

1.1 Desirable attributes of commissions

Global commissions are frequently convened to address societal challenges. Yet there is no agreed list of desirable attributes of commissions, let alone tools to support their development, reporting and evaluation.

The convenors of global commissions can likely learn a lot from the health-related field of clinical-practice guidelines, which was in a similar position three decades ago. Since then a steady stream of methodological developments led to a list of desirable attributes of clinical-practice guidelines,⁽⁸⁾ first- and second-generation tools to support guideline development, reporting and evaluation (AGREE I and II), and complementary tools to assess the quality and implementability of guideline recommendations (AGREE-REX), and to support the development, reporting and evaluation of health-systems guidance (AGREE-HS). For additional details, see the AGREE Enterprise website.

To support its own work and to lay the groundwork for future methodological developments related to global commissions, the Evidence Commission drafted a set of desirable criteria for global commissions, using as prompts the five elements of the AGREE-HS tool (which is closer to the system focus for most global commissions than clinical-practice guideline related tools).

Topic

Convened and/or funded by a formal body with the authority to act on the recommendations and/or justified by a strong rationale for the topic's priority and timeliness for decision makers who can act on the recommendations

Participants

Comprised of commissioners who have been explicitly chosen to capture many elements of the diversity required to ensure that the recommendations speak to and are likely to be used by the types of decision-makers who could take action based on the recommendations, such as by:

- types of challenge (including sector), decision-maker, and evidence
- spectrum of experience and seniority
- gender balance
- mix of ethno-racial backgrounds
- location by region and country
- languages spoken

Supported by a conflict-of-interest policy that requires commissioners and secretariat staff to publicly report their potential conflicts of interest, an independent panel (if needed) to manage these conflicts in a way that is proportionate to their risks, and secretariat staff to ensure that the influence of funders is avoided or minimized

Methods

Enabled by the use of systematic and transparent methods to:

- review the evidence (e.g., data analytics and evidence syntheses) that informed deliberations about sections (e.g., infographics, tables and text boxes) and recommendations
- engage a broader group of stakeholders to build momentum for action and to inform deliberations (e.g., through website, social media, and direct outreach to umbrella groups)
- agree upon the final recommendations (e.g., formal consensus)

Recommendations

Culminated in recommendations that are actionable and likely acceptable to decision-makers, and that promote equity

Implementability

Included plans for dissemination to ensure decision-makers are reached (e.g., translation into multiple languages, open-access publications, engagement of intermediaries, and participation in decision-maker-targeted events), and for monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuity of the work and the accountability of players involved.

The Evidence Commission adhered to these attributes as diligently as possible and used them to analyze global commissions whose reports were published from 1 January 2016 onwards, or were being drafted. We selected this start date because it coincided with the start of the Sustainable Development Goals era (2016 to 2030). Our assessment of global-commission reports against these attributes found that:



The same global commissions also formed the basis of our analysis of:

- global-commission reports by challenge type (**section 2.5**)
- global-commission reports by decision-maker type (**section 3.8**)
- global-commission reports by form of evidence (**section 4.15**)

For this section (**1.1**), as well as **sections 2.4, 3.8** and **4.14**, we focused on what was reported (which may be less than what was actually done). We did not conduct interviews or review websites. Similar work could be done for the many regional, national and sub-national commissions, which sometimes go by other names, such as: 1) advisory group; 2) advisory or review committee; 3) assessment or high-level panel; 4) national or royal commission; 5) monitoring board; 6) science academy; or 7) task force. More extensive analyses could be done using some of the methods used in an analysis of global commissions, albeit with a different focus, by Gertz and colleagues.⁽⁹⁾

A thematic analysis of recommendations from these global commissions also helped to:

- understand the gap between where we are and where we need to be in using evidence to address societal challenges, at least from the point of view of the high-profile members of global commissions (see **section 7.1**)
- improve the framing of the Evidence Commission's draft recommendations, and identify new ideas for Evidence Commission recommendations, that would help to bridge this gap (see **section 7.2**)
- identify the Evidence Commission's recommendations that align with the recommendations from other global commissions (see the 'aligned reports' column in **section 7.2**).

The methods underpinning these analyses are described in **appendix 8.1**.