April 2023 Convening Summary Notes

Overview

Day One

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) - Building a Theory of Change & Measuring Indicators

- *Guests:*
    - Kim Dadisman, Associate Director of Policy, J-PAL
    - Andrea Salas, Senior Policy & Training Associate, J-PAL
    - Sara van Nes, Policy & Training Associate, J-PAL
- *Key Themes:*
    - A theory of change is a structured approach used in the design and evaluation of social programs. It maps the logical chain of how program inputs achieve changes in outcomes through activities and outputs, describing the pathways through which a program's intervention(s) could lead to an impact.
    - Theories of change are often utilized when designing an intervention or an evaluation to identify the causal link between interventions and the final outcome.
    - Program evaluations might take the form of:
        - Process evaluation: Assess if a program was implemented as designed
        - Impact evaluation: Assess if a program achieved its desired goals
            - Randomized Control Trials (RCT) are one type of impact evaluation
        - Cost effective analysis: Compare a program's cost to impact of a given program or policy
    - Theories of change utilize:
        - Process evaluations to make sure the program is implemented as planned by focusing on inputs and outputs
        - Impact evaluations to identify the research question(s) for an impact evaluation by focusing on intermediate and long-term/final outcomes
    - Measurement is crucial
        - Data should be valid and reliable
        - Data sources might be administrative, from existing sources, or primary data, collected for a study
    - Outputs vs. intermediate outcomes vs. final outcomes
        - Outputs are the tangible "products or services"
        - Intermediate outcomes are expected changes (behavior, belief, knowledge) that are not the ultimate outcome of interest, but are along the way to achieving the final outcome
        - Final outcomes are the overall goals of a program
    - Assumptions are the conditions that have to hold throughout the Theory of Change for a program to work as expected.
    - Measuring indicators are established along a Theory of Change and help to answer why and how a program did or did not lead to the desired results.

- ○ Interpreting results: Finding no impact in an evaluation does not necessarily mean that the program is ineffective. It's possible there were problems related to the implementation or the Theory of Change was not right.
- *Resources:*
  - ○ [Session Slides](#)
  - ○ [Session Worksheets](#)
  - ○ [Summer Youth Employment Program Evaluation](#)
  - ○ J-PAL, in partnership with RFA, has developed the Leveraging Evaluation and Evidence for Equitable Recovery (LEVER) resource, which provides a suite of critical resources and training for government jurisdictions to use and build evidence. A two-part workshop is coming up on May 16 & 23, 2023 on "Starting your Evidence and Evaluation Journey Workshop." To learn more about LEVER and join programming, visit https://www.povertyactionlab.org/lever.

Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (GPL) - Active Contract Management
- *Guests:*
  - ○ Charles Kargman, Project Leader, GPL
  - ○ Nayana Nagapurapu, Government Innovation Fellow, GPL
- *Key Themes:*
  - ○ Active Contract/Grant Management (ACM) prioritizes a collaborative-oriented relationship with providers vs. just compliance-oriented interactions.
  - ○ Active Contract Management
    - ■ Successful active contract management begins with a kick off meeting to model a culture of transparency and honest communication with providers.
      - ● Program managers should use active listening with vendors/providers.
      - ● The tone of a kick off and any following meetings is not punitive, but curious. The goals are to create a safe space and open dialogue.
      - ● Leading conversations can increase a sense of collaboration.
    - ■ Regularity and consistency in reviews of real-time performance data help identify trends and patterns.
    - ■ Regular and consistent communication leads to building trust, making conversations about data and performance easier over time.
    - ■ Meetings should end in clear action steps.
    - ■ 3 key reasons to utilize active contract management:
      - ● Identify the key data
      - ● Generate insights
      - ● Drive action
  - ○ Utilizing Data Literacy 101 Trainings for vendors/providers can be helpful to establish expectations and create shared foundational knowledge at the start of a partnership.
    - ■ Fellows are implementing this approach by:
      - ● Sharing learning agendas at the launch of all contracts to clarify what the funder wants to learn.
      - ● Learning agendas are also helpful to inform future RFPs, as they create a process for accountability/review and lay out a course of action for providers to follow.
      - ● Because many providers don't have capacity to prioritize data management, funders provide support through the data process to ensure any vendor/provider can scale effectively.

- *Resources:*
  - [Session Slides](#)
  - [Session Worksheets](#)
  - [Harvard GPL - Resource Library](#)
  - [Harvard GPL - RFP Guidebook 2021](#)
  - See Active Contract/Grant Management in action! Please review the [Texas Workforce Commission's Building & Construction Trade Grant](#) grantee webinar recordings.
  - Join the GPL Procurement Excellence Network to gather procurement resources, access trainings and templates, and connect with other procurement professionals. Learn more here https://gplpen.hks.harvard.edu/.
  - Reach out to RFA to sign up for an office hours session with GPL.

Fellows' Learnings & Needs
- *Key Themes:*
  - Create opportunities for Fellowship teams to connect by:
    - Similar project topics
    - Similar challenges/areas for learning
  - Offer more training or resources on:
    - Performance-Based Contracting Strategies 101
    - Past Fellowship projects/achievements to uplift best practices or opportunities for replication across other teams
    - Active listening for successful partnership
- *Resources:*
  - Families and Workers Fund (FWF) will be running a state/local challenge grant program in the coming months focused on directly supporting jurisdictions to advance good jobs and equity goals for the climate and infrastructure workforce. Please reach out to RFA staff to be connected with FWF to learn more.
  - In the summer/fall of 2023, RFA will be publishing a Procurement and Grant Reform Guide that will highlight how to integrate evidence-based strategies into public workforce dollars.

Day Two
State and Local Workforce Fellowship & Good Jobs and Equity Project Fellows Introductions
- *Resources:*
  - Session Slides
    - [State and Local Workforce Fellowship overview](#)
    - [Good Jobs and Equity Project overview](#)

Strategic Communications for Effective Initiatives
- *Guests:*
  - Cheryl Burnett, Director of Strategic Communications, Results for America
  - Katherine Ferguson, Manager of Strategic Communications & Marketing, Results for America
- *Key Themes:*
  - What makes a story, the story should not be about you or your organization. It should be about who is being served and for what reason.
    - Storytelling fundamentals
    - Create a narrative

- ■ Share numbers
- ■ Make it digestible – make it easy enough that a five year old could understand
- ■ Demonstrate progress
- ■ Identify message carriers
- ■ Involve stakeholders
- ■ Don't be dull - humanize your story
  - ○ 3 examples that worked
    - ■ Create appealing visuals to highlight key data or insights
      - ● Memphis, TN, utilized a heat map to show overdue library fines' connection to low-income populations
    - ■ Create connections within your community
      - ● Long Beach, CA, worked with community based organizations and young people to talk to business owners to encourage engagement in their programming.
    - ■ Create accessible, educational resources
      - ● Gilbert, AZ, developed a chatbot character to simplify the concept of open data.
  - ○ Fellows' takeaways
    - ■ Develop a definition of success
    - ■ Simplify the story, definition, terms/jargon
    - ■ Utilize multiple communications channels (e.g. in-person events, webinars, emails, social media, etc.)
    - ■ Create communications strategies for a variety of key stakeholder audiences
    - ■ Gather distinct audience, participant, community perspectives to inform strategies
    - ■ Identify how each team member can play a role in communicating the work effectively
    - ■ Create consistent opportunities to uplift achievements, progress, milestones, etc.
    - ■ Reflect if the data being collected is actually answering questions relevant to your work
- *Resources:*
  - ○ [Session Slides](#)
  - ○ [Communications Mad Libs Worksheet](#)
  - ○ [Communications Timeline Worksheet](#)

Peer Consulting
- ● Using a peer consulting model, attendees identified challenges they face through their projects and obtained practical and imaginative support from colleagues to identify solutions or next steps.
- ● *Key Themes:*
  - ○ Highly valuable opportunity to connect with other internal government teams working on similar projects or with similar goals, rather than always speaking to external partners.
  - ○ View colleagues within RFA programs as partners vs. only peers.
  - ○ It is crucial to deeply understand stakeholders' perspectives and what their needs are.
  - ○ Prioritizing relationships as the foundation for success.
  - ○ Work within a timeline that allows consideration for current goals and outputs as well as discussing how today's actions will impact future goals.
  - ○ Create commitments that tie specifically with data that is already available to create an early insight/win.