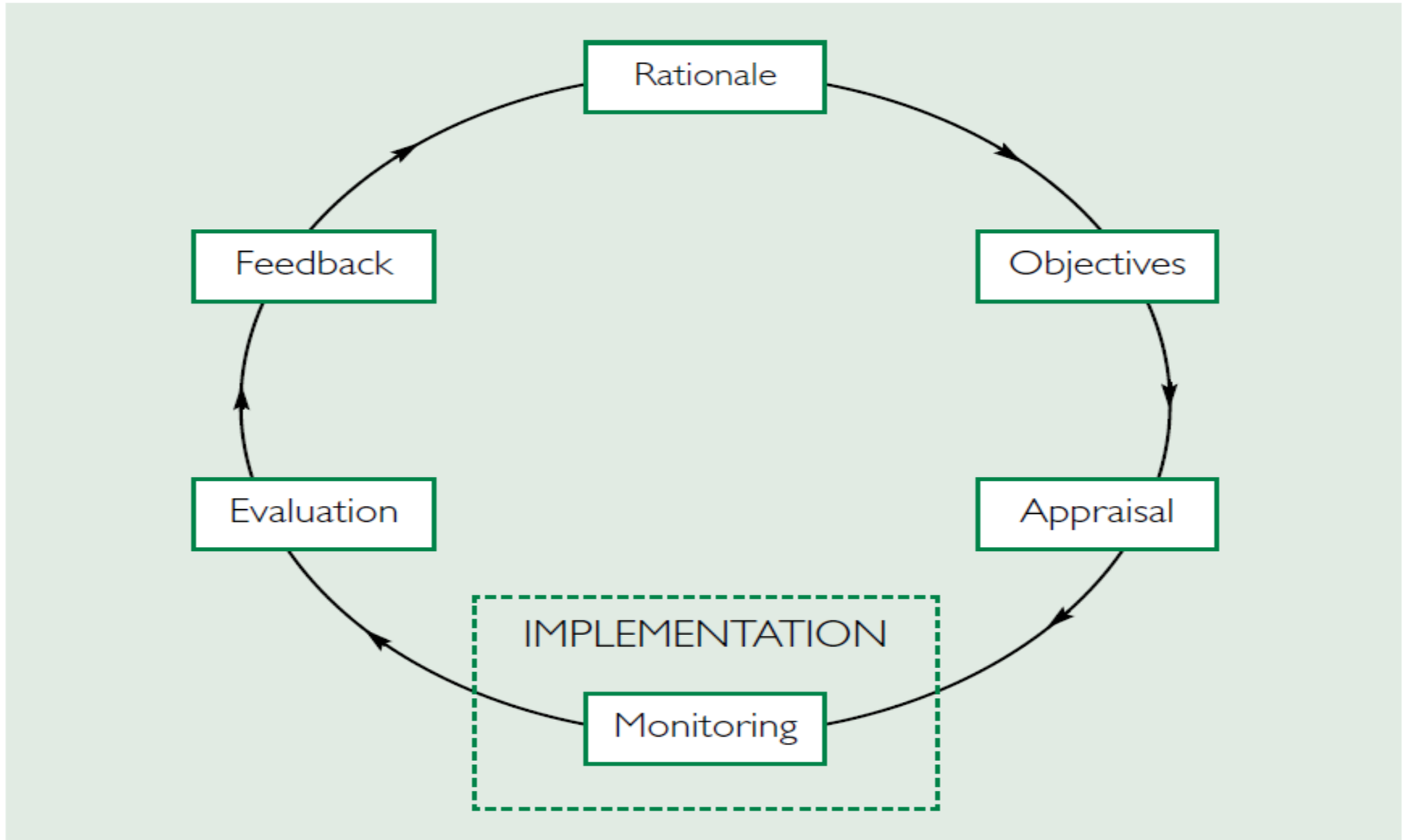# Understanding impact:  research and policy development

## Richard Bartholomew

Chair, Centre for Longitudinal Studies Strategic Advisory Board

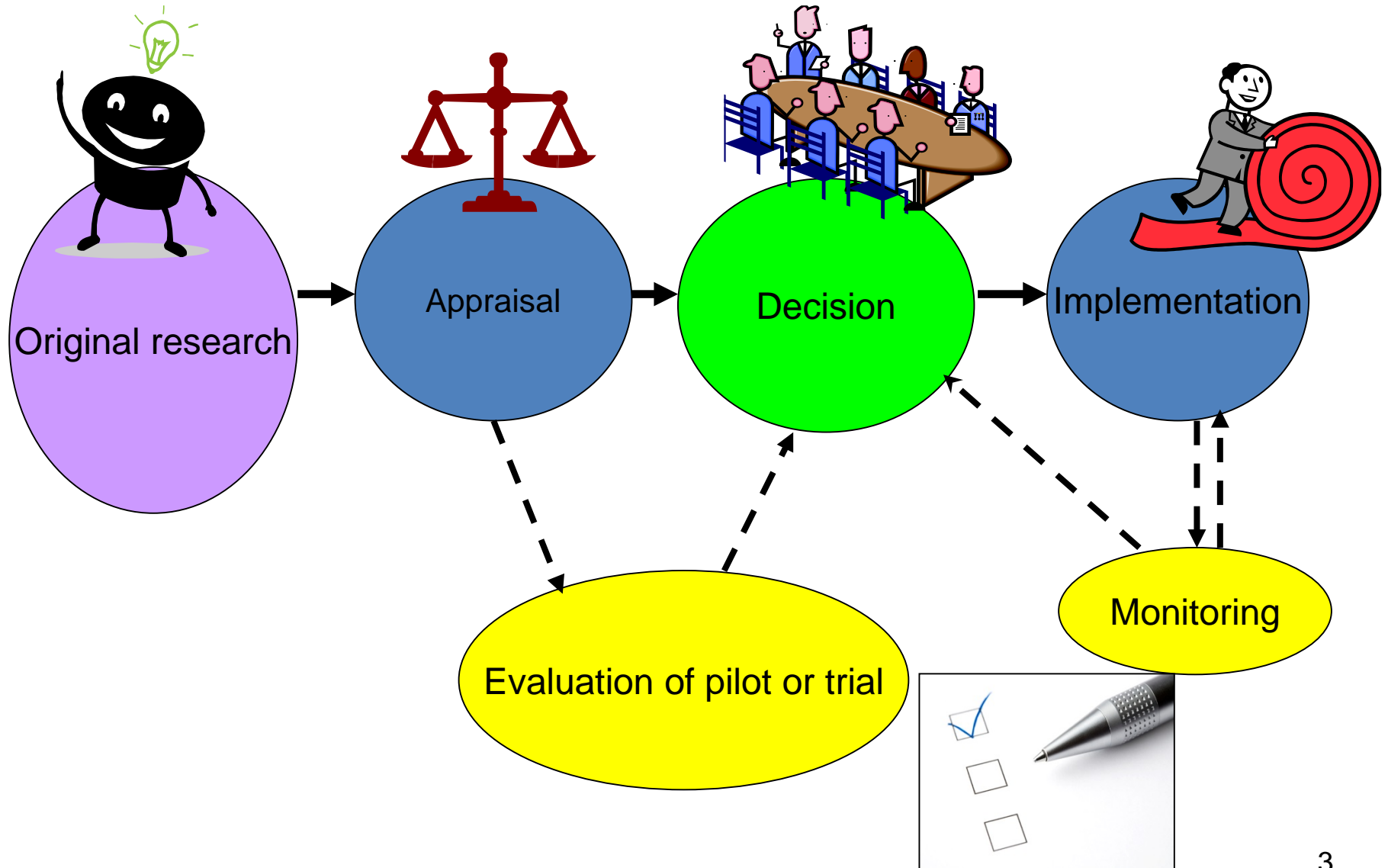Former Joint Head of Government Social Research

21 July 2015

# How is policy developed? 'ROAMEF' policy cycle

2

# Research impact: linear view

Original research → Appraisal → Decision → Implementation

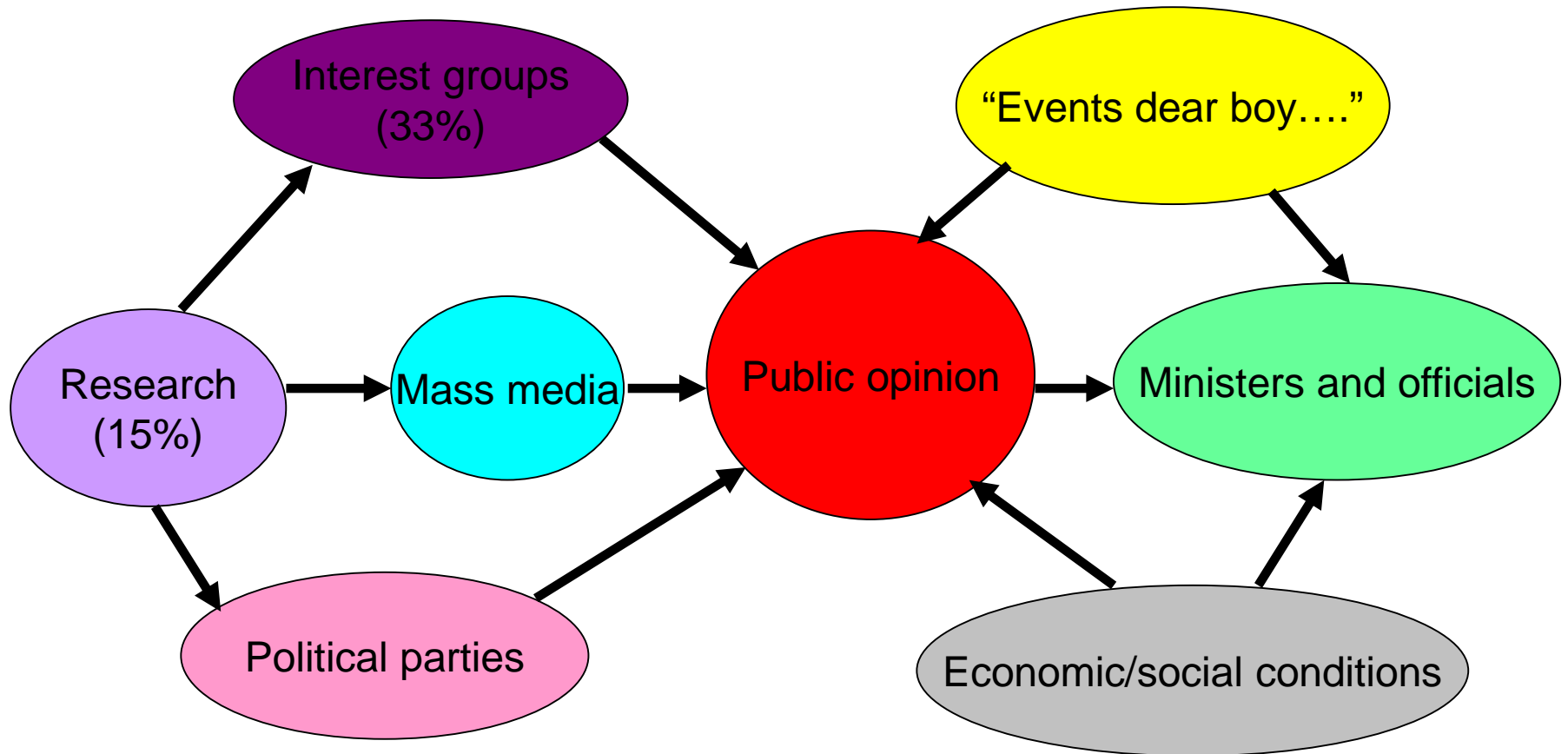Evaluation of pilot or trial

Monitoring

# The rational model

- 'In this 'ROAMEF' cycle, each stage follows on rationally from the previous one,...... a rationale is developed, then objectives are set, then options are appraised.

- The ROAMEF cycle presents policy making as a controllable sequence......... The policy represents a set of planned actions that are then implemented, with monitoring to assess the extent to which the goal was fulfilled.

- The framework is technocratic, with politics, values and events seen as external 'noise' that needs to be minimised.'

Policy Making in the Real World, Michael Hallsworth et al , 2011
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/policy

'The stages model presents a naive view of policy making. Some of its constituent parts are necessary for the making of good policy, but its suggestion that policy can be made through a series of logical, sequential steps, with a clear beginning and end within a finite period, is a dangerous over-simplification'.
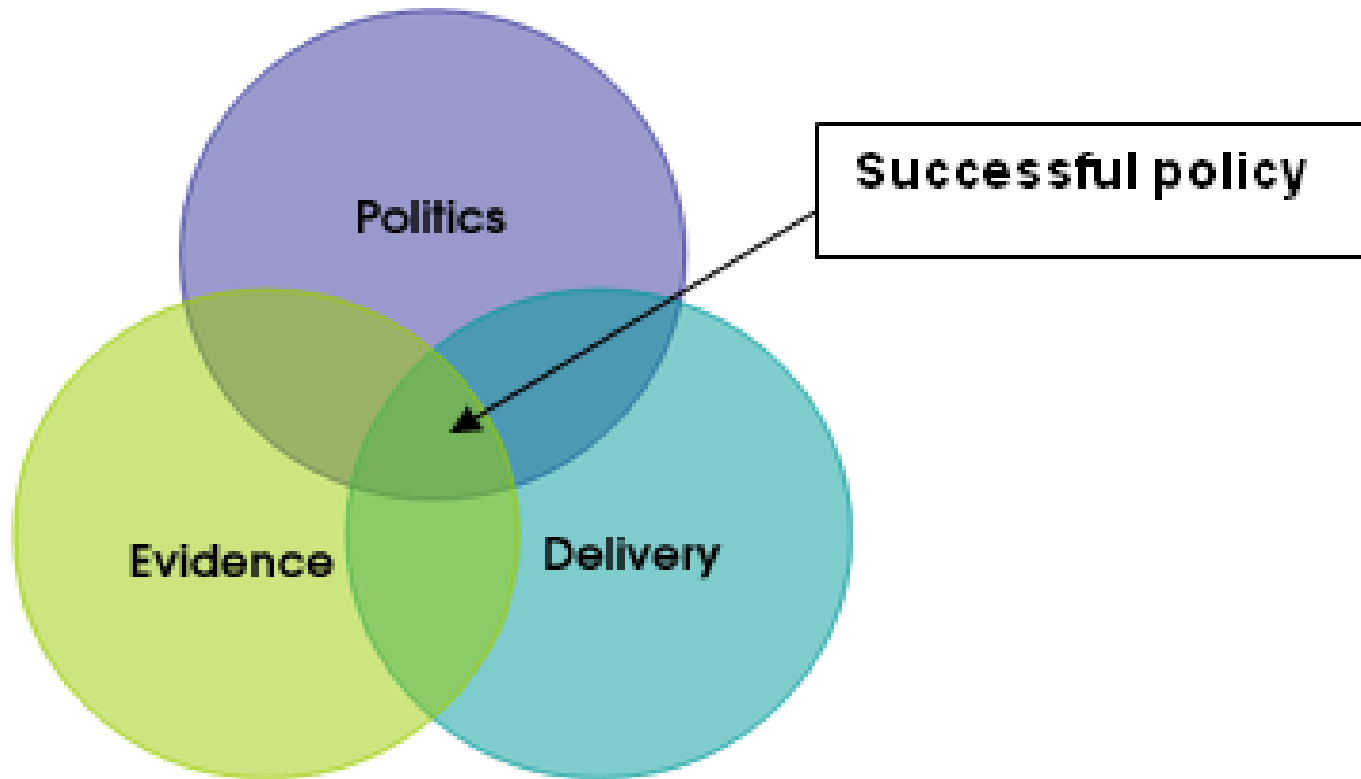
Policy Making in the Real World, Michael Hallsworth et al, 2011
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/policy

# Research: a mediated impact

# Policy Skills Framework 2010

'successful policy is produced when evidence, politics and delivery all come together'

# Factors affecting influence of research

| Variable | Description | Controllability |
|---|---|---|
| Comprehensibility | Clear, crisp messages | High |
| Credibility | Rigorous method | Moderate to high |
| Trust | To be cultivated | Moderate to high |
| Framing | Economic and scientific frames work best | Moderate |
| Scholarly consensus | Its absence limits use | Low to moderate |
| Quality of legislative debate | Failure to rebut false evidence is damaging | Low |
| Economic conditions | Weak or strong economy | Low |

# Communicating clearly

- Address the 'so what?' question: why is it interesting, what's new, what difference would it make?

- Think through and explain the implications, including costs

- Explain the scale of likely effect

- Set the context: how does your research relate to the existing evidence?

- Findings first!

- Use clear and concise language

# Influencing Whitehall

- Government Social Research & Government Economic Service: ges.int@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk
- Direct collaborations: workshops, seminars, placements
- Giving evidence:  departmental consultations and Select Committees: www.parliament.uk/business/committees
- Membership of Advisory Committees, public bodies: www.gov.uk/publicappointments
- Special and Expert Advisers
- The Think Tank/interest group route

# Some messages

- Research impact is rarely linear or immediate
- Research is one of many of inputs to policy process
- Other players and advocates equally important
- Impact needs a coincidence of different factors
- But some things can be more easily controlled by researchers themselves: clarity of message, rigour, thinking through the implications, building trust and influence, spotting the opportunity