From Identification of Major Challenges to Evaluation to Proactively Influencing Evaluation Policies: A Compilation of the Findings from a Series of Think Tanks

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Five AEA “think tanks”

- 2003: Focus on **Identifying 6 Types of Barriers to Evaluation**
- 2004-2006: Focus on Barriers to **Performing Evaluation**
- 2007: Focus on Barriers to **Using Evaluation to Inform Program Management and Public Policy**
Six categories of barriers

1. Methodological
2. Institutional/cultural
3. Data/Measurement
4. Resources
5. Communications
6. Conflicting stakeholder agendas
Barriers …

Were strikingly common across programs and across countries.
Barriers were said to impede …

- Demand for evaluation
- Planning and conducting evaluation
- Understanding of evaluation studies
- Acceptance and interpretation of findings
- Use of results to inform
  - program management (internal)
  - planning, budget, accountability (external)
  - public policy (larger environment)
Roundtable focus

- 2008: Deeper dive into connection between evaluation and policy
What stands in the way of evaluation informing policy?

- Policy is driven by value judgment
- Evaluation seeks to be objective
- Policy asks what should be done
- Evaluation measures the results of what was done
- Policy tends to be at the meta level
- Evaluation tends to be at the project/program level
Current state of disconnect ...

- Policy input is not a traditional use of evaluation
- Policy implications of evaluation buried in complex studies and not well identified
- Mismatch of current policy interest and evaluation focus
- Timing of evaluation studies not well matched with policy needs
- Scope of evaluation studies tends to be narrower than policy questions
- Lack of knowledge of evaluation by those in the policy community
- Potential conflict between evaluation findings and political views
Challenges to meet …

- Incorporating policy questions into evaluation studies
- Drawing out policy implications of evaluation results
- Making evaluation results more accessible to policy makers via interpretation
- Linking evaluation findings across agencies for a broader point of view
- Increasing trust, understanding, and comfort level of policy makers in using evaluation results
Roundtable attendees …

■ Your thoughts?
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