BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICYMAKING IN BRAZIL WITH A FOCUS ON EQUITY

STORY OF CHANGE

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The use of evidence in policymaking in Brazil is far from satisfactory. A recent survey of federal public servants showed that 54% of them never or rarely used scientific research reports to inform their decision-making.[1] To teach the basic concepts and skills of knowledge translation and evidence-informed policymaking (EIP), the Brazilian Coalition for Evidence created a course to spread awareness of EIP, taught by five EIP experts. In this document, the coalition shares two key aspects of this effort that supported greater equity in EIP capacity building: innovative targeting and course design.

Innovative Targeting

The first iteration of the course, offered in 2021, had 52 participants. While half of the participants were female, most of the cohort were white, well-educated professionals of middle or upper socioeconomic status from the South or Southeast regions of Brazil. For the second iteration of the course, a year later, we sought to tackle a new challenge: advancing equity in the Brazilian EIP ecosystem by including young professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds and socially excluded groups. With support from the Partnership for Evidence and Equity in Responsive Social Systems (PEERSS), we tapped our network of universities and researchers to expand the call for registrants beyond traditional audiences. Of the 120 participants in the second course, 86.1% were between the ages of 20 and 29 and eligible for financial assistance[2]. More than half of the participants were from the North or Northeast regions, 40% were from rural areas, and the LGBTQIA+, black, and traditional communities (indigenous and *quilombolas)* were significantly represented. Many participants were also associated with civil society initiatives. Together, the group made lively contributions from multiple perspectives throughout the learning process.
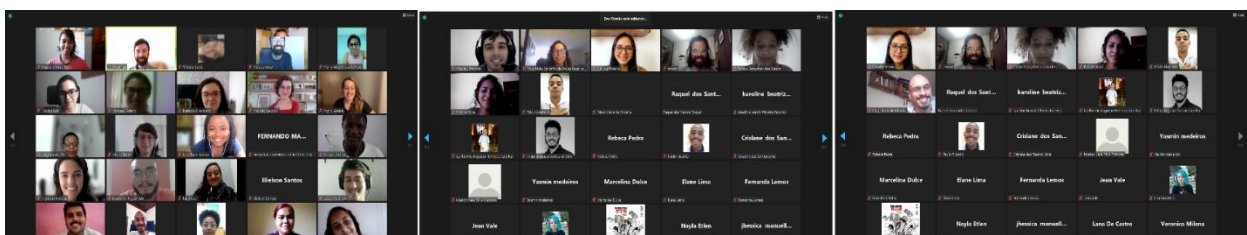

Figure 1: Screenshots from the second edition of the Brazilian Coalition for Evidence's Introductory EIP course

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[1] Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA). Quantitative survey of 2,180 federal public servants (2021). For more information, see IPEA's policy brief titled "Use and lack of use of scientific evidence in public policy" (*"O uso e o não uso de evidências científicas nas políticas públicas"*)
[2] Of those, 68.3% applied for and received a scholarship of up to R$ 500.

Equitable and Inclusive Course Design

We took great care to ensure that all course methods, materials, and videos for the second course were thoroughly reviewed and validated by EIP specialists, as well as by an expert in accessible language. Our course materials used gender-inclusive language and included subtitles, audio descriptions, and a Brazilian Sign Language window. Participants had access to video classes produced for the first round, which they could watch at their own pace. We also considered feedback from participants gathered through anonymous surveys halfway through the course and adjusted accordingly. The instructors and course organizers met every 15 days to discuss their challenges and explore new mentoring strategies.

The participants reported gaining a comprehensive set of skills and techniques for conducting high-quality research that prepared them for a career in the EIP field. Most participants in the first iteration of the course stayed engaged with the Brazilian Coalition for Evidence and EIP activities, either as researchers, knowledge translators, or civil society representatives. Two groups of participants from the second course went on to produce rapid-response briefs for state-level agencies. Most participants expressed satisfaction with the relevance of the course to real-world contexts and reported that the course gave them a set of tools for promoting equity in policies and policymaking processes. Some participants mentioned that their communications with other stakeholders improved after they started adopting EIP-related terminology such as *evidence-informed* instead of *evidence-based*. The participants' final deliverables will be published and will contribute to future policy discussions.

Figure 2: Terms of Reference for the course, showcasing SuperEvident, an evidence-informed hero

The second iteration was the first Brazilian course focused on equity in the EIP field and overcoming gender and racial underrepresentation. Much remains to be learned about how to continue promoting interest in EIP and improve access to this kind of training, but it was a significant initial step. We want to ensure that the course reaches as many people as possible, so we're exploring options that include partnering with universities to offer the course through their online teaching platforms. Although the course materials are publicly available, we are considering ways to reach an even wider audience by creating a massive open online course or publishing the materials on an open-access platform such as an open educational resources site. We are also looking into transforming the course videos into a podcast, to make the content accessible to those who prefer an audio format or have limited internet access.

Our next steps include continued outreach to expand Brazil's knowledge translation community in addition to our ongoing efforts to promote access to EIP knowledge. We're excited about these possibilities and believe that we can spread awareness of EIP to a diverse group of people and help build the capacity of the next generation of Brazil's knowledge translation community.