

# Social Innovation Fund – 2015 NOFA: Evidence & Evaluation Webinar

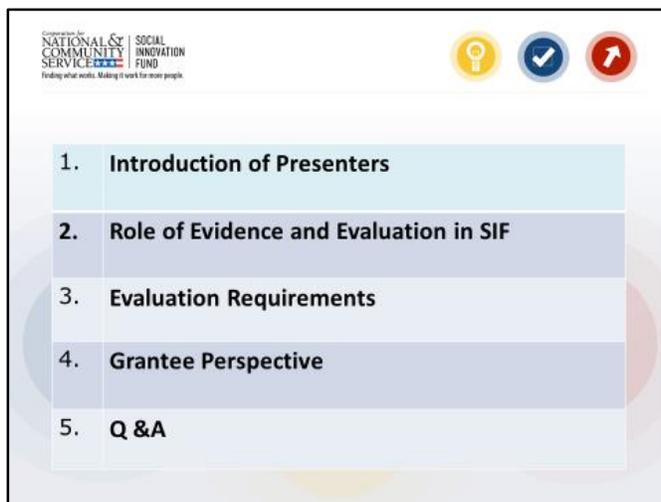
February 18, 2015

**Speakers:** Rose Armour, Training Manager (SIF/CNCS); Andrea Robles, Research Analyst (Research & Evaluation/CNCS); Ayo Atterberry, Director of Outcomes, Assessment and Learning (Venture Philanthropy Partners); Lois Nembhard, Acting Director (SIF/CNCS); & Lily Zandniapour, Evaluation Manager (Research & Evaluation/CNCS)



## Slide 1 (Rose)

Title slide



## Slide 2: Objectives (Rose)

My name is Rose Armour and I am the Training Manager for the Social Innovation Fund.

The purpose of this webinar is to provide you with an overview of the SIF's evidence and evaluation expectations and requirements.

Hopefully you or a colleague have either participated in the overview webinar or reviewed the materials because on today's webinar, we will assume that you understand

how the SIF works and will not be covering background information.

Our agenda today includes 1. Introduction of Presenters; 2. Role of Evidence and Evaluation in SIF; 3. Evaluation Requirements; 4. Grantee Perspective; and 5. Q&A

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## PRESENTERS

**Andrea Robles, Ph.D.**  
Research Analyst  
Office of Research and Evaluation, CNCS

**Ayo Atterberry**  
Director of Outcomes, Assessment, and Learning  
Venture Philanthropy Partners

### Slide 3: Presenters (Rose)

Our presenters today are Andrea Robles, Research Analyst in the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation, and, Ayo Atterberry, Director of Outcomes, Assessment and Learning from Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP).

I will now turn you over to Andrea.

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## ROLE OF EVIDENCE AND EVALUATION IN SIF

### Slide 4: Subtitle: Role of Evidence and Evaluation in SIF (Andrea)

Hi everyone - thank you for joining us today. I am going to begin with the role of evidence and evaluation in SIF.

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## SIF: Stages of Development

Start-up → Nascent → Promising → "Proven" as effective

### SIF Focus: Promising Interventions

- At least preliminary evidence of results
- Ready for more substantial evaluation
  - Quasi Experimental Design (QED) or Random Control Trial (RCT)
- Poised for expansion to more people or new communities in need of promising innovations.
- The competition and funds are for grant-making institutions; these grant making institutions
  - will implement and evaluate the promising innovation itself; or,
  - select subgrantees (e.g., non-profits, etc.) that will implement and evaluate promising innovations

### Slide 5: SIF: Stages of Development (Andrea)

The nonprofit marketplace offers many sources of funding for new ideas to be explored and tested. These new ideas are at the earliest stages of idea development and innovation. As you see from this graphic, SIF is not intended for these start-ups but for models that have at least some existing evidence of results. In other words, SIF is intended for innovations that already have some type of research or

evaluation that have shown positive results, and are ready for a more substantial evaluations. By a more substantial evaluation we mean implementing an intervention that can be evaluated using a Quasi-Experimental Design (QED) or a Random Control Trial (RCT).

Additionally, SIF is intended for innovations that are interventions or models poised for expansion to more people or communities, in other words they are ready to be scaled up.

It is important to note, that the SIF competition is intended for grant-making institutions that we also commonly refer to as intermediaries. It is the intermediary that will implement and evaluate the promising innovation itself; or, it is the intermediary that will select subgrantees (such as non-profits) to implement and evaluate promising models and innovations.



**Slide 6: SIF: Growing Investment and Impact (Andrea)**

This graphic and additional information on evaluation can be found at:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund/evidence-evaluation>

As of January 2015, the majority (72%) of SIF grantees started with interventions assessed at preliminary, and as you see from the graphic, with investments in rigorous evaluation designs, the majority (74%) are on the way towards reaching a strong or moderate level of evidence. I should note however, that 2010, our first funding year, interventions were not required to reach moderate or strong levels of evidence, thus you see that there are some interventions that will reach only a preliminary level of evidence, this however, is no longer allowed under SIF.

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## Role of Evidence & Evaluation

Reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund, which employs evidence and evaluation in two primary ways:

**1) To select experienced intermediaries**

SIF examines:

- Intermediaries' experience of and capacity for using evidence to assess effectiveness of their programs and interventions, and drive impact
- Whether intermediaries are proposing or using program models with at least "preliminary" evidence of results

### **Slide 7: Role of Evidence and Evaluation (Andrea)**

As you know by now from listening to the SIF NOFA webinars (The prerecorded SIF NOFA Overview Webinar can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHF4bpegK0&feature=youtu.be>) and reading the NOFA or other information on the SIF website, reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund, which employs evidence and evaluation in two primary ways:

First, SIF examines intermediaries experience and capacity to use evidence to assess the effectiveness of their programs and interventions, and to drive impact. SIF also examines whether intermediaries are proposing or using program models with at least "preliminary" evidence of results. I will expand on this further in just a few slides.

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## Role of Evidence & Evaluation

Reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund, which employs evidence and evaluation in two primary ways:

**2) SIF aims to grow the body of evidence for interventions that work**

Intermediaries commit to increase evidence base:

- through rigorous evaluation for each intervention, and,
- to achieve "moderate" or "strong" levels of evidence for each intervention

### **Slide 8: Role of Evidence and Evaluation (Andrea)**

Second, SIF also aims to grow the body of evidence that exist regarding interventions that work and can demonstrate positive impacts. Intermediaries commit to increase their evidence base to achieve "moderate" or "strong" levels of evidence through rigorous evaluation for each intervention or program model. So, let's unpack this a little further.

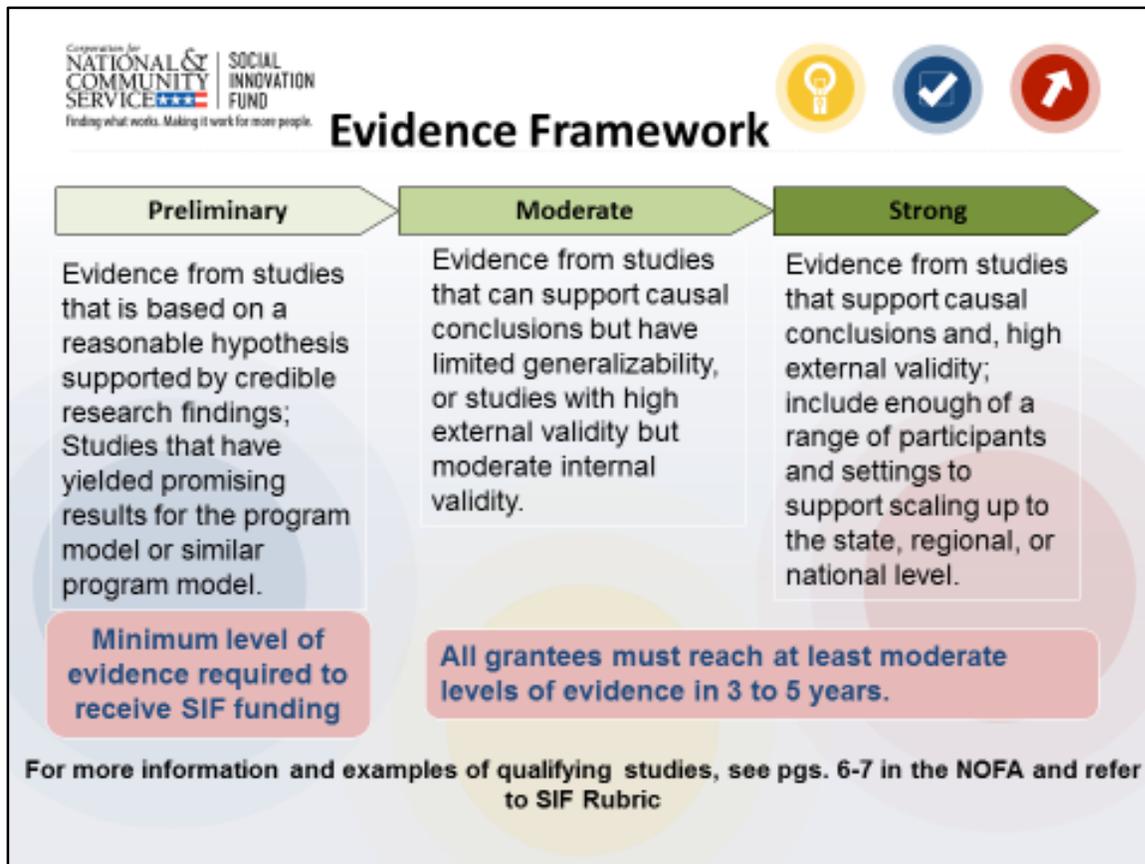


**Slide 9: Evidence Framework (Andrea)**

**In SIF, what does it mean to increase an evidence base of an intervention?** This is a schematic of what we call the “Evidence Framework” and it helps to visualize an increase in an evidence base for an intervention within the SIF timeframe. The evidence framework is also sometimes referred to as the “evidence continuum”. Given that our end goal is to grow the body of evidence about program models and interventions that actually

work, it is critical that we appropriately categorize each intervention or program model within this continuum at their point of entry in the SIF program. Where an intervention or program model lands in this classification is what we consider the starting point to be for SIF.

The incoming level of evidence for a program model may be preliminary, moderate or strong, depending on the existing **body of evidence** behind the intervention, which I will explain in more detail in the next slide. Then, during the SIF grant period of 3 to 5 years, the grantees’ goal is to construct and implement **rigorous evaluation designs** that will increase the body of evidence behind each intervention or program model and move them along this continuum.



### Slide 10: Evidence Framework (Andrea)

**What is a body of evidence?** This includes the types of studies that have been already conducted on the intervention or program model, the methodologies used to conduct those prior studies, and the results of the studied interventions.

**So how does a grantee increase the body of evidence?** As I stated in the preceding slide, the grantees construct and implement **rigorous evaluation designs** by which we mean high quality, independent and unbiased evaluations that are consistent with the principles of scientific research.

So just to give you an example. To obtain SIF funding, an intervention must, at a minimum, be assessed as having **Preliminary** level of evidence which means demonstrating that the program model or intervention has “yielded promising results for either the program or a similar program.” Specifically, the program must have at least some outcome information from a pre- and post-test without a comparison group, or post-test comparison between program and comparison groups, to just to name a few.

Thus an advancement on the continuum for this type of intervention that shows positive results from an outcome evaluation using a pre- and post-test approach, may mean conducting an impact evaluation using a quasi-experimental or experimental design study that can get them to achieve a moderate level of evidence.

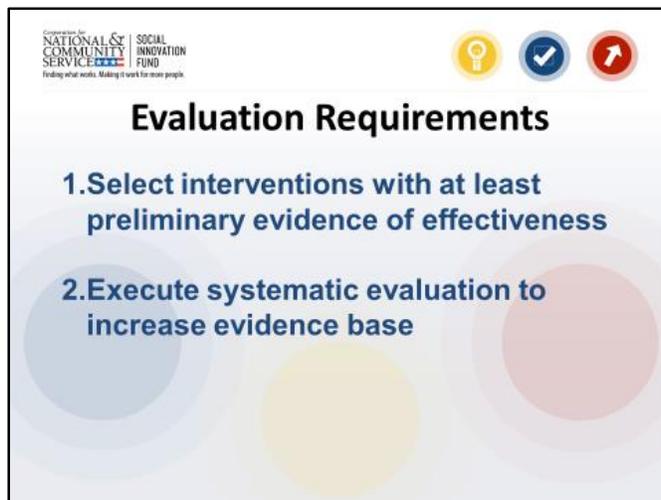
If for example, a program currently has positive results on a single site randomized controlled trial, advancing the evidence may entail conducting a random control trial across multiple sites.

And I want to reemphasize, it is an expectation of CNCS that each program model or intervention you fund in your portfolio will achieve moderate or strong evidence as defined in this continuum by the end of its three to five year grant period.



**Slide 11: Subtitle: Evaluation Requirements (Andrea)**

Now that we have reviewed the fundamental roles that evidence and evaluation play in the Social Innovation Fund, I would like to discuss the most essential evaluation requirements for grantees once they have been selected into the SIF program.



**Slide 12: Evaluation Requirements (Andrea)**

If you are selected and awarded SIF funds, there are two fundamental responsibilities that you will have in terms of evaluation:

**First**, if you are not proposing your own intervention but funding subgrantees' proposed interventions, the subgrantees you select, will also need to demonstrate that they are proposing models or interventions with at least **preliminary** levels of evidence.

**Second**, within the SIF timeframe, each intermediary will need to execute a series of systematic evaluation activities in collaboration with CNCS, your subgrantees, and your evaluation experts.






## Evaluation Requirements

### 1. Select interventions with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness

- Any proposed intervention or program must enter with preliminary evidence – this includes the intermediary level but also at the subgrantee level
- If selecting subgrantees, the intermediary will execute a competitive grant process and work in consultation with CNCS and its evaluation technical assistance provider to assess levels of evidence on proposed interventions
- See SIF Rubric: Determining Incoming Levels of Evidence

### Slide 13: Evaluation Requirements (Andrea)

If you are selecting subgrantees, you will need to design and execute your own competitive grant competition and select subgrantees for your portfolio. CNCS will work with you in a consultative manner to establish the incoming level of evidence for the proposed intervention of the short-listed subgrant candidates since they also must enter the program with at least preliminary levels of evidence.






### SIF Rubric (see SIF NOFA website)

How matched is the studied intervention to the proposed intervention by organization and similarity to intervention? Was it done by:

What type of design was used for studies where the results on relevant outcomes were positive?	Similarity to Proposed Intervention:				
	A different organization doing a similar, but not identical intervention?	A different organization doing an identical intervention? (The proposed intervention will be replicated with fidelity)	The same organization doing a combination of interventions that include the one studied?	The same organization doing an intervention that is similar, but not identical to the studied intervention?	The same organization, doing exactly the same intervention?
None or none known	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary
Implementation only	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary
Pre-post testing	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary/Preliminary (Depending on the extent of similarity)	Preliminary
Pre-post or post only with non-matched comparison group, or interrupted time series with comparison group	Not yet preliminary	Not yet preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary
Single site, well designed and implemented QED or RCT	Preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary	Preliminary	Moderate
Two or three well designed and well implemented single site RCTs or QEDs	Preliminary	Moderate	Preliminary	Preliminary/Moderate (Depending on extent of modification)	Moderate
National/large scale multi-site well designed and well implemented QED or RCT, or multiple (three or more) well designed and well implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations	Preliminary	Strong*	Preliminary	Preliminary/Moderate (Depending on extent of modification)	Strong*

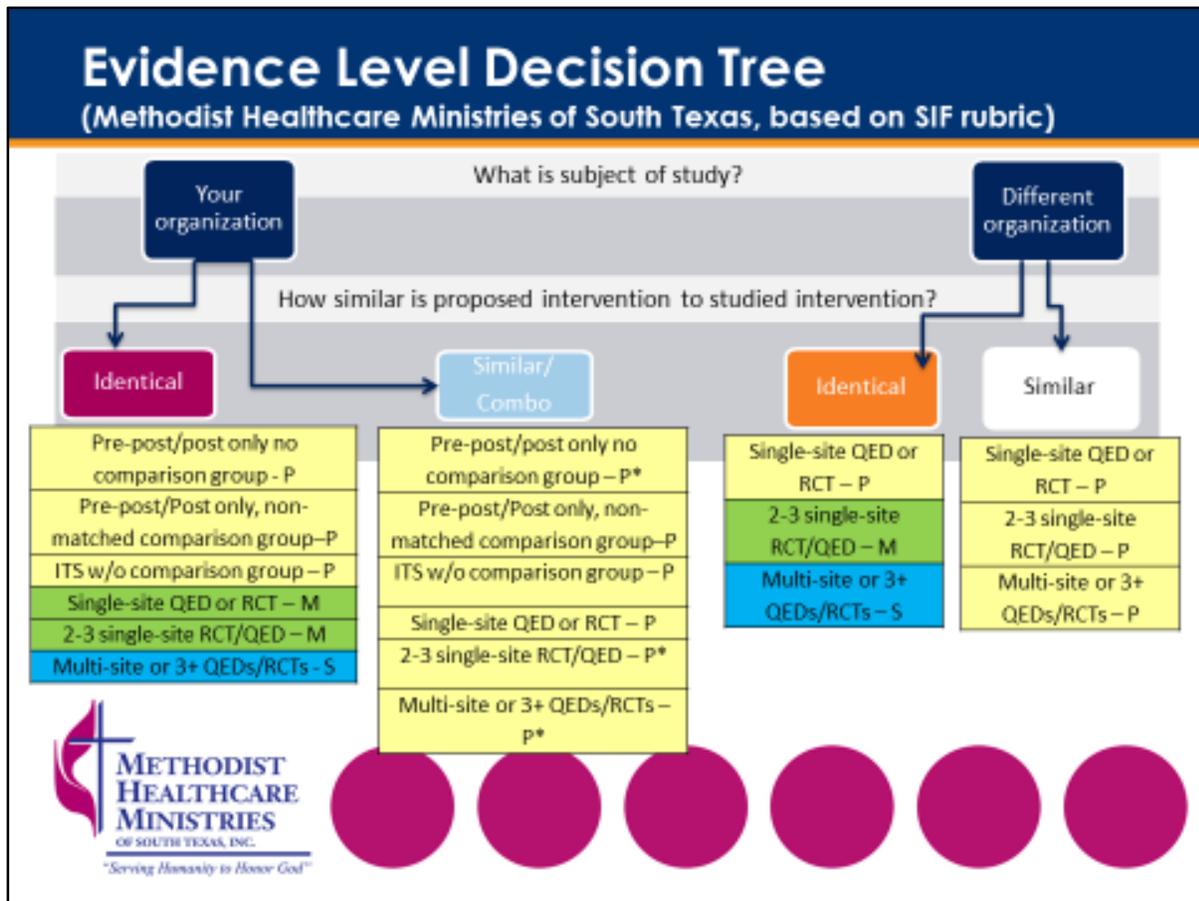
### Slide 14: SIF Rubric (Andrea)

**This rubric is available at:**  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/main-menu/2015/sif-supplemental-evaluation-resources>

**At this point, many of you are asking, how do you assess interventions' incoming levels of evidence?** In a previous slide, I gave you a few examples of how interventions or programs may be assessed, but I also want to share with you a tool that we use and have shared with our grantees to determine

incoming levels of evidence of their applicants' proposed interventions.

I know the rubric's print in this Powerpoint slide is small and hard to read, but I wanted to take the opportunity during this webinar to let you know that we do have a rubric we have developed for determining incoming level of evidence. The rubric, along with instructions on how to use it, can be found on the SIF NOFA website under "Supplemental Evaluation Resources." Although the process of determining the incoming level of evidence for an intervention requires thoughtful assessment that can be complicated and often requires technical knowledge of research and evaluation design and methods, this rubric provides a framework for assessing the existing body of evidence behind an intervention based on past research and evaluation studies conducted on the program.

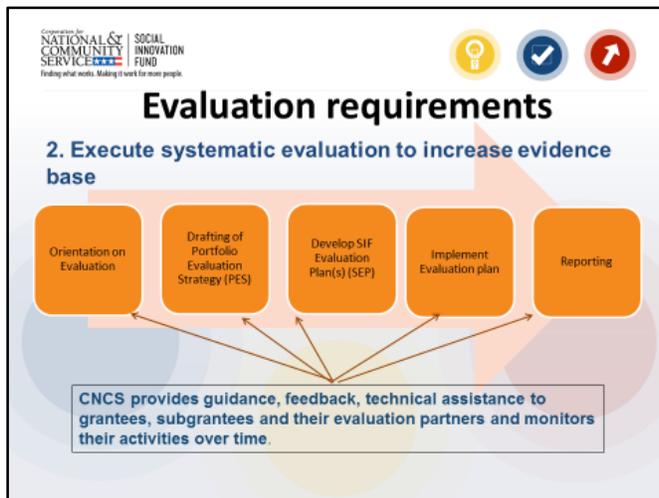


**Slide 15: MHM- Evidence Level Decision Tree (Andrea)**

I don't want to spend too much time on how one determines an intervention's level of evidence, but I did want to share this wonderful decision tree based on the SIF rubric that one of our 2014 grantees, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, created to simplify some of the main steps to determine how a study may qualify. They were kind enough to share this graphic in the hope that it may be useful to some of you as you are looking at the rubric.

1. Assuming that the study shows positive results on relevant outcomes, the next question to ask is: what is the subject of the study?
2. Is the study **your proposed** intervention or a **different** organization's intervention?
3. Is the proposed intervention :
  - a. **Identical to** the studied intervention? [SIF language: "replicated with fidelity"]
  - b. **Similar to** the studied intervention?
  - c. Or a **combination of** the studied intervention and other interventions?
4. Lastly, what type of research design did the study use?

Again, we direct you to the rubric for more detail.



## Slide 16: Evaluation Requirements (Andrea)

Besides the evaluation requirement that an intervention enters the program with at least a preliminary level of evidence, the second main responsibility for the grantees, is that within the SIF timeframe of 3 to 5 years, each intermediary will need to execute a series of systematic evaluation activities in collaboration with CNCS, your subgrantees, and your evaluation experts.

This slide presents a snapshot of the SIF Evaluation Program Process in order to better ground you in SIF's evaluation and evidence activities.

- Once intermediaries are awarded a SIF grant, they receive further **orientation** on the initiative's evaluation program.
- Each intermediary develops a **portfolio evaluation strategy** that provides a framework for CNCS and the SIF intermediary to enter a discussion on how the intermediary will approach the evaluation of its interventions or program models. Depending on the models and intended outcomes, this evaluation strategy determines whether sponsored interventions will be evaluated using multiple evaluation plans, or whether one evaluation plan will be used across a range of subgrants, or both;
- The next step in the planning process is the development of evaluation plans for all funded interventions that will build on and increase its evidence base. These plans will go through a rigorous vetting process and must be approved by CNCS before they are implemented. It typically takes about a year following the grant awards for intermediaries to have approved evaluation plans in place.
  - SIF Evaluation Plan Guidance on the SIF NOFA website  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/SIF%20Evaluation%20guidance%208%205%202014.pdf>
- Once the plans are approved, the implementation and reporting phase begins. Intermediaries are expected to closely monitor all evaluation activities tied to their portfolio of funded interventions and report progress and results of those evaluations to CNCS.
  - Intermediaries **share results** of the conducted evaluations in their portfolio by submitting interim and final evaluation reports to CNCS and ultimately make final reports available to the public in order to increase the base of knowledge about your funded interventions;
- Throughout the process, CNCS and its evaluation technical assistance provider will assist the intermediaries and their partner organizations in their evaluation efforts, offer an array of evaluation capacity building services including individualized feedback, advice, coaching, and other supportive services
- Also, during this time intermediaries are expected to provide **evaluation capacity building and technical assistance** to their subgrantees.

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**Other considerations for your evaluation:**

**Use of Contracted Evaluation Experts:** Intermediaries are required to contract with evaluation expert and/or require their subgrantees to contract with such experts.

**Funding for Evaluation Activities:** Intermediaries and their subgrantees are expected to allocate appropriate resources to cover the many activities related to the evaluation of each program model's effectiveness.

**CNCS Role:** CNCS will provide technical assistance on the design, implementation, and monitoring of their SIF evaluation plans. We want you to succeed!

**Slide 17: Other considerations for your evaluation (Andrea)**

I want to emphasize three particular points for those of you that will go on to complete and submit an application to the program.

**First**, CNCS expects that intermediaries contract with evaluation experts and/or require their subgrantees to contract with such experts. As you have heard in this presentation, this grant will require time, energy, and technical

expertise. Please carefully weigh the capacity and skillset on your own staff and consider how you might partner with external advisors and experts who can support your Social Innovation Fund efforts.

**Second**, CNCS recognizes that rigorous evaluations are expensive and that nonprofits often are unfamiliar with these costs. Given the central role that evaluation plays in the success of the Social Innovation Fund, please be advised that intermediaries and their subgrantees are expected to allocate appropriate resources to cover the many activities we have reviewed here today.

**Finally**, I really want to emphasize that CNCS is committed to supporting intermediaries in their efforts to meet their goals and increase the evidence of program effectiveness within their portfolios. CNCS sees this process of ongoing evaluation and knowledge building as a key aspect of the Social Innovation Fund that can improve grantee and subgrantee programs.

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**GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE**

**Slide 18: Subtitle: GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE (Andrea)**

Now that I have covered the basics around the role of evidence and evaluation, and evaluation requirements, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you one of our pioneer intermediary grantmaking partners in the program.



## **Slide 19: Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP) (Ayo)**

Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP) is a SIF intermediary that joined the program in 2010, its inaugural year. I believe it is fair to say that our 2010 cohort of grantees have in many ways paved the way for future cohorts of grantees. The experiences of the first group of SIF intermediaries have been extremely valuable to the program and have benefitted others that joined SIF in later years.

VPP is a philanthropic investment organization dedicated to improve the lives and boost the opportunities of children and youth of low-income families in the National Capital Region. Ms. Ayo Atterberry will be representing VPP on this webinar. Ayo is the Director of Outcomes, Assessment, and Learning at Venture Philanthropy Partners and she has graciously agreed to share her perspective and insights with all of you in order to better ground you in the program. Ayo, I want to thank you so much taking time from your day to participate in this webinar. Please go ahead.

Ayo Aterberry:

VPP's investment model involves working closely with nonprofit investment partners to strengthen their organizational capacity and ultimately have greater outcomes and impact on the low-income youth in the National Capital Region. The Social Innovation Fund presented VPP with an opportunity to implement a networked approach to investing in nonprofits, a concept it had been conceptualizing internally. Out of the SIF's investment came youthCONNECT, a network of nonprofit subgrantees working in collaboration for greater impact.

While VPP has always focused on strengthening performance management within its nonprofit partners, the SIF grant gave VPP the opportunity to heavily invest in evaluation for the first time.

VPP took two important steps that have been crucial to its journey as a SIF intermediary:

1. It contracted with an evaluation firm, Child Trends, as a partner; and
2. It created the Director of Outcomes, Assessment and Learning position to build its internal capacity to facilitate and monitor the ongoing support for its subgrantees.

The evaluation work was a heavy lift and both VPP and Child Trends worked directly with SIF subgrantees on their evaluations.

VPP provided three levels of evaluation resources to its SIF subgrantees:

1. Evaluators conducted subgrantee external evaluations, and were selected through an RFP process;
2. Child Trends provided technical assistance where needed and was primarily involved with reviewing and preparing the subgrantee evaluation plans (SEPs); and,
3. The Director of Outcomes, Assessment and Learning performed ongoing evaluation monitoring and acted as another reviewer of SEPs .

This was also the first time that VPP received federal funding. In order to monitor the work most effectively, VPP decided to conduct quarterly reviews of its subgrantees. It has allowed VPP to stay on top of the achievement of key goals, compliance with grant guidelines, as well as the fundraising match requirement. VPP's experience highlights the necessity of assessing your organization's internal evaluation capacity and thinking through how your organization, given its current areas of expertise and staff structure, can manage the development and management of evaluation plans and ongoing evaluation implementation. Here are some questions to consider with your team that may be of help:

- Who on your staff has extensive knowledge of evaluation research designs and implementation?
- To what extent can you support the development of evaluation plans for other organizations or potential subgrantees?
- Have you conducted an RFP process before?

Based on your responses, you may need to think about building the capacity of your organization in the areas you have identified gaps. Also as part of your selection process, VPP recommends assessing the performance management systems and evaluation readiness of potential subgrantees. This will allow you to gain an understanding of the organization's evaluation capacity. A possible assessment could include:

- A site visit to review their performance management systems;
- A matrix of data reporting components completed by the organization;
- Review of previous evaluation reports;
- Interviews with staff about how they use data; or, even,
- A sample data report that the organization generates for internal use.

You have to decide, given your resources, which type of assessment makes the most sense for your organization.

The investment in evaluation has had significant impact on VPP's subgrantees. For most youthCONNECT network partners/subgrantees, this was the first time they conducted third-party evaluations. Although completing the subgrantee evaluation plans was time-intensive and resource-heavy, it was a great opportunity for organizations to strengthen their internal evaluation and performance-management capacity. VPP has observed many of its subgrantees prioritizing the importance of evaluation and data within their organizations. In many cases, our SIF dollars have gone to support the director of evaluation or data management at the subgrantee organizations. In addition, because VPP subgrantees work closely together as part of youthCONNECT's networked approach, the organizations meet monthly to discuss

evaluation and data related issues. It has become a learning community that supports best practices as the organizations learn from each other.

Andrea: Ayo, thank you so much for sharing your experience and insights.

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## Summary

- **Program design:** promising interventions with at least preliminary evidence that can advance to at least moderate, if not strong; not for start-ups
- **Organizational Capability:** Need the experience and organizational capacity to adequately support and implement rigorous evaluations
- **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy:** Sufficient budget for rigorous evaluation of an intervention and if appropriate, sufficient budget for subgrantee support

For more information on evaluation criteria, see pgs. 16 -17 in the NOFA

### Slide 20: Summary (Andrea)

Just to briefly summarize: SIF funds promising interventions or program models with at least preliminary evidence that can advance to at least moderate, if not strong; it is not intended for start-ups.

We are funding experienced intermediaries that have the organizational capacity to adequately support and implement rigorous evaluations.

The budget needs to be adequate to fund an intervention, a rigorous evaluation and if appropriate, there needs to be sufficient budget for subgrantee support.

For more information on evaluation criteria, I refer you to pgs. 16 -17 in the NOFA.

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## Key Documents & Resources

[www.nationalservice.gov/SIF](http://www.nationalservice.gov/SIF)

Click on: 2015 Notice of Funding Availability

- NOFA and application instructions
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Evaluation and other resources
- Link to previous successful applications

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### Slide 21: Key documents and resources (Andrea)

I am sure most of you, by now are familiar with this website, but just in case you haven't look at the website, here it is.

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## Questions?

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### Slide 22: Questions

So now we would like to hear from you and answer any questions you may have.

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