

NAPA Grants Management Symposium

Wednesday June 23, 2021

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The BETTER Project (BETTERproject.info)

Bringing Everyone Together To Enhance Results

**Improving Federal Grants Management to
Improve Outcomes, Operational Quality,
Transparency**

<https://www.betterproject.info/writing/federal-grants-management-improving-outcomes>

Grants/Coop Agreements Important Government Tool

- **For federal government**

- \$1.1 trillion post-Covid proposed to s/l/t/t govt. 18.5% proposed federal outlay. (7 percent > 2021)
- 5% GDP proposed (4% in 2020)
- Even before Covid 19, **\$765 billion annually in grants** (+ NGOs), 30 - 40 percent > contracts every year for preceding 5 years!
- Leverage additional in-kind, financial investment
- ~ **1700 grant programs**

- **States, locals, non-profits**

- State spending/revenues: fed govt funds 14 % spending 2020 (NASBO); 32% revenue (Urban 2018)
- Locals: feds fund 4% local revenue (Urban 2018)
- Non-profits: **32% revenues from government grants & contracts**
(<https://www.nonprofitimpactmatters.org/site/assets/files/1/nonprofit-impact-matters-sept-2019-1.pdf>)

Therefore, important to manage wisely!

- **What does that mean?** Report, 2 companion white papers:
 - **Improving Federal Grants Management – Outcomes, Operational Quality, Transparency**
 - <https://www.betterproject.info/writing/federal-grants-management-improving-outcomes>
- Suggest ways for grantors and grant recipients to move beyond mindset that too often focuses on compliance, moving money, and avoiding problems to one that encourages continuous improvement on 3 dimensions.
- Content:
 - Framework
 - Specific recommendations for grant programs, agencies, cross-agency
 - Examples ... but only a beginning

Federal Grants Management – *IMPROVE!*

Improve Outcomes – *First and Foremost!*

Improve Operational Quality

- Service – process quality, but also and especially knowledge finding, building, sharing
- Stewardship – cost-effectiveness, risk management, fair mgt.

Improve Transparency. Communicate successfully, fairly, efficiently to:

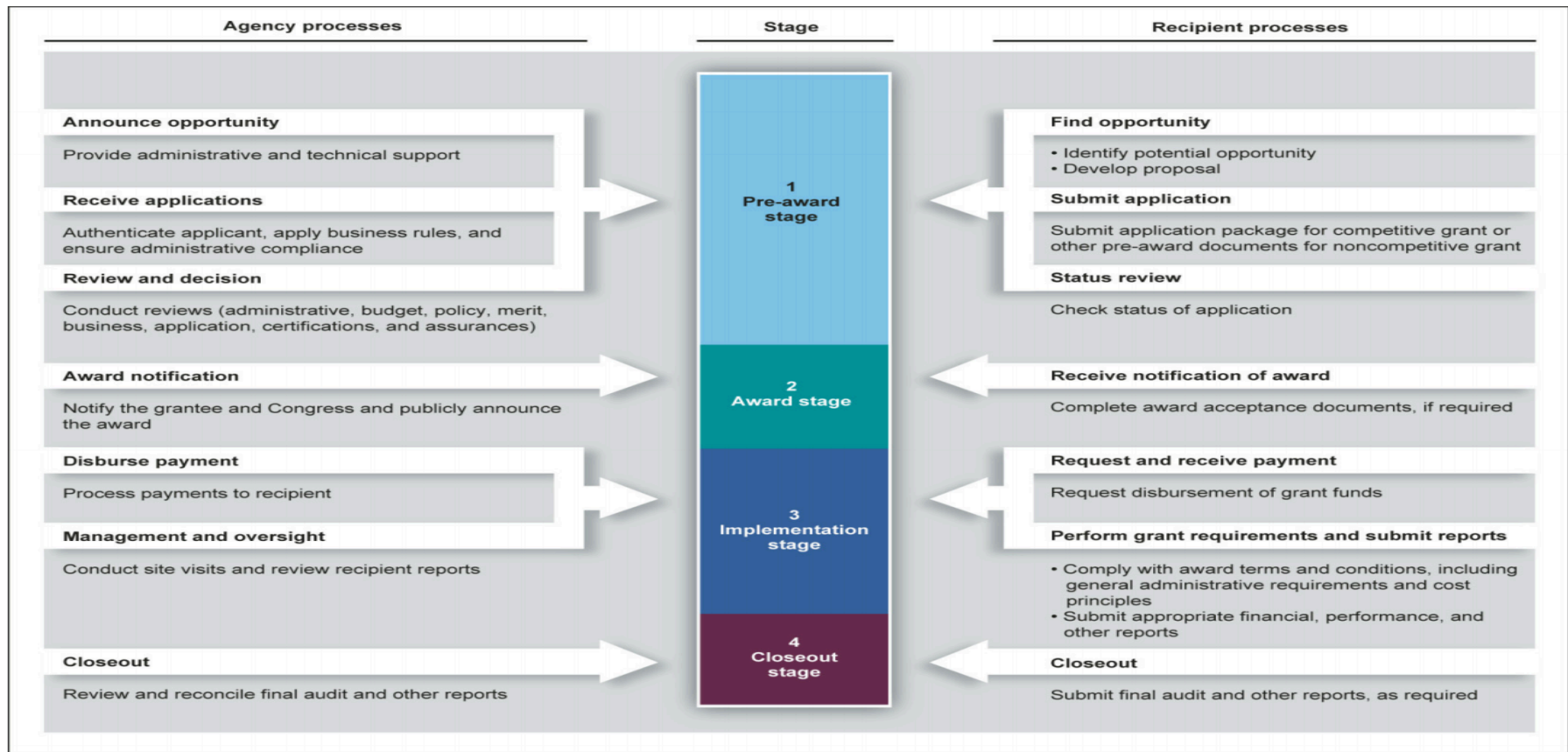
- Improve outcomes & operational quality
- Strengthen accountability – mutual, democratic, performance
- Build understanding of and trust in government

Manage Grants to *Improve Outcomes First and Foremost*

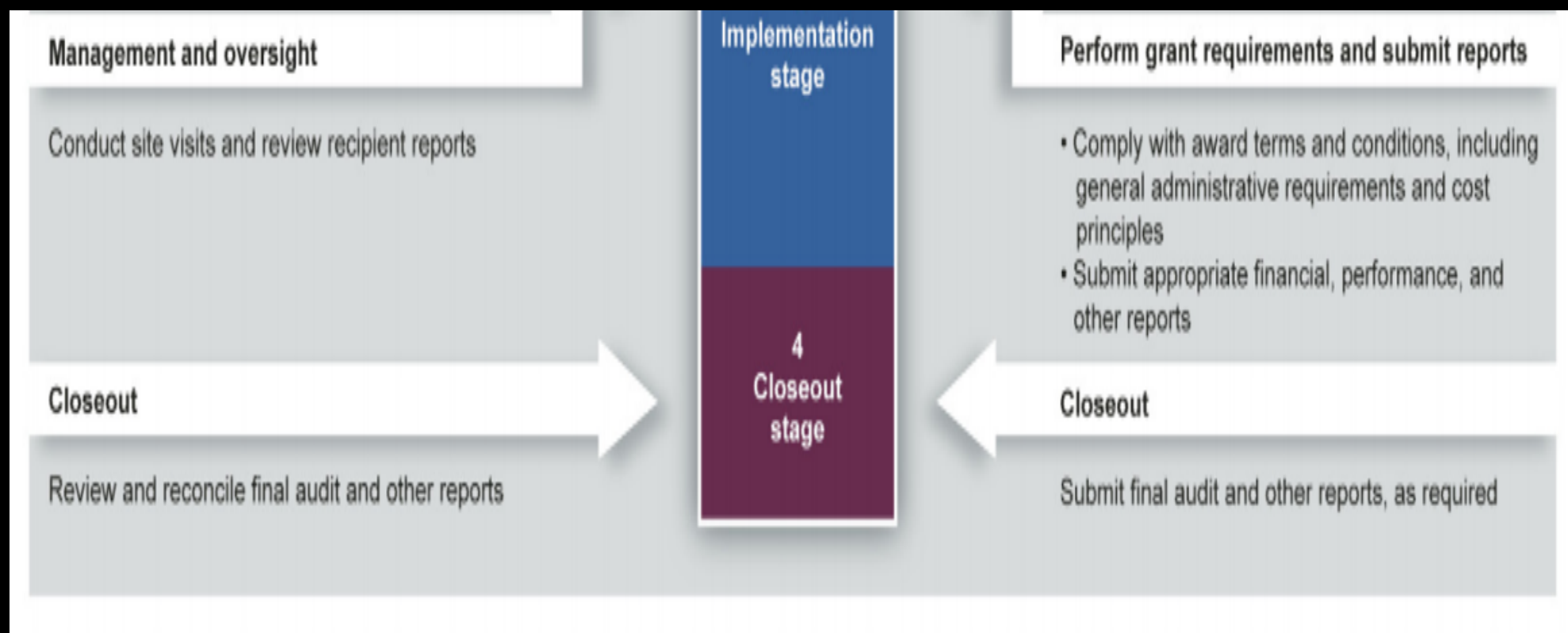
- Easy to say, but hard to do
 - Lack of clarity about outcome objectives and responsibility for outcome improvement
 - Difficulty finding and sharing relevant data
 - Emphasis imbalance: oversight infrastructure overwhelms insight-generation & sharing (R&D survey: 40+% time on administrative matters)
- Fortunately, technology, data & analytic advances create unprecedented opportunities for outcome improvement but changes needed to rebalance as called for by grants CAP goal and Grants Playbook ...

Emphasis on compliance and money movement not surprising given grant Life Cycle Charts, eg., GAO's ...

Figure 1: Grant Life Cycle for Federal Grant-Making Agencies and Grant Recipients



Missing: insight generation to inform focus & find ways to improve + action/info to increase uptake of better practices, reduce use of less good ones (note words – oversight, review reports, comply, submit)



Contrast phases, language in State Dept doc Grants Playbook id'ed



(A cautionary note: re over-focusing on “meeting” goals: Strong evidence that setting a few stretch targets lead to better performance so want progress on goals, but if meet them all, not tapping the power of stretch target. Consider a Covid July 4 goal.)

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Program-Design-and-Performance-Management-Toolkit.pdf>

Areas of Opportunity for Improvement

- ?'s grant programs, grantees, policy makers ask
 - Where to focus and how to improve
 - What works, what works better, and situational differences affecting effectiveness
- Data, analytics, and well-designed trials
- People – roles, responsibilities, skills
- Communication & community – data viz., communication platforms, mobile tech, continuous learning and improvement communities
- Processes and routines – connect people with each other & w/ relevant evidence to understand evidence, decide next steps
- Accountability expectations and incentive structures – getting them right

TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES, START WITH CLEAR OUTCOME OBJECTIVES: “BIDEN-HARRIS IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES”

- **Covid 19**
- **Climate**
- **Racial equity**
- **Economy**
- **Health Care**
- **Immigration**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/>

as of May 12, 2021

Next: Cascade high-level outcomes objectives to strategies and strategy objectives. US Covid “strategy map”

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/covid-19/>

- Ensure all Americans have access to regular, reliable, and free testing.
- Fix personal protective equipment (PPE) problems for good.
- Provide clear, consistent, evidence-based guidance for how communities should navigate the pandemic – and the resources for schools, small businesses, and families to make it through.
- Plan for the effective, equitable distribution of treatments and vaccines — because development isn’t enough if they aren’t effectively distributed.
- Protect older Americans and others at high risk.
- Rebuild and expand defenses to predict, prevent, and mitigate pandemic threats, including those coming from China.
- Implement mask mandates nationwide by working with governors and mayors and by asking the American people to do what they do best: step up in a time of crisis.

To Improve Outcomes:

Find, Build, Share, Use Evidence

- What is evidence?
 - Data analyses, not just evaluation
 - Evaluation not to find and fund what works but what works and what works better, situational differences affecting effectiveness, lessons from failed trials as well as areas for focus
- What to use evidence for?
 - Inform where to focus both for action and for knowledge building
 - Find ways to improve
 - Positive outliers. Moneyball players” outperforming peers from which to learn or to hire.
 - Other analyses – e.g., correlation, causal factors, clusters, unexpected change, anomalies, outliers.
 - Well-designed trials – RCTs, trials integrated into operations. (Structure of collected data matters!)
 - *Iterative, integrating evidence into operations as well as strategy selection*
 - Increase use of better practice/products/providers. Reduce use of less good ones.
 - *Find, build, share, use evidence about successful knowledge diffusion and uptake practices within and across programs*

Inform where to focus – Mid-Atlantic StatNet

Fairfax County COVID-19 Vulnerability Index

A Story Map



Background

COVID-19 Vulnerability Index

Socioeconomic Status

Household Composition and Disability

Race/Ethnicity and Language

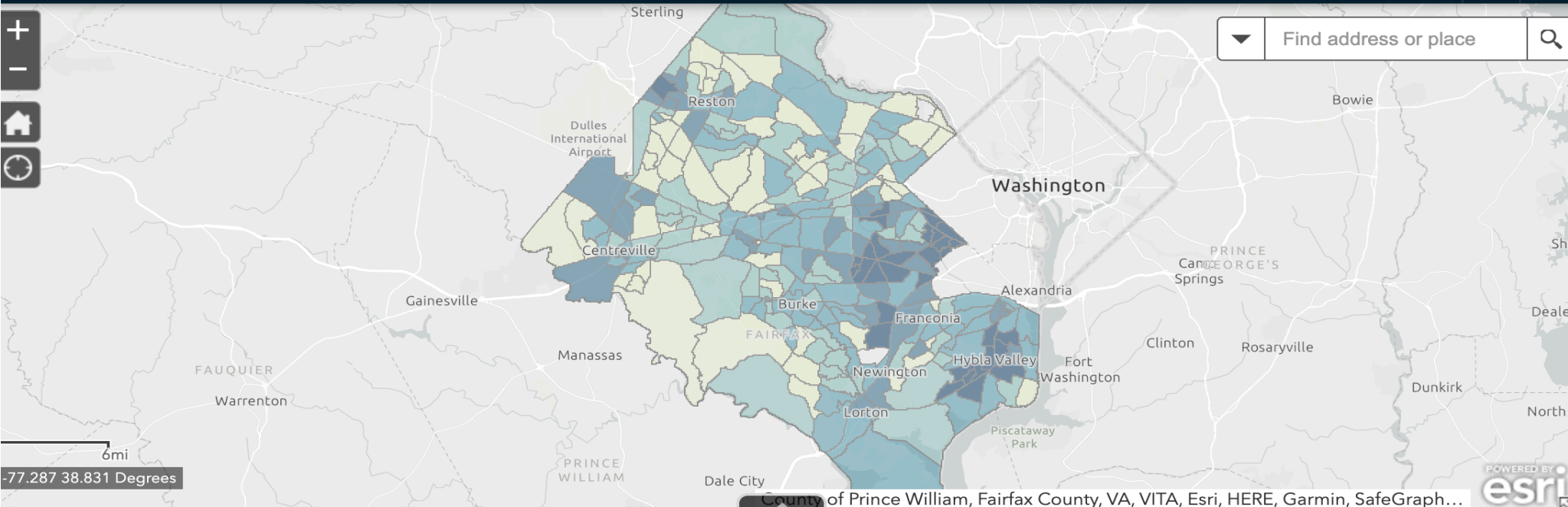


COVID-19 Vulnerability Index



Find address or place

6mi
-77.287 38.831 Degrees



Inform where to focus and find ways to improve – Johns Hopkins

JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY & MEDICINE

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Tracking Home

Data Visualizations ^

Global Map

U.S. Map

Data in Motion

Tracking FAQ

Tracking Critical Data



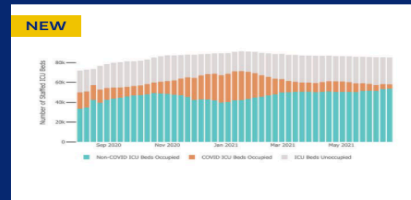
Track how the novel coronavirus is spreading around the globe with up-to-date visuals that give context to the data collected on Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 map.



THE SEARCH FOR COVID-19 VARIANTS

Sequencing the genome of SARS-CoV-2 allows scientists to identify emerging variants

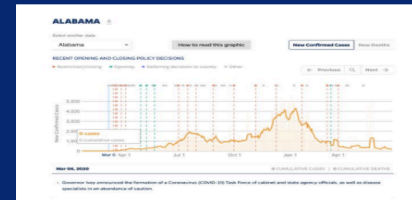
Variant surveillance helps determine if emerging mutations are rendering the virus more contagious or resistant to existing vaccines and medicines.



WEEKLY HOSPITALIZATION TRENDS

What is the trend in COVID-19 related hospitalizations?

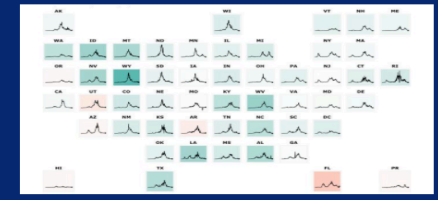
A look at the 7-day trend in overall and Covid-19-specific hospitalization occupancy data



STATE TIMELINE

Timeline of COVID-19 policies, cases, and deaths in your state

A look at how social distancing measures may have influenced trends in COVID-19 cases and deaths



NEW CASES OF COVID-19 IN US STATES

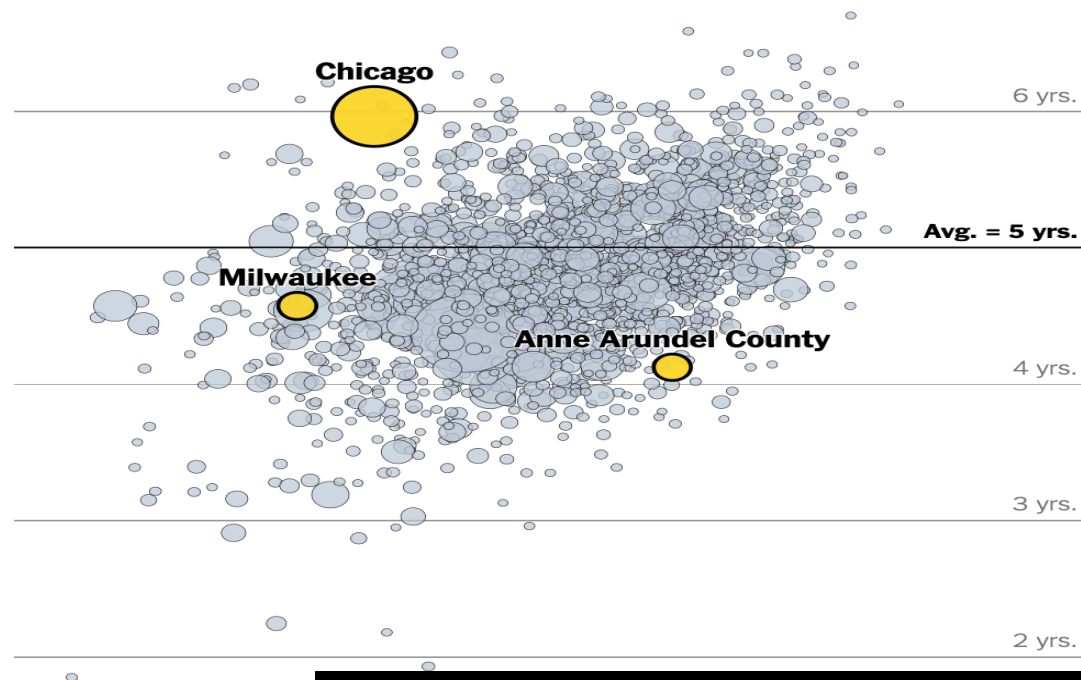
Have states flattened the curve?

See if new cases are rising or declining as states reopen.

Inform where to focus and find ways to improve – positive outlier search (ED and Stanford Ed Oppty Project)

THE UPSHOT | How Effective Is Your School District? A New Measure Shows Where Students Learn the Most

Change in test scores between 3rd grade and 8th grade



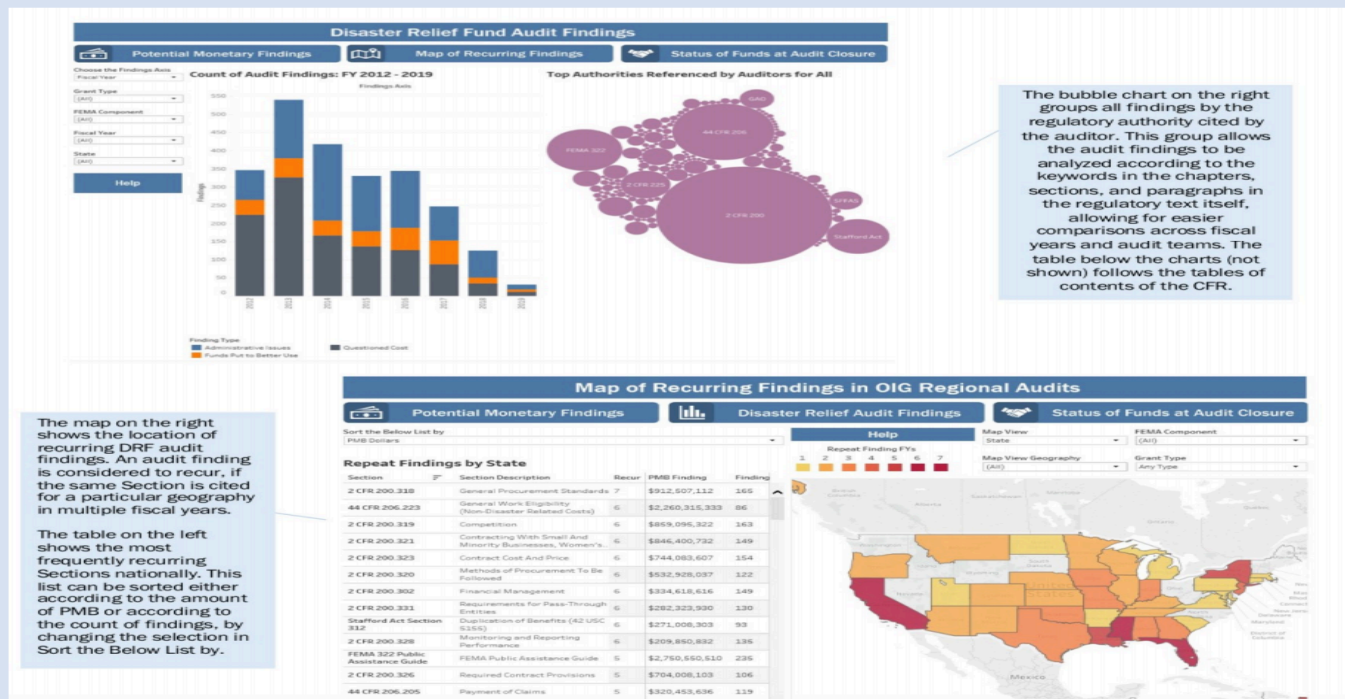
← Poorer districts

Add your school district to

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/05/upshot/a-better-way-to-compare-public-schools.html>

Evidence not just to improve outcomes. Also to improve operational quality within/across grant programs

Figure 1: Example of How FEMA Presents Analyses Graphically



Systematically code, analyze, and communicate monitoring & audit info to reduce non-compliance problems.

Confirm compliance requirements align with real-world risks)

Source: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration (2020, January 23). "Compliance Dashboard." Presented at National Academy of Public Administration Grants Management Symposium. Retrieved from: https://napawash.org/uploads/FEMA_COD_Handout.pdf.

Improve Transparency.

Communicate successfully, fairly, efficiently to:
Improve outcomes & operational quality

- Nominate, illuminate, motivate, allocate, stimulate innovation, enlist & engage, inform choice
- Return data to data suppliers with value added through analyses
- *Communicate evidence successfully in fair and cost-effective ways*

Strengthen accountability

- Mutual – between grant program and grant recipient re goals and who will do what when + with other goal allies
- Democratic – support democratic discussion and decision-making about goals, measurement, strategies
- Performance – not for making all targets or outperforming others, but for managing to make progress on outcome objectives informed by evidence in fair, cost-effective ways while managing risks wisely

Build understanding of and trust in government

Communicate to Build Understanding of and Trust in Government + Inform Focus

NOFO linked to action plan indicating next steps plus narrative, visualization of past progress showing likely contributing government actions

Figure 1: Lead Poisoning Prevention Policies Impact Mean Blood Levels among Children in the U.S., 1972-2012

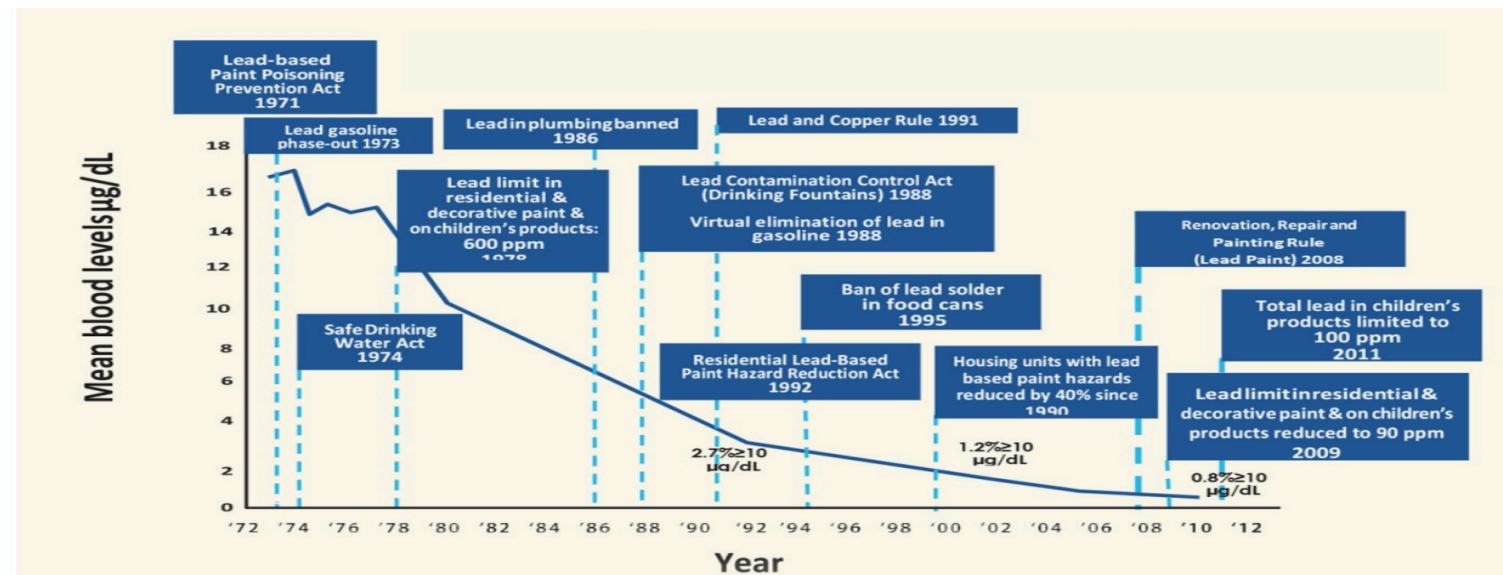
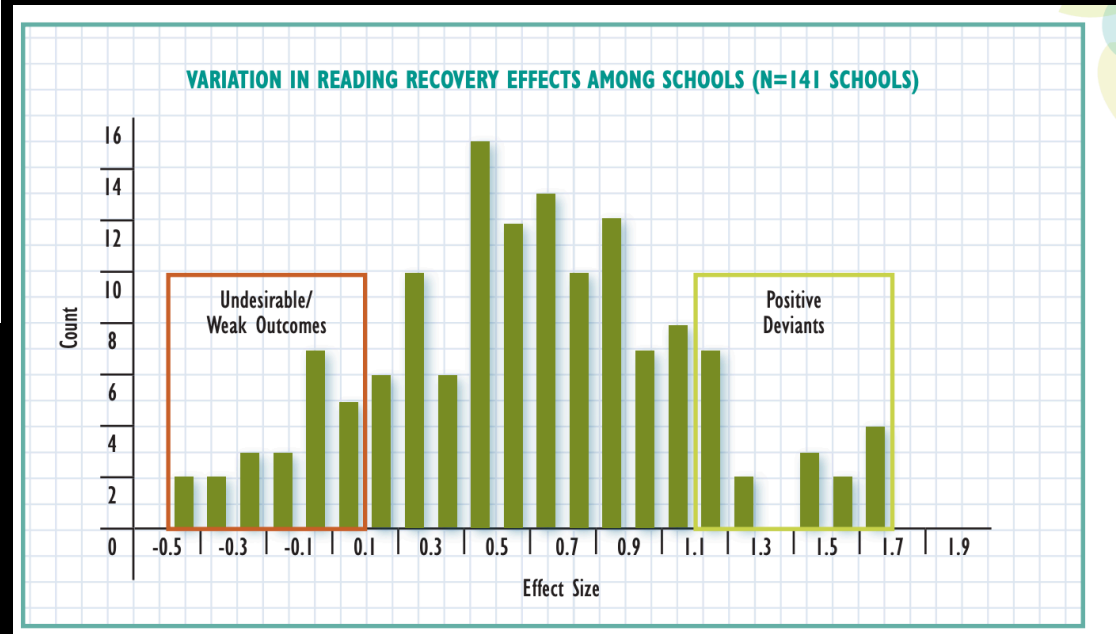
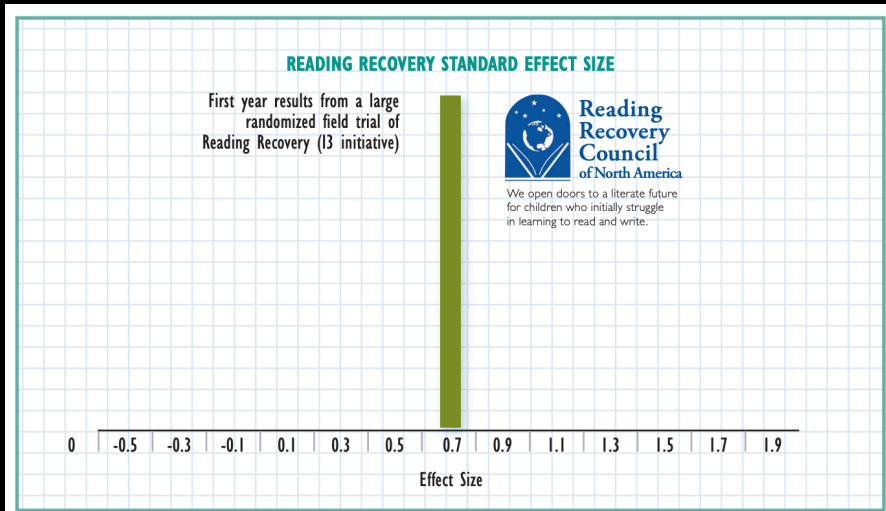


Figure 1: Source - Adapted from https://ptfceph.niehs.nih.gov/features/assets/files/key_federal_programs_to_reduce_childhood_lead_exposures_and_eliminate_associated_health_impacts/presidents_508.pdf and Brown MJ and Falk H. Toolkit for establishing laws to control the use of lead paint. Module C.iii. — Conducting blood lead prevalence studies. Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (2017)

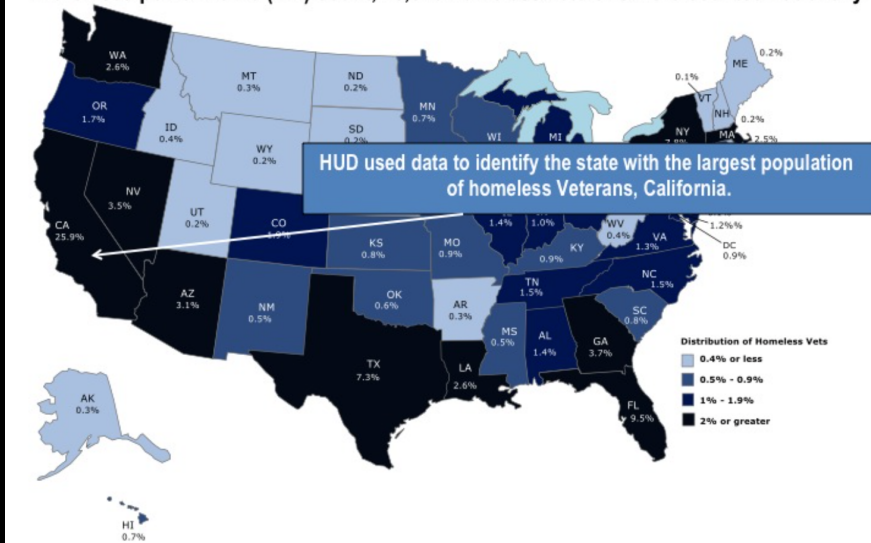
Find, build, and share evidence about what and how to communicate evidence for accurate interpretation and appropriate application



HUDStat Reducing Veteran's Homelessness

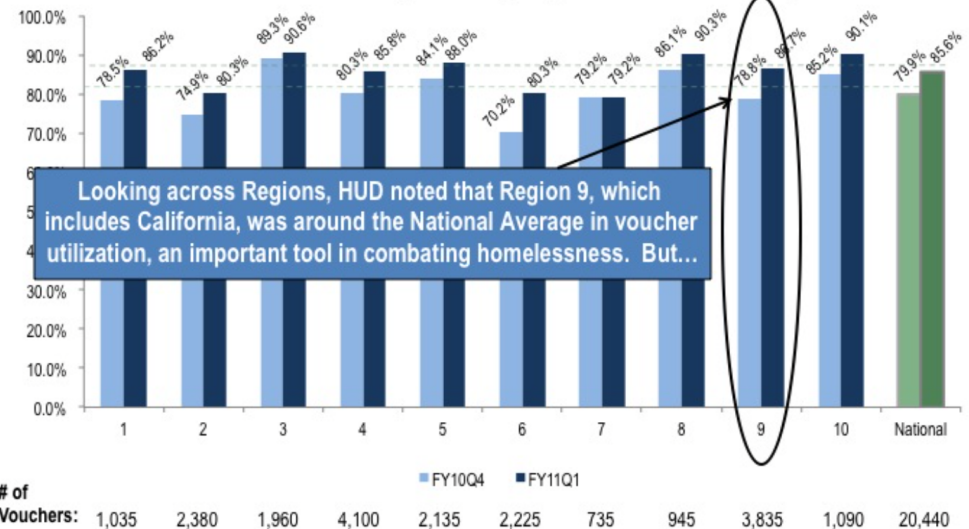
Using Data to Understand the Problem to be Solved: Where are these homeless veterans located?

In the 2009 point-in-time (PIT) count, 75,610 homeless veterans were counted nationally.



Voucher Utilization Drill-Down: In order to identify variations in performance, we spend a lot of time looking at the data by geography.

Voucher Utilization by HUD Region (FY08 & FY09 Vouchers)

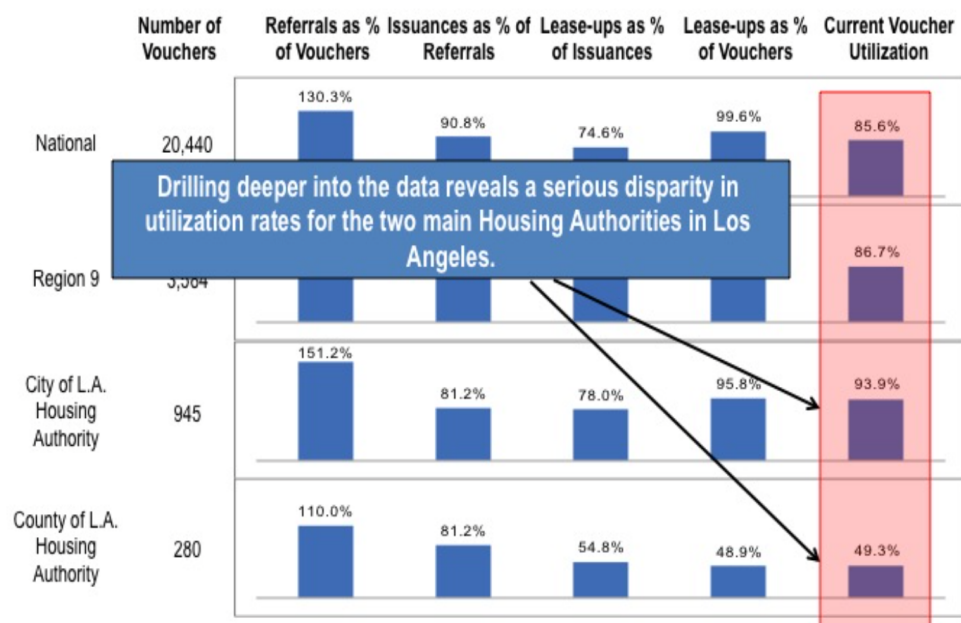


Sharing analyses and insights to inform central office and field decisions. Build and enlist everyone's experience and expertise.

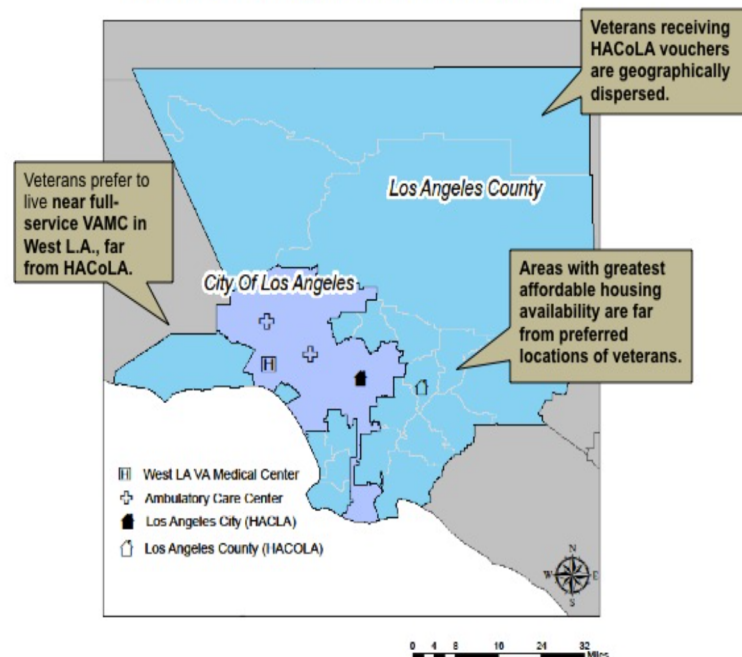
Voucher Utilization Drill-Down: Since California has the highest concentration of homeless Vets nationwide, we drilled down even further.

Voucher Utilization Drill-Down: Having identified performance issues in LA, HUD and VA convened a series of discussions with local partners.

Cumulative Actions on FY08-FY09 VASH Vouchers (As of January 2011)

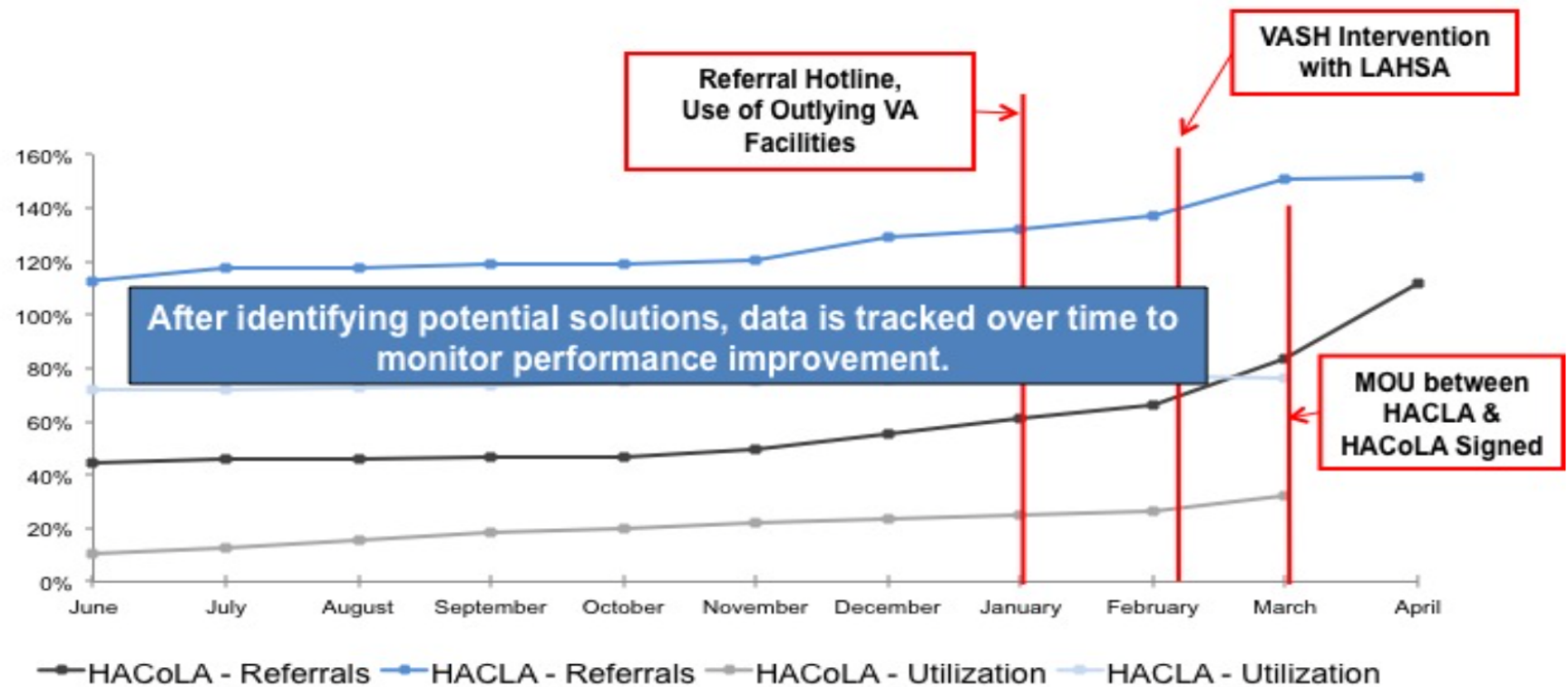


VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System



Voucher Utilization Drill-Down: Following a series of interventions, the data is now being tracked to measure and evaluate the impact.

Referrals and Utilization as % of Combined FY08-FY10 VASH Awards



HudStat: What It Is? What It Is Not?

- **What HUDStat IS...**

- Review of progress toward goals, understanding where problems exist, and using collective knowledge to address these issues early.
- Sharing local successes and best practices in order to replicate what works.
- Opportunity to collaborate in order to achieve goals.
- Focuses on “places” as much as “programs”.
- Prompts relentless focus on improving data quality and problem-solving.

- **What it IS NOT...**

- A “show-and-tell” to the HUD Secretary that avoids the issues.
- Focused **ONLY** on what is not on track or not working.
- Programmatic focused discussion on how each program is doing individually, without looking at how programs interact locally.
- A process that is finished after an individual HUDStat session.

- **HUDStat Meeting Principles:**

- Understand the data is not perfect but will evolve over time. It gives us the basis for the discussion.
- Maintain environment of open and honest dialogue;; even with less than perfect results.
- Practice ‘no surprises’ with Program Offices and the Support Operations.
- Limit “show and tell” and expand on problem solving using the collective wisdom and experience in the meeting.
- Maintain a spirit of collaboration while not shying away from issues.

USERS

***Multiple
measures for
multiple uses
(safety,
fairness, health,
informed
choice, public
confidence,
plus...)***

- **EMPLOYEES, DELIVERY PARTNERS**
- **BOSS**
- **CURRENT AND POTENTIAL GOAL ALLIES**
- **POLICY MAKERS** (*What do they want to know? What do you want them to know? Where and when do they want to get it?*)
- **THOSE SERVED/BENEFITED**
- **REGULATED PARTIES**
- **FUNDERS**
- **PUBLIC**
- **PEERS** (benchmarking & possible collaboration)
- **OTHERS?**

Users and uses:

**For goals,
measurement
, analyses,
trial findings
to be used,
need to
communicate
them
successfully**

- To whom
- When
 - Time of use
- Where
 - Point of use
- What to communicate
 - Outcomes – Goals or not? Why selected? Strategies and why? Progress & Problems? Planned next steps? Where progress being made and where it is not? Who making progress? Who doing better?
 - Resources: demand vs. supply, resources for strategies
 - Context
- How to communicate
 - Date-reviewing decision-making routine
 - Strat plans and performance reports but if don't talk about it, just paper exercise someone else produces
 - On the wall
 - On the website
 - Send/receive/static
 - Synchronous/asynchronous
 - Static/dynamic
 - Other?

Recs: what and how data are collected, shared, analyzed, used

- Data structure to facilitate learning, improvement, community
 - Timing, timelines, temporal and geographic frequency
 - Granularity/units of analyses
- More data analytic and communication capacity needed
 - Within and across grant programs and agencies
 - For shared outcomes and common processes
- Data standards for SAM.gov, USASpending, Performance.gov, etc.
 - Outcome categories to facilitate collaboration around outcomes, strengthen democratic and performance accountability, build public understanding
 - Goal types and grant mechanism categories to build and share knowledge about effective grant practices
 - Operational risk categories to manage risk, bias, cost-effectiveness and learn across programs
 - Add unique grant program identifiers to outcome data systems, evidence repositories, learning agendas
- More capacity needed to find, build, and share knowledge about how to communicate effectively, efficiently, and equitably to the field, policy makers, others

Rec: Tap data viz, shared platforms and research

- *Within and across*
 - Individual grant programs
 - Decide where to focus within grant program's outcome goals
 - Improve outcomes
 - Enlist and engage support
 - Across grant programs
 - Coordinate and learn on shared outcome objectives, beneficiaries
 - Share analytic and visualization methods
 - Find, build, share evidence about evidence repositories, T/TA, other uptake promoting methods sortable by audience and goal type
- Grants Playbook and guidance evolution – v. 2 and beyond?
 - Find and share examples + how-to's
 - Evolved guidance and playbook formats using user-centered design principles
- Share platforms - NASA using PubMed, ClinicalTrials.gov, dynamic learning agendas

Manage Grants to Improve Outcomes and Op. Qual.

People, Accountability, Incentives

- People – evolving roles for federal officials and grant recipients, networks
 - Outcome brokers and outcome teams
 - Problem solvers and opportunity pursuers
 - *Identify and network outcome brokers and others working on outcomes and similar process improvement*
- Communication (transparency) and community
 - Identify users and uses
 - “Fuel” the front line
 - Continuous-learning-and-improvement communities organized around outcomes. Nurture and create where needed.
 - Find, build, share, and use evidence to boost use of shared evidence.
- Evidence-informed accountability expectations and incentive structures to:
 - Pay attention to outcome & other improvement
 - Work across silos to serve people, fix problems, advance opportunities
 - CAUTION reusing incentives for meeting goals, relative rank

Questions? Concerns? Suggestions?

Action! Leadership!

If you want to contact me, do so at:

BETTERproject.info