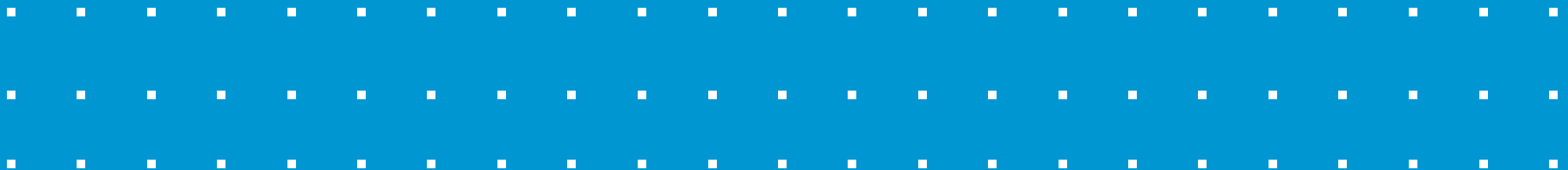




Using Evidence for Program and Policy Decisions in Federal Agencies

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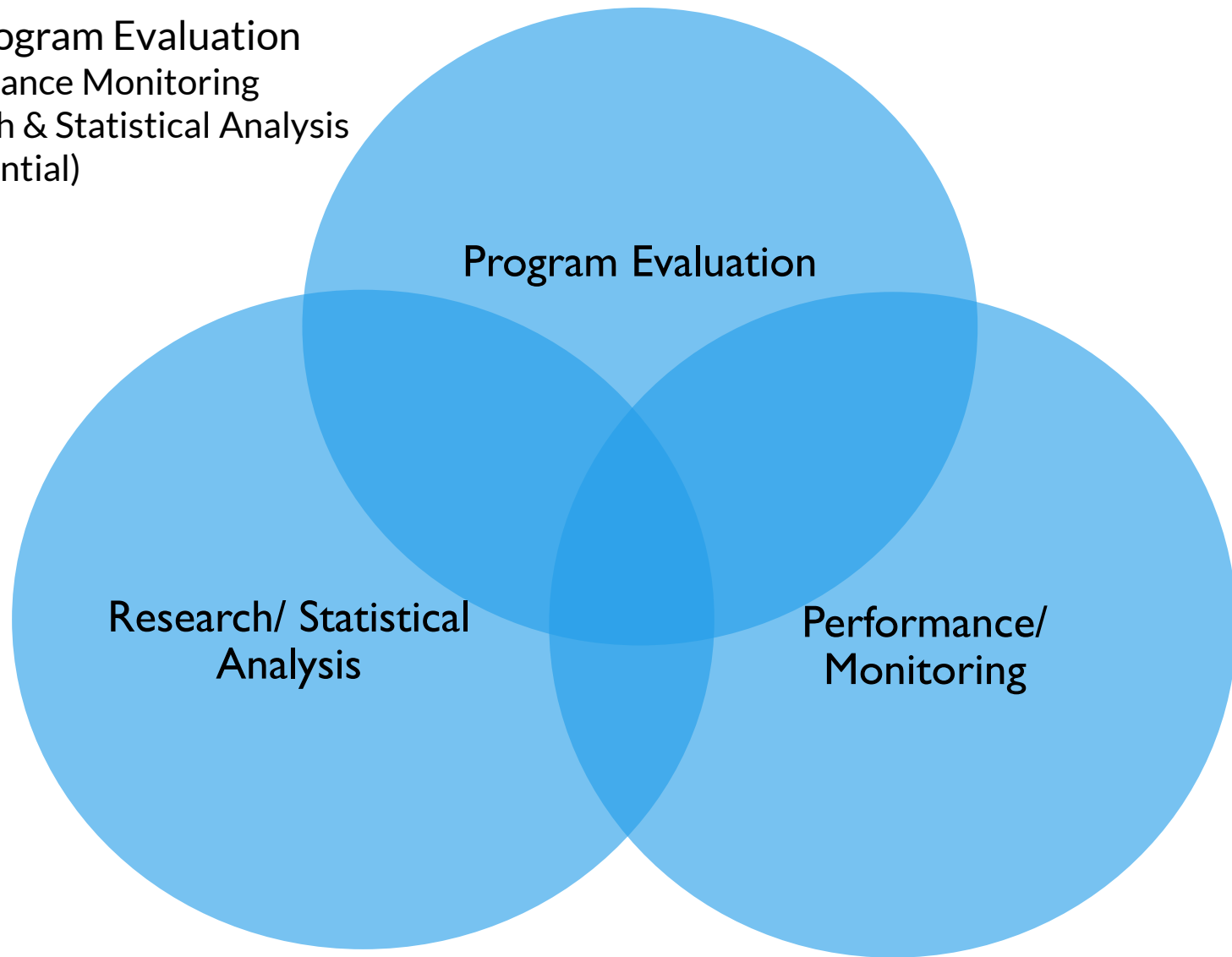


EBP Commission Recommendations

- Secure access to private and confidential data
- Modernize data security for evidence/research purposes
- Implement a National Secure Data Service for research/evidence use
- **Strengthen Federal evidence-building capacity**
 - Chief Evaluation Officer in each department
 - Develop learning agendas in departments to generate and use evidence
 - Improve coordination and cross-agency evidence activities
 - Align administrative processes (e.g., PRA, ICR, procurement) to facilitate generation of evidence
 - Ensure sufficient resources to implement these recommendations

What is evidence?

- Evidence = Program Evaluation
 - + Performance Monitoring
 - + Research & Statistical Analysis
 - + (Experiential)



Ways agencies can strengthen their use of evidence

1. Have an Evaluation Policy Statement
2. Establish/review evaluation offices' responsibilities
3. Use systematic process for evaluation plans and learning
4. Promote adoption of evidence-based strategies
5. Incorporate evidence into Budget submissions and justifications

1. Have an Evaluation Policy Statement

- Agency-tailored (department-wide or sub agency):
 - Concise (e.g. ,~1 page)
 - Agreed upon/cleared
 - Consistent application agency-wide
- Principles:
 - Rigor
 - Relevance
 - Transparency
 - Independence
 - Ethics
- New report on strengthening evidence culture (policy statement examples on p.8)
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/building-evidence-culture-and-capacity-federal-agencies>

2. Establish/review evaluation offices' responsibilities

Broad Evaluation Office (mid-size and small departments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibility : Provides expertise, coordination & guidance on evaluation policies and activities department-wide; funds/directs many evaluations; develops plan/agenda; dissemination• Autonomy: Office leads an independent evaluation-only (or primarily) office and dedicated evaluation staff• Funding: Dedicated funding for evaluation staff and evaluations• Sub agency role: Sub agencies may also have evaluation offices and \$
Coordinating Evaluation Office (large departments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibility: Provides expertise, coordination & guidance on evaluation policies and activities department-wide; funds/directs few if any evaluations• Autonomy: Office leads an evaluation-only (or primarily) office; small staff; helps establish planning/agenda and dissemination processes• Funding: Minimal if any dedicated funding for evaluation• Sub agency role: Sub agencies have main responsibility and \$ for evaluations
Facilitating Evaluation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibility: Provides expertise, coordination & guidance on evaluation policies & activities department-wide; funds/directs few if any evaluations; helps establish planning/agenda & dissemination processes• Autonomy: Office and staff have evaluation responsibilities and other related responsibilities (e.g., planning, policy, performance, budgeting)• Funding: Minimal if any dedicated funding for evaluation• Sub agency role: Sub agencies have main responsibility and \$ for evaluations

3. Use systematic process for evaluation plans and learning: learning agendas

- Plan for agency evaluations and other research and analysis
- Multi-year, updated annually (working document for internal use)
- Can also include capacity-building activities
- Process can be tailored for each department or sub-agency
 - Department-wide plan or agency plans
 - Complement strategic plans and/or operating plans and performance metrics
 - Coordination across agencies helps strengthen plans
- Stakeholder input
 - Within-agency stakeholders (program and evaluation/research unit collaboration)
 - External stakeholders
 - Public comment

Sample Learning Agenda Outline

- I. **Priorities:** ~ 3-4 key topics/issues/questions for research or evaluation, e.g.:
 - A. Performance issues (e.g., factors associated with particular outcomes for particular agency)
 - B. Program operational issues (e.g., effectiveness of particular strategies/services/programs)
 - C. Special initiatives (e.g., effect of new or proposed initiative or program)
 - D. Effectiveness of proven practice
- II. **Basic Evaluations** (e.g., descriptive statistical analysis of program activities, trends, costs, services, performance/organizational assessments)
- III. **Impact Evaluations** (causal [net] impact studies, experimental or non-experimental, clinical trials)
- IV. **Performance Analysis** (e.g., statistical analysis of activity, outputs/outcomes, performance and metrics)
- V. **Exploratory Studies** (e.g., evaluability assessments, implementation evaluations, background analysis, economic/demographic statistical analysis, simulations)
- VI. **Capacity-building Activities** (e.g., logic models, evidence-based clearinghouses, research registries/archives, staff seminars, internships, evaluation TA, cross-departmental collaborations)

Obtaining Learning Agenda Stakeholder Input

- Internal stakeholders
 - Collaborative effort of program/operational offices and evaluation specialists (webinars, requests for priorities/interests)
 - Field office input (either at initial stage or to review drafts)
 - Agency leadership input
- External stakeholders
 - Congressional committees; OMB offices (retain inquiries)
 - Research/academic community (Request for Information, webinars)
 - Public comment (e.g., Request for Information, or public notice of draft plan in Federal Register)
 - Optional contractor assistance to obtain and compile stakeholder input

4. Promote wider adoption of evidence-based strategies

- Disseminate evidence on proven practices with: catalogs, inventories, and clearinghouses
- **Evidence-based registries** of programs or strategies based on proven strategies and models demonstrating evidence of effectiveness (useful for evaluators)
 - Example: Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE)
<https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/About-Us/5/Executive-Summary/20/2>
- **Evidence Library Portals** with abstracts, publications, evaluation guidance, and TA (useful for practitioners)
 - Example: USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse
<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx>
- **Evidence-based clearinghouses** with evidence reviews, ratings, and standards for methodological rigor and effectiveness (useful for policymakers)
 - Example: Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

5. Incorporate evidence into budget submission and justifications

- Agency/program budget requests
 - Include a chapter (or section) in budget submission to OMB
 - Cite relevant findings from research or evaluation for new budget requests
 - Indicate evidence-building when possible
 - Consider tiered funding for discretionary grants when possible (e.g., higher grant amounts for scale-up replication of evidence-based strategy; basic grant amount for innovation with rigorous evaluation to test concept or effectiveness)
- Evaluation budget requests
 - Include an evidence chapter in budget submission
 - Include an evidence chapter in Strategic Plan
 - Align evaluations to strategic priorities
 - Consider cross-agency priorities and cross-agency evidence-building
 - Consider capacity-building (not just evaluations) (e.g., clearinghouses, fellowships, staff development, data analytics/sciences)
 - Consider creative/flexible funding mechanisms (e.g., set asides, IAAs)



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