

Cape Town Consensus Charter

(Last updated on 14 August 2025)

We, the attendees of the 2025 Cape Town Consensus meeting, commit to **transforming evidence synthesis to improve lives**. Alongside our own individual and organizational efforts, we commit to building and sustaining – together – the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (hereafter the Collaborative) as a vehicle for this transformation. We commit to a strategic shift of power to the Global South and more generally to locating **equity** – in its many dimensions – at the heart of the infrastructure, the processes and outputs enabled by it, and its impacts on people. Embracing this once-in-a-generation opportunity for impact, we will **follow the five steps in the ESIC roadmap** – and the ‘SHOW ME the evidence’ principles – to achieve this vision and make the Collaborative a cornerstone of the global evidence architecture. We will act urgently to establish a short-term strategy for action with input from the many interest holders involved in ESIC.

1) Build a **user-centred evidence synthesis infrastructure** to serve everyone

We will co-create a distributed infrastructure governed, funded and delivered using a collective impact framework. The infrastructure will include: 1) engaging with users to understand needs and respond to ‘windows of opportunity’; 2) sharing and reusing data; 3) safely and responsibly using AI; 4) making synthesis more timely, relevant and affordable; and 5) sharing capacity. *In Cape Town we agreed that: 1) we see key principles reflected in the proposed solutions (e.g., collaboration among this ‘community of communities’, equity including leadership from the Global South, and agility in how we co-develop ways of working together); 2) we have already seen significant alignment happening during the six months of the planning process and we will benefit from regular ongoing communication, an agile coordination team, a lean governance function, and an overall commitment to adapt and evolve over time; 3) we need to pursue further alignments using a ‘nothing about us without us’ approach, by leveraging the strengths of regional, language and sectoral networks, and by foregrounding transdisciplinary and intersectoral perspectives; and 4) we need to be alert to unintended consequences and risks.*

2) Make user-centred **evidence synthesis** the norm

We will make evidence synthesis more timely, relevant and affordable. We will support equitable global provision, coverage of all key societal challenges, and integration into users’ preferred sources of information. *In Cape Town we agreed that: 1) we need to better engage neglected sectors and interest holders in the process, and acknowledge their different traditions of evidence synthesis and use, different capacities, and different needs; 2) we must systematize and innovate in evidence synthesis, including in co-production with citizens and in operationalizing the idea of ‘evidence for big decisions’ (or ‘policy-scale’ evidence synthesis).*

3) Work with **intermediaries** who support decision-makers

We will support evidence intermediaries with: a) actionable insights about what has been learned from around the world and how these findings vary by groups and contexts; b) open, reusable data ‘on tap’ that can be rapidly contextualized; and c) quality assurance for the data being shared. The

role of evidence intermediaries can be played by evaluation units and operations teams in UN agencies, multilateral development banks and international financing institutions, science advisors and evidence-support units, citizen-led and citizen-serving NGOs, and groups working with other forms of evidence. [In Cape Town we agreed that we hear excitement for and from evidence intermediaries, with groups seeing clear roles for them to fulfill and how the roadmap can support their work.](#)

4) Ensure more people **start using** or **keep using** actionable insights generated with rigour and speed

We will ensure that evidence intermediaries have decision-ready information for decisions that matter, including decisions by government policymakers, organizational leaders, professionals (and other practitioners and service providers) and citizens (in the broadest sense of that term). We will also ensure that this information is available to funders – domestic, development, philanthropic and research – that support the operationalization of these decisions. [In Cape Town we agreed that: 1\) we must do more to respond to demand and, where it is lacking, to stimulate requests, anticipate needs and showcase examples of other similarly placed decision-makers asking for and using evidence synthesis; and 2\) with a range of partners, we will co-develop open, equitable and validated AI tools that provide decision-makers with rigorously synthesized evidence.](#)

5) Enable better informed decisions to **improve people's lives** and **save money**

We will move fast, delivering impacts early and often to make the case for escalating investment and supporting course corrections where needed. [In Cape Town we agreed that: 1\) we must get right 'the balance of rigour and speed' given generative AI tools are now our major competitor; 2\) we need to communicate in simpler language, advocate for change more effectively, and learn from others with more humility – within, across and beyond our communities.](#)

We will draw on this infrastructure to deliver suites of AI-enabled living **evidence syntheses** on the greatest societal challenges of our time. We will also draw on this infrastructure to serve up **actionable insights** in different ways for different decision-makers, sectors, regions and languages. [In Cape Town we agreed as the Collaborative to take inspiration from South Africa's Freedom Charter and the UN Charter – celebrating their 70th and 80th anniversaries, respectively, on the concluding day of our meeting – as beacons of light and a call to action for our collective work ahead.](#)