

Funder Perspective
Perspective on Funders and ISE Evaluation
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The federal government as a funder is very keen on accountability lately. For example, see the requirements for the MSPs from NSF

Evidence-based Design and Outcomes

- *Linkages of current research and studies, including theoretical foundations, used to inform the project design*
- *One or more educational research questions, of considerable import to the STEM education community, and associated research design*
- *Student and teacher data that provide the baseline for the specific improvements targeted by the project; these data serve to define the need to be addressed by the project; data should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and disability, unless precluded by local or state law*
- *An external evaluator, evaluation questions, and evaluation design linked to the goals and outcomes of the project;*
- *Analysis of data that informs the continuous refinement of the project*
- *Credible measures documenting impact, inclusive of quantitative and qualitative benchmarks of progress and outcomes associated with student learning and teacher quality, as well as related to the measurement of other goals delineated in the project*
- *Reliable procedures for analyzing data on the effectiveness of the Partnership and the impact of the contributions made by faculty members in the STEM disciplines*

Another example of federal evaluation is the new OMB (M-12-14) to all the executive departments and agencies about evaluation and the use of evidence. The memorandum suggests that funds in 2014 will be available for three areas of evaluation. The first area is to develop new evaluations such as low cost evaluations linked to existing administrative or budgetary information, evaluations linked to waivers and performance partnerships, expansion of evaluation efforts within existing programs, and systemic measurement of costs and cost per outcome. The second area is using comparative cost-effectiveness data to allocate resources such as ranking and funding programs on the basis of their cost effectiveness. The third area is using evidence in funding such as encouraging the use of evidence based practices in formula grants, applying a tiered framework or something similar to assess evidence and support different funding levels or a reimbursement model where the government would only pay for something after success had been demonstrated. The memorandum also suggests that agencies should increase their own evaluation capacity through education and appointment of an official in charge of evaluation efforts.

The needs of funders are highly individualistic. Is there any way the ISE community could help them develop common standards to help facilitate evaluations?

How can evaluations help funders provide more funding for ISE programs?

*Draft Reflections Provided to Stimulate Conversation at the
June 20-21, 2013 CAISE Evaluation Convening
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How best should we provide evaluation information to our funders? The discussion forum related to more creative ways to present evaluation findings and perhaps funders would prefer materials other than written reports.

A new article in American Journal of Evaluation by Hall et al talks about providing evaluation data in the form of poems and role plays which might be interesting.

The CAISE evaluation forum brought up the idea of rigor. What do funders consider as rigorous—what type of information will be most valuable or compelling to them?

The webinar provided information on the agreement of research approaches across the NSF and Dept. of Education. Would these serve as a basis for evaluation across funders? How are the research ideas different from evaluation.

We should consider what is meant by funder, does it mean the funder of the evaluation? Does it mean the funder of the program that the informal setting is providing and for which the setting has hired the evaluator? This could mean reports to NSF or private foundations, etc. Generally reports to the funder of the program include more than the evaluation report but the desires of the funder as perceived by the program implementers can translate into requirements for the evaluation.

Often the perception is that the funder wants summative information—what is the value or worth of this program. These types of evaluations are usually more expensive and less focused on what the program could do better and so less appealing to the program staff.

How supportive are funders of evaluation. Do they provide separate funding for the evaluation?

Do the funders provide their own evaluations. For example, a foundation might have its own evaluation staff that evaluates the programs it funds. What does that mean for the local evaluator?

Some foundations use cluster evaluations of their projects. Might something like this work across different funders and different settings?

Are funders interested in evaluation across different projects or only on a project by project basis?

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