



Accessing and Building Local Evaluation Networks

Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Kathryn Newcomer
November 10, 2016

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

How AEA can strengthen the:	AEA and the United States	Other Voluntary Organizations of Public Evaluation (VOPEs) in Other Countries
Enabling Environment		
Institutional Capacities		
Individual Capacities		

AEA Will Support All Six Areas

How AEA can strengthen the:	AEA and the United States	Other VOPEs and Other Countries
Enabling Environment	✓	✓
Institutional Capacities	✓	✓
Individual Capacities	✓	✓

13 Specific Actions

AEA will work to strengthen the:	Within AEA and the United States	Within Other VOPEs and Other Countries
<p>Enabling Environment</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>6. Find ways to learn systematically from other VOPEs around the world how they are strengthening their own enabling environments</p>
<p>Institutional Capacities</p>	<p>2. Work to strengthen the demand for evaluation within governments at all levels of government, the private sector, nonprofits, and foundations</p> <p>3. Use Federal Executive Institute and other courses to train incoming federal-level political officers and SES candidates and leaders in evaluation</p>	<p>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)</p>

Individual Capacities

4. Offer relevant international topics to be featured in AEA's e-studies programs

5. Expand in-person training opportunities beyond the conference and summer training institute, including online courses

8. Waive the conference and workshop fees for any developing country evaluator awarded conference travel funds by EvalPartners

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)

10. Step up the marketing for the Silent Auction, including recruiting more corporate donations

11. Match the travel funds raised during the Silent Auction, doubling the number of evaluators from developing countries AEA supports

12. Offer access to AEA online services to selected evaluators outside the USA (price/promotion to be determined by management)

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.

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

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

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”

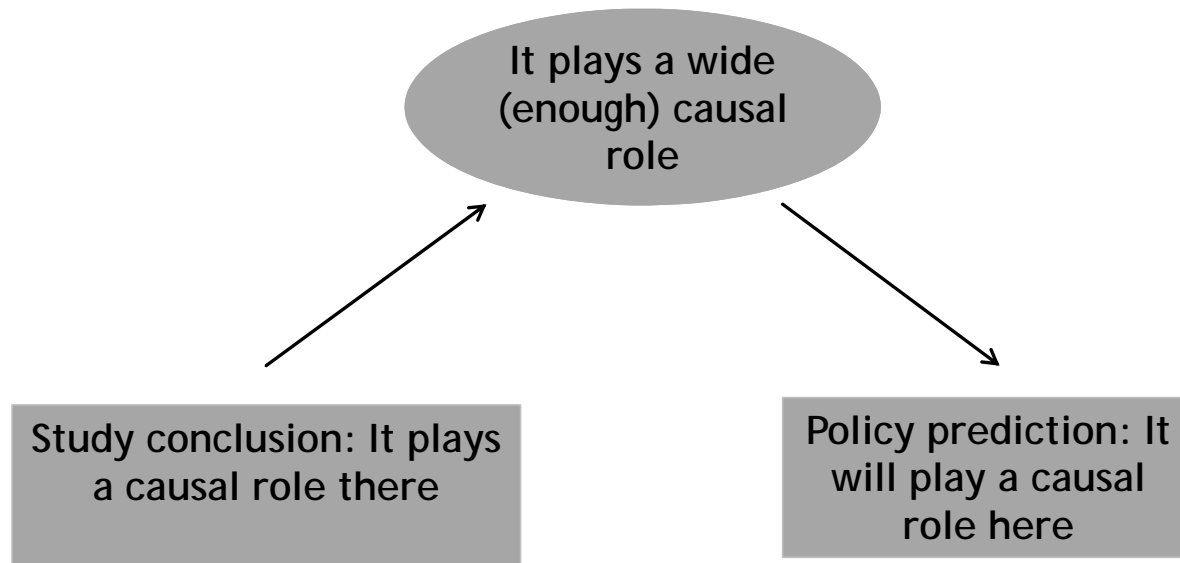
Why isn't There Agreement About the Quality of Evidence?

- ▶ 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 impacttees

We Underestimate the Evolving Sources of Complexity Affecting the Production of Relevant Evidence

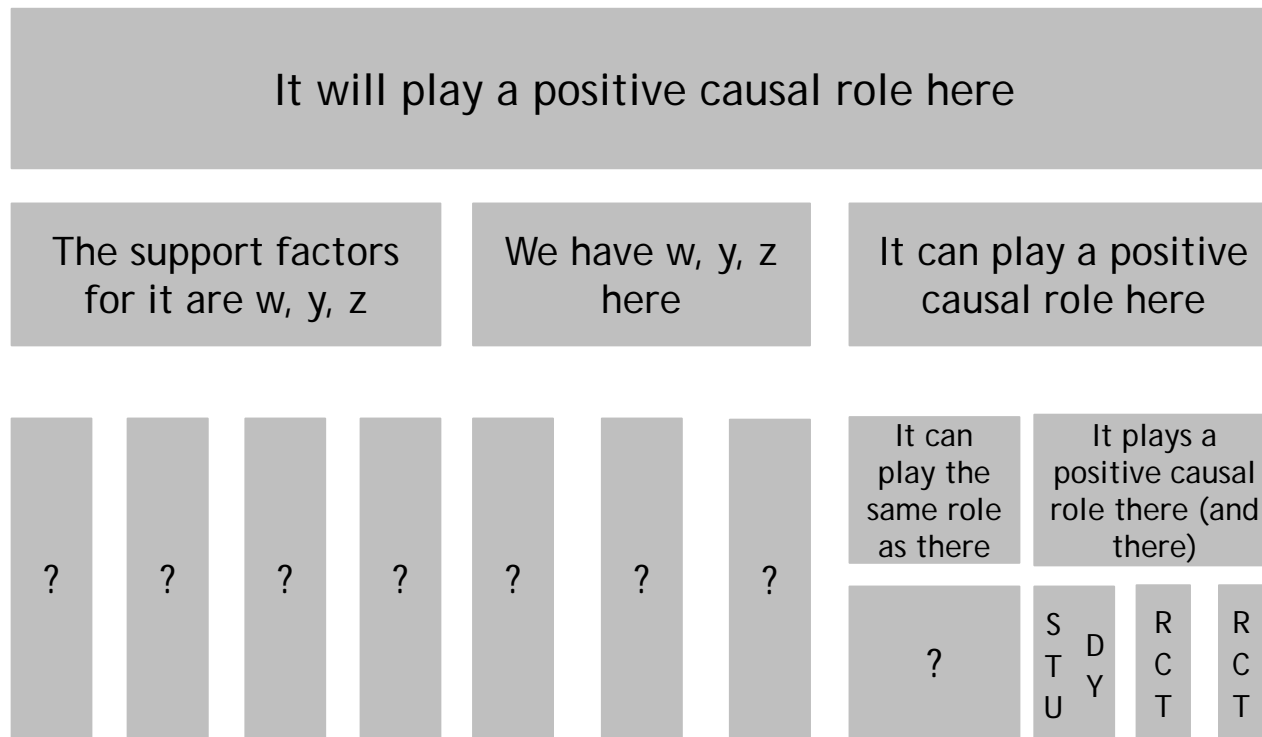
- ▶ Change in the nature of problems to be addressed by government, e.g., the nature of natural security threats, the use of the internet in crime
- ▶ Change in the context in which programs and policies are implemented, e.g., increasingly complicated service delivery networks, PPPs
- ▶ Changing priorities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

We Overstate the Ease of Flow of Evidence

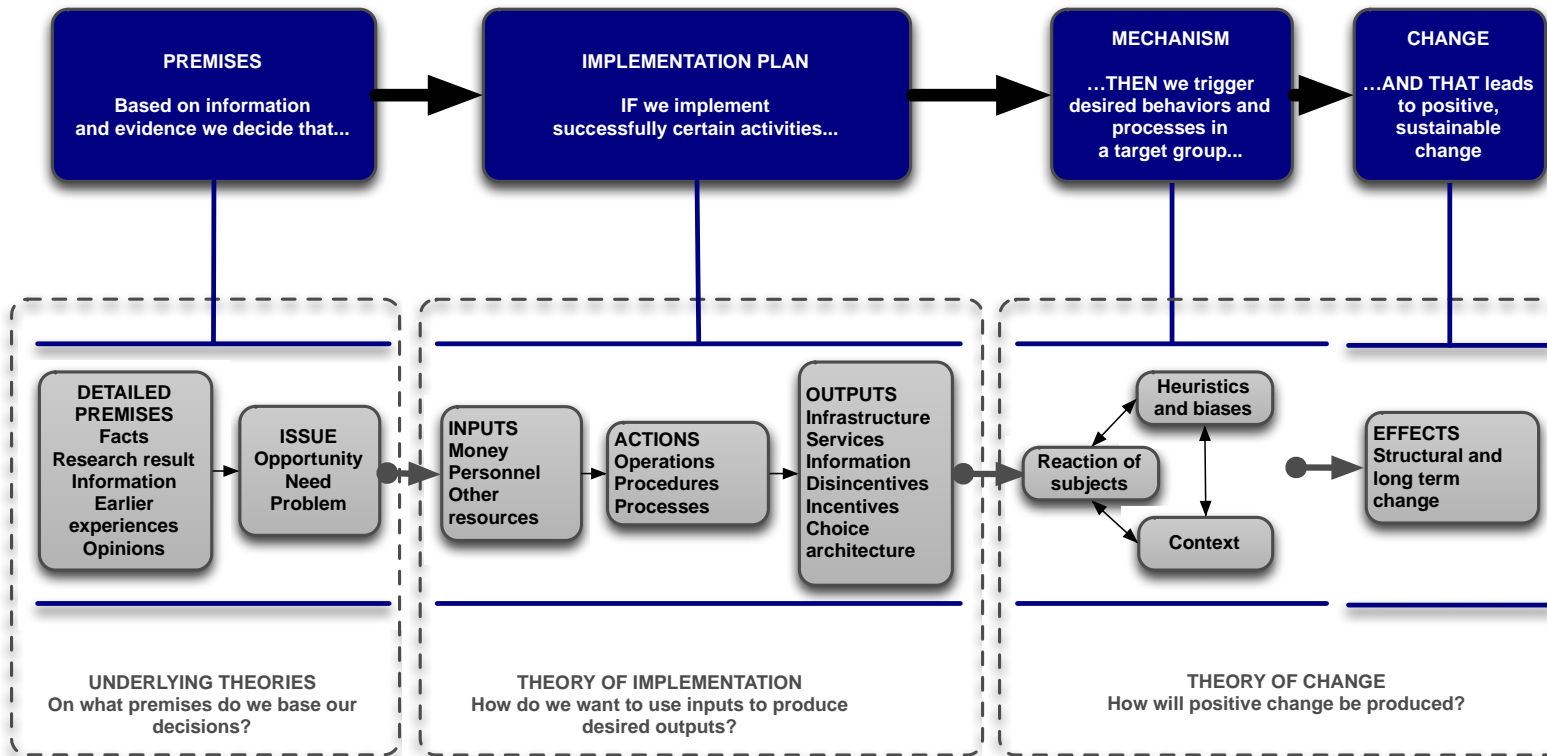


Source: Cartwright, N. (2013). Knowing what we are talking about: why evidence doesn't always travel. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, 9(1), 97-112.

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



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



Olejniczak, K. & Newcomer, K. (2014). "Moving towards accountability for learning";
 in: Olejniczak, K. & Mazur, S. (eds.) Organizational Learning. A Framework for Public Administration, p.81-99. Warsaw: Scholar Publishing House.

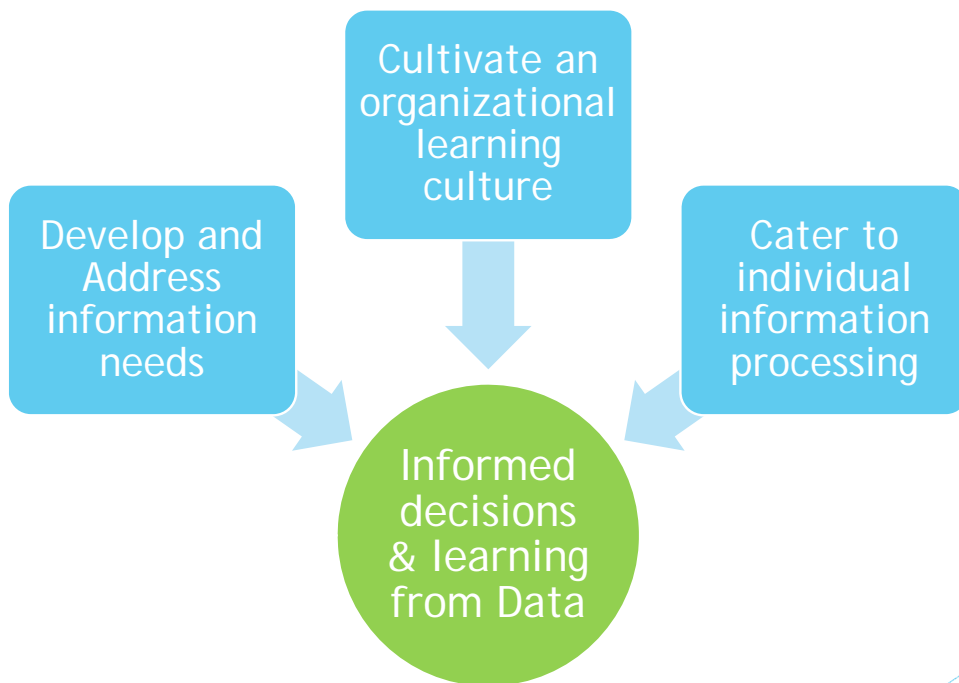
Evaluation Capacity = Both Demand and Supply

- ▶ 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

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

A simple framework....



Remember Evaluation Capacity = Both Demand and Supply

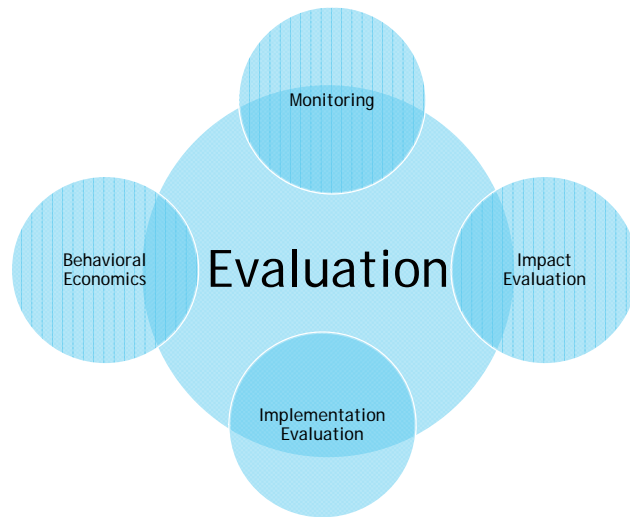
- ▶ Consider who is asking for the data/evidence and **who** might use the information provided and **how** and **when** they may use it
- ▶ Probe the extent to which there is a clear understanding between providers and requestors for what sorts of evidence is needed, e.g., brokering
- ▶ Assess whether 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?

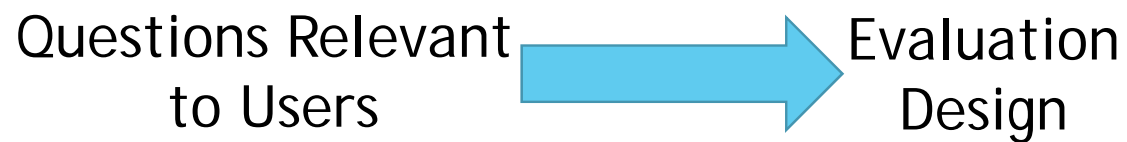
- ▶ Engage in **self-reflection & self-examination**
 - ▶ Deliberately seek evidence on what it's doing
 - ▶ Use results information to challenge or support what it's doing
 - ▶ Promote candor, challenge and genuine dialogue
- ▶ Engage in **evidence-based learning**
 - ▶ Make time to learn
 - ▶ Learn 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



Match Evaluation Approach to Questions

Objective	Illustrative Questions	Possible Design
#1: Describe program activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Exploratory Evaluations • Evaluability Assessments • Multiple Case Studies
#2: Probe targeting & implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 do new interventions interact with other potential solutions to recognized problems? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Case Studies • Implementation or Process evaluations • Performance Audits • Compliance Audits • Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation
#3: Measure the impact of policies & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Pathways and Process tracing • System dynamics • Configurational analysis

Relevant References

- ▶ Dahler-Larsen, Peter. 2012. *The Evaluation Society*. Stanford University Press.
- ▶ Donaldson, S., C. Christie, and M. Mark (editors) 2015. *Credible and Actionable Evidence*, 2nd Edition. Sage.
- ▶ Head, B. 2015. "Toward More "Evidence-Informed" Policy Making?" *Public Administration Review*. Vol.76, Issue 3, pp. 472-484.
- ▶ Kahneman, D. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux Publishers.
- ▶ Mayne, J. 2010. "Building an evaluative culture: The key to effective evaluation and results management." *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 24(2), 1-30.
- ▶ Newcomer, K. and C. Brass. 2016. "Forging a Strategic and Comprehensive Approach to Evaluation within Public and Nonprofit Organizations: Integrating Measurement and Analytics within Evaluation." *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 37 (1), 80-99.
- ▶ Olejniczak, K., E. Raimondo, and T. Kupiec. 2016. "Evaluation units as knowledge brokers: Testing and calibrating an innovative framework." *Evaluation*, Volume 22 (2)., 168-189.
- ▶ Sunstein. C. and R. Hastie. 2015. *Wiser: Getting Beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- ▶ World Bank Group. *Mind, Society and Behavior*. 2015.

Thank You!

I can be reached at newcomer@gwu.edu

**Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration**
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY