ESIC

EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS
INFRASTRUCTURE
COLLABORATIVE

Briefing for funders considering how best to leverage ESIC

Context relevant to all funders

- The Evidence Synthesis Collaborative (ESIC) is now a '**community of communities**' committed to a collective impact approach to learning from others – using evidence synthesis – to improve lives.
- These **communities** range from 45 UN entities (through the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition) and the world's largest producers of evidence synthesis (e.g., Cochrane, JBI, Campbell) to key networks of evidence intermediaries (including science advisors and evidence-support units) and 35+ funders (research, philanthropic, government, and international assistance).

- Evidence synthesis gives us rigour in learning from scientific studies and UN/MDB evaluations; AI gives us speed.
- ESIC has made the case that **AI-enabled living evidence synthesis** are the way to deliver localized, actionable insights with both rigour and speed.

- ESIC is operationalizing its commitment to shifting power to the **Global South** and locating **equity** at the heart of each step in its development. While ESIC will work across all **sectors and regions**, its initial focus is on 11 sectors and two regions.

- ESIC has mobilized **US$126 million** in the past year.
- The ESIC funders interest group (FIG) executive has made **five foundational investments** and put in place key **transitional arrangements**.

ESIC can provide 'ways in' for four types of funders

- International assistance funders
  - e.g., Deval (Germany) and other evaluation offices being engaged by the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition, as well as by EvalNet (OECD) and Nordic+
  - e.g., Canada, Netherlands, Norway and others being engaged by the Smart Buys Alliance
  - e.g., chief economists, heads of strategy, and others in the multilateral development banks
- National (or domestic) funders
  - e.g., Canada, Ireland (and EU), UK and others being engaged about health emergencies, preventive services (including screening)
  - E.g., participants in intergovernmental bodies like the Joint Research Centre (EU) and OECD
- Philanthropic funders
  - e.g., Jacobs, Mastercard and Wellcome (& tripartite partners like Novo Nordisk Foundation)
  - e.g., Bloomberg, Gates and others that have historically been more focused on data analytics
  - e.g., members of networks like the Impact Funders Forum (formerly the Transforming Evidence Funders Network)
- Research funders
  - e.g., Australia's NHMRC (with an interest in guidelines), Canada's IDRC (with an interest in research capacity strengthening), Ireland's HRB (with an interest in research impact), and UK's ESRC and NIHR (with an interest in supporting advisory and decision-making processes), as well as Canada's CIHR
  - e.g., members of networks like EViR (with an interest in reducing research waste) and HIROs (with an interest in peer review and impact assessment), as well as GRC

We are considering tech companies a potential partner rather than a funder

1) International assistance funders

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Year 1 investments	'Ways in' to ESIC
Sectoral hubs for AI-enabled living evidence syntheses (AI LESs)	• **Access 'best evidence'** – including actionable insights – on the big questions of our time ○ Climate solutions* ○ Humanitarian assistance* ○ Crime and justice ○ Peace and effective institutions ○ Economic growth* ○ Social protection* ○ Education ○ Sustainable-development 'accelerators' ○ Environmental management ○ Food systems* *Asterisked hubs will also each have a health determinants / outcomes lens ○ Health (with 'spokes' for health emergencies, mental health, and preventive services) **Example of additional hubs being considered:* ○ Housing, transportation & other community amenities • **Commission or fund** radically more timely, relevant and affordable **syntheses** (and write calls and require proposals that leverage and contribute to the infrastructure and help move us to full coverage)
Regional hubs for evidence intermediaries	• **Contextualize what has been learned globally** – alongside many needed forms of local evidence – to national & local levels via local evidence intermediaries (in partnership with UN Country teams) ○ One hub in Africa, another hub in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a third (subregional) hub in Europe & UK ○ Next pair of hubs to include Asia Pacific and Middle East (or Arab States)
Open (evidence synthesis) data system	• **Access synthesis data** – both synthesis-ready data and AI-ready data – to support **re-analysis**, to create feedback loops for next-generation **evaluation planning**, and to underpin '**best buys**' and other decision-ready formats • **Incorporate synthesis data into workflows** (via APIs), such as **diagnostics and project analysis**
Living inventory of AI-DESTs	• **Make informed choices, and improve reporting**, about AI-enabled digital evidence-synthesis tools (AI-DESTs) alongside the RAISE guidance and proposed UN-ESIC 'AI Commons'
MEL infrastructure	• Support for accountability and for **learning and improvement cycles**

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Year 1 investments	'Ways in' to ESIC
Sectoral hubs for AI-enabled living evidence syntheses (AI LESs)	• **Access 'best evidence'** – including actionable insights – to improve accountability and support learning and improvement on the big challenges of our time ○ Climate solutions*　　　　　　　○ Humanitarian assistance* ○ Crime and justice　　　　　　　　○ Peace and effective institutions ○ Economic growth*　　　　　　　　○ Social protection* ○ Education　　　　　　　　　　　　○ Sustainable-development 'accelerators' ○ Environmental management ○ Food systems*　　　　　　　　　　*Asterisked hubs will also each have a health determinants / outcomes lens ○ Health (with 'spokes' for health emergencies, mental health, and preventive services)　　**Example of additional hubs being considered: 　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　○ Housing, transportation & other community amenities • **Commission or fund** radically more timely, relevant and affordable **syntheses** (and write calls and require proposals that leverage and contribute to the infrastructure and help move us to full coverage)
Regional hubs for evidence intermediaries	• *Less relevant*
Open (evidence synthesis) data system	• **Access synthesis data** – both synthesis-ready data and AI-ready data – to support **re-analysis and** to create feedback loops for next-generation **evaluation planning** • **Share evaluation data** – as part of a commitment to 'open government' – so that it can be incorporated in syntheses • *Less relevant*
Living inventory of AI-DESTs	• **Make informed choices, and improve reporting**, about AI-enabled digital evidence-synthesis tools (AI-DESTs) alongside the RAISE guidance and proposed UN-ESIC 'AI Commons'

3) Philanthropic funders

Year 1 investments	'Ways in' to ESIC

Sectoral hubs for AI-enabled living evidence syntheses (AI LESs)	• **Access 'best evidence'** – including actionable insights – on the big questions of our time
	
	    ○ Climate solutions* ○ Humanitarian assistance*
	    ○ Crime and justice ○ Peace and effective institutions
	    ○ Economic growth* ○ Social protection*
	    ○ Education ○ Sustainable-development 'accelerators'
	    ○ Environmental management
	    ○ Food systems* *Asterisked hubs will also each have a health determinants / outcomes lens*
	    ○ Health (with 'spokes' for health emergencies, mental health, and preventive services) ***Example of additional hubs being considered:*
	                                  ○ *Housing, transportation & other community amenities*
	
	• **Commission or fund** radically more timely, relevant and affordable **syntheses** (and write calls and require proposals that leverage and contribute to the infrastructure and help move us to full coverage)

Regional hubs for evidence intermediaries	• **Contextualize what has been learned globally** – alongside many needed forms of local evidence, including local data analytics – to national & local levels via local evidence intermediaries (in partnership with UN Country teams)
	    ○ One hub in Africa, another hub in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a third (subregional) hub in Europe & UK
	    ○ Next pair of hubs to include Asia Pacific and Middle East (or Arab States)

Open (evidence synthesis) data system	• **Access synthesis data** – both synthesis-ready data and AI-ready data – to underpin '**best buys**' and other decision-ready formats • **Incorporate into workflows** (via APIs), such as **project review**
Living inventory of AI-DESTs	• **Make informed choices, and improve reporting**, about AI-enabled digital evidence-synthesis tools (AI-DESTs) alongside the RAISE guidance and proposed UN-ESIC 'AI Commons'
MEL infrastructure	• *Less relevant*

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Year 1 investments	'Ways in' to ESIC
Sectoral hubs for AI-enabled living evidence syntheses (AI LESs)	• **Invest in improvements in access to 'best evidence'** – including actionable insights – on the big questions of our time (and write calls and require proposals that leverage and contribute to the infrastructure and help move us to full coverage) o Climate solutions* o Humanitarian assistance* o Crime and justice o Peace and effective institutions o Economic growth* o Social protection* o Education o Sustainable-development 'accelerators' o Environmental management o Food systems* *Asterisked hubs will also each have a health determinants / outcomes lens o Health (with 'spokes' for health emergencies, mental health, and preventive services) **Example of additional hubs being considered:* o Housing, transportation & other community amenities • **Fund** radically more timely, relevant and affordable **syntheses** (and write calls and require proposals that leverage and contribute to the infrastructure and help move us to full coverage)
Regional hubs for evidence intermediaries	• **Fund local evidence intermediaries who can contextualize what has been learned globally** – alongside many needed forms of local evidence – to national & local levels (in partnership with UN Country teams and a regional hub) o One hub in Africa, another hub in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a third (subregional) hub in Europe & UK o Next pair of hubs to include Asia Pacific and Middle East (or Arab States)
Open (evidence synthesis) data system	• **Incorporate synthesis data into workflows** (via APIs), such as **peer review and research-impact assessment** • **Access synthesis data** – both synthesis-ready data and AI-ready data – to underpin **feedback loops to improve the relevance and rigour of primary research (and reduce research waste)**
Living inventory of AI-DESTs	• **Support researchers to make informed choices, and improve reporting**, about AI-enabled digital evidence-synthesis tools (AI-DESTs) alongside the RAISE guidance and proposed UN-ESIC 'AI Commons'

Additional details relevant to all funders

ESIC preparatory work	'Ways in' to ESIC
Methods for policy-scale, AI-enabled LESs	• Working – alongside Cochrane, Campbell & other methods groups – on a shared agenda of **methods transformation**, particularly for complex problems (e.g., how to address water quality or under-five mortality) and system-level solutions to these problems (e.g., food systems or urban development)
ESIC transitional arrangements	**'Ways in' to ESIC**
Funder interest group (FIG) executive	• Meeting regularly with five 'early movers' (HRB Ireland, Jacobs, NIHR, UKRI, WT) that are helping us 'fund for collective impact' and that are governing for collective impact through their own organizations
Steering group	• Appointed six leaders who are helping us 'govern for collective impact,' with one candidate from each region, and with a balance in gender and career stage and across forms of evidence and interest-holder categories
Communities council	• Invited 25 leaders of groups with 'skin in the game' – key interest-holder representatives and newly named ESIC infrastructure leaders – who will help us 'strategically coordinate for collective impact'

Things to keep in mind
• We are co-building a more fit-for-purpose evidence-synthesis infrastructure, which is exciting (and scary)
• Working within a collective-impact approach is hard, a daily commitment, and often requires tough conversations as we move towards a 'new equilibrium'

ESI

- Access to **trustworthy, actionable insights** on all of the big questions (or problems) of our time – from policy-scale, AI-enabled, living evidence syntheses – including how the insights vary by groups and contexts
  - i.e., every study (or evaluation) – from anywhere in the world – addressing the same question… all in one place, each with key data (e.g., about effect sizes) extracted and quality assessed, and with an overall synthesis about what was learned and with what equity considerations and confidence or caveats
- Access to the **synthesis- and AI-ready data** underpinning these insights and feedback in case you want to contextualize the insights for a different group or context, or you want to adjust how studies were identified and selected or how evidence was extracted, appraised and synthesized
  - i.e., extract data once and conduct quality (e.g., risk-of-bias) assessments once, and use the data many times (and thereby avoid the extraordinary duplication happening in evidence synthesis every day)