Questions to Address Today

- How might the American Evaluation Association and its affiliates help strengthen evaluation capacity in local nonprofit service providers?
- How might local nonprofit service providers access other resources to help them strengthen capacity?
- Why is the demand to supply evidence so prevalent?
## AEA’s Participation in the International Evaluation Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How AEA can strengthen the:</th>
<th>AEA and the United States</th>
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### AEA Will Support All Six Areas

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### 13 Specific Actions

<table>
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<th>AEA will work to strengthen the:</th>
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<td><strong>Enabling Environment</strong></td>
<td>1. Ask the Evaluation Policy Task Force (EPTF) to identify 1-2 key gaps in federal legislation, regulations, or practices, then work to correct those gaps</td>
<td>6. Find ways to learn systematically from other VOPEs around the world how they are strengthening their own enabling environments</td>
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<td><strong>Institutional Capacities</strong></td>
<td>2. Work to strengthen the demand for evaluation within governments at all levels of government, the private sector, nonprofits, and foundations</td>
<td>7. Identify emerging VOPEs in other parts of the world, and use AEA, Local Affiliates, and/or TIGs to twin/mentor their development (IPP Program)</td>
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<td>3. Use Federal Executive Institute and other courses to train incoming federal-level political officers and SES candidates and leaders in evaluation</td>
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<td>Individual Capacities</td>
<td>4. Offer relevant international topics to be featured in AEA’s e-studies programs</td>
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<td>5. Expand in-person training opportunities beyond the conference and summer training institute, including online courses</td>
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<td>8. Waive the conference and workshop fees for any developing country evaluator awarded conference travel funds by EvalPartners</td>
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<td>9. Solicit webinar speakers from outside the USA. Offer relevant topics to be featured in AEA’s e-studies programs (increase access by offering at different times to accommodate time zones)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Step up the marketing for the Silent Auction, including recruiting more corporate donations</td>
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<td>11. Match the travel funds raised during the Silent Auction, doubling the number of evaluators from developing countries AEA supports</td>
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<td>12. Offer access to AEA online services to selected evaluators outside the USA (price/promotion to be determined by management)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Continue to explore other ways AEA can promote the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 in general and partnerships with other VOPEs around the world in particular.</td>
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Evaluation Resources

- American Evaluation Association - on-line resources
- Local American Evaluation Association Affiliates
- Local Colleges and Universities - in Schools or Departments of Education, or Public Administration or Public Policy Departments or Schools (especially programs that have required capstones!)
- Betterevaluation.org
- Innonet.org
“Evidence-based Policy”

- “Evidence-Based Policy” is a Mantra affecting governmental decision-makers, foundations, nonprofit boards, intermediaries and evaluation practice!
- Myth or reality?
- Advantages and disadvantages for evaluators and nonprofit service providers? Meeting expectations!
# Contrasting Views about Evidence-Based Policy

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
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<td>1. We need to collect data to test if programs work or do not work.</td>
<td>1. We need to learn which program mechanisms work for whom, where and under what circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Policy should be made at the top and based on evidence.</td>
<td>2. Policy is “made” through implementation processes at multiple levels by multiple actors with different types of data available to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Program impact can be measured precisely.</td>
<td>3. Measuring program impact is difficult as programs and impactees change and evolve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Random Control Trials (RCTs) are the gold standard for research and evaluation design.</td>
<td>4. Research designs must be matched to answer the question raised; RCTs are appropriate for certain impact questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Proven program models can be replicated successfully in multiple locations as long as they are implemented with fidelity to the original design.</td>
<td>5. Program mechanisms may be replicated successfully in multiple locations as long as they are adapted to meet local conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Benefit-cost analysis should be used to compare social programs.</td>
<td>6. Benefit-cost analysis is difficult to use to compare social programs given the challenge of costing out benefits, especially those accruing over time.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
What are Challenges for Evidence to Inform Policymaking?

- Expectations regarding:
  - What constitutes evidence?
  - How transferable is evidence?
  - When and where do we underestimate the role played by the “impactees?”
  - Where is the capacity to support both the demand and supply of evidence?
What are the Opportunities for Evidence to Inform Decision-making?

- Analyses of “performance” data collected by agencies (or delegated service delivery agents such as grantees)
- Implementation, Outcome and Impact evaluations typically performed by other agents for government
- Manipulations of services in experiments by agencies - “behavioral economics”
- Syntheses or systematic reviews of impact evaluations by external agents, e.g. websites like “What Works”
Why isn’t There Agreement About the Quality of Evidence?

- Differing professional standards and “rules” or criteria for evidence, e.g., lawyers, accountants, engineers, economists
- Disagreements about methodologies within professional groups, e.g., RCTs
- The constancy of change in problems and the characteristics of the targeted impactees
We Underestimate the Evolving Sources of Complexity Affecting the Production of Relevant Evidence

- Change in the nature of problems to be addressed by government, e.g., the nature of natural security threats, the use of the internet in crime
- Change in the context in which programs and policies are implemented, e.g., increasingly complicated service delivery networks, PPPs
- Changing priorities of political leaders (and would-be leaders)
We Overstate the Ease of Flow of Evidence

It plays a wide (enough) causal role

Study conclusion: It plays a causal role there
Policy prediction: It will play a causal role here

What is needed for a well-supported effectiveness (impact) prediction?

It will play a positive causal role here

The support factors for it are w, y, z

We have w, y, z here

It can play a positive causal role here

It can play the same role as there

It plays a positive causal role there (and there)

We Underestimate the Role of Volition Among Impactees and their Own Heuristics

PREMISES
Based on information and evidence we decide that...

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
IF we implement successfully certain activities...

MECHANISM
...THEN we trigger desired behaviors and processes in a target group...

CHANGE
...AND THAT leads to positive, sustainable change

DETAILED PREMISES
Factors
Research results
Information
Earlier experiences
Opinions

ISSUE
Opportunity
Need
Problem

INPUTS
Money
Personnel
Other resources

ACTIONS
Infrastructure
Services
Information
Disincentives
Incentives
Choice
architecture

OUTPUTS
Reactions of
subjects

Heuristics
and biases

Context

EFFECTS
Structural and long term change

UNDERLYING THEORIES
On what premises do we base our decisions?

THEORY OF IMPLEMENTATION
How do we want to use inputs to produce desired outputs?

THEORY OF CHANGE
How will positive change be produced?

Evaluation Capacity = Both Demand and Supply

- Who is asking for the evidence?
- How clear is the understanding between providers and requestors on what sort of data (evidence) is needed?
- Are there sufficient resources to respond to demand for data?
- What about the lack of interaction and synergies among the different potential providers of evidence - such as at the U.S. federal level GPRA/GPRAMA reporting staff, internal evaluation staff, external evaluation contractors, SBST, data.gov teams, etc.!
## Promising Practices from the Obama Administration

<table>
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<th>Promising Practice</th>
<th>Affects Supply or Demand?</th>
<th>Needed Support Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge Brokers, e.g., Chief Evaluation Officers</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Brokers have technical expertise, interpersonal skills, and contextual wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Agendas</td>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>Strong leadership backing and encouragement to be innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly Reviews</td>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>Credible data, stress on learning, no punitive actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Reviews</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Encouragement to be innovative, stress on learning not accountability</td>
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A simple framework....

Develop and Address information needs

Cultivate an organizational learning culture

Informed decisions & learning from Data

Cater to individual information processing
Remember Evaluation Capacity = Both Demand and Supply

- Consider who is asking for the data/evidence and who might use the information provided and how and when they may use it.
- Probe the extent to which there is a clear understanding between providers and requestors for what sorts of evidence is needed, e.g., brokering.
- Assess whether or not sufficient resources are available to meet demand.
- Address the lack of interaction and facilitate synergies among the different potential providers of evidence - such as monitoring and reporting staff, internal evaluation staff, external evaluation contractors, etc.
What are Evaluation-Receptive Organizational Cultures?

- Engage in self-reflection & self-examination
  - Deliberately seek evidence on what it’s doing
  - Use results information to challenge or support what it’s doing
  - Promote candor, challenge and genuine dialogue

- Engage in evidence-based learning
  - Make time to learn
  - Learn from mistakes and failures
  - Encourage knowledge sharing

- Encourage experimentation and change
  - Support deliberate risk-taking
  - Seek out new ways of doing business

(See John Mayne, 2010)
Move To Strategic and Synergistic Use of Evaluation!
Help Information Users Frame Pertinent Questions and then Match the Questions with the Appropriate Evaluation Approach
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<th>Objective</th>
<th>Illustrative Questions</th>
<th>Possible Design</th>
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| #1: Describe program activities | • How extensive and costly are the program activities?  
• How do implementation efforts vary across sites, beneficiaries, regions?  
• Has the program been implemented sufficiently to be evaluated? | • Monitoring  
• Exploratory Evaluations  
• Evaluability Assessments  
• Multiple Case Studies |
| #2: Probe targeting & implementation | • How closely are the protocols implemented with fidelity to the original design?  
• What key contextual factors are likely to affect achievement of intended outcomes?  
• How do contextual constraints affect the implementation of an intervention?  
• How does a new intervention interact with other potential solutions to recognized problems? | • Multiple Case Studies  
• Implementation or Process evaluations  
• Performance Audits  
• Compliance Audits  
• Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation |
| #3: Measure the impact of policies & programs | • What are the average effects across different implementations of the intervention?  
• Has implementation of the program or policy produced results consistent with its design (espoused purpose)?  
• Is the implementation strategy more (or less) effective in relation to its costs? | • Experimental Designs/RCTs  
• Non-experimental Designs: Difference-in-difference, Propensity score matching, etc.  
• Cost-effectiveness & Benefit Cost Analysis  
• Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analyses |
| #4: Explain how/why programs & policies produce (un)intended effects | • How/why did the program have the intended effects?  
• To what extent has implementation of the program had important unanticipated negative spillover effects?  
• How likely is it that the program will have similar effects in other communities or in the future? | • Impact Pathways and Process tracing  
• System dynamics  
• Configurational analysis |
Relevant References

Thank You!

I can be reached at newcomer@gwu.edu