Building Evidence
Culture and Capacity

DEMETRA SMITH NIGHTINGALE
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Overview

- What is the evidence-based policymaking context?
- Evidence-based Policy Commission and Guidance for Foreign Assistance Agencies recommendations
- Principles of Evidence Culture
- Building Evidence Capacity
- Disseminating Results and Findings
Evidence-based Policy Context--Performance and Evaluation

- Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act 2010 (following GPRA and PART earlier)
  - Strategic Priorities & Quarterly Reviews
  - CAPs (cross-agency priorities)
- Office of Management and Budget “Guidance”
  - Evidence-based budgeting
  - Capacity building (e.g., data, utilization, knowledge)
- White House Budgets for FY 2018 and FY 2019
- OMB Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines for Foreign Assistance Departments and Agencies (Jan. 2018)
- Evidence-based Policy Commission (September 2017)
Evidence = Evaluation + Performance Measurement + Statistical Analysis + Policy Analysis
White House Budgets FY 2018 and FY 2019

- FY 2019 Budget title: “Efficient, Effective, Accountable”
- “Hiring and deploying trained staff
- “Ensuring independence and rigor in statistics and evaluations”
- “Using cost-effective, cutting-edge methods”
- “Bring evidence to bear in policy and program decisions”
- “Make better use of administrative data” with security
Performance Management & Monitoring vs. Evaluation

- **Performance measurement**: a management function, occurs regularly to plan, track activities, outputs, outcomes (i.e., results/progress towards goals), and manage.
  - Uses program (administrative) data; MIS; possibly from multiple agencies
  - Conducted within a program/agency
  - Cross-sectional, point in time data (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually) and by unit (e.g., office, work unit, agency, state, nation)

- **Program monitoring**: a management function, tracking program or grant compliance
  - Uses program or grantee reported information (sometimes with official administrative data)
  - Based often on logic models (resources, activities/inputs, outputs, outcomes)

- **Program evaluation**: conducted **periodically** to address outcome/impact questions.
  - Uses program data and (often) other collected data
  - Typically conducted by independent evaluators
  - Strongest designs measure causality (e.g., net impact with a counterfactual/comparison)
Foreign Assistance Agency Guidelines

- Delineates the distinction between monitoring and evaluation
- Requires evidence “principles” for evidence activities
- Emphasizes logic models for clarifying the link between objectives, programs, and outcomes
- Use monitoring and evaluation plans
- Apply rigorous analytic methods
Definitions (FY 2018 Budget)

- Evidence culture: infrastructure for agencies to build and use evidence information for continuous learning, effectiveness, and performance improvement
  - “ask and answer” critical questions related to effective programs and practices
  - “improve or eliminate” ineffective programs and practices
  - “test” innovative and promising programs and practices
  - “find lower cost ways” to improve results
- Evidence capacity—activities, procedures, and skills needed to establish and maintain an evidence culture (functional approach)
Evidence capacity functions (FY 2019 Budget)

- Evaluation policy and principles
- Designated evaluation office or staff
- Learning agendas/evaluation plans
- Interagency coordination around building and using evidence
- Leverage evaluation funding and funding flexibilities
- Improve quality, accessibility, and use of administrative data
- “Use evidence to learn and improve”
Evaluation Policy Statement

- Principles
  - Rigor
  - Relevance
  - Transparency
  - Independence Ethics

- Agency-tailored
  - Concise (e.g. 1 page)
  - Agreed upon/cleared
  - Consistent application agency-wide
  - Meanwhile adopt some
Developing learning agendas/evaluation plans

- Systematic plans for evaluations and other research and analysis. Multi-year but updated annually (working document for internal use).
- Can also include capacity building activities. Tailored process for each department.
  - 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)

II. Basic Evaluations (e.g., descriptive statistical analysis of program activities, trends, costs, services, organizational implementation)

III. Impact Evaluations (causal [net] impact studies, experimental or non-experimental)

IV. Performance Analysis (e.g., statistical analysis of activity, outputs/outcomes, performance and metrics)

V. Exploratory Studies (e.g., evaluability assessments, background policy reviews, 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)
Strategies to Obtain Stakeholder Input to Evaluation Plans/Agendas

- **Internal stakeholders**
  - Collaborative effort of program/operational offices and evaluation specialists
  - Field/mission input (either at initial stage or to review drafts)
  - Agency leadership

- **External stakeholders**
  - Congressional committees; OMB offices
  - Research/academic community
  - 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
Strategies for Staff Development

- Allow 2-3 days a year for evaluation staff to attend conferences, workshops, seminars
- Encourage participation at cross-agency meetings and workshops (e.g., OMB, ICE-P, agency evaluations “fairs” or “days”)
- Allow staff to serve on grant review panels in other agencies
- Hold evaluation-related webinars for field/mission staff; build “Community of Practice”
Urban Institute Federal Evaluation Workshop Series

- Facilitate an exchange of information across agencies to share lessons and practices
  - Building evidence
  - Expanding rigorous analysis
  - Using results of evaluations and evidence in decision-making and management
  - Strengthening an evidence culture

- Agencies are on the evidence capacity continuum
  - Sessions cover issues at different points on the continuum
  - Web options
Catalogs, Inventories, Clearinghouses

- **Catalogs and Inventories of Agency-funded Research** (e.g., study, authors, reports; some abstracts, some new studies); no ratings
- **Archives and Bibliographic Records of Research**; no ratings
- **Library Portals**; no ratings
- **Evidence-based Clearinghouses**, with standards, guidelines and ratings; syntheses/collaboratives
- **Registries/directories/indices of research studies and reports** (e.g., “proven strategies” or models based on evidence); usually
Examples of Research Registries/Directories/Indices

- Evidence-based Registries of programs or strategies based on proven strategies and models evidence of effectiveness (evidence-based registries)
  - Example: Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) [https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/About-Us/5/Executive-Summary/2012](https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/About-Us/5/Executive-Summary/2012)

- Study Registries of designs (before and/or after completion of the study)
  - Example: ClinicalTrials.gov directory of clinic trials/research studies of designs and, later, results [https://clinicaltrials.gov/](https://clinicaltrials.gov/)
  - Example: Campbell Collaborative registry of rigorous meta analysis at design stage, following standards before analysis, then publication [https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.html](https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.html)
Examples of Archives

- Archives and Bibliographic Records of Research Studies (e.g., study, authors, design, study type, publication, data bases; some with new studies listed and designs) no ratings

  - Example: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)  
    https://eric.ed.gov/

  - Example: U of Maryland Inspection and Compliance Research Archive  

  - Example: Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS)  
Examples of Evidence Library Portals

- Evidence Library Portals/Hubs with evidence-informed entries, **abstracts**, **publications**, evaluation guidance and TA (e.g., for practitioners, researchers, or others); no ratings
  - Example: USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse
  - Example: Self Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse
    [https://www.opressrc.org/about-ssrc](https://www.opressrc.org/about-ssrc)
  - Example: Workforce Systems Strategies
    [https://strategies.workforcegps.org/](https://strategies.workforcegps.org/)
Examples of Evidence-based Clearinghouses

- Evidence-based Clearinghouses, with evidence reviews, ratings and standards (methodological rigor and effectiveness)
  - Examples: Crime Solutions [https://www.crimesolutions.gov/](https://www.crimesolutions.gov/)
  - Examples: CLEAR [https://clear.dol.gov/](https://clear.dol.gov/)

- Syntheses and Systematic Reviews
  - Example: Campbell Collaboration (published reports from registered evidence-review study designs) [https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/](https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/)
Standards/Quality Categories in Evidence-based Clearinghouses

- **Research Design:**
  - Study questions
  - Conceptual framework or logic model
  - Evidence/theoretical base
  - Evaluation design

- **Analytic Approach:**
  - Outcome/impact measures
  - Sampling (e.g., sample size, sample selection method, baseline equivalency, stratification, attrition)
  - Data collection methods (e.g., instrumentation, follow-up)
  - Analytic methods (e.g., internal/external validity, modeling, subgroup analysis)
  - Operational setting/context (e.g., implementation)
Information and Contact

- Demetra Nightingale  dnightingale@urban.org
- Urban Institute web site  https://www.urban.org/
  - Capacity building page  https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/evidence-based-policy-capacity