ORGANISER

A behavioural approach for
influencing organisations - Summary

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- ORGANISER is a behavioural approach to influencing organisations. It was commissioned by a cross-Government group and has been designed to support better policy making by:

  - improving the design or targeting of policy by enabling the likely behaviour of organisations to be considered in advance; and

  - reducing the risk of policy failing to achieve its ambition, by highlighting possible unintended responses from, or behaviours by, organisations.

- ORGANISER was inspired by the success of insights into individual behaviours.   As with tools such as MINDSPACE, EAST, COM-B and ISM, ORGANISER complements existing policy making approaches.

- ORGANISER is based on detailed evidence gathered by the Institute for Employment Studies during an extensive Rapid Evidence Assessment. Findings from the Rapid Evidence Assessment are published separately.

- Upon completion of the Rapid Evidence Assessment, Brook Lyndhurst worked with nearly 200 policy experts from across Government and beyond to distil from the evidence a set of common themes and to derive key insights into organisational behaviour and decision making. ORGANISER is the outcome of that process.

- Each letter of ORGANISER corresponds to a common theme; and for each theme, ORGANISER presents definitions, questions, links to useful information and suggestions for action.

- The material supports policy makers, at any point in the policy cycle, to adopt a behavioural perspective on organisations and, to avoid making assumptions that are not based in evidence about how organisations behave.

- Examples are provided, illustrating how policies across a wide range of areas have benefitted from adopting a behavioural perspective on organisations.

- ORGANISER is a resource that will support innovation in policy making and the creation of further examples and evidence in the future. As such, it is a living resource and it is hoped that all those using and testing it will contribute to its ongoing development.

The ORGANISER Approach

ORGANISER is a mnemonic derived from the titles for each of nine 'Common Themes'. The Common Themes have been derived from the evidence base and comprise a set of perspectives on organisational behaviour. Collectively, the Common Themes comprehensively capture the factors that have been shown to influence organisational behaviour and organisational decision making.

Consideration of each Theme helps to understand why organisations behave the way they do, and to begin to identify ways of influencing that behaviour. The Common Themes fall into three groups:

Those in **green** refer to behavioural factors which are **external** to an organisation

Those in **red** refer to behavioural factors which are **internal** to an organisation

Those in **orange** refer to the **decision-making processes** within an organisation

The nine themes are set out in the table overleaf. The positioning of each theme is important as it suggests relationships across themes. For example, 'relationships' and 'gaining advantage and reputation' are placed adjacent to one another because they are similar and related. The order of the themes within each of the three groups is also important as the ones at the periphery may be considered to be linked to the preceding or following category. For example, 'Aims' refer to behavioural factors which are internal to an organisation but these aims may, at times, be outward looking and, therefore, be relevant to external factors as well.

These themes, however, are not hierarchical, as may be inferred by the table. The ORGANISER approach shows the full complexity of organisational behaviour: namely, that a multiplicity of factors are at play, and they are inter-related. Just as w ith individual behaviour, there can be no presumption as to which factor is most important. It is only by adopting a careful and systematic approach, and asking the right questions, that the behavioural perspective can be brought to bear. The material in the section on 'Detailed material for each theme' helps users to adopt such a perspective. This means recognising that the evidence set out in the REA and the materials presented here is only the beginning of a process.

Only by testing and exploring the application of these insights can the true potential and ambition of the ORGANISER approach be fulfilled. This will mean drawing on the collated evidence from the research and academic community and designing pilots which test the use of the ORGANISER approach with 'live' policy options and issues. Lessons, both positive and negative, will need to be learned and shared. Experiments will need to take place in different settings, for different policy areas and by different departments and agencies. Mechanisms to conduct and evaluate these experiments and to share the lessons learned will need to be put in place. It is the beginning of an exciting time for applying behavioural insights for organisations and further improving evidence-based, open policy making.

The Nine Themes of ORGANISER		
Theme	**Brief description**	**Overarching suggested action**
External	Operating environment	Organisations operate in an environment characterised by a complex set of laws, regulations, taxes, and other influences that shape behaviour.	Map how the operating environment is enabling or constraining organisational behaviour and how this can affect your policy or issue.
	Relationships	Organisations exist within a network of relationships – with suppliers, customers, shareholders and others – that influence behaviour.	Identify most important network members and assess how your respective interests align and identify potential entry points for influence.
	Gaining advantage & reputation	Organisations pursue some sort of comparative or competitive advantage relative to others with which they either compete or compare themselves.	Assess whether your policy or issue can benefit from benchmarking similar organisations against each other
Internal	Aims	Organisations always have an aim or a goal or a purpose; and this aim shapes and helps to explain behaviour.	Frame your policy so it aligns with known organisational aims and capitalise on how your policy may positively affect or enhance organisational aims
	Norms & organisational culture	Organisations have norms – a culture, rules, an ethical framework, a sense of their own identity – that explain and influence behaviour.	Frame policy to align with internal organisational norms/values; and assess what shift in values/norms might be necessary to enable your policy to be more successful
	Internal structures	Organisations have an internal structure – leadership, teams, a more-or-less explicit distribution of power, a varied mechanism of making decisions – that shapes behaviour.	Target policies at the right level of decision makers focusing where responsibility for implementation resides within target organisations
Decision-making processes	Strategic processes	Organisations tend to be more strategic and slower in their decision-making than an individual; they are slower;. This can be positive, by softening extreme positions; or can be negative, creating a 'group-think' situation that reinforces an extreme position.	Gather evidence on decision-making by the organisation(s) and assess whether it is possible to influence any factors of negative or biased strategic decision making via your policy or issue.
	Estimation	Organisations are constrained by time and resources and use heuristics and rules of thumb – best estimates – to make decisions.	Make things easier and design implementation of policies to go with the grain of behaviour by accounting for organisational constraints and short-cuts.
	Relying on trusted sources	Organisations rely on trusted sources, in particular, to provide information, insight and judgment when making decisions.	Secure the buy-in from and use, where possible, trusted sources to deliver messages relating to your policy or issue.