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# IPA Policy Products & Activities

*Policy Team Example Proposal Inputs & Quick Guidance*



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# IPA Policy Products for Evidence Use

Ultimate goal: evidence is USED to improve lives

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# I. Boilerplate language for policy

# I. Boilerplate language

IPA's policy team equips IPA and our partners to create evidence-informed, sustainable impact at scale, improving millions of lives through improved policies and programs.

IPA's policy strategy equips partners to use evidence to improve lives at scale, by working with partners to create the building blocks of evidence use along the whole path to scale. In doing this, IPA makes high-leverage, evidence-driven inputs for policies and programs that affect millions of lives. Our work involves—and goes beyond—evidence generation to ensure that evidence not only reaches and informs decision-makers, but is also used, incorporated, and scaled up into policy and programming decisions.

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## II. Policy Product Menu

# IPA Policy Products for Evidence Use

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# 1. Creating credible, relevant evidence



# Policy Needs Assessment

**What this is:** A set of semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders to understand what are their pressing policy agendas and questions, and where evidence/data (i.e. IPA's work) may have the most added value. The output is a needs assessment analysis that lists key actors, their policy priorities, and identified entry points for evidence creation and use.

**Use this for:** Understanding the key interests, questions, challenges and limitations of policymakers as it relates to your project's sector and policy environment.

**Budget for:** At least 3 weeks of country office policy staff time; 1-2 days global staff if desired to set up the needs assessment tool based on other experiences and/or to help review the output and connect conclusions to the global policy conversation.

**Watch out for:** Setting up policy meetings can take considerable amounts of time and requires effort for follow up. Make sure time is spent to analyze notes from these meetings to produce a thoughtful end output (needs assessment analysis).

# Research Coordinating Committees

**What this is:** A forum for gathering policymakers and locally-based academics in a given sector.

**Use this for:** Guiding a policy partner who wants to set a research agenda in their sector. E.g. Research Coordinating Committee in Zambia's Ministry of General Education; Education Sector Research Group in Ghana's Ministry of Education.

**Budget for:** In-country policy staff time to support this 1-2 days per month, ongoing; possibly meeting costs, ongoing

**Watch out for:** The lengthy process to set the terms of reference for the group and getting all stakeholders to agree

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## 2. Making evidence accessible to the right people at the right time

# Project-Level Cost Effectiveness Analysis

**What this is:** A ratio of costs to impacts, CEA can provide partners with insight into which programs might offer the greatest value for money if they are choosing between programs that aim to achieve the same goal or outcome.

**Use this for:** Policy-relevant projects that have the potential for replication and/or scale-up

**Budget for:** 3-5 days of global Policy Manager time to conduct CEA, 1-2 days of in-country research staff time to gather costs and liaise with partners / PIs

**Watch out for:** Try to avoid collecting cost data retrospectively (more difficult than collecting cost data for ongoing projects), partners who may be unwilling to share cost data, collecting data from multiple sources, making cost and program assumptions where data is not available

# New Evidence Synthesis or Research Brief as Input to Policy

**What this is:** A bespoke evidence review, either in the form of a brief or a presentation, as an input to a policy in development or another policy target we want to influence

**Use this for:** Sector wide influence, sharing evidence with long-standing strategic policy partner, sharing evidence with strategic policy partner we are developing a relationship with, or as an input into a policy process you want to influence

**Budget for:** 3 weeks of staff time for global Policy staff and 3-4 days for sector staff. Can also leverage in-country policy staff to review and contextualize to ensure the output is targeted correctly for the program & audience.

**Watch out for:** Avoid under-budgeting or under-estimating staff time needed to retrieve research and write evidence synthesis

# New Evidence Synthesis or Research Brief as Input to Programming

**What this is:** An evidence-based input into a close, strategic implementing partner's programming.

**Use this for:** When a partner with whom we are working wants to incorporate evidence into their programming; we have a reasonably high level of confidence that they will really use the evidence; we feel well-placed to provide this input either for contextual or sector specific reasons (i.e. we know and can apply the evidence)

**Budget for:** 3 weeks of staff time for global Policy staff and 3-4 days for global sector staff. Can also leverage in-country policy staff to review and contextualize to ensure the output is targeted correctly for the program & audience.

**Watch out for:** under-budgeting or under-estimating staff time needed to understand program, target evidence synthesis topics, and retrieve/ write synthesis.

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### 3. Engaging evidence buy-in users and influencers

# Stakeholder mapping

**What this is:** The process of identifying and categorizing key stakeholders involved in achieving a given policy objective

**Use this for:** Identifying key stakeholders and entry points for research and evidence sharing, understanding what actions stakeholders might take with the results, and the path to influence for these stakeholders

**Budget for:** 2 weeks of country office policy staff time; 1-2 days of global policy staff time if desired to work on a stakeholder mapping template and plan based on previous experiences

**Watch out for:** Ensure stakeholder mapping is actionable and useful to the project's policy influence goals



# Project-level Steering Committees

**What this is:** A group of key stakeholders involved in a project that meet regularly to provide guidance, resolve key issues, and ensure achievement of project outcomes

**Use this for:** Projects where you want to encourage evidence co-creation and keep decision-makers engaged throughout the process

**Budget for:** 1-2 days **per month** of policy staff time (in country) **throughout the course of the project**

**Watch out for:** Partners who aren't interested in making this commitment

# Project-level Dissemination

**What this is:** Sharing project results with partners through written materials or presentations

**Use this for:** Many IPA proposals will want to include a bit of general language on IPA's dissemination and policy communications work, as this is a selling point for some PIs and funders. For that purpose, we can point out that for every project, IPA produces plain-language summaries on our website. However, for projects that have more policy relevance and more policy and communications goals and ambitions, we can propose a more generous dissemination plan, with tailored products. This always begins with private dissemination to the partner and circles outward towards more public audiences.

**Budget for:** Policy brief, webinar, press release announcement, blog post, slide deck, banner, 1-page brochure, full designed report, dissemination.

**Watch out for:** Under-budgeting and overpromising on policy products like webinars, policy briefs, and events

# Evidence Convenings/Summits

**What this is:** A forum bringing together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to share rigorous evidence in a particular sector and identify ways in which evidence can be used for better decision-making

**Use this for:** Sector wide influence, sharing evidence with long-standing strategic policy partners, sharing evidence with strategic policy partners we are developing a relationship with

**Budget for:** 3-4 weeks of global policy and in-country policy staff time, printing costs, venue, per diems, speaker gifts. It is REALLY advantageous if the partner (especially government) can co-fund these expenses with IPA. This can make the event itself much more influential and impactful in the end (and make a funding proposal much more successful).

**Watch out for:** Partners wanting to plan an evidence summit without providing enough planning time, clarifying roles between partner and IPA.

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## 5. Equipping implementers to use evidence to improve lives

# Pre-Policy Plans

**What this is:** A tool to help partners plan how they will take action based on the results of a project

**Use this for:** Projects where you want to encourage evidence use but research is still in the early stages (results aren't quite out yet)

**Budget for:** 1-2 days of Policy Associate time (in country or global) to guide the process

**Watch out for:** PIs or partners who aren't interested in making this pre-commitment

# Path to Scale or Influence Plans (and associated workshops)

**What this is:** A tool to help partners plan how they will apply project results to policy/programming

**Use this for:** Projects where you want to encourage evidence use and you will have some results within the timeframe of the project. You may use this also to position IPA/your team to provide technical assistance for the path-to-scale work: in other words, you write the path to scale plan and then propose further funding to carry it out.

**Budget for:** 2-3 weeks of policy staff time (in country or global) to guide the process

**Watch out for:** Projects that may not provide very clear policy takeaways even after results are available; projects that do not have enough partner engagement built-in to enable end-of-the-project workshops and planning like this

# Technical Support for Evidence-Informed Policy Development and Implementation

**What this is:** Sharing rigorous evidence on a specific topic to inform the development and implementation of a policy

**Use this for:** Long-term, well-developed policy partners who are ready to take IPA's input on policy documents, implementation plans, programming, etc. and who are placed to act on this input, with our support

**Budget for:** Full time policy manager in-country with strong global policy & sector expert support, sometimes external PI support as well; external-facing senior-level in-country person e.g. Country Director time and attention

**Watch out for:** Overpromising on all outcomes; understaffing with junior staff

# Integrated Evidence-Informed Partnerships

**What this is:** Comprehensive policy support to a partner depending on their learning stage

**Use this for:** Long-term, well-developed research and policy partners who are ready to invest in both evidence generation and use, within one sector in a country or multiple countries. This is a nice method to get full-time policy staff in country offices, but it takes a lot of pre-work and positioning of IPA as a go-to evidence partner *before* we can propose and commit to a project like this.

**Budget for:** Full time policy managers in-country with strong global policy support

**Watch out for:** Overpromising on all outcomes; understaffing with junior staff



# Technical Support Along the Path to Scale

**What this is:** Identifying and equipping partners with tools to facilitate the scaling process

**Use this for:** Long-term, well-developed policy partners who are ready to scale-up a project with our support

**Budget for:** global policy team, global comms, one in-country policy person's staff time for the length of the project

**Watch out for:** Under-budgeting or under-estimating staff time needed

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## III. Evidence lab framing and products

# Embedded Lab

An embedded lab is a team within a government organization working to strengthen the use of data and evidence in public policy. In the early stages of lab incubation, IPA staff work shoulder-to-shoulder with this team to support their work, demonstrate proof of concept, develop networks, and transfer skills, but one of the main attributes of the model is that we expect the government partner to increase their ownership over time while IPA's support gradually fades.

By working side-by-side, IPA and our partners engage in mutual capacity transfer in a learning-by-doing environment. This differs from the typical consultant model where experts work independently and exit, creating neither ownership nor improved technical capacity within the client organization.

Specific areas of collaboration, include but are not limited to: improvements in data management, design and implementation of monitoring and learning (MEL) systems, data analysis to inform policy or program design, pilot interventions, descriptive and exploratory research, and impact evaluations. Lab and IPA staff communicate policy-relevant evidence to key stakeholders and provide technical assistance to implement decisions based on this evidence.

The labs' structural approach focuses on four workstreams: data for decision making, lab design, policy-driven evidence creation, and applying evidence to policy. Each of these workstreams moves through five phases of development from lab "entry" to "exit", with exit by IPA demonstrating full government ownership, leadership, and responsibility for the sustainability of the lab.

# Data Mapping

**What this is:** Creating a data directory of existing databases, sources, and processes

**Use this for:** To unlock data for research purposes, for operational decision making and organizational learning

**Budget for:** Senior staff to develop the engagement and start it —understanding need and set up a working plan is key. Once we get the data, at least one RA, it can be embedded or not

**Watch out for:** Once you get access to the data make sure to look into data quality by doing a proper data cleaning, “values” check, and check panel data consistency.

# Data and Evidence Use Assessment

**What this is:** An assessment of a partner's monitoring, evaluation, and learning capabilities and gaps

**Use this for:** To make sure partner organizations are able to utilize the data they collect to guide policy decisions and conduct program evaluations

**Budget for:** Embedded staff time, global policy time, and potentially RFE team support.

**Watch out for:** This process can be more time-consuming than you may think - budget for at least six months

# Data and Evidence Use / M&E Training

**What this is:** Training for government partners on specific research or M&E-related topics

**Use this for:** Providing the right kind of training to right partner can set the stage for more impactful collaborations in the future. A common understanding of the value of evidence and to generate a learning agenda can facilitate the co-creation of policy relevant research projects.

**Budget for:** Research Manager/Associate to design and conduct the training.

**Watch out for:** Avoid creating something from scratch, when various teams like RFE have conducted training sessions on the same topics before

# Piloting Interventions / Quick Wins

**What this is:** Rapid randomized controlled trials to efficiently evaluate programmatic questions using a partner's own programs and data

**Use this for:** Getting buy-in from partners and other stakeholders, and to train staff via “learning by doing”

**Budget for:** Embedded staff and Research Manager time.

**Watch out for:** Unless the partner has good administrative data sources, it might be hard to have enough resources for a full RCT. Consider including only the design of the study and then providing support to fundraise for the rest.