7.2 Evidence Commission recommendations

The preceding chapters provide the context, problems, potential solutions, and shared vocabulary that underpin the recommendations that follow. These chapters can be used by many people, not just those in a position to take action. However, here we focus on those best positioned to make the changes necessary to ensure that evidence is consistently used to address societal challenges. This includes primarily:

- multilateral organizations like the UN system, multilateral development banks, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the G20, and others
- national and sub-national government policymakers
- organizational leaders, professionals and citizens
- evidence intermediaries, including those who do not currently function as evidence intermediaries (such as journalists for the most part)
- evidence producers, particularly impact-oriented units engaged in producing and supporting the use of data analytics, modeling, evaluation, behavioural / implementation research, qualitative insights, evidence syntheses, technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis, and guidelines.

Here we provide an overview of the Evidence Commission's 24 recommendations in an infographic, and then we elaborate on them in the table below it. The eight most-important recommendations – 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 15 and 24 – are bolded. Their importance stems from how they provide the framing [1, 4, 13], structures and processes [5, 14, 15], accountabilities [3] or funding [24] from which so many other actions can follow. As a reminder, we use the word 'evidence' in these recommendations (as in the rest of the report) to mean research evidence, and specifically all eight forms of evidence described in chapter 4 (data analytics, modeling, evaluation, behavioural / implementation research, qualitative insights, evidence syntheses, technology assessment / cost-effectiveness analysis, and guidelines). We use 'best evidence' to mean – in a given national (or sub-national) context – national (or sub-national) evidence drawn from the best available studies (i.e., what has been learned in that context) and global evidence drawn from the best available evidence syntheses (i.e., what has been learned from around the world, including how it varies by groups and contexts).

All who can take action

Two recommendations, one a **wake-up call** [1] and the second a proposed new standard for responding – to ask for evidence – any time a claim is made (e.g., this intervention works) [2]

Multilateral organizations

Two recommendations, one calling for a **resolution by multi-lateral organizations** [3] and the second a **landmark report** [4]

Government policymakers

Seven recommendations:

- four calling for fit-for-purpose national (and sub-national) **evidence-support systems** (and broader evidence infrastructures) [5], evidence-support staff and partnerships [6], science advisors [7], and advisory bodies [8]
- one calling for building a more diversified evidence base [9]
- two related to open science [10] and artificial intelligence [11]

Organizational leaders, professionals and citizens

Two recommendations:

- one calling for every significant organizational association, professional body and impact-oriented civil-society group to contribute meaningfully to its national (or sub-national) evidence-support system [12]
- one calling on citizens to consider the many ways they can use best **evidence in everyday life**, and to consider supporting politicians (and others) who enable this [13]

Evidence intermediaries

Three recommendations:

- one addressed to **dedicated evidence intermediaries** [14], and another addressed to **news and social-media platforms** [15]
- one more generally calling for the timely and responsive matching of best evidence to the question asked [16]

Evidence producers

Seven recommendations:

- five addressing their roles in: 1) filling gaps and adhering to standards [17]; 2) responding, referring or working with others [18]; 3) learning from evidence groups in other sectors [19]; 4) being prepared to pivot for global emergencies [20]; and 5) making evidence understandable [21]
- one addressed specifically to academic institutions [22], and another addressed to journals [23]

Funders

One recommendation calling for **spending 'smarter,' and ideally more, on evidence support**, particularly on national (and sub-national) evidence-support systems and broader evidence infrastructures [24]

The Evidence Commission offers the following 24 recommendations. To make the eight most-important recommendations – 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 15 and 24 – easier to identify, they are preceded by a coloured circle containing the recommendation number and contained in a text box with an outer border of the same colour. For each recommendation we list the related sections of the report that provide the context, concepts or vocabulary that underpin it (in the order that they are introduced). Where relevant, we also list the global reports that are aligned with an Evidence Commission recommendation. The global-commission reports are typically aligned only with part of a recommendation or its rationale (e.g., being attentive to equity, investing in select forms of evidence such as evaluation, and holding decision-makers to account), whereas reports from other global entities tend to be more fulsomely aligned.

All decision-makers, evidence intermediaries and impact-oriented evidence producers

1

Wake-up call — **Decision-makers, evidence intermediaries and impact-oriented evidence producers should recognize the scale and nature of the problem.** Evidence – in all of the eight forms addressed in this report – is not being systematically used by government policymakers, organizational leaders, professionals and citizens to equitably address societal challenges. Instead decision-makers too often rely on inefficient (and sometimes harmful) informal feedback systems. The result is poor decisions that lead to failures to improve lives, avoidable harm to citizens, and wasted resources.

The cohort of decision-makers who were involved in COVID-19 decision-making, especially high-level government policymakers, now has direct experience with using many forms of evidence and with leveraging strategies that support its use. They also have direct experience with the challenges that can arise, leading evidence to be disregarded or misused. They may also have heard about the evidence supports available to their peers in other countries, such as living evidence syntheses, and wondered why they are not available or used in their own country. This cohort is uniquely well positioned to systematize what went well before and during the pandemic, and to build or improve their respective country's evidence-support system in ways that address what didn't go well.

Related sections: **4.13** Weaknesses in many COVID-19 evidence-support systems | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | **4.1** Forms in which evidence is typically encountered in decision-making | **4.7** Living evidence products

2

New standard of asking for evidence — **All decision-makers should pay attention when a claim is being made and ask about the quality and applicability of the evidence on which the claim is based.** Experts and others who make claims (e.g., this intervention works) may be relying on their personal experiences or a subset of the available evidence. They may be overconfident in what they think they know. Instead of relying on experts as their sole source of evidence, decision-makers can look to sources of best evidence, such as 'one-stop shops' containing evidence syntheses that have been organized using an appropriate taxonomy, and that have each been rated for quality, updatedness, and other decision-relevant factors. They can engage experts in other roles, such as working through what specific evidence syntheses mean for a given jurisdiction and challenging ways of thinking with different forms of evidence.

Related sections: **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | **4.8** Best evidence versus other things (and how to get the most of other things) | **4.11** Misinformation and infodemics

Multilateral organizations

3

Resolution by multilateral organizations — **The UN, the G20 and other multilateral organizations should endorse a resolution that commits these multilateral organizations and their member states to broaden their conception of evidence, and to support evidence-related global public goods and equitably distributed capacities to produce, share and use evidence.** The 'quintet of change' meant to support the UN's transformation from 2021 to 2025 explicitly includes data analytics and behavioural/implementation research, implicitly includes evaluation (under 'performance and results orientation'), and is silent on the other needed forms of evidence.(1) The UN and other multilateral organizations (including the global commissions they sponsor) continue to rely on an 'expert knows best' model. The reinvigoration of the UN Secretary-General Scientific Advisory Board provides an opportunity to do better.(2) Much can be learned from the organizations that have pioneered more systematic and transparent approaches to using evidence, such as the World Health Organization's (WHO) Guidelines Review Committee (that develops normative guidance) and the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Related sections: **4.2** Definitions of forms in which evidence is typically encountered | **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | **5.5** UN system entities' use of evidence syntheses in their work | **7.1** Insights from an analysis of global-commission recommendations | Aligned report: (3)

4

Landmark report — **The World Bank should dedicate an upcoming World Development Report to providing the design of the evidence architecture needed globally, regionally and nationally, including the required investments in evidence-related global public goods and in equitably distributed capacities to produce, share and use evidence.** The World Bank's steps towards being the 'knowledge bank' have been too tentative. Their work to date emphasizes some forms of evidence (e.g., data analytics) and largely disregards others (e.g., evidence synthesis). A landmark report can establish a common language about evidence and evidence use that everybody – decision-makers, evidence intermediaries and impact-oriented evidence producers – can use. It can also lay out the many steps involved in doing better, including the World Bank's role, as well as the roles of its global partnerships and of other UN agencies, in supporting evidence-related global public goods like evidence syntheses.

Related sections: **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | **1.6** Timeline of key developments in using evidence to address societal challenges | Aligned report: (4)

Government policymakers

5

National (and sub-national) evidence-support systems — **Every national (and sub-national) government should review their existing evidence-support system (and broader evidence infrastructure), fill the gaps both internally and through partnerships, and report publicly on their progress.** For example, many governments do not have an evidence-support coordination office, a behavioural-insights unit, an evidence-use handbook and related metrics, and other features of an ideal evidence-support system (as described in **section 4.14**). Each government can also review their 'mainstream' structures and processes (e.g., budgeting, planning, monitoring and auditing) to formalize the 'ways in' for evidence. Without the right evidence-support system, staff will not have the capacity, opportunity and motivation to use evidence in government policymaking.

Some governments may choose to formalize their effects in legislation, like the U.S. Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. Many governments can also support the use of evidence in the everyday work of organizational leaders and professionals, and in the everyday lives of citizens, and can explicitly respect Indigenous rights and ways of knowing in their efforts.

Related sections: **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **3.3** Government policymakers and the context for their use of evidence | **4.10** Indigenous rights and ways of knowing | Aligned report: (3)

6

Staff, partnerships and other resources — **Government policymakers should ensure that the executive and legislative branches of government have access to the staff, partnerships and other resources needed for evidence support.** Policy, program, technical and library staff involved in supporting government policymakers (i.e., the staff who provide the 'absorptive capacity' for evidence in government) need to keep abreast of developments in using evidence. They need to have partnerships (which can include technical-assistance arrangements) with specialized evidence producers and intermediaries that complement their in-house capacities, and the other resources needed to apply these capacities (e.g., online document access).

Related sections: **3.3** Government policymakers and the context for their use of evidence | **5.3** Strategies used by evidence intermediaries | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | Aligned reports: (3-5)

7

Science advisors — **Government policymakers should select their science advisors based on their ability to find, contextualize and communicate diverse forms of evidence, and to sustain a high-performing evidence-support system.** Many science advisors are instead selected based on their past scientific contributions or their relationships with senior government officials. Just like policy and other staff, science advisors need to keep abreast of the many developments in using evidence. Such evidence includes the eight forms of evidence discussed in this report, evidence from across the health, natural and social sciences, and evidence from across sectors. Many of these forms of evidence are now available as living evidence products.

Related sections: **3.3** Government policymakers and the context for their use of evidence | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **4.2** Definitions of forms in which evidence is typically encountered | **4.7** Living evidence products

8

Advisory bodies — **Government policymakers should hold advisory bodies to higher standards in their use of evidence.** Many advisory bodies do not use a combination of the best local evidence (e.g., data analytics from the national or sub-national level) and syntheses of the best evidence globally, or match the right form of evidence to the right decision-related question. They typically do not use robust deliberative processes, including giving voice to the individuals who can bring an equity perspective to interpreting what the evidence means for particular groups. They also do not typically distinguish between their recommendations that are based on best evidence from those that are not.

Related sections: **4.4** Interplay of local and global evidence | **4.3** Matching decision-related questions to forms of evidence | **1.7** Equity considerations | **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence

9

Building a more diversified evidence base — **Government policymakers should complement their general support for data collection and sharing with specific support for a more diversified evidence base that can inform decision-making in equity-sensitive ways.** Global commission reports consistently trumpet the value of 'big data.' They are largely silent on what constitutes robust data analytics, the types of questions data analytics can answer, and the many other forms of evidence needed to answer questions that data analytics can't answer. They are also largely silent on the need to better use the stock of existing evidence in all its forms, to build a diversified evidence base through all of their proposed investments, and to improve the signal-to-noise ratio in the sharing of both existing and new evidence.

Related sections: 7.1 Insights from an analysis of global-commission recommendations | **4.3** Matching decision-related questions to forms of evidence | **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | **1.7** Equity considerations | Aligned reports: (4; 6-13)

10

Open science — **Government policymakers should incentivize open science as a key enabler for using evidence in decision-making.** Sharing anonymized data, physical samples, and software (like that used in modeling) – while ensuring appropriate standards are in place to ensure data privacy – makes possible many types of data analytics and many evaluations. Addressing the factors that lead publicly funded researchers to place global public goods like evidence syntheses behind publisher 'pay walls' will help decision-makers and evidence intermediaries, as well as other evidence producers, to access the evidence they need.

Related sections: **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use Aligned reports: (14)

11

Artificial intelligence — **Government policymakers should ensure that regulatory regimes and ongoing validation schemes for artificial intelligence (AI) optimize AI's benefits for evidence-support systems and minimize its harms.** Machine learning and other approaches have created substantial new opportunities in data analytics, evidence synthesis, and other forms of evidence, but also have substantial potential to do harm. For example, these approaches may inadvertently perpetuate or increase the risk of discrimination. Policymakers can also work with researchers to ensure these analytical methods are reported transparently, replicated judiciously, and interpreted and used appropriately. In particular, the ability to draw causal inferences is often overestimated, leading to inappropriate interpretations and use in decision-making.

Related section: **4.7** Living evidence products | Aligned report: (15)

Organizational leaders, professionals and citizens

12

Contributions from organizational associations, professional bodies and civil-society groups — **Every significant organizational association, professional body and impact-oriented civil-society group should review its contributions to its national (or sub-national) evidence-support system (and broader evidence infrastructure), fill the gaps both internally and through partnerships, and report to its members on their progress.** Most organizations and virtually all professionals and citizens need to be able to rely on an evidence-support system that meets their needs while addressing conflicts of interest and avoiding 'spin.' Organizational associations (such as those representing and supporting school boards) and professional bodies (such as those representing and supporting social workers) can become key parts of a national (and sub-national) evidence-support system. Civil-society groups can hold accountable all of these groups for how they support the use of evidence to address societal challenges.

Related sections: **3.4** Organizational leaders and the context for their use of evidence | **3.5** Professionals and the context for their use of evidence | **3.6** Citizens and the context for their use of evidence | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | Aligned reports: (11; 16; 17)

13

Evidence in everyday life — **Citizens should consider making decisions about their and their families' well-being based on best evidence; spending their money on products and services that are backed by best evidence; volunteering their time and donating money to initiatives that use evidence to make decisions about what they do and how they do it; and supporting politicians who commit to using best evidence to address societal challenges and who commit (along with others) to supporting the use of evidence in everyday life.** Government policymakers, among others, need to ensure that citizens have access to best evidence, evidence-checked claims, and simple-to-use evidence-backed resources and websites to make informed choices at all times, not just during global crises. They also need to help build citizens' media and information literacy, provide the transparency needed for citizens to know when decisions, services and initiatives are based on best evidence, and more generally create a culture where evidence is understood, valued and used.

Related sections: **3.6** Citizens and the context for their use of evidence | **4.11** Misinformation and infodemics | Aligned reports: (3; 5; 10; 16; 18; 19)

Evidence intermediaries

14

Dedicated evidence intermediaries — **Dedicated evidence intermediaries should step forward to fill gaps left by government, provide continuity if staff turn-over in government is frequent, and leverage strong connections to global networks.** Evidence intermediaries work 'in between' decision-makers and evidence producers, supporting the former with best evidence and the latter with insights and opportunities for making an impact with evidence. As with government science advisors, intermediaries need to be able to find and communicate diverse forms of evidence and to sustain (at least a part of) a high-performing evidence-support system. COVID-19 has shown – in some countries at some times – the value of intermediaries partnering with community leaders to engage those who may have been ill-served in the past by evidence that was inappropriately generated, shared or used.

Related sections: **5.1** Types of evidence intermediaries | **5.3** Strategies used by evidence intermediaries | **4.2** Definitions of forms in which evidence is typically encountered | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **1.7** Equity considerations | Aligned reports: (8; 20)

15

News and social-media platforms — **News and social-media platforms should build relationships with dedicated evidence intermediaries who can help leverage sources of best evidence, and with evidence producers who can help communicate evidence effectively, as well as ensure their algorithms present best evidence and combat misinformation.** Journalists and fact checkers need to become familiar with evidence syntheses and use them to ask specific questions about any evidence they are presented with and any 'other things' that may be offered as a substitute for best evidence. Familiarity with evidence syntheses includes: the importance of contextualizing and situating new studies in a broader body of evidence; the rationale for preferring syntheses of high-quality studies over single, small, poorly executed studies; the concept of scientific uncertainty; the evolving nature of evidence and how this relates to emerging and replacement guidance; the importance and role of bias and conflict of interest; and the importance of reporting that avoids 'spin.'

Related sections: **5.1** Types of evidence intermediaries | **4.4** Interplay of local and global evidence | **4.8** Best evidence versus other things (and how to get the most of other things) | **4.11** Misinformation and infodemics | Aligned reports: (21; 22)

16

Timely and responsive matching of best evidence to the question asked — **All evidence intermediaries should – in a timely and responsive way – support the use of best evidence to answer the question being asked (or that should be asked given the decision-maker's area of interest).** Some forms of evidence can help to answer a question about a problem (e.g., data analytics); others may help to answer a question about options to address a problem or about an implementation strategy (e.g., evaluation of benefits, harms and costs). Syntheses of the best evidence globally need to be complemented with the best local evidence, as well as by other forms of analysis (e.g., policy, systems and political analysis) that can help understand the contextual factors that influence whether and how evidence is used. Innovative new evidence products will be needed to profile a mix of best evidence.

Related sections: **4.3** Matching decision-related questions to forms of evidence | **4.4** Interplay of local and global evidence

Impact-oriented evidence producers

17

Filling gaps and adhering to standards — **Evidence groups should anticipate and fill gaps in, and adhere to standards for, their respective forms of evidence.** Too many priority topics have no available evidence synthesis, and too many topics have too many available evidence syntheses. Many evidence syntheses are of low quality and out-of-date. This is true for COVID-19 nearly two years into the global pandemic.

Related sections: **4.6** Coverage, quality and recency of evidence syntheses | **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | Aligned reports: (3; 23)

18

Responding, referring or working with others — **Evidence groups should play to their comparative advantages, collaborate with groups that have complementary comparative advantages, and help to build a better evidence-support system in their country and a better global evidence architecture.** Evidence groups can respond to the types of questions that best match the forms of evidence they produce. They can refer other questions to other groups. They can also adopt a collective-impact orientation and work collaboratively with other groups to produce more integrative evidence products. These evidence products can combine evidence in the many forms described in this report, evidence from across the health, natural and social sciences, and evidence from across sectors. Evidence groups can bring judgement, humility and empathy to all they do, and encourage those sharing and using evidence to do the same.

Related sections: **4.3** Matching decision-related questions to forms of evidence | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | Aligned report: (3)

19

Learning from evidence groups in other sectors — **Evidence groups should be open to adapting innovations from other sectors.** Cochrane has pioneered many approaches to synthesizing studies about what works in health, including living evidence syntheses. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has pioneered many approaches to modeling human-induced climate change over long time horizons. Cochrane and the IPCC can learn from one another, and others can learn from them.

Related sections: **4.4** Interplay of local and global evidence | **4.7** Living evidence products

20

Being prepared to pivot for global emergencies — **Evidence groups should ensure they have the agility to pivot to new topics when global emergencies strike.** Many global commissions about COVID-19 make this case for foundational research on vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics. They are silent on the need to do this for the many forms of evidence that will determine whether these products get to the people who need them. Evidence groups focused on these broader questions will inevitably return to their existing areas of focus, but need to be prepared to pivot back to focus on a pandemic or another global emergency. Global commissions are also silent on the need to have the protocols for randomized-controlled trials and other study designs, as well as national evidence-support systems and a broader global evidence architecture, 'ready to go' or already in use.

Related sections: **7.1** Insights from an analysis of global-commission recommendations | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure

21

Making evidence understandable — **Evidence groups should prepare 'derivative products' that communicate what we know (and with what certainty we know it) in ways that make sense to their target audiences.** Because quality standards don't exist for modeling in the way they do for other forms of evidence, modelers need to publicly share enough detail about their model to allow others to assess it (e.g., structure of the model, data used, consistency, and their software or tool). Communication considerations include the informational needs of decision-makers, formats that make it easy to grasp the key messages and to dig deeper if there's interest (sometimes called graded entry), plain-language wording, and translation into other languages.

Related sections: **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | **5.3** Strategies used by evidence intermediaries | Aligned report: (24)

22

Academic institutions' responsibilities — **Academic institutions, and their public funders, should incentivize faculty members to contribute to their national (or sub-national) evidence-support system and to evidence-related global public goods.** Existing incentives tend to reward only peer-reviewed grants and publications, as well as to be first to publish on a topic rather than contributing to more definitive studies. Some countries are using periodic institution-assessment exercises to drive greater attention to evidence impact (e.g., UK's Research Excellence Framework). Additional incentives can reward the work needed to achieve impact (e.g., engagement with and responsiveness to decision-makers) and to support best evidence (e.g., prioritizing quality over quantity of publications and communicating insights from bodies of evidence rather than their own single studies). Interest in visibility to funders and philanthropists encourages a focus on media releases and media interviews for single studies rather than on best evidence that is 'ready for prime time.'

Related sections: **5.4** Conditions that can help and hinder evidence intermediaries | **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use | **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | **4.8** Best evidence versus other things (and how to get the most of other things)

23

Journals' responsibilities — **Journal publishers should improve the ways in which they support the use of best evidence.** Journals can mandate the use of reporting guidance and critical-appraisal checklists by reviewers, the placement of single studies in the context of evidence syntheses, and the sharing of anonymized study data. They can also commit to publishing non-positive research reports and replication studies, avoiding 'spin,' and acting quickly when apprised of scientific misconduct. Journals need to find a timely way to publish updates to living evidence products. Journals also need to ensure that publication delays never hinder the public sharing of evidence that is urgently needed for decision-making (and reciprocally that public sharing does not preclude later publication in a journal).

Related sections: **5.4** Conditions that can help and hinder evidence intermediaries | **4.5** Distinguishing high- from low-quality evidence | **4.4** Interplay of local and global evidence | **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use

Funders

24

Funding — **Governments, foundations and other funders should spend 'smarter,' and ideally more, on evidence support.** They can commit to ensuring that 1% of funding is allocated to national (and sub-national) evidence infrastructures (with a reasonable share to the evidence-support system and evidence-implementation system, as described in **section 4.14**), and they can monitor adherence to standards. They can ensure that 10% of this funding is allocated to evidence-related global public goods if this responsibility is not taken up by multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and other UN agencies. High-income country governments and global funders can dedicate 1% of their international-development funding to equitably distributed capacities for evidence use.

Related sections: **4.14** Features of an ideal national evidence infrastructure | **6.1** Global public goods needed to support evidence use | **6.2** Equitably distributed capacities needed to support evidence use | Aligned report: (3)

As Nick Hart from the Bipartisan Policy Center noted (in a podcast series about the US Commission on Evidence-based Policymaking, and the Evidence Act and executive memos that followed it), there should be bipartisan support for building and using evidence even if there will frequently not be bipartisan agreement about what the evidence says and what it means for a specific context.(25)

Now is the time to take action. Decision-makers around the world – government policymakers, organizational leaders, professionals and citizens – need the best evidence to address societal challenges. To ensure they have what they need, we should not just prepare for the next global emergency and then watch those preparations be dismantled as the years pass and we move on to other challenges. The world needs an agile, methodologically strong and unbiased infrastructure that intersects with those who bring content knowledge specific to any given societal challenge. We need global public goods and equitably distributed capacities to produce, share and use best evidence. We need capacity, opportunity and motivation on the one hand, and judgement, humility and empathy on the other.

Government policymaker, Andrew Leigh

Seasoned politician bringing economics and legal training to public-policy writing and debate

Participating in the preparation of this report and in the discussions among commissioners has shifted my thinking about what I can do personally, what countries like my own need to do, and what I'd like to see multilateral organizations do.

On a personal level, **section 4.8** – best evidence versus other things – is my favourite section. There is so much wise advice here about how to get more from the 'other things' that elected officials like me are regularly presented with, such as a single preprint, an expert with an opinion, a panel of experts offering recommendations, and a jurisdictional scan. A few years ago, I wrote a book on randomized trials. Now, after working on this report, I'm even more passionate about the need for randomized policy evaluations. One of the strengths of trials is that they're easy to explain to citizens. They help us get around citizens' concerns about 'technocracy,' in which regular people feel they're being scammed through decision-making processes they don't understand. Trust in government isn't just about making the right decisions; it's about making decisions that citizens perceive to be right.

Evaluation isn't an elite issue. Evidence is for everyone. Our report offers suggestions to individuals, governments, and non-governmental organizations. If you're an individual looking at the evidence on quitting smoking or losing weight, you should look at evidence syntheses, not single studies. If you're a journalist writing about health, become a regular visitor to Cochrane, where you'll find the distilled evidence on thousands of topics. For media outlets reporting on social policy, the Campbell Collaboration offers the same service. Our report proposes that governments become better at using evidence in their decisions, and build the evidence base through rigorous evaluations. International organizations should place greater reliance on evidence, and the World Bank should prepare a landmark report on best-practice use of evidence.

International organizations differ markedly in their use of evidence. Reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change use a highly rigorous approach to selecting and grading evidence on global warming and its consequences. Other global bodies are less systematic in their use of evidence, frequently relying on single studies, citing only expert opinion when a substantial body of peer-reviewed literature exists, or extrapolating evidence across very different contexts. This is not a matter of international bodies wanting to misrepresent the science – these organizations are keen to improve, and outside experts can help them do so by assessing reports against each body's published policy on how to use evidence. As described in **section 5.5**, 'naming and shaming' had a tremendously positive impact on the World Health Organization's use of evidence, starting in 2007. Other parts of the UN system need to follow WHO's lead.

Among philanthropic organizations, there is a growing recognition that high-quality evaluation can create a virtuous cycle: allowing ineffective programs to be wound down and effective programs to be scaled up. The fast-growing effective-altruism movement is demanding that charities produce rigorous evidence of their impact. For example, GiveWell.org estimates that two of its top-rated charities – the Against Malaria Foundation and the Malaria Consortium – each save a life for every additional US$4,500 that they spend on their programs. This is a powerful incentive for donors to support these charities. More evidence of direct impact from other charities could help to spur a philanthropic race to the top.