Evidence-based Policy: A Federal Evaluation Office’s Perspective

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DOL Mission

• “...foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights”
  ▫ Over a dozen operating agencies, each with subagencies, many programs, and field offices
    • Worker protection and labor standards
    • Employment services, job training, and worker security
    • Policy and advocacy
    • Many have research, analysis, and/or evaluation offices

• CEO’s Departmental-level evaluation support-
  ▫ Complements not duplicates agency evaluation functions
  ▫ Raises the quality of evaluations and awareness and knowledge of evaluation methodology and standards
  ▫ Improves use and dissemination of evaluation results
  ▫ Improves access to, quality of, and use of data, including the CEO Data Analytics Unit (coordinate with BLS, Performance Management Center, and agencies)
Evaluations & Analytic Projects

Strategic Plan & Priorities

Congressional Requirements

OMB Guidance

Agency Learning Agendas

Capacity Development
- Dissemination (website, briefs, SnapShots)
- CLEAR (standards and reviews)
- Scholars Programs & Grants
- Data Quality and Access
- Seminars
- Cross-agency Evidence Groups

Data Analytics
- Consultative Analytics & Projects
- DEAP-Data Exchange Platform
- Public Use Files
- User Groups & Seminars
- Software
- Statistical Modeling
- Collaborative Analysis
- Data Visualization
Main Types of Evaluations

- **Formal evaluations**
  - Experimental design—random assignment treatment and control groups (especially formal net impact evaluations, rapid cycle behavioral tests)
  - Quasi-experimental designs—created comparison groups (statistical matching techniques)
  - Various analytic levels: nation, states, localities, grantees; programs, demonstrations, strategies, models

- **Outcome evaluations**
  - Nonexperimental statistical/econometric modeling
  - Survey analysis
  - Statistical analysis of BLS and Census data

- **Program performance analysis**
  - Quantitative output and outcome analysis

- **Implementation and management evaluations**
  - Organizational and program process analysis
Priority Data Issues for Evaluations

• Appropriate outcome variables
  ▫ (e.g., individual workers, program participants, firms, establishments, states)
• Appropriate independent variables, covariates
  ▫ (e.g., labor market conditions, demographic and household characteristics, work and earnings history, education, criminal record, occupation/industry, compliance history)
• Time frame aligned to evaluation goals—pre and post periods
• Micro-level data
• Longitudinal features
• Agile merging
  ▫ Longitudinal analysis files
  ▫ Using unique identifiers (e.g., individuals, firms, establishments, states, programs, grantees)
  ▫ Linking other evaluation data collected (e.g., surveys, program data)
Priority data systems issues for evaluations

• Analysts’ access to the physical data infrastructure (e.g., by third-party researchers, federal staff analysts)
• Expert human capital (e.g., data and programming expertise)
• Timeliness of access
• Security (e.g., secure PII, informed consent usage)
• Cost efficient
Priority interests ("wish list") to improve data for DOL evaluations

- *Earnings data.* Direct, and less costly, access to earnings records produced by DOL’s state employment security agency partners—for evaluation, statistical products, and program performance measurement
  - National Directory of New Hires
  - Longitudinal Employer and Household Dynamics
- *Firm identifiers.* Common firm, employer, and establishment identification scheme
- *Reformed PRA.* Streamlined and less costly Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) process for evaluations and evidence-building
- *Streamlined IAA.* Less cumbersome interagency agreement (IAA) process to facilitate and encourage cross-agency data sharing and matching at the Federal level
- *Privacy & Security.* More clarity and consistency in procedures and rules among Federal agencies and other data providers
For more information...

- Demetra Nightingale
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- CEO website (including DOL Evaluation Policy Statement)
  https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/EvaluationPolicy.htm

- CLEAR (DOL’s evidence-based clearinghouse)
  http://clear.dol.gov/