

# Method for Synthesizing Knowledge About Public Policies

Presentation to the NCCHPP Advisory  
Board

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Centre de collaboration nationale  
sur les politiques publiques et la santé  
National Collaborating Centre  
for Healthy Public Policy

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Québec 

# Purpose of presentation

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- Provide an overview of the method developed by the NCCCHPP for synthesizing knowledge about public policies



# Why this method?

- Public policies: levers for action on health and its determinants
- Public health practitioners are called upon to advise decision makers on which policies to adopt
- Evidence-informed decision making: central role of knowledge syntheses
- Tradition borrowed from the field of medicine...
- ...application to public policies requires some adaptation



# Why this method?

- What interests decision makers:
  - Effectiveness of policies being considered...
  - ... But also, issues related to implementation
- Sources of data on these aspects:  
Scientific literature = significant source,  
but must be supplemented by other types  
of information.



# Analytical framework

- Synthesize knowledge about *what?*
- Cf. Salamon, 2002 ; Swinburn et al., 2005

<b>Effects</b>	Effectiveness
	Unintended effects
	Equity
<b>Implementation</b>	Cost
	Feasibility
	Acceptability



# Analytical framework - Effects

- Effectiveness: effects of the policy on the targeted health problem  
Broadened understanding of effectiveness data
- Unintended effects
- Equity: effects on different groups



# Analytical framework - Implementation

- Cost: *Financial* cost of implementing the public policy
- Feasibility: *Technical* feasibility
- Acceptability: Stakeholders' judgement of the public policy
  - Influenced by their knowledge, beliefs, values, interests...

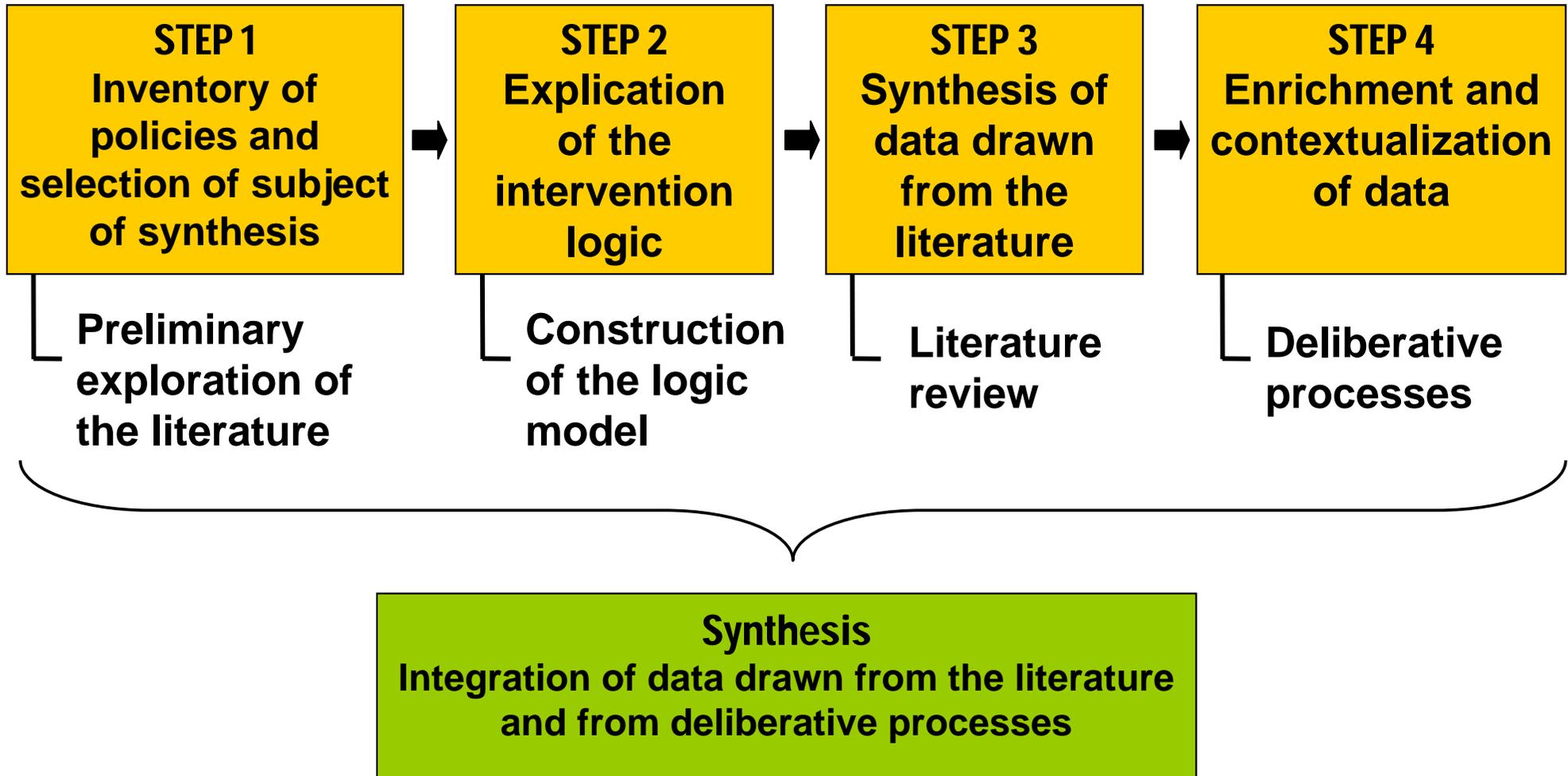


# Types and sources of data

- Many types of research designs, quantitative and qualitative data, research and other data, experiential knowledge
- Sources:
  - scientific literature
  - grey literature (documents produced by governments or non-profit organizations, statements by professional associations, opinion polls...)
  - actors concerned (deliberative processes)



# Four-step method



# Step 1 – Inventory and selection

- Instead of deciding in advance that the synthesis will focus on this or that public policy...
- ...start with the targeted health problem, describe it, and identify the range of policies that could potentially address it



# Step 1 – Inventory and selection

- Method: Preliminary exploration of the literature

## Grey literature:

websites of national and international organizations interested in the targeted health problem

## Scientific literature:

- Websites that inventory systematic reviews
- Optional: preliminary exploration of databases



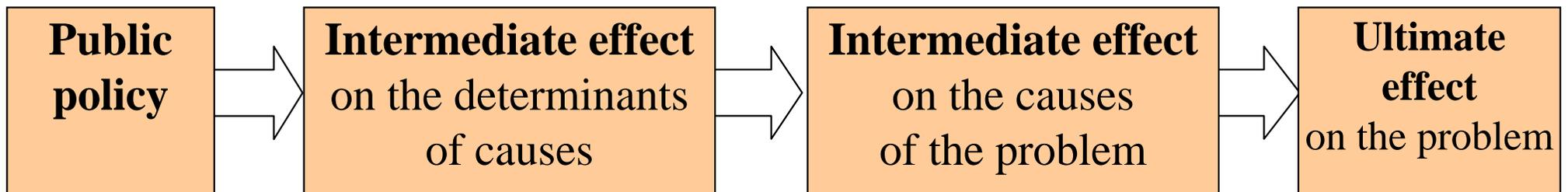
# Step 1 – Inventory and selection

- Selection of public policy / policies to be studied, based on:
  - Results of the inventory (including: potential effectiveness and cost of each policy)
  - Our context (including: decision makers' and other actors' interest in the various policies)
  - Resources for producing the synthesis
- If several policies are selected: a knowledge synthesis for each one

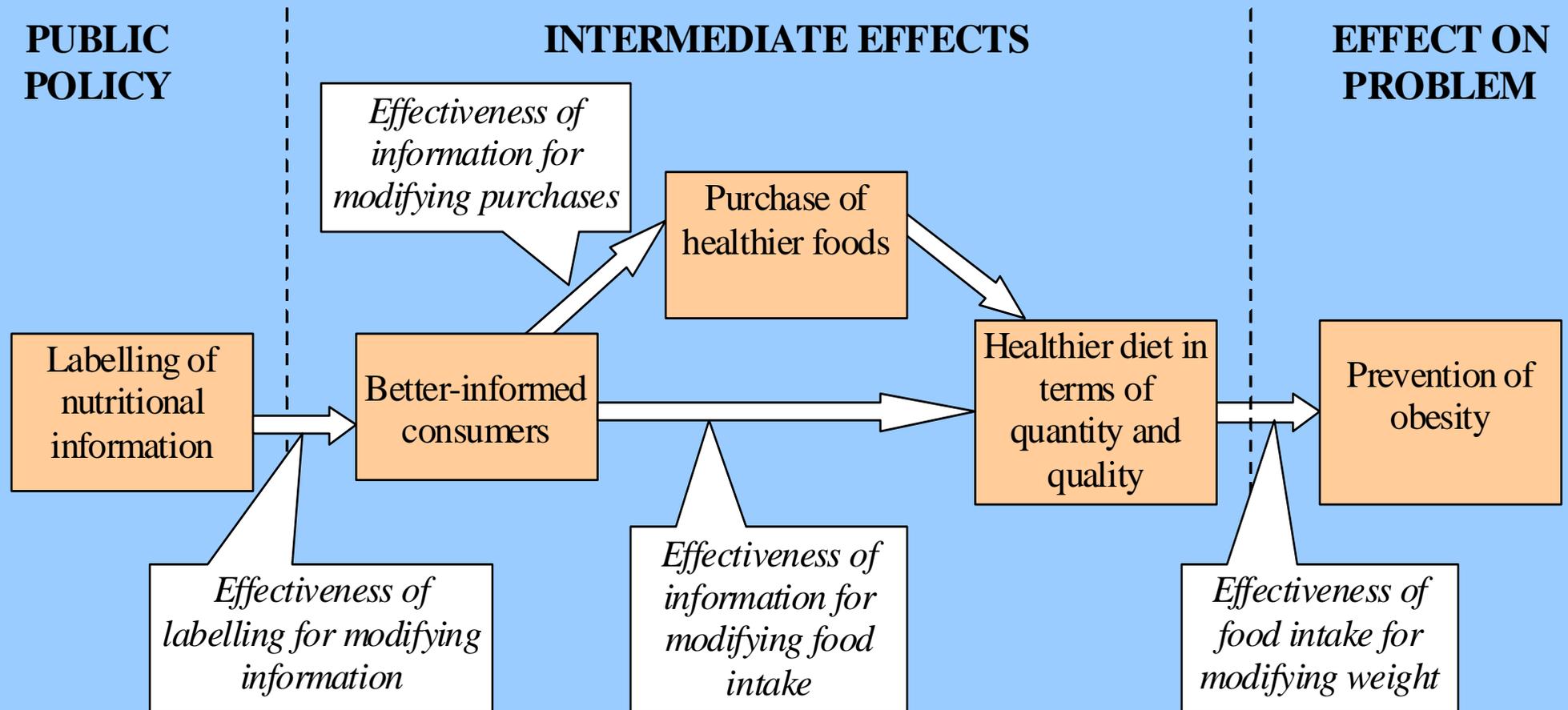


# Step 2 – The intervention logic

- Chain of expected effects linking the public policy and the targeted problem (Champagne et al., 2009; Weiss, 1998)
- Representation = the logic model:



# Step 2 – The intervention logic



# Step 2 – The intervention logic

Contribution to study of effectiveness:

- Verify if the intervention logic is plausible
- Define the type of effectiveness data sought (includes: intermediate effects)
  - ⇒ Guide the documentary search
- Verify effectiveness step by step
  - ⇒ Better identify what works or doesn't work



# Step 3 – Synthesis of data drawn from the literature

- Method: literature review
- Scientific and grey literature
- Review should be as *methodical* as possible
  - Detailed description of procedures followed
  - Use made of *all* the relevant data found (no selection based on convenience)
  - Data extraction tables



# Step 3 – Synthesis of data drawn from the literature

- Appraisal of the "quality" of data:
  - No exclusion based on design of study
  - Appraisal of the *relevance* (contribution)
  - Description of the methodological characteristics of the documents selected

⇒ The reader forms an opinion of their "quality"
- Analysis and synthesis of data: follow the structure of the six dimensions of the analytical framework



# Step 4 – Enrichment and contextualization of data

- Method: Deliberative processes
- Objectives (Lomas et al., 2005; Lavis, 2006)

Gather additional knowledge to:

- Supplement the literature review
- Contextualize data drawn from the literature



# Step 4 – Enrichment and contextualization of data

Structured meeting bringing together actors concerned with the targeted problem, to present them with the literature review and have them discuss collectively how the review compares with and can be enriched by their own knowledge



# Step 4 – Enrichment and contextualization of data

- Participants who are able to bring forward knowledge about the expected effects or the issues surrounding the potential application of the public policy under study in their own context
  - Experts, decision makers, and also ordinary citizens
  - Health sector and other fields
  - Public / private / community-based



# Step 4 – Enrichment and contextualization of data

- Analysis and synthesis of exchanges: as with the literature review, follow the structure of the 6 dimensions of the analytical framework



# Integration of forms of knowledge

The final synthesis document includes:

- Transparent and detailed description of the process followed
  - Side by side, but distinct presentation of data
    - drawn from the literature (scientific / grey)
    - drawn from the deliberative processes
- for each of the 6 dimensions of the analytical framework



# Publications to follow

- Document describing the method: theoretical background and procedure to follow
  - Written in a generic manner to allow for adaptation to the needs of various clients and to the policies of different sectors
- Sister document: application of the method to a sample public policy (nutritional labelling)



# Expected input from the Advisory Board

- Advice/suggestions as to disseminating the method:
  - Which actors and public health organizations might be interested?
  - To which networks should we present the method?
  - Which dissemination channels should we use?
  - ...



# For more information:

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