

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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