|||RESULTS FOR ALL

A global initiative dedicated to helping policymakers demand and use the evidence they need to improve the lives of citizens

An Awards Program for Good Practices in Monitoring & Evaluation

National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), Mexico

Why it was introduced

- Mexico's National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL, for its Spanish acronym) is an autonomous government entity tasked with measuring the state of national and subnational poverty in Mexico, and coordinating evaluations of programs related to the National Social Development Policy. It is committed to objectivity, technical rigor, and transparency, and publishes evaluation results and poverty measurements on its website for anyone to access.

- Not long after CONEVAL's creation in 2005, its leadership recognized that public officials in other government entities saw evaluations as costly tasks with only long-term benefits. The high turnover of public officials created even less of an incentive to commission and use evaluations. In response, CONEVAL sought to introduce short-term benefits that would encourage government entities to commission evaluations, use the results to improve programs, and invest in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) skills of their staff. An awards program would help CONEVAL create short-term, political benefits for the government entities and officials who demonstrated good practices in M&E, and incentivize others to follow suit.

How it works

- Every year since 2009 CONEVAL gives awards to programs, units, or departments in the federal public administration that have demonstrated good practices in the use of M&E results and the generation and use of evidence to improve public policies and programs.

Incentivizing Evidence-Informed Decision Making in Government

How are public sector officials incentivized to use evidence[1] routinely in their work, whether to inform major policies and decisions, design or alter programs, or guide implementation? The Results for All *Incentivizing Evidence-Informed Decision Making in Government* series highlights strategies, processes, and programs that government agencies around the world have used to create incentives for using evidence in government decision making.

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[1] We define evidence broadly as the best information available to decision makers, which can include administrative and statistical data, research, evaluations, and citizen input.

- One of the [2017 winners](#) was Mexico's Secretariat of Social Development, [Sedesol](#), a cabinet department tasked with social development efforts, including those related to education, health, nutrition, financial security, and housing, in order to reduce poverty, exclusion, and vulnerability in Mexico. CONEVAL [recognized Sedesol](#) for the design and implementation of its Integral Social Information System, which has been instrumental in identifying 6.6 million undernourished citizens and reaching them with effective programs.
- CONEVAL also issues a similar award for subnational governments every two years, and these are highly popular and competitive. In 2017, CONEVAL evaluated 84 practices, 23 states, and 8 municipalities, ultimately [awarding 11 subnational governments](#) for good practices in one of 7 categories, such as transparency and accountability, and use of monitoring and evaluation to improve social development policy.

What it has achieved

- The public award ceremonies are well attended and accompanied by a large media presence, providing the winners with positive publicity, and ultimately helping to establish norms and expectations for using evaluations and other forms of evidence in government work.
- In the first few years, staff in varying positions typically accepted the awards on behalf of their departments. Now, directors and senior level policymakers accept the awards in person because they want to be personally associated with CONEVAL and M&E efforts. This is one indication that not only has the awards program attracted attention, but that government leaders are now embracing a culture of evaluation and learning.
- Another indication of this evolving culture is that when public officials apply to new jobs or seek new political appointments, they now tout the role they played in helping their programs and departments win CONEVAL awards, demonstrating that their commitment to evaluation and use of evidence to inform program decisions speaks to their professional effectiveness and value.

What lessons were learned

- The awards program was relatively easy to introduce at the federal level, because CONEVAL staff already had relationships with the relevant public officials and their programs, and thus knew which departments and practices merited awards the first few times. CONEVAL staff built on this initial foundation by inviting others to submit descriptions of their good practices, and gradually expanded their relationships. The subnational level awards presented more challenges, as CONEVAL staff were less familiar with the people and programs and therefore needed to dedicate a small team to spend several weeks sorting through the submissions to identify the winners. For those interested in adopting a similar initiative, starting small can help ensure that staff are not overwhelmed; the program can always grow over time.

- The relatively small CONEVAL team has no shortage of technical M&E skills, but is less equipped for the flashy, media-heavy awards program, so pulling off these events can be time consuming. Nevertheless, they stress that a large media presence is paramount to create the "carrot" incentives, and the awards program has both benefitted from and contributed to CONEVAL's strengthening relationship with the media.

2017 Award Ceremony for Good M&E Practices in Federal Entities ([Source](#))

What comes next

- With elections creating turnover among political administrations and public officials, CONEVAL must continuously build relationships with new people. However, because CONEVAL is highly visible and credible, new officials are likely to be open to collaboration, a testament to the progress made to promote evaluation and learning in the last decade.

- CONEVAL is also working to better document the good M&E practices recognized by the awards, and hold small peer learning workshops to promote technical exchanges and the replication of good practices.

Resources

- "5° entrega de Reconocimientos de Buenas Prácticas 1era parte." CONEVAL Video of 2014 awards recipients. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suyD9p78QOA
- "Buenas Prácticas de Evaluación y Monitoreo de la Admin. Pública Federal 2015" CONEVAL Video of 2015 federal awards ceremony. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHRaJ7Op8QQ
- "Buenas Prácticas en Monitoreo y Evaluación." Mexico City: CONEVAL. https://www.coneval.org.mx/Evaluacion/BPME/Paginas/BuenasPracticas.aspx
- "CONEVAL Reconoce los Instrumentos de Monitoreo y Evaluación en las Entitades Federativas 2017." Mexico City: CONEVAL comunicado de prensa no. 011, November 13, 2017. https://www.coneval.org.mx/salaprensa/comunicadosprensa/documents/comunicado-011-buenas-practicas-estatales.pdf
- Interview with Thania de la Garza, Director General, and Alonso De Erice Dominguez, Subdirector of Interinstitutional Coordination, CONEVAL, Mexico, December 13, 2017 and March 15, 2018.
- "Reconoce CONEVAL Buenas Prácticas en Materia de Monitoreo y Evaluación 2017." Mexico City: CONEVAL comunicado de prensa no. 010, November 9, 2017. https://www.coneval.org.mx/SalaPrensa/Comunicadosprensa/Documents/COMUNICADO-10-Buenas-Practicas-2017.pdf
- "Reconoce Coneval a Sedesol con Premio de Buenas Prácticas." Excelsior, Mexico City, November 11, 2017. http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2017/11/09/1200309