

# Global Evidence Commission update 2025

Contributing to a step-change improvement  
in how we learn from others around the world,  
and not losing sight of ongoing opportunities



## ***Publication information***

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The publisher of this report is the McMaster Health Forum, 1280 Main St. West, MML-417, Hamilton, ON, Canada L8S 4L6. Acting as the secretariat for the Global Evidence Commission, the McMaster Health Forum welcomes feedback about Update 2025, as well as expressions of interest in addressing ongoing opportunities, namely formalizing and strengthening national (and local) evidence-support systems and putting evidence at the centre of everyday life. Please send your comments to [evidencecommission@mcmaster.ca](mailto:evidencecommission@mcmaster.ca). The Forum encourages you to keep abreast of efforts to enhance the global evidence architecture by following the work of the [Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative](#).

The appropriate citation for this report is:

Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges. Global Evidence Commission update 2025: Contributing to a step-change improvement in how we learn from others around the world, and not losing sight of ongoing opportunities. Hamilton: McMaster Health Forum, 2025.

ISBN: 978-1-927565-71-1 (online)

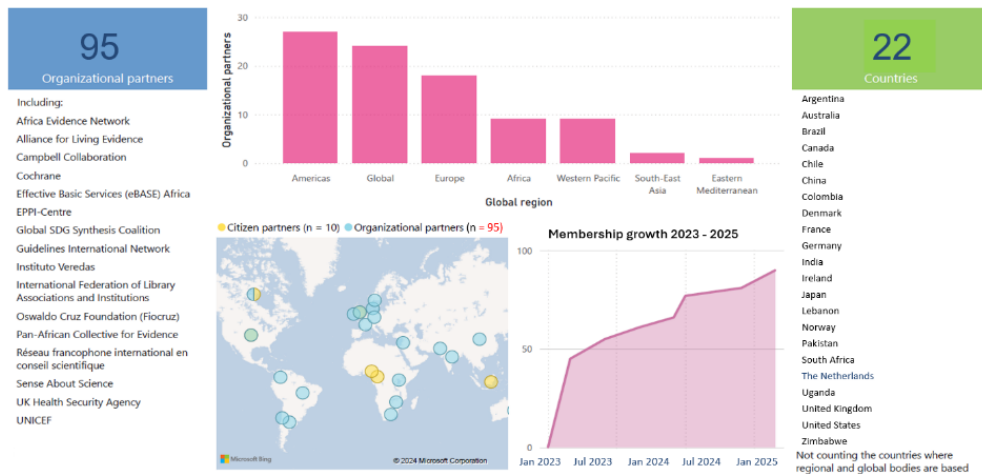
## Introduction

The Global Evidence Commission began in April 2021 as a time-limited, cross-sectoral and grassroots effort to improve the use of research evidence, both in routine times and in future global crises. As was evident then, and still is today, the common approach to societal challenges and ways to address them frequently relies on learning in ad hoc ways and over long periods of time. But the world must transition to a new approach that involves using evidence systematically and transparently to rapidly learn and improve. In order to support people in this vital work, the Global Evidence Commission convened and published – in many languages – its [foundational report](#) in January 2022 and updates in January of each of [2023](#), [2024](#) and now 2025. This marks our final update, as the Global Evidence Commission will cease operations in March 2025.

In Update 2024 we made the case that momentum was building for a step-change improvement in how we use evidence to address societal challenges, both in general and through actions related to each of our three implementation priorities. This proved to be particularly the case for our second implementation priority, which is really about how we can better learn from others around the world.



Our Implementation Council will conclude its work having grown to 95 organizational partners, drawn from 22 countries in every part of the world and from many global and regional bodies.



We describe in the next section the breakthrough that was achieved with our second implementation priority, and in the following section what we see as the ongoing opportunities related to our first and third implementation priorities. In [appendix 1](#) we acknowledge the many groups that have contributed to the work of the Global Evidence Commission and the impacts it helped to achieve.

## Enhance and leverage the global evidence architecture

Four events in 2024 culminated in a breakthrough, namely the Wellcome Trust's announcement – at a Summit of the Future 'Action Day' event – of its intention to fund an 'Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative' and UKRI's announcement to work in partnership with the Wellcome Trust and with other funders.

- What Works Climate Solutions Summit in Berlin, where bold thinking about the need for large-scale, AI-enabled suites of living evidence syntheses began to emerge
- 'SHOW ME' the evidence consensus posted, which helped key 'interest holders' to jointly describe a better future and reassured funders that there was a 'money problem' and not a 'people problem'
- Global Evidence Summit in Prague, where leaders from Campbell, Cochrane and JBI committed to working with a broad coalition of partners to design and help execute a step-change improvement
- Summit of the Future in New York, where a breakthrough announcement was made, which triggered the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC) planning process that is now underway



A consensus statement – the posting of which on the Global Evidence Commission website is listed as the second event above – helped to consolidate the case for change. The second feature (in bold below) aligns most directly with the ESIC announcement, however, ESIC is seen as being in service to the first feature and as enabling or manifesting the other features.

**SHOW ME** the evidence: Features of an approach to reliably deliver research evidence to those who need it

- 1) Support systems nationally (and locally) that use many forms of research evidence to help address local priorities
- 2) **Harmonized efforts globally that make it easier to learn from others around the world**
- 3) Open-science approaches that make it the norm to build on what others have done
- 4) Waste-reduction efforts that make the most of investments in evidence support and in research
- 5) Measured communications that clarify what we know from existing evidence and with what caveats
- 6) Equity and efficiency in all aspects of this work

Available in seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)

Co-published in five journals (Campbell Collaboration, Cochrane, Collaboration for Environmental Evidence, Guidelines International Network, JBI)

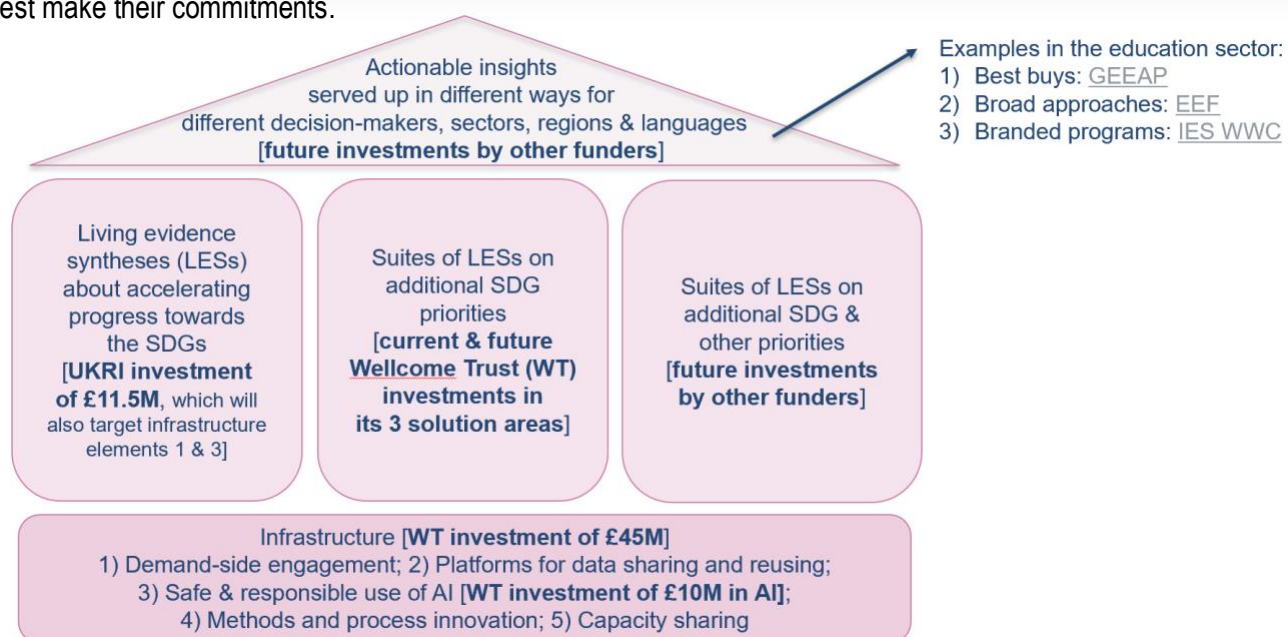


In other words, ESIC (or the global evidence architecture more generally) offers the potential to make freely available what we have learned from around the world, including how it varies by groups and contexts, both to those who can use the insights directly (e.g., government policymakers and professional leaders) and those whose job it is to put this global evidence alongside the many needed forms of national (or local) evidence (i.e., evidence-support units).

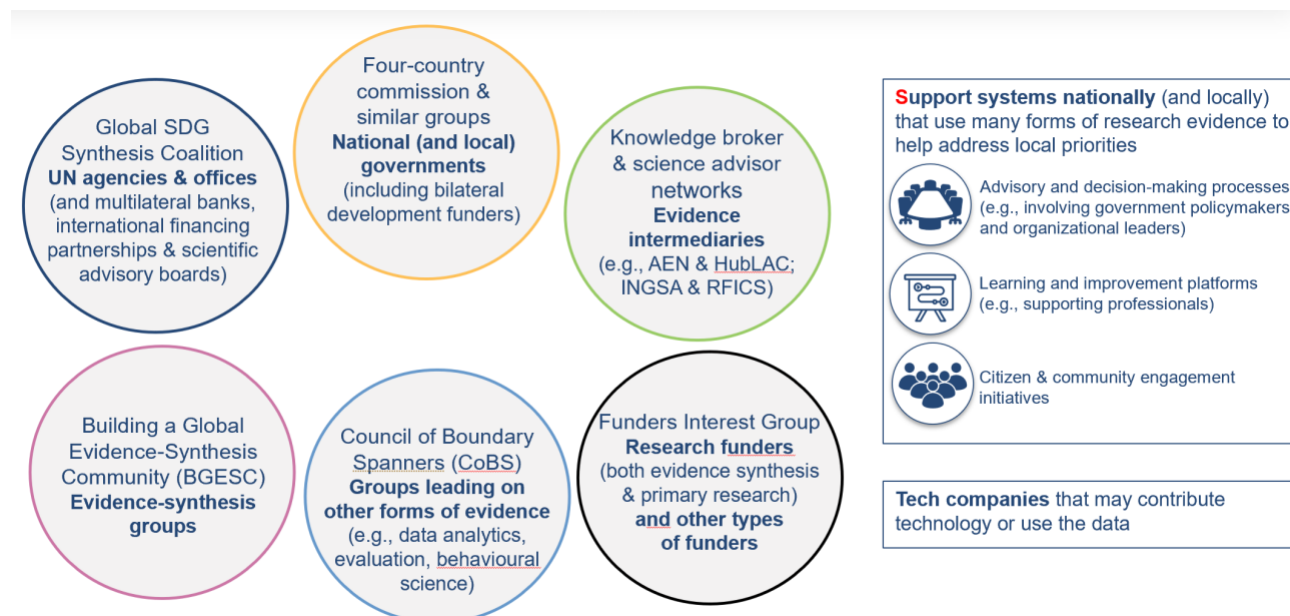
Additional reports (e.g., from NESTA), journal reporting (e.g., in Nature), complementary announcements (e.g., from UKRI) and statements (e.g., from the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition) were all part of a flurry of activity leading up to and following up on the ESIC announcement.

Date	Title	Description
4 Sept 2024	<a href="#">‘SHOW ME the evidence’ consensus</a> (working version posted on the Global Evidence Commission website)	Features of an approach to reliably deliver research evidence to those who need it.
9 Sept 2024	<a href="#">A blueprint for better international collaboration on evidence</a>	NESTA/ U.K. Behavioural Insights Team report (informally the ‘Four country commission’ report) on how countries can collaborate on evidence synthesis and on evaluation
17 Sept 2024	<a href="#">Unearthing ‘hidden’ science would help to tackle the world’s biggest problems</a>	Nature editorial about the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition by Helen Pearson (an editor at Nature)
19 Sept 2024	<a href="#">Transforming global evidence: AI driven evidence-synthesis for policymaking</a>	Open funding call for £11.5 million (US\$15 million) by U.K. Research and Innovation (UKRI) for an infrastructure that will support demand-side engagement and integrate human and AI capabilities to deliver a ‘demonstrator case’ for radically more relevant, timely and affordable living evidence syntheses
21 Sept 2024	<a href="#">‘Intent to fund’ announcement: Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative</a>	Announcement that the Wellcome Trust will provide £45 million (US\$60 million) in funding over five years for an ‘ <b>Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative</b> ’ that will support demand-side engagement and the safe and responsible use of AI, as well as data sharing and reusing, methods and process innovation, and capacity sharing
21 Sept 2024	<a href="#">Towards 2030 and beyond: Accelerating the SDGs through access to evidence on what works</a>	Video recording of panel-led discussion about the role of science and digital technologies in accelerating progress towards the SDGs, which includes Wellcome Trust CEO, John-Arne Røttingen, formally announcing the Wellcome Trust investment
21 Sept 2024	<a href="#">Scientists are building giant ‘evidence banks’ to create policies that actually work</a>	Nature article about the two funding announcements by Helen Pearson
21 Sept 2024	<a href="#">US \$74 million new investments in SDG evidence to be announced</a>	Statement from Global SDG Synthesis Coalition about the two funding announcements
22 Sept 2024	<a href="#">X thread about the transforming global evidence funding announcement</a>	X thread about the UKRI investment by Executive Chair of the U.K.’s Economic and Social Research Council, Stian Westlake
2 Oct 2024	<a href="#">‘Evidence banks’ can drive better decisions in public life</a>	News article from the Financial Times about the two funding announcements

The ESIC planning process is adopting a collective-impact approach, starting with building agreement on a common agenda for the needed infrastructure, as well as ways to prioritize and undertake suites of living evidence syntheses and ways of serving up actionable insights drawing from these syntheses. A living evidence synthesis is a summary of the best available evidence addressing a given question that is updated as the context, issue and evidence evolve. Some funders have already made initial commitments and others are being engaged in a Funders Interest Group so that they can be actively engaged in thinking about where they can best make their commitments.



The ESIC planning process will engage many categories of ‘interest holders,’ particularly now those captured in the two circles on the left and the two circles on the right, as well as citizen leaders. In keeping with the first ‘SHOW ME the evidence’ feature, the planning process is placing the needs of national (and local) evidence-support systems front and centre, as well as engaging tech companies.



The process is being led by five working groups and a governance planning group, with additional planning groups to be activated later in the process. Each group will prepare five draft documents, each of which will be shared publicly during a ‘consultation window.’ We encourage you to collaborate with groups and networks to provide consolidated feedback that strengthens each group’s work.

Working groups (WGs) and planning groups (PGs)	Focus
WG1: Demand-side engagement	Get producers and potential users working together to understand and meet user needs
WG2: Data sharing and reusing	Make it normal to study a question once and use the answers many times in many different contexts
WG3: Safe and responsible use of AI	Bring evidence synthesis to the forefront of technology so that we can get the best impact from the people and resources we have
WG4: Methods & process innovation	Devise synthesis methods and processes that enable radically more timely, relevant, and affordable synthesis
WG5: Capacity sharing	Build a global community with the capabilities to deliver and use evidence synthesis across all major societal questions
PG1: Governance	Devise options for how key interest holders can continue to set and achieve shared goals beyond this process
Additional PGs to be activated later	

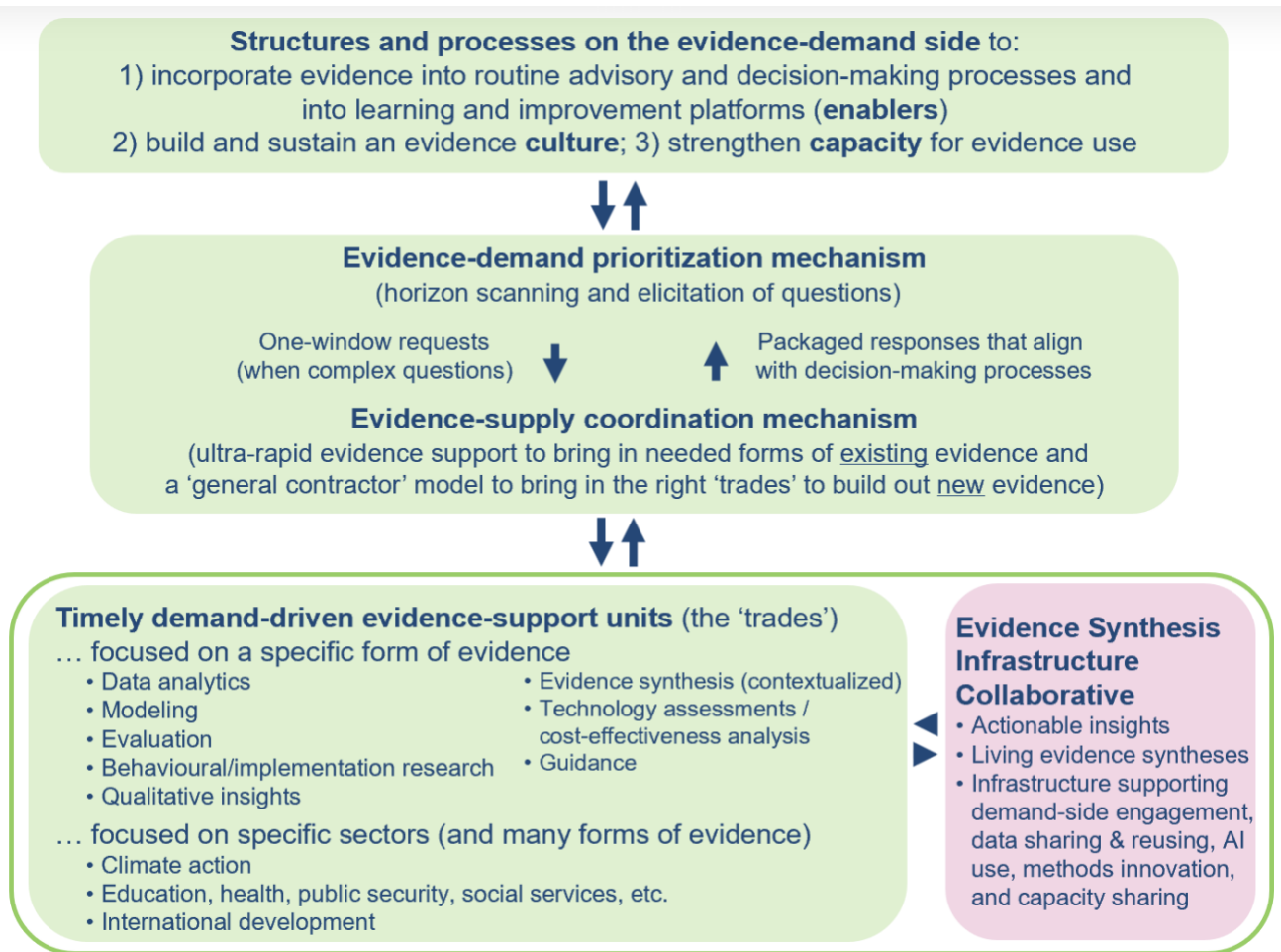
Draft documents	Consultation window opens
1) Capability profile for each focus area	February 12
2) Capability-maturity assessment and gap map for each focus area	March 12
3) Strategies for strengthening capabilities related to each focus area, including any ‘quick wins’ with ‘no regrets’	April 30
4) Impact effort matrix and conclusions/recommendations for each focus area	May 21
5) Report – now incorporating costing and additional planning-group considerations – for each focus area that will be pre-circulated to consensus meeting attendees	June 4

The draft documents from each group, as with all related documentation and the option to sign up for email alerts, can be found on the [website for the ESIC planning process](#).

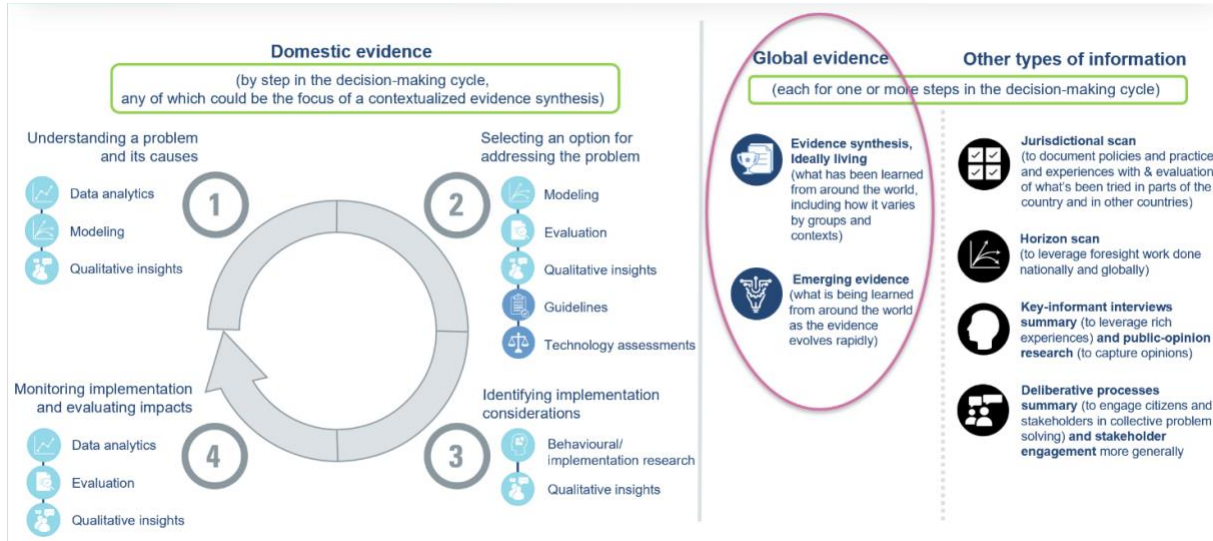
**Ongoing opportunities: 1) formalize and strengthen domestic evidence-support systems; and 2) put evidence at the centre of everyday life**

The good news with the Global Evidence Commission’s two other implementation priorities is that ESIC will be a game-changer in how people approach these priorities and may indeed create the ‘tipping point’ needed to spur action at national (and local) levels.

The timely demand-driven evidence-support units operating within national (and local) evidence-support systems will now be able to leverage the actionable insights, living evidence syntheses, and supporting infrastructure made possible through ESIC (which is shown in the pink ‘box’ in the lower right below).



For example, those supporting government policymakers may soon be able to access data from ESIC (e.g., study-level findings and risk-of-bias assessments and synthesis-level certainty-of-findings assessments) – see the red oval below – and then very rapidly provide highly contextualized insights about what we’ve learned from around the world and how it varies by groups and contexts alongside insights from what has been learned from national (and local) evidence.



Those supporting citizens will also benefit significantly from ESIC, which will offer actionable insights to meet citizens’ needs and ‘power’ their efforts to put evidence at the centre of everyday life.

Signs of building momentum (captured in the visual below) with implementation priority 1 are still there, however, we are not seeing efforts – on the demand side – to formalize and strengthen national (and local) evidence-support systems. For example, we’re rarely seeing sustained commitments to scaled-up versions of the pilots of ultra-rapid evidence support or decisive action based on the findings from rapid evidence-support system assessments.

- 1a Era of fast-moving ‘**polycrises**’ and rapidly developing AI mean evidence support is needed now more than ever
- 1b **Pilots** of ultra-rapid evidence support and a ‘general contractor’ model are demonstrating value for money and building demand
- 1c Evidence-support mechanisms increasingly **aligned** both ‘up’ to advisory and decision-making processes and ‘out’ to learning and improvement platforms
- 1d **Cross-country** evidence-support collaborations are emerging in key sectors like education, development and health
- 1e Collaborations **across forms of evidence** are also emerging, such as with evaluation and evidence syntheses
- 1f Rapid evidence-support system assessments are pointing us towards the **fertile ground** where we need to ‘plant more seeds’



Similarly, some of the signs of building momentum with implementation priority 3 are still there (captured in the visual below), but we're not seeing commitments to truly put evidence at the centre of everyday life. In fact some countries are witnessing a roll-back of efforts to provide high-quality evidence and to address mis/disinformation.

- 3a Partners are coming together to **learn from one another** (e.g., Cochrane-GCESC-WHO EVIPNet webinar series; space is being co-created for discussions about Indigenous rights and ways of knowing)
- 3b Greater acknowledgement that citizens are inundated with information, misinformation and disinformation, and more commitment to finding effective ways to **counter mis/disinformation**
- 3c More appreciation for the **strong headwinds** and for the **need to 'lock arms'** to make progress against these headwinds
- 3d Greater recognition that we need to use a **collective-impact orientation**

Both of these implementation priorities constitute ongoing opportunities to do better.

## Conclusion

As the Global Evidence Commission celebrates what we collectively achieved and passes the baton to others working to improve the use of evidence to address societal challenges, we encourage you to get involved.



**Formalize and strengthen national (and local) evidence-support systems**

- Continue to advocate for formalizing and strengthen national (and local) evidence-support systems, including sustained commitments to scaled-up versions of the pilots of ultra-rapid evidence support and acting decisively based on the findings from rapid evidence-support system assessments



**Enhance and leverage the global evidence architecture**

- Help to create the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC), including following the [planning process](#), providing feedback during the consultation windows, encouraging funders and other 'interest holders' in your country to become involved, and responding to funding calls



**Put evidence at the centre of everyday life**

- Support citizen-serving NGOs and citizen leaders to become active contributors to the evidence-support systems in your country, to the ESIC planning process and to what is created as a result of this process, and to ongoing efforts to put evidence at the centre of everyday life

We also encourage you to continue to draw on the insights from [report 2022](#) and updates [2023](#), [2024](#) and now 2025, to be on the look-out for papers that Global Evidence Commission groups will be publishing about our work in the months ahead (e.g., about the methods for and findings from rapid evidence-support system assessments), as well as to email us at [evidencecommission@mcmaster.ca](mailto:evidencecommission@mcmaster.ca) if you have questions about successor and complementary initiatives in which you could become involved.

## Appendix 1

The Global Evidence Commission supported three groups that are involved in addressing its three implementation priorities:

- [Implementation Council](#), which focuses on all three implementation priorities
- [Rapid Evidence-Support System Assessment \(RESSA\) Country Leads Group](#), which focuses on priority 1: formalizing and strengthening domestic evidence-support systems
- [Citizen Leadership Group](#), which focuses on priority 3: putting evidence at the centre of everyday life.

Additional details about these groups are available on the Global Evidence Commission website.

The secretariat worked with – for translation and dissemination – six collaborating centres, including:

- for Arabic, the Knowledge to Policy Center, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- for Chinese, the Center for Evidence-Based Social Science, Lanzhou University, China
- for French, the McMaster Health Forum, Canada
- for Japanese, the Administrative Evaluation Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, Japan
- for Portuguese, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Brasilia, Brazil
- for Spanish, the Unit for Evidence and Deliberation for Decision Making in the Faculty of Medicine of Universidad de Antioquia (UdeA), Colombia.