

Chipping Away at the Challenge: Ideas on How Research & Researchers Can Influence Policy

The Initiative for Applied Research in Education

The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities

July 19, 2018

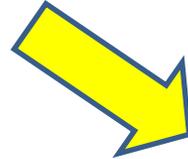
Elizabeth Grant

Visiting Associate Professor

Department of Education Leadership

Research Influence

Research



Outcomes

The Power of Public Ideas

Ideas matter because...

they establish the context in which policy debates are conducted,

organizational activities are rendered coherent and meaningful, and

people's actions are animated and directed.

Mark H. Moore

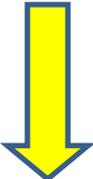
What Makes Public Ideas Powerful?

Research Influence

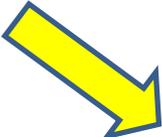
Research



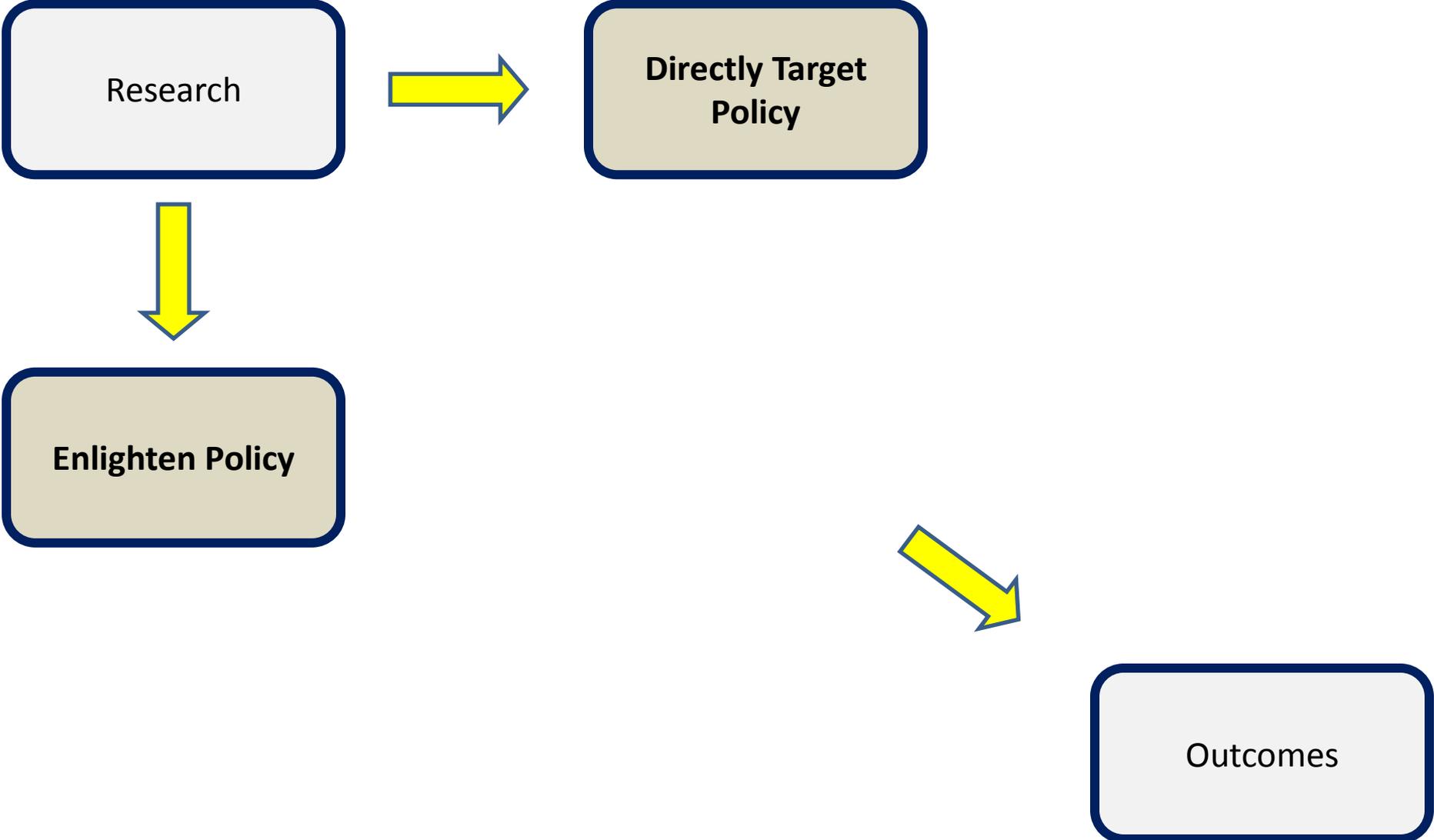
Directly Target Policy



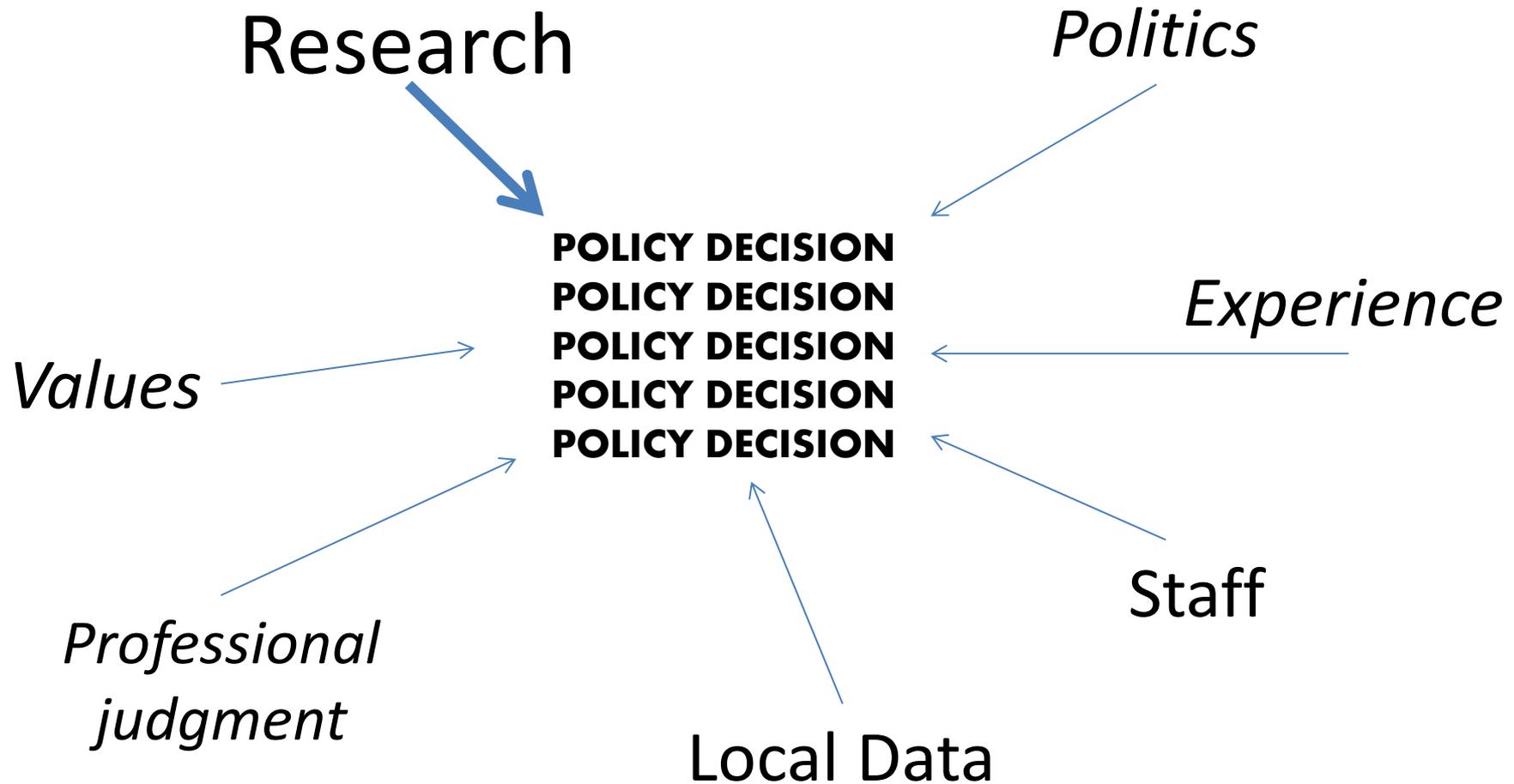
Enlighten Policy



Outcomes

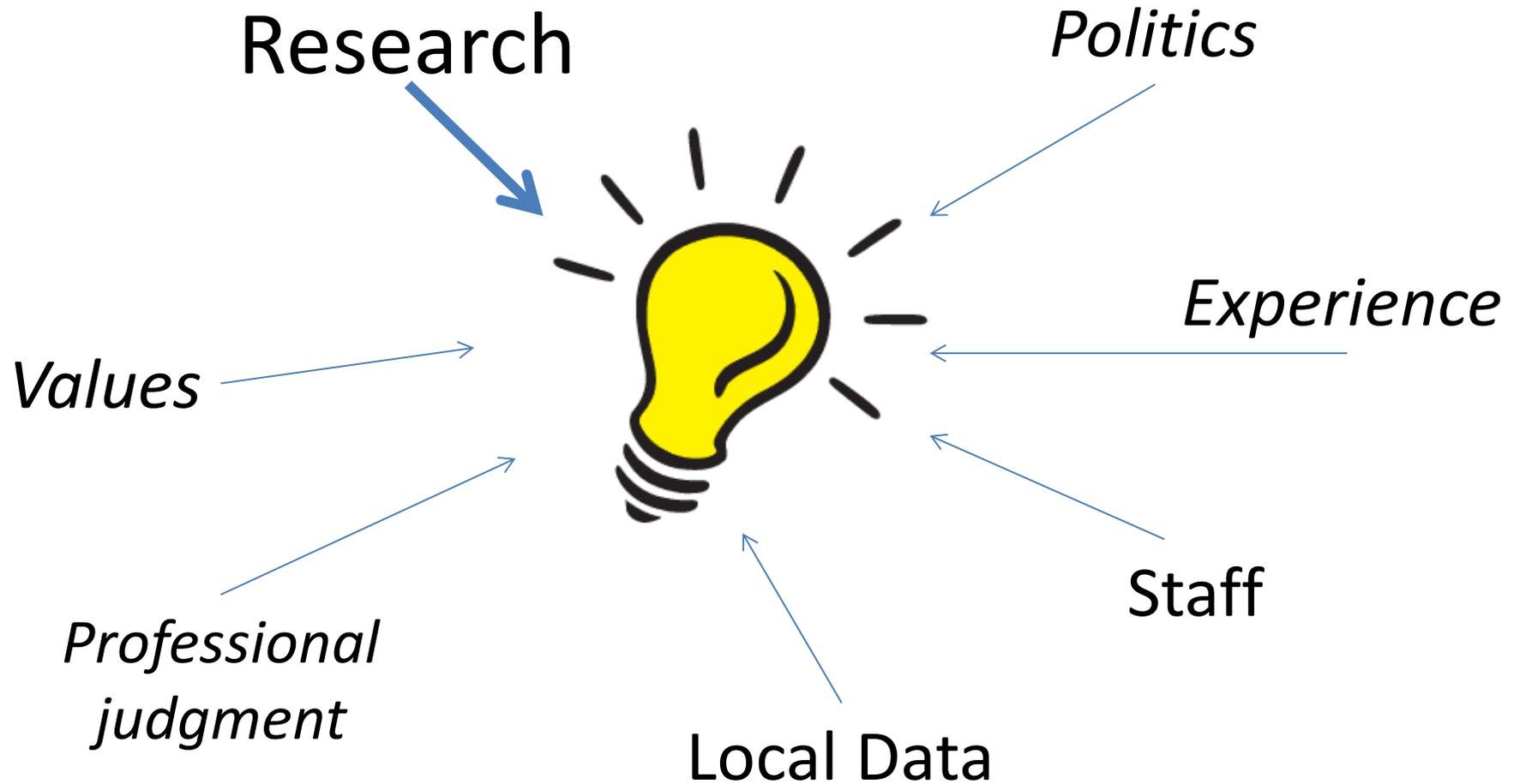


Instrumental or Targeted Use of Research*



*Hat tip: Vivian Tseng, W.T. Grant Foundation, for the example of how to depict these ideas.

Enlightenment or Conceptual Use of Research



Enlightenment Model

- Ideas derived from evidence provide organizing frameworks, shape assumptions, define problems, create policy options
- A convergence of evidence shapes the content of the discussion rather than concrete choices
- Altering the terms of the discussion is an indirect conceptual contribution
- Diffuse process of enlightenment matches diffuse process of policymaking

From Weiss, C. H. (1977). Research for policy's sake: The enlightenment function of social research. *Policy Analysis*, 3, 531-545 and Weiss, C. H. (1982). Policy Research in the context of diffuse decision making. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 53 (6), 619-639.

The Power of Public Ideas

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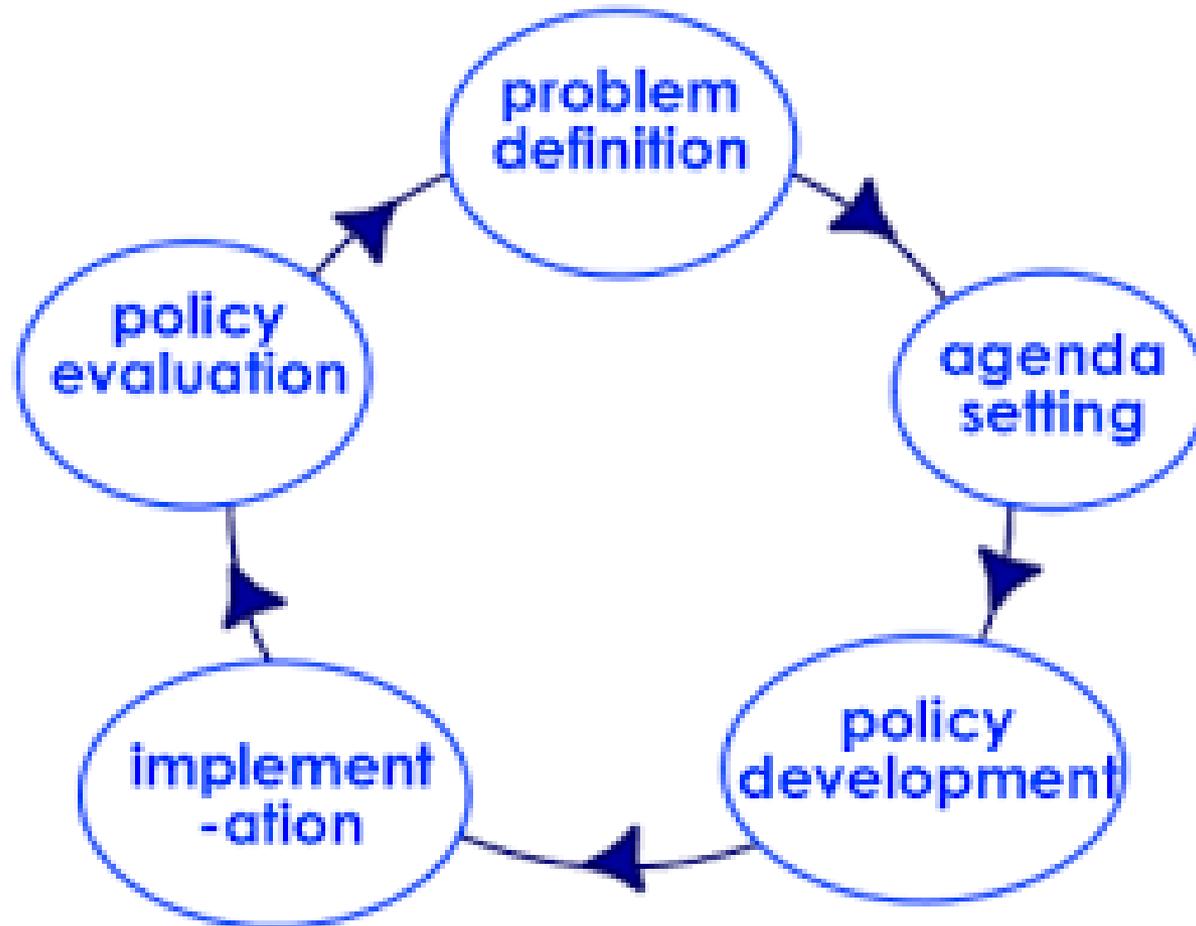
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What Makes Public Ideas Powerful?

When does research influence policy?



Problem Framing

Much of the struggle over problem definition centers on the categories that will be used and the ways they will be used.

You may not be able to judge a problem by its category, *but its category structures people's perceptions of the problem.*

~John Kingdon

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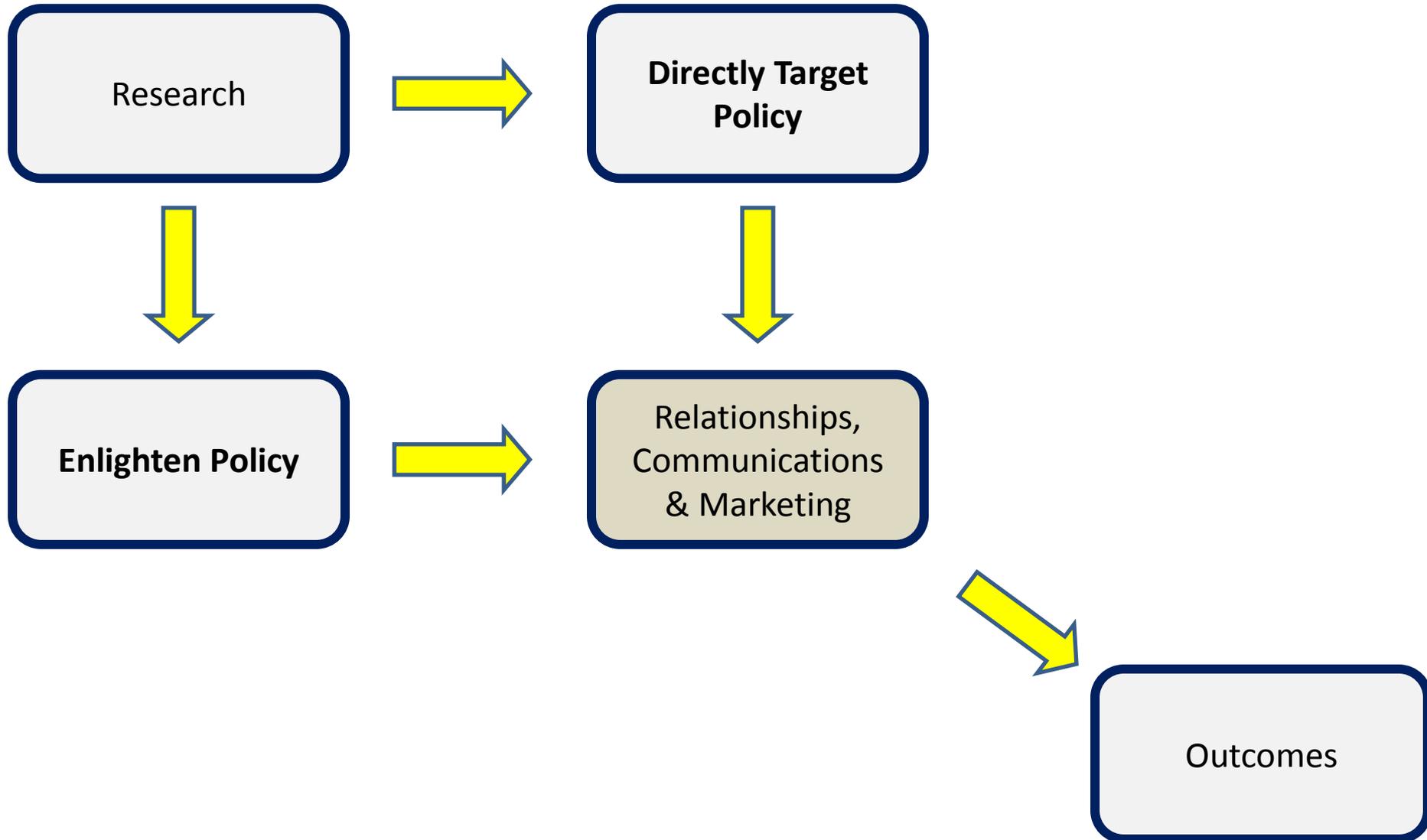
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What Makes Public Ideas Powerful?

Research Influence



Storytelling

The Universe is made of stories, not of atoms.

~Muriel Rukeyser

The last few years have seen stunning breakthroughs in knowledge about how to make families, along with other groups, work more effectively. The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative.

~New York Times, “The Stories That Bind Us”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html>

Policymaking Realities

- Policy decision making is not an event, it happens over a long period of time
- Policy is created through a process of “decision accretion”
- Policy influence is based on relationships
- Policymaking, like research and practice, is a form of theory-testing and theory-building
- Stories and theories can affect “the underlying influences that powerfully shape policy discourse”
- Researchers have stories AND theories

Polycymaking



“Greater than the tread of armies
is an idea whose time has come.”

Victor Hugo