Online course

"Leaders of change: helping African policymakers develop their capacity to promote the use of knowledge in policy"

Through this call, Politics & Ideas, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) will support, with full scholarships, the involvement of those public officials from Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe interested in promoting the use of knowledge in their organizations through their participation in this online course (limited places).

2016

Launch of call for applications	January 11st
Deadline for submitting proposals	March 2nd
Participant selection notification	March 16th
Course start date	March 28th
Course end date	May 15th

1. Justification

This online course is aimed at African policy makers and civil servants interested in promoting a better use of knowledge in policy making in their governmental agencies and thus seeking to discuss with colleagues and learn from inspiring practices and reflections.

While over the last years there has been an increasing interest and institutionalization of the use of knowledge to inform public decision-making, our work experience with political leaders shows that many of them need to get to know concrete tools and ideas to foster effective changes within their agencies, as well as receive support to face political challenges implied in the promotion of a better use of research. As a response, this course will focus not only on supporting the development of technical ability, but also on how to approach frequent challenges that arise when seeking to strengthen the use of evidence, taking into account the political economy of these processes.

A first round of the course was launched in Latin America in April 2015 under the name "Leaders of change: developing Latin American policymakers' capacity to promote the use of knowledge in policy". A very rich and heterogeneous group of 24 participants was selected to take the course. By the end of the course, 95% of the participants indicated that the course met their expectations.

Moreover, based on the firm conviction that there is a need to engage and build on the experience of those working in the policymaking environment, for the design of the curriculum and the development of the materials of the first round of the course, we had the guidance of a Content Strategy Group made up of eight former or current senior policymakers (national and provincial ministers, secretaries and directors, among others) with a significant academic or research background from different Latin American countries.

2. Institutional background

Politics & Ideas (P&I) is a joint initiative of researchers and professionals to co-produce and share innovative knowledge on the link between ideas and policy in developing countries. P&I is a space led from the South and its goal is to encourage researchers, professionals and officials to rethink and debate, through collective spaces, on how to improve policymaking at local, national and regional level. Their goal is to critically analyze the relationship among ideas, research and policy in order to foster a more constructive use of knowledge and information in decision-making and policy management. Therefore, P&I produces knowledge and promotes the development of abilities in key fields such as evidence use planning, its influence on policy, research communication, monitoring, assessment and learning, among other issues.

P&I and its members have extensive experience in the development of online courses.

Between 2014 and 2015, P&I delivered the following online courses, helping more than 60 policymakers, think tanks, civil society organizations and researchers from 30 countries in Latin America, Central and East Europe, Asia and Africa develop capacities and increase knowledge in different areas to strengthen the link between knowledge and policy[1]:

- Online training to strengthen M&E&L on policy influence

- Re-thinking your Funding Model

- Leaders of change: developing Latin American policymakers´ capacity to promote the use of knowledge in policy

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) is an African-led, regional non-profit policy think tank that seeks to bridge the gaps between development research, policy and practice in Africa. AFIDEP achieves its mandate through three main activities, namely: synthesis of existing evidence to provide advice to decision-makers, advocating for increased priority and use of evidence in decision-making, and capacity building for increased and better use of evidence in decision-making. AFIDEP's capacity building programme has focused on strengthening both individual and institutional capacity needed for better understanding of policy contexts, identification of policy questions, finding the relevant evidence to respond to policy questions, appraising the evidence for its rigour and credibility, synthesizing the evidence, and applying it or enabling its application in decision-making processes. AFIDEP's largely focuses in the broad areas of population change and sustainable development, and health systems strengthening.

The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) is an international development organization that works with a global network of partners to improve the access, production and use of information and research knowledge in order to help countries be prepared to solve their development problems. In particular, INASP works towards strengthening the production, quality, promotion and access to information by researchers and officials from developing countries, as well as improving research products.

3. Goals

The general goal is to contribute to improving African officials' current capacity to use and promote the use of knowledge in policy making and public management in the region.

To achieve this, the course will:

- Develop participants' abilities to identify, generate and use relevant information and knowledge within the framework of their organizations.

This course is intended for policymakers in Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

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1   For more information on P&I capacity building offer see here.

- Promote exchange of knowledge and experiences among peers related to information generation, management, use and communications in policy-related processes.
- Generate new relevant and useful knowledge to contribute to the generation and use of information in the public sector in other regions as well.

4. Learning methodology

Through the effective combination of theoretical modules and practical exercises, we help participants reflect, debate and interact about how to contribute to a culture of use of evidence in policymaking. Besides, the course will provide concrete tools for participants to leverage the evidence generated by researchers and the public sector itself in their areas of work when discussing, designing and implementing public policies.

In order to obtain different perspectives to the approach of this issue, the course will promote debate as well as the exchange of experiences among participants. Facilitators will guide discussions and provide technical support through personalized, detailed feedback on the exercises presented. The course will also provide constant assistance for participants to focus their daily efforts in the right direction, based on a successful reading of the political-technical context within which they develop their work.

The course will last seven weeks. Each session will be moderated by a facilitator who will help participants reflect on the course contents, share their thoughts and knowledge with others through online forums and develop the corresponding exercises. Participants will be encouraged to complete exercises with other colleagues in order to foster institutional learning. In turn, 3 webinars (live Internet seminars) will be developed with the presence of former or current policymakers who will present their experiences and learning opportunities in relation to the different issues approached in the course.

5. Contents structure

The course will last seven weeks. The first week is merely introductory and will focus on participant introduction and their familiarization with the platform and facilitators. The next six weeks will be focused on the following content[2]:

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2   Kindly note that this content could suffer some minor changes due to current updating of modules.

Modules	Minimum contents
Module 1. The challenge of public policy processes. The paradigm of complexity.	This module reflects on the inherent complexity of public policy processes, with a strong focus on their inherently political nature, the incentives, interests and resources that move other players and configure what the object of the debate is, on what decisions are based and how those decisions are implemented, monitored and assessed or not. It explores different public policy models and their implications on the use of evidence, as well as it identifies factors that affect its use in public institutions.
Module 2. Focus on information. Detecting possible uses and available resources.	This module devotes to the possible uses of knowledge, according to the different needs and opportunities that arise from the policy decision making process. It also approached the needs for information according to the management level, since political, strategic and operational decisions open very different windows of opportunity to incorporate knowledge. Finally, the module goes into the advantages and disadvantages of resorting to internally and externally-generated information.
Module 3. Focus on information. Generating information for decision making and management.	This module focuses on the different types of research than may be useful in the decision-making process, together with a series of criteria that may be helpful for assessing their usefulness and quality. The module also approaches internal information systems and focus on monitoring and evaluation processes as tools to generate relevant information for the decision making process, and explores experiences in the institutionalization of the use of knowledge in developing countries.
Module 4. Focus on stakeholders. Identifying and relating to potential research users and interpreters.	This module acknowledges the wide variety of players who, in different ways and according to their own interests and paradigms, may affect the use of evidence in their fields of work. It also approaches the concept of epistemic communities. The module also studies the different decision-making styles that characterize public servants in order to identify the best strategies to provide them with evidence, and explores some approaches to recognize elements that may help promote a culture of a wider use of evidence in public organizations.
Module 5. Focus on stakeholders. Effective information communication.	The last module addresses the effective communication of information of knowledge. To do so, it approaches the creation of effective messages and dynamic formats. Besides, it reflects on public policy recommendations as a format to introduce research and evidence in decision-making environments.
Workshop: Case analysis.	The last week is devoted to read, analyze and reflect on cases involving the challenges and problems that arise when seeking to use knowledge in policymaking.

In addition to the workshop in the sixth week, three webinars will take place as part of Modules 2, 4 and 6[3].

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3   Dates to be confirmed in the first week of the course.

6. Target audience

The course is aimed at mid-level policymakers from different public institutions in **Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe**. In particular, those whose tasks already imply, or are interested in, informing public policy processes with knowledge, evidence, research and information.

7. How to apply?

Bear in mind that places are limited, therefore, the selection process will be competitive.

Only applications from policy makers in the following countries will be considered: **Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe**.

To complete the application, applicants must:

- Complete the application form: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/65YNW2N
- Submit a resume or CV to contact@politicsandideas.org.

The application will not be considered if any of the two requirements is omitted.

In addition, those applications that, together with the online form and CV, present a letter signed by an authority of their working area will be especially considered. The letter should state that the applicant is committed to fulfill the requirements of the course and contain a clear statement on how the organization expects to benefit / specific use of the newly acquired knowledge after the course.

Data privacy protection: P&I, AFIDEP and INASP will not share the individual and organizational Data with third parties as well as they will not use data for purposes other than this course.

The deadline to fill out the online form and send the required documentation is March 2nd, 2016 (inclusive). Please, send all documentation to contact@politicsandideas.org with subject: *"Application to the Leaders of change online course."*

8. Selection criteria

Criteria to select the participants will include:

1. Seniority of applicants and position within their institutions.
2. Need or potential of the organization to undertake the course or to use its outcomes to make a specific change in the organization,
3. The experience of the applicant and/or his/her organization regarding use of knowledge in policy making, and
4. The participant's commitment and his/her organization to share the knowledge acquired with his/her colleagues.

9. Requirements

The role of participants

Participants are expected to be responsible for their own learning process and to assume the following commitments:

- Complying with the tasks assigned within the terms set.

- Making at least one weekly contribution, whether in the form of forum comments or by sending materials or interesting information related to the subject under analysis.

- Cooperating in the learning experience of other participants, through an active involvement in the exchanges that may arise, sharing his/her experiences, ideas and learning.

- Present three exercises during the course, which should be submitted according to the course schedule (in general, 10 days will be provided between the exercise announcement and delivery date.)

- Take part in one and a half-hour online webinars to take place during weeks 2, 4 and 6 of the course

- Notify the facilitator of exceptional circumstances that may prevent the participant to have a normal course attendance.

- Those participants whose lack of compliance of the above commitments may threaten their meeting the course goals may lose their login privileges to the platform.

Dedication

The approximate amount of time that should be devoted to reading materials, using the platform, preparing exercises and taking part in webinars is 8 weekly hours. Webinars are the only activity that requires simultaneous connection by all participants. All other activities are designed so that each participant manages the time he/she devotes to the course, being able to make comments in the forum and interact with classmates and tutors on the dates and at the time most convenient for him/her.

Minimum technical requirements

Participants must have available a computer with a stable Internet connection. A reliable Internet connection will be required in order to take part in webinars.

Performance assessments and attendance certificates

Participants performance assessments will be an ongoing process carried out through the review of exercises submitted, the quality of their involvement and their commitment to the different exchanges that may arise during the course. An

Online course "Leaders of change: helping African policymakers develop their capacity to promote the use of knowledge in policy"

7

attendance certificate will be issued only for those participants who submit their exercises before their deadlines and who have also shown an active involvement in the forum and webinars.

Course evaluation

Upon finalization of the course, participants will be asked to fill out an evaluation form on the different aspects of the course, such as quality, usefulness, etc., which will allow the course creators to improve further training courses.

10. Schedule

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Proposals deadline	March 2nd, 2016
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Course start date	March 28th, 2016
Course end date	May 15th, 2016
Number of hours (estimate)	8 weekly hours

11. Faculty

The online course was designed by Politics & Ideas with the collaboration of the African Institute for Development Policy.

Facilitators

Leandro Echt. Is member of Politics & Ideas and an independent consultant. He is devoted to studying the link between research and policy, especially focused on the role of think tanks and the development of abilities to influence public policy (influence planning, research communication, monitoring and evaluation, among other aspects.) He has worked as Coordinator of Influence, Monitoring and Evaluation Program by the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC). He coordinated different initiatives aimed at developing abilities for think tanks, civil society organizations and public servants from Latin America, Asia and Africa regarding the use of knowledge to influence policymaking. He advised provincial governments in Argentina in the design of communities of practice and systematization of experiencea. Candidate to a Masters on Public Policy and Development Management (Georgetown University and Universidad de San Martín, thesis under development), Diploma in Advances Studies in Public Policy Assessment (Universidad de San Martín, and Bachelor in Political Science and Teacher of Political Science (Universidad de Buenos Aires).

Rose Oronje. She is a development policy and communications specialist with over 10 years experience in development research-to-policy communications, and conducting policy analysis research. With a strong background in communication and policy analysis, Rose has extensive experience in conducting analyses of policies and policy environments, and translating and communicating research to policymakers and other general audiences (including the mass media). She also has extensive experience in designing and delivering capacity building programmes in knowledge translation, including research-to-policy communications, but also research utilisation by policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society. Currently, Rose is the Director of Science Communications and Evidence Uptake at AFIDEP, where she provides strategic leadership in the design and delivery of evidence uptake programmes. Her publications have focused mainly on the areas of health policymaking, and research-to-policy in the health sector. Rose has a PhD in Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

Supervisor

Vanesa Weyrauch. She is the co-founder of Politics & Ideas and Associate researcher of the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) in Argentina. She has worked in the field of policy and research for the last 10 years, especially with Latin American think tanks. She has created an online platform to offer courses on policy influence planning, research communication and monitoring and assessment of policy influence, training regional organizations as well as organizations form Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Besides, she acts as mentor for different think tanks, especially as regards research communication and its influence on policymaking. She has developed innovative methodologies to monitor how research influences policies in organizations such as Save the Children, Rimisp from Chile and ASIES from Guatemala. She has authored several publications on the subject.

Contacto:
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