DATA FOUNDATION
U.S. Government Accountability Office

ISSUES IN EVALUATION: IMPROVING PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

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- Provides expertise in program evaluation methods that are used to study the implementation and effectiveness of government policies and programs;
- Strengthens available evaluation methods, within and outside of GAO;
- Promotes evidence-based policy and management;
- Disseminates knowledge of program evaluation.
Issues in Evaluation Panel: CEMI

Products

• Select Listing of Past CEMI reports:
  • Designing Evaluations (GAO-12-208G)
  • Program Evaluation: Annual Agency-Wide Plans Could Enhance Leadership Support for Program Evaluations (GAO-17-743)
  • Program Evaluation: Some Agencies Reported that Networking, Hiring, and Involving Program Staff Help Build Capacity (GAO-15-25)
• Current report: GAO-21-404SP, Program Evaluation: Key Terms and Concepts updates previous glossary (GAO-11-646SP) that compared Performance Measurement and Evaluation terms.
Key Terms and Concepts
Timeline of Relevant Statutes and Guidance Since 2009

• Helps provide the context for evaluation and evidenced-based policymaking in the federal government
• Expanded requirements for information about agency evaluation plans to be made public (2010, GPRAMA)
• Expanded requirements for standardization and reporting of government spending data (2014, DATA Act)
• Requirements for expanding agency evidence-building capacities (2018, Evidence Act)
• Requirements for making federal government data open by default (Title II of the Evidence Act, Open Government Data Act)
Program Evaluation: Key Terms and Concepts (GAO-21-404SP)

Useful guide both within and outside GAO:

• Facilitates conversations with GAO teams about potential criteria, evidence sources (including existing evaluations), and the design and selection of approaches and methods for a given project
• Expands and updates prior publication
• Publicly available as a reference and tool for teaching, learning about and conducting evaluation
Objectives, Scope, Methodology

• Objectives
  • Standardize a lexicon for our various communities of practice
  • Describe key products from recent legislation
  • Describe program evaluation’s unique role alongside other complementary forms of evidence

• Methodology
  • Review of Statutes, OMB Guidance, academic literature, AEA guidance, and a significant body of GAO reports
  • Infographic
Enhancing Evidence Building Capacity

- Establishing a culture of evaluation…the long view

- Continuous learning practices: Data reviews, Reviews of performance measures, Meta-evaluation, Capacity assessment

- Conducting evaluations and embedding quality through Transparency, Independence, Ethics, Relevance, Rigor

- Use of evaluation in decision making
Discussant

Diana Epstein
Evidence Team Lead, the White House Office of Management and Budget
Diana Epstein  
Evidence Team Lead  
Office of Management and Budget
OMB’s Implementation of the Evidence Act

**Phase 1: Learning Agendas, Personnel, & Planning**
- Learning Agendas
- Chief Data Officers
- Evaluation Officers
- Statistical Officials
- Agency Data Governance Boards
- Chief Data Officer Council
- Evaluation Officer Council
- Interagency Council on Statistical Policy
- Agency Evaluation Plans
- Capacity Assessments
- Open Data Plans

**Phase 2: Open Data Access & Management**
- Make Data Open by Default
- Comprehensive Data Inventory
- Federal Data Catalogue
- Repository of Tools and Best Practices

**Phase 3: Data Access for Statistical Purposes**
- Make Agency Data Assets Available to Statistical Units
- Expand Users’ Secure Access to Data Assets through Statistical Units
- Allow Recognition of New Statistical Units
- Standardize Application Process for Accessing Data Assets
- Codify Statistical Unit Responsibilities

**Phase 4: Program Evaluation**
- Program Evaluation Standards and Best Practices
- Program Evaluation Skills and Competencies (with OPM)

**Ongoing Implementation & Reporting**
- Budget Cycles
- Information Resource Management Plans
- Performance Plans
- Strategic Plans
- Federal Data Strategy Annual Action Plans
- Open Data Biennial Report
- Statistical Programs Annual Report
- Regulatory Planning
- Information Collection Review
Components of Evidence

Policy Analysis
Analysis of data, such as general purpose survey or program-specific data, to generate and inform policy, e.g., estimating regulatory impacts and other relevant effects

Program Evaluation
Systematic analysis of a program, policy, organization, or component of these to assess effectiveness and efficiency

Foundational Fact Finding
Foundational research and analysis such as aggregate indicators, exploratory studies, descriptive statistics, and basic research

Performance Measurement
Ongoing, systematic tracking of information relevant to policies, strategies, programs, projects, goals/objectives, and/or activities

Source: OMB M-19-23, July 2019
Program Evaluation Standards and Practices

  • Relevance and Utility
  • Rigor
  • Independence and Objectivity
  • Transparency
  • Ethics

• Includes ten leading practices to support agencies’ implementation of the standards
Discussant

Tom Chapel
Former Chief Evaluation Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HHS
VIRTUAL DATA SYMPOSIUM 2021
May 18 – May 21, 2021
RSVP
Thank you for participating

Learn more at datafoundation.org

To view the new GAO publication, visit https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-404sp