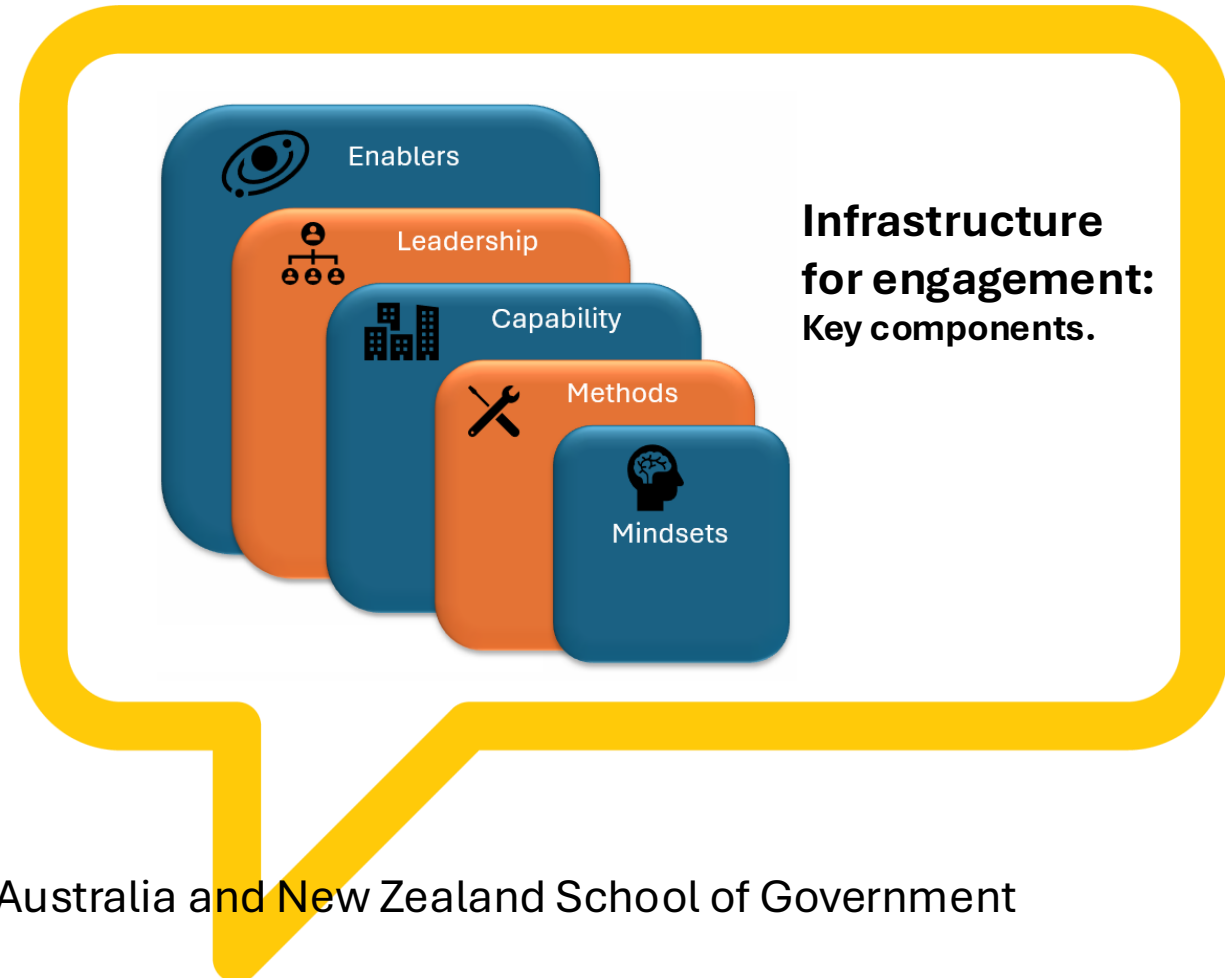


Putting the public into public policy:

engaging for better decision making

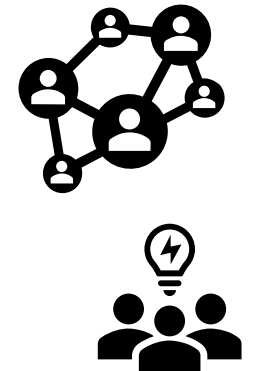
Public Engagement for Better Policy
University of Galway ILAS
27 May 2025.

Presenter: Sally Washington, Practice Fellow, Australia and New Zealand School of Government

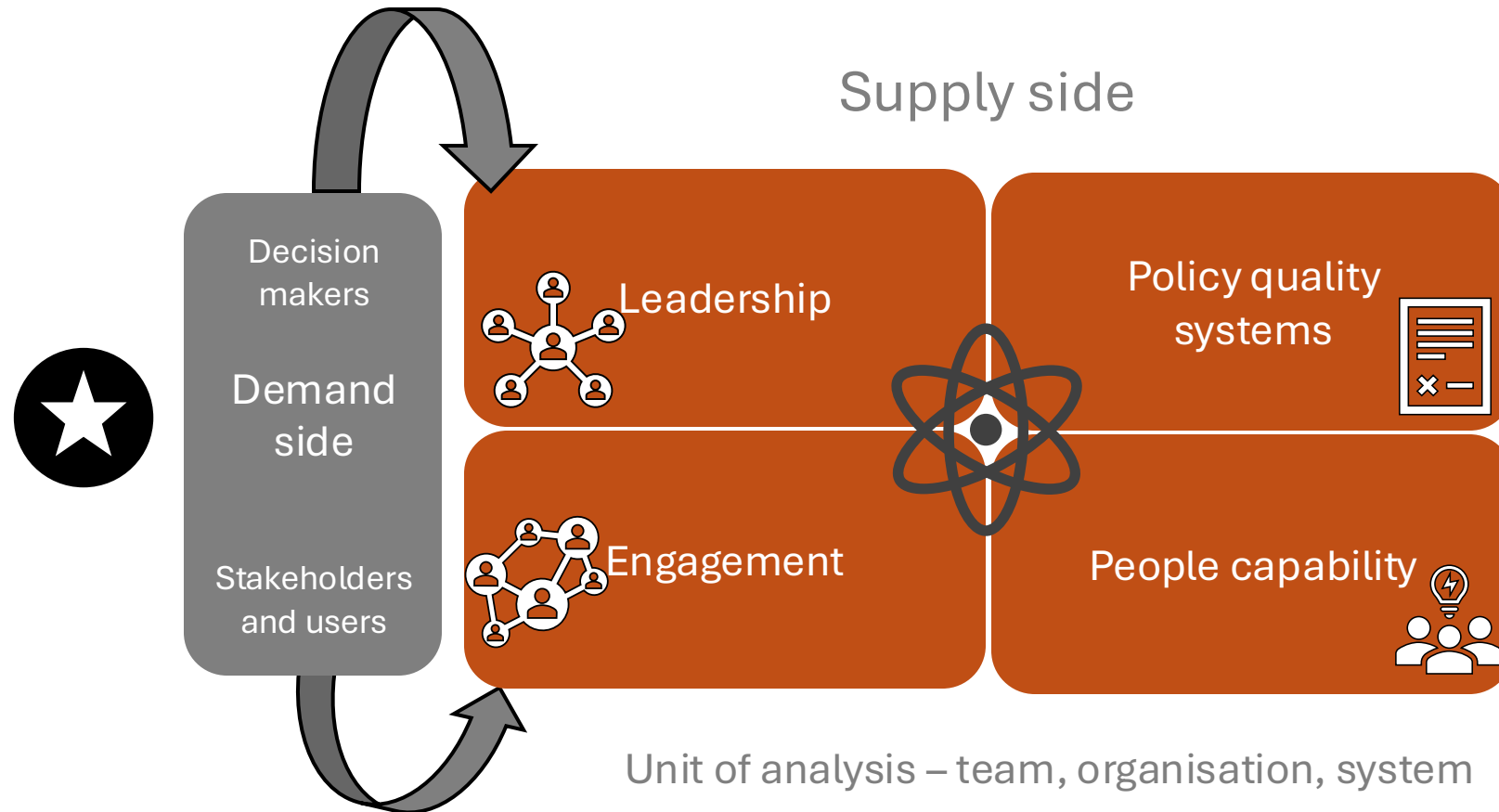


Engaging for better decision making

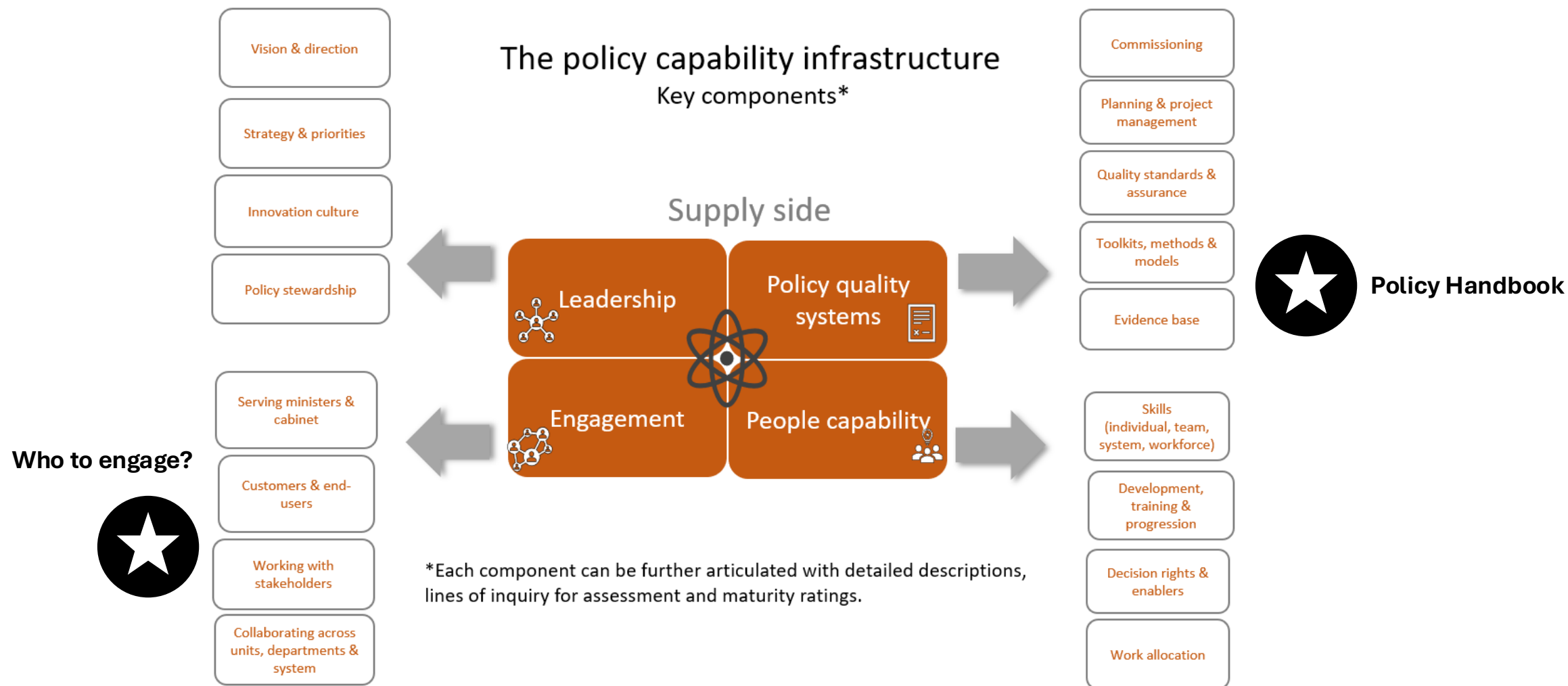
- ☐ **Engagement in context:** The policy infrastructure - improving policy quality & capability
- ☐ **Why?** Legitimacy, trust, better decisions – better outcomes
- ☐ **Who with?** Inclusion, relationship capital
- ☐ **When?** Type of challenge, stage of the policy process
- ☐ **How?** What process for what purpose?
- ☐ **So what?** What does that mean for ‘how we do policy’ & for civil service capability?
- ☐ **What next?** What can ‘you’ do to improve engagement for better policy?



The policy infrastructure: engagement is a key component of the policy system



Engagement is a key component of organisational policy capability



Why engage?

- ☐ Legitimacy & trust through participation
- ☐ Reframing evidence
- ☐ Better advice -better decisions
- ☐ De-risking implementation
- ☐ Better policy – better outcomes

Democracy

Representative... Participatory, Deliberative ... Direct...

*“...the system is creaking...The only way you're going to maybe rebuild that is to create a **new sort of system**, [where] **people feel much more directly involved**.”* [Alastair Campbell](#), The Rest is politics.

“Nothing about us, without us”.

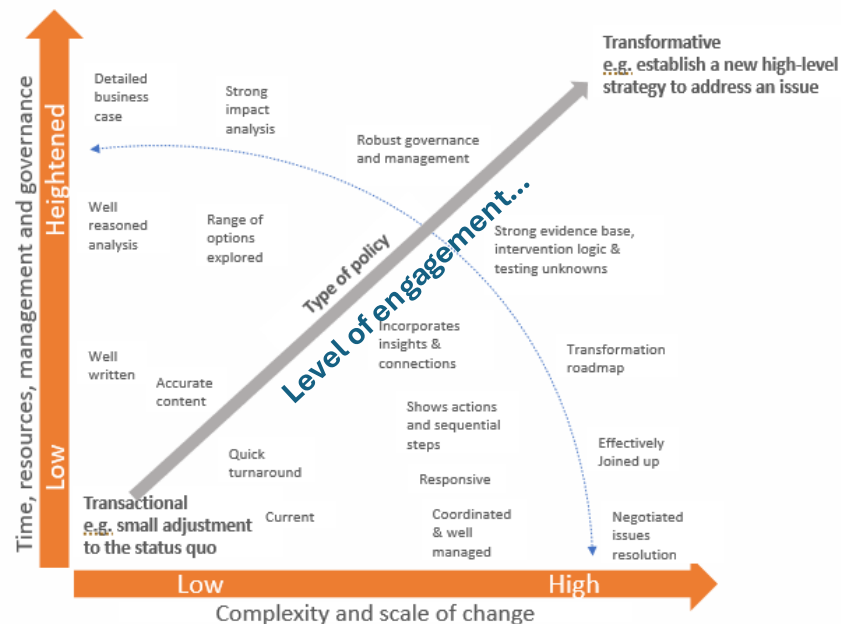


The Policy Handbook 3-pillar framework

*“The growth of ‘collaborative public policy’—involving citizens to improve its efficacy—sits uncomfortably in a context where **the public is so divided from itself and from public institutions**”.* [Helen Sullivan](#), ANU

Who to engage with?

- ❑ Depends on the **purpose**: what impact on the decision?
- ❑ **Targeted** v's all in?
- ❑ **Diverse** voices – better evidence
- ❑ **Relational** vs transactional?
- ❑ Build **relationship capital**.



Understand the policy challenge or opportunity...
Not all policy is created equally

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

© IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved. 20181112_v1

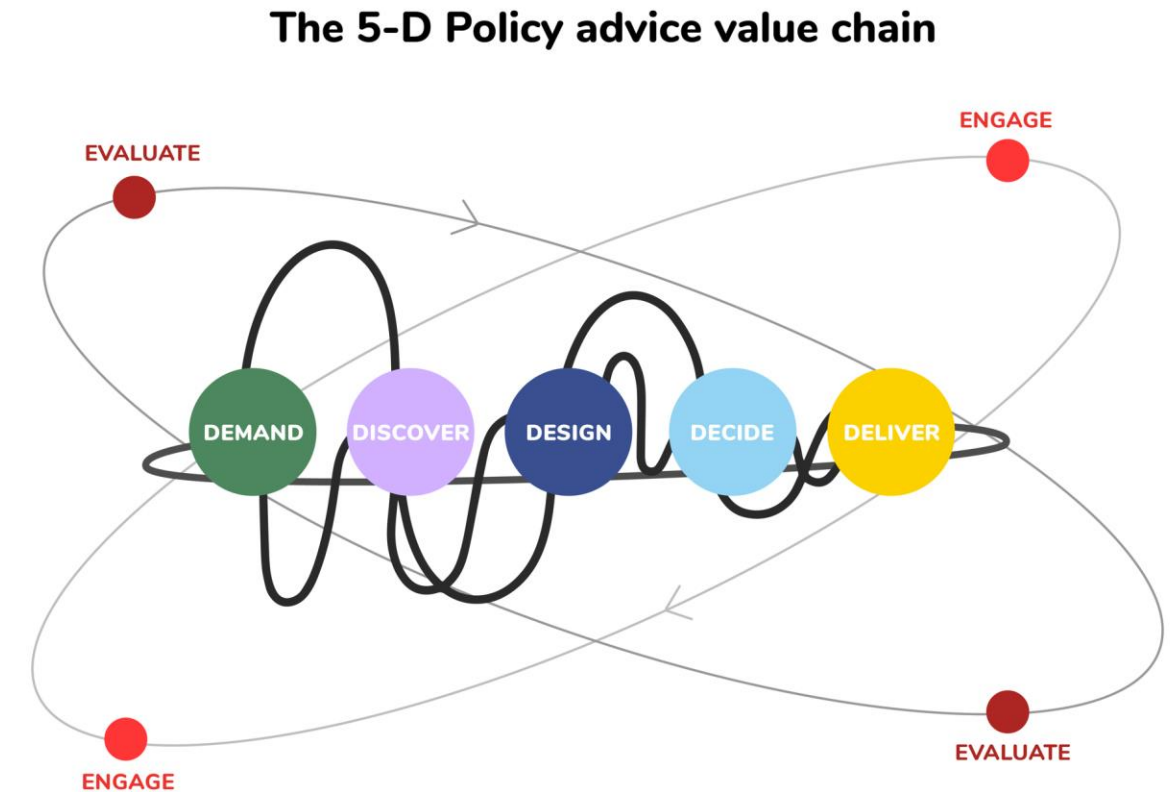
IAP2 Spectrum of public participation

Be clear about the intended influence on the decision...

When to engage in the policy process?

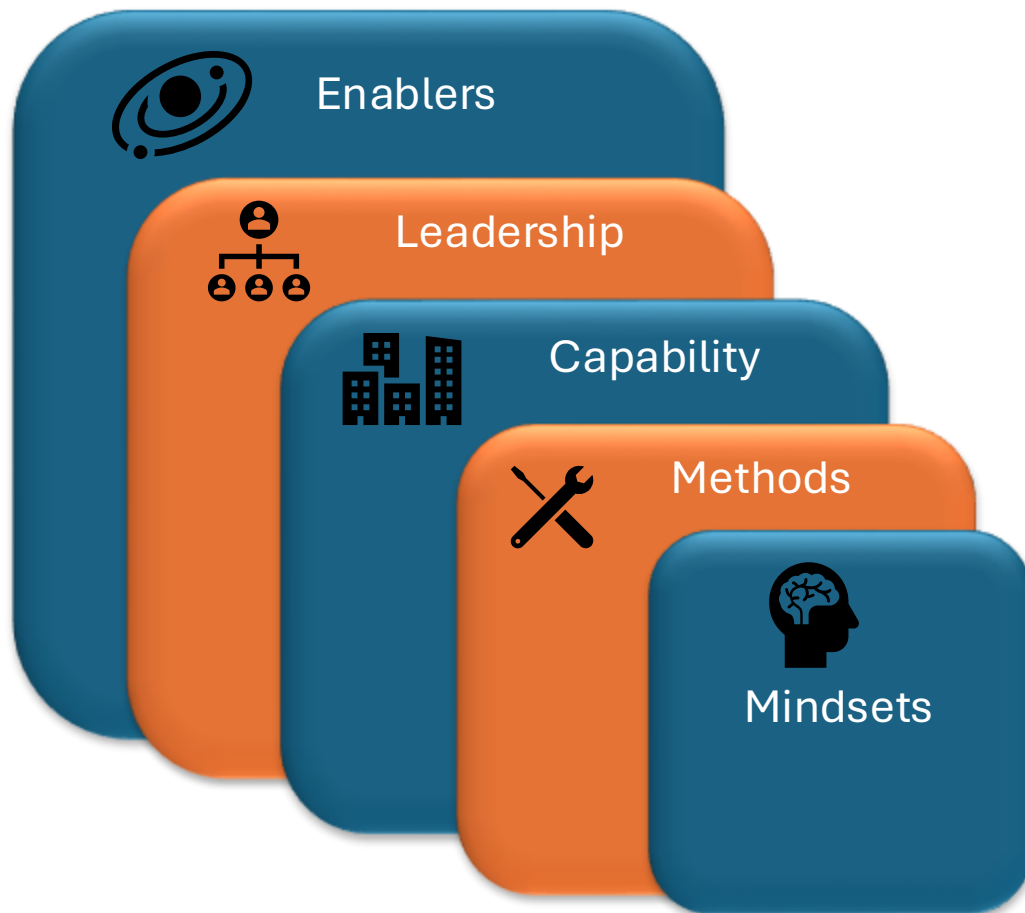


The Policy Handbook: 3 Pillars and 5Ds process



[Guiding the provision of quality policy advice: the 5D model](#): credit S. Washington

How to engage – what does that mean for civil service operating model & capability? An engagement infrastructure...



Critical components:

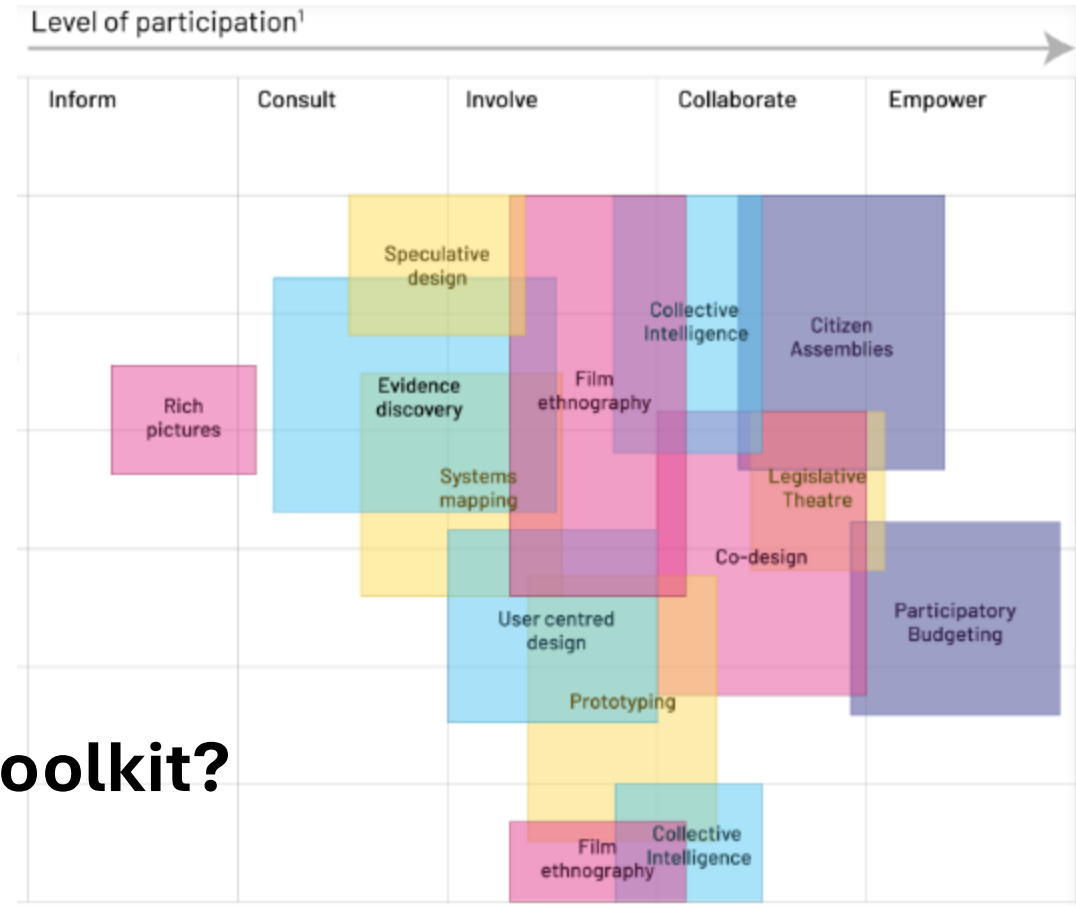
- ☐ System enablers – mandate, expectations
- ☐ Leadership – resources, systems & socialisation
- ☐ Organisational capability: dedicated vs general
- ☐ Methods and toolkits
- ☐ Skills & mindsets

Methods of engagement...

Need to understand:

- ☐ Range of methods
- ☐ Purpose of the method
- ☐ When to use it
- ☐ How to use it
- ☐ Costs and benefits

Include in guidance/a Policy toolkit?

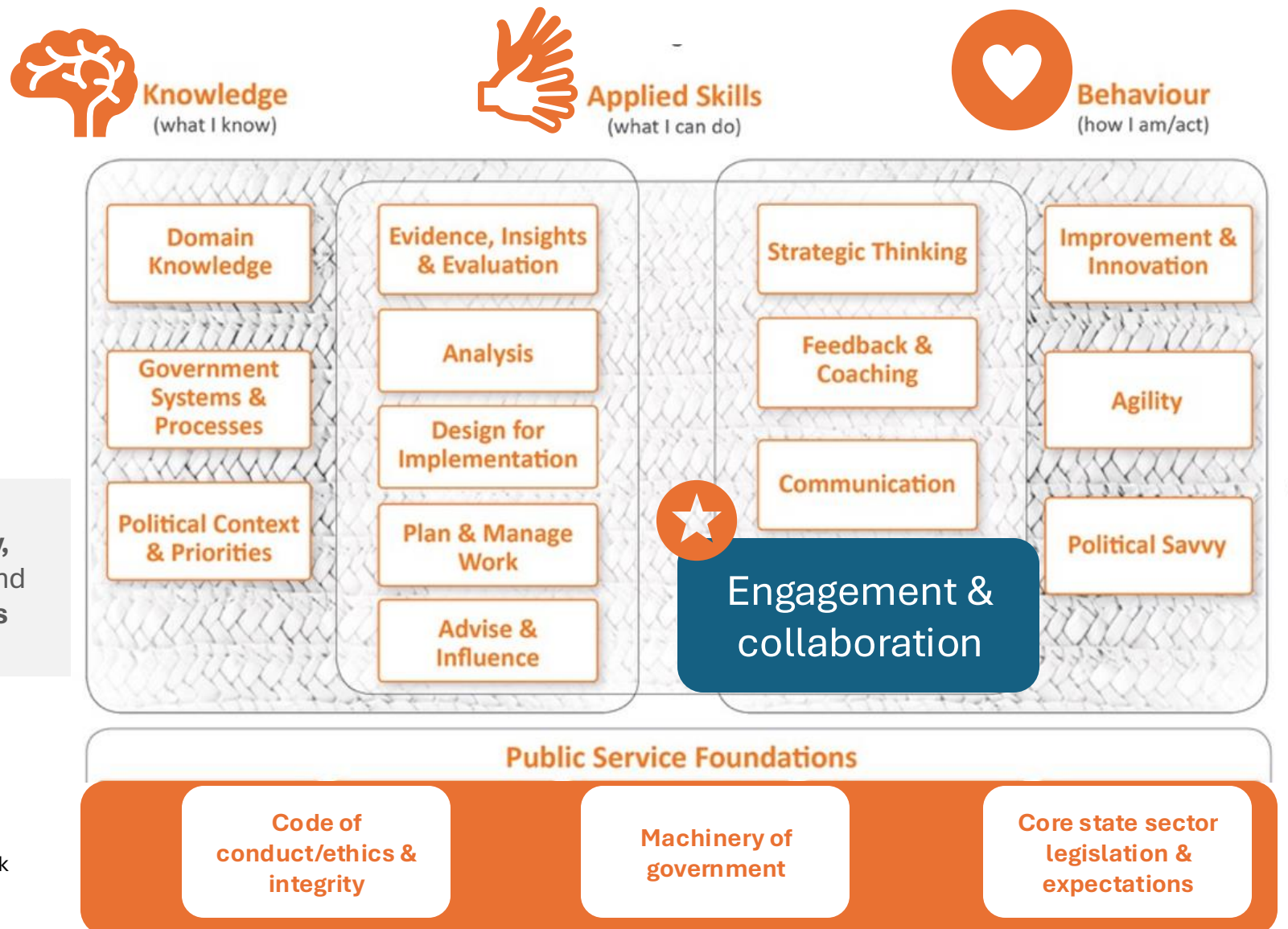


Source: [UK Policy Lab](#)

Skills for engagement*

Define skills for engagement as part of broader policy skills framework.

Definition: Engagement & collaboration*: “Engage **stakeholders** and the **community**, and build **relationship capital** to understand **diverse expectations**, **co-create solutions** and **support implementation**.”



* Adapted from the original NZ policy skills framework

What could possibly go wrong? Or Right?

Things to consider...

- ☐ **Cost** – time and effort
- ☐ **Risks** – relationship, reputational, political
- ☐ **Competing views & interests** – surfacing and balancing for sense-making/making sense
- ☐ **Decision rights** – who has the final say?
- ☐ **Clarity & communication** – transparency and managing expectations.

Guiding Principles for Citizen Participation Processes



OECD guidance for citizen participation processes

Next steps: what can you do....?

Civil/public servants

- ☐ Embed engagement into departmental processes (guidance)
- ☐ Be proactive – don't wait for permission (inside out – outside in)
- ☐ Build engagement muscles & mindsets
- ☐ Test and learn
- ☐ Socialise the Policy Handbook (anchor for policy quality assurance)



Academics

- ☐ Analysis (methods, a decision tree?)
- ☐ Collaborate on engagements
- ☐ Translate evidence from engagement – knowledge brokering
- ☐ Support policy capability build – reference the Handbook (teaching & research)



References & resources

- ❑ [Walker, C and Washington, S \(2025\) Guiding the provision of quality policy advice: the 5D model](#), Policy Design and Practice, 1-14.
- ❑ [Washington, S \(2023\) An infrastructure for building policy capability – lessons from practice](#), Policy Design and Practice, vol 6, issue 3.
- ❑ Washington, S. (2023) [Hindsight, foresight, insight: three lenses for better policy-making](#): International Review of Public Administration: Vol 28 , No 2.
- ❑ [Delivering quality policy advice? Think D, E and F-words](#)
- ❑ [NZ Policy Project : Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement \(April 2023\) - The Policy Project](#)
- ❑ [NZ Policy Project: Selecting Methods for Community Engagement \(October 2023\)](#)
- ❑ Australian Government [Guide to the Right Engagement](#) (updated 2025)
- ❑ [UK Policy Lab: People-centred and participatory policymaking – Policy Lab](#)
- ❑ [OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes | OECD](#)
- ❑ [OECD Deliberative Democracy Database](#)
- ❑ [MLE on missions Discussion paper on citizen engagement.pdf](#)
- ❑ [40+ Community Engagement Tools for Building Connected Communities - Visible Network Labs](#)
- ❑ Novelli, Claudio and Argota Sanchez-Vaquerizo, Javier and Helbing, Dirk and Rotolo, Antonino and Floridi, Luciano, [A Replica for our Democracies? On Using Digital Twins to Enhance Deliberative Democracy](#) (March 23, 2025).
- ❑ [ESR \(NZ\) Digital Twin. ALMA: AI-powered simulation of Aotearoa](#)
- ❑ The GovLab & Burns centre for social change (2025) blog: [From Citizen to Senator: Artificial intelligence and the Reinvention of citizen lawmaking in Brazil.](#)
- ❑ Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, Mila, CIFAR (2025) [Deliberative Approaches to Inclusive governance](#)
- ❑ Sullivan, H. (2025) [Collaborating in future states—Contextual instability, paradigmatic remaking, and public policy](#), Australian Journal of Public Administration