Reviewer's report

Title: Capturing lessons learned from evidence-to-policy initiatives through structured reflection

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Reviewer: Justin Parkhurst

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper on an area requiring greater exploratory work. That said, it does not explore issues in great depth due at times, in part due to the nature of the methods, and in the end finds several things already known (as the paper notes). There are important insights, however, including mapping out some of the common challenges KTPs face, and some clarification of areas for future work. I think the paper could be changed in a few ways to improve it or justify publication.

I'd consider these minor revisions.

The first issue that could be useful to explore is if the authors have any way to provide insight into ways KTPs fit within government structures or political systems beyond their simple physical placement. We have a basic explanation that they follow different arrangements (internal to ministries or based in arms length (e.g. academic or NGO) bodies). But many questions will remain about what else the choice involves, why to choose one or the other, or the reasons, goals, and features within different KTP arrangements. Indeed, at times I felt there should be more explicit discussion of what makes something a KTP to begin with - clearly they are not all the same thing, so are there key features or activities that need to be done to be considered a KTP? And then are there secondary or optional features that will vary (and what are the purposes or reasons for those variations)?

Several statements remain vague or repeat already established ideas - such as the need to increase awareness of policy making to the importance of EIHP, or the need for capacity building. While some repetition of past findings is expected, it could be useful if the paper could try to say more about these ideas - either what the interviewed groups have done about them, or reflections on how to research them further. So, when talking about the need to raise awareness, is it possible to explore how one identifies such social/political awareness? Has it been studied or compared between settings? Or is it possible to discuss how one might go about facilitating it. Even if not known, the gaps in knowledge could be explained, rather than just saying there is a need to improve awareness (or build capacity, or institutionalize, etc).

I think at times statements may not be not justified by the methodology. Stating that "evidence briefs for policy have been among the most successful tools for
informing policy making” seems to overstate the certainty that can come from a small qualitative sample of this nature. If that is based on other evidence or references, they should be given. If this is the opinion of interviewees, it should be qualified as such in the text.

Similarly the statements about the effectiveness of deliberative dialogues could be more carefully worded. Quotes given provide opinions that these are useful. One quote says that it was 'interesting' to see different views on the system, and that it was 'encouraging' for the KTP member to see that. These are hardly robust measures of effectiveness. The text says these were 'percieved' as the most successful effort to enhance EHIP, but I wonder if there was clarity on what 'success' in 'enhancing' EHIP actually means?

Overall I think the text could do more to explore or give details to the issues that are needed next to improve efforts to research this topic. The paper recognizes its limitations, and already notes the need for some more research. But I think the paper could go farther in exploring aspects of those issues which are mentioned.

For example:

- When it says that efforts to intensify push, pull and evaluation efforts are needed, it could discuss what such efforts might require, or how to facilitate them;

- The paper could go into greater depth to ask what is seen as 'success of EHIP' to KTP members (it raises that this is not well established, but it could do more to try to establish it, perhaps?);

- the paper could discuss strategies for building institutions (or incentives) to support EIHP which have been undertaken, or if not known, could discuss how one might research them;

- The paper could do more to explore what is meant by monitoring and evaluation of EHIP efforts. How could this be done (or what is needed to learn how to do it?)

These are just a few suggestions. I would not say every single one is needed, but if some of them are, it would make the paper more useful for the field, rather than falling back on statements that more work is needed. (The paragraph on page 17 noting the need to tailor HT efforts, and providing an example from ZAMFOHR I think is a useful one, and would be an example of the type of probing of difficult issues that could be done for some of the above issues as well).

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests