

Managing for Success: Integrating Multiple Types of Evidence into Decision-Making Processes

The Forum for Youth Investment's 2017 report, *Managing for Success: Strengthening the Federal Infrastructure for Evidence-based Policymaking*, reviewed the current landscape of offices, interagency collaborations, policies and other mechanisms which produce and use evidence at the federal level and recommended ways to strengthen and better coordinate this infrastructure. The report was meant to serve as a complement to the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, particularly in terms of its recommendations on increasing agency capacity to use evidence.

The Forum's report received input from the Cross-Agency Learning Community on Federal Investments in Research and Evaluation, a group of federal officials in agencies focused on research and evaluation related to children and families. The Forum also conducted research on the status of each building block for its landscape scan of current efforts. The recommendations for this report were further informed by interviews with current and former federal agency staff as well as White House officials spanning five administrations and a bipartisan set of organizations involved with evidence-based policymaking.

The twenty five recommendations were organized into three overarching categories: integrating multiple types of evidence into decision-making processes, elevating evaluation and focusing on revenue-neutral approaches to scaling the use of evidence. This issue brief will examine the report's third subset of recommendations: revenue-neutral approaches to scaling evidence use.

The Problem

The federal government currently organizes the various components of infrastructure into silos based on specific types of evidence. The report identified five types of evidence including statistics, data, performance improvement, evaluation, and social and behavioral sciences. The report also separated the federal infrastructure into six types or components: White House leadership positions, interagency coordinating bodies, agency-level offices and actions, guidebooks detailing principles and best practices, policies governing the creation and use of evidence, and mechanisms helping states and localities.

With a few exceptions, there is one infrastructure set up to support statistics, a separate infrastructure designed to support performance management, and yet another infrastructure meant to support evaluation. These silos prevent policymakers from aligning processes where evidence is brought together and from using this combined evidence to make better-informed policy decisions.

The Commission on Evidence-based Policymaking also identified coordination of evidence as a challenge to strengthening the evidence-building capacity within the federal government. They noted that:

- The capacity of the Federal departments to support the full range of evidence-building functions is uneven, and where capacity for evidence building does exist, it is often poorly coordinated within departments;
- Federal departments frequently do not have an integrated approach or a long-range plan for evidence building;

- The current organizational structure of OMB does not optimize the agency’s ability to coordinate evidence building across the Federal government;
- Administrative processes are not tailored or aligned to support evidence-building activities; and
- The federal evidence-building community has insufficient resources and limited flexibilities that restrict the ability expand evidence-building activities.

With the Commission’s findings and further backing from the numerous experts who were consulted in the Managing for Success report, the Forum came up with several recommendations to integrate multiple types of evidence into decision-making processes.

Recommendations

Evidence-based policymaking works best when multiple types of evidence are created, collected, and presented to policymakers as a coherent package to be used in key decision-making processes. But the fragmented nature of the infrastructure for evidence can frustrate efforts to provide policymakers with the complete picture. The Forum recommended eight changes in total for integrating multiple types of evidence into decision-making processes. The recommendations range from better coordination of evidence-building functions at the OMB (similar to the Commission’s recommendations) to actions that could be taken by individual agencies to coordinate across the many different guidebooks for the various types of evidence. Congress could also take a larger role in encouraging the integration of multiple types of evidence. Federal agencies could also better publicize their efforts on a common public-facing website to better support integration efforts.

Recommendations		
White House Leadership Positions	Interagency Coordinating Bodies	Agency-level Offices and Actions
The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) deputy director for management should align the work of the federal chief performance officers, the chief statistician, the U.S. chief technology officer (in his or her role overseeing data), the federal chief information officer (in his or her role with Project Open Data), and the chief evaluation officer (if such a position is created).	The OMB deputy director for management/chair of the President’s Management Council, or a similar-level official, should align the various interagency coordinating bodies that are focused on specific types of evidence.	Agencies should integrate multiple types of evidence into agency decision-making processes in ways that protect independence, transparency, and rigor.
Guidebooks detailing principles and best practices	Policies governing the creation and use of evidence	Mechanisms helping States and Localities
Identify common themes across the full range of types of evidence activities and include them consistently in each guidebook.	Congress, in partnership with OMB, should craft policies that provide a clearer vision for how multiple types of evidence should be integrated into decision-making processes, including putting in place safeguards to preserve the independence of those who create, compile, and present evidence. Congress and OMB should implement the Commission on Evidence-based Policymaking’s recommendations.	Create a network of Using What Works Centers to help states and localities integrate multiple types of evidence into decision-making. Create an evidence.gov Web site comprising the full complement of types of evidence that are currently siloed in sites like FedStats, data.gov, and performance.gov.

For more information and to read the whole report, visit:

<http://www.forumfyi.org/managingforsuccess>.



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