

Peer Review

From evaluating science to evaluating science policy

AEA Denver 2008

Papers, Projects, Programs and Portfolios: Peer Review as a Public Health Evaluation tool

Robin Wagner, Trevor Woollery, Robert Spengler Jerald O'Hara, Juliana Cyril and John Arujo

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

Peer Review and the Open Method of Co-ordination: reviewing national research and development policy mixes

Patries Boekholt, Technopolis Ltd

Peer review as a policy learning tool

Isabelle Collins, Erik Arnold, Barbara Good, Technopolis Ltd

Peer Review as a Policy learning tool

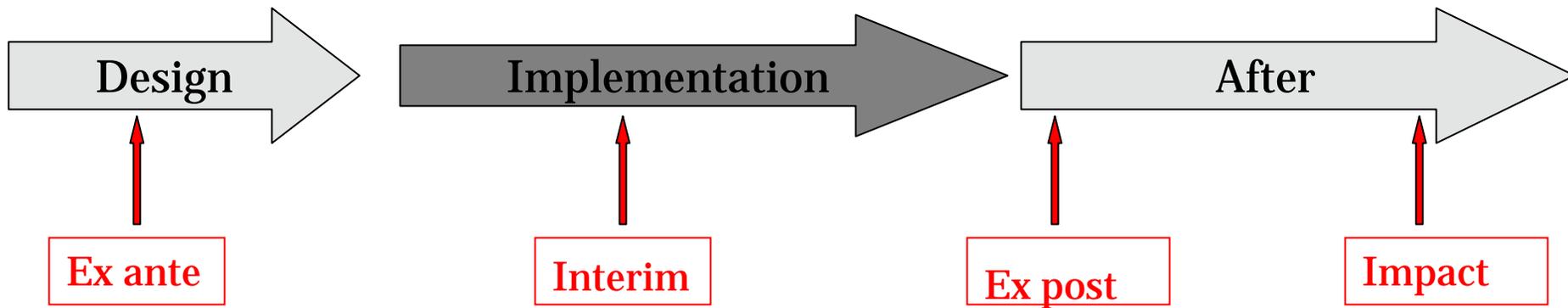
Isabelle Collins, Technopolis Ltd

AEA Denver 2008

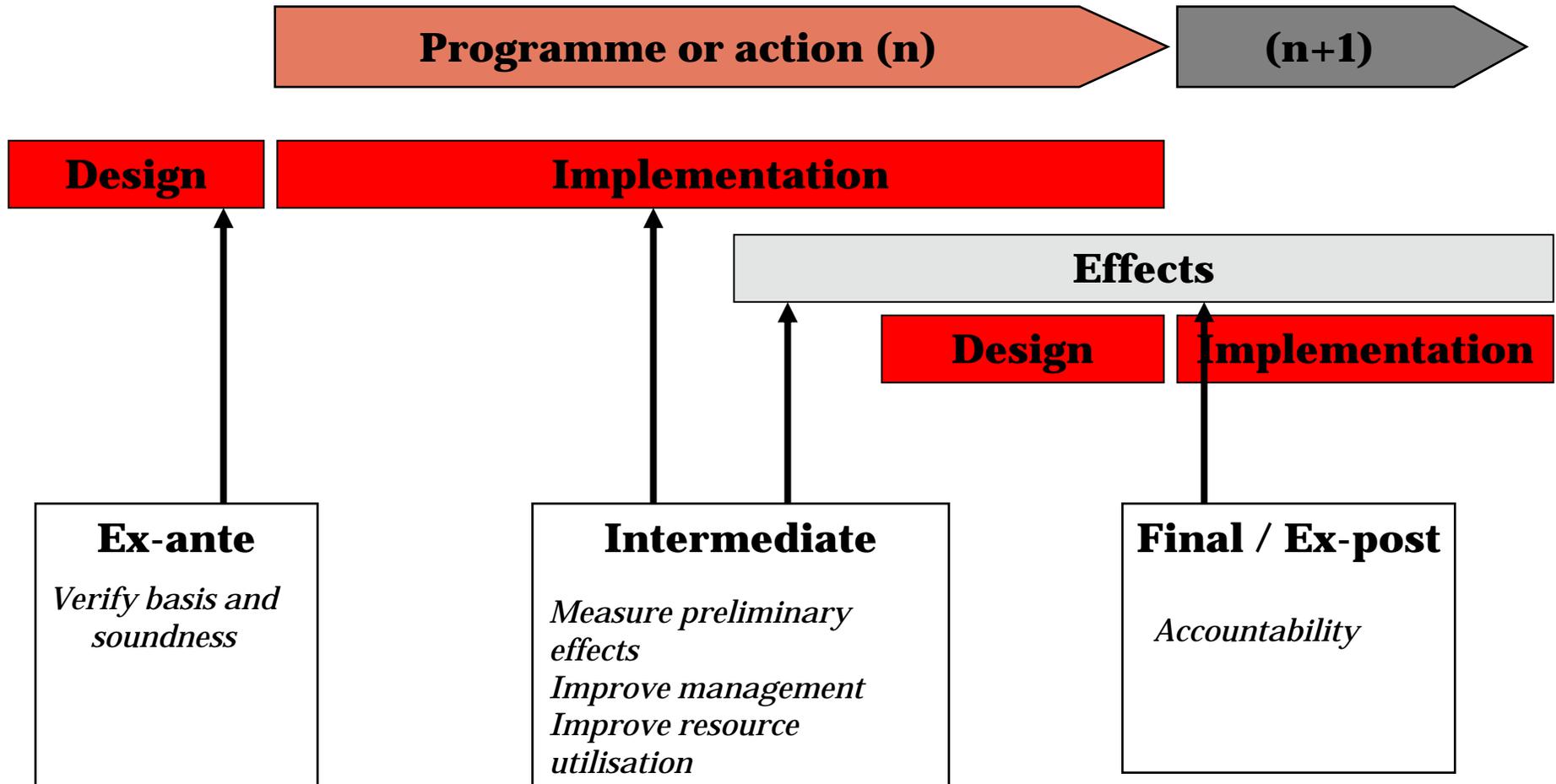
Scientific Peer Review

- Originally developed to decide about the suitability of articles proposed for publication in academic journals (17th century) - still probably the dominant mode essentially a judgement about scientific quality
- Much later (20th century), peer review was extended to play a 'gate keeping' role in the access to research resources via Research Councils
- In the late 20th century, the concept is extended further ('extended peer review') to tackle non-quality questions such as relevance (ex ante) and impact (ex post)

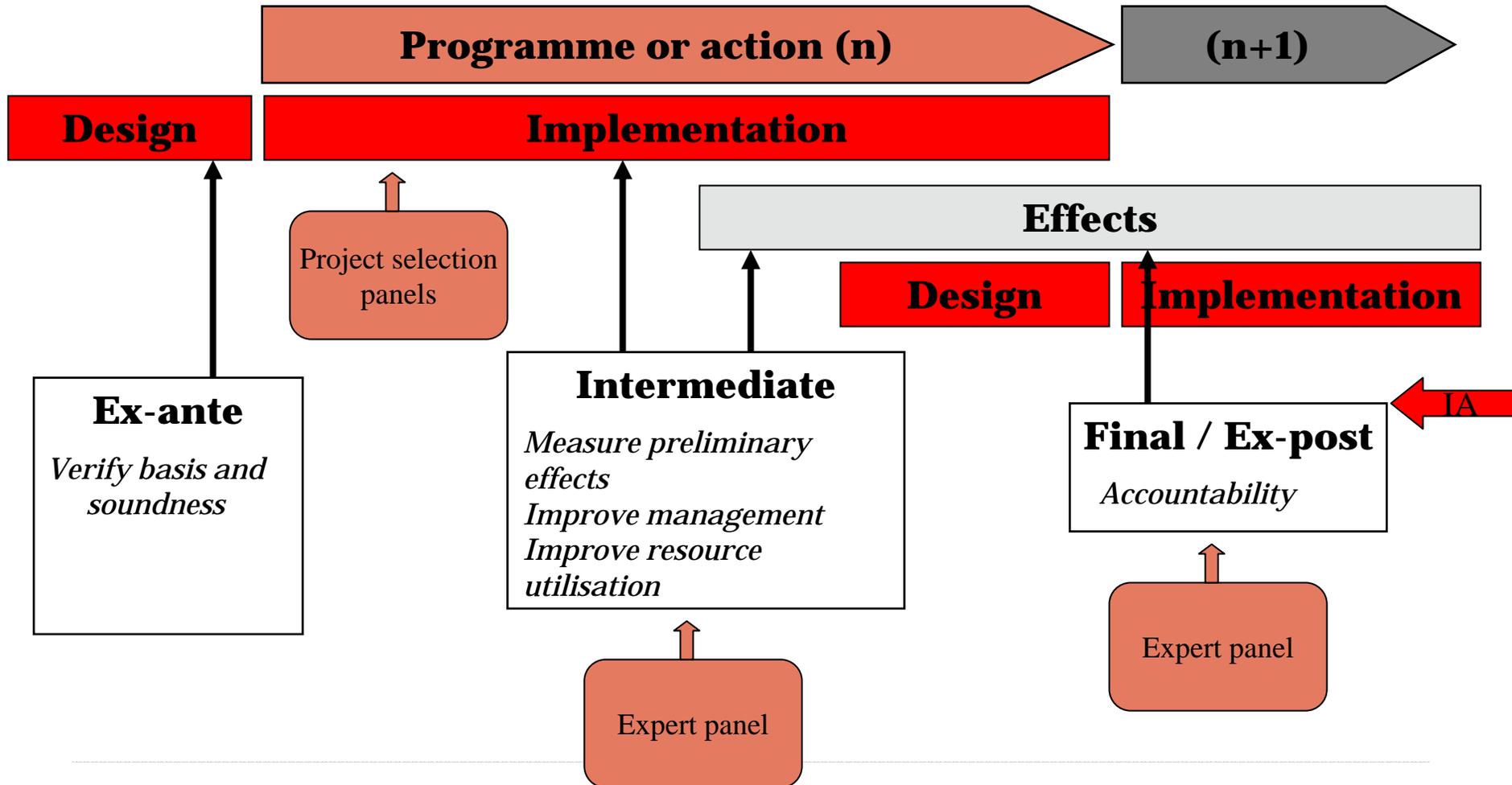
Location of evaluation in EU programmes



Evaluation timing



Where are peers involved in EU Research evaluation?



Outside science

- Increasingly seeing forms of peer review outside the scientific arena
- Taking tools into new environments mean you need to adapt them:
 - who are the experts?
 - who chooses them?
 - what is the nature of their expertise?
 - how does their expertise differ from opinion?
 - what are the criteria used for assessment?

Examples

- **Policy Mix Peer Review**
 - Assessments of whole research and innovation systems
 - Focus is on analysis and assessment but also on learning from each other
- **Peer Learning Activity in the area of higher education**
 - Aim is not so much analysis and assessment but learning and new points illumination
- **BEST process evaluation of SME programmes**
 - Aim to assess national evaluations of SME support programmes

Peer learning in Higher Education Policy

- Education and Training 2010
- Bologna Process

- Curriculum Reform
- Governance Reform
- Funding Reform

Peer learning in Higher Education Policy

- **Who are the experts?**
 - Senior staff from education ministries plus topic experts
- **Who chooses them?**
 - National ministries
- **What is the nature of their expertise?**
 - Varied, but typically hold senior positions in ministries/universities
- **How does their expertise differ from opinion?**
 - Rooted in experience
- **what are the criteria used for assessment?**
 - Rooted in experience
 - “Best practice”
 - “transferability”

BEST assessment of SME support programmes

- **“Small businesses are the lifeblood of the innovation system”**
- **Review of evaluation processes in a range of countries**
- **Outputs designed to be identification and sharing of good practice**

BEST assessment of SME support programmes

- **Who are the experts?**
 - People nominated by Member States - ranged from civil servants to external experts (unpaid)
- **Who chooses them?**
 - National ministries
- **What is the nature of their expertise?**
 - Varied but mainly not evaluation
- **How does their expertise differ from opinion?**
 - ?
- **What are the criteria used for assessment?**
 - Evaluative criteria devised in the course of the work by secretariat

Key differences from “classic” peer review

- **Assessment is not primary purpose**
- **Peers not disinterested**
- **Policy objectives of participants may be different from overall policy objectives**

Issues

- How do you select peers for complex programme assessment?
- What is the place of expert opinion in the broader stakeholder analysis
- Tensions between expert opinion and policy objectives
- Tensions between independence and engagement
- Level of buy-in of “peers”
- What happens to the learning?

Conclusions

- Peer review can be a useful tool in a formative evaluation when it is used as a policy learning tool
- Useful tool in assessing intangible or process issues
- It is less useful - if not dangerous - in a summative evaluation when it used as an assessment tool without making the assessment criteria transparent
- Select your experts very carefully