

EVIDENCE-BUILDING CAPACITY IN GOVERNMENT

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- ▶ Learning From Evidence: The Current Context
- ▶ Assessing the Quality of Evidence
- ▶ Employing Evaluative Thinking in Government
- ▶ Developing Learning Agendas for Public Organizations
- ▶ Building Capacity to Generate Evidence
- ▶ Building Capacity to Use Evidence
- ▶ Sustaining Momentum for Evidence-Building Capacity in Government

OUR AGENDA

- ▶ The motivation and infrastructure to:
 - ▶ develop relevant questions about an organization's programs and policies,
 - ▶ collect and generate (or access if already collected by other agencies) data to address the questions, manage and protect data, analyze and interpret the data, and
 - ▶ provide relevant insights from the evidence to inform management and stakeholders for policymaking. (demand for and supply of evidence!)

WHAT DOES EVIDENCE-BUILDING CAPACITY ENTAIL?

Neo-Liberalism and the New Public Management Calls for the Use of Evidence in Government

Outcomes

Results-Based
Management

Evidence-
Based Policy

1980s

1990s

2000+

The Current Context



- Supportive appointees, leaders, and program administrators willing to engage in evidence building

- Establishment of research & evaluation priorities, for example with a “learning agenda”

- Collection of relevant, quality data that are managed well with relevant data access and use authorization

- Actionable information or evidence relayed through intermediaries and brokers

COMPONENTS OF EVIDENCE-BUILDING CAPACITY

- ▶ The “evidence-based policy” imperative – history and current expectations
- ▶ U.S. Federal government environment affecting the Supply of “Evidence”
- ▶ The State and Local government appetite of using evidence
- ▶ The Accountability Versus Learning Imbalance

LEARNING FROM EVIDENCE

- ▶ When is Evidence Sufficiently Rigorous?
 - ▶ The “Rule of Evidence” Provides a Useful Template
 - ▶ Competence: Was the methodology used to collect the evidence competently executed by competent professionals?
 - ▶ Relevance: Does the evidence address the question?
 - ▶ Sufficiency: Is the evidence convincing to the customers/to a reasonable person? (Adapted from The Rule of Evidence from the GAO Yellowbook)
- ▶ What Constitute Challenges to Assessing the Quality of Evidence?
- ▶ Where are Opportunities for Promoting Shared Understanding of Evidence?

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF EVIDENCE

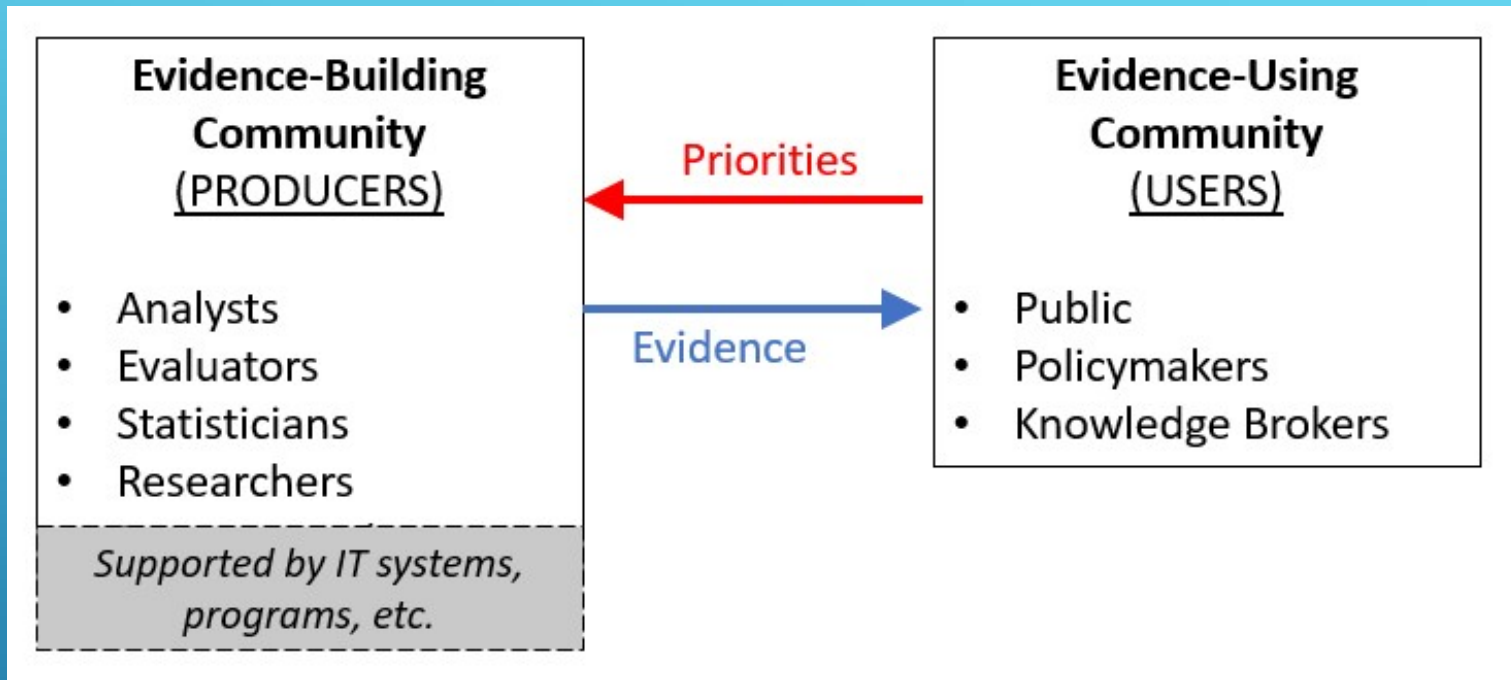
- ▶ Evaluative thinking is Critical in:
 - ▶ Consulting with stakeholders - intentionally, explicitly and inclusively - about assumptions about how programs or policies are actually implemented AND about the willingness of and obstacles facing intended beneficiaries
 - ▶ Developing and Using Theories of Change
 - ▶ Carefully and intentionally developing important questions that can be used to guide data collection in order to provide timely and relevant evidence to inform decision making and policy making.
 - ▶ Informing decisions about appropriate research designs and data collection tools to employ to address the questions that have been developed.
 - ▶ Helping recipients of any evidence they receive to ensure they understand the relative rigor and appropriateness of the methods used to generate the evidence

EMPLOYING EVALUATIVE THINKING IN GOVERNMENT

- ▶ What are learning agendas?
 - ▶ A learning agenda includes:
 - ▶ (1) a set of questions about policy or program design, implementation or outcomes that organizational leaders and program stakeholders prioritize, and
 - ▶ (2) plans for evidence generation to answer those questions.
- ▶ What steps are involved in developing and using learning agendas?
- ▶ What are benefits of developing learning agendas in public agencies?

DEVELOPING LEARNING AGENDAS FOR PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS





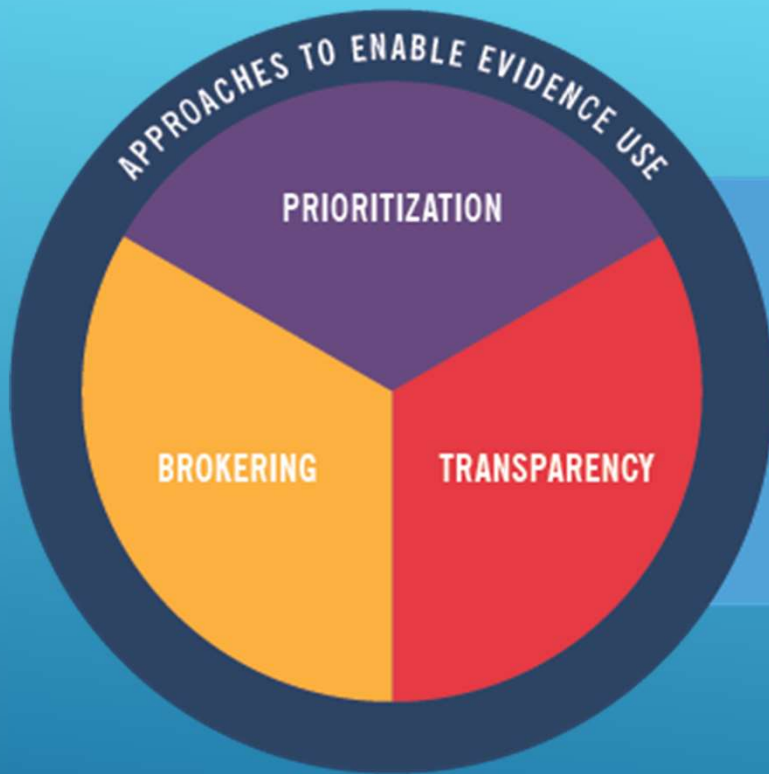
THE EVIDENCE ECOSYSTEM

- ▶ What is the Evidence-Building Community (EBC) and its relevance for capacity?
 - ▶ The EBC connects individuals and disciplines across organizational silos. Extends beyond evaluation and data managers to also include IT specializations, data science, and those conducting policy-relevant research inside and outside government.
- ▶ What are Challenges to Capacity to Generate Evidence:
 - ▶ Leadership Commitment and Organizational Motivation
 - ▶ Organizational Silos and Placement of Analytic Operations
 - ▶ Legal authorities that affect control of knowledge, data, etc.
 - ▶ Availability of quality data, expertise and relevant resources
- ▶ Where are Opportunities to Build Capacity to Generate Evidence?

BUILDING CAPACITY TO GENERATE EVIDENCE

- ▶ The whole point of spending time and energy on the generation of evidence is to support its eventual and intended use
- ▶ What Constitute Challenges to Enhancing Use?
 - ▶ Difficult to use evidence that does not exist. But once it does exist, also difficult to ensure use.
 - ▶ The challenges that exist to enhancing use include individual and organizational factors that affect perceptions about credibility and usefulness of data.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO USE EVIDENCE



Types of Actions

- Capacity Enhancement
- Institutional Modification
- Process Change

(BPC 2018)

ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES TO USE

- ▶ Build and sustain infrastructure for sharing good ideas and bridging across silos of evidence builders within agencies
- ▶ Organize and sustain communities of practice among evidence providers and among program managers who wish to be evidence-informed through ongoing support
- ▶ Design and build choice architecture so that the use of evidence by both managers and policy makers is the default – e.g., in laws and in budget guidance

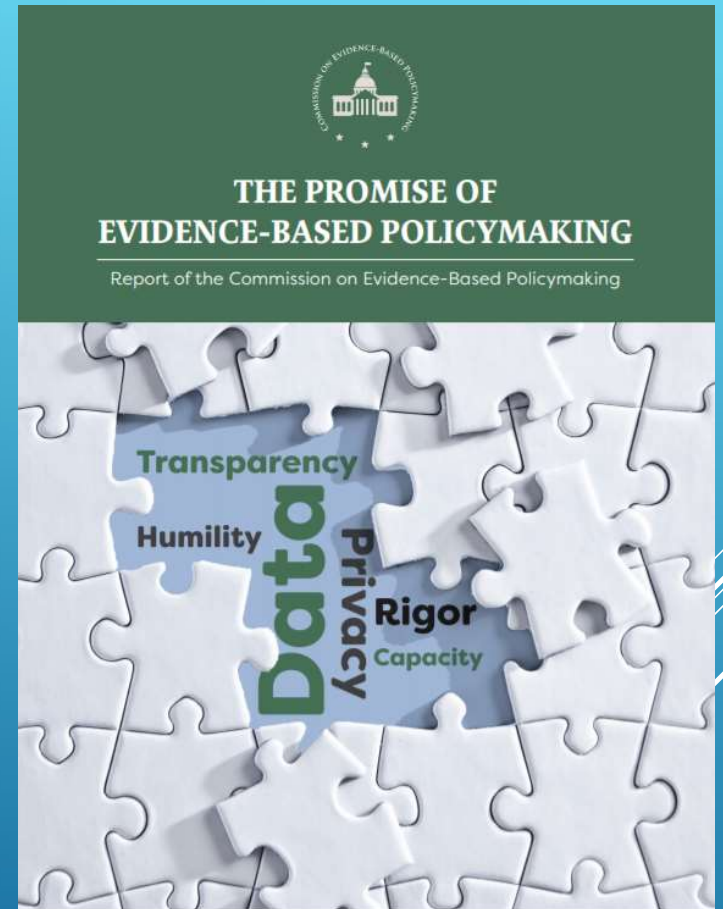
SUSTAINING MOMENTUM FOR EVIDENCE-BUILDING CAPACITY IN GOVERNMENT

- ▶ Educate stakeholders inside and outside of government on the value of evaluation
- ▶ Educate policymakers and others in control of resources on the value of building and sustaining infrastructure and expertise within government to generate and analyze evidence of all kinds
- ▶ Develop authentic engagement and collaboration among providers of evidence and the potential users of evidence
- ▶ Sustain networks to provide support program managers with knowledge and skills regarding the generation and use of evidence on an as-needed basis

SUSTAINING MOMENTUM FOR EVIDENCE- BUILDING CAPACITY IN GOVERNMENT, CONTINUED

- ▶ Potential for upcoming reforms in government to spur additional capacity. For example, the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking's recommendations.

SUSTAINING MOMENTUM FOR EVIDENCE-BUILDING CAPACITY IN GOVERNMENT, CONTINUED



THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

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