

# Leveraging Evaluation & Evidence for Equitable Recovery

## Building Your Team

Government policymakers have the opportunity to improve the lives of residents and the quality of their communities by identifying and investing in programs that are proven to work. Achieving outcomes like economic mobility and gender and racial equity requires an understanding of which programs do – and do not – work. Impact evaluations provide vital insights into which programs are successful, for whom, and in what contexts. This knowledge empowers government leaders to innovate and refine their services, ensuring that they are able to deliver the highest quality services for their residents. By investing in evaluations, leaders demonstrate their commitment to making informed, effective decisions that can truly benefit their communities.

That said, one person cannot take on this work alone. Wherever your government stands in its journey to embedding evidence-based decision-making into its processes, this guide will help you identify and assemble a team to begin identifying and investing in what works. Through a **Stakeholder Mapping** exercise, this guide will help you identify and prioritize who you need to solicit approval and buy-in from, as well as develop a plan to strategically engage every type of stakeholder.

To get started, we recommend you identify one of four key focus areas to building your evaluation team around: Readiness Foundations, Practices and Policies, Leadership and Culture, and Evaluation Planning. You can learn more about these focus areas and identify your government's growth opportunities using this [needs assessment tool](#). Take a moment to reflect on your department's internal capacity, culture, and key stakeholders prior to delving into this exercise.

### Stakeholder Assessment

Conducting a stakeholder assessment helps identify various stakeholders' level of interest and influence, and assigns them to one of four quadrants:

1. **Opposition:** Stakeholders who are disinterested or opposed, but have little influence on decision-makers.
2. **Opposition with influence:** Stakeholders who are disinterested or opposed with significant influence or the ability to make decisions.
3. **Champions:** Stakeholders who are interested or motivated but have little influence on decision-makers.
4. **Champions with influence:** Stakeholders who are excited with significant influence on decision-makers, or able to make decisions.

Categorize stakeholders by answering the following questions:

1. Who would oppose or not support your efforts to embed evidence and evaluation into your decision-making process? Separate your opposition between those who influence decision-making and those who do not. Note strategies for advancing a program despite their opposition. Consider how you can minimize their negative impact while addressing their concerns.
2. Who would support embedding evidence and evaluations into your decision-making process and how can you maximize their positive impact? Group your supporters by those who influence decision-making and those who do not. Note strategies for leveraging their support, particularly how these stakeholders can help you manage and assuage the concerns of your opposition.

**Instructions:**

Based on the area you've decided is most important, consider your internal and external stakeholders and where they would land in terms of interest in this area *and* level of influence to make changes in your government.

Plot your stakeholders on this chart!

- Top-left quadrant: disinterested or opposed with significant influence
- Top-right quadrant: interested or motivated with significant influence
- Bottom-left quadrant: disinterested or opposed with little influence
- Bottom-right quadrant: interested or motivated with little influence
- **Your team: your most excited peers and stakeholders who can help you move this work forward**

**Evidence & Evaluation Readiness Focus Area**

- Foundations
- Practices & Policies
- Leadership & Culture
- Evaluation Planning

**Your Team**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*most influence*

*little influence*

**Next Steps:**

- Build your implementation team: reach out to those stakeholders and set a meeting to discuss growth opportunities
- Be aware of your detractors and identify some potential strategies to bring them along
- Make sure you have community stakeholders in your map and on your implementation team to ensure that your solutions are aligned with local needs

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### Develop a Plan

Once you've mapped where your stakeholders stand, review your categorization and build a plan to strategically engage every type of stakeholder. Here are a couple of suggested next steps to get you started:

1. Now that you've identified your most aligned peers and stakeholders who can help you move this work forward, begin planning how to best engage them. Perhaps you schedule an initial one-on-one to assess their interest and capacity, then begin monthly check-ins to update each other on progress.
2. Proactively try to minimize the influence of your opposition by developing a strategy to address their concerns and generating success stories that demonstrate the utility of evidence and evaluations, while also building trust with these stakeholders.
3. A cornerstone of any successful process – especially one that centers equity – is community input. Review your stakeholders and ensure you're engaging community members who have firsthand experience with any programs you are hoping to implement to ensure your work is grounded in the lived realities of the people you serve. If you are unable to incorporate local voices into your list now, think about how to begin engaging with community members around this work so that they can be at the table in the near future.

Now that you have assessed your key stakeholders and begun planning to engage them, you are ready to begin building the buy-in necessary to embed evidence-based decision-making into your government's process. LEVER has resources available to support you on this journey, so please reach out to Results for America at [recovery@results4america.org](mailto:recovery@results4america.org) to find out more.