Evaluating research policy interactions

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• New form of funding from Scottish Government
• “to connect research and policy, delivering objective and robust research and professional opinion to support the development and implementation of water policy in Scotland”

• Purpose:
  • deliver timely and accurate advice
  • co-ordinate research, analysis and interpretation
  • stimulate innovative thinking

• Honest broker
• £1 million a year
Why evaluate?

• Evidence informed policy
  – Stronger connections
  – Better relationships
  – Trust
  – Co-construction of research
• So we know how to do it better
• Demonstrating value for money
Methods

- Formative evaluation
- Baseline questionnaires & post-project interviews
- Conceptual framework to guide approach

Interactive networks generate opportunities for capacity building

Capacity building leads to shared understanding and changes in cultures and thinking

Changes in cultures and thinking allow instrumental changes to policy & delivery

Changes to policy & delivery lead to environmental improvements, societal wellbeing and economic growth
Findings

• Existing knowledge not capability
• Problems with capacity and timing
• Appreciation of co-produced questions to get better policy solutions
• Deeper but not wider networks?
• Examples of impacts on policy development and implementation
Lessons learnt: capacity building

• Often a funder requirement
• But what is it?
• How to conceptualise and evaluate

• Need a shared understanding
• Networks and relationships
Lessons learnt: co-construction

• Fundamental to success!
• Basis for more informed policy
• Needs to happen throughout the process
• Shared understanding of working cultures

• Takes time and resources
• Requires buy in from all involved
Lessons learnt: impact

- Objectives and engagement well planned
- Relationships, networks and trust
- Co production
- Good infrastructure and management support

- Who defines impact?
- Attributing impact
- Indirect, reliant on other factors, time lags
- Establishing the counterfactual
- Even the best outcome may have no impact
Conclusions

• Need both process and outcome variables
• Assessment over time vs. snapshots
• CREW is constantly evolving
• Making what is important measurable
• Moving from KT > KE> co-production