

Transcript | The Policy Playbook: Delivering Impact in Complex Systems

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And by building innovative tools designed for and with governments. I am going to take a look in the chat and see who we have in the virtual room today. I see Darwin. I see Scottish Highlands, UK, Toronto, Ottawa, lots of Canada representation, Edmonton.

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Hi, Canada. We have Jersey, Mexico City. Oh, you must be having an amazing, beautiful day over there. Leeds, welcome everyone. We are so excited to have you here, and please.

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keep the introductions coming in the chat. We'd love to hear from all of you.

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We are thrilled to extend an invitation to join today's speakers and your peers in public service from across the globe in the global policymaking community.

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Whether you're just starting out in policy or you're a seasoned policy analyst, this forum is the place to share resources, ask questions, and gain collective wisdom from your peers in policymaking. The link is in the resources tab at the bottom of your screen, and my colleague is also posting the link.

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In the chat now. Do take a look, we would love to see your voice in there.

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I will get just a few more technical notes out of the way before we get into today's conversation. This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the Apolitical website. Please don't record it yourself.

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Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. Closed captions are available in your own language and can be toggled on or off in your screen settings, and my colleague will post the instructions to follow in the chat for that.

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So before we introduce our speakers, we are going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of where you're coming to today's discussion from.

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So the first poll is, what most often gets in the way of good policy delivering real impact? You should see that popping up on your screen right about now.

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So is it poor design? It doesn't reflect how people actually behave. Weak handoff intent gets lost between design and delivery. System resistance structures and incentives work against it. Short termism, momentum dies when priorities shift.

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Or siloed working departments pull in different directions. I will give everyone a few moments to answer that poll. Let's take a look. Oh, we have a winner at the moment, which is short-termism.

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And we have in second place siloed working. Yeah, and know that that's a huge pain point amongst civil servants. We hear that a lot.

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All right. It looks like we have a winner, which is short-termism momentum dies when priorities shift.

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Thank you so much for answering that poll. And now we will move on to just one more. What frustrates you most about the way policy works in practice?

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Is it that good ideas get watered down before they reach delivery?

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There's too little connection to the people policy affects.

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Learning from failure is rarely built in. Short political cycles undermine long-term thinking, or evidence gets used to justify decisions, not inform them.

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take a moment to respond to that. Let's see right now we have. There's 2 little connection to the people policy effects in the lead.

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And we have. short political cycles undermine long-term thinking in second place, so kind of relating back to our first poll there on short-termism.

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Just a few more moments, and then I will declare the final winner here.

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All right. It looks like the winner here is going to be. There's 2 little connection to the people policy effects. And yes, I can understand that being incredibly frustrating, and I know that we are going to address that idea in today's panel.

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So thank you guys for answering, and I will hand it over to Natalia.

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Yes. Hello, everyone. Thanks for taking part in those polls. Now to introduce our speakers. We are fortunate to have 3 brilliant guests. Katherine Pia, and Suhid joining us today, covering all house is a professor at the University of New South Wales, Canberra.

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and founding director of the Academy of Adaptive Leadership, a former Queensland public servant, she works at the intersection of practice and academia, specializing in policymaking, leadership, and Indigenous and trauma-informed approaches. She is an award-winning academic.

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An advisor with global experience. Next, Pia Andrews is a public sector reform leader focused on making government more humane and effective. She works with the UNDP in Asia Pacific and has helped senior roles, including chief data officer in Australia.

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and founder of New Zealand's Service Innovation Lab. She specializes in adaptive policy, digital transformation, and citizen-centered design. And last but not least, Suhid Anantula is a strategy and system designer working across policy, design, and innovation.

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He has led major government initiatives in Australia, and is the founder of the Helix Lab. His work focuses on helping leaders navigate complexity and reimagine policymaking as adaptive systems of the age of AI. And before we move to today's case studies, I thought we could start with a quick icebreaker.

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So the question for Catherine Via and Sahid is, you all wrote this book together. What's one idea from the policy playbook that sparked the most debate between you? And I'll give you a moment to think, and everyone else here today, I pose a similar question to you and I'd love for you to share your answers in the chat.

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please. So, Pia, I'll start with you.

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Thank you so much. We started this book with with 4 of us actually, and it was quite interesting because.

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Three of us had worked inside of government. 2 had strong academic background. Two had done consulting. We sort of had a mix between us of different experiences of trying to do and shape policy from inside of public sector and from outside.

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And one of the things that we found ourselves discussing a lot. I wouldn't say we debated necessarily, but we we discussed a lot was.

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How much control you have, and how much perceived or presumed control you have in policymaking? And... Where, you know, that concept of how much can you actually set in stone? You can never design a perfect policy because, of course, the things change, circumstances change, needs change. Reality is never the same as how you plan it out.

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But we also kept coming back to the reality that as public servants, we don't have the luxury of.

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sitting around and spending 2, 3, 10 years trying to figure out what what perfect might be sometimes, and you think about emergencies, but also social services, taxation, so many areas of policy, you need to move now and getting something in place, and then trying to make it better.

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is, um, is far better to actually help the people than, um, than striving for the perfect that you may never actually achieve. So, um, um, Catherine, I'll hand over to you on your thoughts.

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Thanks, Pia, and thanks so much for the opportunity to be here and join everybody. Yeah, so it's a really great point, Pia. So we had Thea Snow is a big tip of the hat to her for her contribution because it was great working with her.

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Um, and there's a lot of issues, of course, that are coming up today about systems thinking and the complexity of working within systems, but we're all grappling with that. You talked about the

silos in your responses to the polls, the short-termism, those kinds of issues, they're everywhere.

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across the globe, everyone is grappling with those. And a large part of it is because we are encased in systems. And so that was part of the debate point, I guess, for us, or the conversation point, as Pia rightly called it. Um, how do we grapple with these systems?

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system dimensions, the complexity issues, and therefore what role do we have with respect to control or not within that? And that's a bit of a perennial question. Suhit, did you want to add to that?

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Yeah, thanks, Catherine. Hello, everyone. Great to be here.

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Um, yeah, I think it's a perennial challenge, right? And I think I've done both. I've worked inside government and outside government. And from outside government, it's like you get a chance to kind of see a different angle. You get a chance to go inside, work with the right people, give some advice, support and go back.

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But it never feels fulfilling because you're not able to see through. But inside government, there's a different kind of challenge.

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Because what's happening there is you're not actually fully moving into the conversation. You are deep in it, you're doing it. But then there's sometimes frustration, you can't make it happen.

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So what I've learned, I guess, is that it's about your stance.

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Um, you know, which part of the equation you are and taking the right stance. And one thing I've learned over time is that sometimes you have to give space for the right ideas to show up.

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And sometimes it's actually about timing, it's not about how smart we are. And so it's really about working through and thinking through and giving the right opportunity space to make this to happen. But it's really having that.

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patient sometimes for the right things to happen at the right place.

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Thank you so much for your answers. Very great start of the panel. Well, let's continue with the question about again about the policy playbook, your brilliant book. So could each of you briefly share what you set out to do with the policy playbook? What were you seeing in policymaking that made you feel a new approach was needed?

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And what were you proposing that's different?

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I'm going to very politely and rudely encourage Catherine to go first, actually, given that she's got such form on this first.

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Thanks, Pia. Um, so I guess there's a long history that I have with something called the Australian Policy Handbook.

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Uh, which is coming up to 30 years now of its anniversary, from when we first wrote that, and it was a, um, a guide for the practical aspects of policymaking. But even within that broad structural guide.

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The policy playbook became just a critical piece of the puzzle. We use the term in the policy playbook of like place, as in like, you know, with coaching a sporting team, for example, you've got the broad parameters of the game, but you actually want to do that tactical and strategic elements of, well, what do we do in this situation?

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How do we bring this alive? How do we provide some sort of additional layer of guidance for practitioners within the broader parameters of the inability to have complete control that we just talked about, but within that parameter, we still want to provide ways or ideas for people.

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to start to, you know, really turn things into practice, to be able to learn from each other, experiment, collaborate more together, so it was very deliberately done as a global, um, element as well. I think that's super important. So, I guess just to answer the second part of the question there from my perspective.

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It was to really add that layer of inspiration, I guess, for practitioners, as well as the collaborative element. We often use the term that policymaking is a bit like playing jazz. You'll learn some of the rules of thing and you throw the rules out the window as you engage with the real world of.

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of what the policy environment is requiring of you and the community is requiring of you. So that was kind of some of the inspiration, and I guess, um, what was important for me is how do we make sure that we provide that element of guidance, but also for younger people?

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Get them inspired. We really need younger generations to get very active in the policy space. So I'll hand back over to you, Pia.

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Oh, sure, okay. Suhit, did you want to go next? You're happy for me to go?

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I'll go, okay. All right, so I started in the public service only 16 years ago, and it was very interesting because I had already worked in the tech sector for nine years, and then I actually worked in the senator's office. And I remember when I was working in the senator's office, having had no experience from government, except from trying to lobby for policy change from the outside.

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As a regular muffin as I was. Um, a bit of a troublemaker, and I remember working in the ministers, or senator, she became a minister's office, and I had I made a friend in the department who was a policy person, and I said, Look, can you explain what policy is?

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and he said to me, Well, Pia, when your minister gives a speech, that's policy. And I remember being horrified, because I said, but we just make stuff up. That's that's terrible. Why would you take the things that we make up and and that be, you know, the rule. And so it was just this really interesting moment. And then, as I.

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I realized working for this politician that I needed to work in the public service. That was where I needed to be. I don't actually like politics, but I realized the criticality of service. So, um, and just two other very quick ones. Um, I realized when I came into the public service that policy design and delivery.

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are separate, and I was very confused. Why? Why would they be separate? But the idea you have someone over here coming up with a perfect plan, and someone over here implementing separate from that and unable to update the plan. I sort of felt like being told to go to the shop to get milk.

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But then being so structured on exactly how to get there that when there's no doubt roadworks or a traffic light out or the car's broken down, that you just can't get the milk at all. So that adaptivity in constant design and delivery was something I felt was missing in a lot of, um, the... And a lot of what I'd seen. Uh, and the final one is that, um, we wanted to try to bring back into the... we want to make it very practical, so to Catherine's point, we didn't just sort of include in the book this idea of policy as a journey to get people away from.

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a lot of people's starting point of policy as a document. You know, we developed the policy, and there's a document that sits on a shelf and gets read and dissected and interpreted, and it may or may not be implemented according to the intent.

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So trying to see policy as a journey was something that we felt really strongly was needed as a shift in the mindset, because when you treat policy as a journey where the outcome is actually the most important thing, there's no point having perfectly polished documents or perfectly polished procedures, or perfectly polished.

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any aspect of the of the journey, if you don't actually get to the outcome, going back to the milk analogy. So trying to codify that and make it easy to follow, provide templates, and trying to make it accessible and easy to adopt that mindset and methodology and skill set.

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We thought was very timely, particularly with the world being as continuously changing as it is now.

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Thanks, Pia. My journey is slightly different. So I've spent time inside outside government. I've spent time with business and public sectors. I've done both.

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So I was working inside and outside and I realized that actually some of the work you do in business around strategy and actually around policy is actually very similar in terms of the challenges and approach.

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And when I realized that, I realized that actually that what we have learned in strategy is very valuable in policymaking, even though we use those words differently. And, you know, I think we talk a bit about in the book, but if you go back 100 years, there was no strategy, it was all policy. Strategy was only for military.

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So if you think about it, and then the second aspect was design and a strategic design. That's where I've spent a lot of my time. And I realized that strategic design brings a lot of valuable mindsets and capabilities, like, you know, working with the with real people, but also at the same time.

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You know, iterating, but also thinking strategically. So, combining all those layers, and then that translates into policy design.

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So that was kind of the angle that I was trying to bring. And then having people like Catherine Pia and Thea was amazing because not that we all agreed all the time, but we kind of saw each other's views and kind of be able to consolidate, so... To be very frank, at one level, none of the simple, like, if you take any page and say, oh, yeah, somebody else wrote about this, I wouldn't say the book.

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Every page is an original. But I actually think what is good about the book is we've been able to bring this multiple perspectives into a simple framework that people can take forward.

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And you may be able to find parts of it or all of it in different places, but to have a current logic.

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to see how they all fit and work, I think that's been the real valuable aspect of doing this. And so, in some cases, it's not really about whether it's the latest and the new, it's actually about.

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battle scars and what we have seen that works, and really bring that together in a coherent whole.

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Yep.

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Yeah, wonderful. I'm sure a lot of people found this book really helpful, so thank you for creating it. So Suit, let's stay with you. And I'm just going to go back to the idea that Pia already mentioned that our policy is a journey. So one of the core ideas in this book is that policy should be understood as a journey rather than a fixed document. Again, as Pia mentioned. But in practice, however.

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This often becomes exactly that, a document. So why does this happen and what might it look like to approach policy more as an evolving process, Suhid?

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Yeah, sure. Look, I think it goes back to structural.

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psychological and just human stuff about how we work, right? Structurally, you know, policy is set up in such a way that there are people who write policy and the people who kind of implement policy. So, structurally, we've already set it up as a, you know, different.

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Groups who do different things, which by itself means that we are kind of stopping policy at a stage which is generally a document, because that's where we end up writing.

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The second thing is, as humans, I think we want something.

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nice and written down and feel like it's solid, right? We've got a plan, and the plan is here, and this will help us achieve something. And so if you start telling people, like, it's actually just a plan, it's just a hypothesis, it's not fully real, it's not battle tested, it's not people tested, it's like, you know.

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We'll have an oil crisis and everything will go around. Like, people don't want to hear that. But actually, that's the truth. So the challenge is, like, you want to do something that gives you confidence to move forward. But at the same time, you want to be able to kind of adapt to it. And this is a genuine human and organizational challenge, right?

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So, I think what we have to work out is how do we keep what's real? Like, what is the real parts of policy that is always true?

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And what are the tactical parts of policy that is not always true, but needs to adapt?

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And sometimes you have to change the big picture, but let's imagine the big picture is right. That's where the journey metaphor really works well.

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Right? What we are saying is like our ultimate intent of the policy, right? Our policy intent, our strategic intent is actually true. That needs to be written down. Our hypothesis about why we are doing the policy has to be written down.

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But, we have to also be very loose with the tactics of implementation, because you cannot get your implementation right on day one, sitting in a room.

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So, the journey metaphor is basically, look, you know, we plan a journey, not every hotel we plan, every sightseeing we plan, every food we plan, every location we plan works out the same way.

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So we all know that, like, we're all familiar with that, and we are very comfortable with that. We don't, like, go onto a journey and expect everything to be ticked off and say, wow, like, we achieved everything exactly what we expect. Challenges, we expect things to go wrong, we expect something else, we expect food poisoning, like, all of those things happen.

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Right? Same things in policy as a journey. Like if you take it as a journey, then kind of makes it easy. So I think the thing, the way journey works is it works really as a way to work, but also as a metaphor that we all understand.

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And if you just think it as that, it's just an easy way to kind of work through the conversation, work through the book, and it's also an easy way to help understand your colleagues, like, what are we talking about here? So, we've kind of tried to find a metaphor that makes it easy to explain, and that's kind of where the journey.

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kind of helps in a lot of ways.

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Yeah, thank you, Sahid. I love this metaphor. It's really great fitting as well as Pia, if you don't mind this question to you. The book also talks about the importance of thinking about the delivery operating model behind policy.

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Could you unpack what that means in practice? What needs to be in place for policy to actually deliver outcomes? And what changes does the policy playbook suggest to help government work in this way?

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Thank you so much. 1st of all, obviously, this concept of taking ownership of the journey end to end. So just to riff off that the 1st step is not just understanding the metaphor of a journey, but.

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being and feeling responsible for delivering an outcome. Everyone sort of talks about outcomes, but then when it comes to when the rubber hits the road, quite often people focus on outputs. They focus on the document, they focus on the role that they play.

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And then it's got... and then it gets handed to somebody else. But taking on a mindset of ownership, not ownership, but stewardship of the outcome is absolutely critical. Multidisciplinary teams are clearly important to.

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include across the whole way. Imagine if we took a policy and had a policy product team, a policy team that was made up of representatives of the people on the whole journey. So the policy people, the people with the term policy in their job title, stay engaged throughout the whole process.

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But as importantly, people who have technical expertise, frontline expertise, you know, public expertise even are participating in the process end to end as well. And I know that everyone is going to be immediately talking about and thinking about types of policies that we don't have the luxury to do any of that, right?

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quite often people will be put under the spotlight to just come out with something within a day, within 2 days. So we even have guidance in the book from people who have worked in those sort of crisis policy or very senior, you know, prime ministerial policy groups.

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and even they were saying, Look, I give my team an hour every day just to research, and we don't have meetings, and we don't do anything else, because the worst thing that can happen in policy is you're asked.

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to come up with a position, and it's guesswork. It's soundboarding, it's not actually informed by evidence. Even if you only have two days, you should have had the structure and infrastructure and way of operating that enables and supports continuous research so that you can at least.

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Be as well informed as possible. A couple of other things that are helpful is starting to incorporate not just evidence-based policy, but experimentation-based policy as a methodology, particularly for legislation and regulation, but for any form of policy, being able to.

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start to create reference implementations? How would this actually look? How would I implement it? Let's invite someone into the room who would be responsible for implementing

this policy, so that we can see how it might actually work, and that would save a lot of problems down the track.

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And the last 2 quick things I'll say is, and I think this is a real gap, and the book does talk about this is policy infrastructure. At this point in time across government. You will have economists teams in one department.

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who have their interpretation of how different policies work, of taxation systems, of social security benefits, of economic modeling, and they'll have these beautiful models that they will use to understand budgets.

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But their interpretation of the policy will be different to what's actually implemented in the social service department and the taxation department, which will be different to the regulated entity or the assurance or the governance. So everyone sort of working from their own interpretation of the policy, their own monitoring tools, their own analysis, their own data.

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Introducing shared policy infrastructure where you have a single reference implementation of policies that everyone is working from literally the same. Well, okay, not literally the same page, but from the same digital page, and has the same ability to monitor, to model, to understand.

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create significant opportunities to not just shorten the time it takes to test and play with different interventions, but it also helps ensure that you've tested multiple scenarios that are outside of the pressure or imagination or experience of the originating team.

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So the final part is, I think, really introducing, and the book goes into this, not just new knowledge systems and particularly engaging with Indigenous knowledge systems in whichever country you're from, but also that participatory governance.

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the participatory policy sounds like a nice to have. It sounds like a thing you do when you can, but we are increasingly running an issue where when the public doesn't trust the public institution.

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Uh, you start to lose not just perceived legitimacy, but real legitimacy. So participation and participatory processes are actually a really critical part to making sure that policies are able to be implemented and trusted by the public that is affected by them.

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So those would be a couple of tips, but in the book we go into a lot more.

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Yes, thank you so much for covering this. That's very helpful. Catherine, let's move over to you. And there is another theme running through the book is the idea that policymaking needs to become more adaptive and more human. What does that really look like in practice, especially in complex policy environments?

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that Pierre just mentioned.

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Thanks. So yeah, that human element is just so important. Human beings are magical creatures, right? But we've got all these kind of interplay, this relationality, which sometimes we forget as we do policy type work.

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Because we do go to the expertise that we rely on. So he gave some great examples of that. And so in the book, we talk about the importance of actually valuing the whole human person.

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Uh, so it's not just our expertise, our intellectual kind of aspects, but we talk about, um, closed mode and open mode thinking when it comes to doing policy-type work. And by that we mean in the closed mode, we go into critical thinking, we go into, you know, coming to a single answer.

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Sometimes, or a couple of recommendations. We use that expertise, we use evidence, etc, etc. So we don't want you to forget that, or to ignore that.

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But a lot of times, too, we have to go into open mode. We have to use, as Pia suggested, our imagination, our playfulness, our very humanity. How do we find a good balance of both of those? So, in a sense, the whole policy-making chain does require either us to engage to be a polymath, so we've got to be able to work with many different skills and disciplines.

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talents and experiences, including lived experience. Um, or we've got to have a team, uh, involved. And preferably, you want the people who are affected by the policy to be involved in that.

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As Pia said, that trust is so important. So if we're truly being human, we're going to engage with the whole human person in community, in place. It's a place-based policymaking is something we touch on as well. Each context is so different.

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So it's wonderful having everyone from different places around the world here this evening or during the day, wherever you're located in the world.

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But each of us comes from a very particular historical setting, context, community set of values and things that we want to respond to with care and sensitivity.

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Uh, so that's part of that human dimension. On the adaptive side, of course, we are facing a world that is highly turbulent, highly volatile, highly uncertain. Uh, many people call it the VUCA world, volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity... ambiguity.

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Within that VUCA world, we do rely on these different modes again. So, there's the mode of, you know, if you use Goleman and Tversky's work, um, System 1, System 2, fast and slow thinking, some's deliberate and slow.

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We need to really engage very carefully. Others were using heuristics or shortcut tools, because as human beings, that's what we do to manage effectively to respond to the time pressures Pia was talking about. So in that context, many of you, I'm sure, have done sort of stakeholder mapping.

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starting to map out all the relevant people that are involved. If we start to really apply an adaptive lens to this, then we start to look at what's called faction mapping, where we start to look at the values, the losses, and the loyalties of each of those stakeholders.

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So once you put that extra layer onto the whole process, suddenly bump up against the realities of being a truly adaptive approach, which is where we say it's not necessarily change that we fear.

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Because we do change all the time, and though we do have change fatigue and burnout, it's not change that we fear per se, it's loss.

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And so, if you put a loss prism on things, suddenly that can transform the way you look at what people are actually being asked to do in policy. We can be a lot more sensitive in terms of how we might cater or ameliorate the process to allow for those losses to be, one, recognized.

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Two surfaced. Three, how do we deal with that? Um, and there's some hard choices to be made. We are up against, you know, restricted resources, a whole range of complexities, um, but we can actually be more human and more adaptive if we start to use.

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Those kinds of informed, kind of, prisons, those different modes of thinking. And I guess the last point I'd just say is that, um, you know, I did a lot of work in the trauma-informed space, and that's increasingly got a lot of traction. Recognizing that all of us suffer in some ways, not from the actual events of things themselves, but the wounds that might be left behind.

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All of us are carrying wounds. But the great news on that front is that we can achieve healing. So policy, in a sense, can be a healing process. If we are really going to think carefully about being truly human and adapting in real time. Uh, so that's.

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Some of the issues that we cover is the sort of timely dimension to things and how do we bring that sort of magical nature of being human together?

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Well, I love that, Catherine. Thank you so much. And I can see that our attendees are sending you a lot of love with heart emojis. So probably resonates with a lot of people. Thank you so much.

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Great. On a slightly different topic, Sahid, as we all know, AI is mentioned everywhere. So how do you see technologies like AI influencing the way policy is developed and delivered? And are there opportunities or risks policymakers should be paying attention to right now?

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Yeah, look, it's such an evolving space, right? So I spent a lot of time in the last 2 years going deeply into AI.

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Because at one level, I was curious. At one level, I understood that.

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The exponential growth of AI is actually extraordinary. The last three months in AI has been unbelievably.

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Yeah, crazy in terms of what's been announced. So there are 2 aspects, right? As policy makers, we need to understand and which most policymakers seem to understand.

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the risks and challenges of AI. I think we get that. So I'm not going to go deep on that.

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But I think what I see missing is that even though AI is not perfect, there's a lot of issues. There's hallucinations, there's different angles that you can take to it.

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There's actually a new type of intelligence that's emerging.

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right? We've always designed every aspect of our work around human intelligence for good reason.

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But there are aspects of our work which, if we think deeply, where does machine intelligence come into the into this space?

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What are... what are the parts of a work that actually can do something really better?

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So as an example, Perplexity is a great AI tool that is amazing at search, can do citations, can do deep research.

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Now, it also does something called model counsel. It brings together three different AIs to debate each other.

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So what I like about that is, is actually taking a very complex challenge and running through a very strong deep research to get a cited research and then using that to think about a policy challenge, right? So now you've kind of cut down that time.

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The second thing I think is that humans not always jump to the most logical answer. We jump to the answer that we think we know better or we grapple for it.

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One of the most fascinating things I found was that if you can actually use AI to kind of expand your opportunity space and thinking space.

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So for example, if I'm in Australia, I may not know what's happening in Japan or what happens in Finland.

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right? Or especially in countries where English is not the 1st language. How do I understand what people are doing in policy in that space? So you kind of open up your option spaces and really open up your mind about what's possible. So I think what is going to be far more challenging and important is.

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AI is going to create more challenges for policymaking. And I think part of the way to solve it is to figure out what is the role of humans? Where does judgment play a role? Where does purpose play a role? Where does ethics play a role? Where does goals play a role? Where does values play a role?

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And those are very strong, important things that humans have to hold. And then, how do we combine that with a new kind of machine intelligence that enables us to move faster?

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The oil crisis is a good example, right? Like, there's so much of data crunching, supply chain analysis, pricing modeling, effects on the economy, on human beings that you have to think through.

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This is where you could absolutely use AI to simulate, to create models to understand. And really, that's where you look at everything and say, how does a human make a judgment? So I think we need to start working closer and better and exploring the positives and negatives.

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But it's going to stay with us. So the faster we kind of bring that into our workflows, I think the better the potential outcomes in the long run.

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Yes, thank you. Yeah, that is quite a positive approach that we like, and there are definitely a lot of opportunities that AI is bringing us. All right. Thank you so much, Suhid.

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Yeah, I'll go back to you. Much of your work has focused on helping governments move from good intentions to real world change. And in your experience, what helps policy ideas actually gain traction inside institutions?

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And what tends to get in the way.

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I'm going to share four barriers that I've seen just briefly. The first one is not everywhere. I should say I've worked in and with a lot of governments around the world. I've mostly worked in Australia and New Zealand and Canada, but I've worked with another dozen.

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countries, and this problem, this first barrier, is not evenly distributed. But I do see quite often there is confusion about what policy is.

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So in some jurisdictions, it is defined only as the intention of the government of the day, so political policy. In some jurisdictions, there is a far greater understanding of the spectrum of operational policy, of political policy, of,

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foundational policy, so your constitution, legal framework, etc. In countries that understand this spectrum, they are more confident to lean in where they have authority, and to be able to shape policies that are within their domain, whereas countries that see policy as something that they can only advise on, not do.

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they're very disempowered. So the first barrier I would say is, in some countries, a huge disempowerment on the... on what policy is, how to engage in it, how to actually.

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play our role as public servants, as civil servants, as stewards.

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whose job is to actually bend the arc of everything that we do towards public good and public outcomes.

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Um, the second one is, um, confusion about that authority.

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Actually, sorry, the second one is, um... problem solving. It became very fashionable to start trying to just solve problems. So a lot of policy making started to say, what's the problem you're trying to solve?

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When you just try to solve problems, you end up doing symptomatic relief all the time. It is a constant game of whack-a-mole of which problem is the biggest problem. We need to complement that shift, because it was a helpful shift for certain things.

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With, um, getting back to designing a better future, if you don't design a future state which is better than your current state to work towards, then you end up just repeating the current state or the past with shiny new things. And unfortunately, this is where.

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Some policymakers using Gen AI to write policies seem to forget that AI is trained on data, which is necessarily something from the past, which means that you are now building policies based on the past, which is horrifying. We need to make sure that our policymaking designs a better future.

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So we do go into that. And I'll just say one more, and this is a very cheeky one.

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One of the biggest barriers is. When you want to get broader expertise in the room, particularly from outside of your department, not just from other departments, but from the public, from different sectors, from different jurisdictions.

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Um, a lot of governments a long time ago actually started to create functional separation. Let's call it functional segmentation. So you put the developers with the developers and the policy people with the policy people. And importantly, the communications people with the communications people in a separate little communications department.

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At some point, this functional segmentation led to, for a lot of governments, a I can't talk to the public unless I go through the communications team. Now, it didn't used to be the case. Policy people, public servants generally used to just engage with who they needed to engage with.

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to do their work. But the moment we actually formalize that any public or any external contact has to go through the comms department, we lose that genuine engagement. We lose real engagement because it all becomes about polishing and messaging and managing expectations rather than.

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true engagement. So I think we have a lot to learn from countries like Taiwan on that.

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Because their ability to engage the public in real, live, adaptive and publicly involved policy design and making, including legislative drafting, by the way, means that you can actually ensure that your policies are reflective of the values, hopes, fears, and.

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better future state that the public want to see. So we need to make sure that we don't have barriers, artificial barriers that are not actually helpful in maintaining that relationality that Catherine spoke about before to the people that we serve. We need to get rid of those barriers, or at least have them work differently.

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Yeah, that's very true. Thank you so much, Pia. All right. One more question to Catherine, and then we will move to the Q&A section. If you have a question, please write them in the Q&A feature on Zoom.

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Um, so Catherine, policymaking can sometimes feel like working against the system rather than working with it. What role does optimism play in sustaining good policy work and supporting public servants who are trying to make change happen, just like Pierre?

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was describing just a minute ago.

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Thank you. It's a great question. There's a really interesting movement happening at the moment, um, called Positive Public Administration. So we've got colleagues around the world who are doing scholarly work on this, so it's really great to see. But on the practice space, it's really important that we actually draw on each other.

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In terms of, um, Pia mentioned the word empathy before. We sometimes like to use the term radical empathy. So not only just putting yourself in the shoes of the other, but taking action.

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in those shoes where you can, where it's legitimate. Um, so that's where that close connection, that tie with the people that you're serving is so important.

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One of the issues, though, that we encourage is just a practical tool is, um, find that spark.

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That motivates you. Pia just mentioned, public servants are humans too. So find the thing that is the inspiration for you, that got you into this. I mean, that's the amazing thing about public servants.

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Um, so motivated to serve others, to make the world a better place. And it's not just cliché, it's real. It's this genuine motivation. And sometimes it can get hard. It can get lonely, uh, and you can feel very fatigued.

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Um, so continue to turn to the spark that sets you afire and lights you to keep moving forward. Oftentimes, that's coming from the community that you're a part of. So, community like the apolitical community, your local community in the policymaking space.

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your actual community itself, whether it's families, community groups, you know, whatever it is, get out and about and find that spark and continue to draw on it. Um, and that will help to motivate you on a continuous basis. Uh, and make sure that you replenish yourself.

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Through that it's good to know that the world is still worthwhile. Human beings are still worthwhile. It's still worth making that effort.

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Um, so we think optimism is a really great and important thing to be used as a motivator. Uh, strengths-based policymaking is another element as well. So, uh, Pia mentioned before, not just looking at the deficit model.

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But how do we find ways to really bring up the strengths that people already have, the assets that are already at our disposal? So that's just another practical way to make policy come alive in different ways, utilize optimism, utilize people's strengths.

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as a very deliberate tool. So those are just some practical things that hopefully will help people as they move along.

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Yes, very practical, very helpful. Thank you so much. Really good reminders. All right. Thank you so much. I am gonna hand over to Kelly for Q&A section. We have a little bit of time for your questions.

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Great. Thanks, Natalia, and thank you all for that brilliant conversation. Everyone, remember to keep sharing any questions you have for today's speakers. We have some submitted from you already and pre-submitted. But to ensure your question gets seen and not lost in the chat. We just want to ask you to submit it in the.

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Zoom Q&A, which you should see at the bottom of your screen.

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Alright, let's get started. I am going to come to Pf. First so you talked a bit about stewardship, and I would love for you to elaborate, because we have a question submitted that says, I love this idea of stewardship. What recommendations do you have to be able to position yourself.

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to steward outcomes end-to-end as someone who's not at senior levels, particularly if my environment doesn't have great policy as product teams.

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So, Pia, over to you for that one.

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So thank you so much for the question, and the first thing I think I want to say is everyone, everyone. We you, we all feel certainly at sometimes more than others. That the system is so big and so hard to change. And sometimes we sort of look at it and say, Oh, well, how do I just do my tiny little bit?

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But the first thing I just want to remind you and remind you all is that those systems are made up of people. And we are those people. So when we change ourselves, even just in small ways, we are actually changing the system.

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There is actually research that shows that somewhere between 3 to 5% of any population changing its behavior is the tipping point for that behavior to start to become normalized. So connect with peers, connect with communities, and.

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agree with each other what good looks like, what better looks like, and just do it. Um, so, first of all, just applying that mindset means that when you're having conversations with your senior leaders, with your peers, with your colleagues.

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You can just be asking those questions. Oh, okay, I understand we're going to do that. But how might that look in implementation? I might go and chat to some of the people who are probably going to have to implement this. Maybe we could get some of their expertise to help us reduce risks. Now, a lot of the senior execs that you're all dealing with, and I know some of you in the room are senior execs.

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Of course, are very driven by trying to remediate risk, trying to understand and remediate risk.

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When you look at policy as a journey, it gives you a chance to be able to say, look, I'm going to help remediate the risk of this not being implemented the way we expect. So being able to frame it from that organizational mission perspective, you know, what's the actual mission of your organization? How can you tie your work to that?

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being able to use these skills to remediate risk and to actually help your senior executives feel confident is really important, and being able to just, and this is going to sound very strange, but.

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Try to always be the kindest, calmest in the room. I know that sounds crazy, but what I've noticed is most public servants are.

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So busy that they are actually dealing with a mindset of, you know, flight, freeze, fear, fawn, all those F's. Um, all the time, which means that they... and that stress means that when you're trying to talk to them.

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everything you're trying to do just feels like more work, and it feels so hard. If you can be kind and calm in the room, if you can be the best meeting that person has that day.

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Intellectually, you may not get them on the first go, but emotionally you've just opened the door, and that door is how change happens. So be kind, be calm, realize that even if something seems so obvious to you, and I feel this all the time, it doesn't mean that it is obvious to everyone around you.

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And... but if you can help open people's hearts, that will help open their minds. And even just introducing into your work, well, I wonder how that would feel for the person affected by this. It's amazing how much that changes the room, and I'll share just a very quick story, I'm very sorry. I was running a.

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whole of government data initiative a while ago, and this was a very, very sensitive, dealt with a lot of privacy data.

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And we went around the whole room, and every senior executive shared what they were doing in their department. And I said to them, look, I'm going to do a little thought experiment. I want you to tell me what it would take you individually, you personally, to share your personal data, your mother's data, your kid's data, your partner's data.

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With me. Pia, what would it take you to share your data with me? Forget your department, forget your level. What would it take you to share with me?

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And it was so interesting, they all went around, oh, I need to know it's not being sold on and not going to be used against me, and there's always one that talks about standards, but um... but they all talked about what would matter to them personally.

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And then we went back to their programs, and not a single one of their programs had a single one of the things that they said they would need from me to share with me personally. And so I helped them reflect that that lack of empathy.

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from that perspective has actually led to them having programs that they themselves wouldn't trust. So, um, yeah, really just bring it in the room however you can, and what you'll find is, if you can persist.

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If you can maintain your hope and your heart, and I know it's hard.

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for what it's worth, I keep my expectations so high, and what that means is reality delivers below my expectation regularly, and that creates emotion, that creates frustration, sometimes rage.

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But it's just energy. And rather than that eating away at me, I use that energy to do something productive. Find what works for you to keep your energy high, to keep your joy, and to keep your optimism, because when we persist, when we persist.

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Great. Yeah. And and Pia, what what you just mentioned about data made me think, everyone, we actually have a event next Wednesday, how to unlock hidden data in local government. So if that got you thinking about data, my colleague is going to post post a link in the chat to that. But.

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That was really great advice, Pia. I especially loved what you said about being the kindest and the calmest in the room. I think something the three of you have done such a great job of today is really showing us the human side of policymaking and what centering that looks like. And I can tell by the emoji reactions that I've seen from everyone in the room that they agree.

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We have time for one final question, and I'm going to pose that to Catherine. So we have a question from Julia. It reads, going back to your comments on losing public trust in governments, I know a few of you guys talked about that today. Do you have any recommendations on how we can start to rebuild that trust.

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Back through policymaking.

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Another great question. So thank you. And Suhid, if you want to come in on this, please feel free.

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I mean, there's some different practical techniques to use in the trust area. One is obviously connecting in with the communities again. When doing that, it can be an interesting and helpful idea at times to allow space for people to go and play different roles.

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So put yourself literally in the shoes of the decision maker, and then decision makers get into the shoes of the community, and actually see if you can experiment to give those roles some sort of teeth. Even do it just for a day.

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Uh, and say, well, what's this actual experience like? Oh, a community member suddenly realizes, oh, I now see what the decision makers are up against, in terms of the constraints or the opportunities that they're facing. And similarly, if we can actually put ourselves in the shoes of the lived reality.

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of the effects of the policy. Then we can actually start to create an environment where we're entering into a deeper relationship with each other.

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Um, so trust, of course, you know, there's the old saying, trust arrives on foot and departs in a Ferrari. So, you know, we can just lose it so quickly, uh, and it takes a really long time, oftentimes, to rebuild. So, we start.

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you know, relationship by relationship. We start with as much as possible transparency and outlining the parameters within which we're trying to make decisions. Consider the implications of that for everybody. How do we find ways to to do all the different values?

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that Suhit was talking about earlier. How do we find ways to even think about the different values that people bring?

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Um, so this is all part of the trust-building equation. Obviously, accountability. So, when things don't go right, which they don't, Suhett mentioned that earlier as well.

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Um, how do we rectify that? How do we create a sense of return to justice, or providing mechanisms to say, I'm sorry, we stuffed up?

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Uh, here's what we're going to do. So that always helps in terms of trust again. So there's many just sort of different elements. It takes time. It is important to just go, you know, relationship by relationship, exercise accountability, and um... Suhit, do you want to add anything in there in terms of?

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fixed truth perspectives.

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Yeah, thanks, Catherine. I think. Ultimately, I think trust comes from being honest, as Catherine said. I think one of the things I've learned is in actually a lot of cases, the police actually does a good job of communication. They tell that they can't solve all the problems. Sometimes they're very open about.

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how much they've sold, or how much they've not sold. And I think it's actually being honest and being telling people that we are in the journey, because people are smart, you know? We think that we can actually tell people different things, but the reason trust doesn't come up is because we're actually not.

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Giving people... in Australia, we call it the pub test, right? Like, what are people talking in the pub about? You know, an ex policy, or what what's happening? And then people really have a good sense of it.

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And I think that's what we have to believe. We have to actually trust the citizens actually already know stuff. And if we can actually share that openly and talk to them, the trust actually increases. We think trust is about getting it right. I actually think trust is about getting it in the open and having open conversation about the challenge.

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And that's how kind of you build trust. You don't build trust by getting everything right.

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Okay, thank you so much, Catherine and Suhid, for your answers. So we've had some incredible wisdom from each of our speakers today, and we'd like to ask you all to join me in giving Catherine, Pierre and Sahid a virtual round of applause.

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With the emojis. Thank you so much. I'd like to see more. And most importantly, thank you, the attendees, for investing your learning and being so engaged to this topic. Um, so the team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today.

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which will be help, uh, which will help to continue improving our content, and we really appreciate your responses. So before you go, and while you're responding to that poll, I want to share a few more events.

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that you can register to join us again soon. If you're not available to join live, remember that you can always register for the event in order to get sent the recording to catch up whenever suits you. So, um, Kelly already mentioned the how to unlock hidden data in local government event.

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So that's happening next Wednesday on finding and accessing data across siloed departments. We saw in the poll today that a lot of people mentioned siloed.

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issues. The next event is communicating more strategically at work. That's next Thursday on making your ideas clear, compelling, and decision ready. And then the following week we have futures thinking fundamentals for busy public servants on navigating uncertainty and planning for what's.

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Next. Okay, that's all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful and we want to say a huge thank you to our speakers, to everyone who's made today happen, and to you attendees for taking time out of your busy days.

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