

Implementation-minded policy making: an evidence synthesis

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Aims and methods



Aims and context of the study

What does ‘implementation savvy’ policy work involve?

Policy that is cognisant of what’s required for effective implementation

- **Quality of implementation is integral to policy success**
 - *“Policies do not succeed or fail on their own merits” (Hudson et al., 2019)*
 - *“... bad policy, bad implementation and bad luck” (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984)*
- **Focus on ‘big P’ policy: government directed**
- **Wales context of devolved government**

Hudson et al.(2019); Hogwood & Gunn (1984); Cairney (2019))



Methods

- **Scoping phase to define**
- **Review of reviews:**
 - Reviews of studies that identify factor aiding or hindering policy implementation
 - Searched 7 databases, screened 4043 (T&A) and 144 (full text)
 - 50 in scope, 15 selected for inclusion
- **Resources: guidance documents, reports, ‘toolkits’**
 - Searched 22 websites, identified 113 resources
 - 22 in scope, 10 selected for inclusion

Inclusion criteria:

- Government-level policy
- High income countries
- Wide range of policy areas
- Implemented at any level
- Selection based on depth of coverage of implementation

Included reviews

TOPIC	POLICY AREA	COUNTRIES	REVIEW TYPE	AUTHORS/DATE
Transformation	Innovation	Not described	Systematic	Haddad 2022
Education policy	Education	Various OECD	Literature	Viennet 2017
Physical activity	Education, health	USA, UK, NZ, Oman	Scoping	Forberger 2022
Nutrition in schools	Education, health	US, Canada, Aus, UK + others	Scoping	Mclsaac 2019
Food in schools	Education, health	Var. OECD, Malaysia, Philippines	Systematic	Ronto 2020
Maternity protection	Empt, health	Various Eur and Canada	Narrative	Probst 2018
Health pol. in hospitals	Health	US, UK, Australia, Canada	SR & MA	Havers 2020
Diet & physical activity	Health	Not described	Umbrella	Horodyska 2015a
Diet & physical activity	Health	Not described	Umbrella	Horodyska 2015b
Health care	Health	Var. OECD, Asia, Africa, MidEast, Caribb	Integrative	Kennedy 2019
Food environments	Health	US, Canada, Australia, Fiji, Mex, Chile	Systematic	Ng 2022
Food environments	Health	US, Australia, Canada + others	Systematic	Nguyen 2021
Health promotion	Health	Various OECD, Croatia	Scoping	Weiss 2016
Alcohol policy	Health	Var OECD, China, Nigeria, Thailand +	Scoping	Jankhotkaew 2022
Alcohol policy	Health	UK, NZ, Caribb, Thai'd, S Af, Vietnam +	Systematic	Wright 2022

Reviewed policy resources

Title	Website	Year
Reports / guidance documents		
Successful implementation of policy initiatives	Australian Nat. Audit Office	2014
The Public Impact Fundamentals ...	Centre for Public Impact	2018
New approaches to policy implementation ...	Ramboll Consultants	2018
Implementing whole of government approaches	Centre for Effective Services	2014
Achieving behaviour change : a guide for national government	Public Health England	2020
Toolkits		
Open policymaking toolkit	Policy Lab	2016
Architect, Pilot, Scale, Improve: Framework and toolkit for policy implementn.	Harvard Kennedy School	2021
An introductory systems thinking toolkit for civil servants	Govt.Office for Science	2022
Introducing a 'Government as a System' toolkit	Policy Lab	2020
Lessons learned		
Doing them Justice. Lessons from four cases of policy implementation	Institute for Government	2014

Findings

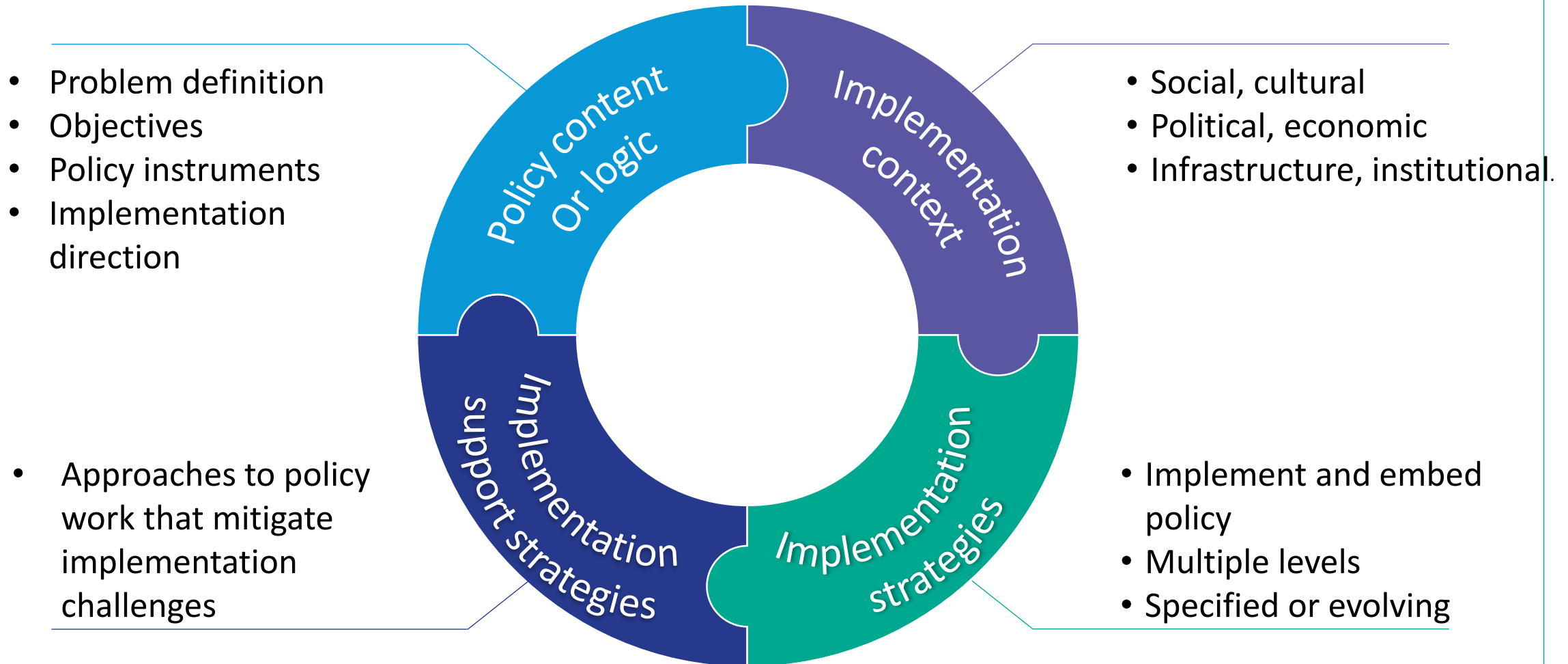
Levels of implementation



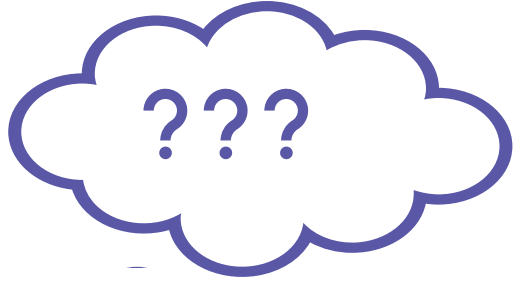
- Policy implementation involves policy moving between levels
- Policies are reinterpreted and reshaped as they move through the system
- “... [A] complex change process, rather than the execution phase of policy making” (Viennet and Point, 2017)

Bullock et al. (2021); Crable et al., (2022)

Key components of policy implementation



Integrative concepts

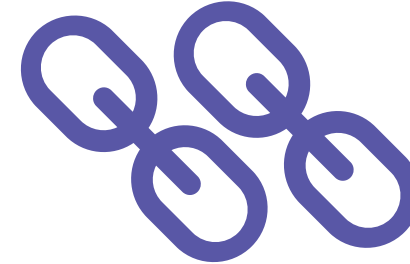


Ambiguity

Richard Matland's work

Ambiguity & conflict

Relationship shapes
approaches to implementation
required



Alignment

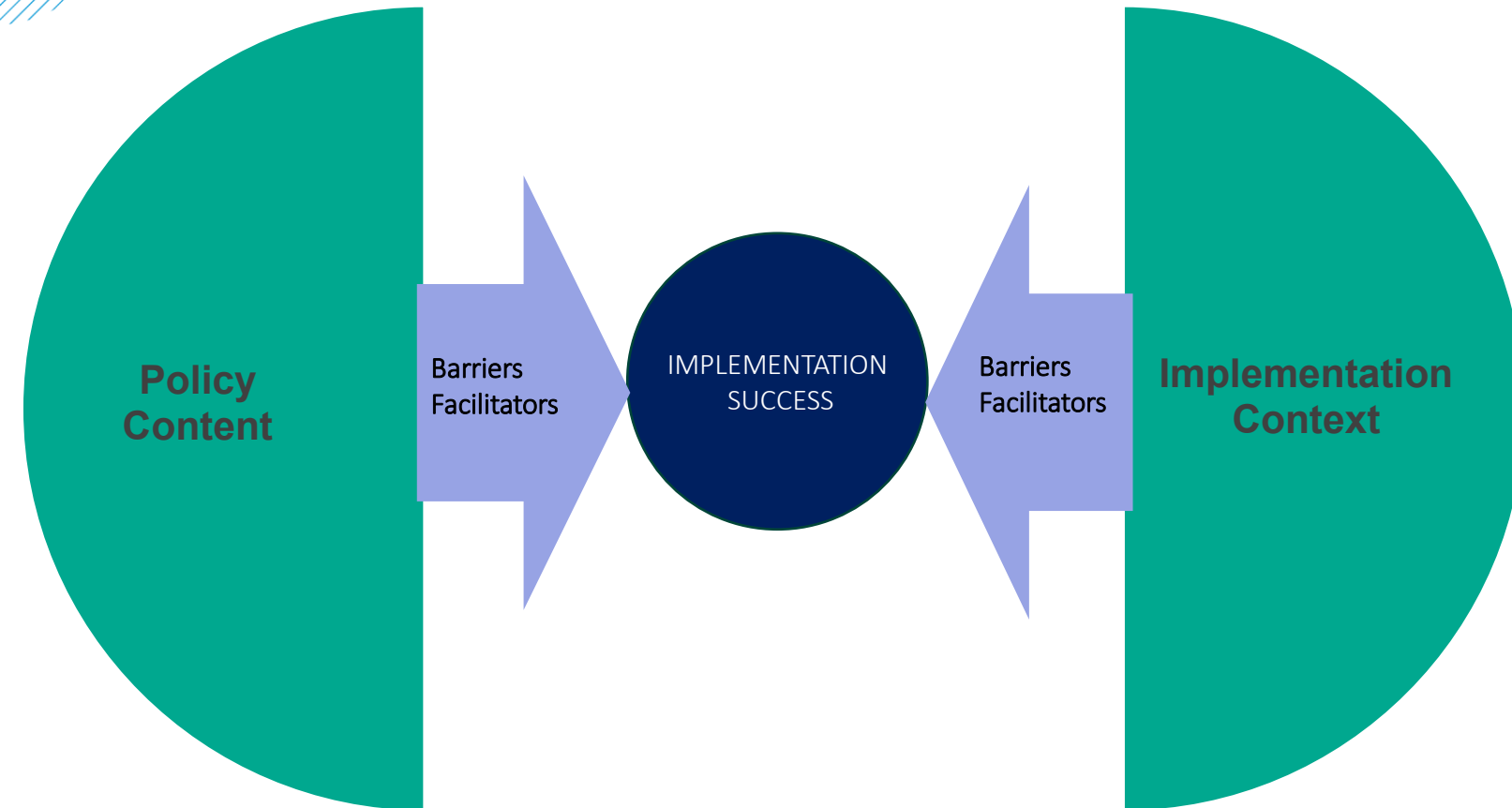
Between intervention, inner
setting and outer context

Structural and social dimensions

Strategies to address

Matland (1995); Lundmark et al. (2021)

Ambiguity



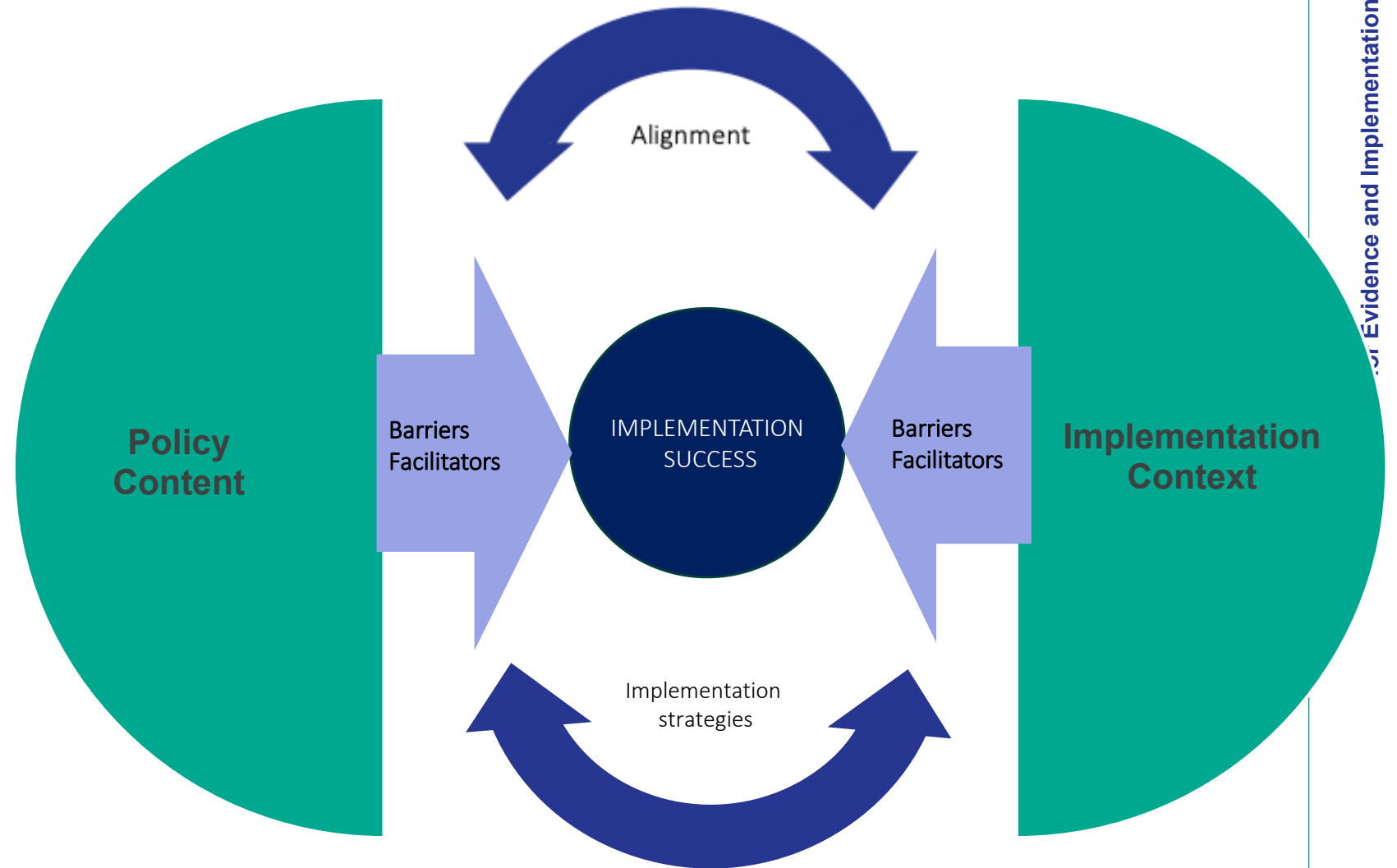
Implementation is facilitated by clarity about:

- Why: the problem or need
- What: aims and change intended
- How: strategies and responsibilities

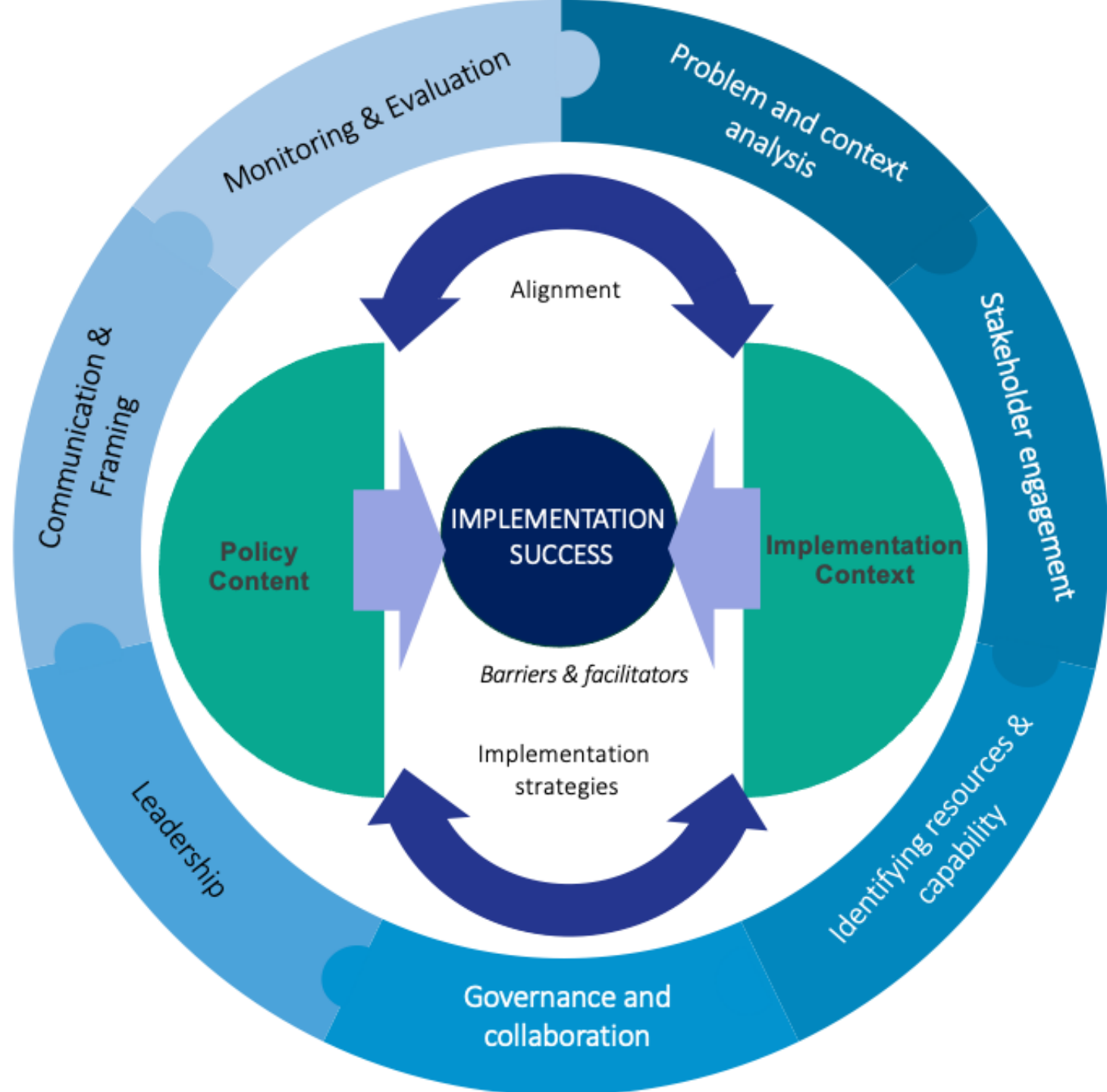
Alignment

Implementation is facilitated by alignment with:

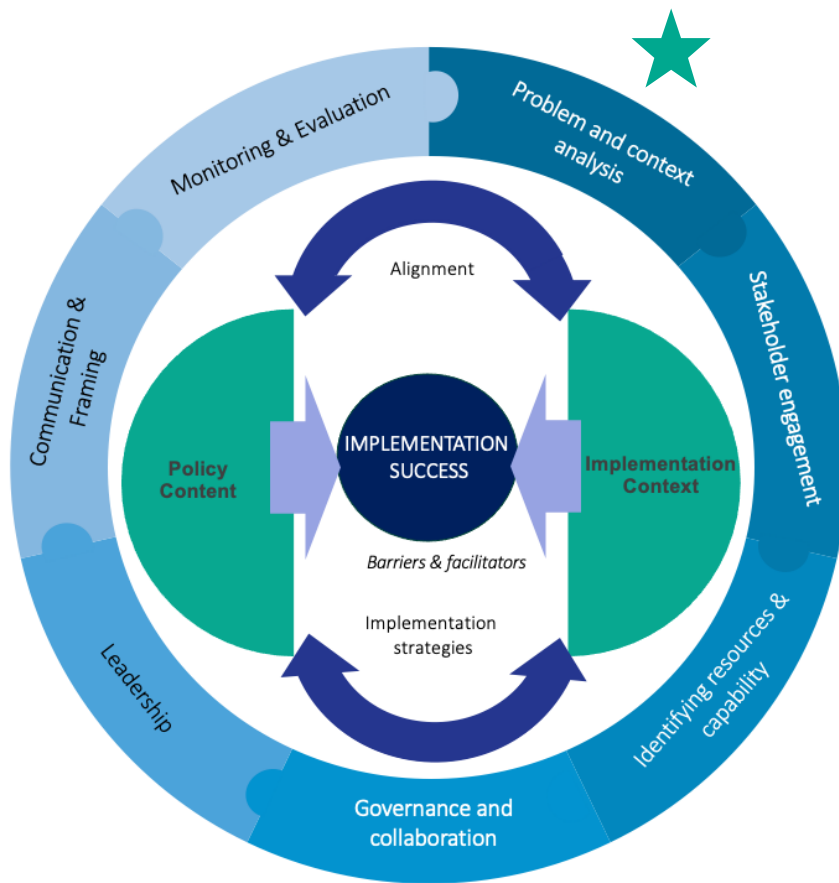
- The policy context
- Needs and priorities
- Implementation infrastructure: resources, structures, systems



Implementation support approaches



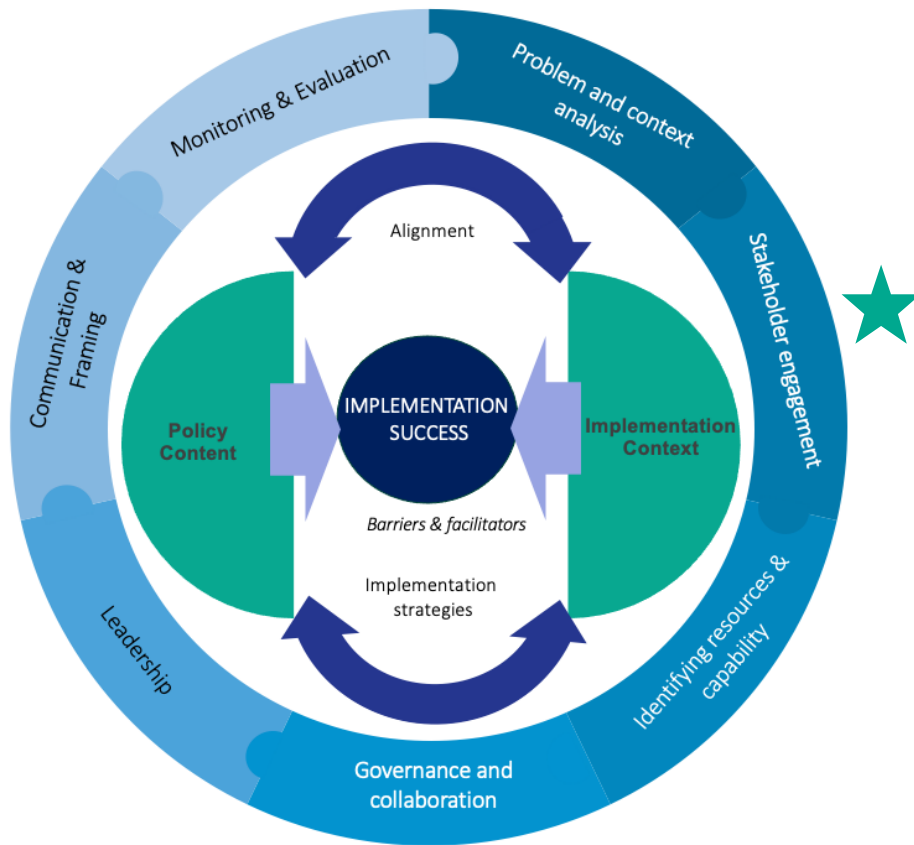
Implementation support approaches



Problem and context analysis

- Shared understanding of causes and influences
- Shared values and priorities
- Understanding of context, interactions, interdependencies
- Understand interactions between policies

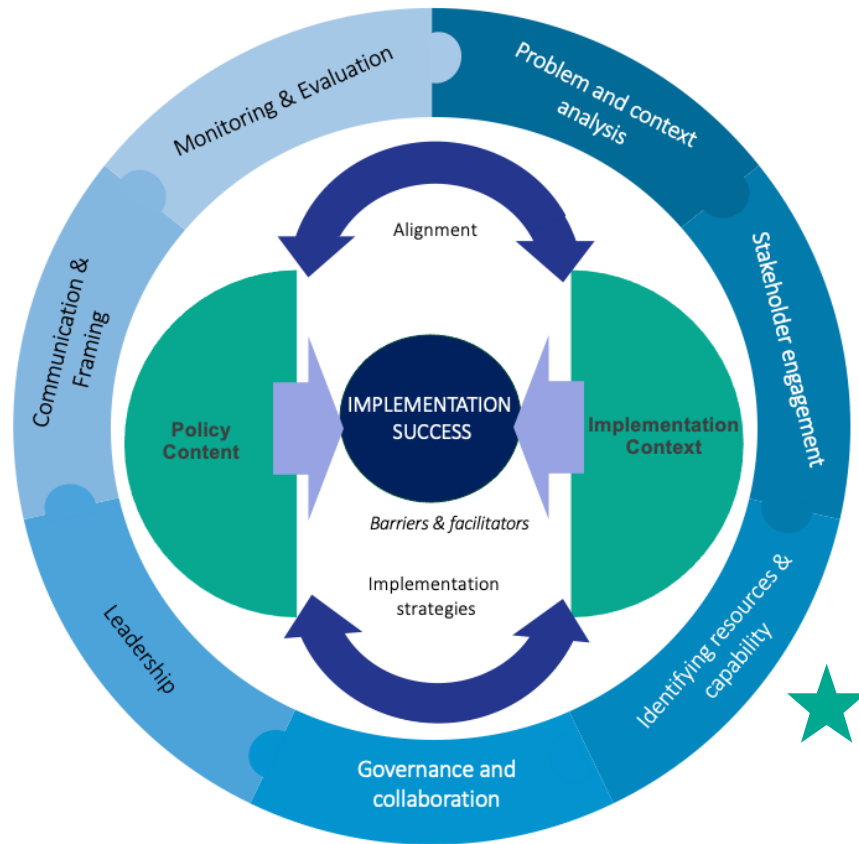
Implementation support approaches



Stakeholder engagement

- Build shared understand and vision
- Co-design policy solutions
- Plan implementation – with those essential to it
- Achieve buy-in and mobilise support

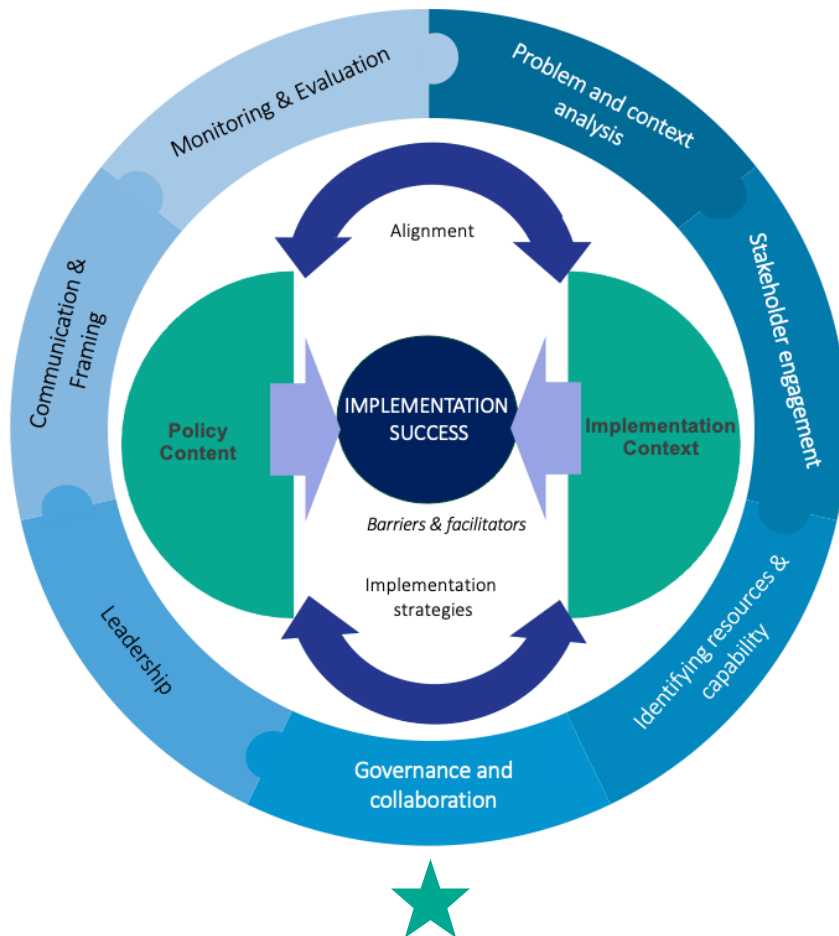
Implementation support approaches



Identifying implementation resources and capabilities

- Identify what's needed, where and how available, and how to address gaps
- Capacity and capabilities (at all levels) including collaborative skills
- Realistic timeframes

Implementation support approaches



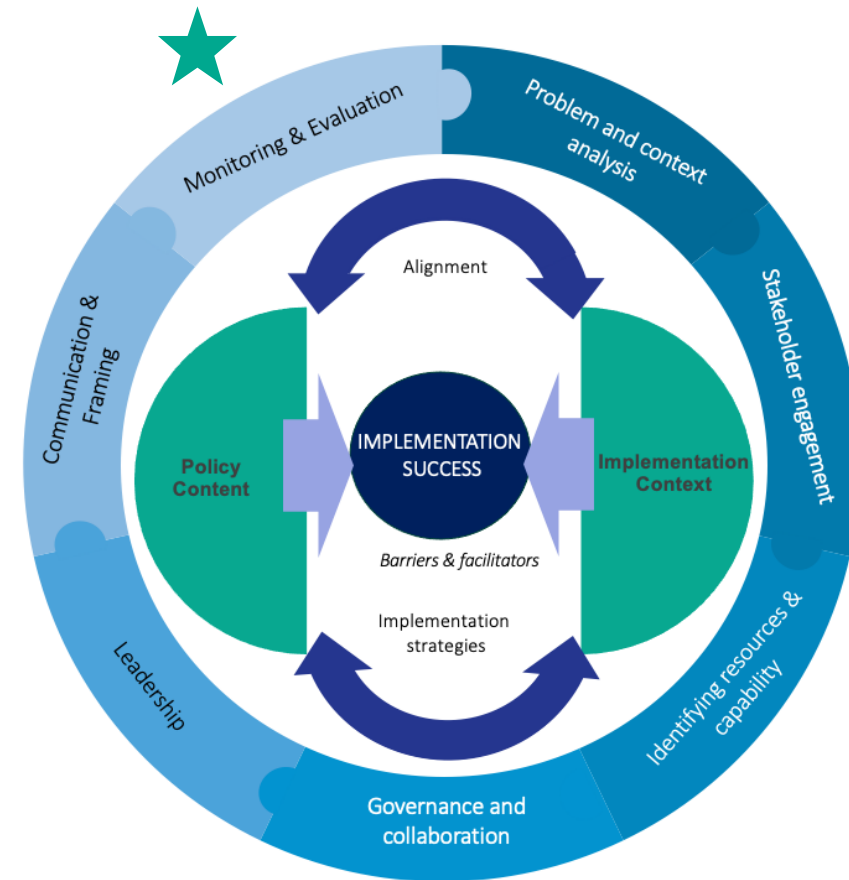
Governance and collaboration

- Effective coordination between and within levels
- New or repurposed
- Extent depends on complexity
- Start early esp. if conflicting goals

Implementation support approaches

Monitoring, evaluation, learning, risk management

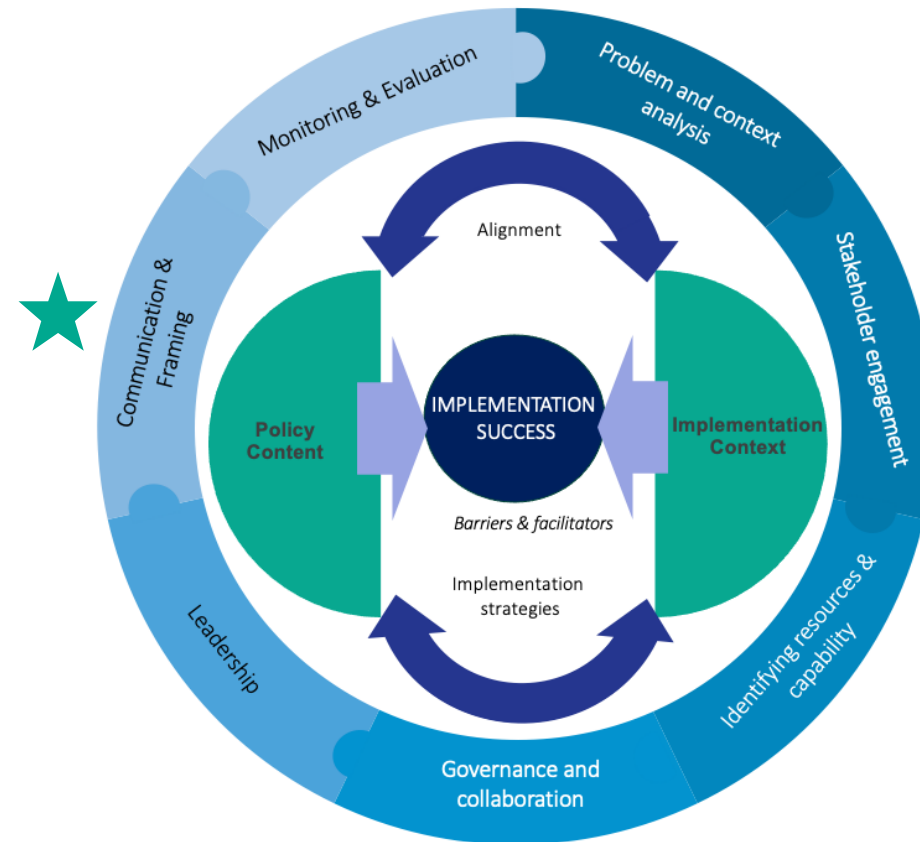
- Basis for active management of implementation process
- Particularly important in unstable and dynamic contexts
- Provides incentives and accountability
- Collective learning



Implementation support approaches

Communication and framing

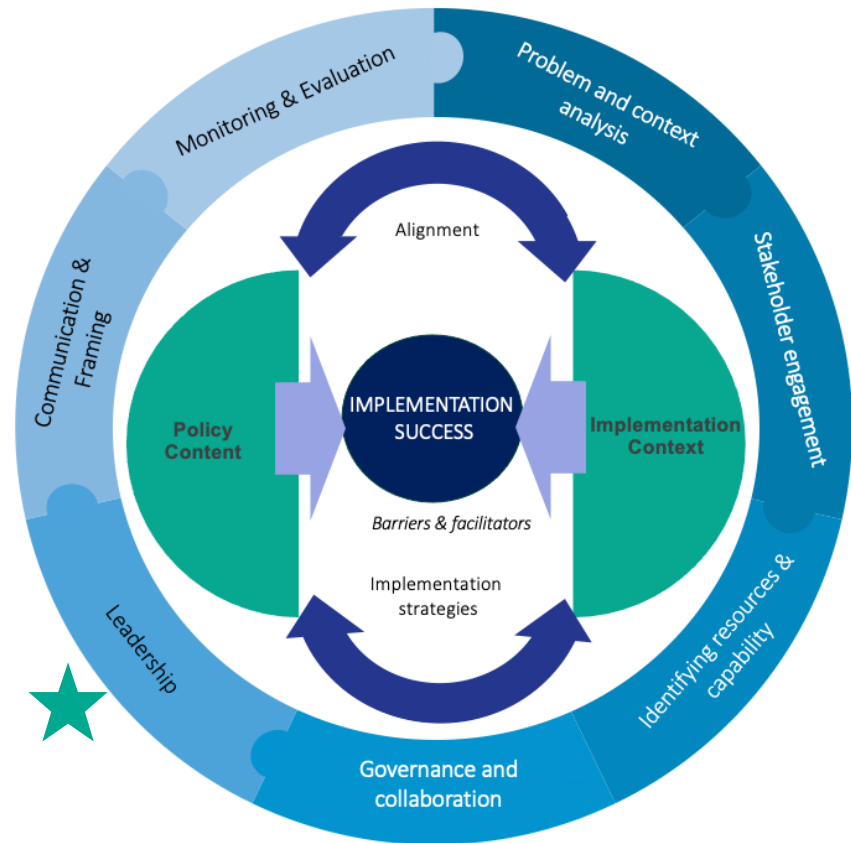
- Affects how policy is interpreted and delivered
- Sharing information about progress and results
- Directed across all levels and groups



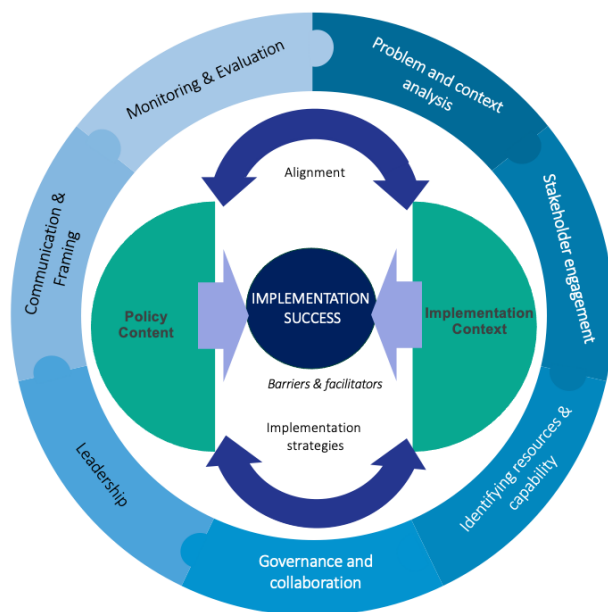
Implementation support approaches

Leadership

- Visible proponents: foster commitment, drive and oversee implementation
- Type of leadership required varies
- Formal and informal; within and between levels



Implementation support strategies ...



- Come into play at different points and for different purposes
- Are compensatory and mutually reinforcing
- Bring implementation thinking in earlier - and with more nuance than execution of policy
- Bring more people into policy work

Implementation savvy policy work involves:

- Building implementation thinking into policy logic and content
- Attending to ambiguity in the what, why and how of policy
- Assessing and improving alignment
- Using implementation support approaches to ensure the conditions and infrastructure for effective implementation

Thank you!



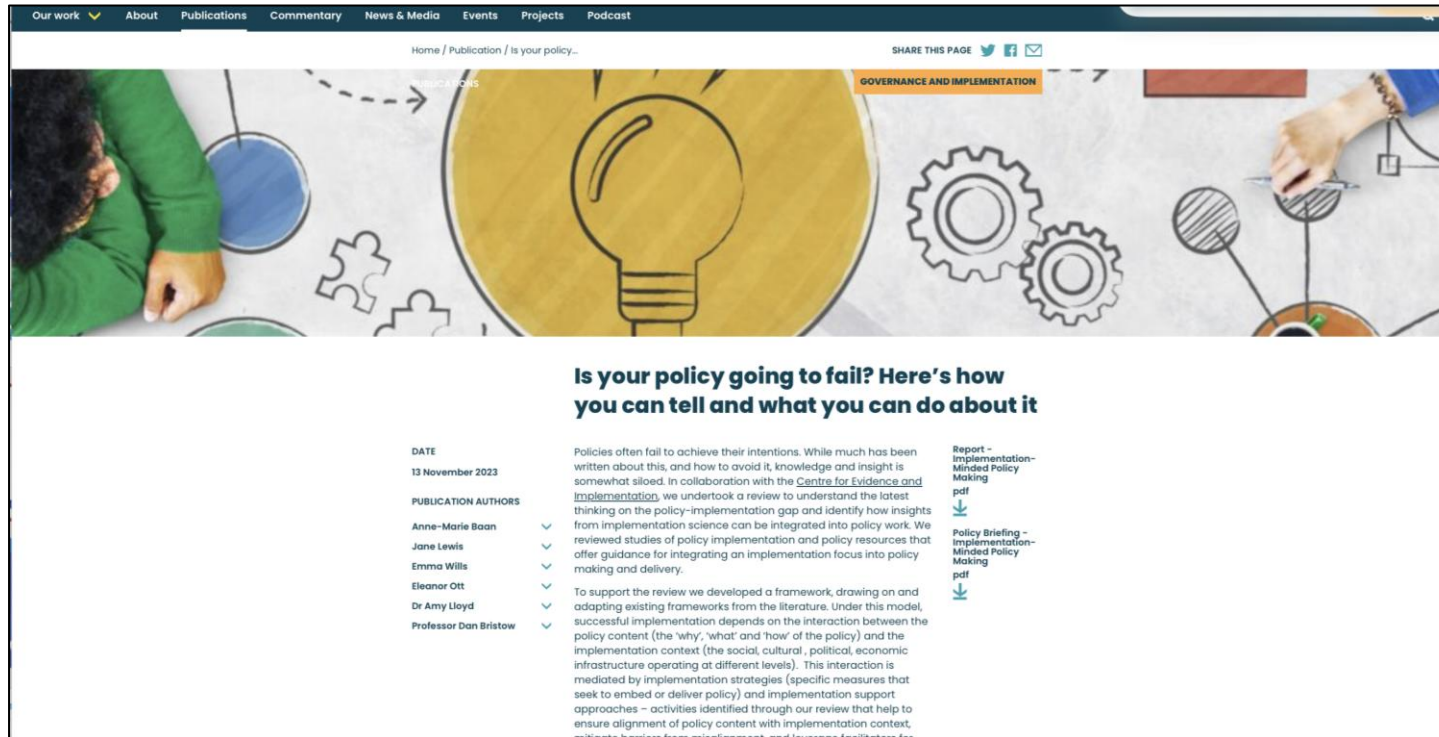
Without this, policy makers are leaving the reform effort early

Access the full report here:

<https://wcpp.org.uk/publication/is-your-policy-going-to-fail-heres-how-you-can-tell-and-what-you-can-do-about-it/>

Policy briefing here:

<https://wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Policy-Briefing-Implementation-Minded-Policy-Making-1.pdf>



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