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Sustainability planning for EdLabs

OTT Consulting

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OTT support to EdLabs in 2024



1) Convene the EdLabs to facilitate learning between them, acting as a broker



2) Support EdLabs with practical, operational advice on common areas of need as they start their implementation phase



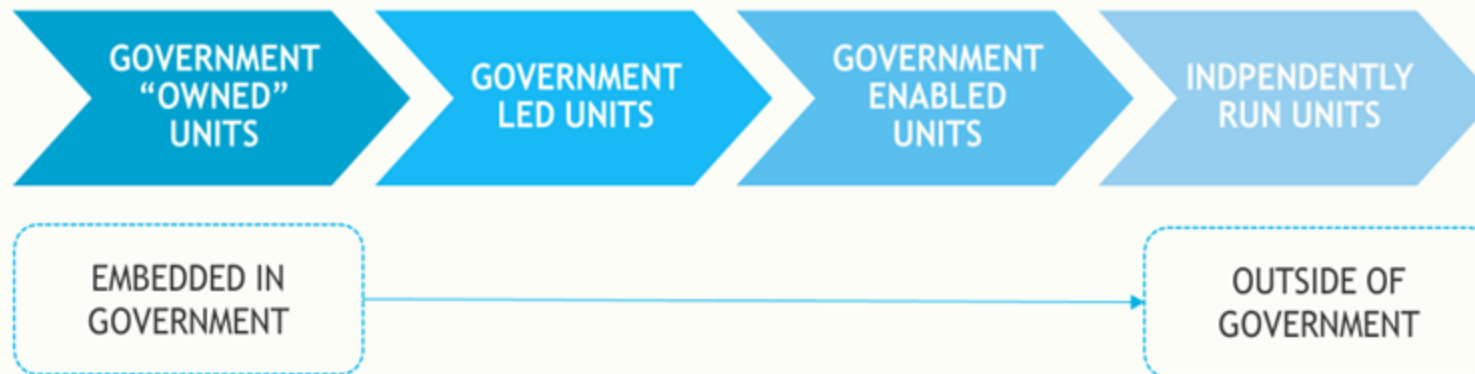
3) Support EdLabs to engage with the wider field, keeping them updated on new developments on an ongoing basis

Key principles for sustainability



Some starting assumptions...

- We're not equating sustainability with embeddedness. Any of the models can be sustainable or unsustainable
- Sustainability will look different in each context
- So we are not providing a 'definition' but sharing potential ways of thinking about it
- Keeping an open mind: is sustainability always a good thing? Is the lab meant to last forever?



Source: [Hayter and Morales, 2023](#)

Demand

Governments around the world have taken steps to create and sustain a wide range of organisational reforms to structures, processes, and procedures with the aim of improving evidence use.

Evidence shows that ‘accompanying’ internal initiatives, rather than imposing them from the outside, offers the greatest chances of success.

- Demand is sometimes known as ‘buy in’ but can be further unpacked (AAA)
- Risk of ‘isomorphic mimicry’ (PDIA)
- Can be both genuine *and* changeable

- *Who is demanding the EdLab, in your context?*
- *Why are they demanding it?*
- *Who else should be demanding the EdLab in order for it to be valuable & sustainable?*
- *Who is your EdLab ‘for’?*

Source: [Hayter and Morales \(2023\)](#)

Relationships

Evidence shows that building long term, trusted relationships is one of the most effective ways of sustainably institutionalising evidence use.

‘If you want long-term/sustainable approaches, invest in relationships that can last even if the structures are gone’

Key informant interviewee

- *Who are the key stakeholders involved in making the EdLab valuable & sustainable in your context?*
- *Have you mapped these stakeholders and identified their attitudes towards the Lab?*
- *What is your plan for how to engage with these stakeholders?*
- *What formal and informal relationships does the lab need in order to succeed?*
- *How will you monitor changes in relationships?*

Source: [Hayter and Morales](#) (2023:42)

Resources-financial & human

Financial sustainability is an obvious and major consideration.

But evidence shows that continued financing alone doesn't necessarily result in sustainability. Choices about human resources (staffing and contracting) have a strong effect.

- *Who are the envisaged funders of the Lab beyond the funder?*
- *What are your relationships with these funders?*
- *Do you have a strategy for how to engage them?*
- *How much do you know about their resource allocation processes & timelines?*
- *What staff attributes and structures does your lab need to sustain itself in your context?*
- *How will the lab maintain those attributes & structures?*

Examples

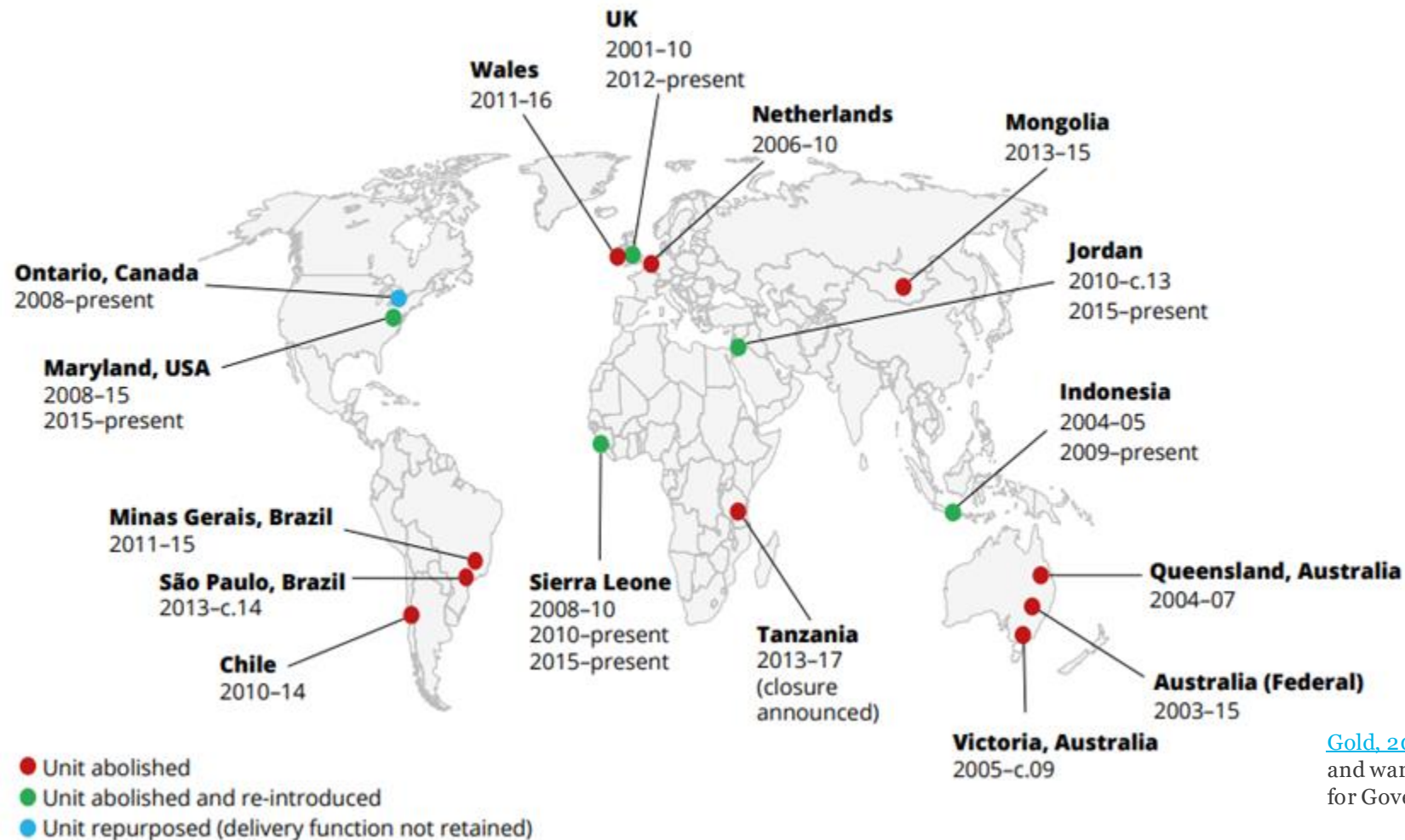


- How long does all this take?
- What happens next?



What happens next? The afterlife of embedded units

Figure 2: Location of past delivery units



[Gold, 2017](#). "Tracking delivery: global trends and warning signs in delivery units". Institute for Government.

Sustainability experiences: Jordan

Lesson	Example	Developments since then...
<p>Policy labs change over time and adapt their approaches</p>	<p>Prime Ministry's Performance Management and Delivery Unit, Jordan 2010 – active Source: (Qarout, 2022)</p>	<p>2010: The delivery unit was established within the Prime Ministry of Jordan with the primary goal of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government performance.</p> <p>2011-2014: During this period, the unit engaged in monitoring and promoting the progress of significant national projects. It focused on achieving strategic priorities across various sectors.</p> <p>2014: The unit was initially deactivated towards the end of 2014 due to a shift in government priorities and a reevaluation of strategic frameworks under new leadership. It faced challenges such as bureaucratic resistance and fluctuations in political support, which are common in the lifecycle of such government units.</p> <p>2015-Present: the Jordanian government reactivated the delivery unit. This decision was influenced by a renewed commitment to enhancing public administration and the successful impact observed during its initial operation phase. Since its reactivation, the delivery unit has expanded its role, not only continuing its monitoring and implementation facilitation but also incorporating new tools and approaches to improve government services.</p>

Sustainability experiences: Malaysia

Lesson	Example	Developments since then...
<p>Ownership of the Lab is key to ensure sustainability.</p>	<p>Malaysia's Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), Malaysia 2009 -c.2018 Source (World Bank, 2017)</p>	<p>2009: PEMANDU was established to spearhead the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), with the aim of transforming Malaysia into a high-income nation by 2020.</p> <p>2010-2012: PEMANDU began its operations by focusing on crucial areas needing reform, such as crime prevention and rural infrastructure improvements. Design labs were utilized to develop detailed pilot projects and identify KPIs for the GTP and ETP. The unit expanded its approach by involving experts from international organizations, along with local stakeholders, to refine and adapt the methodologies to better suit Malaysia's context. This collaboration helped tailor the programs to local needs and ensure broader buy-in.</p> <p>2014-2015: PEMANDU's strategies began showing tangible results. Its management practices were recognized and emulated internationally</p> <p>2016: PEMANDU faced scrutiny regarding its role and effectiveness, prompting an evaluation of its impact and alignment with other ministries.</p> <p>2018: PEMANDU was disbanded. Its functions and the ongoing projects were absorbed back into the respective ministries to ensure continuity and integration of the transformation programs into the national administrative framework. The closure marked a transition to a more integrated approach within the governmental structure, emphasizing the sustainability of reforms initiated by PEMANDU.</p>

Sustainability experiences: Peru

Lesson	Example	Developments since then...
<p>Ownership of the Lab is key to ensure sustainability</p>	<p>Evidencia Midis, Peru 2017-active</p>	<p>2017: Evidencia Midis was established within Peru's Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Midis). Located in the General Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation, this initiative was created to promote the use of evidence-based practices within the ministry.</p> <p>2018: The Evidencia Midis Portal received official approval, marking a significant step towards institutionalizing the use of evidence in policy-making. The portal began as a repository of evaluations, aiming to make data and findings accessible to enhance program effectiveness.</p> <p>2020-2021: During this period, Evidencia Midis adjusted its strategic approach to broaden its impact. The adjustments were aimed at increasing the utility and accessibility of the portal, enhancing its role in promoting evidence-based decision-making within Midis.</p> <p>Ongoing: As the initiative gained popularity and official backing, it reinforced the importance of internal support and local ownership. This local commitment has been identified as crucial for the sustainability and continued growth of Evidencia Midis.</p>

Sustainability experiences: UK

Lesson	Example	Developments since then...
<p>Delivery units often have a limited lifespan and evolve over time, giving way to new units.</p>	<p>Prime Minister Delivery Unit (PMDU), UK 2001-c. 2012 Source: (Clement 2022)</p>	<p>2001: The PMDU was established under Prime Minister Tony Blair. The unit was designed to ensure that the government's major priorities, which included sustainable development across various sectors such as health, education, and transport, were delivered effectively.</p> <p>2005: The PMDU was instrumental in tracking progress on key government commitments, including those related to sustainable development, outlined in the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy launched in March 2005.</p> <p>2010: With the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government under Prime Minister David Cameron, the focus began to shift away from the centralized, target-driven approach.</p> <p>2012: The unit was officially disbanded as part of Cameron's broader governmental reform agenda, which moved towards decentralization and reducing the influence of central government-driven targets.</p>

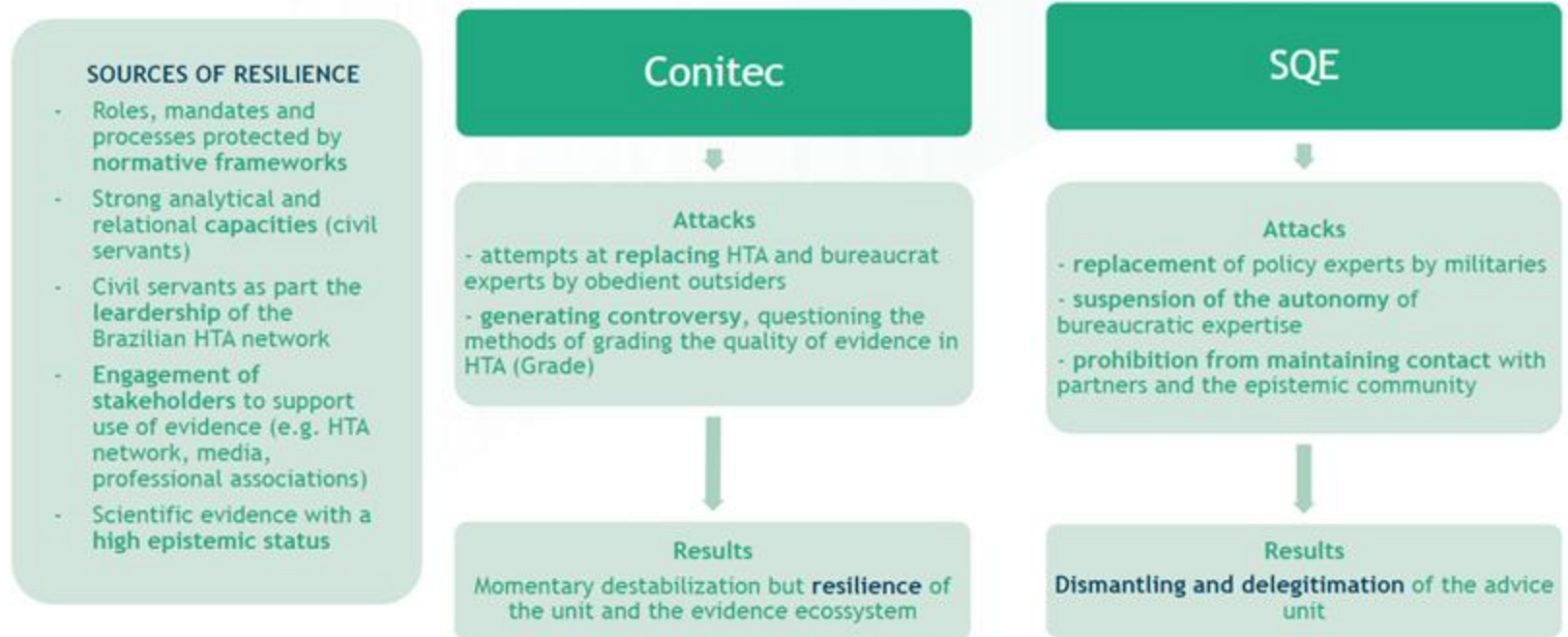
Sustainability experiences: Australia

Lesson	Example	Developments since then...
<p>Sustainability does not necessarily mean 'inside of government'. There are different ways of ensuring sustainability close to the government.</p>	<p>Australian Education Research Organisation, (AERO), Australia</p>	<p>2018: Established by recommendation from the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (also known as the Gonski Review 2.0).</p> <p>2019: All Australian governments agreed to create an institute to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research, aiming to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people.</p> <p>2020: The creation of a national education evidence organisation was included as one of the national policy initiatives under the 2020 National School Reform Agreement. Dr. Jenny Donovan was appointed inaugural CEO of AERO, and an independent Board was announced.</p> <p>AERO secured an initial investment of USD 50 million over 4 years by the Commonwealth and combined states and territories.</p> <p>2021: AERO was officially incorporated. AERO's first Strategic and Research Agenda were approved by the Education Ministers in September.</p> <p>2022: AERO's updated 2021-2024 Strategic Plan and Research Agenda for 2023 were approved by Education Ministers in August 2022.</p>

Brazil: evidence units ‘under attack’

Conitec (health policy- Covid 19) and environment (SEQ)

How resilient to government attacks were the evidence ecosystems in both cases?



Koga, N. (2023). [How can EIPM practices survive governmental changes? Presentation at WHO Global Evidence to Policy Summit, August 2023](#)

Based on

[Koga, Karruz, Palotti, Soares Filho, Couto, When bargaining is and is not possible: the politics of bureaucratic expertise in the context of democratic backsliding,](#)

Learning points from evidence units in Pakistan

- ‘Capacity substitution’ or capacity development?
- Leadership: capacity to use/demand the Lab
- Importance of clarifying mandate of the unit– risk of ‘becoming all things to all people’.
- Influence of donor funded units is strong–e.g. one unit perceived as donor funded despite being govt funded
- Staff contracts matter
 - In one example, staff are on short-term contracts at market rates (outside civil service structures) which allows them to maintain flexibility & responsiveness.
- Over time, other actors ended up ‘capturing’ the space that the unit was meant to fill.
 - E.g. IMF ended up doing the analysis the lab was meant to do; experts left the lab; it still exists in the organogram but is unstaffed
- Gathering feedback and lessons learned (including on cost/value for money)

Best to lower expectations. The full ToC didn't happen.

But "at least the ideas get embedded even if the practice doesn't get embedded"

Source: [Hayter and Morales \(2023\)](#)

Food for thought from Pakistan

- Is it ‘sustainability’ if the lab raises demand for the function, but that function ultimately ends up being provided by another entity?
- Is it ‘sustainability’ if the structure remains unstaffed in an organogram?
- What about if the mandate of the unit shifts or ‘dilutes’ from an evidence focus?
- What about if the lab is dismantled and returns years later in another form?

[Donor funded] delivery unit did very good work for 5 years. Then the minister left and staff moved on.

But then the minister became the Prime Minister, and suddenly demanded the unit back.

Government couldn't afford the staff anymore as they were now with KPMG, Deloitte etc.

So [donor] had to go and pull them out of the consultancy firms and pay for their time so the PM could re-establish the unit.

It's now running & [donor] has supported regular technical assistance to support it.

Based on notes from key informant interviews ([Hayter and Morales, 2023](#))

Six recommendations for success from the [IoG](#)

1. Strong, highly visible political backing

- “Civil servants are very attuned to whether you have the ear of the Prime Minister ... As soon as people suspect that you don’t, then it’s over. It doesn’t matter how skilled and capable you are.”

2. Keep a clear & tightly defined remit

- Beware the experience of Sierra Leone which saw its unit watered down/spread too thin across a “bewildering array of complex projects”

3. Physical location close to top decision makers/political sponsors

- Consider operational elements of maintaining trusted relationships, especially in contexts where face-to-face engagement is important
- Tanzania: the unit was across the city and with traffic it took too long to ‘pop in’ to meetings

[Gold, 2017](#). “Tracking delivery: global trends and warning signs in delivery units”. Institute for Government.

Six recommendations for success from the [IoG](#)

4. Get the staffing right

- “There is a question as to how much you bring in outsiders who might not understand government and government systems and not have the relationships with government, versus bringing people [in] from [other] bits of government who might not have the fresh ideas and the willingness to challenge and shake things up”
 - Tanzania: decision to staff largely through external hires led to considerable delays in getting the unit up and running. Vetting procedures for successful applicants took the best part of a year, leaving the unit with only 37% of posts filled after the first 12 months. The unit had to rely on secondees from other parts of government as a temporary stopgap.]

5. Ensure cross govt ownership: don't let the unit become isolated/siloed

- Especially important for centre of govt delivery units but also for those in sectors with an ambition to work across government

6. Put routines in place to review effectiveness & refresh operations.

- There will be a need to adapt.

Life cycles of public innovation labs ([Werneck et al, 2020](#))

In the beginning

“Like a newborn, a lab at this stage doesn’t really know what it is yet.

It needs the support of experts in the public arena and the endorsement of those inside the administration to let it figure things out.

It needs room to understand how to couple its strengths and skill sets with the priorities of the respective government/public-sector ‘motherhood’, but it also... learn to stand up very quickly.”

Mari Nakano (2019), NYC Civic Service Design Studio

Early days

“The sponsor’s expectation is that the lab will develop itself very quickly, even skipping the childish stage dedicated to playful games, tests and discoveries, soon reaching the stage when it delivers actual results.”

Growing up

“I believe all labs should live in a constant teenage state, which matures over time. If you lose your teenage years, you will absolutely lose your drive to try new things and your ability to fail and to learn from these mistakes in a very short time.”

Juan Felipe Yepes (2019), LabCapital

Maturity

“This is where I think maturity is – in looking back, absorbing the key takeaways and moving forward.”

Aura Cifuentes (2019), Equipo de Innovación Pública

Death

“The natural death of a lab [can] be seen as a goal to be pursued, because it would mean that its mission ...was accomplished and there would no longer be a need for its existence.

Therefore, it could also be seen as heroic. In this case, would not death in fact be an opportunity for rebirth?”

Legacies of labs

“The idea of a legacy refers to matters of continuity and sustainability.

Leaving a legacy corresponds to ensuring or, at least, creating favorable conditions which allow for the continuation of the project initiated.

Or even to create room for the development of new things.”

“Beyond the Lab’s records, a legacy that remains alive are its potential children, here understood as the units that received mentorship from the lab and the people that composed the team at the now-defunct lab.

These professionals, while they were establishing a lab, were themselves being formed and transformed by the experience, and may continue promoting such inquiries and continue to adapt the lab’s forms of doing and thinking to new contexts, new problems and new teams.”

Source: [Werneck et al, 2020](#)

Tools & resources



- Triple A (PDIA) change space analysis
- Evidence Institutionalisation Checklist (WHO)
- loG 'Warning Signs' checklist

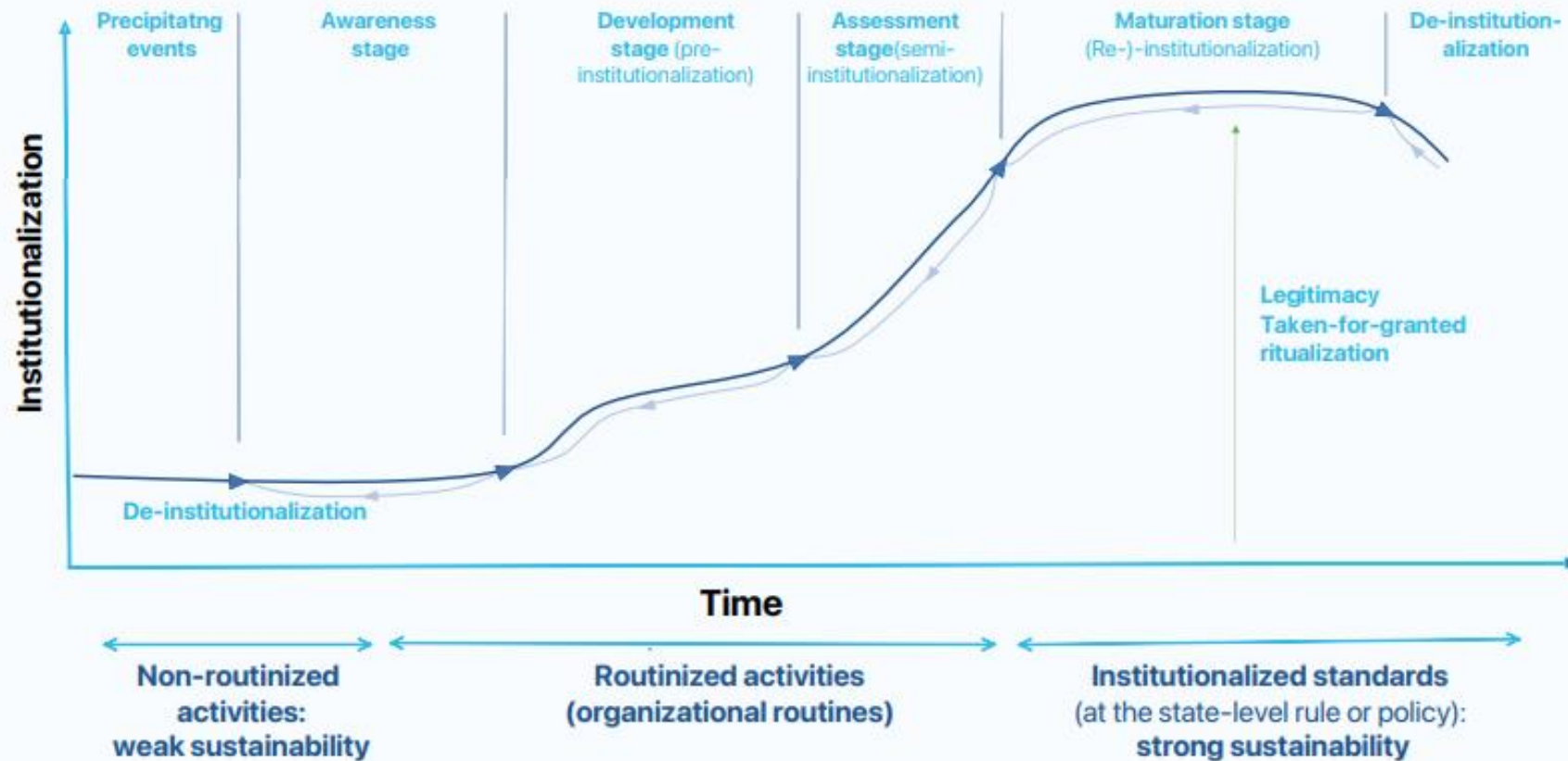
‘Triple A’ change space analysis from Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)

Questions to reflect on the ‘change space’	AAA (low, mid, large)	Assumptions
<p>Authority: the support or needed to effect the reform or policy change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the authority to engage (Legal? Procedural? informal?) • Is there high-level leadership/endorsement and buy-in? (e.g. minister and permanent secretary level)? • Are there any informal authorisers/ influencers to consider and how supportive are they? • Which authorisers are not supportive? 		
<p>Acceptance: the extent to which those who will be affected by reform or policy change accept the need for change and the implications of the change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How supportive is the broader team involved in implementing the lab (lab staff & adjacent/Ministry colleagues)? • What about those who are expected to use the lab? • Who is less supportive and why? 		

Questions to reflect on the ‘change space’	AAA (low, mid, large)	Assumptions
<p>Ability: the practical side of reform or policy change, including the human and financial resources required to support interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What human, financial, and infrastructural (i.e. technology) resources are available to support the lab? • How are the key evidence functions carried out within the host agency and where do they sit (formally/ structurally and informally)? • At what point in the planning/budgeting cycle is the host agency and are there opportunities to integrate new evidence approaches within this? 		

Evidence Institutionalisation Checklist ([WHO](#))

Fig. 3. Process of institutionalization of EIPM



Assessing stages of institutionalisation (WHO)

	Precipitating events (or antecedents) and Awareness stage	Development stage (pre-institutionalization introducing change processes)	Assessment stage (semi-institutionalization)	Maturation stage (re-institutionalization)
Overall look of institutionalization	Absent or de-institutionalization with lack of legitimacy and "taken-for-grantedness"	Vulnerable institutionalization with low legitimacy and "taken-for-grantedness" (17)	Anchored institutionalization with medium legitimacy and "taken-for-grantedness" (17)	Resilient institutionalization with high legitimacy and "taken-for-grantedness" (17)
← Continuous situation analysis, planning, monitoring and feedback/evaluation (29,32) →				
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the problem of fragmentation and poor connection between policy and research within the evidence ecosystem, as well as realizing the need for stronger linkages (4,12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting a situation analysis or proof of concept, as well as collaborative priority-setting (4,21) - Establishing a preliminary institutional KT arrangement (3) - Discussing a clear legal frame, government mandate and responsibilities (4,15) - Understanding and dealing with administrative formalities (4) - Mapping policy development and/or planning units within government institutions that may contribute to framing the expectation of informing policy using evidence (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing an official mandate for an institutional KT arrangement, with clear hierarchical consultative and decision-making chains (3,4,12) - Developing expansion strategies (goals, priorities, implementation plans) (15) - Creating forums to deal with policies across sectors, for which the evidence could at times be contradictory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guaranteeing a defined legal mandate and institutional KT arrangement role, steeped with expectations, integrated into government planning processes (3,4) - Continuously enhancing coordination of strategy and activities (15) - Having an EIPM public policy regulation (3)
Standards and routinized processes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting familiar with international tools (3) - Developing a work plan for institutionalization of EIPM and using guiding tools (15) - Deciding of the level of standardization required for different EIPM processes (12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing operational (technical) standards and implementing organizational routines (3) - Sharing innovation, cost savings and results, demonstrating improved policy quality (15) - Conducting focus groups, meetings, surveys and other monitoring and evaluation efforts, and including external experts in this process (4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having scripted, internalized, precise and continuous EIPM activities and products incorporated into the decision-making flow (3,15) - Having systems for documentation, information-sharing and advocacy operating routinely (15)

The Institute for Government ([IoG](#)) ‘Warning Signs’ checklist for embedded units

1. Political sponsor	2. Remit	3. Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The head of the unit has little, if any, direct access to the political sponsor.● Stocktake meetings are ad hoc, routinely cancelled and/or responsibility for chairing them is delegated to another official.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The unit has a poorly defined mandate, is responsible for tracking too many priorities or has competing responsibilities that are hard to reconcile (e.g. policy and delivery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The unit is set up in (or moved to) a satellite location, making daily interactions with the rest of government more difficult and creating the impression that the unit has limited traction with the political sponsor.

4. People	5. Mainstreaming	6. Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a heavy imbalance between external and internal hires, leaving the unit either with too few staff members who can understand government and utilise existing relationships, or with too few ‘disruptive thinkers’ to challenge the status quo. • There is a top-heavy organisational structure that constrains day-to-day operations, such as routine data analysis. • There are high levels of turnover among staff members and unit heads, meaning that critical relationships with departments have to be rebuilt continually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient capacity within the wider delivery system to support the unit’s data-tracking systems and/or develop good-quality delivery plans. • There is no coalition outside of the unit taking ownership for the government’s evidence agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of routines in place to review and refresh the effectiveness of the unit’s operations and generate improvement ideas.



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