Improving the Impact of Social Programs Through a Comprehensive Approach to Design and Evaluation

Thursday, January 25, 2024
Washington, DC and Online
Welcome

Paul Decker
President and CEO
Mathematica
Approaches and Evaluation Methods Relevant Over a Program’s Lifecycle

Design and piloting
- Formative evaluations
- Theory of change/program logic and design
- Developmental evaluations
- Rapid cycle evaluations
- Behavioral change
- Evaluability assessment

Implementation
- Program Monitoring and performance management
- Process and Implementation Evaluation
- Implementation Science
- Costing of programs

Assessing and interpreting impacts
- Performance Evaluations
- Impact Evaluations
- Cost Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness

Scale-up and systems change
- Effectively scaling-up promising programs
- Systems Change Research
The Oxford Handbook of
PROGRAM DESIGN AND
IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

Contributors

Samia Amin, Kathy Armstrong, Emilie Bagby,
Michael Bamberger, Rukmini Banerji, Tanya Beer,
Randall Blair, William Borden, Samantha Carter, Julia
Coffman, William J. Congdon, Jesse C. Crosson,
Laura J. Damschroder, Anupama Dathan, Annie Dufllo,
Rebecca S. Etz, Rebecca Goldsmith, Martha M. Gonzalez,
Mary Kay Gugerty, Michelle Kaffenberger, Rosalind E. Keith,
Kathleen Knocke, Helen Lee, Celeste Lemrow, Kevin Cyrus
Hong, David A. Long, Arif Mamun, Michelle S. Manno,
Heidi McAnnally-Linz, Laura Meyer, Candace Miller,
Kyle Murphy, Nancy Murray, Katie Naeve, Gulzar Natarajan,
Demetra Smith Nightingale, Michael Quinn Patton,
Irma Perez-Johnson, Anne Pizer, Diane Paulsell,
Byron J. Powell, Shawn Powers, Anu Rangarajan,
Patricia J. Rogers, Roy T. Sabo, Jason Silberstein,
Marla Spivack, Daniel Stid, Marissa Strassberger,
Kai Stryczynski, Caroline Tangoren, Louisa Treskon,
Craig Thornton, Bala Venkatachalam, Daniele Vidoni,
Delia Welsh, Josh Wright, Michael Woolcock,
Peter York, Alix Peterson Zwane
Agenda

Author presentations

/ Michael Woolcock, 
World Bank – Process Evaluations

/ Alix Zwane, 
Global Innovation Fund – Scale-up

/ Emilie Bagby, 
Mathematica – Rapid Cycle Evaluations

Discussants

/ Melissa Chiappetta, USAID

/ Michelle Sager, U.S. Government 
Accountability Office

Closing Remarks

/ Doug Besharov, University of Maryland

Questions and Answers

Wrap Up

5:00 – 6:00
Reception for in-person attendees
Author Presentations
Process Evaluations

Michael Woolcock
Lead Social Scientist
Development Research Group, World Bank
Five Types of Process Evaluations: What they are, what they do, why they matter

Patricia Rogers (Founder, Better Evaluation)
Michael Woolcock (World Bank)

25 January 2024

Introducing Chapter 14 of the Oxford Handbook of Program Design and Implementation Evaluation (2023)
Why do many social programs have such a poor track record?

What can we do to maximize a program’s chance of success?

If a program shows promise, how can we scale it up?

_Process evaluations can help us answer these questions._
1. Chronicle

Detailed account of what happened during implementation
2. Compliance/fidelity

Whether intended activities were implemented appropriately
3. Translation

Understand contextual factors needed to achieve positive outcomes in new settings or at larger scale
4. Improvement

Enhance real-time implementation to improve outcomes and impacts
5. Adaptive management

Support ongoing learning and replanning in situations of uncertainty and unpredictable change
Challenges for evidence-based policy and practice that process evaluations can address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Type of process evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Know what is actually involved in an innovation</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distinguish between implementation failure and theory failure</td>
<td>Compliance/fidelity</td>
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<td>Understand in which contexts an intervention might work</td>
<td>Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support ongoing improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting under conditions of ongoing uncertainty and insufficient evidence</td>
<td>Adaptive management</td>
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A quick example from India: When an impact evaluation yields an “It didn’t work” verdict...
Scale-up

Alix Zwane
Chief Executive Officer
Global Innovation Fund
Rapid Cycle Evaluations for Program Improvement

Emilie Bagby
Director, International Education
Mathematica
Rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) is broad and is usable across the program lifecycle.

RCE is a systematic and iterative approach to facilitate learning around programmatic elements.
RCE can be used for a range of purposes

- Diagnose challenges and identify operational choices
- Identify facilitators to implementation and take-up of services
- Pilot test and identify solutions for scaling-up
It encompasses a range of methods
Case study

Education Project in Senegal

- USAID-funded technical assistance (2016-2021) to the Ministry of Education
- Implemented at scale in public schools across ~half of the country
- Learning during implementation was of key interest to USAID and project implementers
Case study Education Project in Senegal (cont’d)

// To answer early questions about specific elements of activities
  • In-person usability testing
  • Simple A/B testing
  • Semi-structured interviews

// To answer a more fundamental question about a core activity
  • Qualitative research of barriers and facilitators
  • Followed by a small sample RCT

// To understand the short-term impact of one activity
  • RCT using Bayesian analysis
  • Qualitative research
Discussants
Melissa Chiappetta
Senior Education Advisor, Latin America and the Caribbean
U.S. Agency for International Development
Michelle Sager
Managing Director for Strategic Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Evidence-Based Policymaking

January 25, 2024

Michelle Sager
Managing Director
Strategic Issues
sagerm@gao.gov
SERVING THE CONGRESS

Mission

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and ensure the accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

Scope of Work

GAO performs a range of oversight-, insight-, and foresight-related engagements, a vast majority of which are conducted in response to congressional mandates or requests. GAO’s engagements include evaluations of federal programs and performance, financial and management audits, policy analyses, legal opinions, bid protest adjudications, and investigations.
Multiple Laws Direct Evidence-Building and Performance Management Activities

- November 1990
  Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990
  (Public Law 101-576)

- October 1994
  Government Management and Reform Act of 1994
  (Public Law 103-356)

- February 1996
  Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996
  (Public Law 104-13)

- December 2002
  E-Government Act of 2002
  (Public Law 107-347)

- May 2006
  Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act
  (Public Law 109-282)

- September 2011
  GPRA Modernization Act of 2010
  (Public Law 111-352)

- January 2011
  Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016
  (Public Law 114-191)

- December 2016
  Program Management Improvement Accountability Act of 2016
  (Public Law 114-264)

- March 2016
  Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016
  (Public Law 114-140)

- July 2016
  Inventory of Program Activities of Federal Agencies

- January 2021
  National Secure Data Service

- August 2022
  Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018
  (Public Law 115-435)
Evidence-Based Policymaking Guide

- Help executive branch leaders and employees at any organizational level build and use evidence
- Primer on federal evidence-building and performance management
- 13 key practices to effectively implement evidence-building and performance management activities
Key Practices for Evidence-Building and Performance-Management Activities

• The key practices are distilled from hundreds of actions identified in GAO’s past work

• For each practice, we
  - identify key actions to implement it,
  - provide an illustrative example,
  - identify selected related legal requirements, and
  - list our related past work
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Congressional Relations
A. Nicole Clowers, Managing Director, ClowersA@gao.gov
441 G Street, NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548

Public Affairs
Chuck Young, Managing Director, youngc1@gao.gov
441 G Street, NW, Room 7149, Washington, DC 20548

Strategic Planning and External Liaison
Stephen J. Sanford, Managing Director, spel@gao.gov
(202) 512-4707, U.S. Government Accountability Office,
441 G Street NW, Room 7814, Washington, DC 20548

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Closing Remarks
Douglas Besharov
Professor
University of Maryland
School of Public Policy
Q & A
Questions?

Virtual participants, submit via the Slido panel on the right side of your screen.

In-person participants, raise your hand for the microphone, or scan the QR code to submit electronically.
Wrap up
Supplemental Materials

/ Presenter Bios
/ Presentation Slides
/ 30% discount code
Thank You!