with new ways of doing their work. The shifts in being and doing can—and often do—happen concurrently.

Open and closed mode thinking

Iain McGilchrist wrote a provocative book in 2010 called *The Master And His Emissary: The Divided Brain And The Making Of The Western World*. There, he encouraged us to start focusing on the fact that humans feature two hemispheres to their brain. His argument was that this duality suggests a multiplicity of modes of experience and dispositions towards the world which can be harnessed to grow in our relationships to that world. Sometimes, these different modes are engaged in a power struggle or we ignore one to the others' peril. Either way, this limits our existence and progress. When we recognise and embrace the full cranial repertoire at our disposal, we alternatively provide a powerful engine to fuel human possibilities. In his words "The kind of attention we pay actually alters the world: we are, literally, partners in creation" (2010:18).

The world of policymaking is no different. Being able to tap the full capacity of our neurological networks should yield better payoffs in terms of fuelling possibilities and generating new freedoms and options.

How well are we currently doing in harnessing our cranial repertoire? The mainstream policymaking process is heavily dominated by the disciplines of economics, law and science. Yet we know that creativity and the arts are powerful and important to human endeavors. They can also be intrinsic to political and policy life. How did one set of ideas and disciplines crowd out others? Why have we tended to privatise creativity to the personal realm instead of its public face?

There are many stories that might be told to attempt to respond to these questions. That we privilege certain sorts of knowledge and evidence (Althaus 2020), that our political and policy systems seek control because uncertainty is intolerable and viewed as incompetence or irresponsible (Hamill 2013), that we have been captured by seductive models that suggest we can impose simple frameworks to tame the world (Pusey 1991). For now, let's put those stories aside to focus on movements we see by modern public services and servants to recalibrate the balance.

The Creative Bureaucracy movement and its associated Creative Bureaucracy Festival is one such initiative spawned by Charles Landry and Margie Caust (2017) that encourages the harnessing of all human perspectives and capacities to improve policymaking for the 21st century.

Scholarly and practical work on narrative based policymaking is another movement that has kickstarted creativity in important ways across the policymaking spectrum. This reality can be extremely powerful for policymaking (see, e.g. Roe 1994; and Borins 2011). Public administrators can use narrative techniques to reframe problems and connect decision makers and affected parties to ways to make sense of what is happening at any given point (see Dickinson et al. 2018 who describe storytelling as a necessary skill for the twenty-first-Century public servant). Narrative also allows diverse stories to surface, thereby facilitating ways to understand why conflict and consensus might be present and how to navigate through such conflict and consensus (see, e.g. the work of Le Baron Duryea and Potts 1993). These are important tools. Collective sense-making and a path forward through emotional and intellectual dimensions of policy are critical to public administration and policymaking success.

The ability to establish clearly shared understandings and empathic insights as to how a policy is framed and solutions put forward can shift the

dial on policy progress. Antagonism can turn to empathy, brick walls can turn to possibilities and ignorance can turn to conversation.

Meanwhile in functional policy areas such as health, education, housing, justice to name but a few, we are seeing deliberate deployment of ideas and processes beyond conventional analytical, critical thinking to generate new options to meet community needs and aspirations. Links between the arts and human well-being are well documented. Crawford (2018) argues that the arts act as a "shadow health service". Certain forms of music, singing, dancing, museum and gallery visiting, as well as visual thinking strategies present options to be more inclusive, to value diversity, to establish social bonding and connect people together in new ways that they find joyful and life-giving rather than threatening.

A turn to the possibilities offered by imagination, creativity and letting go of control involves tapping different mindsets and skills. Here, we call this method **open mode thinking**.

Whereas the conventional closed mode policymaking skillset stresses technical expertise, critical thinking and problem diagnosis with a view to coming to a solution, open modes of thinking suggest different pathways into and across the policymaking process (Chu 2017). **Closed modes** focus on predictability, analytical judgements and coming to single-solution precision, with policymaking largely a technocratic endeavor. Open mode works with unpredictability, preferencing imagination, multiple possibilities, blue-sky and no-wrong-answer thinking, iterative prototyping, improvisation, co-creation and empathic connection to make progress on policy challenges and developing innovations.

Facts and figures can exist as independent knowledge to some degree in that they need to be explained and bridged to the context of the knower. Narrative, on the other hand, automatically and inevitably reaches into the depth of the knower and their world. Narrative connects. Our emotions—and often our senses—are engaged and not just our intellects. Cairney et al. (2016) argue that unlike the use of evidence to reduce uncertainty, this aspect of policymaking is about using persuasion to reduce ambiguity. Using emotional appeals that turn to "…emotions, gut feelings, deeply held beliefs and habits" (Cairney et al.2016, 399) is as much a part of the

policymaking endeavour as having recourse to hierarchies of "rational" evidence to inform problem definition and analysis. Political and policy leadership is thus concerned with performance. Sometimes this requires entertainment, but political and policy performance demands authenticity.

While many political and policy actors think carefully about how they will establish authenticity with respect to expertise and evidence, the arts remind us that authenticity requires as much care with emotions if this expertise and evidence is going to hold sway.

The policymaking endeavor needs both open and closed mode thinking. While the (re)calibration of open to closed mode balance might shift, more or less, depending on the policy issue in question, overall we know that more emphasis is needed across conventional policy spaces towards open mode thinking. This is because the world around us has grown in complexity and VUCA[2] realities. In order to confront these realities, we can either try to tame the world around us somehow or we grow the complexity of mind we hold internally in order to confront and respond with greater emergent confidence.

When open mode thinking is added to traditional policy analysis, new options open up and unforeseen opportunities begin to arise that are often unanticipated but positive. While they may or may not be a solution in themselves, open mode processes can inject powerful additives, or modes of expression and accomplishment, into the policymaking toolkit.

In the Australian setting, we are aware that parts of public services are adopting unique strategies to help create "under the radar" spaces for open mode thinking. For example, we know that certain groups of public servants are being "shielded" by levels above them in the hierarchy in order to create time and space for these innovators to engage in more playful and open-mode endeavors. These shielded teams are winning public sector innovation awards. While on the one hand this is an ingenious device to assist bureaucracies to generate new options and approaches, it is also sobering that our institutional fabric is not yet woven to embrace the entire continuum across closed to open modes of thinking and practice.

2 Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity, a lens that organisations can use to interpret their challenges and opportunities

Are there more open approaches to embracing all elements? If not, we may end up stifled in the grips of a closed mode prison of our own making. "In the very end, civilizations perish because they listen to their politicians and not to their poets" (Mekas n.d.).

Balancing efficiency with efficacy

It is worth noting the old adage that you get what you measure. Our Australian public sectors were, broadly speaking, initially established as simple rules of administration and obedience to direction. Nowhere in these early foundations do you find the "why" or purpose. Later in the 1999 Act we see a full values statement along with two interesting requirements that have dominated public sector culture ever since: **efficiency and effectiveness**.

Having the language of efficiency and effectiveness in the public service is appropriate, but it needs to be balanced with purpose and outcomes. But when you look to the foundational frameworks of the Australian Public Service, where is the reference to purpose, to outcomes, or to the intended goals for society, the economy or people more broadly? Surely success in public sectors should be predominantly measured in the resulting human outcomes? By embedding efficiency and effectiveness without explicitly embedding the intended impact on humans, we believe we have and have experienced the impact of a phantom "master": the assumed and unrelenting master of **blind financial prudence**, with increasingly diminishing returns, usually and increasingly at the cost of all other goals or outcomes.

On the one hand, it seems obvious that if you want to do something, especially with public funds raised from taxpayers, that you should try to be efficient and effective. But on the other hand, efficient and effective as stated goals in isolation from other goals are a little tricky because they beg the question: to what end? Anyone can be 100% efficient in that if you give them nothing, they can do nothing. We always hear "there isn't budget for that", but the fact is, there is a substantial amount of money involved in the public sector and it is more a matter of prioritisation than availability.

The policy direction of the government of the day often is prescriptive around a number of key priorities, which is their prerogative and authority, but the majority of public funding is defined in foundational policies with support from the Parliament, so it is important that public servants understand and exercise their delegations to ensure a holistic and balanced approach that delivers on their mandate while also being responsive to the government of the day, always bending the arc of public sector efforts and investments towards the best and most sustainable public outcomes. The lack of holistic budgeting across the public service and the conflation of often highly competitive approaches to accessing funds has created an uneven distribution that is not always aligned with best outcomes (or efficient or effective programs) and is not balanced by a consistent measure of impact on people.

So how do we ensure key functions and services are appropriately funded balanced against policy priorities of the government of the day? How do we invest in the continuous improvement of the public sector and meaningful cross sector public policy reform that is important but not the political priority of the day? How do we ensure good human outcomes in the face of purely economically measured systems?

Many other public sectors have stated aims, legislation or even a constitutional mandate to protect and support the rights or dignity of their public, which provides a balance for them to this and all other pressures, and it is perhaps worth consideration here in Australia.

An adaptive skillset —evolving policy

What becomes clear in this context is that the operating model of the policy process and the policy team must differ from previous approaches. The three key aspects of this operating model are sensing, learning, and evolving.

Sensing involves determining what the policy aims to achieve, whether the problem being addressed is genuine, and if the aspiration pursued will significantly impact people's lives. This sensing must occur at

various levels: the policy team, the department, and the political level. Additionally, a co-design approach with all relevant stakeholders is essential. Sensing extends beyond mere analysis. While analysis assumes possession of all necessary information and data, sensing acknowledges uncertainty about objectives and seeks to explore possibilities without guaranteed outcomes. This uncertainty is crucial because if a policy is genuine and intended to create value, initial uncertainty is inevitable.

An example where all the best planning still resulted in unexpected issues was during the procurement of military tanks in Australia (example with thanks to Donald S. Williams). After considerable planning and testing during procurement, the tanks were procured but it was only afterwards it was discovered that the extremely fine red dust in outback Australia was destroying the Leopard tanks' suspension system. The observation is: no matter how much planning and preparation happens, the unexpected will occur and managers need to have both the ability and willingness and authority to implement change quickly. This means they need both the authority and a culture of outcomes-focused delivery to realise the intended policy impact.

Managers who understand the intent of the policy and are willing to act to achieve the outcome are more effective and useful than those who defer decisions, delay actions or do not exercise their delegated authority. Unfortunately, "doers" are also the ones likely to make mistakes and be reprimanded for exercising their authority—even when they deliver the end result.

The second aspect of the operating model is learning. As previously discussed, co-design and co-creation are critical in exploring how learning occurs. Sensing and learning constitute a continuous process involving ongoing co-creation efforts. There is a continuous aspect of co-creation that permeates deeper processes of engagement.

A possible way to achieve this is through the exploration of co-design and co-creation, with a particular emphasis on micro-implementations of co-creation. The objective extends beyond merely testing the policy design; it necessitates an examination of the policy itself, requiring the exploration of multiple methodologies for creating a delivery approach. Micro-implementations of the delivery approach facilitate learning about the efficacy of the delivery mechanism. Numerous instances exist where

well-intentioned and well-designed policies fail during implementation. Therefore, it is imperative to integrate these micro-implementations back into the learning process. This ongoing cycle of co-design and co-creation contributes to the development of more robust design and delivery aspects of the policy.

Once coherence is established between policy intent, future state, design, and delivery approach, readiness for large-scale implementation is achieved. The real challenge often emerges during large-scale implementation, where public perception, media scrutiny, and political dynamics come into play. To ensure successful implementation, a micro-sensing and learning approach must be created and integrated into an evolving strategy during execution. This constant micro-sensing and micro-learning process ensures continuous improvement in both design and delivery over time, thereby enabling the policy to evolve in response to emerging needs.

Co-design and co-creation in policy

Policy cannot be implemented in a vacuum. Two principles can be applied here: all policy design is co-design, and all policy delivery is co-creation. In practice, this means that the single policy team working on both design and delivery must embrace the fundamental idea that all policy is co-designed.

From the outset, the policy team must act as stewards of the policy, engaging in co-design with all stakeholders. During the delivery phase, they must co-create and co-implement the policy with these stakeholders. This approach is critical because even a highly competent policy team can encounter significant challenges.

The co-design element allows for the creation of appropriate policies based on current understanding. Co-creation and co-implementation ensure that learnings are derived from diverse sources and incorporated into the policy process, resulting in improved design.

The continuous co-design and co-create aspects of the policy process necessitate that the policy team maintains focus on internal objectives while collaborating effectively with a range of individuals. These skills are essential for an effective policy team.

Keeping it simple

The key to effective policy is the ability for people to easily understand and implement initiatives that drive the intended impact. The more complex the policy, the greater the likelihood the intent may be lost and a compliance mindset may emerge, resulting in perfectly compliant implementation that misses the mark on impact or outcomes. It can be tempting to match the complexity or ambition of the policy agenda with an increase in verbosity, but it is critical to stay laser focused on keeping it simple, applicable and understandable.

A case study of urgency driving clarity, peacetime driving verbosity

***Donald S Williams**, CPP SRMCP ASecM*

In the 1980's there was an historical review of the procedures for Army units to: request, receipt, store, maintain, issue and dispose of stores. The review found that in WWII the procedures were in a small single volume; by the time of the Korean war it was a larger volume; in the Vietnam era it was three volumes; by the 1980s it was seven volumes. The implication being: when the necessity was to get large quantities of stores to those who needed them to fight major conflicts the accounting was simple and straightforward but potentially open to interpretation and abuse. As the urgency decreased the processes increased in detail and complexity resulting in greater probability of "paperwork" and process errors and bureaucratic delays

Better rules: developing legislation as code for a digital economy

This methodology below is a combination of content written by Hamish Fraser and Pia Andrews, including liberal reuse of content created as part of the "Better Rules" work done in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2018-2022. Please refer to the ***Better Rules* report** for further information and note

that this methodology continues to evolve. Please also see the Better Rules and Rules as Code reference section at the end of this chapter. The high level methodology below is meant to be a practical guide to support test-driven drafting of new legislation and regulations, particularly those that need to be adopted into software systems at some point, but policymakers should feel confident to experiment in their specific domain. Drafting in human and machine languages provides some useful benefits in delivering better rules that are also more usable for rules consumers, while also providing a means to test settings in a digital twin of the policy environment.

At the core of Better Rules is the use of a multidisciplinary team that includes people skilled in policy, legal, business rules, drafting, programming and service design, working together in an iterative and test driven fashion to develop the best possible rules to drive the intended policy outcome. This multi-disciplinary team uses concept models and decision trees to develop a shared understanding of the scope of what is to be addressed, then taking that understanding to write the rules in plain language, in rule statements and in code—iterating as necessary and using the simultaneous drafting approach to create well defined and easy to implement rules.

The Better Rules approach complements the policy-making and implementation process. It can be applied to developing new rules or evaluating and understanding existing rules.

Preparation

The following capabilities are useful to include in the policy team for the purpose of drafting rules in a design-led and test-driven way.

- 1-2x Subject Matter Specialist
- 1-2x Policy Advisor
- 1-2x Legal Advisor and/or Legal Drafter/Parliamentary Counsel Representative
- 1-2x Rules-as-Code Specialist

- 1-2x Service Designer
- 1-2x Business Rules Specialist

The team will need a few props and supports to work well, and should spend the first day or two simply learning about "the domain" that the group will be focusing on:

- Comfortably sized room or virtual space to work in
- Ideation tools (physical or virtual) including whiteboards
- A coding environment for the rules-as-code developer
- Collaboration and co-drafting tools.

Each team member should prepare the following to bring to the process.

- Subject Matter Expert—Prepare an initial presentation on the domain for the team with the goal of giving the other team members a broad understanding of the history and challenges in the space.
- Policy Advisor—Ensure a good understanding of the current and historic policy positions as they relate to the domain is on-hand for them to supply the team
- Legal Advisor—Ensure a good understanding of the current and historic legal context to the subject matter are available to the team.
- Rules-as-code developer—Have previous to the project ensured they have a suitable coding environment (with test suite) setup ready to go and an understanding/experience in the process of coding rules. They will also need to have a methodology that non coders can utilise to create and store the tests.
- Service Designer—Establish a good understanding of the design implications currently faced in the domain and prepare a simple analysis of what works and doesn't work.
- Business Rules Specialist—Bring existing knowledge of business processes and rules and be prepared to present this perspective to the workshop.

Ensure each member of the group needs to be comfortable in sharing their perspective and confident in disagreeing/questioning the rest of the group; this team dynamic is important for ensuring success. If the team are new to each other it's advisable to set aside time to foster a sense of trust and undertake some team-building/ice-breaking activities. Once this has been achieved the team is ready to start.

Getting started

The Concept Model is initially a messy process and one should keep in mind its purpose. The overriding role of the concept model is to provide a focal point that allows the group to form a shared consistent view of the domain.

Expect it to be redrawn multiple times and plan accordingly. Post-it notes directly to a whiteboard is not a bad starting approach for this reason. Utilise the whiteboard to draw connections. Connections can be labelled. Do not get distracted by logic flows, that comes later. As the above example shows: beard and "beard tax" are identified as concepts—they are then linked with the concept "person"—the word used in the current rule set. Age is also identified and posted close to "claimant" as it applies to that concept.

Expect a sense of agreement to develop within the group and for that to be suddenly interrupted by disagreement, repeatedly. The concept model provides a focal point to work out disagreements in how the model is perceived and will be modified often as part of this process. This is the concept model fulfilling its purpose.

Creating an "out of scope" section can help keep the group in agreement on the scope of the project and remind people of what has been previously discussed and ruled "out of scope".

Once the concept model is underway and team members believe it's reached a level of maturity and clarity which they're comfortable with - a number of other activities which contribute to the output of the workshop (described below) can be added to the group's work flow.

Focus the individual team members as outlined below on their appropriate tasks but to try and work through the process as a collective, sharing into the wider group the questions inspired by their respective tasks. Each of the tasks is likely to throw up new insights and changes to the concept model—and these will need to be absorbed and discussed by the whole team. Iterate over each of the rules individually so each task has an opportunity to interrupt and inform the other parts of the team while they are looking at the same components. While this feels somewhat slower, it allows the group to be giving full consideration to each point as they move through the processing of the tests, rules and service modelling impacts which will often result in a more thorough and ultimately more efficient process.

It's essential that the group keeps checking in as a whole to discuss findings as is appropriate to the process.

Developing better rules

Note this activity can differ a little depending if existing rules are being unpacked or new rules being written or both. Regardless, it's important to keep the rules tied directly to the concept model which is the group's shared understanding of the domain. This is best done by ensuring the terminology used is kept consistent.

The process for new rules starts with the Policy Advisor giving an outline of the proposed new rules from their research in the domain. Each of the team will likely have perspectives to share on what's proposed.

Each of the outputs of the workshop are designed to highlight gaps and inconsistencies in the rules. It's often helpful in analysis of the rules to play with "what-if" statements that focus on changing variables that are often assumed.

For example, what if there is X, does our ruleset account for that? The personas and user/life journeys should help to flush out these assumptions and create a holistic approach, but stakeholders and users should be regularly engaged to test ideas throughout the process.

A decision tree is created by taking the elements of the concept model and organising them in an order that represents the sequence (if there is one) that people and systems would use to navigate the process. They provide the opportunity to look at the logic dependencies that exist in the domain. It provides another way to describe the domain and will often highlight inefficiencies in the approach and inaccuracies in the concept model.

The business rules specialist, while keeping the concept model in mind, starts the process of crafting the statements that make up the individual components of logic within the domain. Keep in mind the order of these is often related to the decision trees. It's important to try and keep each line or statement precise and describing a single point.

While coding the rules, it's expected that the rules-as-code specialist keeps an eye on the underlying concept model and any assumptions they may find themselves making while developing the code should be raised. The art of coding rules is to be very careful to not include any assumptions or extensions of logic accidentally into the code but faithfully mirror the rules in an isomorphic fashion.

The rules-as-code specialist will need to advise on the format for the tests (a spreadsheet can be a low tech solution) so they can later be converted into code and run against the rules-as-code output. They should also be relied upon to give an introduction to test writing, documentation requirements and good practice.

Writing tests is initially an exercise in expressing the policy intent but then switches to an exhaustive analysis of possible scenarios. If the rules-as-code specialist is not yet sure of the format of the tests, the scenarios can be described in spreadsheets ready for importing alongside the code.

Broader testing and consultation

Most legislations/regulations include a consultation phase, and it is recommended that the reference implementation be included in public consultation for independent testing, and where possible to also share the other outputs above for context and feedback.

Parliamentary process

Of course, all of the above has only led to a draft submission that can be taken to the parliament, which then follows parliamentary processes including debate and ultimately (if successful) ratification in multiple houses. But by maintaining the digital policy twin, amendments throughout the parliamentary process can be quickly tested and modelled in closer to real time, to inform and hopefully help ensure the ratification of a final draft that is tested and well evidenced.

Process outputs

Several outputs are produced using this approach, each offering an opportunity that can be fed back into that iterative process and re-used to solve other issues including:

- user research
- concept models
- decision trees
- rule statements
- rules-as-code
- test suites.

Outputs are marked as either base requirements or optional outputs. Choosing which outputs are focused on will be dependent on the context and purpose of the workshop. The outputs could be incorporated into the enveloping institution's documentation and kept as foundational reference material for the rules that have been brought into effect.

User Research

As a follow-on from the Phase 1 Policy Preparation work, it is useful to engage with users (those who will need to implement the rules and those who would be affected) throughout this process, to ensure rules are applicable, understandable, equitable and relevant. Service designers can also provide analysis of the rules and model the impact they might have on services and people's access to them.

Concept models (required)

Concept models form a working map of the concepts that make up the policy domain the team is focusing on and are an essential central component to the better rules process, providing an accessible and inclusive method for all participants to contribute and come to an agreement on how the legislation/regulation should theoretically work. They allow the team to create a visual shared understanding of the domain and its scope, and it becomes a reference point that allows all the other expected outputs to achieve a high level of consistency. It is also the central mechanism for quantifying and resolving disagreements and differences in perspective and as such is constantly evolving and improving over the lifetime of the workshop.

To date, the practice of developing concept models within Better Rules has proved simple. It involves the team identifying the concepts they are attempting to create rules for. We've used post-it notes or Google Draw so far—laying out the concepts and drawing lines between them to indicate how the concepts relate.

This first step, often initially feels elementary, but has proved crucial for the team to be able to define the scope of what is being tackled and allows the development of a shared model of understanding. It draws out the different understandings in the team. It also provides an opportunity to raise novel ideas from different disciplines that may not otherwise have been considered by traditional policy professionals or legislative drafters.

Decision trees or logic maps (required)

The decision trees or logic map for the policy helps the team to map out the order in which the concepts need to be addressed when considering rules that will work. Both of these outputs may have long term value if digitised and stored somewhere central, capturing institutional knowledge for future reference or re-use. It may be useful to draw upon the personas and user/life journeys defined in policy preparation to identify how the rules might be triggered, and to identify parallel policy areas that need to be part of the mapping and analysis in designing new rules.

Decision trees map the logic and ways people and systems practically navigate the concept models. Experience suggests these maps can take anywhere from a few minutes to several days depending on the complexity of the concept model and the more complex ones will be revisited often in the same manner as the concept model. Their development will often result in changes to the concept model.

Logic maps (also known as process flows) are detailed flow charts of the process(es) that rules would ideally follow. They are especially useful in questioning how implementable a ruleset is, at what point in time, with what trigger, and can provide insight into potential bottle necks or inconsistencies that the rules might introduce. Keep in mind there are often multiple process flows for a set of rules depending on the perspective and roles of the people the rules affect, which is why the personas and user/life journeys can be useful as mechanisms to flush out policies that would likely intersect in real life.

Rule statements (optional)

These are short plain language statements which describe each of the proposed rules. They are not always required, as it is possible to only produce a human and machine readable version of the legislation, but rule statements can help the team to work through any ambiguities. The iterative practice of describing them in plain language for humans while simultaneously describing them in code for machines provides valuable insights into previously unidentified issues. These rule statements can be useful for legislative drafters.

Business rule statements are precisely written statements of logic describing each rule in a set of rules succinctly. An example might look like:

“A person is eligible to vote if: their age is 18 years or more, and they have lived in the district for 6 months”

Business rule statements are useful for both drafters and coders in establishing statements of logic. Note their dependency on the terms used and how they map to the concept model.

Rules-as-code (required)

Computer code can play an interesting and exciting role for developing legislation and regulation. Firstly there's the pragmatic realisation that computers have been a vital part of rule implementation for some time with a lot of government rules already being interpreted subjectively and then coded into software in both the public and private sectors.

What has been discovered through the Better Rules work is that attempting to explain a rule to a computer can significantly impact or even change how it is implemented. The best way to describe what happens in this process (other than experiencing it) is that the computer acts as a brutal mirror without assumption or context, making visible any assumptions/context held by the team.

The consequences of this are experienced every day when people implementing legislation in software have to make enormous leaps in interpretation. A recent simple example was the challenges experienced with the NZ Holidays Act, which had significant ambiguity in the rules leading to very different implementations across the economy, creating billions in incorrect and inconsistent holiday pay.

The use of computer code in this process can vary. Below is a brief summary of some rules-as-code uses and what they might offer:

- **Simulations: E**stablishing a digital twin of the current policy environment to support policy simulation is a great way to improve the quality of new legislation, without creating contradictory or duplicative rules. Combining datasets relevant to the concept being addressed with this rules-as-code digital policy twin enables simulations to feed into the drafting process. Simulations also allow experimentation with various parameters, assumptions or proposals and may lead to entirely new solutions not previously explored.

- **Reference implementations:** If the rules-as-code reference implementation of the new legislation or regulation is published in a suitable, machine readable format, government departments and regulated entities could more easily implement those rules into their business systems. This process would vastly decrease the differing implementations and discrepancies, creating economy wide efficiencies and productivity uplift.

- **Publication:** In the same way governments publish legislation online, legislation-as-code could also be published in an open executable format allowing for non-government entities to build services informed by law, able to consume legislation as a service.
- **Powering government services:** legislation as code model can be used by government services both to streamline and make service delivery more efficient, and to delineate foundational policies from operational policies, such that government services don't unintentionally become non-compliant with rules defined explicitly in legislation.

The process of simultaneously drafting human readable and machine readable rules may iterate many times as new issues are identified and grappled with. This will also often highlight issues with the underlying concept model design.

It's important to note that rules-as-code can exist separate from the Better Rules process and is a large field of expertise in its own right that overlaps into other areas, such as business contracts, trade agreements and business rules.

Test suites (required)

Guided by the policy intent, tests are often described as scenarios and provide the means to assure and test that the policy definition and reference implementation match each other, and match the intended policy outcome. In the field of programming these tests are often described as test suites, and used in what's known as test-driven-development.

The tests describe a scenario along with the expected (policy) outcomes that the test should deliver. When this concept is combined with rules-as-code, computers can be leveraged to store large numbers of these tests describing as many unique scenarios as needed to be captured and then the machines can execute these tests en masse, producing immediate reports. If stored and published alongside the rules-as-code, these test suites provide another way to assess if policy intent will be met and capture existing institutional knowledge for future maintainers of the rules.

Better rules and rules as code references

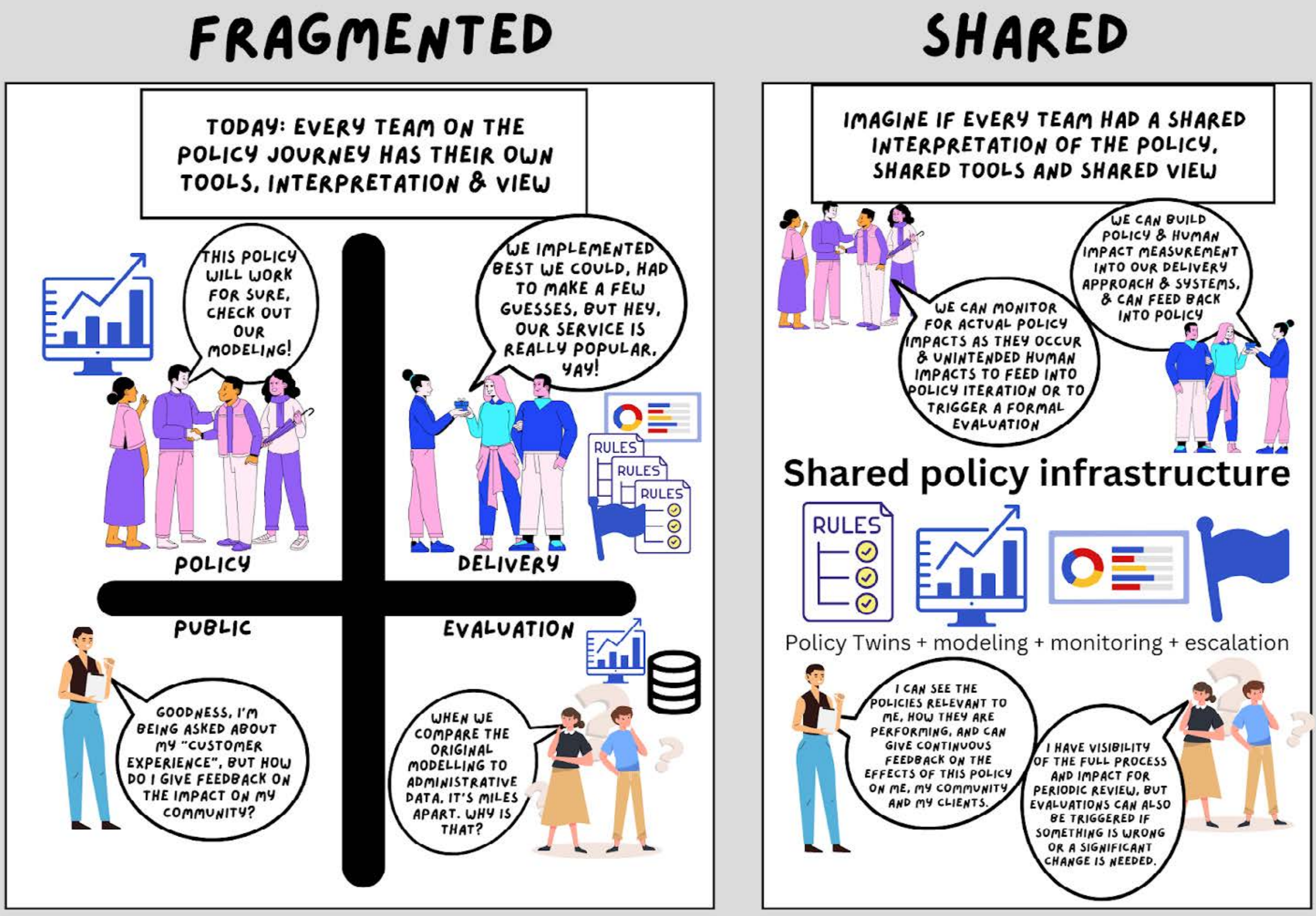
- The first Better Rules Discovery Report from NZ (by Nadia Webster) and video by MBIE
- Legislation as code for New Zealand: opportunities, risks and recommendations and also Governing digital legal systems by Tom Barraclough and Hamish Fraser
- Cracking the code: rulemaking for humans and machines and the Global Innovation in Government Trends 2019 (OECD)
- The NSW Rules as Code Emerging Tech Primer (the NSW Gov Policy Lab)
- Accident Compensation Act (NZ) Better Rules Discovery Report (ACC)
- Applying Rules as Code for city planning and consenting (Wellington Council)
- Experimenting with Rules as Code by the Canadian Community of Federal Regulators, and the Canadian School of Public Service
- A March 2021 report by the Law Foundation in NZ on Rules as Code.

An adaptive toolset— Infrastructure for impactful policy

"Policy infrastructure" isn't a term that's often used in government, and yet public servants use and rely upon policy infrastructure every day. Policy infrastructure includes the data, tools and platforms that help us to analyse, design, model, implement, automate, iterate, monitor and report on policies and policy interventions, throughout the entire policy lifecycle. Policy infrastructure necessarily includes an enormous range of software, data and platforms, because any one tool that tries to do it all will never work.

Policy infrastructure is used to support both the design and development of new policies, as well as the delivery, ongoing management and

evaluation of policy interventions. If we are to include all policies (constitution, legislation, regulation, government objectives, operational requirements, department rules, whole of government requirements, etc), then there is a large and complex canvas of goals, success metrics, rules, requirements, eligibility criteria, formulae and requirements that need to be reflected in the policy infrastructure, relied upon by many. In the age of digitally-enabled governments, the scope of policy infrastructure has expanded to include digital policy delivery and policy as code.



Unfortunately, there is traditionally no consistent or end-to-end approach to policy infrastructure - policy is created, implemented, measured, and amended by different actors, often working in isolation from each other. This inconsistency means there is no visibility of the whole policy journey by anyone involved, and a significant air gap between how policy is represented in modeling tools, and how policy is represented in the real world systems of service delivery government departments or regulated entities.

This also creates a significant gap between the predicted impact policies are expected to have, and the broader impacts they have in reality. No modeling is perfect, and unexpected conflicts or variables will emerge as policy is implemented in real time. For instance, social security and taxation legislation is extensively modeled in policy agencies for the purpose of reform and budget analysis, but the same legislation is implemented separately (and sometimes differently) in delivery departments, where new variables exist such as system constraints, integration with other policy domains, operational rules and, of course, the intersection of cross-jurisdictional policies. Without access to the insights of the people tasked to deliver policy, policymakers and legislative/regulatory drafters may be unaware of the risks or conflicts, and unable to build in mitigations. In any case, when unintended conflicts or impacts inevitably emerge, there are limited ways to influence or iterate policy design.

Policy impact and outcomes are often not consistently measured or monitored across interventions. For instance, policy or evaluation teams might use administrative data to analyse policy impacts at a point in time, but delivery teams tend to monitor for system performance and customer experience. Imagine if all our services also enabled real time measurement of policy outcomes and broader quality of life or environmental impacts? It is possible a policy intervention like a public service or grant program might be considered successful in delivery (efficient, good user feedback) that is simultaneously having an inverse policy impact, or creating unintended harms. So measuring and monitoring for both policy and human impact is a critical next step to build into policy infrastructure.

The final challenge in this space is the lack of shared or common policy infrastructure, because it exacerbates interpretation confusion and mutual incomprehension between policy design and policy delivery. The diagram below presents a high level view of the current state challenge of fragmented policy infrastructure, and contrasts it with the idea of shared policy infrastructure.

All actors involved in a given policy domain (including all relevant policy interventions) would ideally have access to the same shared policy infrastructure, the same digital representation of policy ("policy twins"),

the same modeling and monitoring tools, feedback loops and perhaps even a shared "policy backlog". Perhaps policy infrastructure could be shared across policy domains, or even open to the public, to facilitate transparency, alternative modeling, and testing policy options or proposed reforms in a wide variety of contexts to help identify potential or unintended consequences, and to maximise intended policy outcomes.

Below is a list of "adaptive tools", or policy infrastructure, which are worth investing in and building for your policy agenda, and ideally as a persistent capability for your public institution.

Participatory governance infrastructure

Getting the public involved in policymaking, management and optimisation is a great way to both leverage a broader set of insights, expertise and experience, but also a way to help the policy outcomes be better realised through public support. Participatory governance tools include co-design tools, public communications and engagement tools, modelling, prototyping and much more. Below are the four types of public engagement, which inform the tools required.

There are four broad levels of practical participation in public governance, but all have the critical first characteristic of being discoverable. Public visibility, including to relevant organisations and community groups enables discovery, and people can only participate in what they know about. In a heavily time-poor society, you also need to plan for and create space, opportunity and effort into getting diverse views into the room in a way that is equitable.

Level 0: request for comment. This is where Departments release discussion papers for comment or feedback, which usually means there is substantial work done to shape a direction in a paper that is published for feedback, and then people are effectively invited to just tweak what has been created. Engagement varies, with some consultations just publishing online, and some going all out to proactively engage with stakeholders and community groups.

- **Pros:** easy to do, tends to focus feedback in a pre-defined direction.
- **Cons:** normative outcomes, tends to focus feedback in a pre-defined direction.
- **Tools:** website and email.

Level 1: user centered practices. Any form of early engagement with "end users" of a strategy, policy, program, service or piece of regulation is helpful as a form of participatory design, but isn't really participatory governance. It is a useful form of getting more participation in public sector processes, but do not mistake it as sufficient for participatory policy, because engaging with users is still seeing people as consumers rather than co-creators in the overarching policy intent. However it can be useful at different phases of policy navigation, particularly to improve the design and effectiveness of policy interventions. When you engage with the end users of your work, you have a better chance of meeting their actual needs. If you don't engage with end users or a representation of the community you serve, to understand them and test different approaches with them, then you are simply imagining or hoping people will use/interact with your work in the way you intend. For service delivery, we have all seen User-Centred Design (UCD) becoming mainstream in many public sectors, resulting in better designed and more intuitive service delivery. Sometimes UCD also includes **observing user behaviours** (the lawn experiment). The Life Journey approach takes this even further to **understand end user journeys across organisations** and sectors around complex events. In the policy profession there has been some early **adoption of UCD and agile methods for policy** (eg, NSW Policy Lab) to develop policy artefacts that are easier for policy consumers to understand and implement. In legislation and regulation design, we've seen bringing end users into the room result in **profoundly better rules and outcomes** (Better Rules work, NZ).

- **Pros:** work gets shaped around actual user needs and the testing approach assures a better quality output with more predictable implementation. There are well understood methods with many skilled professionals available. Usually participation is equitable because diversity is necessarily sought and compensated for inclusive design.

- **Cons:** even though the work output is better shaped, you still get a somewhat normative outcome because the broad direction is largely set in that you are engaging people only as end users which assumes the product is necessary. There is a subtle power imbalance to be careful of as it can too easily focus feedback in a pre-defined direction, for example "which design is better" as opposed to "is this the right thing to be doing at all"?.
- **Tools:** websites, email, wireframing tools, mockups/prototyping, user testing tools, engagement tools.

Level 2: participatory drafting. This is where something is still in an early or formative phase, and you engage publicly or externally in helping shape it from the start, which is quite different to user centred practices, where you engage with end users primarily to just understand and test their needs. Participatory drafting can draw out some profound ideas, assumptions and experience very early, to help shape something from the start. It requires strong support for getting the right outcome and an appetite for having flexibility in the direction of the thing. This approach creates a little more work up front, and can lead in quite a different direction than first anticipated, but gets something that is likely faster to implement, with greater public support, and results that are more durable and sustainable.

Good examples of participatory drafting include the Taiwan approach taken to co-draft Uber legislation in Taiwan (2015), the New Zealand Police wiki for participatory legislation (2009), the Australian Public Spheres done by Senator Kate Lundy to co-draft policy recommendations (2008-2009) which included public contributions to the Gov 2.0 Taskforce Report of 2009 and citizen Policy Juries in Canada (2010-13) which were also used in New Zealand for a time. Other examples of participatory drafting could include public proposal systems, which aren't just about feedback, but that enable completely new ideas, like public ideation or participatory budgeting projects. Ideation work and participatory drafting work has been done in Australia for years with local examples including work by engage2, Democracy 2025, Bang the Table and many many more community or company led participatory programs. The question to my mind is why we haven't yet seen this become normal public sector process? Something worth unpacking for your organisation.

Participatory budgeting can range from project nomination and voting, tools to explore visibility of budgetary decision impacts, direct decisions or old school consultations. Some examples include **Porte Alegre, Brazil since 1989**, NSW's **My Community Dividend** and Iceland's **Iceland's Better Reykjavik**. Service examples are trickier because even internally, the scope of a service is often defined by policy, legislation or strategy, so it is in these early phases where participatory drafting is most powerful. Although a lot of public servants seek external feedback for their work (policy, legislation, services, etc) through subject matter experts, industry engagement, stakeholder engagement or consultants, the value of public participation in drafting or designing is that you get a perspective from the people who will be affected by the work, not just those with a subject matter expertise, business or contractual imperative.

- **Pros:** much more formative method for overall direction, gains greater public trust and support through their participation, better quality outcomes informed by public values as well as a broad range of experience and expertise.
- **Cons:** unless the coordinators make an explicit effort to enable equitable and diverse participation, this method can too easily create over-representation of privileged groups who have time and skills, and who aren't intimidated by government. Extra effort needs to be made to ensure representative and inclusive participation.
- **Tools:** Holopolis platform (Taiwan), sms/email, prototyping, modelling tools, communications and cooperation tools such and forums, wikis, whiteboards, mockup/prototyping tools, AI

Level 3: system co-design or "walking together" through to co-delivery

All the methods above involved people at different levels of influence in the work, with increasing levels of flexibility in direction. Genuine co-design is rare but is the most powerful of participatory governance mechanisms, as it necessarily involves bringing two or more parties together on an equal footing to determine shared goals, methods and values, and actually design and decide the way forward together. This means being flexible on all aspects of the work, including, perhaps, the idea it isn't appropriate at all. It is the most disruptive to a centralised or top down way of working, but does yield the best results, especially

for wicked problems. It is also the best at avoiding potential or even accidental exclusive (single purpose or homogenous) design by the people responsible for the policy or services. This approach is most useful in transformative agendas where the public institutions involved are open to new ideas to drive better outcomes, or address systemic challenges or opportunities. A few good examples include the ***Walk Together*** design methodology (**more information here**) which is a culturally responsive design approach, the **participatory action research work done for the *Both Ways* report** (2004), and exemplary work done by ***Old Ways, New*** in bringing design, culture and technology together. When initiatives are then co-delivered, you get a profound impact through systemically motivated partners collaboratively delivering around shared or common goals. Some of the co-design and co-delivery work done in South East Queensland during the 2005 floods is useful to learn from, where government co-designed and co-delivered a work program to respond to the crisis. Indeed, a lot of great co-design and co-delivery seems to happen when there is a crisis, the question is how we can bring it into business as usual.

- **Pros** - is the best path for working through complexity or "wicked problems" and for designing sustainable solutions that don't just include people in the process, but enables them to genuinely shape it in accordance with their values.

- **Cons:** requires the most commitment, flexibility and support. Requires time, skills, relationship building and longer term deadlines to get to a point of genuine consensus through engagement and co-design, noting this isn't a con, but makes it harder unless teams in government are supported to take time to do this kind of work properly.

- **Tools:** many and varied.

Level 4: shared oversight or co-governance. All the methods above get you to a point in time, the highest level of participatory public governance is where you have public transparency, oversight and participation in the ongoing governance of your work. Sometimes this is ostensibly achieved through independent advisory or steering groups, but to operate properly these groups should have their minutes and decisions publicly available to avoid creating unaccountable or self-serving governance. To reflect back to SmartStart in NZ, having independent groups on the project governance

(in this case, via a steering group) provides a balancing force that tips in the favour of the citizen's needs amidst the ongoing tensions of budget constraints and competitive projects in public sectors. If we had citizens or citizen groups involved in policy governance, I believe we would see greater public outcomes. This is also reflected in the work of **Collaboration for Impact**. This of course requires ways to support equitable and inclusive representation on such governance groups, which then requires either persistent funded roles or some other funding mechanism. Given so many things in government are funded as projects with start and end dates, it would take some significant work to make this normal in many public sectors, but I suggest it is worth the effort as it sets programs up with oversight and pressures that are well balanced and aligned towards best public outcomes.

Engaging with community-run infrastructure

Many communities run their own data, analysis and modeling infrastructure. Whether a not for profit NGO, an Indigenous or First Nations community or a town, the insights and intelligence that could help shape and inform policy options and change are worth understanding and building into a policy infrastructure model. This makes it necessary to consider federated architectural design, and ways of sharing insights and patterns across systems without sharing raw data. The progress made in verifiable claims/credentials, as well as in confidentialised computing provide some excellent opportunities for communities and governments to co-create meaningful and empowering policy twins. It also makes sense for government policy infrastructure to be available to communities for them to model, explore and test policy reform options.

Policy infrastructure

Using our "**policy journey map**" approach provides an opportunity to identify the necessary ingredients for modern, shared policy infrastructure that supports the proactive management and optimisation of policy settings to deliver the best possible outcomes over time. Imagine for instance, being able to rapidly develop new legislation/regulation with

reference implementations circulated for consultation and testing prior to being enacted by parliament (with the usual democratic rigour) and then available as code that same moment for rapid and consistent implementation by all the relevant policy consumers. It is possible, but only through transforming the policy/service continuum. When we make the rules of government authoritatively consumable by software, we dramatically improve the speed and consistency of delivery, with better policy outcomes and compliance.

Proposals for reforming how policy is done are understandably met with concerns at whether change would "slow things down", but a more end-to-end approach to policymaking where instruments are designed for easy implementation actually shortens the time to realise policy outcomes, even if it means a little more time up front.

With the high level journey map above, we can then explore and propose the shared and common policy infrastructure we need to support the journey end to end, as per below. These tools are worth building into your departmental core infrastructure, or if it doesn't exist, into your policy agenda costing. Even "delivery" departments need policy infrastructure, as all public institutions are intended to deliver on policy intent.

POLICY INFRASTRUCTURE CONCEPT MODEL

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE MODELING TOOLS FOR TESTING AND EXPLORING POLICY CHANGE

CASE LAW AND GAZETTES AS A MACHINE READABLE UTILITY

CONSISTENTLY APPLIED HUMAN IMPACT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK USED INCLUDING FOR NEW POLICY PROPOSALS

A LINKED DATA REPRESENTATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS TO AUTOMATE REPORTING, ACCOUNTABILITY, AUDITING & MOGS

CITIZEN'S LEDGER TO STORE ALL DECISIONS WITH TRACEABLE EXPLANATIONS, FOR AUDITING & CITIZEN ACCESS

OPEN FEEDBACK LOOPS FOR PUBLIC AND STAFF ABOUT POLICIES & SERVICES, TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF POLICY & HUMAN IMPACTS, PATTERNS & INDICATORS, ALONGSIDE USUAL SYSTEMS MONITORING

LINKED AND INTEGRATED ADMIN DATA FOR RESEARCH, POLICY MODELLING & PATTERNS MONITORING

POLICY ORIGIN

POLICY PURPOSE, INITIAL DESIGN & DECISIONS

PREPARATION

DESIGN, DELIVERY & MANAGEMENT

PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS

CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT TO INFORM POLICY CHANGE

NAVIGATION

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS TO EXPLORE, CO-DESIGN & TEST POLICY OPTIONS, INITIALLY & ONGOING

PUBLIC REPOSITORY TO SHARE POLICY TOOLS, GOVERNMENT MODELS, MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORKS, SYNTHETIC POPULATION DATA, ETC.

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE POLICY AS CODE (INTENDED OUTCOMES, LEGISLATION, MODELS, DEFINED TARGET GROUP) AVAILABLE AT API.LEGISLATION.GOV.AU

POLICY CATALOGUE WHERE ALL OPERATIONAL AND BIG P POLICIES CAN BE DISCOVERED

POLICY TEST SUITE TO VALIDATE LEGALITY OF SYSTEM OUTPUTS IN GOV SERVICES & REGULATED ENTITIES

ESCALATION AND POLICY ITERATION MECHANISMS TO DETECT AND ACT UPON CHANGE (OR DARK IMPACT PATTERNS) AT PORTFOLIO AND WHOLE OF GOV LEVELS.

The model above includes the following elements, aligned to the broad temporal phases of policy delivery:

To support the **Policy Preparation** phase:

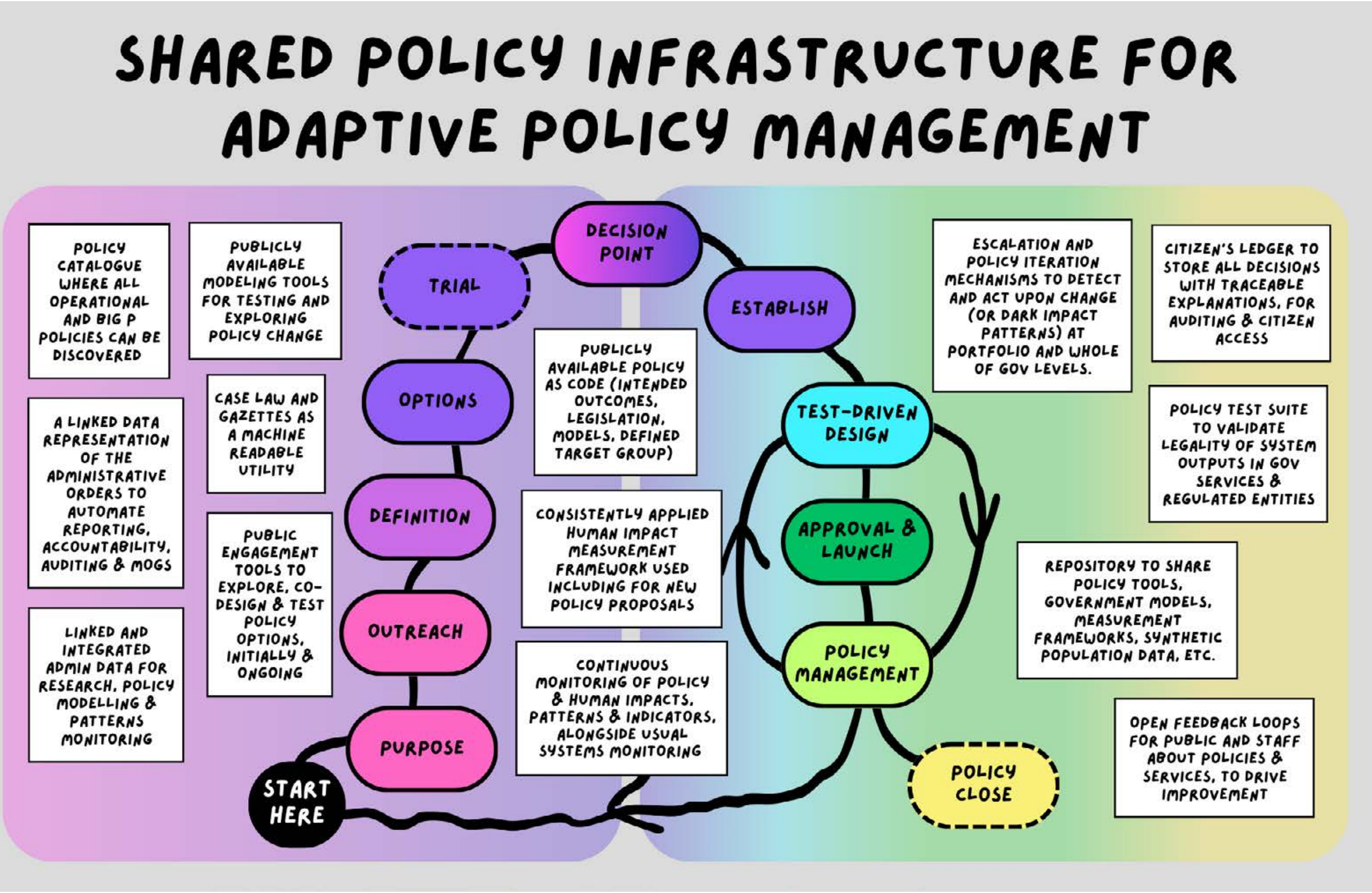
- **Public engagement tools** to explore, co-design and test policy options, both initially (new policies) and ongoing (continuous improvement to policies and policy interventions).
- **Linked and integrated admin data** for research, policy modelling and patterns monitoring, best hosted by an independent, highly trusted entity, like the ABS.
- **Case law and gazettes as a utility** to use for analysis and to test new ideas.
- **Publicly available modeling tools** for testing and exploring policy change.
- Consistently applied **Human Impact Measurement Framework** used across government, including for new policy proposals and for monitoring.
- **Public repository** to share policy tools, government models, measurement frameworks, synthetic population data, etc.

To support the **Policy Navigation** phase:

- A **linked data representation of the administrative orders** to automate reporting, accountability, auditing, security, access and to streamline MOGs.
- Publicly available **Policy as code** (intended outcomes, legislation, models, defined target group) available at api.legislation.gov.au
- **Policy catalogue** where all operational and Government policies can be discovered, along with measures and transparent reporting of progress.
- A **"Citizen's ledger"** to record all decisions with traceable explanations, for auditing and citizen access.
- **Policy test suite** to validate legality of system outputs in gov services and regulated entities.
- **Open Feedback loops** for public and staff about policies and services, to drive continuous improvement and to identify and mitigate harm.

- **Continuous monitoring of policy and human impacts**, including dark patterns and quality of life indicators, alongside usual systems monitoring, to ensure adverse impacts are identified early and often.
- **Escalation and policy iteration mechanisms** to ensure issues detected are acted upon at portfolio and whole of gov levels.

Another representation of policy infrastructure for adaptive policy management is below.



Policy Twins

Although not all policies are legislation or regulation, almost all government services and programs draw upon some legislation/regulation combined with myriad operational policies. The many and varied interpretations of these building blocks of public administration can make it hard to understand which rules are authoritative and which are operational. If we had reference implementations of **policy (including legislation and regulation) as code**, then we could remove the interpretation gap and have a better chance at identifying and remediating unintended policy issues as they arise.

A Policy Twin is simply the policy equivalent of a "Digital Twin". Digital Twins provide a digital representation of spatial information like buildings, roads, water and gas pipes, which is used to model town planning, environmental impacts or other spatially driven analyses. A Policy Twin could be as simple as a digital representation of a policy, but could include legislation as code, relevant data (admin data, policy measures, lead and tail indicators, and others), modeling tools, impact monitoring and more. All the things you have seen emerge in the "Digital Twin" space, are possible with Policy Twins, and in fact some Digital Twins have already started including policy as code, such as the inclusion of resource management regulations in the Wellington City Council digital twin to model and display the impacts of changes to the building code.

A shift to "CI/CD policy"?

It's clear when you start trying to imagine a more collaborative, adaptive, humane, iterative and test driven approach to policy management, that a lot of the techniques and methods from product management, CI/CD (Continuous Integration / Continuous Development) pipelines, service design and agile become useful. So why not reuse some of the infrastructure, tools, methods and platforms that we have adopted in service reforms over the last decade to help modernise policy delivery. Speak to people in your IT department or in the tech sector about the tools required for CI/CD, and consider which ones are relevant to CI/CD policy in your context.

We could have CI/CD policy pipelines, policy feedback loops, product management for policy, policy monitoring and measurement tools, policy escalation frameworks, policy test suites, policy twins, and public policy engagement/codesign platforms. Perhaps each policy would have a policy manager who owns the end to end outcome realisation (rather than the current baton passing from design to delivery teams). Perhaps each policy intervention could have its own "policy product owner" who owns the delivery of that intervention, but works to the policy manager with other interventions to make sure interventions are effective, complementary and continuously adapting to change and impact.

Foundations

For those curious on the history and foundations of public policy, we have provided some background and insights. This is not to say the foundations can't be changed, but it is worth understanding the past to help you shape the future. Then you are better able to understand how we got here, what is worth keeping and what is worth changing.

Every reader of this playbook ought to consider their own origin stories and historical backdrops to the development over time of the political and policymaking systems of which they are a part. We provide the Australian story here as an example of the types of matters to consider as you reflect on the foundational DNA that structures your architecture and journey path dependencies.

Without reflection on these origin stories and histories, we cannot weigh and calibrate the balance of what we might need to unlearn or lay down, what we need to preserve, and what might demand us to innovate or create new to meet our contemporary and future aspirations and challenges.

Washminster: the uniqueness of Australian Government

The colloquial term for the Australian system is **Washminster**—reflecting the dominant influences of the British and American systems and the locational building (Westminster) and place (Washington) that spoke to the Australian sensibilities of "founding fathers" of the late 20th century. Such a term speaks of the international gaze that colonial Australia exercised from its inception, as well as the pragmatic deployment of a range of governance systems that were uniquely meshed together to form a functional mechanism to manage six distinct colonies across a vast landmass with need for some semblance of unity to attempt to create a national identity worthy of defence and economic development.

As an island continent far removed from the rest of the known world, marked with what colonisers saw as harsh land conditions, massive spatial distances and an incredibly large shoreline, Australian governance was structured both to capture its land of opportunity status as well as its dangerous qualities. From its inception, colonial Australia ignored or dismissed wisdom it might have learned from the country itself and that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inhabitants whose governance systems were viewed as uncivilised or impenetrable (Althaus and Morrison 2015).

The concept of Australian government must also be taken in historical context.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance has a long history, featuring remarkable attributes that prioritised relationality across all facets of life and the planet. Governance included integrated holistic community progress, sustainable custodianship and management of country, biological kinship and clan structures that remain sophisticated in ways that sustained complex but robust and harmonious intertribal coexistence. These structures enabled over 500 unique nations (some 250–300 language groups) to flourish with dignity across the diverse conditions of the Australian landscape for over 65,000 years (Mulvaney and Kamminga 1999; Clarkson et al. 2017). A noteworthy feature is the ability of these unique systems of governance to achieve unity through diversity, prizing their specific customs, traditions, languages and practices, managing conflict and living sustainably in ways that defy the domination effects that otherwise dogs other significant civilisations.

Colonial public administration in Australia brought the practices of British rule to establish a penal colony, setting a new and different tone to the governance of this part of the world. Each state had their own approach so when it came to Federation in 1901, the course of a federalised Australian government as a discrete set of institutional arrangements moved beyond mere British sensibilities to attempt to capture some of what was considered the "best and brightest" of the western world. Deliberate attention was paid not only to enshrining the ideas of Westminster enhanced with the republic ideas of the United States of America. Westminster carried notions of responsible government in an elected parliament, the separation of powers and an independent judiciary, the

roles of sovereign and symbolic heads of state, and the presence of a loyal opposition and independent public service. Washington contributed its federated model of layered jurisdictions with the division of powers, the presence of a dedicated "states" house in parliament and a written constitution.

The Swiss referendum process was adopted for constitutional reform and Canadian ideas of united, nationalised government were also influential, as was having a single federal defence force. Australians remained citizens of the British Empire until the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* when the idea of Australian citizenship was pragmatically adopted. The collapse of the British Empire and the increasing non-British migration patterns of the post-WWII era facilitated assimilation agendas and heralded a need to address the Australian constitutional requirement that parliamentarians could not be dual citizens.

A number of features mark this Australian system of government and associated policymaking.

First, it is **pragmatic**. Australians are rarely persuaded by grand narratives or theoretical forays. They want something that works. And Australian citizens are not fussy as to who or how many layers of government may be involved (Brown 2010; Gray and Brown 2006). They just want good outcomes. On the policymaking side, there is no pressure to conform to a particular model or framework. On the contrary an eclectic mix of approaches can be found across and between different policy domains, with policymakers often mesmerised by experimenting with new shiny ideas from overseas or kicking around the cobbling of various ideas into a practical option to explore for suitability and fit to the Australian policy landscape. Together, this suggests a pragmatic bowerbird style might describe something of the Australian style of policymaking.

Second, **checks and balances**. From the inception of the colonial system of governance, Australia has relished the deployment of specific measures to contain unilateral power and an interesting paradoxical tendency to simultaneously prize high conservatism with thumbing our noses at authority. The incorporation of compulsory voting makes citizens participate in their civic life so Australians know for sure the people have decided the expression of their political will. We turn this into the modern

democracy sausage party and community fundraising event but we value abiding by the law, maintaining social order, and people "having a fair go". Culturally, Australians endure the "tall poppy syndrome"—one doesn't want to grow too tall or they will get cut down to size. Much of this cultural reality stems from a checks and balances approach that values equality and no one getting "too big for their boots".

Third, there is a **big and prominent role for the public sector**. Australians did not feature a significant elite class nor the presence of a high number of entrepreneurs, manufacturing, or philanthropic actors. It was a British colonial outpost populated initially largely by convicts and rogues seeking new opportunities and fresh starts far away from their old mother or fatherlands who had often exiled them for one reason or another. In such a setting, the public sector became a dominant force helping to create Australian colonial society. Moreover the public service was instrumental in forging the basic foundations of the federation and spawning the massive infrastructure, defence, education, agricultural and justice architecture and initiatives that marked out economic progress. This origin story of the role of the public sector has remained unchanged over time with Australians not only tolerant of the role of government, but often demanding it to do its part in creating economic growth, employment opportunities and government service delivery. According to *The Economist* (2025), Australia features the biggest public sector workforce, adjusted for population, in International Labour Organisation (ILO) data with 143 employees per 1000 people, equating to approximately 29% of Australian workers.

Fourth, the **role of place** is significant for policymaking. The sheer diversity of geographic biodiversity and cultural realities across the vast continent of Australia is remarkable. What life is like for a citizen in the North Queensland tourist mecca of Cairns is very different from that in cosmopolitan Melbourne, remote communities in Alice Springs or Kalgoorlie, or the regional realities of Launceston in Tasmania. Over time, and in contrary movement to that of Canadian provincialism, Australia's states and territories have ceded their states rights for a more unified national market and identity. Yet the institutional governance fabric and the economic instruments of the Australian federation remain wedded to deliberate calculations dedicated to establishing ongoing

"equality" across the states and territories through mechanisms such as the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Furthermore, flirtation has long persisted with regional governance institutions in attempts to meet the needs and aspirations of highly dispersed populations across large geographic distances (Brown 2001 and Brown 2007). Meanwhile, Australia is home to persistent secessionist tendencies, especially from Western Australia (Secession In Australia - MoAD History Stories, and Republic of Western Australia: From secession to COVID, the west has always charted its own course - ABC News, (Holbrook and Megarrity 2025). While territorial parochialism remains alive and well—especially in the realm of the Australian national religion of sport—Australians are sensitive to both the uniqueness of their personal place as well as the unifying forces of being singularly Australian. Trends emphasising place-based policymaking continue to find modern expression in institutions such as PLACE (Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment).

Put together, these historical and foundational characteristics of Australian policymaking and its public sector and political system suggest attention be paid to its critical role and ongoing purpose and fit. Australia is viewed as a mature liberal democracy (Emy and Hughes 1988) featuring remarkably flexible and evolving democratic principles that remain hinged to free and fair elections, adherence to the rule of law, engaged citizenry through compulsory voting, and relatively inclusive society (Dunleavy et al. 2024). Yet it still grapples with its historical and modern relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Davis 2018; Davis 2015). Assimilation and racism remain forces at play (Bargallie 2019) as does complex relationships to multiculturalism and Australia's current (and future) status as an Asian nation.

Australia's interpretations of responsible government and ministerial responsibility have moved beyond a strict interpretation that it is only the minister of the day to whom policymaking responsibility is owed. The pragmatism of Australian policymaking style is likely to endure, marking it out as particularly ripe in dynamic, adaptive capacity.

A (very) brief history of public management and policy

Public management and policymaking have been shaped by various theories and approaches over time. While this book does not purport to offer a comprehensive overview of public management theory, it nevertheless feels important to situate this work in the context of its history.

Classical public administration

Classical Public Administration theory emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is often associated with the foundational works and thoughts of scholars such as Woodrow Wilson, Max Weber, and Frederick Taylor, who sought to bring about efficiency, predictability, and standardized procedures in the management of public organizations. The core principles and characteristics of Classical Public Administration include:

- **Hierarchical Organization Structure:** It is important to establish a clear, hierarchical structure within organizations, where authority and responsibilities are clearly defined, and there is a distinct chain of command.
- **Division of Labor:** Tasks should be specialised and overseen by people with specific skills and expertise. By dividing work into specific tasks, each employee becomes highly skilled in their particular area, leading to increased efficiency and productivity.
- **Impersonality:** Decisions and actions within the organization are made based on established rules and procedures, rather than personal preferences or relationships.
- **Merit-based Advancement:** Employees should be selected and promoted based on their abilities and performance, rather than nepotism or patronage.

- **Formal Rules, Norms and Procedures:** Clear, formal rules and procedures should be the basis for governing operations. In addition, authority within organizations should be grounded in legal statutes and bureaucratic norms, rather than in traditional or charismatic forms of leadership.

New Public Administration

New Public Administration was born out of the Minnowbrook Conference in 1968, which was attended by a group of young public administration scholars who gathered to discuss and propose a new direction for the field. These scholars were concerned with the pressing social issues of the time and advocated for a public administration that was more responsive to the needs of society, more engaged with ethical issues, and more committed to social equity. Key themes of New Public Administration include:

- A focus on addressing social equity and justice.
- The importance of bringing values and democracy into the administration discourse.
- A call for public administrators to be change agents who actively work to improve society.
- The recognition of the political nature of public administration.

New Public Management

New Public Management (NPM) emerged in the 1980s as a response to criticisms of the inefficiencies of traditional public administration. NPM shifted the focus towards efficiency, effectiveness, and the adoption of private sector management practices within the public sector. It was characterized by an emphasis on performance measurement, market-based mechanisms, and customer service orientation. Scholars like Christopher Hood played a significant role in shaping the NPM agenda. Key principles underpinning NPM include:

- **Performance Measurement:** Focus on results through setting clear, measurable objectives and benchmarks.

- **Market-based Mechanisms:** Introducing competition into the public sector, such as through outsourcing, privatization, and public-private partnerships, with the aim of reducing costs and improving service quality.
- **Decentralisation:** Shifting authority and responsibility from central to local government or from government agencies to private or semi-private organisations to enhance responsiveness and flexibility.
- **Customer Orientation:** Viewing citizens as customers and focusing on improving their satisfaction with public services.
- **Management Autonomy:** Granting more autonomy to public managers, including in financial matters, staffing, and operations, to encourage innovation and responsiveness to local needs.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Emphasizing accountability for performance and outcomes, not just adherence to procedures.

New Public Governance

New Public Governance (NPG) emerged in the early 21st century as a response to the principles of both New Public Administration and New Public Management. NPG aims to address their limitations and adapt to the complexities of modern governance. In particular, in contrast to New Public Management's focus on efficiency, performance measurement, and market mechanisms, NPG highlights the importance of public value, participation, and governance through networks and partnerships. Key characteristics of NPG include:

- **Collaboration and Networks:** Relationships and networks between various stakeholders are critical to effective governance. This includes government agencies, non-profit organizations, the private sector, and the community. Public problems are too complex for any single entity to solve alone; collaborative approaches are needed.
- **Public Value:** Public value encompasses not just economic value but also social value and democratic value. Public value is created through engagement with citizens and stakeholders, reflecting their preferences and priorities.

- **Democratic Participation:** A strong emphasis on enhancing democratic participation and engaging citizens in the decision-making process. This is vital not only for legitimacy but also for harnessing community assets and knowledge.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Given the complex and changing nature of public challenges, flexibility and adaptability in policy-making and service delivery are critical.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Even within decentralized and networked approaches, there is a need for mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency in public service delivery and governance.

The role of paradigms

Shifts in public management approaches have been—and will continue to be—shaped by political, cultural, social, environmental, global and economic contexts, as well as societal beliefs, narratives, and values. For example, as neoliberal thinking emerged as the dominant paradigm of the 1980s, NPM emerged as the dominant public management approach.

Paradigms are "a grand organising story about how the world works. It affects how we understand our world, ourselves and our ability to change things." (Lowe & McIntosh, 2023). Throughout history, the dominance of certain paradigms have both enabled and constrained the emergence of new approaches to public management.

According to Thomas Khun, paradigm shifts are typically preceded by periods of crisis, where anomalies or inconsistencies in existing theories or observations accumulate, challenging the validity of the prevailing paradigm. As the prevailing theories are challenged, we see the emergence of new ideas, theories, or conceptual frameworks. These new ideas often challenge the core assumptions of the prevailing paradigm and gain acceptance through empirical evidence, conceptual coherence, and explanatory power. As evidence accumulates and the new paradigm demonstrates its superiority, it gradually gains acceptance, leading to a paradigmatic shift.

Paradigms are often invisible to us—they're the water we swim in. So as we seek to explore new ways of thinking about policymaking and implementation, we need to be thinking about how our current assumptions and worldviews might be holding current practices in place, and about what might need to shift to make new ways of doing things possible.

The evolving landscape of policy and strategy from the 1920s to present

In our daily work we use the word "policy" and "strategy" sometimes interchangeably and at other times as distinct concepts depending on whether we are in government or business or academia. It is instructive to understand these words and their origins and use over the last 100 years as we embark on the policy journey.

The story of "policy" and "strategy" is a tale of evolution and divergence, set against the backdrop of changing global landscapes. From their intertwined origins in the early 20th century to their distinct roles in modern governance and business, these concepts have navigated through complex socio-economic and political terrains, adapting and transforming along the way.

History emergence

The word "policy" has its roots in the late Latin term "politia" which means "the state, civil administration" and it was derived from the Greek word "politeia" which refers to "state, administration, government, citizenship." The term "policy" started being used in the late 14th century to refer to the "study or practice of government; good government". From the early 15th century, it was used to denote "an organised state, organised or established system of government or administration of a state." It also came to represent "the system of measures or the line of conduct which a ruler, minister, government, or party adopts as best for the interests of the country in domestic or foreign affairs".

On the other hand, the term "strategy" originated from the French word "stratégie" and the Latinized form of the Greek word "stratēgia" which means "office or command of a general." The term was first used in 1810 to refer to "the art of a general, the science of war." The term "strategy" started being used in non-military contexts by 1887.

In the military, "strategy" refers to the overarching plan or set of goals designed to achieve victory in war or conflict. It encompasses the deployment of troops, equipment, and resources to achieve specific objectives. This is distinct from "tactics" which are the specific actions or short-term decisions made to implement the overall strategy.

The 1920s and 30s: Policy is strategy

In the 1920s, "policy" in both government and business contexts was synonymous with guiding principles and strategic objectives. Governments used policy to shape economic decisions and societal norms. Businesses, buoyed by the economic boom, developed policies focusing on expansion and innovation.

Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), laid the groundwork for operational efficiency and management policies in businesses. Mary Parker Follett, a visionary in organisational theory, focused on human relations and participatory management in *Creative Experience* (1924) added a new dimension to understanding workplace dynamics and policies.

Australia's experience in this era exemplified the policy-as-strategy approach. The Bruce-Page government (1923-1929) used policy as a strategic tool for nation-building, emphasising infrastructure and industrial development through tariff protection. The creation of the Loan Council in 1927 established a uniquely Australian model of federal-state fiscal coordination, formalising intergovernmental financial strategy that would shape policy-making for decades.

However, the Great Depression of the 1930s drastically altered this landscape. John Maynard Keynes' now famous *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936) advocated for government

intervention in the economy, influencing New Deal policies and reshaping public policy. Government policy, particularly in the U.S., underwent a seismic shift with the New Deal, incorporating comprehensive strategies for economic recovery and social welfare. Business policies, in turn, adapted to the harsh economic realities, prioritising financial prudence and regulatory compliance.

Australia's response demonstrated this shift from laissez-faire to interventionist approaches, as governments grappled with unemployment and economic reconstruction while maintaining the federal-state balance that would become a hallmark of Australian policy-making.

The Post-war era: Birth of modern strategy

The conclusion of World War II marked the emergence of "strategy" as a key concept, especially in business and military contexts. While military strategy had ancient roots, its modern business counterpart began to crystallise in the 1950s and 1960s, mirroring the complexities of a rapidly evolving global market.

Peter Drucker in *The Practice of Management* (1954) introduced concepts like management by objectives, shaping business strategy in the post-war era. Alfred D. Chandler in Strategy and Structure (1962) analysed the strategies of large American firms, solidifying the importance of strategy in business. Charles Lindblom in his *The Science of "Muddling Through"* (1959) highlighted the incremental and complex nature of policy-making and finally, Aaron Wildavsky: *Speaking Truth to Power* (1979) emphasised the political aspects and complexities of policy analysis.

Australia's post-war reconstruction embodied this strategic thinking in distinctive ways. The Curtin and Chifley governments focused policy deeply on strategic nation-building—immigration, industrialisation, and social welfare. The Snowy Mountains Scheme (1949) wasn't just infrastructure policy—it was nation-building strategy, integrating immigration, industrialisation, and regional development. The creation of the CSIRO reflected a strategic bet on science-led development, establishing institutions that would drive policy and strategy for decades.

Business strategy diverged from policy, moving towards long-term planning and competitive positioning. Theories by Peter Drucker and later Michael Porter, who introduced frameworks like the Five Forces analysis, were instrumental in this evolution. Government policy, meanwhile, focused more on public administration and societal issues, influenced by systems theory and the rise of policy analysis.

The interplay in the late 20th century

As the 20th century progressed, the distinct paths of policy and strategy began to intersect and influence each other. Business strategy, with its focus on competitive advantage and market dynamics, started to impact government policies, particularly in areas like economic development and international trade.

Australia's experience in this period perfectly exemplified this interplay. The Whitlam government (1972-75) redefined policy as a tool for social transformation—healthcare (Medibank), education, and urban planning were strategic priorities that fundamentally reshaped Australian society. The Hawke-Keating reforms of the 1980s and early 1990s demonstrated policy-strategy convergence at its most effective. Floating the dollar, deregulating finance, and introducing compulsory superannuation weren't just policies—they were strategic repositioning for a globalised economy, showing how government could use policy tools strategically while businesses adapted their strategies to new policy realities.

The establishment of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 1992 formalised strategic coordination across federal, state, and territory governments, while institutions like the Productivity Commission professionalised policy analysis, bridging academic rigour and strategic implementation.

Conversely, governmental policies, especially regulations and international agreements, increasingly shaped business strategies. This interplay highlighted the interconnectedness of the public and private sectors in a globalised world.

Case study: The Snowy Mountains Scheme —Policy as strategic nation-building

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme (1949–1974) stands as one of Australia's most ambitious and enduring examples of policy as strategy. Conceived in the aftermath of World War II, it was not merely an infrastructure project—it was a strategic blueprint for national development, economic resilience, and social transformation.

Strategic objectives

- **Energy Security:** Harnessing the Snowy River's flow to generate hydroelectric power for industrial growth.
- **Water Redistribution:** Redirecting water inland to support agriculture in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- **Nation-Building:** Stimulating post-war reconstruction, employment, and regional development.

Policy instruments

- **Legislative Framework:** The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Power Act (1949) established the Snowy Mountains Authority, a federal body with sweeping powers.
- **Immigration Policy:** The scheme became a magnet for post-war migrants, integrating over 100,000 workers from more than 30 countries—an early example of policy-driven multiculturalism.
- **Federal-State Coordination:** Despite jurisdictional tensions, the scheme exemplified strategic intergovernmental collaboration across NSW, Victoria, and the Commonwealth.

Strategic execution

- **Engineering Innovation:** The project involved 16 major dams, 145 km of tunnels, and 7 power stations—requiring cutting-edge engineering and logistics.
- **Workforce Strategy:** A deliberate mix of skilled and unskilled labour, with training programs and community infrastructure to support long-term settlement.
- **Narrative Framing:** The Snowy was framed as a symbol of modern Australia—progressive, inclusive, and technologically advanced.

Legacy and global relevance

- The Snowy Scheme remains a benchmark for strategic infrastructure planning. It demonstrated how policy can be used to shape geography, economy, and identity.
- Its success influenced later projects like the Ord River Scheme and informed Australia's approach to water and energy policy for decades.
- Globally, it stands alongside the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Hoover Dam as a model of integrated strategic planning.

Lessons for contemporary practice

The Snowy's approach offers insights for current challenges:

- **Long-term vision with staged delivery:** 25-year execution with clear milestones
- **Narrative as strategy:** Creating public buy-in through nation-building story
- **Integration by design:** Infrastructure as a vehicle for social policy (migration/integration)
- **Institutional innovation:** Creating new governance structures (Snowy Mountains Authority) when existing ones don't fit.

The 21st Century: Complexity, convergence, and new paradigms

In the 21st century, the narrative of policy and strategy continues, marked by increasing complexity and fundamental shifts in how both concepts operate. Global challenges like climate change, technological disruptions, and geopolitical shifts demand strategic thinking in policy-making and a policy-minded approach in business strategies.

The data revolution and evidence-based approaches

Strategy and policy increasingly converge around data. Australia's Productivity Commission pioneered evidence-based policy review, while businesses adopted similar data-driven strategic approaches. The COVID-19 response exemplified this convergence—real-time health data drove both government policy (lockdowns, border controls, JobKeeper designed in days) and business strategy (pivots to digital delivery, complete strategic reimagination overnight). The pandemic compressed both policy and strategy cycles, challenging the traditional temporal mismatch between policy development (years) and strategic pivots (months or weeks).

Agile and iterative design

The traditional linear policy cycle has given way to iterative approaches borrowed from business strategy. Design thinking and behavioural economics now shapes policy through initiatives like NSW's Behavioural Insights Unit. "Policy labs" and regulatory sandboxes — such as ASIC's fintech sandbox—show governments adopting startup-style experimentation. This represents a fundamental shift from the "announce and defend" model to "test, learn, and iterate."

Platform thinking and digital ecosystems

Digital platforms force a complete rethinking of both concepts. When government creates digital identity systems (myGov, Digital ID) or data-sharing frameworks (Consumer Data Right), it's simultaneously policy-making and platform strategy. Businesses must now factor regulatory technology and "policy as code" into their strategic planning. The distinction between policy implementation and digital strategy has essentially dissolved.

Multi-stakeholder governance

Neither pure government policy nor corporate strategy suffices for contemporary challenges. Australia's climate and energy debates illustrate this complexity—the Renewable Energy Target, National Hydrogen Strategy, and Net Zero Economy Agency demonstrate hybrid approaches where policy and strategy must be co-created across government, business, and civil society. The National Reconstruction Fund exemplifies this new model, blending public policy objectives with private sector strategic capabilities.

Speed and adaptation challenges

Perhaps the starkest change is the acceleration of both policy and strategy cycles. Traditional five-year strategic plans and lengthy policy development processes struggle to remain relevant. Instead, we see adaptive management approaches, continuous monitoring and adjustment, and the rise of "perpetual beta" in both government services and business models. Australia's Digital Economy Strategy and rapid pandemic response mechanisms show how both sectors are learning to operate at digital speed while maintaining democratic accountability and strategic coherence.

Artificial Intelligence: The great convergence accelerator

AI represents perhaps the most profound challenge to traditional policy-strategy distinctions. It operates at speeds that collapse the gap between strategic planning and tactical execution, while raising policy questions that require immediate strategic responses.

AI development outpaces policy by design. While Australia's National AI Centre and AI Ethics Framework attempt to provide guardrails, the technology evolves faster than traditional policy cycles can respond. The result: "regulation by iteration", where policy must be continuously updated through technical standards, industry codes, and adaptive regulation rather than static legislation.

AI fundamentally alters strategic planning itself. Predictive analytics replace intuition, machine learning identifies patterns humans miss, and generative AI accelerates option development. The Australian Public Service's use of AI for service delivery (Centrelink's automated systems, ATO's fraud detection) shows government adopting private sector strategic tools, while businesses increasingly need to factor AI governance and policy compliance into their core strategy.

Unlike previous technological shifts, AI raises existential policy-strategy questions. Australia's Critical Technology List and Quantum Commercialisation Centre represent attempts to maintain strategic autonomy in an AI-dominated world. The AUKUS Pillar 2 focus on AI cooperation shows policy and strategy merging at the highest levels of national security.

Case Example: Australia's responsible AI ecosystem:

Rather than rigid legislation, Australia is developing an adaptive ecosystem, combining voluntary AI Ethics Principles, sector-specific guidelines (TGA for medical AI, ASIC for financial algorithms), and regulatory sandboxes. This represents a new model where policy provides principles while strategy emerges through experimentation.

An ongoing journey

The journey of "policy" and "strategy" from the 1920s to the present is a testament to their adaptive nature. From their shared beginnings to their divergent paths in the mid-20th century, and their complex convergence today, these concepts have been integral to navigating the ever-changing global landscape.

For Australian practitioners, this evolution carries particular lessons: the importance of federal-state coordination, the value of evidence-based approaches pioneered by institutions like the Productivity Commission, and the need to balance Westminster traditions with innovative, agile approaches demanded by digital transformation and global challenges.

As we move forward, the boundaries between policy and strategy will likely continue to blur. Success will require fluency in both languages—understanding when to apply strategic thinking to policy problems and when policy considerations must shape strategy. The future belongs to those who can navigate this convergence, combining the democratic legitimacy and public purpose of good policy with the agility and innovation of effective strategy.

John Kingdon's (1984, updated 2010) influential work reveals that policy change rarely follows a neat, linear path. He identified three streams flowing independently through government work: the **problem stream** (issues demanding attention), the **policy stream** (solutions circulating among specialists and advocates), and the **politics stream** (shifts in political mood, election results, or changes in government). Policy breakthroughs happen when these streams converge—when a recognised problem meets an available solution at a politically opportune moment. Kingdon called these moments "policy windows", fleeting opportunities when motivated policy entrepreneurs can couple the streams together and drive change. Understanding this framework helps public servants recognise when conditions are ripe for action and when to build coalitions, refine solutions, or reframe problems.

Yet Kingdon's streams can feel detached from the lived reality of citizens and communities. To make policy that truly serves the public, we need to add a fourth consideration: **Polity—the people and places policy affects**. This means actively asking: whose voices are missing from any problem definition? What does this solution look like from the perspective of regional communities versus metropolitan centres? How do cultural contexts, local institutions, and community strengths shape what's possible? Practically, this requires embedding genuine co-design processes, conducting place-based policy analysis, ensuring diverse representation in policy teams, and building relationships with community leaders preferably before the policy window opens. When people and place become central—not afterthoughts—we create policy that's not only politically feasible but also legitimate, implementable, and responsive to the communities it serves. The challenge is making this "fourth stream" as rigorous and intentional as the other three.

A short history of the APS and its values

The Act that established the APS in 1902 was largely administrative and had no detail of values or purpose. Rather, it laid out the rules for regulating the administration such as hiring, promotions, and salaries. Some values are implied subtly throughout, but more obviously in the ***Offences*** section, where anyone found guilty of disobedience, negligence, incompetency, alcoholism and improper conduct would be reprimanded. Though it isn't clear what is meant by improper.

In the *Commonwealth Public Service Act* (1922) the ***Offences*** section was extended to include a public official in both their official and unofficial capacities, and to hold them accountable to both this **Act and regulations**, and to the oath (or affirmation) made by all public servants (laid out in the Fourth Schedule) to **bear allegiance to the King and to uphold the Constitution.**

It might amuse some to know these early foundational documents did very clearly mandate that women were only allowed to be hired until marriage, a rule that persisted until 1966 when another round of changes to the original Act occurred in the ***Public Service Act (1966)***. There was a significant review into the APS which recommended a values based approach be implemented.

Finally, in the ***Public Service Act (1999),*** we saw actual values enshrined in legislation, a long list that makes for interesting reading.

a) the APS is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner;

b) the APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit;

c) the APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves;

d) the APS has the highest ethical standards;

e) the APS is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public;

f) the APS is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs;

g) the APS delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public;

h) the APS has leadership of the highest quality;

i) the APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace;

j) the APS provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace;

k) the APS focuses on achieving results and managing performance;

l) the APS promotes equity in employment;

m) the APS provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment;

n) the APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government;

o) the APS provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of APS employees.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b), a decision relating to engagement or promotion is based on merit if:

a) an assessment is made of the relative suitability of the candidates for the duties, using a competitive selection process; and

b) the assessment is based on the relationship between the candidates' work-related qualities and the work-related qualities genuinely required for the duties; and

c) the assessment focuses on the relative capacity of the candidates to achieve outcomes related to the duties; and

d) the assessment is the primary consideration in making the decision.

In 2013 there was an overhaul of these values in the ***Public Service Act (2013)*** to simplify, and to require public servants to demonstrate and promote the APS Values, the APS Employment Principles and compliance with the Code of Conduct.

- **Impartial:** The APS is apolitical and provides the Government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence.
- **Committed to service:** The APS is professional, objective, innovative and efficient, and works collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the Government.

- **Accountable:** The APS is open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility.
- **Respectful:** The APS respects all people, including their rights and their heritage.
- **Ethical:** The APS demonstrates leadership, is trustworthy, and acts with integrity, in all that it does.

After reading through all these values, how does it align with your values? Those of your community or family? How do you apply a values based approach in your day to day work?

A 2008 Australian Public Service Commission review resulted in various recommendations and practical guidelines for public servants to consider what it means to be an apolitical service. ***Reinvigorating the Westminster tradition: Integrity and accountability in relations between the Australian Government and the APS***, remains useful background for curious public servants.

The values of any public service should be continually reviewed, balanced against and improved to be reflective of the changing values of the people and communities we serve. It is only when public and public sector values are in alignment that we can understand and be appropriately responsive to, reflective of and considered properly legitimate in the public eye.

About this book

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About the authors

Catherine Althaus

Catherine Althaus discovered her calling through an unusual combination: working as a policy practitioner in Queensland Treasury while nurturing a deep curiosity about how policy works from rigorous academic thinking as well as other global practices. This dual perspective became her professional hallmark—the ability to bridge the worlds of scholarship and practice. Her foundational epiphany was realising that the best policy insights come from moving between these worlds, not choosing between them. This "practitioner-academic" approach led to co-authoring *The Australian Policy Handbook*, Australia's most trusted policy guide, and pioneering research on Indigenous public service leadership and more recently adaptive leadership and trauma-informed public administration. Catherine is currently a Professor in the School of Business, UNSW Canberra and Founding Director of the Academy of Adaptive Leadership at UNSW.

Suhit Anantula

Suhit Anantula is a strategy designer and systems thinker working at the intersection of policy, design, and innovation. Over two decades, he has helped governments, mission-driven organisations, and enterprises navigate complexity—translating public purpose into actionable systems and strategies. Suhit has led policy and design initiatives across Australia, from developing the nation's first mission-driven economic strategy in South Australia to embedding design-led policymaking and innovation practices in state and federal government programs. His work often bridges economic strategy, public sector reform, and future-focused institutional design. As founder of The Helix Lab, Suhit focuses on helping organisations become adaptive and AI-ready through strategic design and human-centred transformation. He is also the author of *The Helix Moment: How to Think, Lead, and Design in the Co-Intelligence Age*—a book that explores how leaders can reimagine strategy and policy as living, learning systems in the age of AI. Through all his work, Suhit remains grounded in a simple conviction: policy is one of the most powerful design tools we have for shaping a fairer, more intelligent society.

Pia Andrews

Pia Andrews has had two professional epiphanies that shaped her into becoming a passionate and relentless serial public sector reformer, in Australia and around the world. Her first early career epiphany was to realise the critical need to have a values-driven approach to technology, to ensure the tools we make actually align to human development, supporting our values and quality of life. As part of this work Pia engaged in tech community advocacy and inevitably came to interact with the government, something she'd never previously had an interest in. This led to working in a political office as an apolitical senior advisor, which led to the second professional epiphany: the realisation of the critical role the public sector plays in supporting and maintaining a fair, equitable and stable society. This second epiphany led to a career change and now ongoing commitment to humane, adaptive and impactful public service digital transformation, with 10 years in the technology sector and 16 years working in (and with) public sectors around the world, bringing together international perspectives, best practices and important lessons on the need for digital transformation to extend from service delivery, to policy, institutional uplift and participatory governance. Pia currently works as a Senior Policy Advisor on Digital Transformation (including AI) for the United Nations Development Programme with the Regional Innovation and Digital team across South East Asia and the Pacific.

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