

Early market engagement: Evidence use in policymaking

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
Research Commissioning Centre

rcc@3ieimpact.org

12 December 2024

Housekeeping

- The session is being recorded to make available to those who cannot attend
- We will share slides and a FAQ summary with registered participants
- Please use the **Q&A function** to enter questions at any time
- Feel free to use the **meeting chat** to introduce yourself and make connections
- To **opt out** of appearing on the participant list, please contact: ckelly@3ieimpact.org
- Please remain muted unless speaking. **Raise your hand** to ask question.
- **Live captioning** is available

Please note: All information shared today is indicative only and may change before the final tender is published

Session agenda

Welcome and housekeeping	5 mins
Research Commissioning Centre and funding round overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to FCDO RCC• Rationale for funding round• Scope and objectives• Methods and research questions• Commissioning process• Due diligence and contracting	25 mins
Q&A and feedback	40 mins
Opportunities to build partnerships	15 mins
Next steps and close	5 mins

Contributors



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FCDO Research Commissioning Centre (RCC)

The FCDO RCC is a leading, inclusive, responsive, and efficient funder of high quality, policy-relevant and impactful research informing the most pressing global challenges of our time.



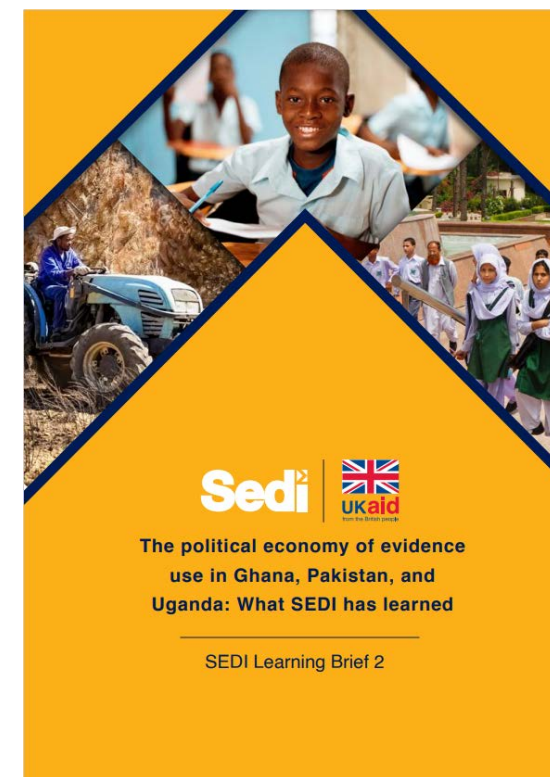
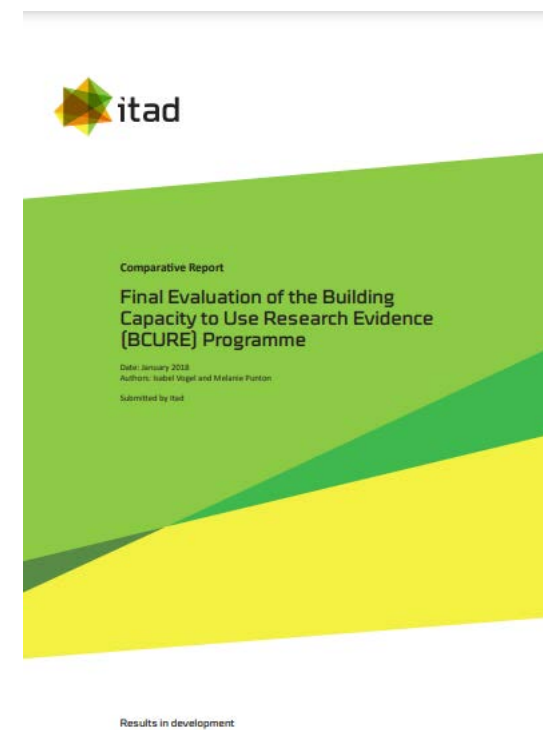
To consider

1. Are the proposed activities, and rationale underpinning them, clear?
2. Are the proposed activities useful and relevant for policymakers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia?
3. Are there any other considerations that should be included in the proposed research?
4. What features of the commissioning process would you like to see (or not see) to best facilitate your bid development? For example:
 - How long would be needed to develop a strong proposal?
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 - Would any additional information would be helpful to inform your decision or approach to applying?

Please share your feedback!

Research programme background

- Overarching objective to support economic development and growth through evidence-informed policymaking
- Well-documented barriers to, and weak governance around, evidence use
- Previous DFID/FCDO programming in this space



Scoping work to date

Activities

- Rapid scoping review of existing theoretical and synthesis literature
- Systematic review on what works to increase the use of evidence for policy decision-making (with Pan-African Collective for Evidence) - forthcoming
- Consultations with researchers, evidence intermediaries, funders and senior policymakers
- Pathfinding paper - forthcoming

Findings

- The field lacks a shared conceptual framework and common taxonomy of interventions.
- Previous research on the use of evidence in policymaking is often atheoretical and pays limited attention to political, bureaucratic and institutional context.
- Scant evidence from rigorous evaluations of innovations to increase the use of evidence in policymaking, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.
- No agreed set of indicators and outcome measures by which to assess evidence use in policymaking.

RCC commissioning: Evidence on evidence use

Strand 1:

Theory of change development and measures inventory

Objective: Produce an overarching theory of change to identify constructs of interest and a toolkit of robust measures and associated guidance that can be used to track and assess evidence use and factors that facilitate it

Timeline: Underway



To inform commissioned research

RCC commissioning: Evidence on evidence use

Strand 1:

Theory of change development and measures inventory

Objective: Produce an overarching theory of change to identify constructs of interest and a toolkit of robust measures and associated guidance that can be used to track and assess evidence use and factors that facilitate it

Timeline: Underway

Strand 2:

Studies of evidence use in practice

Objective: Identify common conditions under which decision-making is informed by research evidence (or not) in economic policymaking and draw actionable conclusions on the factors or levers used that enabled change

Timeline: Launch 2025
Project size: max £200k

Strand 3:

Interventions to influence use of evidence in policymaking

Objective: Advance empirical knowledge on how to improve the use of research evidence in policymaking through rigorous evaluation of evidence use interventions

Timeline: Launch 2025
Project size: max £400k

Strand 2: Examples of evidence use in practice

Rationale:

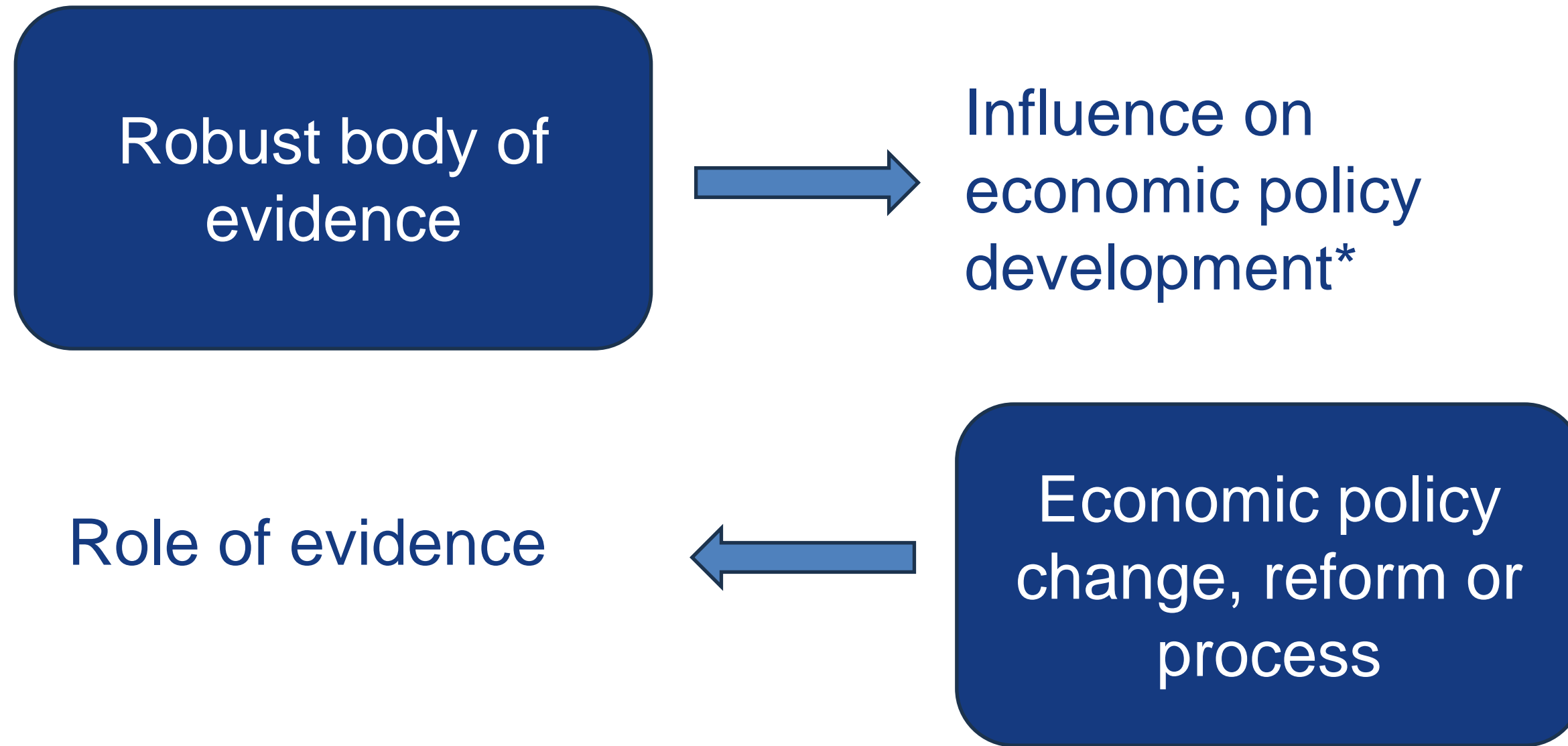
Cross-cutting theme during scoping was the lack of detailed attention in previous research to the political and bureaucratic influences on evidence use in government decision-making processes. Very few published policy case studies that focus on evidence use within economic policymaking.

Indicative research questions:

- What are the individual, institutional, and political factors that influence national economic decision-making in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- What are the barriers or constraints that impede the use of evidence in economic decision-making?
- What value do decision-makers place on evidence and for what purpose? How do they access, select and interpret evidence? How do they define 'evidence'?
- Which actors within the policy ecosystem need to be targeted to institutionalise evidence use?
- How does the timing of evidence provision matter in relation to electoral cycles, proximity to a decision-making moment, or policymaker tenure?
- How does political ideology/polarity shape policymakers' receptiveness to evidence-informed decision-making? In what ways does the contentiousness of the decision affect the role of evidence?

Strand 2: Examples of evidence use in practice

Research entry points



*Includes agenda setting, policy decision-making, policy implementation, public investment decisions, economic reform, regulation, legislation, etc.

Strand 2: Examples of evidence use in practice

Geographic focus: Low- and lower-middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Can take an individual country or comparative focus.

Sector focus: National economic growth (e.g., energy systems, high-volume transport, industrial policy, labour markets, trade policy)

Policymaking focus: National governments. May include sub-national government level, where policies have national implications for economic growth. May also explore the role of external evidence intermediary organizations in supporting national decision-making.

Strand 2: Examples of evidence use in practice

Study designs: Retrospective, appropriate to the research question

Example: Qualitative case study



Example: Secondary quantitative analysis



We are interested in **successful examples** of research evidence translating into desired courses of action but also **misuse, selective use or lack of evidence use** and the factors that contribute to it.

Strand 3: Interventions to influence evidence use

Rationale: Rapid proliferation of evidence and approaches to enhance evidence use, but very limited impact evidence. PACE/3ie systematic review found just 18 counterfactual impact evaluations, mostly from high-income countries.

Indicative research questions:

- What interventions are effective at increasing the use of research in policymaking in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia?
- What are the mechanisms through which effective interventions operate?
- How effective are evidence intermediaries, such as knowledge brokers, local research institutions or embedded policy labs, in bridging the gap between evidence and policy? What strategies do they use?
- What approaches facilitate the institutionalisation of evidence use?
- What are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness of an intervention in a given setting?
- What are the implementation costs associated with effective evidence use interventions?

Strand 3: Interventions to influence evidence use

Geographic focus: Low- and lower-middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Sector focus: Preference for sectors important for national economic growth, but open to any policy area.

Outcomes of interest: Preference for observable policy impact as primary outcome, with additional proximal outcomes along the causal chain (e.g., institutional change, attitudes, beliefs).* Downstream socio-economic outcomes also welcome.

* To be informed by Strand 1 work.

Strand 3: Interventions to influence evidence use

Intervention types: New innovations or existing interventions

1. Strategies to produce new research evidence that responds to the needs of policymakers

- Co-production of research
- Technical support to build the skills of policymakers to commission and make use of research evidence
- Support for researchers to meet policymakers' needs – e.g., communicate research accessibly, navigate bureaucracies

2. Strategies to facilitate the use of existing research evidence

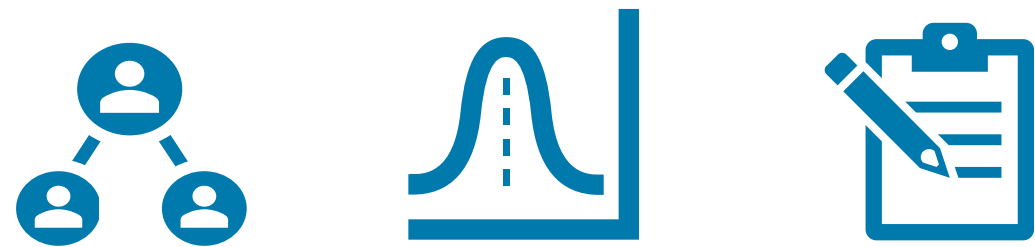
- Structural/ process-related initiatives to change evidence use culture within organisations, e.g., embedded policy labs
- Support services, e.g., rapid response units, designed to answer pressing policy questions in a timely way
- Technological innovations, e.g., generative AI-powered tools, that provide instant evidence summaries

Must be underpinned by a compelling **theory of change** leading to evidence-informed decision-making.

Strand 3: Interventions to influence evidence use

Study design: Prospective or retrospective mixed method impact evaluation

Example: Randomized controlled trial with process evaluation



Example: Mixed method “small n” evaluation of organization- or system-level interventions

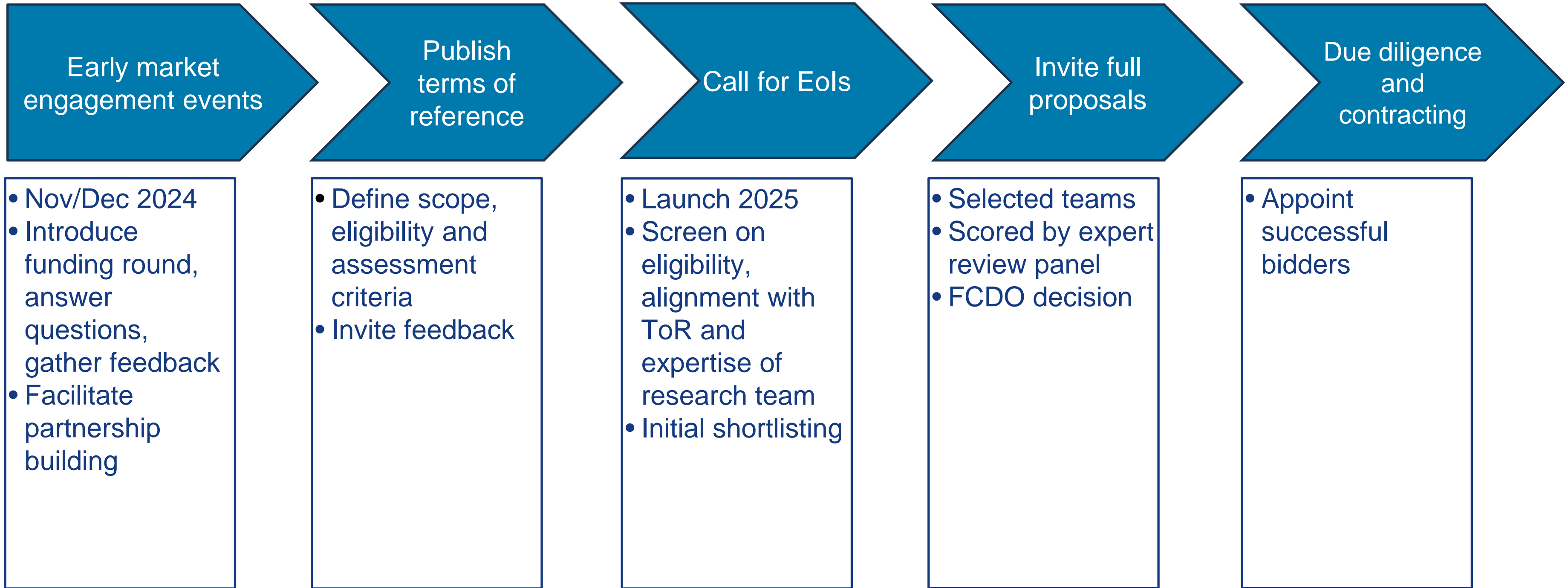


We are interested in both the **extent** to which interventions increase the use of research evidence in policy processes but also the **quality** of evidence use.

Project parameters

	Strand 2	Strand 3
Budget	Max. £200k	Max. £400k
Project duration	1 year from contract signing	c.2 years from contract signing but open to longer
Expected deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protocol/ inception report• Presentation to FCDO• Final report• Presentation of final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protocol/ inception report• Presentation to FCDO• Final report• Presentation of final report

Anticipated commissioning process



Eligibility and selection criteria

Open to any legally registered organisations (not individuals) with the requisite experience and capacity. We strongly encourage the leadership of in-country research teams where studies are undertaken. Organisations may apply independently or in collaboration with partner organisation(s).

Expression of interest	Full proposal
1. Completeness	1. Understanding of call for proposals
2. Eligibility and fit with terms of reference	2. Methodological approach and academic rigour
3. Team experience and expertise	3. Proposed team
	4. Equity and inclusion
	5. Financial feasibility and value for money
	6. Research uptake plan
	7. Overall assessment of the project

Due diligence

Dimensions:

1. **Governance and internal control** (e.g., board membership and structure, conflict of interest protocols)
2. **Ability to deliver** (e.g., performance and risk management systems, information security and data protection protocols)
3. **Financial stability** (e.g., financial reporting, fraud and financial risk management)
4. **Downstream delivery** (e.g., downstream due diligence, monitoring processes)
5. **Safeguarding** (e.g., whistleblowing/ grievance procedures, code of conduct)

Scale:

1. Light touch due diligence assessment – below £100,000
2. Full due diligence assessment – above £100,000

Organisations who do not pass their due diligence assessment will be required to sign a Letter of Undertaking until the necessary policies have been developed

Budgets

- Required at proposal stage (template provided)
- Should be fully costed and demonstrate value for money

Permitted costs - examples	Unpermitted costs - examples
Salaries (+ benefits)	Per diems
Indirect costs (NPAC , TRAC (for universities), other indirect costing methodology traceable through audited accounts)	
Travel under actuals basis	

OFAC checking needs to be completed and passed by all partners (valid for 3-year period)

Contracting

Consortium Partners

- Framework Agreement signed with Consortium Partner
 - No financial commitments made in the Framework Agreement
 - Framework Agreements allow for faster contracting on new projects
- Once the Framework Agreement has been approved, Specific Project Specifications (SPSs) are drafted
- SPSs contain the key deliverables and disbursements

New Partners

- Accountable Grant Agreement (AGA) reviewed by new Partner legal team
- Deliverables and Disbursement Schedule (D&D Schedule) is drafted to agree upon key deliverables
- D&D schedule is included in the AGA and contract disbursements are directly tied to deliverables

Q&A and feedback

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Please share your feedback!

Partnership building

We encourage partnerships between **researchers, practitioners and government decision-makers** in conducting this research.

If you are looking for partners with complementary experience or expertise, please feel free to share with participants. For example:

- What work are you currently doing in this space?
- Are you involved in delivery of an intervention that you would like to be evaluated?
- Do you have experience of a policy example that we can learn from?

Next steps

Please send any additional questions or feedback to: ckelly@3ieimpact.org

For more information about the FCDO Research Commissioning Centre, and to sign up for funding alerts, see:

<https://3ieimpact.org/about/research-commissioning-center>



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