



EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS
I R E L A N D



Cochrane
Ireland

Evidence Synthesis Ireland Fellowship Scheme Project Identification Form

Mentor and Host Centre

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Project title

Is Some Evidence Better than None? Developing a Risk-Benefit Framework for AI-assisted Evidence Synthesis for Policymaking

Project type and methods

Qualitative research (semi-structured interviews, co-production/participatory workshops) with framework analysis

Project details

As AI tools become embedded in evidence synthesis workflows, a critical and underexamined question is emerging for policy: not whether AI can accelerate the production of evidence outputs, but whether the outputs it produces are fit for the decisions they are meant to inform e.g., a rapid AI-generated summary may be timely but incomplete, an AI-generated systematic review is opaque, an AI-curated dataset may still require time to identify and synthesise relevant information. Each output is likely to entail a different risk-benefit profile and use case, which have different implications for the quality of decisions made.

This project starts with the provocation, “is some evidence better than none, or none better than some,” if it creates the sense of completeness, masks uncertainty, or displaces more rigorous synthesis. Building on an existing foundation of semi-structured interviews with government researchers (<https://osf.io/ytpgc/files/qwamb>), the fellow will support the next phase of data collection, analysis, and co-production.

Aims

- Develop a typology of AI-assisted evidence synthesis outputs, characterising their key features, production processes, and intended uses
- Conduct semi-structured interviews with policymakers, analysts, and scientific advisors to understand how different synthesis outputs are currently used, valued, and questioned in practice
- Identify the perceived advantages and limitations of AI-assisted outputs across dimensions including timeliness, completeness, transparency, accessibility, and risk
- Develop an initial risk-benefit framework that maps how different output types perform across varying policy contexts and conditions
- Test and refine the framework iteratively with policymakers through co-production workshops, applying it to realistic policy scenarios
- Produce actionable guidance for policymakers on the responsible selection and use of AI-assisted synthesis outputs under different conditions

Outputs

- Typology of AI-assisted evidence synthesis outputs and their characteristics
- An initial risk-benefit framework for AI-assisted synthesis, developed with policymakers and draft guidance document including guidance for commissioners of evidence synthesis
- Publication reporting the framework development methodology and findings

Any specific/desirable requirements for fellow (e.g. clinical expertise, methodological expertise)**Desirable**

- Experience with qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews and thematic or framework analysis
- Familiarity with a range of evidence synthesis methods e.g., systematic reviews, rapid reviews, evidence gap maps
- Understanding of AI tools used in evidence synthesis

Estimated start and completion dates

October 2026 – July 2027