



July 5, 2022

RE: Budget Execution to Strengthen Federal Evaluation Capacity

For federal agencies to effectively carry out their missions, incorporating evaluation as an integral part of agencies' strategies is vital. On behalf of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), we want to emphasize how crucial budget execution is to bolster federal evaluation capacity.

In June 2021, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued guidance ([M-21-27](#)) to all federal agencies on the implementation of Title 1 provisions of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act), including development of Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans. OMB described program evaluation as a core agency function and directed agencies to "use evaluation as a critical tool to learn and improve, rather than more narrowly to demonstrate whether something works or not." In line with OMB guidance and Evidence Act goals, AEA strongly encourages individual agencies to give appropriate priority to evaluation in implementing annual budgets, especially in terms of providing necessary resources for increasing capacity to conduct and to use evaluation. Under the current FY 2022 budget, agencies have some resources necessary to begin supporting their evaluation functions. It is up to agency leaders, budget officials, and evaluation officials to identify areas where funding can be allocated to ensure successful use of evaluation. Evaluation must be a priority for federal agencies and AEA calls on agency heads to ensure this happens.

AEA encourages federal agencies to undertake their own context-specific strategies for funding evaluation and bolstering evaluation capacity. Alternative funding mechanisms may be appropriate to agencies' unique circumstances. Importantly, funding strategies should embed evaluation in such a way that it is a natural part of the agency's infrastructure. It is important for agencies to understand that funding for evaluation and evaluation capacity does not compete with agency goals. Rather, evaluation and evaluation capacity are critical for mission achievement; funding allocations and future funding requests should reflect that need.

The AEA is a professional association of evaluators and our mission is to improve evaluation practices and methods, increase evaluation use, promote evaluation as a profession and support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human and government action. Evaluation involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, products and organizations to improve their effectiveness.

Evaluation is an essential function of an effective government to understand implementation and effects of programs and policies. As your agency makes final allocations for the end of year spending, the AEA encourages you to direct funding toward strengthening the agency's program evaluation functions and enhancing capacity to successfully carry out your mission.

Sincerely,
Veronica Olazabal
AEA President