

2014 SIF NOFA: Evaluation and Evidence March 14, 2104



Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND
Finding what works. Making it work for more people.

2014 Grant Competition

Evaluation and Evidence Webinar



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[Host: Jerian Abel, Education Northwest] I would like to turn it over to Lois Nembhard to take us away.



Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction of Presenters
- Evaluation Requirements
- Grantee Perspective
- Evaluation Selection Criteria
- Q&A

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[Lois] Thanks, Jerian. Hello everyone. My name is Lois Nembhard, and I'm the deputy director of the Social Innovation Fund, or SIF, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Thank you for your interest in the SIF and participating in this webinar.

By now, hopefully, you've had the opportunity to read the Notice of Funding Availability, or NOFA, and have participated in or listened to the recording of one of our NOFA overview calls. This webinar will focus on the role of evaluation and evidence in the SIF, and except for a few overview points, we won't go into much detail of other aspects of the SIF.

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Our goal is to grow the most promising potentially transformative solutions to some of our nation's most pressing problems, and to do so it's critical to be able to identify with confidence which of these solutions are, in fact, the most effective in improving the lives of people in need. Evidence and evaluation are and have to be the fundamental means to that end. This technical assistance call should result in your having a stronger understanding of this key component of the program.

I will kick us off then turn things over to our resident expert Dr. Lily Zandniapour, the evaluation program manager here at the Corporation for National and Community Service in our Office of Research and Evaluation. She will discuss our evaluation requirements. Then we thought it would be helpful for you to hear the perspective of one of our grantees. So you'll hear from Ayo Atterberry, the Director of Outcomes, Assessment and Learning at Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP). VPP was selected as a grantee of the SIF in our inaugural competition in 2010. I'll follow Ayo with a discussion of the selection criteria specifically related to evaluation, then we'll spend the rest of the time responding to questions that you ask via the chat function. So let's get right into it.

Why the SIF?

"The bottom line is clear: **solutions to America's challenges** are being developed every day at the **grass roots** - and government shouldn't be supplanting those efforts, it should be **supporting those efforts**.

"Instead of wasting taxpayer money on programs that are obsolete or ineffective, government should be seeking out **creative, results-oriented** programs ... and helping them **replicate their efforts** across America."

-President Obama, June 30, 2009

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Why the SIF? Before we get into discussing evidence and evaluation, I'll spend a few minutes setting the context. We like this quotation from President Obama. It's from 2009, after the Social Innovation Fund was created as part of the reauthorization of the Corporation for National Community Service. The purpose of the Social Innovation Fund is to grow the impact of innovative community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. We're all aware of the seemingly intractable problems facing communities across the country. At the same time, there are stories of successful efforts at different stages of being proven, which are the solutions the President refers to here.

The SIF's purpose is to support the identification, funding, evaluation and scaling of these promising efforts. Ultimately, hopefully funders will stop funneling resources to organizations that either have no evidence that what they're doing works, or worse, have evidence that suggests that they aren't having a positive impact. The Social Innovation Fund is one of this administration's six tiered evidence initiatives, and Lily will go into depth on our tiers later. The other tiered evidence initiatives are in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

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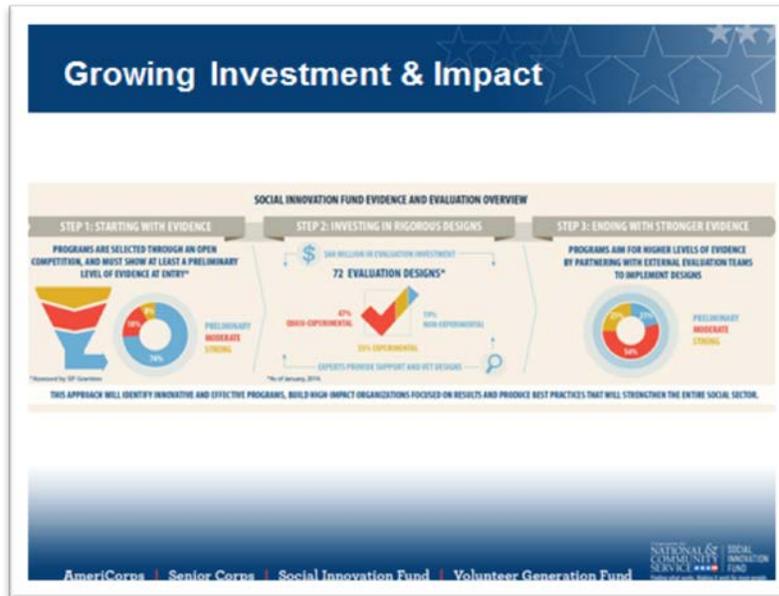
The next slide depicts what we invest in and how we do what we do. We select experienced grantmakers whom we refer to as "intermediaries." The intermediaries match the funds we award to them in cash from non-federal sources on a one-to-one basis. They then select non-profit organizations to engage in programming in our broad areas of focus, youth developments, economic opportunity and healthy futures.

The intermediaries employ one of two approaches as they're looking to select subgrantees. They identify an innovative evidence-based solution and competitively select nonprofits that implement that solution, or the intermediary decides on the outcomes it wants to improve – for example, youth health outcomes – and competitively selects nonprofits proposing their own innovative evidence-based solutions for youth health challenges. The non-profit selected must match the funds they receive in cash on a one-to-one basis as well. The intermediary is responsible for providing support to these nonprofits, now subgrantees, to evaluate and scale the intervention.

It's important that, through the SIF more people in communities are benefitting than prior to the SIF. Lastly, but significantly, we're committed to sharing what we're learning from this new approach to government grantmaking, both what works and what doesn't. And, in fact, a national assessment of the SIF is underway. We will also share the final reports of the evaluations being conducted. Some will show impacts and some won't. Either way, it will be beneficial to the philanthropic, nonprofit and governmental sectors to learn what interventions work under what conditions and what further research is needed.

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The next slide, on growing investment and impact, depicts what we're currently supporting through our first three cohorts of grantees. We've selected 20 intermediaries and provided \$177 million in funding, 217 nonprofits have been funded by those intermediaries, and \$423 million in match has been raised at both intermediary and subgrantee levels. You'll see on the left-hand side of the slide that the majority of program interventions currently being supported started at a preliminary level of evidence, 18% at moderate, and 8% at strong. The investment in evaluation alone is about \$60 million, and 81% of the evaluations being conducted so far are either an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Twenty-five percent of the current evaluations are planning to end with a strong level of evidence. You'll note that 21% are ending in preliminary, that's because our first cohort of programs weren't required to advance to moderate, but that is now a requirement.



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Finally, before I turn it over to Lily, I'll touch on the stage of our program's development that is the most appropriate for the SIF. Although the practice of social innovation certainly involves the development of new concepts and nascent organizations, the Social Innovation Fund does not focus on those early stages for two primary reasons. First, the nonprofit marketplace already offers sources of funding for that stage of development; and, second, the Social Innovation Fund believes that taxpayer dollars are most appropriately and responsibly used for programs with a higher demonstrated probability of success. In addition, we've chosen not to focus on the proven stage because the capital requirements of truly taking worthy organizations to scale are well beyond our means. Consequently, the Social Innovation Fund focuses on what we refer to as promising program models that occupy that middle ground.

On one hand, they have at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness and sufficient organizational robustness to justify limited scaling and further validation of the program's effectiveness. On the other hand, their program and organizational models are not proven and, therefore, are not ready for large-scale expansion. In fact, one way to think about this function of the Social Innovation Fund is that we aim to advance promising nonprofits towards that proven stage, a major aspect of which is increasing their evidence of impact through formal evaluation. This is a good time to turn the presentation over to my colleague, Dr. Lily Zandniapour.

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 the best intermediaries and subgrantees**
 - Intermediaries: Previous track records of using evidence to assess effectiveness and drive impact
 - Subgrantees: Promising program models with at least "preliminary" evidence of results
- 2) To grow the body of evidence about which program models actually work**
 - Both intermediaries and subgrantees commit to increase evidence base through rigorous subgrantee evaluation plans for each program model
 - Commitment to achieve "moderate" or "strong"

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[Lily Zandniapour] Thank you Lois, and good afternoon, everyone. What I would like to do in the next few minutes is to take this opportunity to provide you all with some information about the role that evidence and evaluation play in the Social Innovation Fund, and familiarize you with the evaluation programming requirements of the SIF so you are better grounded in this component of the initiative. This background information will hopefully be useful to you in your decision and preparation to submit an application to the SIF for funding consideration.

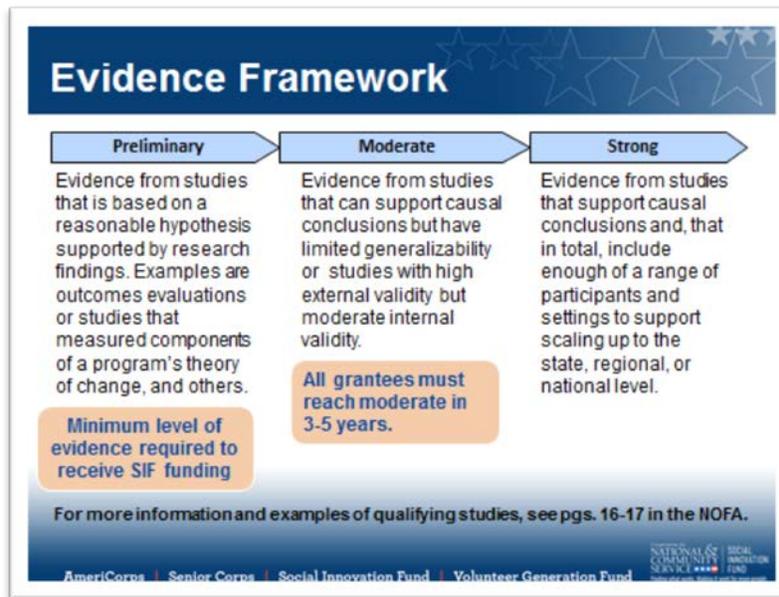
Reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund, and the use of rigorous evaluation to advance the base evidence of sponsored program models and interventions admitted into the program is of paramount importance under SIF. First, experience with evaluation and evidence of effectiveness from previous assessments and measurement efforts is used to select the best intermediaries and subgrantees and welcome them to this program. Intermediaries are required to have strong track records of using evidence to assess program implementation and effectiveness and drive improvement and impact in their work before joining the initiative. Essentially what this means is that we need you to have some level of experience in data-driven decision-making.

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In addition, previous collection and documentation of evidence is also used to select the best subgrantees to the Social Innovation Fund. In fact, in order to even be considered as possible participants, all subgrantees must have promising program models with at least preliminary evidence of results to qualify. Second, in order to grow the body of evidence about which program models actually work, both intermediaries and subgrantees will need to commit, upon entry to the program, to increase each model's evidence base through rigorous use of evaluation to measure the impact of each program.

The Social Innovation Fund is looking for applicants that propose to fund program models with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness and can demonstrate both a plan and capacity to move these programs to at least moderate levels of evidence over their three- to five-year grant period. So let's unpack that a little further.



On slide eight I want to share a picture of what we call the "evidence framework" with you so you might better visualize an increase in an evidence base for a program model within the Social Innovation Fund 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 which program models actually work, it is critical that we appropriately categorize each program model within this continuum at their points of entry in the program. That is their starting point, if you will.

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 includes the types of studies done on the program in the past, the methodologies used, and the results of those studies. Then, during the Social Innovation Fund grant period of three- to five-years, your goal is to construct and implement rigorous evaluation designs that will increase the body of evidence behind each model that will move them along this continuum.

What do we mean by rigorous evaluations? We mean high-quality, independent, and unbiased evaluations that are consistent with the principles of scientific research. A couple of illustrative examples of how existing evidence about a program model can be advanced are as follows: If, for example, a program currently has positive results from an outcome evaluation using a pre-and post-test approach, an advancement may mean conducting an impact evaluation using a quasi-experimental or experimental design study.

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If a program currently has positive results on a single-site randomized control trial, or an RCT, advancing the evidence may entail conducting an RCT across multiple sites. I hope my explanation gives you a basic introduction to get you started. I strongly suggest you read more about these categories of evidence in the NOFA and review the kinds of studies that would qualify under each category. In addition, you are welcome to ask additional questions at the end of this call.

Before I move to the next slide, I do need to re-emphasize one particularly critical point for you and your subgrantees to understand, so please take a note and refer to pages 14 through 17 in the NOFA. 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 subgrant period. In other words, if your model enters with preliminary evidence, it is most critical that by the end model's time in the program, it achieves at least a moderate level of evidence.

Evaluation Requirements

- 1. Select subgrantees with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness**
 - Assess level of evidence at entry in consultation with CNCS and its evaluation technical assistance provider
- 2. Execute systematic evaluation to increase evidence base**
 - Develop an overall *evaluation strategy* for their portfolios
 - Work with subgrantees to develop *subgrantee evaluation plans* for each funded program model that will measure and increase its evidence base
 - *Implement individual subgrantee evaluation plans* and report progress
 - Provide *evaluation capacity building and technical assistance* to their subgrantees
 - *Share results* of conducted evaluations by submitting evaluation reports
 - *Collaborate with CNCS* throughout the process
- 3. Grow impact of program models through expansion or replication**

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Now that we have reviewed the fundamental roles that evidence and evaluation play in the Social Innovation Fund, I'd like to spend a few moments speaking about the most essential program requirements for intermediaries after their selection into the program. Essentially there are three fundamental responsibilities you will have. First, you will need to design and execute your own competitive grant competition and select subgrantees for your portfolio. Again, it will be essential that they enter the program with at least preliminary levels of evidence. CNCS will work with you in a consultative manner to establish the incoming level of evidence with short-listed subgrant candidates.

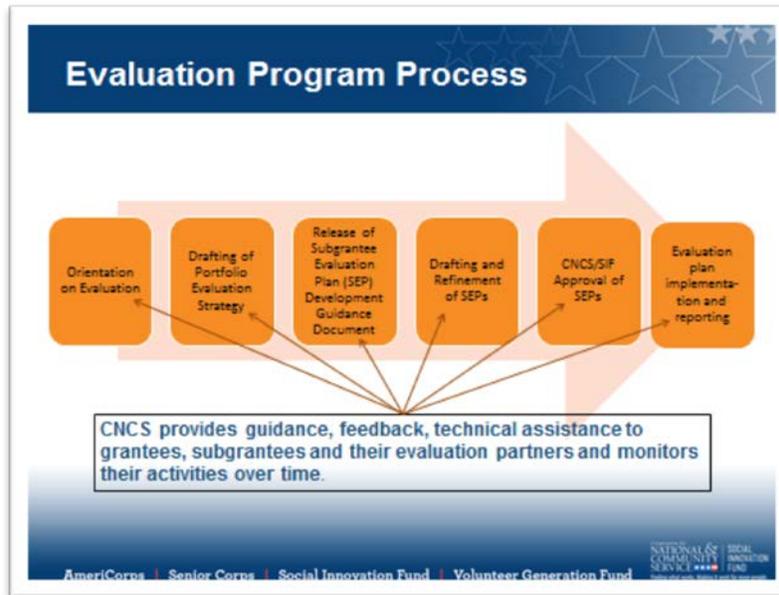
Second, each intermediary will need to execute a series of systematic evaluation activities in collaboration with CNCS, your subgrantees, and any evaluation experts you choose to engage with over the next three to five years. Slide nine clearly lists those activities; that include,

- Develop an overall evaluation strategy for your portfolio. Depending on the models and the intended outcomes, determine whether sponsored interventions will be evaluated locally using multiple evaluation plans or whether one evaluation plan will be used across a range of subgrants or both;
- Work with subgrantees to develop and implement individual evaluation plans for each funded program model 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;

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- Provide evaluation capacity building, and technical assistance to your subgrantees;
- Share results of the conducted evaluations in your 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;
- Collaborate with CNCS throughout your grant to review and strengthen your strategies and plans, and ensure appropriate implementation and reporting of each plan;
- Finally, all intermediaries are required to design and implement a plan to grow the impact of their program model through expansion or replication.



This slide presents a snapshot of the SIF evaluation program process to better ground you in SIF evaluation and evidence activities. Once intermediaries are awarded a SIF grant, they receive further orientation on the initiative's evaluation program. Evaluation planning under SIF follows a two-step process. The first step is the development and submission of the portfolio evaluation strategy by each intermediary as mentioned earlier. The portfolio evaluation strategy provides a framework for CNCS and the SIF intermediary to enter a discussion on how the intermediary will approach the evaluation of its portfolio of subgrantees.

The next step in the planning process is the development of evaluation plans for all funded interventions. CNCS provides support and assistance to selected intermediaries, subgrantees, and their evaluation partners by sharing a core guidance document that outlines elements of a comprehensive and robust evaluation plan. Plans go through a rigorous vetting process prior to approval. It typically takes about nine months to a year following the grant awards for intermediaries to have approved evaluation plans in place.

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. 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.

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Additionally, the evaluation work of all intermediaries and their subgrantees will be monitored and tracked to make sure all evaluations advance the evidence base of funded programs, as intermediaries and subgrantees move through the process as smoothly and efficiently as possible, and that evaluation activities are completed successfully.

Additional Considerations

Use of Contracted Evaluation Experts: Intermediaries should strongly consider working with evaluation experts 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 subgrantee evaluation plans. We want you to succeed!

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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 most intermediaries will choose to contract either 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 skill set of your own staff. If you don't have in-house evaluation expertise, consider how you might partner with external advisers 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 roles 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. More information around budgeting is available to you on our website. The information posted on the website is based on the experiences of past cohorts of grantees in the program.

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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Long Term Success

Long term success of the SIF will mean proving it has contributed to increasing:

- **The number of nonprofits implementing evidence-based programs**
- **The strength of evidence among funded programs**
- **The impact of funded models on program beneficiaries**

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Evaluations and evidence-related activities of the SIF from planning to implementation and reporting are in service to the long-term goals of the program. The Social Innovation Fund's success in the long run is measured by accomplishments across its portfolio and within each of its focus areas based on the number of nonprofits implementing evidence-based programs, the strength of evidence among funded programs, [and] the impact of funded models on program beneficiaries. Alignment with these goals are critical for SIF intermediaries and are important for all interested organizations to consider.

Grantee Perspective



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

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Now that I have covered the basics around the role of evidence and evaluation, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to one of our pioneering intermediary grantmaking partners in the program. Venture Philanthropy Partners, or VPP for short, 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

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way for future cohorts of grantees. The experiences of the first group of intermediaries have been extremely valuable to the program and have benefitted others that joined SIF in later years. Ms. Ayo Atterberry will be representing VPP on this webinar.

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. Ayo is the director of Outcomes Assessment and Learning at Venture Philanthropic Partners, and she had graciously agreed to share her perspectives and insights with all of you in order to better ground you in the program. I want to thank her for participating in this webinar. Ayo, please go ahead.

[Ayo] Yes, good afternoon everyone. Thank you, Lois and Lily, for the information you provided. You were spot on with all the details. I just want to provide a perspective on our experience with VPP. First, I want to say that the SIF presented an opportunity for VPP to implement our youthConnect Initiative, which is a networked approach investing in nonprofits working in collaboration for a greater impact that we have been conceptualizing internally. And our work includes working closely with our subgrantees to strengthen organizational capacity and, ultimately, have greater outcomes and impact on the low-income youth in the national capital region. While VPP is always focused on strengthening performance management within organizations in which we invest, as a SIF intermediary, this is the first time we have heavily invested in evaluation.

So two important steps that VPP took that have been crucial in our journey as a SIF intermediary; first, we contracted with an evaluation firm as a partner, in our case it was Child Trends; two, VPP created my role, director of outcomes assessment and learning, to build our internal capacity to assist and allow for the ongoing support of our subgrantees. And both Lois and Lily pointed those two points out in part of their presentation. Now the evaluation work was a heavy lift, and both VPP and Child Trends, our partner, work directly with the subgrantees on their evaluations and their subgrantee evaluation plans.

So, that you're more clear on what the resources we actually put into the evaluation plans for our SIF subgrantees, we had - for each of our subgrantees - had an external evaluator that is conducting their external evaluation, and these firms were selected via an RFP process by our subgrantees. In some instances, we assisted them with the RFP process. Also we had Child Trends, who is our evaluation partner, providing technical assistance where needed and they were primarily involved with reviewing and preparing the subgrantee evaluation plans, or the SEPs, as we call them. Then my role as another viewer of SEPs, and also I'm responsible for the ongoing evaluation monitoring.

So from our experience, we recognize that it's imperative that you assess your internal evaluation capacity and think through how your organization, given the current areas of expertise and staff structure, can manage the development and management of evaluation plans and ongoing evaluation implementation. So here are some questions to consider with your team that may be of help. First, 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/potential subgrantees, and thirdly, 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 that you identified as gaps.

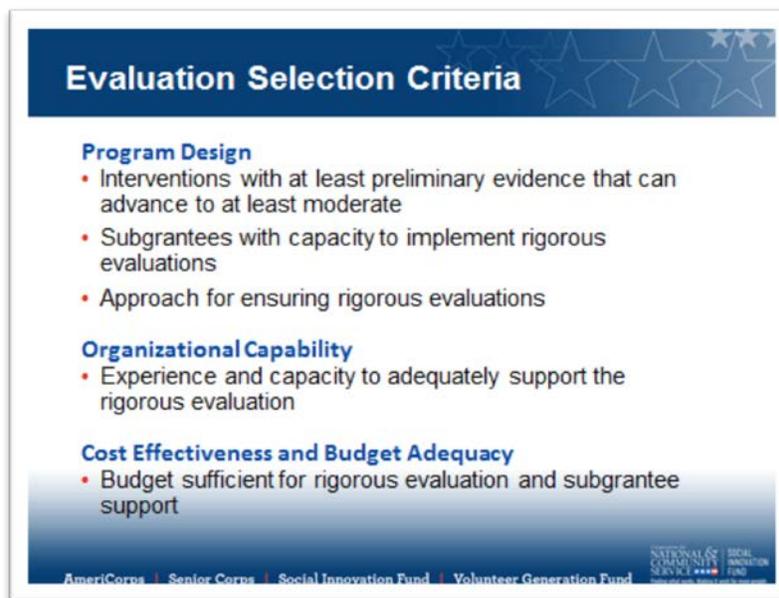
Also as part of you selection process, we would recommend including an assessment of the organizations' performance management system/evaluation readiness. This will allow you to gain an understanding of the organizations' evaluation capacity. So possible assessments can include a site visit to review the performance management system of your potential subgrantees, a matrix of data reporting components to be completed by the potential subgrantees, review of previous evaluation reports of your subgrantees, interviews with staff about how they use data, or even a sample data report that they generate for internal use. You have to decide, given your resources, which type of assessment makes the most sense for your organization to conduct of the potential subgrantees that apply for your SIF.

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This was also the first time that a VPP received federal funding. In order to monitor the work most effectively, we decided to conduct quarterly reviews of our subgrantees, and this allowed us to stay on top of the achievement of our key goals, compliance of the grant guidelines, as well as the match requirement.

Now how this has impacted our subgrantees: For most of our youth subgrantees, this is the first time they're conducting third-party evaluations, and although it has been time intensive and resource heavy to complete the subgrantee evaluation plans, it has really been a great opportunity for the organizations to strengthen their internal evaluation and performance management capacity. We are seeing many of our subgrantees prioritizing the importance of evaluations and data within their organizations, and in many cases our SIF dollars are going to support the director of evaluation or data management with some of our subgrantees. In addition, because of the network approach that we're applying to our SIF, the organization meets monthly to discuss evaluations and data-related issues, and it has become a learning community that supports best practices as the organizations learn from each other. Thank you.



The slide is titled "Evaluation Selection Criteria" and features a blue header with white stars. The content is organized into three main sections, each with a blue heading and a bulleted list of criteria:

- Program Design**
 - Interventions with at least preliminary evidence that can advance to at least moderate
 - Subgrantees with capacity to implement rigorous evaluations
 - Approach for ensuring rigorous evaluations
- Organizational Capability**
 - Experience and capacity to adequately support the rigorous evaluation
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**
 - Budget sufficient for rigorous evaluation and subgrantee support

At the bottom of the slide, there is a footer with logos for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund, along with the National SIF logo and the text "NATIONAL SIF SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND".

[Lois] Great. Thanks, Ayo, that was a great description and perspective, and things to think about, so we'll have to think about how we capture that in writing, maybe in the FAQs. So this is Lois again. I'll now turn on to the evaluation selection criteria. There are many criteria, and I'm going to focus specifically on the ones related to evaluation.

So in the program design section you will note that applicants must make the case that they will select, and how they will select, subgrantees with the capacity to implement robust evaluation. Also, the subgrantees will be identifying the interventions. The intermediary needs to demonstrate in their application to us that it will assess that [the] intervention has at least a preliminary level of evidence. On the other hand, if an intermediary has a pre-identified innovative evidence-based intervention, they need to describe it in their application and make the case that it has at least a preliminary level of evidence, because we will be assessing the level of evidence as part of your application.

Also, you must describe a reasonable evaluation strategy and evaluation budget. Note that evaluation costs may be paid at the intermediary and/or the subgrantee level. We encourage you to not simply allocate a percentage of program budget evaluation. Instead, carefully think through what it will cost to conduct impact evaluation or multiple evaluations, and develop your budget that way. Examples of evaluation expenses may include the cost of staff and/or contractors; travel necessary for the design and

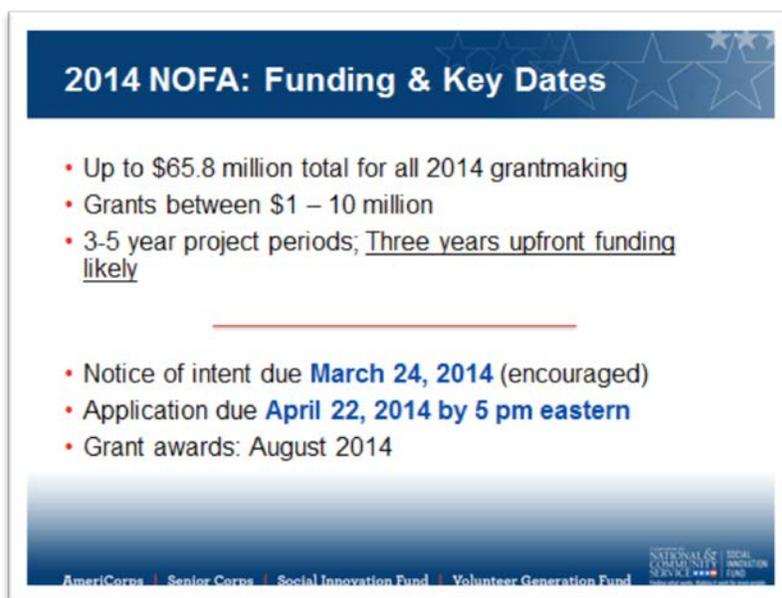
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implementation of evaluation activities; technical assistance provisions to subgrantees; and costs for coordinating your portfolio's overall evaluation activities. We have a document on the website where you find the NOFA that touches a little bit on budgeting for rigorous evaluation, and Lily has definitely done some extensive work on that, so if you have questions, we'd be happy to answer them in a few minutes.

Also under selection criteria, in the organizational capability section, you need to make the case that you have the experience and the capacity to implement a rigorous evaluation program across your perspective subgrantees. We don't expect that applicants will have a formalized evaluation plan at the time of application. We will work with awarded grantees to finalize and approve their plans throughout their grant period. However, in this section applicants should describe the initial approach and overall plan for evaluating the program models anticipated for inclusion in their Social Innovation Fund subgrantee portfolios.

In the cost effectiveness and budget adequacy section of the selection criteria, we will be assessing the overall budget, including the evaluation component and whether it aligns with what you have described in your narrative.



The slide features a blue header with white stars and the title "2014 NOFA: Funding & Key Dates". Below the header, there are two bulleted lists of information. The first list includes funding details, and the second list includes key dates. A red horizontal line separates the two lists. At the bottom, there is a footer with logos for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund, along with the text "NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE" and "SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND".

- Up to \$65.8 million total for all 2014 grantmaking
- Grants between \$1 – 10 million
- 3-5 year project periods; Three years upfront funding likely

- Notice of intent due **March 24, 2014** (encouraged)
- Application due **April 22, 2014 by 5 pm eastern**
- Grant awards: August 2014

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Moving on to funding and key dates, before we answer your questions, just a few additional points: We anticipate awarding up to \$65.8 million across all our grantmaking this year. Awards will range from \$1 million to \$10 million per year. Grant periods are for three to five years, and you would - in your application - identify the grant period you are applying for, and we anticipate giving three years of funding up front in most cases. Notices of intent to apply are due on March 24th, and then applications are due on April 22nd, with grant awards in August.

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Key Documents & Resources

www.nationalservice.gov/SIF

Click on: 2014 Notice of Funding Availability

- NOFA and application instructions
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Quick guides, including **Budgeting for Rigorous Evaluation** and **Subgrantee Evaluation Planning Process**
- Upcoming webinars

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This next slide highlights the resources available to you on our website. Take particular note of the guides on budgeting for rigorous evaluation and on the subgrantee evaluation planning process. Reviewing both will assist you in developing your applications. There will be a general question-and-answer call on March 24th that you might find useful, and when you go on the website you will see a few other resources there, including links to successful applications from current grantees that you might find really helpful to get a sense of how they describe what they were planning to do.

Questions

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We'd now like to start responding to your questions.

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- **Is there a published list of evaluation experts or companies that subgrantees can use to get help in their evaluation efforts?**
 - [Host] One of our panelists did note that there is not an official list, but the grantees do have a technical assistance document that discusses how to locate and screen an evaluator, and there are also professional organizations, such as AEA, that maintain such lists. So a follow up to that question is whether or not that technical assistance documents that available to current grantees, if that could also be available to applicants.
 - [Lois] Absolutely, we'll make that available.
 - This is Lily. I just wanted to sort of an add another note on that front, even though CNCS doesn't endorse any particular organization, one other source that might be of use to consult would be checking the website of American Evaluation Association which a lot of evaluation firms and individuals are members of, and that might be a good source to consult for those purposes.

- **Can subgrantee activities not begin until the evaluation plan is accepted by the Corporation for National and Community Service?**
 - [Lily] Is the question regarding the actual evaluation of those? If that is the case then, yes, those have to start once the evaluation plan is submitted and approved. We want to make sure that these evaluation plans are robust enough and really get the subgrantee to the point they need to be by their completion; therefore, we want to make sure that the subgrantees don't go down a path where they would need to backtrack. So the answer on the evaluation side of things is, yes.
 - [Host] Okay, but to clarify, the subgrantee can continue to perform the programmatic activities, while they work out their evaluation plan and determine the activities associated with that.
 - [Lois] Great. Thank you for adding that.

- **How many years does an organization need to have for preliminary evidence?**
 - [Lily] Our criteria are not dependent on the number of years that the program is in place. It really is about the types of research and evaluations that have been conducted on the particular intervention in the past and the results of those studies. So you can have programs that have been in existence for a long time and are still in preliminary. You might have fairly newer programs that have engaged in evaluation right from the get go, and they would be able to have preliminary level of evidence. I suggest you consult the NOFA in terms of getting more details about what the preliminary level of evidence entails and be sure that it's not tagged to a particular timeframe.

- **And you may have answered this next question with that response, but I'm going to go ahead and ask it anyway. One participant would like to have further clarification on what kinds of startups the SIF would not fund.**
 - [Lily] I think my response would be that that would be startups that really haven't engaged in any kind of data collection. They have no systematic information about their programs that they're really in a very nascent stage of trying to define their intervention and program design. So when you are at that stage you typically don't have enough of the core elements of a program in place to even do some of the preliminary types of evaluations that can be conducted. It might be -- so in those cases I think the program is

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not ripe to participate in SIF. And we want to make sure that those that do enter the program are poised to be successful.

- **Great. Thank you. And this one was for Ayo, but I think I can answer it. They wanted to know the name of your evaluator, and I believe you said it was Child Trends.**
 - [Ayo] Right. Correct.
- **Can part of the 80% allocated to subgrantees be used to cover costs associated with evaluation?**
 - [Lily] Yes, they can.
- **Can you please give an example of a social innovation application that would typically receive funding?**
 - [Lois] There really is no kind of typical application that would receive funding. It's really about do they meet our criteria in terms of the capacity that the intermediary organization needs to have to do this programming, to select subgrantees, to provide them support, to ensure their evaluation and scaling. But you could look at the applications – actual applications submitted by our current set of grantees – to get a sense of how they describe what they were planning to do.
- **What if the intermediary is new but the partner organizations have years of experience and data collection?**
 - [Lois] So I'm not sure when you say "partner organization" if they're referring to – well I guess they're referring to an organization they might partner with. So when we're assessing the application we're going to assess the organizations that are presented in the application as responsible for implementing the program. So if you come in as a partnership it needs to be very clear what both of you are bringing to the table, so we can get a sense if, together, there is sufficient capacity, experience, et cetera to implement the program.
- **What are some of the programs that you do fund?**
 - [Lily] I think for that you can just consult the website. There is a list of the 20 intermediaries that have already entered the program through three rounds of grantmaking. And there's also a list of subgrantees of all those 20 organizations that are also listed on the website. That should give you a sense of the range of organizations that are currently in our portfolio.
- **If the intermediary hasn't shown a data driven selection process in selecting grantees, is it worth applying?**
 - [Lois] For that I would say look carefully at, one, how we describe what we expect of intermediaries in the general section of the NOFA, and then specifically look at the questions in the selection criteria, and if you feel that you can answer them adequately, then you should be fine. I don't want to say no outright, because I'm not sure exactly how you're thinking of the lack of history, but that's definitely your best guide, is the specifics in the NOFA.
 - [Lily] I want to build on what Lois said and just add another point in that it might be that you have not used evidence in selection, but it might be that you've used evidence in

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making program improvements or guiding your subgrantees to , you know, improve their programming and increase their effectiveness. I would suggest that you fully capture and document and include those activities in your application if you haven't used evidence for the selection of subgrantees.

- **In constructing a budget, is the cost of evaluation also subject to the one-to-one match?**
 - [Lois] Yes, it is. I understand why you would ask that question, but the way we're structured, unfortunately, it is.
- **Okay, and I think the last question goes back to when the evaluation versus program activities can begin. So they want clarification around that it would be nine months to a year after August 2014 before subgrantees could start their activities.**
 - [Lois] So I'll first just touch on the timing, then Lily can jump in with the evaluation piece. So once you're approved for funding you need to submit to us a subgrantee selection plan within a short period of time and within six to eight months of being funded by us, you need to have selected your programming, and then, hopefully, you would start – the subgrantees would start implementation shortly thereafter. So activities would start, but specifically where it relates to evaluation...
 - [Lily] So evaluation, in part, sort of the speed with which a subgrantee evaluation plan gets approved really varies based on, partly on the pace at which the grantees and subgrantees in partnership can move the process forward on their end, and how that evaluation plans moves through the review and approval process on CNCS's end. The timeframe that was provided to you was an average estimate of length of time, and it was meant to be illustrative of what, on average, it has taken grantees and subgrantees to get their evaluation plans through. So from the point of award it's taken about nine months to a year to get those evaluations approved.

And just to give you a little bit more detail, once subgrantees are on board, and they also engage their evaluation partners, then the process of crafting an evaluation plan starts, and then the plan gets submitted to CNCS for review. We work with our evaluation technical assistance provider who typically turns around the review of these evaluation plans within about up to three weeks of submission. The plans usually go through at least two rounds of review before they are finalized. We want to make sure all outstanding issues around the evaluation plans are addressed and the plan is solid before it gets green light to move forward. So that should give you a little bit of a sense of how this process unfolds. But more on that and the timing of the different parts of the grant cycle will be shared at the time of orientation.

[Host] Great. Thank you. And that was actually the last question presented.

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AmeriCorps | Senior Corps | Social Innovation Fund | Volunteer Generation Fund

NATIONAL SERVICE QUINCY SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND

[Lois] Great. So we have a few minutes left. So while we go through the final slide, if you have any additional questions, please feel free to submit them in the chat function. So we wanted to make sure that you knew how to reach us, so first, just to reiterate there's lots of resources on the website: NationalService.gov/sif or [/innovation](http://NationalService.gov/innovation). They both get you to the same place. You can send questions to us at innovation@cns.gov. That's definitely our preferred method. You could leave a voicemail, but if you do, please explain what your question is. We've gotten a lot of, "Please call me back, I have a question which hasn't been very helpful."

And we will be updating our frequently asked questions document with the questions that we've gotten from our first four calls very shortly. And make a point of reading the NOFA and FAQs and listening to the different calls by the 24th, which is when we're having our final general question-and-answer session, so you'll have the opportunity then as you've actually been thinking through your applications in more detail to ask us additional questions.

[Host] We have one more question in. Yeah, we do have one more. There's a little bit of confusion around when the subgrantees are actually selected.

- **So are the subgrantees selected prior to the application, and then following the selection you have the full and open subgrantee RFP process?**
 - [Lois] No. And in our first year there actually was an opportunity to come in with some subgrantees preselected, but that is no longer the case. A full competitive process must be completed after we've approved you for funding. So you will submit to us your selection plan. We'll review it with you, and then ultimately approve it, and then you will implement it and actually run your competition to select your subgrantees.
- **Do you recommend some software applications that facilitate data collection and evaluation?**
 - [Lois] We don't have any specific recommendations. Our grantees are using a range of means of collecting data, from fairly simple to really sophisticated systems. So there's always the opportunity, and you can tell from Ayo, they are very willing to talk about the

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things that they're using, so feel free to look at the list of organizations we're funding and the types of programs they're supporting and see if there are any that are similar to what you're thinking of doing, and then you could reach out to them to find out what they're using. But it is really a huge range.

- **Could a new organization like the Head Start Foundation of Northern Illinois apply for the grant for subgrantee programs?**
 - [Lois] Let me answer it two ways, because I'm not sure if you asking to apply to be a subgrantee. So, as an intermediary, we're expecting you to be existing, with experience conducting competition. As a subgrantee it's possible that a new organization could be able to do this, but you'd really need to be able to demonstrate some serious capacity based on maybe staff with lots of experience. And if you're coming in within an intervention, it would need to be one that there has a preliminary evidence, and ideally that you have some experience implementing. So chances are that a new organization probably wouldn't work at that level either.

- **And we do have a follow-up question related to the subgrantee selection process: Do you recommend including a summarized selection approach within the proposal?**
 - [Lois] The selection criteria specifies what we want to hear from you at the time of application regarding your selection plan, so, yes, it does ask you to talk about the approach that you're going to take. And then much more detail will be required after you're approved for funding.

[Host] And that was the last question.

[Lois] Great. Well thank you so much for your interest, and we really appreciate the good questions that you asked, and please keep them coming and look out for further information from us. Thank you.

[Host] And with that, we will conclude this webinar. Thank you everyone. Have a good day.