

The Power of Evidence to Drive America's Progress

A Decade of
Results and
Potential for
the Future



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Preface

History shows us that well-reasoned public policy can effectively address our most fraught societal challenges. The introduction of public education and child labor laws, the creation of public assistance for seniors and those in need, and the passage of anti-discrimination laws are just a few examples of how government leaders, on both sides of the aisle, have worked together to provide effective laws and services for the American people.

The scope and the magnitude of the challenges facing our country are ever evolving. Today, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, raging disparities in education, health, and economic well-being, as well as decaying trust between neighbors and in government, challenge us to find policy solutions that work.

Policymakers have many options for how to do this. They can rely on their gut or the opinions of a few to develop policy solutions. They can invest taxpayer dollars in the things we've been doing and hope that it will result in better outcomes. Or, they can double down on the one strategy that has proven time and again to be the most effective: Basing policy decisions on evidence and data that can show us which policies and programs work, in what places, and for which individuals and communities across the country.

This report tells the story of why this has been the right choice for the country over the past decade, and why it will continue to be far into the future.

Executive Summary

Why Evidence?

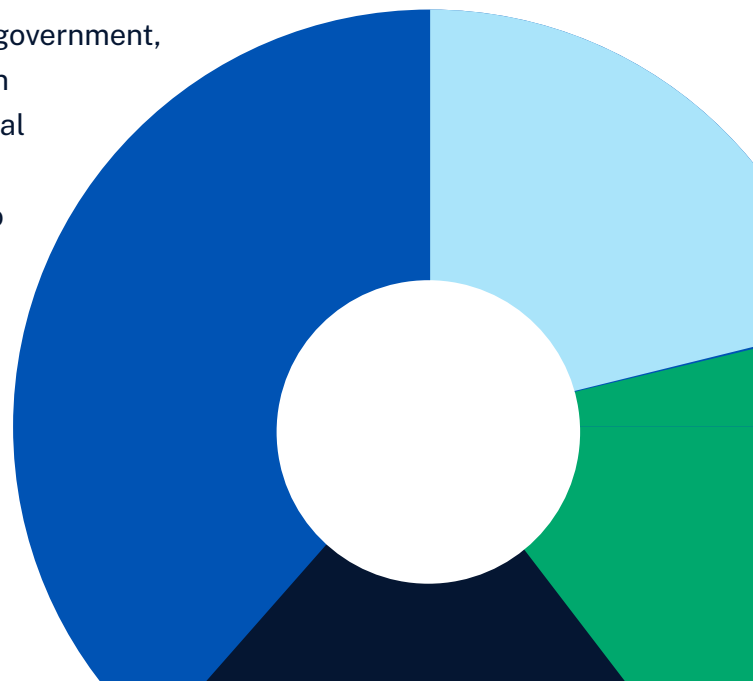
The scope and magnitude of the challenges facing our country — including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, raging disparities in education, health and economic well-being, and decaying trust between neighbors and in the United States government — demand federal solutions that work.

Evidence is a critical tool for showing us which policies, programs and practices work, in what places, and for which individuals and communities across the country, helping government leaders to make better decisions in the future.

Evidence has other powers, too:

- It can inform decisions about how to invest federal funds most efficiently and effectively, protecting taxpayer interests.
- It can create equitable opportunities for the American public, ensuring that people who need help can get it.
- It can drive faster progress for everyone, expanding the impact of public dollars to improve lives.

That's why, even in an era of divided government, evidence-based policy has bipartisan support. Over the past decade, federal investments in programs with evidence of effectiveness have led to extraordinary change throughout the country, making life better for people and communities.



Here are just a few examples:



The **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**, an evidence-based policy aimed at reducing poverty and incentivizing work for low- and moderate-income families, **lifted 5.6 million people above the poverty line in 2018 alone, including nearly 3 million children.**¹



The 2021 expansion of the **Child Tax Credit (CTC)**, an evidence-based policy focused on improving the health and well-being of children, **cut monthly child poverty by 40%.**²



Federal emergency rental assistance, an evidence-based intervention funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (2021), **drove a 50% decrease in evictions** in 31 cities around the country in 2021 — and projections indicated that **1.36 million eviction cases were avoided nationwide.**³



Non-time-limited federal housing subsidies, an evidence-based provision geared toward solving family homelessness, **have been shown to reduce family homelessness and “doubled up” housing by 50% and to decrease stays in emergency shelters by 25%.**⁴



Nurse-family partnerships, a form of evidence-based home-health visiting widely supported by federal funding, **have been shown to produce an 18% reduction in pre-term births, a 48% decrease in child abuse and neglect, and a 56% reduction in emergency room visits due to accidents or poisoning.**⁵



The **federally-funded National School Lunch Program**, an evidence-based effort to increase diet quality and decrease food insecurity among children, has been shown to **lessen food insecurity by over 10% among participating children.**⁶



Federal funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs, evidence-based provisions targeted at reducing teen births and increasing young people's sexual health and safety, **has lowered teen births by 3% in the 55 counties receiving funding⁷** — resulting in the **prevention of at least 13,500 teen births** over 7 years — and has **educated hundreds of thousands of young people, including 125,000 during the 2021-2022 school year.⁸**



Recent increases in **federal funding to improve access to evidence-based preschool education**, an early childhood intervention aimed to prepare children for lifelong learning, **resulted in an 87% increase in children's enrollment in high-quality preschools** in the communities that received funding.⁹



Federal tiered evidence grants for educational success interventions, or grants that offer greater amounts of funding for educational interventions with more, higher-quality evidence of success, have identified the KIPP School model as one that **raises four-year college attendance by 31 percentage points** (from 46% to 77%) and **elevates college graduation by 19 percentage points** (from 20% to 39%).¹⁰



Federal support for facilitating and scaling up sectoral training, evidence-based programs that train job seekers — especially those without college degrees — for high-quality employment in high-demand industries, **has increased earnings for participants by between 12% and 34%.¹¹**

[Appendix I](#) of the report provides the full case studies for each of these data and evidence wins.

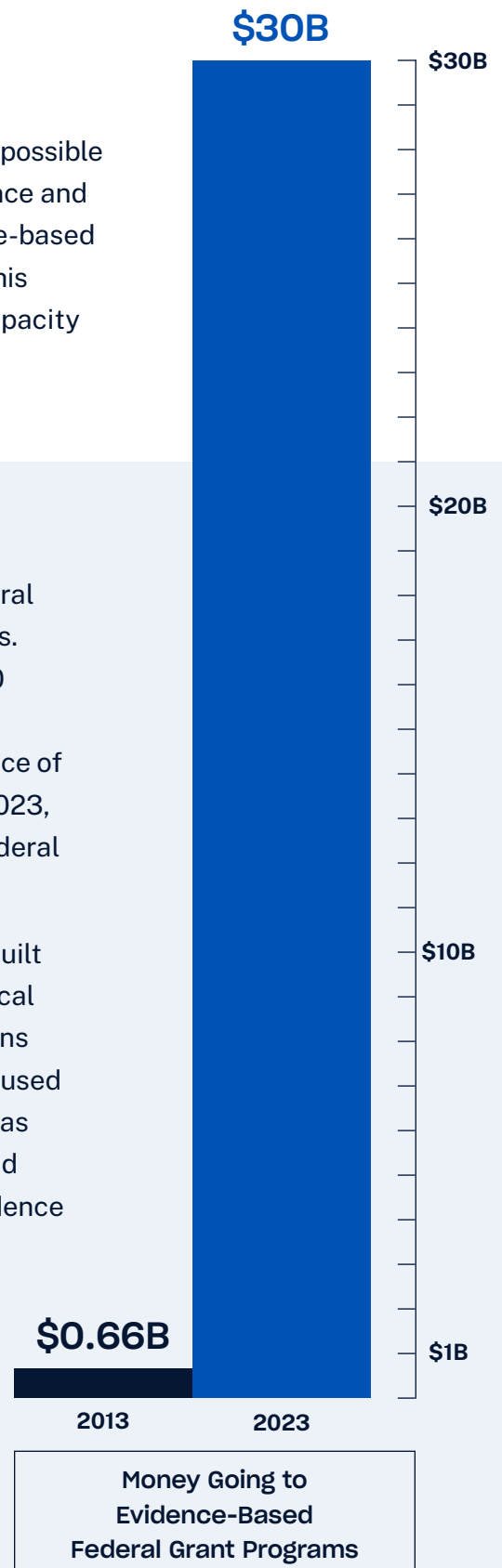


We've Made Real Progress

These stunning policy achievements would not be possible without investments in building and using evidence and data. Over the past 10 years, the federal evidence-based policy ecosystem has expanded exponentially. This expansion has primarily focused on developing capacity within federal agencies and increasing federally supported evidence production.

Since 2013:

- There has been a 30-fold increase in federal grant dollars being directed to what works. In 2013, 3 federal agencies invested \$660 million in 6 federal grant programs that defined, prioritized, or encouraged evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds. In 2023, 11 agencies invested \$30 billion in 254 federal grant programs.¹²
- The number of evidence clearinghouses built and run by the federal government — critical tools for making evidence-backed solutions available to all — has expanded from 1 focused on education to [more than 10](#) in policy areas including labor, criminal justice, health and international development, capturing evidence of effectiveness from several hundred programs and interventions in 2013 to **over 20,000 today.**¹³
- The number of large federal agencies developing critical roles — including Evaluation Officers and Chief Data Officers — to advance evidence-based policy and data-driven decision



making has grown from just a few (including the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, and the U.S. Agency for International Development) to 24, representing all the [agencies](#) party to the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990.¹⁴

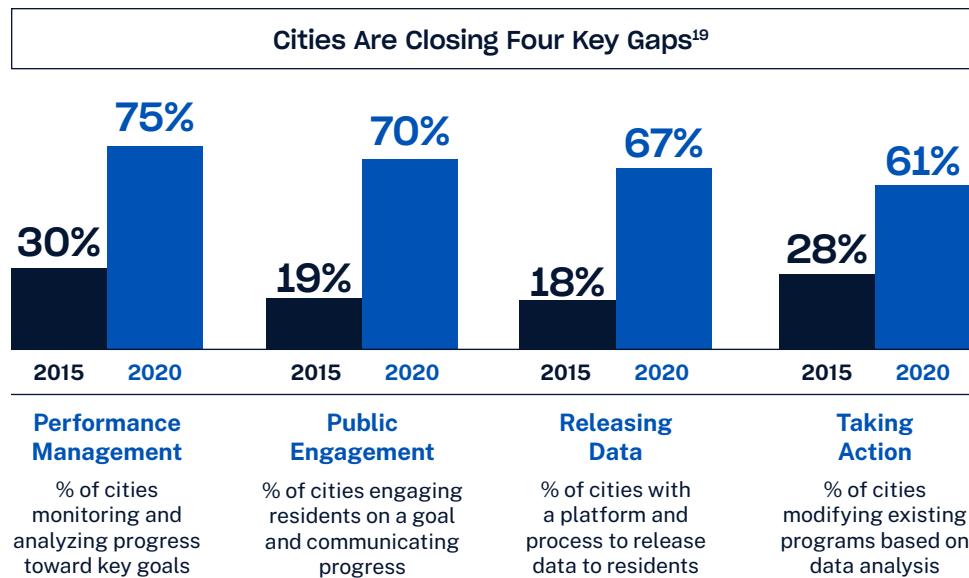
- The number of federal agencies developing and publicly sharing [Annual Evaluation Plans](#) and [Learning Agendas](#) also has expanded from just a few to 24.¹⁵
- The number of federal agencies strongly encouraged to submit evidence justifications to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as part of the annual budget process has increased from 0 to 96.¹⁶

Bipartisan leadership has been essential to this progress. Under the Obama administration, OMB created a new Evidence Team to coordinate the broad set of issues related to evidence-based policymaking — a team still leading evidence efforts across the federal government today. President Trump signed the [Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act](#), sponsored by former U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), into law. Under the Biden administration, the work continues, guided by the president’s [memorandum](#) to “make evidence-based decisions based on the best-available science and data,”¹⁷ and by the choices made in the American Rescue Plan Act (2021) to fund data and evidence capacity and evidence-based programs.

These efforts at the federal level have been accompanied by important advances in evidence-based and data-driven work by state and local governments and nonprofits around the country:



- Since 2015, the number of cities embracing data and evidence for decision-making, captured as part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification initiative, has grown to more than 250, whose leaders have participated in learning opportunities to build their data capacity. Cities in the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification community significantly increased their use of performance management, public engagement, data sharing and analytics. This progress builds residents’ trust in government, produces better outcomes, and reflects the broad culture shift underway in city governments across the country – demonstrating that an evidence-informed approach is possible for all U.S. cities.¹⁸



- The [2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence](#) includes 194 examples of data and evidence-based policies and practices in 46 states.
- Hundreds of nonprofit organizations are developing and implementing evidence-based programs on the ground.
- Academic institutions and think tanks are helping to evaluate and understand why and how programs are working.
- Philanthropy is supporting innovative strategies to drive evidence-based decision making.

How it Works

For federal evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making to improve people’s lives it requires leadership, funding, and culture change. Agency leaders must advance budgets, grants, contracts, and direct services that prioritize funding for building evidence of what works and use that evidence to make future policy and funding decisions. Funding for building and using evidence at the federal level also has important ripple effects, since the federal government can attach evidence and data requirements for federal funding to state, local, Tribal, and territorial government grants. In this report, **an original, in-depth analysis of the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods Initiative** provides a powerful example of what happens when federal dollars are invested in evidence-based programs to alleviate poverty and increase opportunity in cities around the country.

Challenges to Face

But the work is far from finished. Major challenges remain, especially in an era when the most important shift will be from *generating to using* evidence and data to inform decisions.

Original interviews with nearly 40 federal government data and evidence leaders conducted for this report provide important insights in this regard. Current funding levels and staffing capacities are insufficient. Policy leadership is not yet strong enough. Bureaucratic requirements are impinging on progress. And provisions for data sharing are lagging far behind user need — both inside and outside of the federal government.



Data from a **new survey of federal Evaluation Officers** additionally helps to illustrate the specific challenges posed by insufficient funding for evidence:

- More than half of Evaluation Officer respondents indicated that they can direct less than \$1 million to significant evaluations annually; one-third indicated that they can direct \$0.
- Half also reported that they do not have the capacity to complete or use the research from their agency-wide Learning Agendas.
- Nearly half said that they do not have enough resources to fulfill their plans for program evaluation in fiscal year 2024.

Insufficient funding also impacts staffing capacity:

- Two-thirds of Evaluation Officer respondents reported that two or fewer employees — including themselves — currently support the agency-wide development, monitoring, and improvement of evidence building and use.
- When asked what portions of their jobs are spent fulfilling the responsibilities of “Evaluation Officer” versus other roles, only one-third reported 100% while the remaining two-thirds reported anywhere from 5% to 75%.



Call to Action

The next 10 years should be focused on 6 key recommendations:



1. Continue to set aside federal funds to build evidence of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances, while also ensuring that federal legislation, regulations, and guidance prioritize *data and evidence use*: A critical step for directing public resources toward improving outcomes in education, workforce, poverty reduction and other areas of economic mobility.



2. Foster demand for data and evidence through active policy leadership, providing the knowledge and tools for more federal policy leaders to champion the use of evidence and data in the policy-making process.



3. Use federal policy and guidance to build evidence and data capacity in state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments.



4. Advance data and evidence as public goods by expanding public access to both and incorporating underrepresented voices into the evidence ecosystem.



5. Advocate for full implementation of the Evidence Act, ensuring that sufficient federal resources are allocated to evidence and data annually and that evidence and data leaders in federal agencies have a seat at the policy decision-making table.



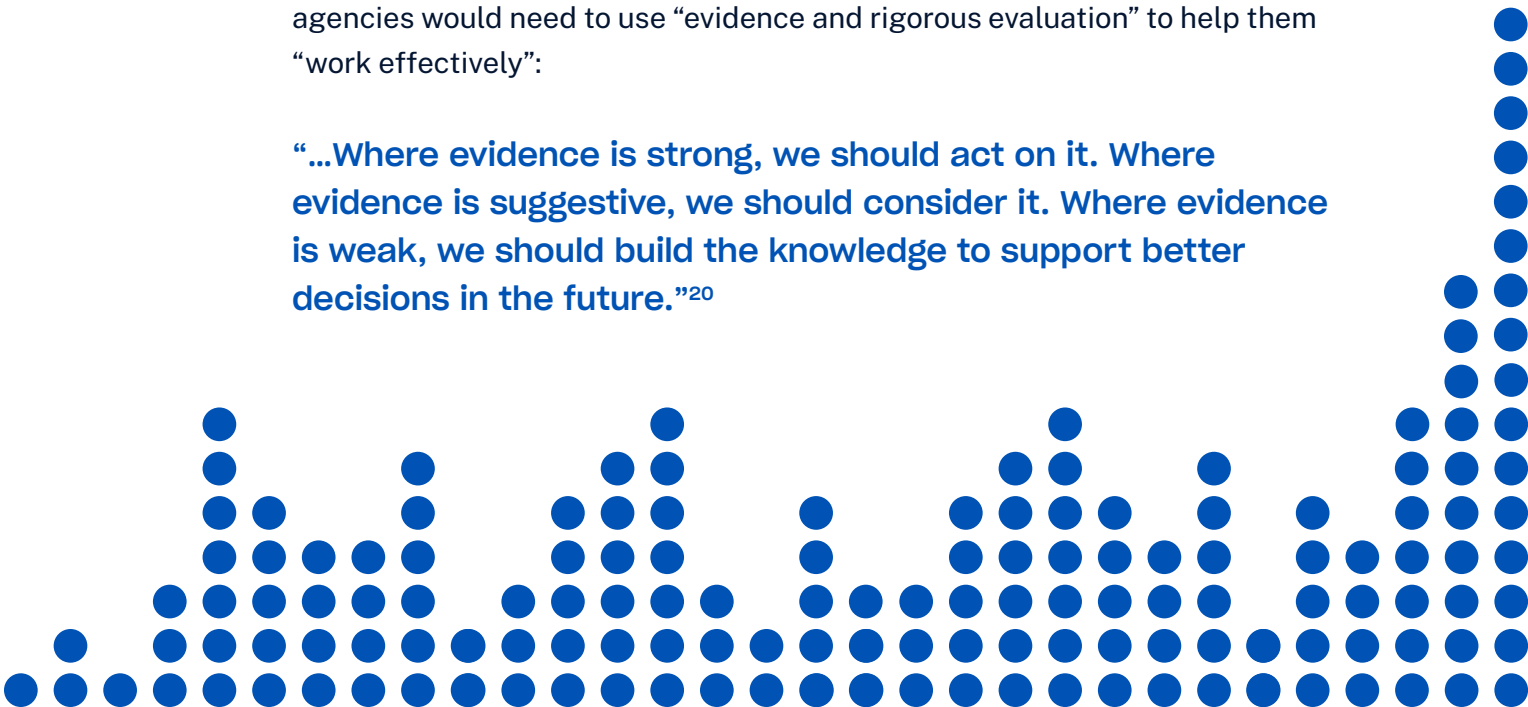
6. Celebrate progress, tell the story, and mobilize new champions by increasing plain-language storytelling about the impacts of evidence and data on real people, advancing economic mobility, elevating mutual learning, and continuing to expand the evidence ecosystem.

Laying the Foundation: A Decade of Evidence- Based Policy and Data- Driven Decision Making

A decade ago, the idea of a performance-focused government — one that relied on data to make progress and achieve major goals — was by no means new. In the years leading up to that point, leaders in the White House and on Capitol Hill mainly had focused on measuring and reporting federal agency performance, not on ensuring comprehensive data collection or policy evaluation. But starting in 2012, the evidence movement began to build steam.

As a 2012 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum stated, agencies would need to use “evidence and rigorous evaluation” to help them “work effectively”:

“...Where evidence is strong, we should act on it. Where evidence is suggestive, we should consider it. Where evidence is weak, we should build the knowledge to support better decisions in the future.”²⁰



Congress was on board, too. In 2012, it authorized the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to dedicate a small, annual budgetary set aside for program evaluation and support of its newly established Chief Evaluation Office (2010). Congressional budget leaders also started to consider appropriations for other evidence-building activities in other agencies. And in 2016, Congress passed the Evidence-based Policymaking Commission Act, sponsored by then-U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), which appointed a commission to study how data and evidence could and should be used across the federal government and laid the foundation for further legislative action.

The leadership shown by the White House, federal agencies, and Congress at that juncture paved the way for the decade of progress that this report categorizes into three key areas: *Building Evidence and Learning to Get Results*; *Using Learning to Change Practice, Policy, and Funding*; and *Delivering Results for All*. Tracing the progress in these areas over the past 10 years tells a story of profound structural change and hard-won successes for advancing equitable economic mobility for people of all backgrounds across the United States.

Building Evidence and Learning to Get Results

Legislative Wins, Executive Actions, and Federal Guidance

Bipartisan legislation and executive actions over the past 10 years have institutionalized federal evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making. These laws, along with related guidance issued by OMB and federal agencies and executive actions issued by the White House, have required agencies to strengthen their data infrastructures, formal program evaluations, and general evidence building activities in unprecedented ways.



Here are the top six highlights in the area of legislative wins, executive actions, and federal guidance in chronological order:²¹



[Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015](#)

Reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), replacing No Child Left Behind (2002). Incorporated numerous evidence-based provisions, especially related to the use of federal funds at the state and local levels, and included two evaluation set-aside provisions. Institutionalized evidence-based approaches to making U.S. secondary education higher quality and more equitable.



[Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act \(FATAA\) of 2016](#)

Directed the president to release guidelines for establishing measurable goals, performance metrics, and monitoring and evaluation plans for U.S. foreign assistance dollars.



[Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#)

Created a framework for federal agencies to take a more comprehensive approach to evidence building with three titles: Federal Evidence-Building Activities; OPEN Government Data Act; and Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act. Based on the important recommendations of the [U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#), co-chaired by Drs. Katharine G. Abraham and Ron Haskins. Sponsored by then-U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and passed with bipartisan consensus.



[Presidential Directives of 2021](#)

- [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government](#)
Established the Equitable Data Working Group to identify inadequacies in the federal government data infrastructure related to measuring equity of policies, practices, and programs, and to remedy those inadequacies. Directed a whole-of-government effort to advance racial equity in policy and practice.

- [Presidential Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking](#)
Created a government-wide policy to “make evidence-based decisions based on the best available science and data.” Created a task force on Scientific Integrity. Mandated OMB guidance on federal Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans stemming from the Evidence Act.

[**American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds \(SLFRF\) Act Final Rule, Department of the Treasury, 2022**](#)

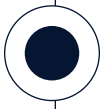
Served as the largest federal investment in state and local government capacity to build and use evidence by clearly stating that SLFRF funds could be used for data collection, analysis, and use; program evaluation and evidence-building capacity; and related resources. In addition, SLFRF Compliance and Reporting Guidance mandated reporting on the use of evidence to inform spending decisions in U.S. locations with a population over 250,000.

[**Congressional Evidence-Based Policy Resolution of 2023**](#)

Pending effort to establish a commission to review, analyze, and make recommendations to Congress to encourage and facilitate better use of data in the legislative process.

An Infrastructure for Federal Leadership and Staffing on Data, Evaluation, and Evidence-Building

The Evidence Act dramatically expanded the institutionalization of federal leadership on evidence building, evidence use, and data-driven decision making. Title I mandated that each of the 24 agencies covered by the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act (1990) appoint an Evaluation Officer (EO) and Statistical Officials, and Title II mandated that all agencies appoint a Chief Data Officer (CDO), to lead these efforts.²² It further required that cross-government councils composed of these leaders, and overseen by OMB, should be established to share leading approaches and learning on data and evidence — a practice that now has been in place for nearly five years.



Evidence Highlight: The Grants Policy Office at the U.S. Department of Education

In the months leading up to the passage of the Evidence Act, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) created a new internal office in early 2019 dedicated to “grants policy.” The office since has become a standout example in the federal government of how to use institutionalized leadership roles to advance evidence-based policy. The Grants Policy Office at ED collaborates with colleagues across the agency to ensure alignment with the Secretary’s policy priorities and to support a learning culture. A primary tool for accomplishing these goals is to work collaboratively to design and learn from the Department’s competitive grant programs that issue \$2 billion in annual funding from ED to diverse organizations throughout the U.S. educational ecosystem.

The Grants Policy Office views this work as a collaborative process to advance ED’s policy goals, to share lessons learned across ED’s program offices, and to support staff across the agency in prioritizing evidence collection and use through federal grant making. The Grants Policy Office also maintains a strong focus on advancing equity by developing strategies shown to help diversify the pool of applicants for ED’s grants, such as providing clearer instructions and information on grant applications to a broader community of potential applicants, advocating for expanding the time from grant announcement to grant deadline, and piloting new outreach and communications strategies to broaden the applicant pool. Together with efforts led by other offices at ED, these activities have positioned ED as a federal government leader in developing a strong internal infrastructure dedicated to data collection, formal evaluation, and evidence building and use.



Beyond these efforts, presidential administrations have shown important leadership, representing a bipartisan commitment to advancing evidence-based policymaking. Under the Obama administration, OMB created a new Evidence Team to coordinate the broad set of issues related to evidence-based policymaking — a team still leading evidence efforts across the federal government today. The Trump administration continued to build on this foundation, signing the Evidence Act into law. Under the Biden administration, the work has continued, guided by the president’s memorandum to “make evidence-based decisions based on the best-available science and data.”²³

Federal Reporting Requirements to Advance Evidence Building

Just as leadership roles and staffing capacity have become institutionalized, so, too, have important reporting tools. Some of these include Learning Agendas, Annual Evaluation Plans, and Evidence Submissions as part of agency strategic plans and annual budget proposals — each of which are required by existing law (i.e., the Evidence Act) or guidance from OMB (please see [Appendix II](#) for a comprehensive account of these laws and guidance documents). A decade ago, only a handful of agencies relied on tools like Learning Agendas — or strategic evidence-building plans — to structure efforts around collecting and building evidence. Now, the use of Learning Agendas is mandated for CFO-Act agencies by the Evidence Act, with over 30 (including some developed for non-CFO-Act agencies) published on the government website, [evaluation.gov](https://www.evaluation.gov), and a variety of other sub-units within federal agencies using this tool to guide evidence-building and data-collection efforts.



Evidence Highlight: The Welfare and Family Self-Sufficiency Learning Agenda at the Administration for Children and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services

While HHS's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is not required by the Evidence Act to develop its own learning agenda, its Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) has worked collaboratively with program office partners and others to develop learning agendas for several topical portfolios of work. The Welfare and Family Self-Sufficiency Learning Agenda is one such effort by OPRE and the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to summarize previous learning, identify questions that might be addressed through future learning, and describe current projects on the topic of economic security, stability, and self-sufficiency.

The learning agenda development brings together a broad range of contributions. The current version of the [Welfare and Family Self-Sufficiency Learning Agenda](#), published this fall, reflects intensive input by OPRE and OFA staff as well as a group of experts in family economic well-being. The learning agenda combines these perspectives with syntheses of findings from a select number of federally funded studies, developed under ACF's [Evidence Capacity Support Project](#), which works to actively deepen and extend ACF's evidence creation and use. Since the learning agenda's publication, the offices gathered feedback from a group of people who have lived experience with ACF programs, convened by OPRE's [Advancing Contextual Analysis and Methods of Participant Engagement Project](#). This group's recommendations, as well as input from others, will inform the next iteration of the learning agenda. Moving forward, the learning agenda will drive OPRE and OFA's collaborative cycle of evidence building on the important topic of welfare and family self-sufficiency — a standout example of how learning agendas can drive the institutionalization of evidence-based activities in federal agencies.



Evidence Highlight: The Aging, Independence, and Disability Portal at the Administration for Community Living within the Department of Health and Human Services

Ensuring open data access, maintaining data inventories, and pursuing data partnerships within and outside of the federal government are critical for strengthening the data-driven elements of the federal culture of evidence. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides a leading example of all three practices through its Aging, Independence, and Disability Portal, or AGID.

AGID is easily accessible and contains convenient links to the most up-to-date federal and state data on aging and disability. Importantly, AGID contains data mandated by the Older Americans Act (1965; most recently reauthorized in 2020) to assess the effectiveness of government programs for older Americans, maintain accountability, and evaluate programs' success in achieving legislative goals. Making these data publicly available in a privacy-protected way helps to facilitate federal government transparency.

Beyond incorporating ACL data, AGID also incorporates data from cross-agency and cross-organization partnerships. Specifically, ACL includes data from the U.S. Census Bureau to make population characteristics of older and disabled adults available, which can support more detailed data analysis of these populations. It further incorporates data from the National Ombudsman Reporting System maintained by the National Consumer Voice, painting a clear picture of how elder and disabled care facilities are staffed and outfitted as well as a profile of resident complaints. Combining each of these elements of AGID shows ACL's strong leadership in data accessibility, inventorying, and partnerships.



Reporting requirements also have applied specifically to federal data policy. The Evidence Act specifies that each agency should have a “strategic information resources management plan” that includes information on how agencies will provide open data access and collaboration with entities outside of the federal government for data sharing and use. It also indicates that each agency should develop and maintain a comprehensive data inventory that is shared with the public. Several agencies have fulfilled these requirements — many of which Results for America highlighted in their [2022 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence](#). The cross-government CDO council additionally has issued government-wide Federal Data Strategies that advocate for agencies to “provide consistent, reliable and privacy-preserving access to federal government data” for all.

Using Learning to Change Funding, Policy, and Practice

Allocating Federal Funds to Support Evidence Building and Use

Funding resources are essential for ensuring that evidence-based learning can inform practice and policy. Over the past decade, Congress has granted several agencies, including DOL, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the Department of Agriculture, either persistent (DOL) or occasional (ACF, FNS) budget set asides for evaluation. For example, starting in 2013, DOL received set-aside authority for evaluation, allowing the Secretary to set aside up to 0.5% (later increased to 0.75%) of operations funds at DOL for evaluations.²⁴

However, agencies can work creatively within existing budgeting parameters to allocate a small proportion of their overall budgets — between 0.5% and 1% — to data, evaluation, and evidence activities. Agencies that have done so include the Millennium Challenge Corporation, AmeriCorps, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Importantly, whether agencies can allocate these funds often is contingent on Congressional budgeting and appropriations decisions.



Evidence Highlight: How Data Can Be Used to Build Evidence through the Good Jobs Challenge at the Department of Commerce

With the \$500 million Good Jobs Challenge, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (2021), the Department of Commerce (DOC) is providing a leading example of how to facilitate data collection for evidence building and evidence use through federal grants. Led by DOC's Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Good Jobs Challenge is designed to facilitate economic stability and upward mobility for workers in the United States by (1) developing and strengthening regional workforce training systems, (2) designing partnerships between various organizations embedded in particular employment sectors (e.g., public health or information technology), and (3) implementing these “sectoral partnerships” in ways that lead workers to high-quality jobs.

Data collection for evidence building is a central part of the Good Jobs Challenge. The Challenge mandates that grantees collect and report detailed performance data, a requirement that enables accountability, transparency, and performance management. In addition, since both EDA and the U.S. Census Bureau are housed within DOC, there are developing plans to merge the Challenge data collected by EDA with detailed Census data over time, enabling DOC to track the economic progress and outcomes of individuals who have participated in the Challenge. These efforts are in line with DOC's separate establishment of a “Data Governance Board” in 2019 to “ensure that Commerce data is fully leveraged as a strategic asset.” This kind of coordination, as demonstrated through DOC's approach to the Good Jobs Challenge, can go a long way in helping the federal government learn about what works in supporting workers' economic stability and upward mobility effectively and equitably.

Evidence Highlight: Using Department of Transportation Funds Granted Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to Build State and Local Data and Evidence Capacity

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (2022) allocates \$1.2 trillion in federal transportation and infrastructure spending to improve public safety and climate resilience, create jobs across the country, and advance more equitable opportunities and outcomes for people in the United States. As part of this spending, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is slated to issue over \$552 billion in grant funding to state and local partners over the next five years.

Understanding the opportunities for data collection, formal evaluation, and evidence use as part of these programs, DOT has doubled down on the importance of these activities. During a collaborative White House-Results for America event as part of the Year of Evidence for Action, DOT's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology and Chief Science Officer, Dr. Robert C. Hampshire urged state and local decision makers to follow guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget stating that grant funds can be used for performance management and evaluation activities. This kind of public communication on use of federal funds for evidence-based activities is crucial to strengthening all levels of the evidence ecosystem, while the leadership shown by DOT in this regard provides an example for other federal agencies.



Many federal agencies have capitalized on these opportunities over time. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued regulations providing standard language for defining “evidence” and indicating that the agency would allocate preference points to grant applicants proposing evidence-based interventions followed by rigorous evaluation. Similar reward structures soon were adopted as part of tiered evidence grant programs at ED as well as the DOL, Health and Human Services (HHS), and in areas including higher education completion, reemployment services, international development initiatives, and home visiting programs for maternal care. Around the same time, the Corporation for National and Community Service, now known as AmeriCorps, launched the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), which combined public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions possessing compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States.^{25,26}

In 2023, 254 federal grant programs have been identified in 11 agencies that have federal grant notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) that define, prioritize, or encourage evidence of effectiveness.

Using contracting to tie funds directly to achieving results is another strategy to ensure the intended outcomes of a program are achieved. In 2014, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization established WIOA Pay-for-Performance to allow state and local government workforce agencies to set aside 10% of their WIOA funds as no-year funding to pay for long-term outcomes achieved through a specific contracting strategy. In 2018, the Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act (SIPPR) was signed into law and administered by the U.S. Treasury Department. Through this program, the federal government will pay for a project only if predetermined project outcomes have been met and validated by an independent evaluator. More recently, an important development in this space has been the inclusion of evidence and data collection criteria for grant and contract funds provided through the new laws passed under the Biden Administration: The American Rescue Plan Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act. The result has been more [evidence-based programs funded](#), [programs evaluated](#), and [data and evidence capacity expanded](#). When such provisions are written into law and included in formal guidance documents, federal agencies can allocate funds based

Evidence Highlight: Committing Budget Resources to Data, Evaluation, and Evidence in the Long Term at the Millennium Challenge Corporation

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) represents a unique agency in the federal government in that its authorizing legislation mandates the use of data, evaluation, and evidence in decision making — a requirement not shared by other agencies. Established in 2004, MCC is an independent U.S. government foreign aid agency that provides time-limited grants to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and strengthen institutions. Its authorizing legislation ensured that decisions regarding the allocation of foreign aid would be cost-effective and transparent. Concerning decisions regarding which countries should receive aid, the legislation states that the determination “shall be based, to the maximum extent possible, upon objective and quantifiable indicators.” MCC’s large-scale investments with foreign countries, known as compacts, also should use “regular benchmarks to measure, where appropriate, progress towards achieving objectives... disaggregated by income level, gender, and age to the maximum extent practicable.” Once compacts are made, MCC is required to make public “a detailed description of objectives and measures for results of the program or project” that has been funded.

MCC has taken these mandates seriously in the twenty years since its founding. Beyond its transparent reporting on data-driven country selection, commitment to maintaining a public “Evidence Platform” website to encourage learning from measured results produced through its projects, and Evaluation Briefs reporting on key impacts resulting from each of its country partnerships, MCC is a true leader in allocating agency budget funding to evidence generation and use. Over the past seven years, MCC has, on average, spent 3% of its budget appropriations on monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based decision making. This kind of investment ensures an enduring commitment to evidence-based approaches that enable ongoing compliance with its authorizing legislation, but also efficiency, transparency, and positive impact for people around the world.





Evidence Highlight: Allocating Resources to Data and Evidence Use at the Department of Labor

Whereas one important aspect of budgeting for results is allocating funding to data, evaluation, and evidence-based decision making, another is ensuring that evidence is used to make future budgeting decisions. In other words, data and evidence pertaining to the effectiveness of agency programs should inform how federal agencies allocate budget dollars in the future. The Department of Labor (DOL) provides a leading example for how federal agencies can institutionalize this model: it has developed a budgeting process that sets program impact goals and then tracks which aspects of programs have worked and which have not each fiscal year. The process is captured in DOL's Annual Performance Report, which lays the foundation for future annual budget requests.

Beyond highlighting the agency's performance on strategic goals, the Performance Report also sets forward several management goals, for which it similarly collects and reports data. In the FY22 Report, one of these management goals was "Strengthening the Department's commitment and capacity for evidence-based decision making." Here, DOL has developed a variety of metrics on which it reports annually, including the number of data sets it makes available for research, the number of data sets it makes publicly available, and the number of short briefs the agency publishes based on research and evaluation products that distill policy implications. Other metrics center on incorporating enterprise risk management into planning for evaluation and evidence-building and improving the utility of the budgeting process for DOL's operating units. Through these efforts, DOL is advancing and further institutionalizing its culture of evidence-based decision making.

Evidence Highlight: Evaluation Leadership Shown through “Evidence to Action” Briefs at the U.S. Agency for International Development

One important way of encouraging evidence use in the federal government is to show leading examples of where this practice already is happening and how it contributes to positive impacts both for federal agencies and for the people they serve. To do so, agencies must have strong evaluation leadership, with an Evaluation Officer capable of advising on the design and implementation of evaluations, interpretation of results, and integration of findings into action — both inside and outside of their agencies.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) demonstrated this kind of leadership when they launched their new “Evidence to Action Briefs” in June 2023. As Agency Evaluation Officer, Dr. Winston Allen, wrote in the first edition, “The Evidence to Action Briefs highlight the central role evaluations play as a source of evidence in USAID’s programmatic and policy decisions. The cases demonstrate how decisions and actions are informed by evidence generated through evaluations. Looking ahead, the publication will continue to showcase how evidence from USAID evaluations are utilized in programmatic and policy decisions.”

In the first brief, USAID shared five key examples of evidence in action: Informing agency-wide decision making about genetically-engineered crops through an impact evaluation in Bangladesh; aiding the government of Nepal in selecting priority actions for early-grade reading; informing the government of Ghana’s new sanitation subsidy program through a USAID-funded impact evaluation; improving a district government’s tax collection and management process through a program evaluation in Malawi; and streamlining youth assessments a new program built on the results of an impact evaluation in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. By taking the lead in highlighting these evidence-building activities, and then showing how they have led USAID and partnering government and organizational actors to make decisions that can help increase program impact, the Agency Evaluation Office provides a leading example of how to encourage and publicly communicate the value of evidence use.



on knowledge of what works, for whom, and in which conditions — and can assess whether government programs and policies are making good on the promises they set out to fulfill.

Encouraging Evidence Use within Agencies

It is not enough to build evidence. Increased capacity to *use existing evidence* to inform effective, equitable practices and policies also is essential. Over time, federal agencies have strengthened this capacity in several ways. Among other initiatives, they have developed and implemented performance management plans that emphasize evidence use, issued agency-wide guidance on requirements pertaining to evidence use in agency programs, and created agency-wide evidence and evaluation working groups to ensure greater transparency, integration, and learning. Some agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, even have dedicated full “Evaluation Weeks” to increasing awareness and use of agency data, evidence, and learning. Others, like the USAID, have developed public materials showing how their evaluation work has changed practice and policy, often in conjunction with the establishment of new structures and roles focused on elevating evidence-based policy. Collectively, these efforts have brought greater attention to the centrality of evidence to policymaking while helping to strengthen agencies’ data, evaluation, and evidence cultures.

Delivering Results for All

Building a Culture of Evidence

Effective evidence-based policy requires creating a “culture of evidence,” where building and using data and research are among the core functions of the federal government. Knowing this, federal agencies, led by OMB, have made great strides in this area. In the interviews we conducted with federal data and evidence officials across diverse agencies to inform this report, many noted that as compared to 10 years ago,





Evidence Highlight: Centering Agency-Wide Strategic Evidence Use at AmeriCorps

As AmeriCorps, the federal government’s hub for national service and volunteerism, celebrates its 30th anniversary, the agency is spearheading a new, all-hands-on-deck effort to advance evidence use in its practices, programs, and policies. AmeriCorps’ Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) is leading the charge, drawing insights from their recent project on “Scaling Evidence-based Models” (2016-2021), their new State of the Evidence Report (2023), and their ongoing reflection, assessment, and agency contextualization from participation in the federal tiered evidence movement with the Social Innovation Fund. This Fund paired public and private funds to grow the impact of innovative, evidence-driven, community-based solutions to improve people’s lives.

AmeriCorps’ new, agency-wide push to strengthen its culture of evidence includes wide-ranging efforts to facilitate learning and integration of evidence-based approaches among agency leadership and staff, regional partners, and grant applicants and recipients across the country. Activities extend from workshops and webinars on evidence use; to resource sharing through AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange, which facilitates public sharing of AmeriCorps-funded research results on national service, volunteering, and civic engagement; to the development of new agency roles meant to center and expand AmeriCorps’ evidence use and evaluation capacities. Three of these roles include a “Learning Officer” within ORE, responsible for facilitating agency-wide evidence-based learning, “Chief Data Officer” focused on data, accountability, and transparency of AmeriCorps’ enterprise data, and “Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Engagement” as part of the Senior Leadership team, all focused on using data and evidence to facilitate strategic engagement with external partners, among other tasks. This confluence of productive activities makes AmeriCorps a federal government leader in helping its culture of evidence to flourish.



Evidence Highlight: Centering Performance Management Through the Evidence and Evaluation Board at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services

Agency-wide coordination on data policy and evidence use is essential for strengthening agency evidence culture. At the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at HHS, the agency has shown clear leadership in this area through its development of the SAMHSA Evidence and Evaluation Board (SEEB). SEEB coordinates the activities of the agency's Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer, Statistical Official, and Division and Office Directors across all SAMHSA centers and offices. The Vice Chair position at SEEB meetings is shared by Centers and Offices to enable further coordination. The position has been held by the Director of the Office of Behavioral Health Equity, the Legislative Office, the Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the 988 & Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office, and the Center for Substance and Abuse Treatment. SEEB focuses on connecting people across the agency, sharing different strategies for evidence building and evidence use, and disseminating important results regarding SAMHSA's program impacts.

From the perspective of organizational culture, SEEB has strengthened the agency's commitment to evidence- and data-based learning. It also has heightened the agency's capacity to use evidence, creating positive feedback loops bolstered by increased transparency and information sharing across the organization. The emphasis on coordination also has allowed SAMHSA to develop a repository for past evaluation and evidence-building activities, as well as begin to create a bank of evaluation questions and evaluation templates. Together, these efforts have improved agency operations, allowing centers and offices to leverage existing evidence resources, reduce redundancy, share information, and encourage continued learning.

evidence-based policy is now part of “the air we breathe.” Indeed, current OMB Director, Shalanda Young, used a 2021 government-wide memorandum to direct heads of agencies and senior leaders to continue creating a culture of evidence in their agencies and to support their staff in undertaking this work.²⁷ She stated, “It is only through [a] shift to a culture of evidence, supported and demanded by agency leaders and brought to bear across agency functions, that we will build and maintain trust in government and ensure that decisions best serve the American people.” Such a statement represents a decade of progress in the federal evidence ecosystem.

Democratizing the Evidence Ecosystem

Since federal policy affects people from diverse communities and walks of life, the inclusion of data, evidence, and voices representing this diversity is essential to making effective and equitable policy decisions. Further, data and evidence can and should be used to improve all people’s experiences with government programs and services, regardless of their backgrounds. The federal government has made progress in both areas over the last decade, democratizing the evidence ecosystem and advancing more transparent, customer-focused approaches to serving all people. Attention to “human-centered design” and performance metrics that began during the Obama administration has transformed into wide-ranging efforts in the last several years. Some of these include federal government efforts to incorporate listening sessions and community forums into policy-making processes; to collect and report the kind of disaggregated data needed for equity analyses; and to increase attention on the “customer experience” through the government website, [performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov), that tracks the President’s management agenda and the issuance of executive orders on improving all people’s experience of the federal government.



Evidence Highlight: A First-Ever Community-Based Research Funding Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has provided an important example of how to democratize the federal evidence ecosystem. In the spring of 2023, HUD issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) focused on supporting community-based research designed to address homelessness. “Community-based research” is defined by HUD in the NOFO as “an approach that meaningfully engages the community that is the subject of the research, including community groups and people with lived experience.” This definition explicitly aligns with the goal of broadening the set of voices making central contributions to the evidence generated from data-based or evaluative activities funded by federal agencies.

This approach to allocating HUD funding has other benefits, too: Beyond extending knowledge of how to address homelessness, it also will build and expand capacity for pursuing community-engaged research methods at colleges and universities and will strengthen partnerships between local nonprofit organizations and such higher education institutions. These positive ripple effects should diversify inputs to local and state knowledge chains while informing how HUD pursues its support of evidence building among grantees in the future.



Ecosystem Expansion: Exponential Growth of Evidence-Based Practice, Programs, and Policy Outside the Federal Government

Federal leadership in evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making has had positive ripple effects throughout the United States. One of the most important has been a sharp uptick in the adoption, expansion, and impact of evidence-based approaches in government sectors and organizations outside of the federal government, which we highlight here.

The Ecosystem of Support and Advocacy Organizations

With the expansion of evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making at the federal level, numerous organizations outside of the federal government — mainly nonprofit and academic — have been created to bolster and extend this work across the country. A decade ago, the number of organizations in this space was small. The chapter on “Program Evaluation and Data Analytics” of the Fiscal Year 2015 President’s Budget (issued in spring 2014) mentioned only four: The Coalition for Evidence-Based

Policy, the National Academy of Sciences, the MacArthur Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts. Just six years later, the 2022 White House Year of Evidence for Action included dozens of organizations with missions centered on evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making.

What’s more, centering data and evidence in these organizations has enabled an expansion in the type of research used to guide decision making. For some time, randomized control trials, or RCTs, have been considered the “gold standard” for building evidence about the effectiveness of policies, programs, and practices. But more recently, an increasing number of organizations have complemented their reliance on RCTs with other rigorous methodologies that help explain why, how, for whom and under what circumstances programs are effective.²⁸ These approaches encompass implementation and descriptive studies, including those that center people’s lived experiences using interview-based research, ethnography, community-engaged research, and a variety of other methods. These efforts represent another positive evolution and expansion of the ecosystem, supporting evidence building and use that is tailored to the context and populations served, and is reflective of the diversity of human experience.

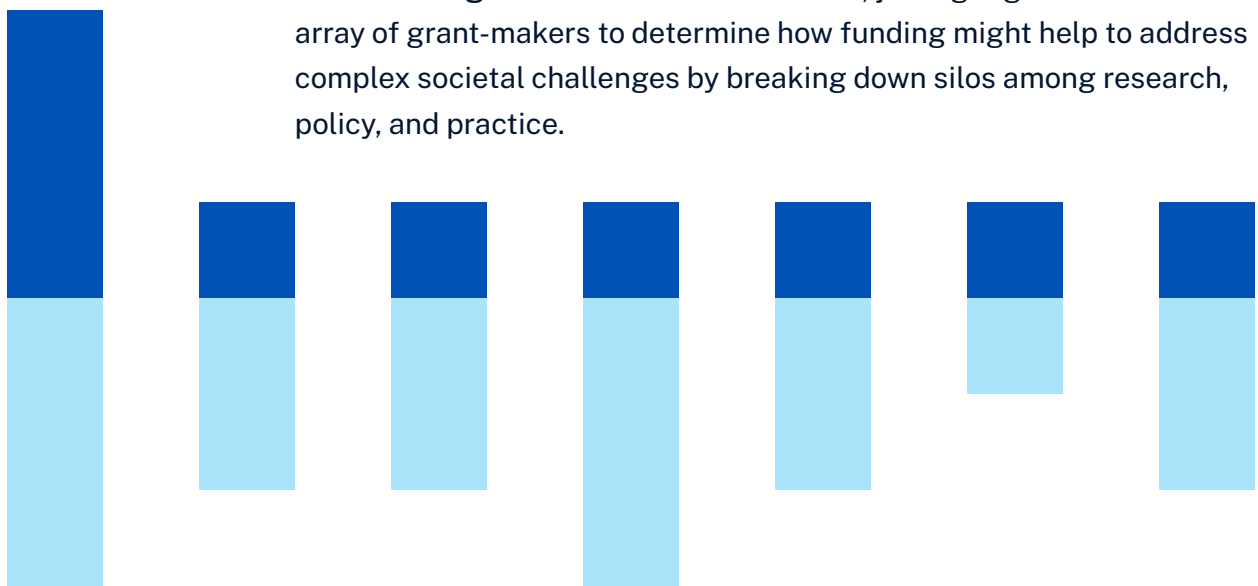


The Ecosystem of Philanthropic Organizations

To help drive the efforts of nonprofit organizations, as well as to expand the nonprofit partners working directly to transform government, a growing network of philanthropic organizations has elevated evidence-based practices, programs, and policies through funding support. Many examples of productive philanthropic support for the evidence and data agendas have emerged, including:

→ **Section 2: Ecosystem Expansion — Exponential Growth of Evidence-Based Practice, Programs, and Policy Outside the Federal Government**

- The longstanding [Edna McConnell Clark Foundation](#), which historically funded evidence building and scaling for nonprofits, has evolved and expanded their work over the past decade into [Blue Meridian Partners](#), a capital aggregation model for philanthropy that scales evidence-based, data-driven solutions.
- Since its inception in 2000, the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) has emphasized the importance of formal evaluation of its funded programs to ensure continuous learning and improvement.
- [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) has designed a suite of programs that are elevating the importance of using data and evidence in local governance and decision making, as well as provided cities with capacity-building programs to bolster these capabilities within their city halls.
- In 2013, [Arnold Ventures](#), a philanthropic organization committed to improving the lives of all Americans by investing in evidence-based policy solutions, had offered support to 154 projects. Now, a decade later, it has supported 3,000 projects.
- In 2016, the [William T. Grant Foundation](#), which had a long tradition of supporting research aimed at translating evidence to policy, decided to redirect an entire programmatic funding stream towards studies that identify, create, and test strategies to improve the use of research evidence aimed at benefiting youth.
- In 2022, building on their earlier evidence-based policy work, the [Evidence Project at Pew Charitable Trusts](#) began to convene the **Transforming Evidence Funders Network**, joining together a diverse array of grant-makers to determine how funding might help to address complex societal challenges by breaking down silos among research, policy, and practice.





The Ecosystem of State and Local Governments



Some of the most productive areas of growth for the evidence and data ecosystems are state and local governments across the country. These gains have emerged due to funding support from both the federal government and major philanthropies, strategic and technical support from nonprofit and academic organizations, and the commitment and dedication of state and local government leaders to elevating evidence-based and data-driven approaches. A recent [survey](#) of hundreds of state decision makers suggests that evidence-based information is having an impact now and will have an even greater impact in the future.



A number of states stand out as leaders in this ecosystem. For example, Results for America's [2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence](#) features 10 states that have put outcomes for the people they serve front and center by defining and prioritizing evidence of effectiveness in the state budget process. They have done so by:



- Defining evidence of effectiveness for purposes of budget development ([CO](#), [IL](#), [MN](#), [NC](#), [NM](#), [RI](#) and [TN](#)).
- Including a default field for evidence collection on internal budget documents (CO, MN, NC, NM, RI, and TN).
- Setting evidence-based targets (OR).
- Including evidence indicators in public budget documents (CO and MN).
- Summarizing items signed into law that support evidence-based interventions (MN).
- Using language within their budget that promotes budgeting towards creating equitable outcomes (CO, IL, MN, NM, and OR).



At the local level, one important example of progress comes from the What Works Cities Certification program, launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies and led by Results for America. The core purpose of this program is to strengthen local governments' capacity to use data and evidence to equitably

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deliver services and solve problems. The process of Certification enables cities to assess their progress in developing sound data management structures consisting of the right people, practices, and policies to put data and evidence at the center of decision making. As an assessment of the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification program recently described, “over 250 cities across the country now are participating in this work, using data and evidence to better engage and support citizens, provide services, and improve people’s overall well-being and quality of life.”²⁹



How It Works: Policies Based on Data & Evidence Can Make Life Better

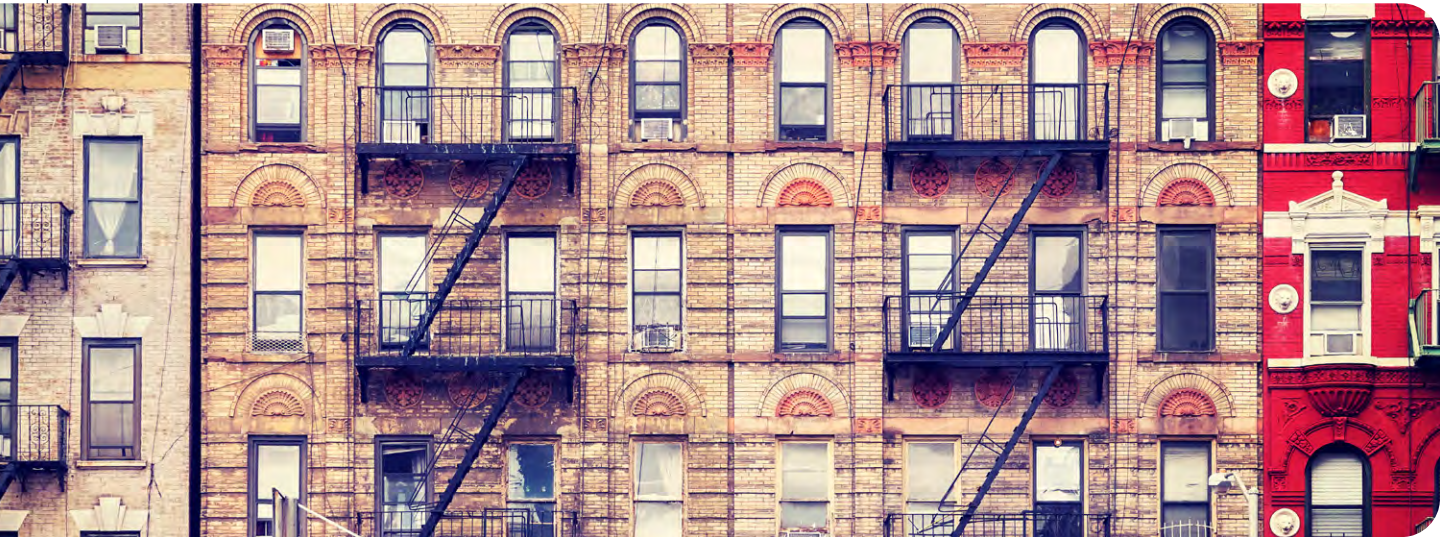


How do federal investments in data and evidence translate to improved lives in communities? To answer this question, we developed an in-depth case study of the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods initiative. This case study allows us to trace the federal evidence lifecycle from the point of policy creation through policy impact on the ground, where the key federal policy is the addition of evidence requirements to competitive funding awards issued by federal agencies. As the case study will show, investments in evidence and data create better, more equitable opportunities and outcomes for people in America.

Our Case Study Approach

We built our case study from multiple sources. First, we read news stories, public reports, and academic research related to Promise Neighborhoods. We then discussed the program with leaders from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Finally, we conducted in-depth interviews with four “backbone organizations” — those coordinating the implementation of comprehensive

programming in each Promise Neighborhood. Putting these sources together shows the power of federal support for evidence-based policy to make positive change on the ground.



Background

In 2008, then-Senator Barack Obama pledged on the campaign trail to create an anti-poverty program modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ): an initiative, that over the past two decades, has advanced comprehensive approaches for addressing the needs of children and families in a 97-block zone in Central Harlem. In 2010, the Obama Administration launched that program, which became known as “Promise Neighborhoods,” with the support of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink, a partnership between HCZ, PolicyLink, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The “Promise Neighborhoods” competitive grant was developed to encourage applicants to propose a continuum of “cradle-through-college-to-career” solutions that would support children, their families, and their communities. Novel at the time, the grant application instructions *required applicants to use research evidence to support their proposed initiatives*. Going a step further, ED defined what they meant by “moderate” and “strong” evidence in these instructions. It also developed a scoring guide for proposals that allocated points to applicants for describing the best available evidence and the ways that they intended to draw on that evidence.

These evidence requirements represented an important milestone for federal evidence-based policy. By including them, ED illustrated how federal agencies could require greater thoughtfulness and rigor from applicants for proposed programs. The requirements also helped the agency ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars would be allocated efficiently and effectively to grantees who would be smart stewards of limited financial resources. And, since ED further required mandatory reporting on a variety of success indicators among funded applicants, the agency helped to spur the kind of data collection needed to support future program learning. In short, all the pieces were in place to create a virtuous cycle of evidence-based policy, positive impact on people, and continuous learning for improvement.

Since 2010, Congress has invested more than \$500 million in 30 Promise Neighborhoods across 15 states. It also has mandated a formal evaluation of the overall implementation and impact of the Promise Neighborhoods program across all grantees from 2010 through 2018, scheduled to be released in 2024. But substantial evidence already shows that Promise Neighborhoods are reporting positive outcomes for children, their families, and their communities.

Promise Neighborhood Educational Impacts

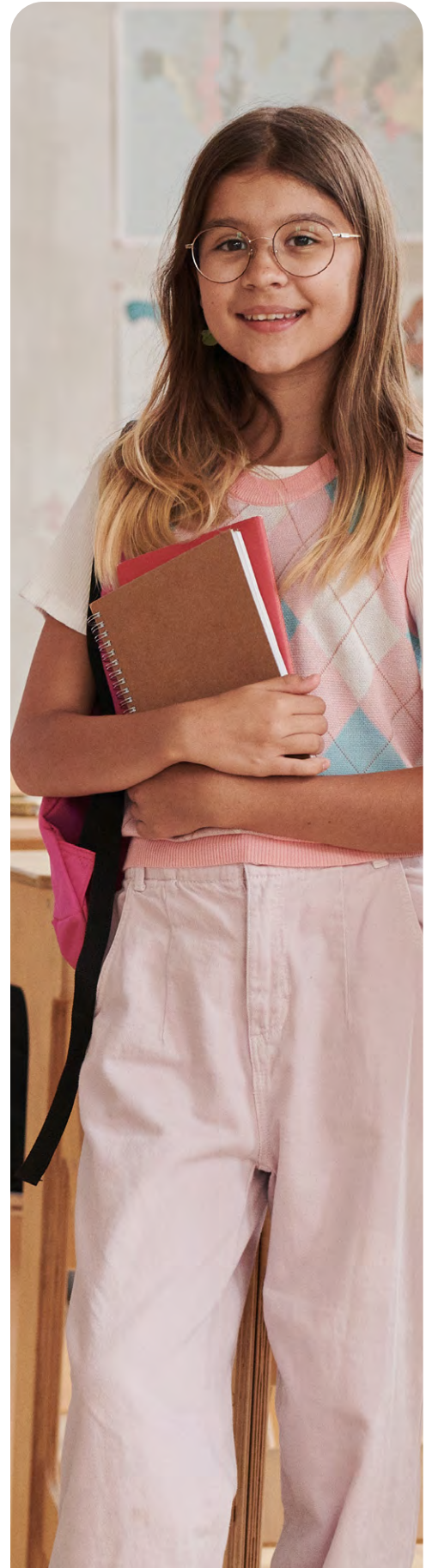
In a recent quarterly newsletter issued by ED to trace progress across Promise Neighborhoods, several shared meaningful results.³⁰ **The Indianola, Mississippi Promise Neighborhood** shared that its Literacy Fellows program, which provides high-quality, research-based reading instruction and intervention to struggling third graders in local elementary schools, recently hit an important benchmark of serving 400 students. The program has reported a 23 percentage point increase in the pass rate for at-risk third grade students on the state's reading assessment, from 36% to 59%.³¹

23 percentage point increase

in the rate of at-risk students in the Indianola, Mississippi Promise Neighborhood passing the third grade reading test

The Lancaster, South Carolina Promise Neighborhood highlighted its Extended Day effort, which offers a variety of free, onsite academic intervention and enrichment activities for students across Lancaster when school is not in session. This program has helped to support an overall reduction in “behavior incidents” across the schools served by Lancaster Promise Neighborhood efforts during the 2022-2023 school year, suggesting an increase in educational experiences for students attending these schools.³²

The Knox Promise Neighborhood in Knox County, Kentucky, originally launched by Berea College and now coordinated through a nonprofit, Partners for Rural Impact, saw a 7 percentage point increase in school attendance among children in grades six through nine between 2018 and 2019, from 80% to 87%. To achieve this increase, Knox Promise Neighborhood worked with schools to roll out a comprehensive, evidence-based attendance initiative focused on education, targeted engagement with the families of chronically absent students, and incentives like attendance competitions and monthly movie passes.³³ While these gains suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, continued engagement with the Knox Promise Neighborhood is helping to stabilize attendance challenges and get children back in school at the rates required for academic and personal success.



Coordinated Community Impact: The Case of the South Ward Promise Neighborhood

Promise Neighborhoods also have succeeded at creating coordinated systems of community support and impact. **The South Ward Promise Neighborhood (SWPN) in Newark, New Jersey** provides an important case study in this regard. Originally awarded \$30 million from ED in 2017, the organization in 2021 became the only Promise Neighborhood led by people of color to receive a second \$30 million award to extend its scope. Since the initial award, SWPN has brought together 26 community organizations and 19 schools to coordinate a two-generation (parent and child) continuum of supports focused on improving the educational, health, employment, and housing opportunities for South Ward residents. As just one example of its positive impact in people's lives, SWPN coordinated collaborative efforts across multiple community organizations to address families' pressing need for food and healthcare during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond launching a COVID-19 text hotline to provide quick help and advice, SWPN delivered over 4,000 health and wellness care packages, provided over \$100,000 in cash assistance through its Family Hub, and distributed over 200,000 masks to the community, in partnership with HCZ's National COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts and a network of community-based institutions, including a fellow Promise Neighborhood.³⁴



SWPN has developed enduring, evidence-based resources meant to serve over 12,000 children in SWPN's service territory and their families. Some of these include the *Promise Navigation Model*, a database that allows service

providers to understand and address students' needs while working to achieve key educational milestones; the *South Ward Wellness Center*, which addresses maternal and infant health needs among chronically-underserved Black mothers and their children; and the *South Ward Healthy Beginnings Initiative*, which reduces sources of family stress while encouraging positive outcomes for children from birth to age five through quality maternal and child healthcare, family support services following birth, early childhood education, and a peer community for sharing learning and building support networks.

As one South Ward mother, Tyhirah Thomas, reflected during an interview with News12 New Jersey regarding the Healthy Beginnings Initiative: “It’s very important that you have a support system. You’re going to need the help regardless of if you’re paying for it or not and thank God that we have these programs now that are free to the community. It takes a village.”³⁵

Connecting Outcomes to Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

The stories presented here from a variety of Promise Neighborhoods are only a small fraction of the data points we reviewed to understand how the evidence-based efforts of Promise Neighborhoods around the country stand to benefit children and their families. The picture that emerges illustrates a diverse array of hard-won gains for people living in Promise Neighborhood communities. It also shows the ways that federal investments in place-based efforts backed by data and evidence have the potential to make an enduring impact in young people's lives, which should yield dividends far into the future.

But what are the challenges and opportunities when it comes to implementing programs designed to reflect the best available evidence of success? How do evidence requirements in federal funding opportunities translate to work on the ground? Our interviews with the leaders of four Promise Neighborhood backbone organizations helped to answer these questions, showing how we can do more to support these leaders and sustain positive impacts for Promise Neighborhood communities.

Insights such as these are valuable not just because they produce learning but because they identify *why* certain programs are effective or ineffective. Once organizational leaders understand *why* programs work in distinct neighborhoods for particular communities, they can replicate and scale those programs in their own Promise Neighborhoods and others with similar demographic compositions. More generally, our interviews helped us to see that one of the tremendous wins of the Promise Neighborhoods program was the development, growth, and maturation of backbone organizations capable of coordinating thousands of people and millions of dollars to create opportunity for high-poverty children and their families.

Implementation Opportunities and Challenges: Learning from Backbone Organizations

The Promise Neighborhoods model hinges on the expertise, support, and coordination of backbone organizations. These organizations are the linchpin holding Promise Neighborhoods together. They are the ones that identify community partners, work with these partners to facilitate program implementation, and ensure data collection and broader evaluation efforts are in place to enable a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. For this reason, a large part of ED’s assessment of Promise Neighborhoods applicants rests on their consideration of backbone organizations. Specifically, will they be able to serve as implementation and community



leaders, forging the path ahead for the full suite of cradle-to-college-to-career initiatives they propose?

Through our interviews with four Promise Neighborhood backbone organizations, we learned that one of the most difficult tasks for these organizational leaders is working with community partners to see that proposed evidence based solutions are being implemented with “fidelity” — the word the community uses to mean “true to form.” There are many reasons why this task is difficult. Many community partners in Promise Neighborhoods are large organizations themselves, particularly local schools, which pursue their own programs and have long standing procedures in place to provide their services. In addition, it’s often the case that the evidence-based practices and programs that Promise Neighborhoods grant applicants have proposed do not directly map onto the service community. For example, the evidence may have been produced in a community with a very different population than the Promise Neighborhood.

As a result, one of the main jobs of backbone organizations is to work with community partners to appropriately modify programs to fit the exact population, needs, and organizational ecosystem of their own Promise Neighborhood. Another is to pursue effective results-based accountability, meaning that the capacity to collect and use data, evidence, and evaluation to make necessary modifications over time is firmly in place. Each kind of work is important because it takes many years and multiple, interwoven efforts, coordinated expertly, to see the kind of population-level change that Promise Neighborhood initiatives envision.

We learned from the backbone organizations that their own journeys have been characterized by constant learning, adjustment, and improvement. One organization, for example, described their initial efforts to implement an evidence-based program with a school partner “out-of-the-box,” meaning, without modification, given their unique community. This approach led to a clear dead end because of school and district policies that did not support the intervention. But rather than abandon the program altogether,



the organization worked with the school and the district to modify the intervention in ways that would work, ultimately resulting in a stronger partnership with the school and the implementation of an evidence-based adaptation now producing positive results for students.

Another organization discussed the importance of understanding the “cultural aspects” of the communities they serve, particularly immigrant communities, to facilitate success. Through constant engagement and work with families, this organization realized that you can’t just “pop programs on” and assume they will be effective, even if they are evidence based. Instead, effectiveness comes from “tailoring programs with the population and understanding the cultural differences there.” The fact that this Promise Neighborhood is collecting data on program impacts with this distinct population, and also pursuing formal evaluation of their programs, means that future place-based efforts will be able to benefit from this evidence in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness with their own efforts.

A third backbone organization described their added value to their community as serving as a “translator” between the evidence base and their partners. The organizational leaders stated:

“[We] take from the evidence and the research and help disseminate that to our communities, helping them see areas where they’re like, ‘We really wanna do this thing’ and we’re like, ‘Oh, well, what if you pulled in this piece? That might be more effective.’... [Then we] translate that back up to the Department of Ed so that they understand how our work is really grounded in research.”

This kind of virtuous cycle of understanding evidence, translating evidence to community partners, adapting to increase program effectiveness, and then communicating opportunities and challenges with ED is an example of how a culture of learning and improvement can be cultivated to improve results for underrepresented communities around the country.



Our Takeaways

Defining and prioritizing evidence in federal grants policy is one crucial approach to enabling more and better knowledge of what works to improve life for people across the country. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has put policies and key systems, such as evidence definitions in federal statutes (e.g., ESSA) and regulations (e.g., EDGAR), in place to ensure that using evidence is standard practice for directing grant dollars. Thirty-two percent of department grants define and prioritize evidence, helping ED to score 83 out of 100 points overall on the 2022 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence.

The Promise Neighborhoods case is one important illustration of best-in-class federal grants policy at work, but there are many other examples. Critical next steps to enable the expansion of these policies include:



Adopting a definition of evidence within all federal agencies, and then requiring applicants to identify and use evidence in grant applications.



Improving integration between federal- and state-level integrated data systems, so that it is possible to track outcomes.



Investing in federal staffing to provide implementation support for evidence-based programs, so that these programs are delivered most efficiently and effectively to the benefit of program recipients.



Working with Congress and the White House to provide both consistent and greater resources to fund more Promise Neighborhoods around the country.

- Because of the complexity and planning required, communities need consistent funding over time at higher levels.
- Resources for Promise Neighborhoods have steadily increased over the years: from \$10 million in 2010 when the program was first launched to \$73.3 million in 2016 to \$91 million in 2023.
- However, there is an enormous and growing demand in communities that outpaces the funding: between 2016 and 2021, approximately 202 applications were submitted with a little over half of all applicants scoring 90 or above (108 applicants in total); of these high-scoring applications only 22% were funded.

The Work Isn't Done: Current Challenges Facing the Evidence Ecosystem and Opportunities to Overcome Them

Despite the tremendous progress made in cultivating America's evidence ecosystem over the past decade, there is substantial work left to do.

To better understand the challenges currently facing evidence leaders in the federal government and to gather potential solutions, we interviewed over 40 data and evidence leaders who currently or previously served in the federal government.

Further, data from the **newly released federal government survey of Evaluation Officers** was incorporated. This survey was completed by 17 Evaluation Officers of the 24 total agencies subject to the Title I of the Evidence Act, reflecting insights from agencies allocating nearly \$200 billion of the federal budget.

The perspectives from the interviews and the survey data are intended to harness the in-depth experiences and perspectives of federal government evidence leaders to document challenges and chart a way forward.

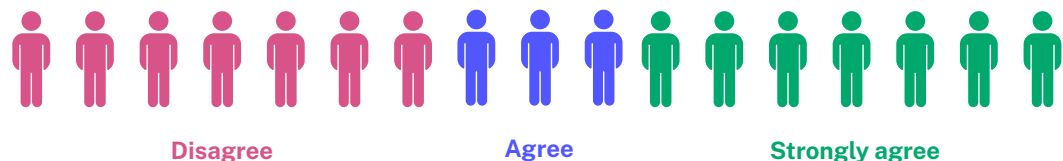
Challenge: Moving from Evidence Generation to Evidence Translation and Use

Evidence and data leaders across the federal government agree that a major shift in the evidence ecosystem needs to take place: It's time to focus on data and evidence *translation* and *use* as primary components of evidence-based policy. A decade ago, evidence *generation* was the primary focus. Federal agencies worked hard to understand how to use funds to support formal evaluations of their programs and to draw on existing administrative data to track the outcomes of programs and people over time. They made substantial improvements.

But now, federal evidence and data leaders are more concerned that the knowledge generated by a decade of evaluation and data work is not being used in critical decision-making contexts, whether regarding policy development or program implementation. Interviewees discussed how the lack of agency capacity, whether in staff, dollars, or momentum. They also discussed how the lack of integration of the data and evidence functions with the policy, programmatic, and grantmaking functions of their agencies inhibits helpful evidence translation and use. While many evidence and data leaders are working to allocate more resources to evidence use, and are seeking to pursue more integration of evidence with other agency functions, much more attention to and support of these issues are needed.



Of the 17 Evaluation Officers, 10 agreed or strongly agreed that they will not be able to meet a portion of their 2022-26 Learning Agendas with the current resource levels.



Challenge: Fostering Active Policy Leadership

Policy officials throughout the federal government, including those in the White House and in executive branch agencies, support the fundamental ideas of evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making. But providing active policy leadership to make these ideas into realities is

more difficult — and is performed with various degrees of attention and excellence across the federal government. For example, many of our interviewees talked about limited “demand for evidence” among policy leaders in their agencies. By “demand for evidence,” they described things like including evidence and data officials in executive decision-making contexts, coordinating explicitly and actively between an agency’s policy priorities and its data and evidence work, and encouraging the inclusion

of data and evidence in policy leaders’ daily decision memos, among other actions. The interviewees also described the need for amplifying leadership attention to evidence both within federal agencies and across White House offices. Together, the message was clear: Without fostering a greater demand for evidence and data among the federal government’s policy leaders, the promise of both will remain unfulfilled.

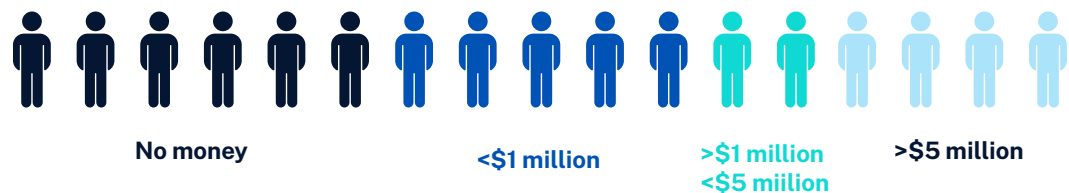
Challenge: Insufficient Funding

Federal evidence leaders agree: The lack of annual budget support for data, evaluation, and evidence building and use fundamentally impedes the overall impact and effectiveness of these crucial government functions. Those we interviewed expressed frustration with current funding levels in many ways. Some shared that because rigorous data collection, data provision, and formal evaluation can be expensive, insufficient funding makes it impossible



to pursue these important tasks. Others noted that the requirements of the Evidence Act essentially represent unfunded mandates, since no new appropriations have accompanied the act. Still others indicated that limited resources can lead agencies to deprioritize data and evidence initiatives outside of formal mandates, diminishing their efforts to create a flourishing culture of evidence. Even when some funding is allocated to data and evidence work, limited flexibility in spending those funds can stifle progress. For example, expiring annual funds are very constraining; if multi-year funds for data, evidence, and evaluation were available, more important work could be funded.

More than half of the Evaluation Officers who responded to the survey (11 of 17) indicated that they can direct less than \$1 million to significant evaluations annually.



Similarly, 7 of the 17 Evaluation Officers agreed or strongly agreed that they do not have enough resources to fulfill their plans for program evaluation in fiscal year 2024



Challenge: Squeezed Staff

While the Evidence Act mandates the creation of new roles in federal agencies, including an Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer, and several Statistical Officials, it does not specify that agencies should view these roles as mutually exclusive from other agency roles. It also does not allocate new or additional administrative funding to support these roles. One result, according to federal evidence and data leaders, is “squeezed” staffing. Given the vast number of responsibilities they hold, the demands placed on them — whether from those who report to them, those to whom they report, members of Congress, or White House officials in the White House

→ **Section 4: The Work Isn't Done — Current Challenges Facing the Evidence Ecosystem and Opportunities to Overcome Them**

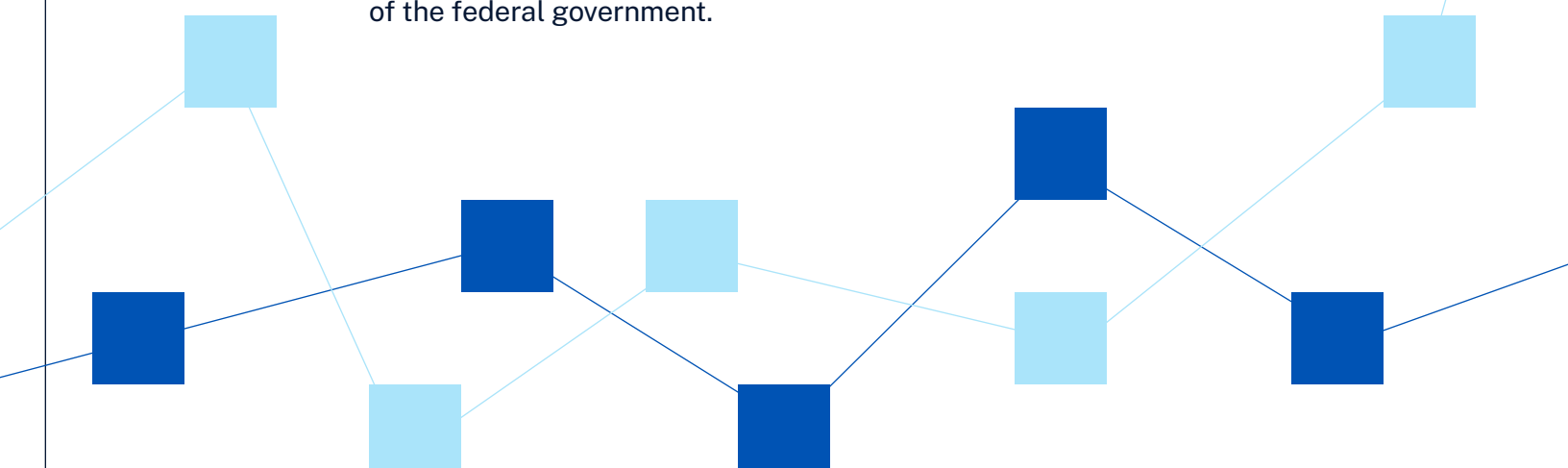
data collection, sharing, and use. For example, many important data sets currently housed in the federal government — like unemployment insurance data — do not include data on race, making it impossible to conduct equity analyses regarding people's access to federal programs and the impacts of those programs across different racial groups. Similar challenges exist regarding data on sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, cumbersome and inefficient data sharing processes continue to hinder federal agencies from sharing data with one another or researchers outside of the federal government. While privacy protection must remain central to data governance, the inability to collect adequate data or to share those data once collected hinders the possibility for effective data-driven decision making.



The Future is Bright: Next Steps in Advancing Federal Evidence-Based Policy and Data-Driven Decision Making

Where should we go from here? How can we ensure that the past decade of investments in evidence-based policymaking and data-driven decision making continue to bear fruit, both for the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government and for people throughout the country?

We base the following recommendations on our analysis of: (1) the last 10 years of progress in the federal government, (2) the development of complementary evidence-based approaches by state and local governments and diverse organizations, (3) the learnings drawn from success stories on the ground, and (4) the insights from data and evidence leaders inside and outside of the federal government.



Here are the next six things we should do:



No. 1

Continue to set aside federal funds to build evidence of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances, while also ensuring that federal legislation, regulations, and guidance prioritize *data and evidence use*: A critical step for directing public resources toward improving outcomes in education, workforce, poverty reduction and other areas of economic mobility.

Changes to federal statute, regulation, and guidance over the last decade mainly have propelled evidence generation. While we should continue to set aside federal funding for evidence generation, it's time to ensure that evidence is prioritized through these same channels and used to guide decisions.

Federal investments in generating rigorous evidence over the past decade have allowed us to better understand what policies and practices work for whom and under what circumstances, leading to positive results that have increased upward economic mobility for people around the country.

But without *using* the evidence generated in decision-making contexts, the full promise of evidence-based policy will not be realized.

For this reason, evidence should be at the heart of regular government processes, ensuring that the billions of dollars allocated by the federal government are invested in evidence-based programs.



Actions:

- Congress should set aside adequate federal funds to build evidence of what works for whom and in what circumstances.
- Congress should focus on translating the findings produced through earlier investments into policy insights, and should use these insights to develop legislation that adopts a definition of evidence, and then authorizes and directs appropriations to programs with evidence indicating they can achieve the intended outcomes.
- The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should issue administrative guidance directing all federal agencies to: a) adopt a definition of evidence of effectiveness; b) prioritize evidence of effectiveness in their competitive grant programs to the extent authorized by federal law, as well as in all reauthorization proposals for federal statute; and c) direct agencies to more fully and purposefully use evidence to guide budget decisions.
- The leaders of federal agencies should implement policies and practices that make evidence and data central to developing agency budgets, programs, and grants, so that the federal government can know what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and then can shift dollars to those solutions.



No. 2

Foster demand for data and evidence through active policy leadership, providing the knowledge and tools for more federal policy leaders to champion the use of evidence and data in the policy-making process.

Changes to the structures and processes of the federal government matter for making better policy decisions, but so do changes in the focus and priorities of policy leaders.

To propel evidence translation and use, federal policy leaders must increase their prioritization of evidence and data and must have the knowledge and tools to do so.

Inconsistency in the demand for evidence and data among policy leaders stifles their full potential in driving better policy decisions and programs for the American people.

Actions:

- Congress should support passage of the bipartisan resolution to establish a Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, spearheaded by Reps. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and William Timmons (R-SC).
 - The resolution would convene experts to review, analyze, and make recommendations to Congress to better incorporate federal data and evidence-based policymaking throughout the legislative process.
- White House units such as the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Domestic Policy Council, and the Council of Economic Advisors, should capture and share leading practices of strong evidence-focused leaders across federal agencies, advocating for the inclusion of such practices as part of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Executive Core Competencies for Senior Executive Service roles.
- Nonprofit and advocacy organizations should collaborate to develop resources and technical assistance for policy leaders regarding the incorporation of evidence and data into policy-making decisions; they also should publicly recognize exemplary leadership.



No. 3

Use federal policy and guidance to build evidence and data capacity in state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments.

The federal government should propel the expansion of evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making across all levels of government.

Federal policy matters. Through the allocation of federal funds, the federal government can advance the expansion of evidence building and use, as well as data collection, linkages, sharing and use, at all other levels of government.

Knitting together evidence and data across all levels of government is a critical next step in strengthening the overall evidence ecosystem.

Actions:

- Congress should allocate new funding, and modernize existing funding, to support state and local governments' efforts to build integrated data systems needed for policymakers, the public, and individuals to track outcomes and make decisions.
- The Executive Office of the President (EOP) and federal agencies should:
 - Be clearer in their guidance to states and localities about allowable uses and expectations of federal grant dollars — especially around integrated data infrastructure and evidence building.
 - Strengthen efforts to broadcast information regarding new evidence-based policies, so that other levels of government can be more responsive.
 - Continue to provide technical assistance to state, local, Tribal and territorial grantees regarding evidence building and use.
 - Create forums to engage states and localities in two-way discussion about what is needed in terms of guidance, technical assistance and resources.



No. 4

Advance data and evidence as public goods.

Everyone should have access to evidence and data used by the federal government to make decisions, and everyone who evidence serves should be partners in generating and using it.

→ **Section 5: The Future is Bright — Next Steps in Advancing Federal Evidence-Based Policy and Data-Driven Decision Making**



Over the past decade, available data and evidence for decision making have expanded exponentially, providing the foundational tools for effective policies, programs, and practices at all levels of government.

But there is more work to do. In the coming decade, it will be important to remove barriers to sharing existing and new data and evidence while protecting individual privacy.

Another critical goal is to expand participation in the evidence ecosystem, incorporating community-based research, practitioner-centered evidence, and lived experience so that evidence is built in partnership with the communities it is intended to serve.

Actions:

- Congress should continue to advance legislation that incorporates initiatives like the National Secure Data Service, which can strengthen data infrastructures at all levels of government as well as between levels.
- Building on the recent [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government](#), OMB should continue to pursue regulatory action that supports the collection and analysis of disaggregated data for equity analyses.
 - Specifically, OMB should continue to develop statistical policy directives that allow the collection of data disaggregated by key categories such as race, sexual orientation, and others, especially since analyses based on aggregated data can mask significant differences across subgroups (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, geography, income and other characteristics).

- Federal agencies should expand state, local and public access to data while remaining vigilant about protecting individuals' data privacy.
- Federal agencies also should support and expand open access to research findings, especially those funded or produced by the federal government, in alignment with the [Nelson Public Access Memo of 2022](#).



No. 5

Advocate for full implementation of the Evidence Act.

The data in this report shows that the Evidence Act is working, but there is unfinished business that must be prioritized and completed.

While the Evidence Act represented a watershed moment for evidence and data in the federal government, it did not come with any new funds. It also did not mandate that leaders holding the roles of Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer, or Statistical Official, participate in the policy decision-making processes of their agencies.

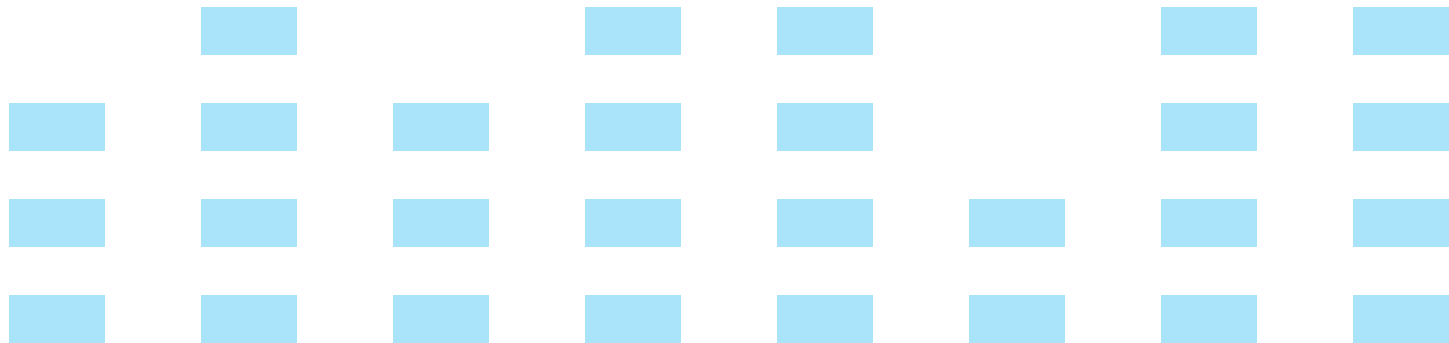
To realize the full promise of evidence and data in the federal government, evidence generation and use must be funded adequately, and its leaders must participate in the highest levels of policy decision making in their agencies.

Actions:

- Congress should provide more funding for data, evaluation, and evidence building and use, and greater flexibility in allocating those funds.
- Congress should increase investment in federal agency staff to enhance support for evidence-focused initiatives on the ground (e.g., those funded through federal grant programs), translate evidence insights into policy recommendations and programmatic insights, and coordinate inside federal agencies to promote the use of translated evidence.

→ **Section 5: The Future is Bright — Next Steps in Advancing Federal Evidence-Based Policy and Data-Driven Decision Making**

- OMB should issue guidance elevating the role of Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer, and Statistical Officials into the executive core of federal agencies.
- At the same time, the leaders of federal agencies should develop stronger organizational structures to incorporate the insights of evidence and data leaders in their agencies.
 - Existing coordinating councils, like the Evaluation Officer Council, the Chief Data Officer Council, and the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy, should develop recommendations and public documentation of how to shift agency efforts in these directions.
- The leaders of federal agencies also should prioritize facilitating, streamlining, and strengthening collaborations between evidence leaders inside and outside of the federal government.
 - At scale, such collaborations would require thoughtful changes, some to statute — like the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act, the Paperwork Reduction Act, and the Higher Education Act — regarding data collection, linking, and sharing both inside and outside of the federal government.
 - But addressing these issues and breaking down barriers to collaboration would help to address agency capacity constraints while advancing the goals of evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making.
- Learning from implementation of the Evidence Act across federal agencies should be harnessed to inform the future of evidence-based policy in Congress, especially through the work of the Congressional Evidence Commission.





No. 6

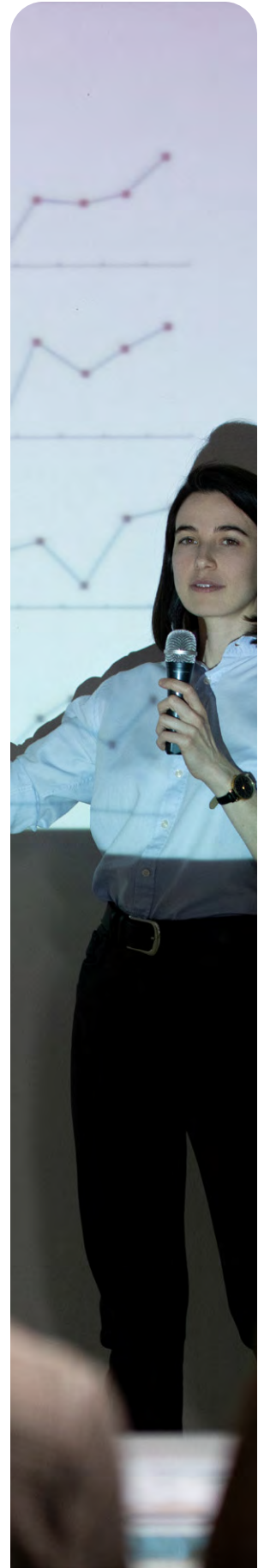
Celebrate progress, tell the story, and mobilize new champions

The evidence movement thrives on visibility, plain-language storytelling, mutual learning, and continued expansion — especially among new champions. It's time to bring these issues front and center.

Clearly communicating learning from evidence-based policies and practices is critical for building and expanding a culture of evidence at all levels of government and must be prioritized in the decade ahead.

Actions:

- Academic institutions, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations must work to identify, inspire, train, and support the next generation of data and evidence-driven leaders.
- Nonprofit and related organizations must tell the success stories of evidence-based policy and data-driven decision making in plain language that captures the imagination of the American public.
- Congress, federal agencies, and the White House also must collect and elevate these narratives to help fuel the continued expansion of the evidence ecosystem and to foster greater positive progress for people throughout the country.
 - Specifically, federal agency leadership should direct their communications teams to seek out, elevate, and advance media coverage of evidence stories and successes to enable this goal.



Conclusion

At the heart of the movement for using evidence-based policy is a basic but profound idea: Life is better for people across the country when government leaders make thoughtful decisions, grounded in a sustained and systematic review of how policies and programs have worked in the past, and with an eye towards continual improvement.

The past decade has seen great strides at the federal level for building and using data and evidence in decision making. Another decade of increased leadership, investment and progress – with a focus on consistently using our growing evidence base – will strengthen and expand the evidence-based policy movement and provide increased opportunities for all people across the United States.



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Organizations

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Hayward Promise Neighborhoods

Partners for Rural Impact

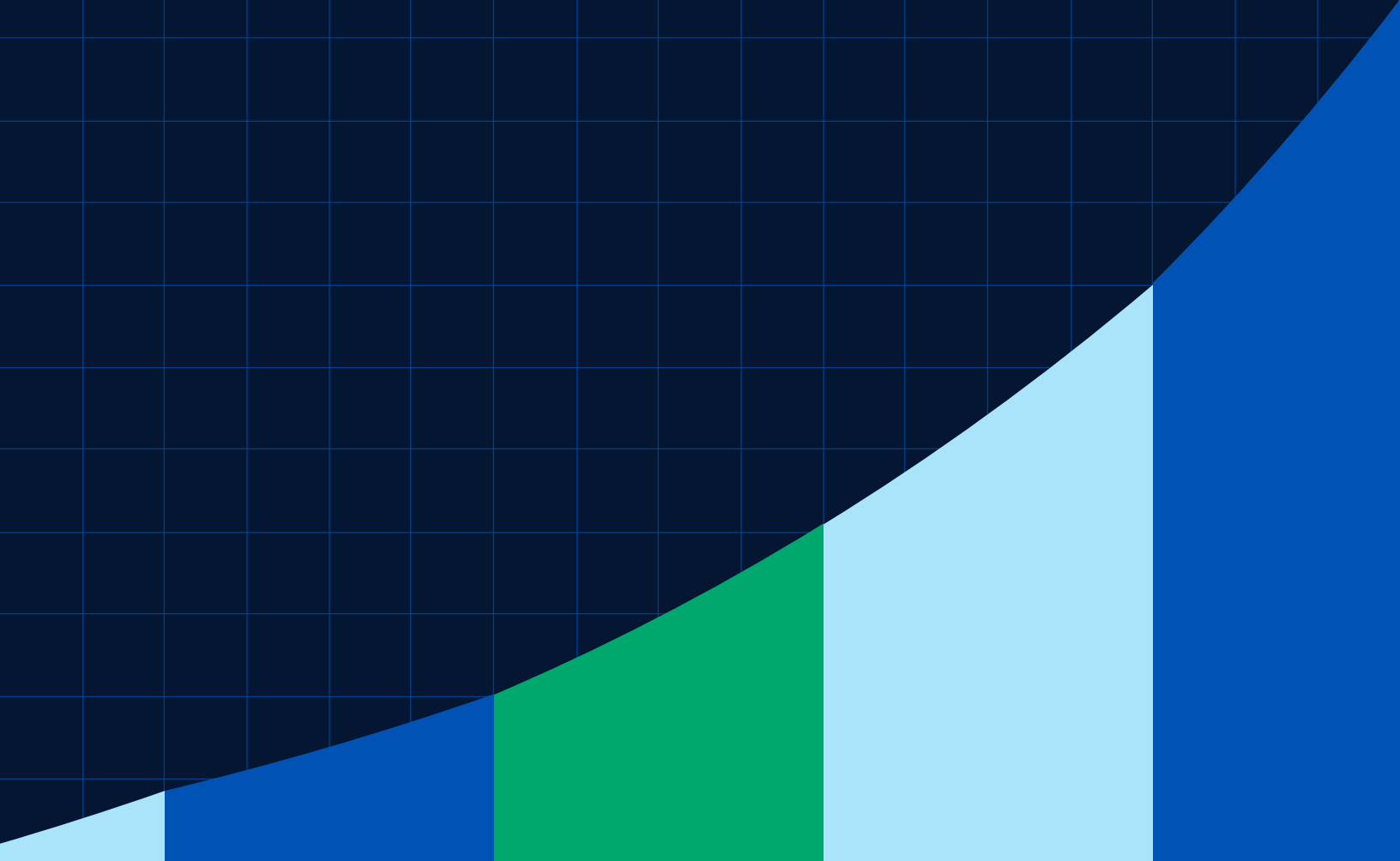
South Ward Promise Neighborhood

US Department of Education

William Julius Williams Institute at Harlem Children's Zone

Report design by [Buoy Marketing](#)

Appendices



Appendix I: Evidence and Data Make an Impact

Over the past decade, federal investments in programs guided by the best data and evidence of effectiveness have paid off, especially investments made through competitive grant programs that define and prioritize evidence-based programs. They have reduced poverty, strengthened health and well-being for children and families, ensured access to high-quality education, and expanded productive participation in the national labor force.

In this Appendix, we describe some of the evidence-based and data-driven programs that have been standouts over the past decade in producing positive impacts for people throughout the country. They provide support for expanding evidence and data capacity and use in the federal government in the years ahead.



The Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), an evidence-based policy aimed at reducing poverty and incentivizing work for low- and moderate-income families, lifted 5.6 million people above the poverty line in 2018 alone, including nearly 3 million children.³⁶

Federal funding pathway: Legislation originally enacted in 1975 through the Tax Reduction Act, with expansions in 1986, 1990, and 1993,³⁷ and a temporary expansion as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (2021).³⁸

Program summary: The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal tax credit for working people with low and moderate incomes, particularly

targeting those with children. Originally enacted as a modest tax credit that provided financial assistance to low-income, working families, the EITC today is one of the federal government's largest anti-poverty programs — in large part because of rigorous evaluations showing strong evidence of effectiveness. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities explains: “Workers receive the credit beginning with their first dollar of earned income; the amount of the credit rises with earned income until it reaches a maximum level and then phases out at higher income levels.... The EITC is ‘refundable,’ meaning that if the value of the credit exceeds the amount of federal income tax a low-paid worker owes, the worker receives the difference in the form of a refund.”³⁹

Impacts: A recent review of research on the EITC by economists, Drs. Austin Nichols and Jesse Rothstein, led to the following conclusion: “Researchers have documented beneficial effects on poverty, on consumption, on health, and on children’s academic outcomes. The magnitude of these effects is large: millions of families are brought above the poverty line, and estimates of the effects on children indicate that this may have extremely important effects on the intergenerational transmission of poverty as well. Taking all of the evidence together, the EITC appears to benefit recipients — and especially their children — substantially.”⁴⁰





The Child Tax Credit

*The 2021 expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC), an evidence-based policy that improves the health and well-being of children, **cut monthly child poverty by 40%**.*⁴¹

Federal funding pathway: Legislation originally enacted in 1997 through the Taxpayer Relief Act, with increases and expansions in 1998, 2001, 2012, 2017, and 2021 (as part of the American Rescue Plan Act).⁴²

Program summary: The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is a federal tax credit that helps families manage the cost of raising children. Under current law the credit is worth up to \$2,000 per eligible child (under age 17 at the end of the tax year). For 2021 only, the American Rescue Plan Act increased the maximum credit amount to \$3,600 for children under age 6 and \$3,000 for children aged 6-17, made the credit fully available to children and families with low incomes, included 17-year-olds for the first time, and issued half of the credit through advance monthly payments.⁴³



Impacts: The CTC lifted approximately 4.3 million people above the poverty line in 2018, including about 2.3 million children, and lessened poverty for another 12 million people, including 5.8 million children. The credit lifted even more families with children above the poverty line when combined with the Earned Income Tax Credit for families with children.⁴⁴ In addition, the temporary expansion of the CTC through the American Rescue Plan Act produced historic results. In combination with other relief efforts, the expanded credit decreased monthly child poverty by 40% and drove the child poverty rate to a record low of 5.2%. Without the CTC expansion, but with other pandemic relief measures in place, the child poverty rate would have been 8.1%.⁴⁵ With more recent data, the Census Bureau recently reported that the expiration of the expanded CTC, together with the end of other pandemic-era stimulus payments, led the child poverty rate to double between 2021 and 2022, from 5.2% to 12.4%.⁴⁶



Federal Emergency Rental Assistance

Federal emergency rental assistance, an evidence-based intervention funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (2021), **drove a 50% decrease in evictions** in 31 cities around the country in 2021 — and projections indicated that **1.36 million eviction cases were avoided nationwide**.⁴⁷

Federal funding pathway: Legislation enacted in 2021 through the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act.

Program summary: Two separate federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) programs have been established. The ERA1 program (authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021) provided \$25 billion to assist eligible households with financial assistance and housing stability services. ERA1 ended in late 2022. The ERA2 program (authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) is ongoing and has provided \$21.55 billion to assist eligible households with financial assistance, provide housing stability services, and as applicable, to cover the costs for other affordable rental housing and eviction prevention activities. ERA funds are provided directly to states, U.S. territories, local governments, and, in the case of ERA1, Indian Tribes or their Tribally Designated Housing Entities.⁴⁸



Impacts: As of June 2023, ERA had made more than 12.3 million household payments to assist renting families in need. Research has shown that relative to eligible renters, a higher share of ERA beneficiaries were Black, women, extremely low-income, and American Indian or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or Hawaiian Native. This finding indicates that ERA outreach efforts reached those renters that most needed assistance: tenants with the lowest incomes and those racial groups most at risk of eviction.⁴⁹ Research indicates that evictions have decreased by 50% in 31 cities around the country due to ERA2, with projections suggesting that 1.36 eviction cases may have been avoided nationwide.⁵⁰

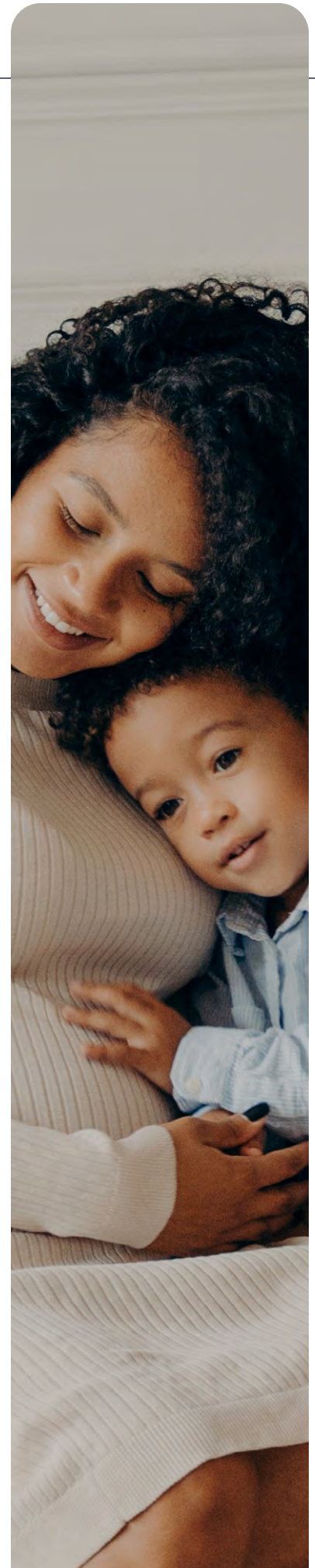


Non-Time-Limited Federal Housing Subsidies

Non-time-limited federal housing subsidies, an evidence-based provision geared toward solving family homelessness, have been shown to reduce family homelessness and “doubled up” housing by 50% and to decrease stays in emergency shelters by 25%.⁵¹

Federal funding pathway: Congressional direction accompanying regular appropriations; Senate Report 109–109 for the fiscal year 2006 Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill directed the Department of Housing and Urban Development to “undertake research to ascertain the impact of various service and housing interventions in ending homelessness for families.”⁵²

Program summary: Non-time-limited federal housing subsidies are long-term rent subsidy programs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) first evaluated the potential effectiveness of non-time-limited federal housing subsidies through the Family Options Study. This ongoing experimental study is focused on developing evidence about which types of housing and services interventions work best for families who experience homelessness. It has compared the effects of three active interventions — a long-term rent subsidy, a short-term rent subsidy (rapid rehousing), and project-based transitional housing — with one another and with the usual care available to families who experience homelessness. A 12-year follow up study is currently underway.⁵³



Impacts: To date, the Family Options Study has shown that non-time-limited federal housing subsidies (i.e., a long-term rent subsidy) produces the most positive impacts for families experiencing housing instability. Among other findings, the study indicated that long-term rent subsidies lead to reductions in homelessness and increased housing stability as compared to usual care, reducing both family homelessness and “doubled up” housing by 50%. Parents offered long-term rent subsidies also reported less psychological distress, alcohol and substance abuse, and domestic violence. Further, children in families offered long-term rent subsidies had fewer school moves, better attendance (at 20 months), and fewer behavior problems as reported by parents (at 37 months) than did children in families offered usual care. Other analyses found that 3- to 4-year-old children and 13- to 17-year-old children in families who received vouchers were more likely to be in a higher functioning group across all outcome domains than were children in usual care.⁵⁴



Home Health Visiting Programs, Particularly Nurse-Family Partnerships

Nurse-family partnerships, a form of evidence-based home-health visiting widely supported by federal funding, have been shown to produce an 18% reduction in pre-term births, a 48% decrease in child abuse and neglect, and a 56% reduction in emergency room visits due to accidents or poisoning.⁵⁵

Federal funding pathway: Congressional appropriations in 2008 for a pilot program,⁵⁶ followed by legislation enacted in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act. The legislation added Section 511 to Title V of the Social Security Act creating the “Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program” that encompassed nurse-family partnerships, with reauthorization in 2023.

Program summary: Facilitated through federal formula-based grant funds to states, territories, and Tribal entities, the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services together administer the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program. The MIECHV Program supports home visiting for expectant and new parents with children

up to kindergarten entry age who live in communities that are at-risk for poor maternal and child health outcomes. Families choose to participate in home visiting programs, including nurse-family partnerships, and partner with health, social service, and child development professionals to set and achieve goals that improve their health and well-being. The program builds upon decades of research showing that home visits during pregnancy and early childhood improve the lives of children and families.⁵⁷ Programs must meet at least four of six evidence-based benchmarks to satisfy the law's rigorous requirements for demonstrated effectiveness.⁵⁸

Impacts: During fiscal year 2022, the MIECHV Program served approximately 138,000 parents and children and provided more than 840,000 home visits. Two-thirds of participating families had household incomes at or below the federal poverty line.⁵⁹ The program has produced substantial research over time indicating positive impacts on postpartum mental health screening and well-being, early childhood medical care, early childhood language and literacy activities, and future educational opportunities for children, among others.^{60,61,62}





National School Lunch Program

*The federally-funded National School Lunch Program, an evidence-based effort to increase diet quality and decrease food insecurity among children, has been shown to **lessen food insecurity by over 10% among participating children.***⁶³

Federal funding pathway: Legislation originally enacted in 1946 through the National School Lunch Program, followed by bipartisan support of yearly appropriations.

Program summary: The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides low-cost or free lunches to children and operates in nearly 100,000 public and nonprofit private schools (grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12) and residential child care institutions. In fiscal year 2019, the program provided 4.9 billion lunches to over 30 million children nationwide. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service administers the NSLP and reimburses participating schools and residential child care institutions for the meals served to students. Any student in a participating school can get an NSLP lunch.⁶⁴

Impacts: Beyond increasing access to free and reduced-price lunches for children around the country, the NLSP has been shown to correspond with a significant reduction in food insecurity for high-needs children.⁶⁵ Rigorous research has found reductions in the order of 10% among participating children.⁶⁶





Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

Federal funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs, evidence-based provisions targeted at reducing teen births and increasing young people’s sexual health and safety, has lowered teen births by 3% in the 55 counties receiving funding⁶⁷ — resulting in the prevention of at least 13,500 teen births over 7 years — and has educated hundreds of thousands of young people, including 125,000 during the 2021-2022 school year.⁶⁸

Federal funding pathway: Regular appropriations first authorized in fiscal year 2010 for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program, with continued annual discretionary funding every year since. The funding is distributed through a competitive grant program overseen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Program summary: The Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) program reaches adolescents, their families, and communities with a focus on serving adolescent populations with the greatest need to reduce disparities in teen pregnancy and birth rates. The TPP program funds diverse organizations across the United States to either (1) implement evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs or (2) develop and evaluate new and innovative approaches to preventing teen pregnancy.⁶⁹ As required in appropriations law, the majority of TPP program grants must use evidence-based education models that have been shown to be effective in reducing teen pregnancy and related risk behaviors. A smaller share of funds is available for research and demonstration grants that implement innovative strategies to prevent teenage pregnancy.⁷⁰

Impacts: Since 2010, TPP grantees have served 1.57 million youth across 41 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Marshall Islands. Annually, the TPP program serves nearly 200,000 young people. The program has also trained more than 23,500 professionals, established over 20,000 community partnerships, and developed 56 innovative programs and products.⁷¹ Recent rigorous research has shown that the program has lowered teen births by 3% in the nearly 3,000 counties receiving funding.⁷²





Preschool Education

Recent increases in **federal funding to improve access to evidence-based preschool education**, an early childhood intervention aimed to prepare children for lifelong learning, **resulted in an 87% increase in children's enrollment in high-quality preschools in the communities that received funding.**⁷³

Federal funding pathway: Regular appropriations authorized in 2014 and continued in 2015, 2016, and 2017, authorizing \$250 million annually in competitive grant funds for the Preschool Development Grant program. The program was administered jointly through the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education.

Program summary: The Preschool Development Grant (PDG) program was developed to serve 4-year-old children whose families were at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and who lived in a state designated “High-Needs Community”. The underlying assumption was that attending a quality preschool program would result in these children being ready for kindergarten. All PDG proposals were required to describe how the state met the definition of “high-quality preschool programs” or include a plan for meeting evidence-based essential elements, including criteria related to staff qualifications and training, class size, instruction and curriculum, family engagement, and program evaluation. PDGs were awarded to 18 states.⁷⁴

Impacts: Over the four years of the PDG grant, a total of 167,725 eligible children attended PDG-supported quality preschool classrooms in 18 states. Between 2015 and 2018, the first and fourth years of the grant, the annual enrollment increased by 24,515 children. The increase indicates that the total PDG enrollment nearly doubled. In addition, early data suggest that some states, including Maryland, Nevada, and Vermont, showed increases in kindergarten readiness alongside the receipt of PDG funding, showing the utility of this kind of federal investment as an early childhood educational





Educational Success Interventions

Federal tiered evidence grants for educational success interventions, or grants that offer greater amounts of funding for educational interventions with more, higher-quality evidence of success, have identified the KIPP School model as one that **raises four-year college attendance by 31 percentage points (from 46% to 77%) and elevates college graduation by 19 percentage points (from 20% to 39%).**⁷⁵

Federal funding pathway: Legislation originally enacted in 2009 as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which directed the U.S. Department of Education to establish the “Investing in Innovation Fund.” The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 more recently modified and reauthorized this program under a new name, the “Education and Innovation Research” program. Funds for both programs were and are allocated through competitive grants.

Program summary: The Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund was a U.S. Department of Education program developed to expand both the evidence base pertaining to effective educational strategies and the use of those strategies to improve student learning and close nationwide equity gaps. It was the first program to require adherence to the department's standards for high-quality, rigorous evaluation. Between 2010 and 2016, the i3 program invested \$1.4 billion to help districts, nonprofit organizations, and schools implement educational strategies with strong prior evidence of



effectiveness, and develop and test innovative approaches to improve student outcomes. Importantly, all 172 i3 grantees were required to fund independent evaluations to measure the impact of their educational approach. Lessons from these activities have informed similar efforts under the i3 program's successor, the Education and Innovation Research (EIR) Program.⁷⁶

Impacts: A 2018 review of impact evaluations produced for 67 i3 grantees reported that 18% of the evaluations produced a statistically significant positive impact on at least one student academic outcome.⁷⁷ More recent research has focused on longer-term impacts pertaining to particular i3 programs. One of these evaluations stands out: KIPP schools, which provide evidence-based middle and high school education to traditionally underserved student populations, have been shown to raise four-year college attendance by 31 percentage points (from 46% to 77%) and to elevate college graduation by 19 percentage points (from 20% to 39%).⁷⁸ This is just one example among many of the positive impacts of i3 and, more recently, EIR.



Sectoral Training

Federal support for facilitating and scaling up sectoral training, evidence-based programs that train job seekers — especially those without college degrees — for high-quality employment in high-demand industries, has increased earnings for participants by between 12% and 34%.⁷⁹

Federal funding pathway: Legislation enacted in 2010 through the Serve America Act, which directed AmeriCorps to develop a new Social Innovation Fund that subsequently supported work in this area. Regular appropriations to the Administration for Children and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services for fiscal year 2009 also enabled an evaluation of multiple sectoral training programs.

Program summary: Sectoral training and employment programs are programs that train job seekers for high-quality employment, or employment in specific industries considered to have strong labor demand and opportunities for career growth.⁸⁰ One of the first and most important sectoral training programs supported by the federal government was the

→ **Appendix I: Evidence and Data Make an Impact**

WorkAdvance program, funded through a public-private partnership housed in AmeriCorps' Social Innovation Fund (SIF).⁸¹ The purpose of SIF is to invest in promising programs that address pressing social and community challenges and use a rigorous process to evaluate each program, building evidence of its impact and effectiveness.⁸² Another important sectoral training program, Year Up, was evaluated as part of efforts by the Administration for Children and Families to develop promising pathways to work for those without a college degree.

Impacts: Participation in sectoral training programs have increased earnings for participants by between 12% and 34%. For the WorkAdvance program funded by the SIF, average earnings increased by 12%. For the Year Up program, evaluated through the PACE program, earnings increased by 34%.⁸³

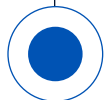


Appendix II: Extended Timeline of Evidence-Based Policy Highlights

OMB Guidance and Other Regulation⁸⁴



- **Joint Memorandum from the Heads of OMB, the Domestic Policy Council (DPC), the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on Next Steps in the Evidence and Innovation Agenda, 2013:** Demonstrated cohesive White House leadership, under the direction of the president, on data, evidence, and evaluation. Described plans for OMB to prioritize budget requests that strengthen the use of evidence and innovation. Strongly encouraged federal agencies to submit budget plans regarding agency progress in using evidence and building new knowledge of what works and is cost effective. This evidence requirement later would become a mandatory aspect of the budget process.



- **OMB FATAA Guidance, 2018:** Defined and standardized key terms, detailing the data, evidence, and evaluation requirements of federal agencies providing foreign aid.



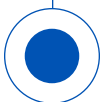
- **OMB Memorandum on Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans, 2021:** Reinforced OMB expectations that agencies will “use evidence whenever possible to further both mission and operations, and to commit to build evidence where it is lacking.” Directed heads of agencies and other senior leaders to create a “culture of evidence” in their agencies and to support staff accordingly. Advanced a broad range of methodological approaches that should be considered part of evidence building activities, including “pilot projects, randomized controlled trials, quantitative survey research and statistical analysis, qualitative

research, ethnography, research based on data linkages in which records from two or more datasets that refer to the same entity are joined, well established processes for community engagement and inclusion in research, and other approaches that may be informed by the social and behavioral sciences and data science.” Built on two other crucial guidance memoranda related to the Evidence Act, OMB M-19-23 and OMB M-20-12.

- **American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) Act Final Rule, Department of the Treasury, 2022:** Includes clear provisions encouraging the use of SLFRF funds for program evaluation and evidence resources for a variety of purposes, including:
 - Building and using evidence to improve outcomes.
 - Strengthening data analysis resources to gather, assess, and use data for effective policymaking and performance tracking.
 - Advancing technology infrastructure resources to improve access to and the user-experience of government information technology and data management systems.
 - Developing community outreach and engagement resources to help incorporate evidence-based on lived experiences into programs.
 - Seeking capacity building resources to support using data and evidence to design, execute, and evaluate programs.

The Department of the Treasury also issued SLFRF Compliance and Reporting Guidance mandating reporting on the use of evidence to inform spending decisions in U.S. locations with a population over 250,000.

- **OMB Guidance on Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2022:** Encouraged explicitly and forcefully that BIL funds could be used to support data infrastructure, program evaluation, and evidence-building activities.



Federal Laws



- **Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014:** Required federal agencies to disclose direct expenditures linking federal contracts, loans, and grant spending information to specific programs; enabled tracking of federal spending through www.USAspending.gov; required OMB to establish government-wide financial data standards for federal funds.



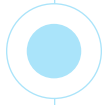
- **Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015:** Reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), replacing No Child Left Behind (2002). Incorporated numerous evidence-based provisions, especially related to the use of federal funds at the state and local levels. Institutionalized evidence-based approaches to making U.S. secondary education higher quality and more equitable.



- **Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016:** Appointed a commission to conduct a comprehensive study on the data inventory, data infrastructure, database security, and statistical protocols related to federal policymaking. Goals included: (a) integrating and making available federal agency data while protecting confidentiality, and (b) incorporating outcome measurement, RCTs and impact analysis into agency program design. Sponsored by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI).



- **Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (FATAA) of 2016:** Directed the president to release guidelines for establishing measurable goals, performance metrics, and monitoring and evaluation plans for U.S. foreign assistance dollars.




- **Program Management and Improvement Act of 2016:** Required the development and adoption of federal government-wide standards related to federal program and project management, as well as mandating annual federal program inventories, the new position of Program Management Improvement Officers, and a new job series for program and project management within federal agencies.

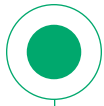


- **Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018:** Created a framework for federal agencies to take a more comprehensive

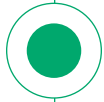
approach to evidence building with three titles: Federal Evidence-Building Activities; OPEN Government Data Act; and Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act. Based on the recommendations from the final report of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission, co-sponsored by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), and passed with bipartisan consensus.

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- **Inventory of Program Activities of Federal Agencies, 2021:** Required OMB to create a single website to provide an inventory to identify all federal agency programs, as well as their purposes and alignment with agency missions and goals.
 - **Inflation Reduction Act of 2022:** Advanced numerous evidence-based provisions, particularly related to the distribution of federal funds to states, localities, and non-governmental organizations, in areas including improving maternal care, providing equitable early childhood education opportunities, developing climate education curriculum, facilitating equitable college access and success, strengthening the school-to-work pipeline, and bolstering high-demand professions in the healthcare field and beyond.
 - **National Secure Data Service (NSDS), 2022:** Directed the National Science Foundation (NSF) to create an NSDS demonstration project dedicated to creating a single, government-wide infrastructure for linking and accessing statistical data.
 - **Congressional Evidence-Based Policymaking Resolution of 2023:** Established a commission to review, analyze, and make recommendations to Congress to promote the use of federal data for evidence-building, evidence-based policymaking, and related purposes.

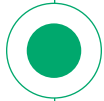
Executive Actions



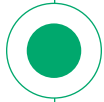
- **Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, 2021:** Established the Equitable Data Working Group to identify inadequacies in the federal government data infrastructure related to measuring the equity of policies, practices and programs, and to remedy those inadequacies.



- **Presidential Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking, 2021:** Communicated the policy of the Biden administration to “make evidence-based decisions based on the best available science and data.” Created a task force on Scientific Integrity. Mandated OMB guidance on federal Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans.



- **White House Year of Evidence for Action, 2022:** Accelerated efforts to center evidence, data, and science at the highest levels of federal decision making through a series of activities, including twelve Evidence Forums, the creation of a Learning Agenda Dashboard, and experimentation with federal funding models linking researchers outside of government with federal evidence-building efforts.



- **OSTP Memorandum on Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research, 2022:** Directed all federal agencies with research and development expenditures to make research publications and their supporting data resulting from federal funding freely and publicly available, without an embargo, by December 31, 2025.

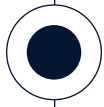


- **Executive Order on Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, 2023:** Required the establishment of Federal Agency Equity Teams to extend evidence-informed approaches to advancing equity and redoubled efforts to advance the collection and provision of agency data to perform equity analyses.

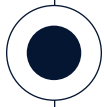
Congressional Report Language



- Over the past 10 years, the Congressional Appropriations Committee has increasingly focused funding on programs with evidence of effectiveness and also included language encouraging Departments and agencies to use evidence, data, and best practices in their decision making.



- Since fiscal year 2013 the funding and language directives have increased as the Committee and agencies acknowledged the benefit of using evidence and data to improve program quality and performance. These, in turn, have had a significant positive impact on communities throughout the nation.



- The following are some highlights of Congressional Appropriations Report language encouraging evidence and data use:

→ **Education Innovation and Research (EIR) (Formerly known as Investing in Innovation i3):** In fiscal year 2013, this program was one of the first to be identified as evidence-based. Since that time the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) appropriations bill has consistently supported funding and report language for EIR. The report language states that EIR grants support the creation, development, implementation, replication, and scaling up of evidence-based, field-initiated innovations designed to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. EIR incorporates a tiered evidence framework that provides early-phase, mid-phase, and expansion and replication grants.



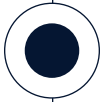
→ **Supporting Effective Educator Development Grant (SEED):** The Committee has consistently included funding and language to expand support for grants to national nonprofit organizations that provide evidence-based professional development activities for teachers, principals, and school leaders with non-traditional preparation and certification to obtain employment in underserved local education agencies (LEAs).



→ **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program:** Funded under the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Committee report has contained language since fiscal year 2014 to implement a comprehensive approach to serving homeless youth. Competitive grants are intended to improve youth homelessness systems on a local level and help implement successful, evidence-based intervention methods for this population.



→ **Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) (funded under USAID):** Report language has been included since fiscal year 2015 for DIV. The program invests in innovative programs and supports a tiered-evidence approach to testing, developing, implementing, scaling-up and evaluating global development solutions that have the potential to change millions of lives in developing countries.



→ **AmeriCorps State and National Grants:** The LHHS Committee has included language since fiscal year 2015 that supports grants to community-based organizations and agencies to address local needs in education, public safety, health and the environment.



→ **Workforce Data Quality Initiative:** Beginning in fiscal year 2017 and each succeeding fiscal year, language has been included in the LHHS reports supporting competitive grants to states for the development and enhancement of longitudinal data systems to integrate education and workforce data. The initiative includes evaluation and research on the effectiveness of education and the workforce; postsecondary and career and technical programs; and permits individuals to select programs that best meet their needs.



→ **Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act:** Since 2019, when the act was signed into law, the reports accompanying the LHHS appropriations bills have included language stating that the Committee believes that the execution of the act will enhance the evidence-building capacity of federal agencies, strengthen privacy protections, improve secure access to data,



and provide more high-quality evidence to policymakers. The language also directs departments to implement the act for the current and future budget years.

- **Strengthening Data Capacity and Infrastructure:** The fiscal year 2024 LHHS report includes language urging the Secretary of Labor to permit grantees to use funds to improve data capacity and infrastructure, analysis activities, and human capacity. It also urges the department to provide technical assistance, highlight best practices, and take other steps to encourage state and local grantees to build capacity for understanding student needs, improving coordination across programs, measuring results, and evaluating which strategies and interventions are most effective, while maintaining the privacy of individuals' data.

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