

# Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation M&E Landscape

October 2015



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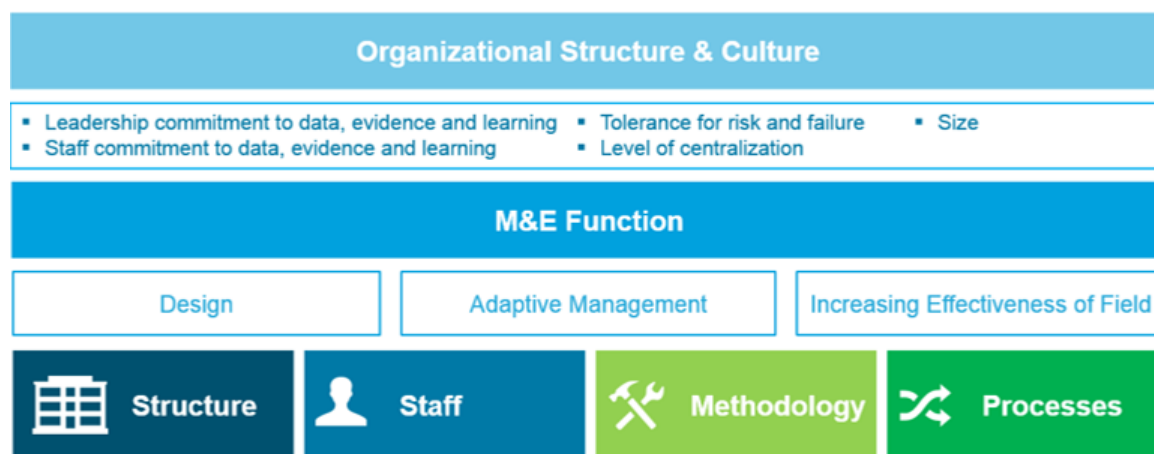
# Introduction

To understand best and next practice in measurement and evaluation (M&E) in philanthropy, we interviewed and conducted research on more than 40 social sector and governmental organizations. We talked with M&E leaders at foundations and other organizations considered to be high-performing in M&E, as well as with field specialists with experience across a number of organizations or deep expertise in relevant areas. Our research focused on four central categories of M&E design: structure, staff, methodology and processes.

Through our research, we uncovered several design characteristics that seem common to high-performing M&E units. These include: an M&E leader with high positional authority and broad expertise, methodological diversity, a focus on learning, and an evaluation focus beyond individual grants.

We also found a number of design characteristics for which there is no one-size best-in-class M&E design. Instead, the aim should be to design an M&E unit that is the right fit for the organization in terms of purpose (function) and in keeping with organizational structure and culture. Therefore, to determine the best design for M&E within an organization, it is critical for that organization to be clear on its measurement purpose and to be clear-eyed on its culture.

We can think about the relevant elements for M&E design as follows:



It should be noted that the structural, cultural and functional components are not fixed, and that a virtuous circle can be created. An organization that's working to strengthen its M&E practice over time can add or deepen functional coverage after proving early value to program staff. Culture is also not static, and leaders can shift to focus on better aligning incentives, for example, in the service of a stronger M&E system.

After discussing organizational structure and culture, M&E function and “must-have” characteristics, this document details the customizable elements for structure, staff, methodology and processes. For each, we define the design decision(s) to be made, questions to ask to help make the design decision, and tradeoffs to consider. Examples are also provided.

# Organizational Structure & Culture



Throughout our interviews, we heard repeatedly about the importance of taking culture into consideration in the design of a best-practice M&E unit. The sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit elements of organizational structure & culture can provide opportunities for transformation, create barriers to effective implementation, and affect how competing priorities are decided.

## Key Aspects of Organizational Structure and Culture for M&E Design:

### Leadership commitment to data, evidence, and learning

- An evaluative focus can be difficult and uncomfortable for program staff; learning activities can require time from busy program staff
- Leadership support and board clarity around expectations is a necessary pre-condition for the successful implementation of organizational M&E priorities

### Staff skill & commitment to data, evidence, and learning

- The level of knowledge and experience staff have around M&E will affect how many of the M&E functions can be handled by program staff as opposed to M&E specialists
- Even when staff have M&E skills, trade-offs of time may lead to different preferences among program staff about how much M&E activity they want to "own"

### Tolerance for risk and failure

- The level of organizational acceptance of risk and failure has implications for both resistance to more evaluative measures and openness to learning for improvement
- Incentives can be structured so that there are more or less negative consequences associated with "bad" outcomes, and so that learning from failure is or is not rewarded

### Level of centralization

- The autonomy of program areas and the authority of program leaders affect how M&E staff interact with program staff and how M&E priorities are implemented at the program level
- The distinctiveness of program areas also impacts how uniform processes, tools and guidelines can and should be

### Size

- Size as reflected in organizational staff and funding levels affects overall amount and complexity of M&E work; also includes constraints on additional hiring and the use of outsourcing

# M&E Function



While the roots of foundation M&E lie in grantee evaluations, M&E units now cover a much broader range of functions. This range has expanded as organizations have looked for better ways to get value from their data, more closely linking M&E efforts to strategic and organizational decision making, and interjecting M&E activities at earlier points in a project life cycle.

There are three categories of M&E functions: Design, Adaptive Management, and Increasing Effectiveness of Field.

## Categories of M&E Functions

| Design  | Adaptive Management  | Increasing Effectiveness of Field   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Involves efforts to support initial program and initiative development, as well as to make sure that foundation-wide quality standards are in place. This includes research for new programs and initiatives, help developing an evaluative mindset at the onset of programs and initiatives, and the creation of standards and resources</i>  | <i>Includes the ongoing M&amp;E iterations that occur throughout a project lifecycle. This includes monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as efforts to promote organizational learning</i>  | <i>Relates to efforts to promote high M&amp;E skills &amp; standards and more effective use of data in the field of philanthropy broadly. This is accomplished through capacity building efforts and the creation of public data goods.</i>   |
| <b>Program &amp; Initiative Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field scans, literature reviews and trend spotting for strategy and initiative development</li> <li>Information gathering for idea testing</li> <li>Assistance with strategy development to promote an evidence-based orientation and clarity of goals</li> <li>Development of Theories of Change and M&amp;E plans</li> </ul> <b>Standards &amp; Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting &amp; evaluation guidelines and templates</li> <li>Foundation-wide quality standards</li> <li>Taxonomy/Common language</li> <li>M&amp;E tools</li> <li>M&amp;E resources</li> </ul> | <b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process monitoring</li> <li>Formative evaluation</li> <li>Developmental evaluation</li> <li>Impact evaluation</li> <li>Management of external evaluations</li> </ul> <b>Organizational Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes promoting ongoing improvement and evidence-based decision making throughout project lifecycles</li> <li>Technical support &amp; coaching</li> <li>Design &amp; facilitation of learning processes and events</li> <li>Knowledge management</li> </ul> | <b>Capacity Building</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grantee measurement &amp; evaluation capacity-building</li> <li>Advancing evidence-based philanthropy</li> <li>Supporting aligned action on M&amp;E</li> <li>Data infrastructure development</li> <li>Constituent voice infrastructure development</li> </ul> <b>Public Data Goods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Big data and data analytics development</li> <li>Research and reports for external use</li> <li>Field-level scorecards</li> </ul> |

# Must-Have Characteristics

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Overview

Some best practices appear to hold across different organizational structure, culture and functional configurations. These are must-have characteristics. For each characteristic one can ask: what does it take to reach the desired state?



**STAFF:**  
AUTHORITY  
OF THE M&E  
LEADER



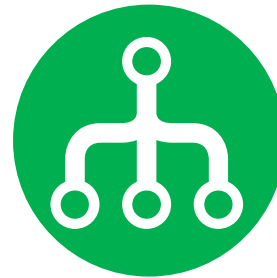
**STAFF:**  
M&E LEADERSHIP  
SKILLS



**METHODOLOGY:**  
METHODOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY



**PROCESSES:**  
FOCUS ON  
LEARNING



**PROCESSES:**  
M&E FOCUS BEYOND  
INDIVIDUAL GRANTS

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Staff: Authority of the M&E Leader



### OVERVIEW

Respect for and inclusion of M&E practices throughout the organization are sustained by having an M&E leader with substantial authority in the organization. This can be accomplished through formal authority that broadly matches that of program leaders, or through reporting lines (e.g. to the CEO).

Formal authority matters for both signaling and decision-making reasons, and having the M&E head be part of the leadership team is helpful. A leadership position signals to the staff that M&E is a high priority for the organization. Being part of key organizational decision making also helps keep M&E considerations and perspectives front and center at the organization. The most effective M&E leads have both positional authority and significant personal leadership qualities.

### CASE EXAMPLE: WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

Historically:

- Program staff oversaw the evaluations
- There was only one M&E person
- M&E wasn't culturally infused throughout the organization

As part of a shift to a greater strategic focus for M&E, the head now reports directly to the executive director and is a peer to the program directors. The M&E team went from 1 to 7 people in 5 years.

Not only is the role on the executive team a sign of the CEO's commitment to M&E, but also, authority for M&E comes from many places, which are mutually reinforcing:

- People with the right content knowledge and skillsets
- A Board and Executive Director that support M&E
- A function that plays a prominent role in decision-making
- Demonstration of value as an evidence-driven thought partner and internal consultant

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Staff: M&E Leadership Skills



### OVERVIEW

Narrow methodological expertise alone is insufficient for M&E leadership. Regardless of the range of specific functions the M&E unit serves, leading an M&E unit requires the ability to translate technical information, support the implications of sometimes uncomfortable results, and work effectively with staff across the organization.

Strong soft skills are essential to play this translational role and to build trust and support for M&E activities throughout the program areas. There is no single formula for personal leadership. However, two qualities seem particularly useful: understanding of the challenges of program staff and an understanding of a broad set of methods and approaches to help weigh evaluation choices.

### CASE EXAMPLE: EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION

In a recent Leap of Reason report, the Director of Measurement & Evaluation at Edna McConnell Clark Foundation said the following about skills needed for an evaluation:

“When you’re hiring for an Evaluation Director, I’ve often been told you want to consider EQ as much as IQ. Evaluation and quality improvement can lead to change management, and when you’re hiring, be sure to keep a lookout for people that are good with people. It’s possible to bring on a team that’s fantastic with data, but the leader should be able to interpret, explain, and make all the information understandable.”

– Gabriel Rhoads, Director of Evaluation and Learning at Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Edna McConnell Clark Foundation’s Chief Program & Strategy Officer hired internally out of programs to fill the Director of Evaluation & Learning position.

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Methodology: Methodological Diversity



### OVERVIEW

The M&E leaders in the field have moved away from a single-minded focus on one gold standard for research (e.g. randomized controlled trials). Instead, they employ a range of methodologies and work to match levels of evidence to need, including randomized controlled trials when looking to scale models or where appropriate for a policy audience. Even organizations strongly identified with randomized controlled trials are emphasizing smaller, more lightweight and mixed methods (e.g. quant. and qual. methods) as well.

#### CASE EXAMPLE: BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION FIT TO PURPOSE APPROACH

Gates avoids a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation because they want their evaluation efforts to be designed for a specific purpose and for specific intended users. This approach to evaluation design, which they call *fit to purpose*, has **THREE ELEMENTS**:

1. It allows for a range of methods, including qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, retrospective and prospective designs, experimentation, theory-based evaluation, and systems-based approaches.
2. It requires their teams, outside evaluators, and partners to be rigorous about the inferences they make and explicit about the assumptions they use to draw conclusions.
3. It requires their teams and partners to consider evaluation evidence in the context of action so the evaluation efforts produce findings that can be acted on rather than information that is merely nice to know.

#### CASE EXAMPLE: WILLIAM & FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION & MULTIPLE METHODS

“Most strong evaluations use multiple methods to collect and analyze data. This process of triangulation allows one method to complement the weaknesses of another. For example, randomized experiments can determine whether a certain outcome can be attributed to an intervention. But complementary qualitative methods are also needed to answer questions about how and why an intervention did or didn’t work—questions that are central to replication. Thus, as part of early planning, it is ideal to select methods that match evaluation questions.”

– Hewlett Foundation Evaluation Principles and Practices

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Processes: Focus on Learning



### OVERVIEW

The field of M&E in philanthropy has been moving for the past several years toward a greater focus on organizational and strategic learning, and a focus on learning is now firmly rooted in the philosophy and practice of best-in-class M&E units. This movement stems from earlier disappointment with M&E outcomes, where an emphasis on summative evaluation didn't enable a timely integration of findings into program activities and the organization more generally.

As a result, best-in-class M&E programs have moved beyond data generation for evaluative purposes to include the creation and strengthening of feedback loops between information and decision making. These programs are also developing activities that promote the dissemination of knowledge throughout the organization. This focus on learning can take many forms and much experimentation is occurring. A blueprint for the ideal M&E learning system has yet to be developed. What is clear is that learning as an M&E practice is driving efforts for rapid cycle learning, continuous improvement and evidence-based decision making in support of world-class program development inside the organization.

### CASE EXAMPLE: DAVID & LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

For Packard's Measurement, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) team: "Learning is the use of data and insights from a variety of information-gathering approaches—including monitoring and evaluation—to inform strategy and decision-making."

The Foundation has developed a set of five guiding principles for their MEL efforts, many of which focus on learning:

1. **CONTINUOUSLY LEARN AND ADAPT:** When developing strategies, develop clear and measurable goals and build in feedback loops for tracking progress on those goals.
2. **LEARN IN PARTNERSHIP:** Listen closely and learn in partnership with grantees, funders, constituents and other stakeholders. Engage partners and grantees, in monitoring, evaluation, and learning design and implementation.
3. **INFORM OUR DECISIONS WITH MULTIPLE INPUTS:** Program staff listen closely to grantees and partners in the field and tap into a variety of inputs, qualitative and quantitative, in order to make well-reasoned decisions to help drive impact.
4. **CULTIVATE CURIOSITY:** Prioritize learning and experimentation within and across programs, with Trustees and with partners in the field. In practice this means creating intentional spaces for individual and group learning, with grantees and other leaders in the field, and within the Foundation.
5. **SHARE LEARNING TO AMPLIFY IMPACT:** Seek out strategic opportunities to share learnings, to co-create openly insights with partners, and to use these insights to inform and galvanize change in The Packard Foundation's fields of work.

Source: The Packard Foundation, [Guiding Principles and Practices for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning](#).

# Must-Have Characteristics

## Processes: M&E Focus Beyond Individual Grants



### OVERVIEW

M&E in philanthropy began with the evaluation of grantee programs for compliance purposes, and this was the sole focus for a number of years. Many M&E programs still direct most of their efforts on grantee evaluation. However, with the ultimate usefulness of many summative grantee evaluations called into question and a greater focus on learning in support of organizational & strategic decision making, there is increasing attention to evaluation and learning efforts at the program and strategy level among our high-performing interviewees.

This is combined with stricter thresholds for when to do grantee evaluations. Our interviewees spoke of an attentiveness to organizational priorities and determining when grantee evaluations provided important opportunities to answer key questions for learning and decision making.

The Foundation's focus on evaluations at the strategy level is in keeping with this approach.

### CASE EXAMPLES

- **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:** Does reporting at grantee-level, program-level, and cross-program level for outcomes of a group of RWJF programs with a common goal.
- **David and Lucile Packard Foundation:** Amount of roll-up is dependent on their strategies. Within strategies, Packard tries to do some degree of roll-up from grant and/or portfolio level to strategy-level.
- **Walton Family Foundation:** Each focus area consists of a small number of key initiatives, and each of those initiatives is subdivided into strategies. The goal is to conduct evaluations at each of those levels in each focus area—for individual grants, for each strategy, and for each initiative.
- **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation:** Synthesizes results at the strategy level across multiple evaluations as no single evaluation can indicate if a strategy has been successful or is on track. Intentionally goes beyond grantee-level evaluations to actively reflect on and interpret results in larger strategic contexts.

Source: Brian Quinn, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interview; Diana Searce, Packard Foundation Interview; Marc Holley, Walton Foundation Interview; Fay Twersky, Hewlett Foundation Interview. Hewlett Foundation, [Evaluation Principles and Practices: An Internal Working Paper](#).

# Customizable Elements

# Customizable Elements

## Overview

For some M&E design elements, there is no one best practice; instead, a best-fit approach is needed. The successful M&E units we researched have chosen features that are well suited to their organizational structure, cultural and M&E functional requirements.

### Organizational Structure & Culture

- Leadership commitment to data, evidence and learning
- Staff commitment to data, evidence and learning
- Tolerance for risk and failure
- Level of centralization
- Size

### M&E Function

Design

Adaptive Management

Increasing Effectiveness  
of Field



Structure



Staff



Methodology



Processes

# Structure

# Customizable Elements

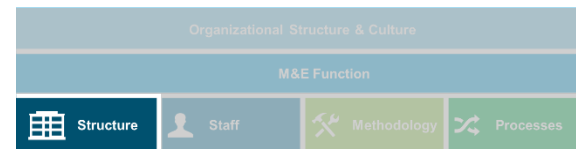
## Structure



1. **Level of Unit Centralization:** Should we use a centralized or partially decentralized M&E model?
2. **Advisory Committee(s):** Should we create an M&E advisory committee?
3. **Resources:** What should we spend on M&E? Who should control the budget?
4. **Evaluative or Consultative Role:** Should the M&E unit have primarily an evaluative or consultative role?

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 1. Level of Unit Centralization (1 of 3)



**DECISION:** Should we use a centralized or partially decentralized M&E model?



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

The following are the different centralization options from our interviews with best-in-class M&E staff:

- **Completely centralized:** All M&E staff work exclusively in the M&E unit
- **Partially decentralized (embedded staff):** There is an M&E unit, but some M&E staff members are also embedded in programs
- **Partially decentralized (delegation to staff):** There is an M&E unit, but as many M&E functions as possible are handled by program staff

| Completely Centralized   | Partially Decentralized (Embedded Staff)   | Partially Decentralized (Delegation to Staff)   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Some organizations, such as the Helmsley Charitable Trust, keep their M&amp;E function completely centralized.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Many organizations, such as the Walton Foundation, Annie E. Casey, and RWJ, use a matrix structure, where M&amp;E is partially centralized with a distributed model and evaluation staff members are also embedded in programs.</li><li>▪ At RWJ, M&amp;E team members act as liaisons where they spend 30% of their time on program-specific work and 70% of their time on cross-program or other central M&amp;E responsibilities.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Some organizations, such as Hewlett Foundation and Cargill Foundation, chose a partially decentralized model in which as many M&amp;E functions as possible are handled by program staff.</li><li>▪ At Cargill, they embed evaluation practices within organization culture and program work. They have a program officer and evaluation officer co-manage the evaluation consultant process, from the RFP to reporting to the Board.</li></ul> |

Source: Marc Holley, Walton Foundation Interview; Debra Joy Perez, Annie E. Casey Foundation Interview; Brian Quinn, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interview; Fay Twersky, Hewlett Foundation Interview; Ted Chen, Cargill Foundation Interview.

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 1. Level of Unit Centralization (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

It is generally helpful when the level of centralization of the M&E function is compatible with the level of centralization of the organization as a whole. If an organization is highly decentralized with a central M&E function, program heads may simply choose to dismiss or not participate in M&E activities. If an organization is highly centralized with decentralized M&E, M&E may not be integrated into top-level prioritization and decision making.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### *Organizational Structure & Culture -- Centralization:*

- How thematically distinct are the organization's programs?
- Are there initiatives that span multiple programs?
- What level of autonomy do program heads have?
- How differently do programs operate in terms of methodology and process?



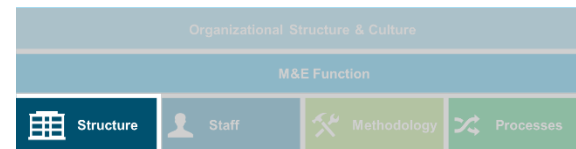
### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of the level of unit centralization chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Centralized   |     | Partially Decentralized (Embedded Staff)  |     | Partially Decentralized (Delegation to Staff)  |
|---|-----|---|-----|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Lessen demands on staff time</li><li>▪ Maintain consistency of standards and skills</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promote knowledge transfer</li><li>▪ Build relationship between M&amp;E and program staff</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promote broad skill development</li><li>▪ Develop buy-in</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promote organization-wide M&amp;E priorities</li></ul>  | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Balance organization- and program-specific priorities</li></ul>                                     | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Promote program-specific priorities</li></ul>                      |

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 1. Level of Unit Centralization (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: WILLIAM & FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

At Hewlett, as much as possible, program staff have responsibility for their M&E and the central team is responsible for cross-organizational work. The Hewlett Foundation laid out the following structure and roles in their “Evaluation Principles & Practices Internal Working Paper”:

#### **Central Evaluation Team:**

- Provide central expertise to review evaluation designs, proposals, and help interpret findings.
- Debrief every evaluation experience with staff, on all relevant lessons, to guard against easy answers or ignoring key findings.

#### **Program and Relevant Operational Staff:** (e.g. in the Communications and IT departments)

- Responsible and accountable for designing, commissioning, and managing evaluations, as well as for using their results.
- Free to organize themselves however they deem most effective to meet standards of quality, relevance, and use. They may use a fully distributed model, with program officers responsible for their own evaluations, or they may designate a team member to lead evaluation efforts.
- Participate (at least one staff member from each program) in a cross-Foundation Evaluation Community of Practice in order to support mutual learning and build shared understanding and skills across the organization.
- Summarize and draw on both monitoring and evaluation data for programs’ annual Budget Memo process and mid-course reviews—providing evidence of what has and has not worked well in a strategy and why.
- Use data analysis to adapt or correct their strategy’s course. In general, program officers will spend 5 to 20 percent of their time designing and managing evaluations and determining how to use the results.
- Effectively manage one significant evaluation at any given time (maybe two, under the right circumstances). This includes proper oversight at each stage, from design through use and sharing of the results.
- Consult with the Foundation’s Communications staff about the best approach for sharing results broadly.

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 2. Advisory Committee(s) (1 of 3)



### ✓ DECISION: Should we create an M&E advisory committee(s)?

Advisory committees can provide access to a wider array of methodological expertise, build credibility for the evaluation practices of the organization and increase the confidence & skill of staff members. They also provide another point of focus on evaluation.

### + OPTIONS & APPROACHES

A report for Packard identified four primary types of evaluation advisory committees, which vary by audience and scope.

|                           | Evaluation Team  | Foundation Management   |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Initiative-Specific Scope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ad-hoc</li><li>Time-limited</li><li>Advise evaluation efforts related to a particular program or initiative</li><li>Members recruited primarily for methodology expertise in particular program area</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ad-hoc</li><li>Time-limited</li><li>Advise management as well as evaluation team on efforts related to a particular program or initiative</li><li>Members recruited to help build consensus, so diversity in representing multiple stakeholders is key</li></ul>  |
| Foundation-Wide Scope     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ongoing</li><li>Advise on evaluation efforts across the entire foundation</li><li>Members recruited from each content area and across methodologies and philosophies to provide as broad a set of advice as possible</li><li>Serve as a peer-review for evaluation efforts</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ongoing</li><li>Advise management as well as evaluation team on foundation-wide issues</li><li>Members recruited from each content area and across methodologies and philosophies to provide as broad a set of advice as possible</li><li>May have secondary focus on staff education, providing information about relevant research in the field</li></ul> |

Other elements that might vary include compensation, involvement of board members, and whether the committee is run by an internal staff person or an external consultant.

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 2. Advisory Committee(s) (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Configuring an advisory committee will depend on how much additional expertise is needed relative to both M&E and program staff members, along with the usefulness of external validation for credibility.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**Organizational Structure & Culture -- Staff skill and leadership commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- Is there demand from program staff for additional measurement, evaluation and learning assistance?
- Is high methodological credibility important for internal or external audiences?

**Other Design Elements -- M&E Staff numbers and skills:**

- Does the organization have enough M&E staff to meet program and organizational needs?
- What is the breadth of M&E staff's methodological expertise?
- What is the level of M&E staff knowledge about program-specific methodological issues?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of whether an advisory committee is chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Committee(s)   | No Committee(s)  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Get access to a wide array of methodological expertise and latest field knowledge</li><li>▪ Gain credibility for and confidence in evaluation practices</li><li>▪ Have external accountability</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Avoid spending time and resources to manage committee</li></ul>                  |
|  | <b>vs.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Avoid possible conflicts of personality, style and approach</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Provide staff development opportunities</li></ul>  | <b>vs.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop expertise internally</li></ul>                                |

Source: Melinda Tuan, 2012, [External Evaluation Advisory Committee Scoping Project: Findings and Recommendations](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 2. Advisory Committee(s) (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: EDNA MCCONNELL CLARK FOUNDATION'S EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Because of their small size of only 33 staff, Edna McConnell Clark's M&E program primarily employ an outsourced model. One key feature of their model that they're quite happy with is their external evaluation advisory committee, and this is a feature that has been praised by many other organizations as well.

#### ***Advisory Committee Overview:***

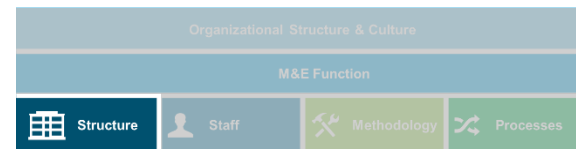
- The advisory committee is comprised of M&E experts including academics, economists, researchers, and leaders of nonprofits, foundations, and evaluation firms.
- It allows them to access to a far greater degree of specialized methodology knowledge for themselves and their grantees.

#### ***Advisory Committee Objective:***

- The Foundation relies heavily on its Evaluation Advisory Committee for evaluation advice, recommendations and referrals.
- The committee convenes quarterly to review the evidence and evaluations of candidates for investment as well as of grantees, and to advise the Foundation how best to assess its own performance. They function similar to a board.
- Importantly, they now pair evaluation advisory committee members with program staff for the life of a project. This provides the program staff with early-stage measurement advice and fosters an evidence-based mindset throughout a project. This also gives advisors buy-in and more closely aligns them with program officers. This pairing has been critical to the success of the advisory committee.

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 3. Resources (1 of 3)



### DECISION: What should we spend on M&E?

#### Who should control the budget?

It is important to be clear in articulating what budgetary expectations are for M&E, because it's difficult when people are asked to choose between program and evaluative spending. Conventional wisdom in the field is that an organization committed to evaluation should spend **5-10%** of programmatic budget on M&E. A 2010 benchmarking survey found an average of **3.7%** M&E spending of programmatic budgets, and a 2014 review found a range between **0.7- 7.5%** of program spending.



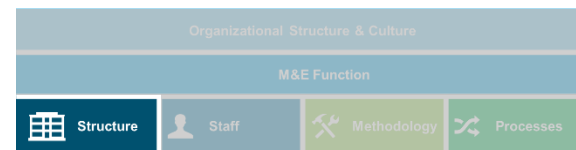
### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>% of Spending</b>                          | Starting with the 5-10% rule of thumb, spending depends on a number of factors. A lot will depend on how much is internalized versus externalized (e.g. bringing in external consultants). Spending varies on a number of factors, including foundation size: larger foundations tend to spend less as a ratio because the cost of evaluation does not rise proportionately with program costs.   |
| <b>Control of Resources Follows Authority</b> | <p>Outside of staff, evaluations constitute the biggest cost for M&amp;E. There are other costs associated with design, standards &amp; resources development, and organizational learning activities. Authority over budget should generally follow functional authority (i.e. who is making decisions or overseeing monitoring and evaluation functions).</p> <p>Field building to increase effectiveness of the field requires it own pool of funding.</p> |

Source: Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2012, *Evaluation in Foundations: 2012 Benchmarking Data*; The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2014, [Benchmarks on Spending for Evaluation](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 3. Resources (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Among the best-in-class organizations we interviewed, we found no strong rule of thumb for M&E spending as a percentage of program spending. Interviews emphasized a “just right” approach of being realistic about sufficiently resourcing M&E, as dictated by the functions required and the total amount & complexity of programmatic spending.

Control of resources wasn’t necessary to reinforce the legitimacy and respect for M&E practices throughout the organization. M&E should have some budget, but the control of evaluation budgets should be consistent with other choices of how centralized / decentralized the function should be.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### *Function:*

- What resources are required to adequately cover needed M&E activities?

#### *Organizational Structure & Culture -- Size:*

- What is the total amount spent on programs by the organization?

#### *Organizational Structure & Culture -- Level of centralization of the organization and the unit:*

- Who will be making primary decisions about when an external evaluation is needed?
- Are there any evaluations that will span multiple programs?
- Who will be managing external evaluation relationships?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of the level of budgetary decisions made, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Smaller % Spending                 |     | Larger % Spending                                       |
|------------------------------------|-----|---|
| ▪ Maximize program resources       | VS. | ▪ Maximize accuracy and credibility of results          |
| Decentralized Control of Resources |     | Centralized Control of Resources                        |
| ▪ Promote program M&E priorities   | VS. | ▪ Promote M&E spending for organization-wide priorities |

*Note:* As was the case with Evaluation Roundtable’s 2012 benchmarking survey, broad budget figures for those interviewed could not be obtained. Much of M&E spending wasn’t tracked directly as it sat inside of program budgets

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 3. Resources (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: MARGARET A. CARGILL FOUNDATION'S HYBRID CONTROL OF RESOURCES

Cargill Foundation has centralized and decentralized budgets in three categories:

1. **Centralized Evaluation Budget:** The M&E team has a centralized evaluation budget that takes the lead on and is responsible for managing direct contract relationships with external evaluators.
2. **Program Budget:** M&E staff work with programmatic staff to set aside a certain amount of money in the annual program budget for contracting out evaluation.
3. **Evaluation in Grants:** Grants have evaluation dollars built into them, particularly for the larger nonprofit organizations that have the capacity to implement and run their own evaluations. On the other hand, some grants are also made to do an evaluation for groups of grantees that have limited evaluation capacity or lack deep experience with evaluation.

### CASE EXAMPLE: CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS) EVALUATION RESOURCES

CNCS does evaluation work internally at the program and grantee level, however, they also bring in external evaluators. CNCS has a policy of embedding evaluations within programs but allocating evaluation as a separate line item in the program budget for the following reasons:

- It helps avoid competition between evaluation and program money
- If it has to be decided on a case by case basis, it can be difficult to budget evaluation money outside of program dollars

Being more evidence-driven requires resources in order to ensure buy-in and prioritization from leadership and program staff.

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 4. Evaluative or Consultative Role (1 of 3)



**DECISION:** Should the M&E unit have primarily an evaluative or consultative role?

An evaluative role involves primarily supporting or conducting evaluations, while a consultative role involves acting more as a thought-partner, coach or advisor.



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

The following are different evaluative vs. consultative options used by organizations with high-performing M&E units:

| Primarily Evaluative   | Primarily Consultative  | Consultative and Evaluative  |
|--|---|--|
| Like the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) at the World Bank, the M&E function focuses primarily on presenting an objective assessment through monitoring and evaluation activities as well as some standards development. Overall, this allows for autonomy for the M&E staff. | All the control lies with programs and M&E staff are giving them advice as more of a thought-partner, coach or advisor. Like Hewlett's Effective Philanthropy Group, the M&E function focuses primarily on program and initiative development, organizational learning and increasing effectiveness of the field through capacity-building and public data goods. | M&E function heavily supports or conducts evaluations but also provide coaching for M&E staff. This hybrid option focuses on both learning and accountability for program staff. |

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 4. Evaluative or Consultative Role (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

A consultative role for the M&E unit works well with a strong focus on learning. It can be more problematic with a functional focus on accountability, since program staff may want to avoid interaction with M&E. The use of external evaluators for final program review allows the M&E staff to avoid being viewed as judges of program staff for purposes of accountability. In that context, M&E staff can play a consultative role in program staff's ongoing monitoring and evaluation.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### *Functions:*

- Is monitoring & evaluation a core part of the M&E function?
- Is organizational learning a core part of the M&E function?

#### *Centralization of the organization and the unit:*

- Are program staff required to submit to accountability measures?
- Do program staff handle most of the monitoring of grants and programs?

#### *Tolerance for risk and failure:*

- Does the organization pursue high-risk, high-reward strategies?
- Can leaders articulate what the expected mix of risk and reward should be?
- Does the incentive structure work against acknowledging and learning from suboptimal outcomes (e.g. job vulnerability, loss of resources)?
- Are there mechanisms in places for assessing and learning from suboptimal outcomes?



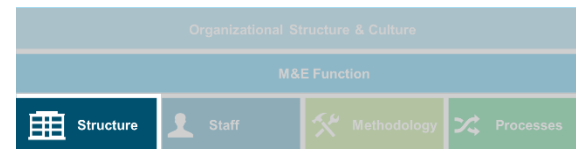
### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of primary role chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Evaluative  |     | Consultative  |
|---|-----|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Provide a more independent perspective</li><li>▪ May be viewed warily by program staff members</li><li>▪ May be difficult to get program staff buy-in of M&amp;E activities</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ More difficult to maintain an independent perspective</li><li>▪ Better able to promote learning</li><li>▪ Create a more collaborative relationship with program staff</li></ul> |

# Customizable Elements

## Structure: 4. Evaluative or Consultative Role (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: MARGARET A. CARGILL FOUNDATION'S CONSULTATIVE ROLE

The Cargill Foundation uses a consultative demand-driven approach with M&E. The M&E team focuses on creating a valuable, useful, productive, and exciting process for program officers and grantees in order to generate demand from them to collaborate with the M&E team. The M&E team focuses on driving demand over time to show value and to spread M&E practices throughout the organization.

This results in an evaluation process that is largely demand-driven and customized. Level of engagement from staff depends on:

- **Comfort level:** The M&E team tailors its technical assistance based on the comfort level of program staff. Some staff are fearful of evaluation terminology, while others have run evaluations or have been evaluation consultants themselves and are therefore more willing to engage.
- **Program content:** The M&E team builds on the strengths of grantees. For example, in the Native Arts & Culture sub-program, grantees are already strong with qualitative storytelling, so the evaluation work strives to build capacity for gathering quantitative, numeric outcome measures.

### CASE EXAMPLE: WORLD BANK INDEPENDENT EVALUATION GROUP'S (IEG) EVALUATIVE ROLE

The World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), epitomizes the evaluative approach since their role is to be an independent evaluator for the World Bank. Their interaction with program areas are standardized and the evaluation team:

- Comes in after the project has been completed
- Reads the report written by program management
- Reviews it and attests to its accuracy
- Confirms whether the team agrees or disagrees with the impact made

Independent evaluations are particularly important for the credibility of an institution like the World Bank. Being too negative about program results loses credibility with management while being too soft in areas of criticality question the evaluative role of IEG. The evaluative approach allows the M&E team to keep their impartiality.



Staff

# Customizable Elements

## Staff



1. **Staff Number / Use of Consultants:** How many M&E staff do we need?
2. **Leadership & Staff Skills:** What skills should we prioritize?

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 1. Staff Number / Use of Consultants (1 of 4)



### DECISION: How many M&E staff do we need?

In a 2012 M&E benchmarking survey, dedicated staff for M&E was almost universal. At foundations with more than a \$200 million annual grantmaking budget, the number of M&E staff grew from an average of 5 to 10 FTEs between 2010 and 2012. Among the M&E units we researched, the range of staff varied from a high of 23 for approximately 300 staff at RWJF to 4 for approximately 500 staff at World Resources Institute (WRI).

There are two dimensions to the staffing decision for an M&E unit. The first is the total number of people required to carry out the needed functions. The second is whether and to what extent support should come from external consultants or evaluators. External support can be brought on early in a specific project to provide developmental evaluation, they can provide technical assistance for program teams in the development of M&E plans, ongoing monitoring, or for external evaluations.



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

Below are various options and considerations of organizations that use internal or external M&E consultants:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Strategic Collaborators | Edna McConnell Clark Foundation uses external consultants as strategic collaborators. The foundation has an ongoing relationship with MRDC to provide evaluations and ongoing support for grantees, and also uses an advisory committee for expertise. The Annie E. Casey Foundation uses performance management consultants for each of their program areas. |
| Outsourced M&E Capacity | RWJF almost always uses third-party evaluators. The internal team might do some self-evaluation and grantee evaluations but primarily rely on third party evaluation.   |
| Strategic Importance    | Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation brings in independent evaluators if the partner lacks evaluation capacity and the evaluation has strategic importance to the foundation, the program team may decide to use an independent evaluator.   |
| Independent Perspective | Skoll Foundation finds that the credibility that comes with external evaluation is important for the promotion of their awardees.   |

Source: Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2012, [Evaluation in Foundations: 2012 Benchmarking Data](#); Brian Quinn, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interview; Aaron Conway, World Resources Institute Interview; Ehren Reed, Skoll Foundation Interview.

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 1. Staff Number / Use of Consultants (2 of 4)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Not surprisingly, a good fit for staff number is largely dependent on the M&E functions to be covered and the number of staff that need to be supported, with greater numbers requiring more M&E staff. Level of centralization and staff skill play an important role as well. The degree to which program staff can successfully and are willing to carry out M&E functions will impact the number of specialized M&E staff needed. Staff may also have different levels of comfort working with an in-house M&E person versus an external consultant, and it may be helpful as a result to allow for flexibility by program.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### **Function:**

- How many and which functions does M&E staff need to cover?

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Size:**

- How many program staff does M&E need to support?
- Do staff have experience and comfort working with external consultants?

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Level of centralization of the organization and the unit:**

- Are most functions carried out by program staff?

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Staff skill and commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- Do program staff have the skill to carry out some M&E functions?
- Do program staff have the time and willingness to carry out some M&E functions?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of the number of staff chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| More M&E Staff   |     | Less M&E Staff (Some functions handled by program staff)  |
|--|-----|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Have more time for other work for program staff</li><li>▪ Focus sufficiently on M&amp;E with consistency of skills</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop greater staff buy-in and integration of M&amp;E thinking</li><li>▪ Develop staff M&amp;E skills</li></ul> |
| Staff Internally   |     | Use External Consultants  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop internal expertise</li></ul>   | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Access a wider array of specialization</li></ul>  |

Source: Monitor Institute Analysis.

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 1. Staff Number / Use of Consultants (3 of 4)



### CASE EXAMPLE: ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION STAFF

Of the foundations interviewed, RWJF has the largest M&E team. They currently have 23 out of roughly 300 staff members in their Research, Evaluation, and Learning Department, and staff members spend 70% of their time on centralized M&E work and 30% on program-specific M&E activities.

#### *RWJ's staff structure is broken down in the following way:*

- VP of Research, Evaluation, and Learning and Chief Science Officer
- Assistant VP of Research Evaluation, and Learning
- 2 Directors
- 5 Senior Program Officers, 1 Senior Scientist, 1 Senior Advisor
- 1 National Program Services Coordinator, 1 Program Results Reporting Senior Officer, 1 Production Coordinator, 1 Information Center Coordinator
- 3 Program Officers, 3 Associates, 1 Research Assistant, 1 Executive Assistant

RWJF works to have a balance of subject experts with deep M&E expertise – which lends credibility to the team and in the philanthropy field – as well as staff members with a broad set of soft skills to navigate the working relationship with program staff.

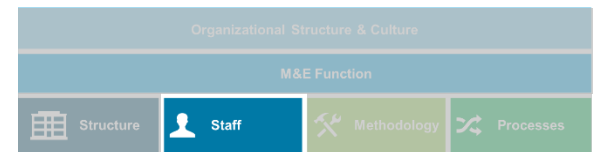
*70% of staff time is used on centralized M&E activities with a strong focus on research that tends to cut across programs:*

#### *Centralized M&E work:*

- Projects related to general health studies, behavioral economics and behavioral science.
- Methodology-based research (e.g., explorations around big data or new evaluation methods).
- Doing work in other parts of the foundation. This allows staff members to get out of their siloes, frees up money to invest in other areas/projects, and adjusts the staffing model accordingly.

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 1. Staff Number / Use of Consultants (4 of 4)



### CASE EXAMPLE: DAVID & LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The Packard Foundation uses both traditional independent external evaluators and has experimented with a more collaborative approach to running an evaluation. The Foundation used a strategic learning approach in their Preschool for California's Children Grantmaking Program:

“With a strategic learning approach, evaluators are embedded and use a collaborative and participatory evaluation process. This approach is different from traditional evaluation in which the evaluator remains deliberately separate. ‘Evaluators become part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement, adaptation, and intentional change. The evaluator’s primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data and logic, and to facilitate data-based assessments and decision making in the unfolding and developmental processes of innovation. This ‘learning partner’ role helps evaluators stay on top of potential strategy shifts and allows them to facilitate reflection and feedback.”

- Packard, Evaluation Round Table

### CASE EXAMPLE: MARGARET A. CARGILL FOUNDATION

Margaret A. Cargill Foundation wants to maintain objective view but also wants program staff partnering with grantees on evaluations. Moreover, Cargill has a lean organization and they want to keep their staff small. Therefore, they use consultants for an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party view and extra capacity.

A high level of engagement is very important; the M&E team meets with the consultants weekly and the interaction is highly collaborative. The M&E team also works with program strategy consultants when using M&E for strategy. Moreover, Cargill has a budget within programs specifically to pay for external evaluation consultants.

Source: Evaluation Roundtable, 2011, [Evaluation of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Preschool for California's Children Grantmaking Program](#); Ted Chen, Cargill Foundation Interview.

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 2. Leadership & Staff Skills (1 of 3)



### DECISION: What skills should we prioritize?

There are three broad categories related to M&E skills to discuss: methodological expertise, substantive knowledge in program areas and soft skills. While excellence in all three areas would be ideal, the relative weight of each in hiring considerations depends on multiple factors.



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

M&E staff need to be good in each of the following skill categories and great in at least one, which differs depending on the M&E model. As a group, M&E staff need at least one person great in each area in order to create the optimal team dynamic. Below are the three broad categories:

| Methodological Expertise  | Substantive Expertise   | Soft Skills   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Particularly important when M&amp;E staff handle evaluations themselves, oversee complex methodological issues (e.g. multi-site evaluations) or where there's a strong evaluative focus</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Particularly important when M&amp;E staff are embedded or otherwise cover specific program areas, conduct in-depth research on substantive topics, or when the organization has a single focus area</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Particularly important when M&amp;E staff play more of a consultative role and need to prove their value to program staff, the M&amp;E function is decentralized, and working well with program staff day-to-day is essential, and/or learning is emphasized</li><li>Soft skills include, but aren't limited to: coaching &amp; facilitation, networking ability, relationship-building, change management, giving / accepting constructive feedback, and translating technical language.</li></ul> |

### There are two important elements of methodological expertise to highlight:

1. Given that most best-in-class organizations employ multiple methods, experience across a range of methodologies is generally more helpful than deep expertise in a single method.
2. When M&E staff oversee the hiring of external consultants, broad methodological expertise is needed to make choices as a consumer of evaluation.

Source: Monitor Institute Analysis.

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 2. Leadership & Staff Skills (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

In terms of background experience, the high-performing organizations we researched draw from a diverse array of academic, programmatic, applied research and evaluation backgrounds. While backgrounds are in large part relevant depending on the type of expertise required, there is a particular advantage that comes from choosing leadership and staff with some program background. In managing the tension that can arise between program and M&E staff, the ability of M&E staff to call upon a shared understanding of program challenges is helpful in developing trusting relationships.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### **Function:**

- *How many and which functions does M&E staff need to cover?*

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Level of centralization of the organization and the unit:**

- *Do M&E staff sit at least part of the time in programs?*

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Staff skill and commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- *What functions are carried out by program staff?*
- *Do program staff have the time and willingness to carry out some M&E functions?*

#### **Other design elements -- Evaluative or consultative role:**

- *Are M&E staff expected to act as thought partners, coaches and/or advisors to program staff?*



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of staff skills prioritized, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Methodological Expertise                                  | Substantive Expertise   | Soft Skills   |
|---|---|---|
| ▪ Promote strong methodological standards across programs | vs. ▪ Develop credibility with program staff and help meet program-specific needs | vs. ▪ Develop program staff and M&E relationships for better uptake |

# Customizable Elements

## Staff: 2. Leadership & Staff Skills (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION'S STAFF SKILLS

At The Walton Foundation, the members of the evaluation unit (7 out of ~70 staff members) have both formal evaluation training and expertise and also content knowledge in the areas in which the foundation invests.

#### *Evaluation Director's Background:*

The evaluation director was a program person who was doing research and evaluation and got drawn into evaluation full time. He has a doctorate in public policy with focus on program evaluation, and has experience conducting RCTs, statistical analysis, etc.

#### *Non-Negotiables for Evaluation Staff:*

- Excellent interpersonal skills and are firm about evaluation but not rigid with people.
- Combination of content knowledge and competency.
- Have immediate credibility because they did something in the field: a few years of experience and a master's degree are required for the research officers. Started by building positions for associate officers, research officers, and senior officers and learned that they can't have associate officers because they were too junior to have credibility and the necessary skills and experience.
- Ability to deal with churn and high volumes of work and to offer and accept constructive feedback.

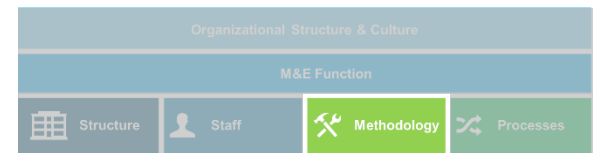
### CASE EXAMPLE: OMIDYAR NETWORK'S M&E LEAD

At Omidyar, the Director of Intellectual Capital, who leads learning efforts for the organization, believes that former entrepreneurs are a good fit for M&E because they want to continuously learn quickly. The Director has a unique background:

- Served for nearly a decade at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a deputy director and founding member of the agricultural development Initiative in the foundation's global development program.
- Was founder/CEO of Cyberplex Africa, one of the largest web development and knowledge management companies in southern Africa.
- Was an original founder and managing director of Africa Online, where he pioneered the delivery of Internet service in Zimbabwe.
- Was a senior manager of CH2MHill and a founding member of CH2MHill's Strategies Group, which focused on assisting large corporate clients in strategically managing key environmental engineering and water management issues.
- Served McKinsey & Co. both as a consultant early in his career and most recently as a senior advisor.
- Holds a Ph.D. and M.Sc. in agricultural and biological engineering with minors in economics and International development from Cornell University. He also holds two B.S. degrees in both mechanical engineering and biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Source: Marc Holley, Walton Foundation Interview; Walton Foundation website, [Our Staff](#); Roy Steiner, Omidyar Interview; Omidyar website, [Our People](#).

# Methodology



1. **Contribution vs. Attribution:** Should evaluations focus on contribution or attribution?
2. **Methodological Rigor:** What level of methodological rigor should we require?
3. **Program Methodology:** Should our methodologies and levels of evidence vary by program area?

*Note: Methodology is a bit different from Structure, Staff, & Processes because it is more case-specific; therefore, the presentation of content will be slightly different than the rest of this document*

# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 1. Contribution vs. Attribution (1 of 3)



### DECISION: Should evaluations focus on contribution or attribution?

- **Attribution** is the evaluation of whether an intervention caused an outcome, with an assessment of the magnitude and statistical significance of the effect
- **Contribution** is the evaluation of whether an intervention *helped* cause an outcome, without an assessment of the magnitude of each contributor's effect

The question about whether and when to use an attribution approach is a central debate in philanthropic evaluation.



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

#### Why attribution is difficult in the social sector:

Paul Brest “asks us to imagine a group of villagers pushing a boulder up a hill, trying to get it out of a dangerously unstable spot. They’re moving slowly, and they ask for your help. You join in, and eventually you all get the boulder to the top. And that’s where the trouble starts – because the goal was reached, but who gets the credit? Was your contribution essential? Was it even helpful? It’s a good analogy for high impact philanthropy, where donors and the organizations they support work to make progress against challenges that have been resistant to easy solutions. Success is the result of collective action.”

#### Attribution requires that:

- 1) It is possible to identify a single actor or to divide the credit in a collaborative or multi-funder effort
- 2) There is clear linkage between intervention and outcome, because either there is a single effect or multiple causes can be teased out
- 3) The level of research evidence permits causal claims

Attribution and contribution are therefore closely connected to questions of methodological rigor. If dealing with a situation where these three conditions can be met, the methodology for attribution needs to support causal claims.

Contribution assessment will work with a wider array of designs and methods, including case studies and correlation studies. It can be used as a way to assess the range of factors that affect outcomes and consider how a specific intervention may contribute.

Some organizations will claim attribution for proximate effects and contribution for longer-term or indirect effects.

Source: The Center for High Impact Philanthropy, 2013, [Impact Myths: Attribution and Contribution](#); GEO, [Evaluation in Philanthropy: Perspectives from the Field](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 1. Contribution vs. Attribution (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Attribution is difficult to do when:

- It is a collaborative or networked effort
- Effects occur over a long timespan
- Foundation is one of many funders
- There are multiple interventions
- The effort involves complex system change
- Evaluation is of indirect effects
- Evaluation is of advocacy efforts
- Evaluation is of policy change



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**Characteristics of the intervention:**

- Is this a direct service intervention? Is this a more difficult intervention to assess attribution (e.g. policy advocacy)?
- Is this a single intervention or part of a broader effort at system-level change?
- Is there a long time lag between intervention and impact?

**Single or collaborative effort:**

- Is there a single actor promoting the intervention, or is this a collaborative effort?

**Purpose and resources:**

- Is there a question tied to a decision that should be answered with a high level of methodological rigor?

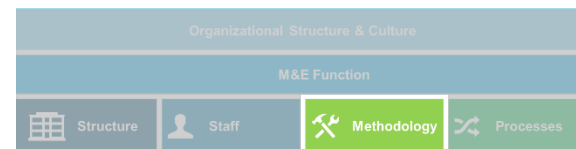


### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of the type of intervention chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Contribution                          | Attribution   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Is less time and resource intensive | ▪ Enables claims of impact and facilitates cost-benefit assessments |

vs.



### CASE EXAMPLE: ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

Two publicly available evaluations of RWJF programs provide insight into a focus on contribution:

- The Foundation's Tobacco Policy Change Program involved 75 grants promoting different aspects of advocacy, including policy change, a more diverse policy infrastructure, and stronger partnerships. It involved advocacy goals such as tobacco tax increases and passage of clean indoor air ordinances. The evaluation of the program focused explicitly on contribution and not attribution in its assessment, assessing a range of policy change process and advocacy outcomes.
- The Foundation's evaluation of its Active Living Research (ALR) program involved key informant interviews to assess the contributions of ALR to the emerging transdisciplinary field including the development of measurement tools, epidemiologic studies, implementation research, and the translation of research to practice. They developed a conceptual logic model to map the interaction of social and institutional forces on policy contribution and field building. Findings of policy contribution were organized according to a framework defining contributions broadly and at multiple stages in the policy process.

### CASE EXAMPLE: OMIDYAR NETWORK

Omidyar Network has in the past few years shifted strategically from a focus on developing scaled solutions through the organizations they invest in to trying to affect system-level change. As a result, they now focus on both the direct and the indirect paths to scale as a result of their investments, with indirect paths coming "through the indirect inspiration or motivation of copycats and competitive responses that build on, extend, and sometimes even replace the initial pioneer." With their indirect and system-level focus, they are explicit about looking for evidence of contribution not attribution, and they have moved almost entirely to a learning-focused M&E model.

The VP of Intellectual Capital co-wrote an article on the challenges of measuring indirect effects:

- "Indirect impact trajectories are often hard to map ex ante, because it's not clear beforehand who will react in what ways. Without knowing ahead of time what to expect, it's hard to put in place a framework to measure outcomes"
- "This will require getting comfortable with 1) much more contribution-based and less attribution-based assessment of impact in the field, and 2) taking a longer view, particularly for start-up ventures. Put differently, instead of focusing on making a rigorous, direct attribution of a given early-stage enterprise to reducing poverty, we ought to spend more time figuring out how to think about the contribution—in the form of both expected and unexpected ripples and "pinballs"—that a given firm has made to advancing change at the sector level."

Source: Merzel et al, 2010, [Assessing Public Health Advocacy Capacity](#); J. Ottoson et al, 2009, [Policy-Contribution Assessment and Field-Building Analysis of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Active Living Research Program](#); Mike Kubzansky and Paul Breloff, 2014, [On Innovators and Pinballs](#).



### ✓ **DECISION:** What level of methodological rigor should we require?

Methodological rigor relates specifically to causal claims: what can be known through the evaluation design about the effects and size of impact of an intervention? How confident can one be in the results? While the ability to make strong impact claims with confidence is obviously ideal, going up the ladder of evidence involves difficult trade-offs in terms of time and resources. As a result, organizations must decide the right level of rigor given specific circumstances. Among the successful M&E units studied, there were a range of approaches taken to make this determination.

### + **OPTIONS & APPROACHES**

There are two primary dimensions of methodological rigor: 1. Strength of the causal claim, and 2. Generalizability

A general increase in levels of evidence could broadly look as follows:

**Preliminary evidence:** exists, but it cannot support cause-and-effect conclusions



**Moderate evidence:** can either support cause-and-effect conclusions with limited generalizability or have broad generalizability but with limited cause-and-effect conclusions



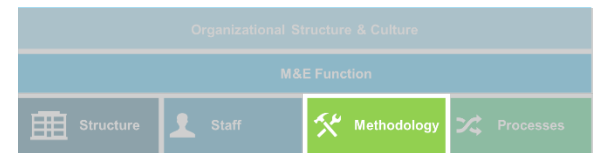
**Strong evidence:** can support cause-and-effect conclusions, and that include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up

Organizations use different systems to make decisions about the level of evidence to support:

- **Best-fit approach:** The most common approach is to link methodological rigor to the specifics of the evaluation in terms of purpose, audience and existing resources. For example, an evaluation to determine if a program should scale requires a higher level of evidence, so a randomized controlled trial might be used.
- **Increasing levels of evidence:** To help assess a nonprofit's evidence base, Edna McConnell Clark distinguishes among three levels of evidence: proven effectiveness, demonstrated effectiveness, and high apparent effectiveness. They then work with grantees to improve levels of evidence over time.
- **Constant:** The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation requests that all research grantees embed a counterfactual in their project design.

# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 2. Methodological Rigor (2 of 4)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Cost-benefit assessments of the right level of rigor given specific circumstances are helpful with time and resource constraints. Key factors include audience, purpose of the evaluation, and whether the characteristics of the intervention make an experimental or quasi-experimental design possible.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### **Audience:**

- Is there an audience for this work that requires a high level of methodological rigor?

#### **Purpose:**

- Is there a question tied to a decision that requires a high level of causal certainty?

#### **Time and resources:**

- What is the time frame for decision making?
- What resources are available for this work?

#### **Characteristics of the intervention:**

- Is this for a stable intervention or a situation where features are still in flux?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Tradeoffs for methodological rigor are primarily between:

*Level of causal certainty and generalizability*    **vs.**    *time and resources*

### CASE EXAMPLE: SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND (SIF)

The Corporation for National & Community Service runs SIF to implement innovative and effective evidence-based solutions to economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development challenges. As grantees develop, they expect them to move up through tiers of evidence:

- **Preliminary evidence:** There is evidence based on a reasonable hypothesis and supported by credible research findings (e.g. third-party pre- and post-tests).
- **Moderate evidence:** There is evidence that can support causal conclusions but have limited generalizability (or the reverse) (e.g. an experimental study with small sample sizes).
- **Strong evidence:** There is evidence from previous studies on the program, the designs of which can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and that, in total, include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the state, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity).



# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 2. Methodological Rigor (4 of 4)



### CASE EXAMPLE: INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION (IPA)

IPA has been and continues to be a strong proponent of randomized controlled trials in development work. However, they are promoting “**The Goldilocks Principles**,” which advocate for developing right-fit M&E evaluations rather than a single approach. The principles are:

- **Credible:** Only collect data that accurately reflects what they are intending to measure
- **Actionable:** Only collect data that the organization is going to use
- **Responsible:** Match data collection with the systems and resources the organization has to collect it
- **Transportable:** Apply lessons learned to other programs and contexts

### CASE EXAMPLE: THE ROBIN HOOD FOUNDATION

- The Foundation promotes common measures across grantees.
- It takes a “relentless monetarization” approach to measurement, using a predictive model for calculating impact and creating a benefit-to-cost ratio to enable them to compare impacts across programs.
- All gains are measured compared to counterfactuals, and they assign a dollar value to each benefit.



### CASE EXAMPLE: BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

As part of its Evaluation Policy, the Foundation lists three types of evaluation designs:

- **Evaluations to understand and strengthen program effectiveness**
  - No need to assess causal relationships between the interventions and the desired outcomes
  - Both quantitative and qualitative data are relevant
- **Evaluations to test the causal effects of pilot projects, innovations, or delivery models**
  - Should clearly demonstrate that the positive or negative effects observed were caused by the intervention or tactic
  - Should also measure the size of the intervention effect
  - Must be able to rule out the effects of other factors by including a plausible counterfactual
- **Evaluations to improve the performance of institutions or operating models**
  - Largely qualitative
  - No need to assess the causal relationship between the organization or operating model and program outcomes

Source: Innovations for Poverty Action, [The Goldilocks Project: Helping Organizations Build Right-Fit M&E Systems](#); The Robin Hood Foundation, [Measuring Impact](#); Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, [How We Work](#).



### DECISION: Should our methodologies and levels of evidence vary by program area?

Interviews with experts in relevant fields for methodological issues and considerations specific to program areas helped to lay out the landscape. There are very basic differences in methodologies used by the three primary program areas that reflect standard practices in their fields. They also face distinct methodological challenges and levels of method and indicator standardization.

|                                   | Environmental Conservation  | Patient Care  | Science   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Common methodologies and measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results chains of threats and actions</li> <li># hectares preserved</li> <li>Habitat quality</li> <li>Quality of air, water, soil</li> <li>Pollution and greenhouse gas levels</li> <li>Population studies (e.g. fish, wildlife numbers)</li> <li>Consumption rates (e.g. water)</li> <li>Land use and land management practices</li> <li>Policy and regulatory changes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information from administrative data, medical records, and patient surveys</li> <li>Process metrics (e.g. rate of administering a drug)</li> <li>Performance metrics (e.g. readmittance rates)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outputs and process milestones</li> <li>Peer review</li> <li>Bibliometric information such as # of publications and citations, # of paper downloads, # of patents and copyrights, use and uptake data</li> </ul>                                 |
| Methodological challenges         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of standardized indicators in areas such as commodities and land use</li> <li>Attribution can be difficult to assess</li> <li>Biodiversity quality can be difficult to assess</li> <li>Advocacy, policy change and regulatory implementation can be difficult to assess</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative data lack clinical detail and may be inaccurate</li> <li>Medical records are less standardized</li> <li>Measurement gaps in clinical areas like diagnosis errors and dealing with complex patients</li> <li>Difficult to measure organizational issues that can cause variation in quality of care</li> <li>Engagement and interaction measures more difficult to quantify</li> <li>Difficult to move from process to outcome measures: need to adjust for patient risk factors, data validity challenges, surveillance bias</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long time-frame to transformation change</li> <li>Need to look beyond the life of the grant</li> <li>Can be difficult to quantify goals (e.g. “changed paradigms”)</li> <li>Peer reviews can be biased</li> <li>Progress isn’t linear</li> </ul> |

Source: Monitor Institute Analysis.



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

The concept of ecosystems, which emerged from interviews, is particularly useful for thinking about program methodologies. Each program operates in an ecosystem – of researchers, academic institutions, standards organizations and other grantmakers – that define best practices, common incentive systems and stakeholders for the field. As a result, methodological considerations for program staff will largely be derived externally rather than in a coordinated internal fashion. One important implication is that transforming a field involves changing other actors within it; user-centered methodological approaches and sensitivity to existing incentive systems can help promote behavior change.

|  | Environmental Conservation  | Patient Care  | Science   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Methodology guidelines and standardized indicators | <p>Standards and guidelines can be found through standards initiatives, certification systems and corporate reporting frameworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">IUCN-CMP Standard Classification of Conservation Actions</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Conservation Actions and Measures Library (CAML)</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Sustainable Development Goals</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Biodiversity Indicators Partnership Indicators</a></li> <li>▪ Certification standards such as <a href="#">Forest Stewardship Council</a> and <a href="#">Rainforest Alliance</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Environmental Performance Index</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Global Reporting Initiative</a> and <a href="#">Internal Integrated Reporting Framework</a> for corporate reporting</li> </ul> | <p>Standards and guidelines can be found at governmental agencies and non-profit standards and certification organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Department of Health &amp; Human Services Health System Measurement Project</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">CDC Program Evaluation Standards</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">The PCORI Methodology Report</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">AHRQ's Guide to Patient and Family Engagement</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">AHRQ Quality measures</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">CMS Health Outcomes Survey</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Joint Commission Standards</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">NQF-Endorsed Measures</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Patient Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System</a></li> </ul> | <p>Standards and guidelines can be found through grantmaking bodies and associations for specific disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">NSF Merit Review Guidelines</a> and <a href="#">Merit Review Criteria</a></li> <li>▪ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine <a href="#">Study Process</a></li> <li>▪ NASA's <a href="#">Science Mission Directorate Peer Review and Selection Process</a></li> <li>▪ Academic policies related to specific disciplines</li> </ul> |
| Useful organizations and networks                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Conservation Measures Partnership</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Biodiversity Indicators Partnership</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Environmental Evaluators Network</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Conservation International's TEAM network</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Convention on Biological Diversity</a></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">National Committee for Quality Assurance</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">National Quality Forum</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Agency for Healthcare Research &amp; Quality</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute</a> &amp; <a href="#">PCORnet</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">The Joint Commission</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Centers for Medicare &amp; Medicaid Services</a></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">NSF</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">NASA</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine</a></li> </ul>   |

Source: Monitor Institute Analysis.

## Methodology: 3. Program Methodology (3 of 5)

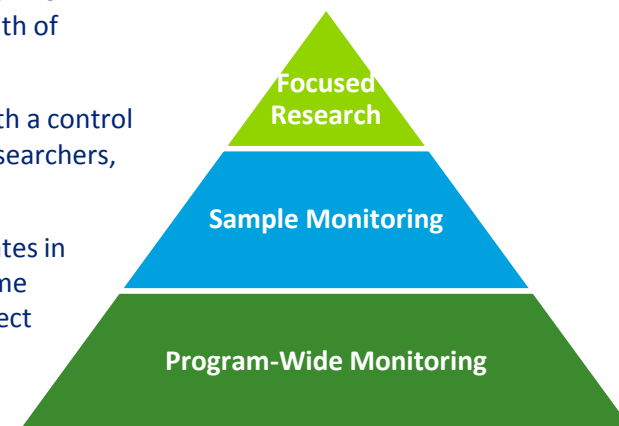
### Environmental Conservation



#### CASE EXAMPLE: RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

Rainforest Alliance uses its Evaluation and Research pyramid to describe the break-down of work overseen by the Evaluation and Research Team to ensure they have both depth and breadth of practice:

- **Focused Research**, the smallest segment of their work, involves traditional research with a control group or a counterfactual. This is generally done by or in collaboration with external researchers, to enable scale and for greater independence.
- **Sample Monitoring** involves a stratified sample of the portfolio (e.g. for coffee certificates in Latin America they do sample monitoring for 15 of the 300 certificates). They collect time series data on key outcomes. While this work doesn't involve a control group, they collect more data than is feasible for the entire portfolio.
- **Program-Wide Monitoring** captures basic data that are compiled for every certification and project.



For its sample monitoring concerning agriculture, the Evaluation and Research team draws upon the following methodologies:

- **Context Mapping (including community mapping)**: Mapping processes that combine local knowledge with other geographic data to identify key conservation threats and opportunities
- **Natural Ecosystem Assessment**: Multiple tools used to track changes in on-farm vegetation; land use on and adjacent to certified farms; and broader effects on forest encroachment and conservation
- **Water Quality Monitoring**: Cost-effective field protocols to monitor key stream health indicators
- **Farm Performance Monitoring Tool**: Method to track changes in best management practices through farmer interviews and observation
- **Carbon and Greenhouse Gases**: Method that adapts the Cool Farm Tool to estimate a farm's greenhouse gas footprint
- **Community-Based Species Monitoring**: Participatory monitoring of wildlife by farmers and community members

# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 3. Program Methodology (4 of 5) Science



### CASE EXAMPLE: HOWARD HUGHES MEDICAL INSTITUTE

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), one of the grantees in Science, focuses on “people, not projects.” It provides long-term, flexible funding for researchers to bring innovative approaches to biological problems. As a result, HHMI does not establish milestones for its researchers. Instead, HHMI requires only that its researchers report on their progress every other year in a seminar and undergo rigorous review every five years.

The Institute maintains a Scientific Advisory Board that conducts the reviews. The board is comprised primarily of academic researchers, but it includes scientists at institutes and private companies as well; its members span the biomedical subfields. This system relies heavily on the quality of the reviewers, and Redstone determined that HHMI spends almost as much time reviewing the reviewers as reviewing their scientists. An expert at HHMI described the ideal reviewer as follows:

*“When choosing someone to be a reviewer, choose them because of their scientific renown, but their wisdom also matters. It is important to get someone who can explain their opinion and can listen to others, and really listen to them and respond to them. They have to have an ability to explain themselves and be credible. If you are too flippant or arrogant, you aren’t invited back.”*

### CASE EXAMPLE: DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation provides support for young physician scientists working in biomedical research rather than support for specific initiatives or programs. They reviewed the effect of this support by comparing the career progressions of the scientists they supported with the progressions of those who applied for funding but just missed the cut. The Foundation determined that its grant receivers won NIH grants at a statistically significant higher rate than those who competed but did not make the cut.

# Customizable Elements

## Methodology: 3. Program Methodology (5 of 5) Healthcare



### CASE EXAMPLE: PATIENT CENTERED OUTCOMES RESEARCH INSTITUTE (PCORI)

PCORI advances comparative clinical effectiveness research on useful outcomes information of importance to patients and their caregivers. One of the prongs of research prioritization for the Institute is patient needs, outcomes, and preferences, and potential researchers are asked to identify specific populations and health decision(s) affected by the research. Guidelines further include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Engage people representing the population of interest and other relevant stakeholders in ways that are appropriate and necessary
- Identify, select, recruit, and retain study participants representative of the spectrum of the population of interest and ensure that data are collected thoroughly and systematically from all study participants
- Use patient-reported outcomes when patients or people at risk of a condition are the best source of information
- Support dissemination and implementation of study results

### CASE EXAMPLE: AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY (AHRC)

AHRC conducted its own research on factors that can lead to improved patient and family engagement in quality and safety. They focus on: 1) individual characteristics and needs, 2) the organizational context within hospitals, and 3) hospital-based interventions. For organizational context, AHRC examines motivation, organizational structure and implementation strategies. Hospital-level strategies include:

- **Health care team interventions** to engage patients and families
- **Procedures to facilitate communication** of patients and families with providers
- **Efforts to increase patient knowledge, skills, or abilities**, such as establishing systems for patients and families to track medications
- **Strategies to promote input into management and processes**, such as patient and family advisory councils

### CASE EXAMPLE: CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

The CDC Evaluation Framework includes the following steps:

- Staff engages the necessary stakeholders, usually people involved in program operations and primary users of the evaluation
- Stakeholders describe the program in terms of its need, expected effects, activities, resources, logic model
- The group focuses the evaluation design to assess the issues of greatest concern by considering the purpose, users, questions and methods
- The evaluation team gathers data and credible evidence to strengthen evaluation judgments
- Justify conclusions by linking them to the evidence gathered and judging them against agreed-upon standards set by the stakeholders
- Ensure use and share lessons learned with design, preparation, feedback, follow-up and dissemination

Source: PCORI Methodology Committee, 2013, [The PCORI Methodology Report](#); Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, [Guide to Patient and Family Engagement](#); Tom Chapel, Centers for Disease Control Interview.

 Processes

# Customizable Elements

## Processes



1. **Learning:** How should we develop learning processes?
2. **Strategic Learning:** Should we engage in strategic learning?
3. **Project Lifecycles:** Where throughout the project lifecycle should we engage M&E?
4. **Transparency:** How transparent should we be, and on what subjects?

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 1. Learning (1 of 3)



### **DECISION:** How should we develop learning processes?

Among the successful organizations researched, there is broad agreement for the need to have M&E output be in service of, and better linked to, organizational improvement and decision-making. However, a blueprint for the ideal M&E learning system has yet to be developed, and there are a range of learning processes that can be employed. Many of the successful M&E programs studied pay ongoing attention to, and experiment around, developing learning processes.



### **OPTIONS & APPROACHES**

#### **Formal processes for learning broadly cover:**

- Generating, collecting, interpreting and disseminating information
- Experimenting with new options
- Gathering intelligence on trends in the field
- Identifying and solving problems
- Developing staff skills

#### **Specific learning processes can include, but aren't limited to:**

- Multiple channels for learning and reflection
  - Retreats, learning convenings, brown bag lunches, program staff meetings, after-action reviews, quarterly or semi-annual retreats, appreciative inquiry, roundtable discussions
- Incentives
  - Performance reviews in part on knowledge sharing
  - Management objectives that include trying new things
- Individual assistance
  - Coaching
  - Training
- "Peer assists" to share "just-in-time" knowledge
- Failure forums

Source: Garvin et al, 2008, [Is Yours A Learning Organization?](#), Harvard Business Review; Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, [What Is A Learning Organization?](#); Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer, 2011, [Evaluation to Support Strategic Learning: Principles and Practices](#); Anna Williams, 2014, [Evaluation for Strategic Learning: Assessing Readiness and Results](#); The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, [Hewlett Work in Progress Blog](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 1. Learning (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

The development and use of learning processes take time and staff resources; they can divert attention away from more immediate program tasks. As a result, it's important that learning processes link to decision-making points in clear feedback loops. Learning should provide strong value to program staff, be relevant for actionable behavior change and be integrated into existing processes that are aligned with how people work. It's most useful if learning occurs at the point of action (i.e. just-in-time). It requires ongoing leadership commitment and engagement from staff.

It is important to note that learning as described here relates to the management of programs and not professional development, which is an HR function.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**Organizational Structure & Culture -- Leadership commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- Is there strong leadership commitment to ongoing learning?

**Organizational Structure & Culture -- Staff commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- Is there staff willingness to expend time and energy on learning processes?
- Is there an openness and willingness to engage in learning processes?

**Tolerance for risk and failure:**

- Does the incentive structure work against acknowledging and learning from suboptimal outcomes (e.g. job vulnerability, loss of resources)?
- Are there mechanisms in places for assessing and learning from suboptimal outcomes?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of whether a focus on learning processes is chosen or not, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Focus on Learning Processes   |     | No Focus on Learning Processes   |
|---|-----|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enables continuous improvement</li><li>▪ Improves decision-making quality</li><li>▪ Ensures lessons learned are disseminated throughout the organization</li><li>▪ Allows the organization to learn from its mistakes</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Does not require dedicated staff and resources to carve out opportunity and time for learning</li><li>▪ Does not divert attention from program tasks</li><li>▪ Does not blur evaluative role</li></ul> |

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 1. Learning (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: DAVID & LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

Since 2012, the Packard Foundation has experimented with a variety of activities, tools and systems aimed at strengthening the ability of the staff and board to capture, make sense of and apply lessons from their work. Examples include:

- **A new platform for managing data about program strategies.** Like many other foundations, Packard invests in considerable research and data collection to track progress on its strategies, such as collecting outcome indicator data. The new database is being designed to talk with the grantmaker's grants management system to allow up-to-date information about how the foundation's work in various areas has evolved.
- **A yearly focus on lessons learned in each program.** In 2014, the foundation asked each program to conduct a more holistic review of the past 12 months of work, including successes and failures and lessons learned. The goal was to engage entire program teams, not just directors, in an annual learning conversation with foundation management and other program teams based on their collective insights. A priority for the second year: adjusting the timing so it is not a crunch and can fit into the natural flow of other work.
- **A foundation-wide learning week.** In February 2014, the foundation was trying to promote more sharing and learning across programs areas and launched its first ever "Strategy and Learning Week." Staff designed sessions throughout the week to share lessons from their work or to invite colleagues to participate in dialogues about emerging questions or issues that cut across programs. Due to staff time constraints and a growing belief that the most productive learning happens close to the work (vs across programs), Packard has not held another foundation-wide learning week. However, there are periodic cross program learning events led by program team members.

### CASE EXAMPLE: OMIDYAR NETWORK

Omidyar's Learning & Impact group focuses on learning and systems. It believes:

- M&E should only be at the service of learning.
- The role of evidence is to inform learning.
- Data must be in the service of learning, if not, they are just collecting data for data's sake. Data for impact helps them become more effective and have greater impact.
- The greatest source of learning will come when things go wrong. There is the power of failure in learning.
- Learning has to be intentional and systematic. You have to allocate time and resources, or else it doesn't happen.
- Most importantly, learning requires a cultural change.

Source: Fay Twersky, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Interview; Roy Steiner, Omidyar Network Interview.

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 2. Strategic Learning (1 of 3)



### DECISION: Should we engage in strategic learning?

Strategic learning “is the use of data and insights from a variety of information-gathering approaches—including evaluation—to inform decision making about strategy.” It is a subset of learning, and it integrates data collection and analysis into the strategy process itself. As a result, the strategic learning process is inherently adaptive, changing in response to new information. Strategic learning is particularly appropriate for complex contexts, requires flexibility, and places a high value on actionability.

Strategic learning was a focus among a number of the successful organizations studied. The field in general is moving away from the idea that loyalty to a long-term plan defines success; instead, strategic plans are viewed as starting points for adaptation.



### OPTIONS & APPROACHES

Elements of Strategic Learning can include, but aren’t limited to:

- **Articulation and Testing of Assumptions:** Rather than a linear plan, which can obscure uncertainty, clear statements of hypotheses and what will be tested
- **Evaluation:** Developmental evaluation with frequent feedback loops and check-points to allow for changing interim indicators and adjustments to data collection and analysis
- **External Facilitator:** For challenging questions, an exploration of differences in perspective, and a check on group think
- **Iterative Processes:** Instead of rote strategy tracking, evolution by learning from doing. Observation of shorter-term results, questions, reflection, and adaptation
- **Built-in Strategy Updates:** More frequently than at the beginning, midpoint and the end of a strategy. Should be enough time to get substantive work done but not so long that opportunities for adaptation are lost
- **Briefs and Debriefs:** To document learnings and share more widely with relevant stakeholders

Source: Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer, 2011, [Evaluation to Support Strategic Learning: Principles and Practices](#); Anna Williams, 2014, [Evaluation for Strategic Learning: Assessing Readiness and Results](#); Snow et al, 2015, [Strategy Design Amid Complexity: Tools for Designing and Implementing Adaptive Funding Strategies](#), The Foundation Review.

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 2. Strategic Learning (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Williams' "Organizational Readiness Screen" is useful for determining if the right conditions exist for effective use of strategic learning:

#### Helpful Starting Points

1. Authentic leadership commitment
2. A reason to improve strategy
3. The right evaluator
4. Adequate evaluation resources and flexibility to adapt to the unexpected
5. Data to inform strategy
6. A safe space for reflection
7. A seat at the strategy table and access to the right people
8. Realistic expectations around improvement

#### Also Important Over Time

9. A learning culture
10. Organizational infrastructure that supports learning



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### **Organizational culture:**

- Does the organization already have an mindset for adaptive strategy?
- How often does the organization revisit the strategy? What is the existing process for strategic updates?

#### **Organizational Structure & Culture -- Leadership commitment to data, evidence and learning:**

- Is there strong leadership commitment to strategic learning?

#### **Tolerance for risk and failure:**

- Does the incentive structure work against acknowledging and learning from suboptimal outcomes (e.g. job vulnerability, loss of resources)?
- Are there mechanisms in places for assessing and learning from suboptimal outcomes?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

| Use Strategic Learning  | Do Not Use Strategic Learning   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enables organization to pivot to more effect strategy as learn</li><li>▪ Creates more adaptive and resilient organization</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Doesn't require ongoing, labor-intensive strategy process</li></ul> |

vs.

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 2. Strategic Learning (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: MARGARET A. CARGILL FOUNDATION'S 3D MODEL

Cargill Foundation is making a concerted effort to integrate M&E into the foundation's strategy development process. Cargill promotes a simple yet effective evaluation practice model, called the 3D Model:

- 1) **Deliverables** – many people stop M&E activities after creating the deliverable. Although this is where 90 percent of the work goes, this is only the first step of the M&E process for Cargill.
- 2) **Discussion** – this is where the M&E insights are created. Cargill pushes to get internal / external stakeholders together to have a discussion around the deliverable, from which insights emerge that can inform strategic decisions.
- 3) **Decision** – this is where the actionable insights resulting from the discussion are used as input for decision making.

This process is iterative and reinforcing. Cargill also finds it useful to **think about this process in reverse**, particularly as they begin to set up their M&E function in the organization. Cargill identifies the decisions they will need to make in 1-2 years, and then they work backwards to determine what stakeholder discussions will need to take place and what data and information will be needed in a deliverable to inform those discussions.

### CASE EXAMPLE: ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION'S LEARNING FROM FAILURE

RWJF funded the largest clinical investigation on dying ever conducted in America. The project took six years, and cost nearly \$30 million. The project was split into two parts and after the first part, the conclusion seemed obvious: better communications between physicians and patients and their families would mean better care. The second part set out to do this; however, the results were shocking.

RWJF expected success and instead found what appeared to be abject failure. Part two's interventions did nothing to improve patient care or outcomes. It seemed that medical and hospital professionals didn't even pay attention to them. It became apparent the problem was not in the approach but in the system's rejection of scrutiny and change. Old practices were deeply entrenched and institutionally resistant to even the most benign intrusion. They proved the negative. Now the big question remained—where's the positive?

**RWJF's answer: Let's learn from this. And once we know for sure what we know, let's act on it.**

# Customizable Elements

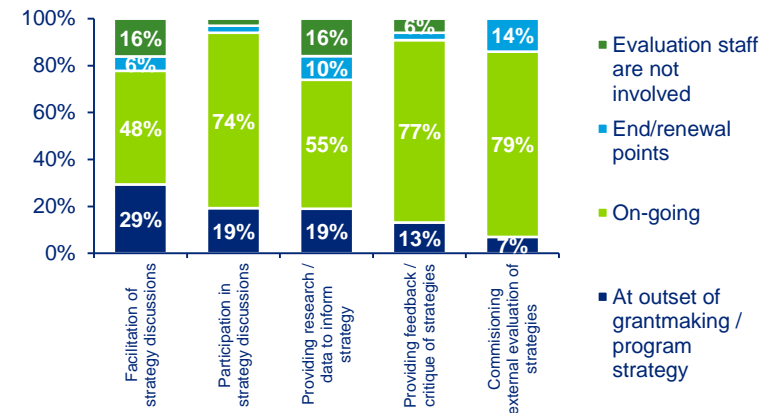
## Processes: 3. Project Lifecycles (1 of 3)



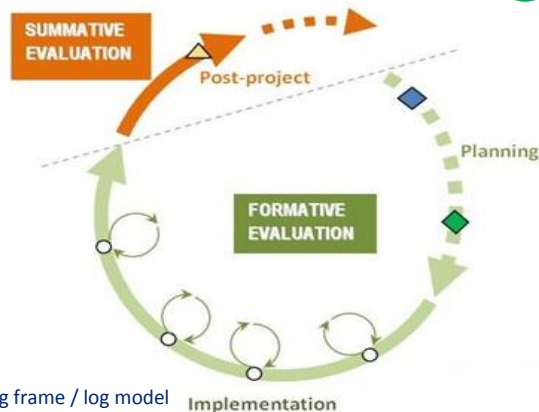
### ✓ DECISION: Where throughout the project lifecycle should we engage M&E?

According to Evaluation Roundtable's 2012 benchmarking study, evaluation is increasingly being integrated throughout the lifecycle of programs and strategies. A majority of M&E units are involved in providing research to inform strategies in an ongoing way, and large majorities (more than 70%) are involved in an ongoing way participating in strategy discussions, providing feedback on strategies and commissioning external evaluations.

M&E integration into the strategy lifecycle ensures that the evaluation data produced is relevant and timely. Among the successful M&E units researched, the aim is largely to align practices ever more tightly with strategy rhythms and decision points, and to ensure that evaluative thinking is embedded early on to improve the overall quality of a project and its assessment.



### THE EVALUATION CYCLE



### + OPTIONS

An implication of evaluation work throughout program and strategy life cycles is that the roles and demands on M&E staff will differ substantially at different stages. External evaluators can be brought in at any stage, and a more developmental evaluation approach can be taken throughout the process in circumstances of complexity or to promote innovation.

- During the design phase, M&E staff may need to conduct in-depth research, literature reviews, field scans, and stakeholder analysis, as well as provide results for pilot or testing work. They need to be responsive and adaptable to changing needs as planning develops.
- The adaptive management phase involves regular and ongoing monitoring and learning processes for continual improvement. M&E staff need to provide timely data about emergent conditions and facilitate their use in decision making.
- The post-project phase will most often involve external evaluators who are methodological specialists; M&E staff may play a role in managing the external process and leading internal coordination activities, such as framing the research questions, writing the RFP and choosing the evaluator. A comprehensive strategy assessment can involve the synthesis of multiple evaluations.

- Log frame / log model
- Evaluation plan
- Regular monitoring reports
- Learning and continual improvement
- Post-project evaluation report
- Longitudinal evaluation and reporting

Source: Evaluation Roundtable, 2012, [Benchmarking Evaluation in Foundations: Do We Know What We Are Doing?](#); Evaluation Toolbox, [Evaluation Life Cycle](#); Scheirer and Schwandt, 2012, [Planning Evaluation through the Program Life Cycle](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 3. Project Lifecycles (2 of 3)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

The integration of evaluation throughout the lifecycle of programs and strategies requires a trusting relationship between M&E and program staff, with the expectation of a more consultative role than when focused on summative evaluations. Close involvement in program strategies increases the importance of substantive knowledge for M&E staff. Close & ongoing involvement increases the possibilities for M&E skill transfer to staff and the development of an evaluative mindset throughout the process.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

#### *Evaluative or consultative role:*

- Is coordination with M&E required by program staff?
- Are M&E staff expected to act as thought partners, coaches and/or advisors to program staff?

#### *Level of centralization of the organization and the unit:*

- Are M&E staff embedded in programs?
- What functions are carried out by program staff?

#### *Staff skill and commitment to data, evidence and learning:*

- What M&E skills do program staff possess?
- Do program staff have the time and willingness to carry out some M&E functions?



### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

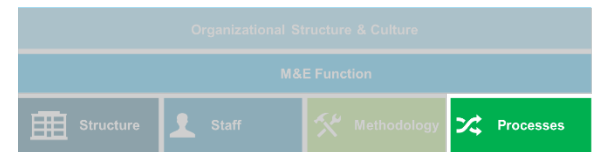
Regardless of M&E involvement through program and strategy lifecycles, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| Evaluation Involved Earlier in Project Lifecycle   |     | Evaluation Involved at End or Renewal Points  |
|--|-----|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ensures benchmark data obtained</li><li>▪ Facilitates an evaluative mindset throughout the lifecycle</li><li>▪ Enables adaptive strategy</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Allows for a more independent stance as evaluators were not brought along throughout the entire process</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Implies M&amp;E will play a more consultative role</li></ul>   | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Implies M&amp;E will play a more evaluative role</li></ul>  |

Source: Monitor Institute Analysis.

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 3. Project Lifecycles (3 of 3)



### CASE EXAMPLE: DAVID & LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The Packard Foundation has worked to integrate M&E into its project lifecycle:

Previously, the expectation was to do mid-course and end-of-strategy reviews. The Foundation now requires a monitoring and evaluation plan for each strategy, in which staff detail their expected information needs over the life of the strategy. This monitoring and evaluation plan is updated annually.

The Foundation is also doing much more developmental evaluation, with the expectation that in-depth formative studies will be helpful in the middle of the strategy lifecycle.

### CASE EXAMPLE: WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Walton Foundation's M&E team works with program staff to set up performance measures on the front end, and the evaluation team assesses on the back end by collecting information from grantees. There are also intermediate checkpoints (annual reporting), and program staff will review those reports.

### CASE EXAMPLE: BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

The Gates Foundation uses a variety of to measure the progress of their strategies:

*A combination of evaluation findings, partner monitoring data, grantee reports, modeling, population-level statistics and other secondary data offer a more cost-effective and accurate alternative to large summative evaluations. The Gates Foundation uses all of these sources, including evaluation where relevant, expert opinion, and judgment to decide how to refine foundation strategies on a regular basis.*

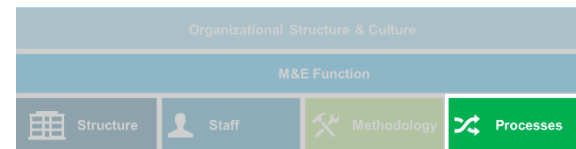
They specifically use evaluation as part of the strategy process for the following:

- To fill a knowledge gap or evaluate a significant policy decision
- To better understand how a cluster of important investments or a specific program or project is performing
- To provide an independent performance assessment when a project is at a critical stage of development

Source: Diana Searce, Packard Foundation Interview; The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2012, [Evaluation Principles and Practices, an Internal Working Paper](#); Steven Buschbaum, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Interview; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, [Evaluation Policy](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 4. Transparency (1 of 4)



### ✓ **DECISION:** How transparent should we be, and on what subjects?

Grantcraft defines transparency such that a “foundation that operates transparently is one that shares what it does, how it does it, and the difference that it makes in a frank, easily accessible, and timely way.” Efforts to promote greater transparency among foundations aren’t new, but they are being given new life through information aggregators like Guidestar, a cultural expectation of greater data availability, and new technology channels for information dissemination.

Benefits of greater transparency may include: less time explaining strategies to grantees, more on-target grant proposals, more effective feedback from stakeholders and more collaborative grantmaking.

### + **OPTIONS & APPROACHES**

Foundation Center’s Glass Pockets Initiative tracks foundations’ online transparency and accountability practices. They’ve identified 23 transparency practices, under categories such as:

- *Basic Information*
- *Governance Policies & Information*
- *HR/Staffing Policies & Information*
- *Financial Information*
- *Grantmaking Information*
- *Performance Measurement*

Of particular relevance are the categories of Grantmaking Information and Performance Measurement:

#### Grantmaking Information

- **Grantmaking Processes:** “Is there a description provided explaining how the foundation selects its grantees?”
- **Grantmaking Strategy/Priorities:** “Are the foundation’s grantmaking priorities or strategy outlined?”
- **Searchable Database of Past Grants or a Categorized Grants List:** “Is there a searchable database of past grants or a grants list categorized by program area?”
- **Statement Regarding How Economic Conditions Affect Grantmaking:** “Has the foundation provided information about how economic conditions affect its grantmaking?”

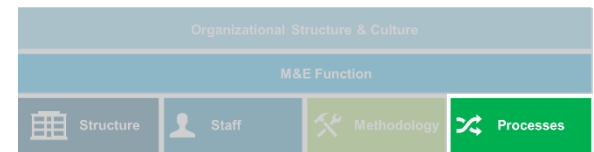
#### Performance Measurement

- **Assessment of Overall Foundation Performance:** “Is there a comprehensive assessment of overall foundation performance and effectiveness...?”
- **Knowledge Center:** “Is there a centralized section of the foundation’s website that provides a collection of the foundation’s program evaluations and lessons learned reports?”
- **Grantee Feedback Mechanism:** “Is there an online mechanism in place so that grantees can regularly provide the foundation with feedback?”
- **Grantee Surveys:** “Has the foundation conducted a periodic survey of its grantees and shared the results publicly?”

Source: Grantcraft, 2014, [Opening Up: Demystifying Funder Transparency](#); The Foundation Center, [Who has Glass Pockets? Indicators](#).

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 4. Transparency (2 of 4)



### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

According to a report from the Center for Effective Philanthropy, a majority of nonprofit leaders say they would like “a lot more” transparency about what foundations are learning. More than 75% also say they want more transparency about the impact that foundations themselves are having. Foundations that are more transparent are perceived to be more helpful to nonprofits, open to developing good working relationships and overall more credible. Among the successful organizations we researched, there were examples of broad transparency around grant process, performance measures, research data and failures.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK

Questions to ask related to organizational structure and culture, function and other design elements include:

#### ***Tolerance for Risk and Failure:***

- What is the level of organizational acceptance of risk and failure?
- Are incentives structured to promote learning from negative outcomes or failure or to penalize staff for negative outcomes (e.g. threat to job, loss of resources)



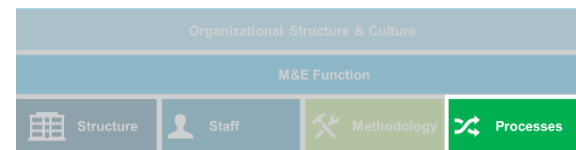
### TRADEOFFS TO MANAGE

Regardless of the level of transparency chosen, there will be tradeoffs to manage:

| More Transparency   |     | Less Transparency  |
|---|-----|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Strengthen credibility</li><li>▪ Increase public trust</li><li>▪ Improve grantee relationships</li><li>▪ Facilitate collaboration</li></ul> | vs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Protect grantees from feeling like they are “outed” or publicly shamed for disappointing results</li></ul> |

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 4. Transparency (3 of 4)



### CASE EXAMPLE: BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

The Gates Foundation's approach to transparency is grounded in their commitment to helping their partners understand what they do and why they do it. Visibility and access to the following information about the investments they make and how they approach their work is intended to improve that understanding.

- **Strategy:** A shared understanding of strategies will provide interested parties the information to assess alignment with the Gates Foundation's goals and objectives. This will strengthen partnerships and create greater opportunities for collaboration.
- **Outcomes:** Information generated during the course of investment activities – in the form of research studies, data sets, evaluation results, investment results and strategy-related analytics – is significant public good. Access to this information is important for accountability, provides valuable learning to the sectors that the Gates Foundation supports, will facilitate faster and more well-informed decision making, and contributes to achieving the impact they seek.
- **Investments and Operations:** Their business processes – such as those for making investments – are better to the extent they are clearly understood and open to feedback.
- **Financials:** Consistent sets of financial data are valuable for clarity, analysis, and accountability. The Gates Foundation aims to publish their information in ways consistent with open data standards so their data provides greater value and context.
- **People:** Sharing who they are along with their responsibilities will personalize the foundation by helping interested parties get to know the people behind the Gates Foundation work, facilitate access to information, and provide greater opportunities for collaboration.

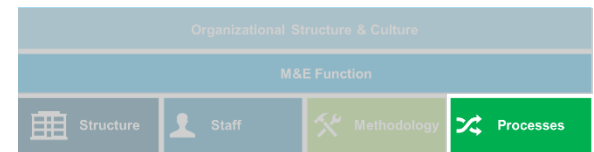
### CASE EXAMPLE: LAURA & JOHN ARNOLD FOUNDATION

The Arnold Foundation is the lead funder of the **Center for Open Science**, an organization that is building free, open-source research tools, promoting the adoption of high-quality methods, and conducting metascience research to better understand the gaps between scientific values and existing practices.

LJAF also supports the **AllTrials initiative** and its campaign to require that all clinical trials—past and present—be registered with full disclosure of study methods and results. In a related effort, they are funding the creation of **Open Trials**, an open, online database that will aggregate information from a wide variety of sources to provide a comprehensive picture of the data and documents associated with all trials of medicines and other treatments from around the world.

# Customizable Elements

## Processes: 4. Transparency (4 of 4)



### CASE EXAMPLE: ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is one of leaders on advocating for transparency among foundations. Some reports call out unsuccessful initiatives, not to express judgement, but rather to share learnings with the broader community. They also provide free access to their data archive to researchers, students, and policymakers. RWJF publishes:

- **Program Result Reports:** Explain the problem addressed, the activities undertaken, the results or findings from the work, lessons for the field, and any post-grant activities—by the grantee or RWJF.
- **RWJF Anthology:** A biennial book series that disseminates learnings from various aspects of RWJF grantmaking. The books, which are produced by RWJF, provide an in-depth look into the Foundation's work improving the nation's health and healthcare through the perspectives of leading health journalists, as well as experts from universities and within the Foundation.
- **RWJF Retrospective Series:** A comprehensive look by independent evaluators at the impact of an entire body of work—groups of programs that were meant to work together synergistically to leverage big changes.
- **RWJF 2013 Assessment Report:** A public version of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's biennial Scorecard, a self-assessment that highlights key indicators of organizational performance.

### CASE EXAMPLE: WILLIAM & FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

The Hewlett Foundation is committed to the principles of openness and transparency. They were among the first foundations to publish the results of their Grantee Perception Report, and they have long provided detailed data about their grants and operations. Moreover, they look for new ways to share information that can help others understand who they are and what they do.

#### Sharing information serves several important functions:

- Helps others build on achievements and avoid similar mistakes
- Attracts new support for effective organizations and strategies while making philanthropy more efficient by reducing the need for duplicative investigation and grants management
- Fosters debate about philanthropy, both generally and in particular areas
- Encourages collaboration by making potential partners visible

# Other Considerations

## Other Considerations

The following recommendations are not specific design elements but are important considerations moving forward. Summarized below is the most common and useful advice from interviewees:

### Don't over-engineer the M&E system

- M&E is ultimately in service of the goals of the organization. It is a means to achieve better performance and ultimately have greater impact. However, it takes time and staff resources, diverting attention from other priorities.
- Flexibility and lightness of touch should be watchwords. What needs to be standardized should be; allow for adaptation and customization where possible.

### Getting buy-in takes time

- Interviewees stressed repeatedly that as leaders they worked carefully and systematically to develop relationships with program staff. Getting buy-in involves gaining the trust of staff members, proving value and showing an understanding of program perspectives, even if M&E is primarily in an evaluative role.
- Interviewees suggested the importance of allowing time for new practices to be fully accepted and implemented throughout the organization. Continued, active leadership support throughout that process is essential.

### Change itself is difficult

- Changes in organizational structure, staffing, methodologies and processes can trigger the same kinds of threat circuitry in staff that are produced in response to physical threats, like pain. Inevitably, regardless of design choices made, this is at its core a change management process.
- Because of leadership and staff turnover, as well as changes in strategy, many of even the highest-performing organizations with respect to M&E have experienced organizational change around their M&E units. Sensitivity to the disruption of change, even if directionally sound, matters.

### M&E design only gets you part-way

- There is no perfect M&E design that will solve all organizational challenges, as there are always dynamic tensions to manage (e.g. between accountability and learning, spending more on M&E or more on programs, etc.).
- When asked to name leading M&E departments, in a number of cases field experts mentioned departments that had been quite active but had declined after the departure of the M&E leader. Continued attentiveness to individual concerns and ongoing clarity about prioritization from leadership and the board helps to mediate those tensions.

Source: Monitor Institute Interviews.

# Appendix

# Appendix

## Exemplars (1 of 2)

|                                | RWJ   | Hewlett  | Walton  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Key Aspects of Org and Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically very academic culture with strong culture of data and evidentiary rigor</li> <li>Research has been a strong part of influence strategy</li> <li>Previously very siloed by program; recently working toward a “one foundation” model</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous president was also viewed as “Chief Evaluator” who fostered strong commitment to M&amp;E</li> <li>Program staff are hired for 8-year tenures. Hiring filters for M&amp;E interest and knowledge</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatively young foundation that’s experienced significant growth</li> <li>Development of Evaluation as a separate unit came as a result of that growth; previously handled by program staff</li> </ul>  |
| M&E Functions                  | <p><b>Name:</b> Research Evaluation and Learning</p> <p><b>Function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable focus on research (~200 reports a year)</li> <li>Have moved to a strong focus on learning</li> <li>Handle high-priority evaluations of interest to the org as a whole</li> </ul> | <p><b>Name:</b> Effective Philanthropy Group</p> <p><b>Function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness and learning (have an org effectiveness officer and an org learning officer)</li> <li>Advise on strategy, consult on evaluation and promote cross-organizational learning</li> </ul> | <p><b>Name:</b> Evaluation Unit</p> <p><b>Function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on both learning and accountability; wanted to create unit that both worked closely with programs and had independence</li> <li>Play a large consultative role in decision-making and strategy</li> <li>Also work with communications to provide proof for their claims</li> </ul> |
| Level of Unit Centralization   | <p><b>Partially Decentralized:</b> Originally had team members entirely dedicated to specific program areas; now split is 30% program, 70% central work</p>   | <p><b>Decentralized to Program:</b> As much as possible, program staff have responsibility for their M&amp;E; central team responsible for cross-organizational work</p>   | <p><b>Decentralized M&amp;E:</b> Some M&amp;E team members are dedicated to specific program areas</p>  |
| Formal Authority of the Leader | VP-level; roughly on par with program leads   | Director-level; on par with program leads  | Director-level; on par with program leads   |

# Appendix

## Exemplars (2 of 2)

|                                    | RWJ   | Hewlett  | Walton   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Staff Numbers and Skills           | <p><b>Numbers:</b> 23 out of ~300 staff; large numbers needed in part because of strong focus on research</p> <p><b>Skill set:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff have formal evaluation training and expertise as well as program content knowledge</li> <li>Strong emphasis on soft skills and substantive knowledge</li> <li>Leader comes out of public health, strategy and evaluation</li> </ul> | <p><b>Numbers:</b> 7 out of ~100 staff</p> <p><b>Skill set:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff have formal evaluation training and expertise as well as program content knowledge</li> <li>Strong emphasis on soft skills</li> <li>Leader has M&amp;E and strategy background</li> </ul> | <p><b>Numbers:</b> 7 out of ~70 staff</p> <p><b>Skill set:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff have formal evaluation training and expertise as well as program content knowledge</li> <li>Emphasis on soft skills, substantive knowledge and methodological knowledge for credibility</li> <li>Leader comes out of programs</li> </ul> |
| Evaluative or Consultative Role    | <p><b>Primarily consultative:</b> Advise program staff with “one foot in” programs and manage centralized functions</p>   | <p><b>Strongly consultative:</b> Aside from board reporting guidelines, staff are free to choose how and whether to evaluate programs and how to promote learning</p>  | <p><b>Consultative and evaluative:</b> Review all evaluations and report progress to the board</p>   |
| Control of Resources               | <p>They have a central budget and pay for the biggest and most strategically important evaluations for the organization. Program teams pay for most evaluations</p>   | <p>Evaluation spending is handled by the programs</p>  | <p>The bulk of evaluation spending is handled by the programs</p>  |
| Methodological Diversity and Rigor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong focus on methodological rigor</li> <li>Mixed methods approach</li> <li>Progress reports use qualitative, survey-based data.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong focus on methodological rigor</li> <li>Mixed methods approach</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong focus on methodological rigor; with a focus on quantitative measures where possible</li> <li>Mixed methods approach</li> </ul>   |
| Other                              | <p>Strong value placed on transparency, and on sharing failures</p>   | <p>Strong value placed on transparency, and on sharing failures</p>  | <p>Growing emphasis on transparency</p>  |

## Appendix: *Interview/Workshop Participant List (1 of 2)*

| Interview Type                           | Interviewee Name  | Title  | Organization                          |
|--|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Donors Practicing Strategic Philanthropy | Daniel Goroff     | Vice President and Program Director                    | Alfred P. Sloan Foundation            |
|  | Debra Joy Perez   | Vice President, Research, Evaluation, and Learning     | Annie E. Casey Foundation             |
|  | Barbara Kibbe     | Director of Organizational Effectiveness               | S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation           |
|  | Steven Buchsbaum  | Deputy Director, Discovery & Translational Sciences    | Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation       |
|  | Marian Mulkey     | Chief Learning Officer                                 | California Healthcare Foundation      |
|  | Rosanna Tran      | Learning & Evaluation Officer                          | California Healthcare Foundation      |
|  | Diana Searce      | Director of Evaluation & Learning                      | David & Lucile Packard Foundation     |
|  | Kelly Fitzsimmons | Vice President / Chief Program & Strategy Officer      | Edna McConnell Clark Foundation       |
|  | Tom Kelly         | Vice President of Knowledge, Evaluation & Learning     | Hawaii Community Foundation           |
|  | Tamara Fox        | Director for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation       | Helmsley Charitable Trust             |
|  | Daniel Silverman  | Vice President for Strategic Services                  | The James Irvine Foundation           |
|  | Kim Ammann Howard | Director of Impact Assessment and Learning             | The James Irvine Foundation           |
|  | Chantell Johnson  | Managing Director, Evaluation                          | John & Catherine MacArthur Foundation |
|  | Kathy Stack       | Vice President of Evidence-based Innovation            | Laura & John Arnold Foundation        |
|  | Ted Chen          | Director of Evaluation                                 | Margaret A. Cargill Foundation        |
|  | Brian Quinn       | Assistant Vice President, Research-Evaluation-Learning | Robert Wood Johnson Foundation        |
|  | Steven Lee        | Managing Director, Income Security                     | Robin Hood Foundation                 |
|  | Ehren Reed        | Director of Evaluation                                 | Skoll Foundation                      |
|  | Marc Holley       | Evaluation Unit Director                               | Walton Family Foundation              |
|  | Amy Arbretton     | Evaluation Officer                                     | William & Flora Hewlett Foundation    |
|  | Fay Twersky       | Director of the Effective Philanthropy Group           | William & Flora Hewlett Foundation    |

## Appendix: *Interview/Workshop Participant List (2 of 2)*

| Interview Type                                  | Interviewee Name     | Title   | Organization  |
|---|----------------------|---|---|
| Donors Using Other Models of Philanthropy       | Venu Aggarwal        | Impact Senior Associate   | Acumen Fund   |
|   | Tom Chapel           | Chief Evaluation Officer  | Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)            |
|   | Lily Zandniapour     | Evaluation Program Manager  | Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS)         |
|   | Vicki Chandler       | Dean of Natural Sciences<br>(Formerly Chief Program Officer, Science at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and presently Scientific Review Board member for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute) | College of Natural Sciences at the Minerva Schools at KGI |
|   | Roy Steiner          | Director of Learning and Impact   | Omidyar Network   |
|   | Mark Kastner         | President   | Science Philanthropy Alliance                             |
|   | Caroline Heider      | Director General and Senior Vice President, Evaluation  | World Bank – Independent Evaluation Group (IEG)           |
|   | Claudio Volonte      | Principal Results Measurement Specialist, Global Economics and Development Impact   | World Bank – International Finance Corporation (IFC)      |
|   | Aaron Holdway        | Managing Results Staff  | World Resources Institute (WRI)                           |
|   | Lindsay Bass         | Manager, Corporate Water Stewardship at World Wildlife Fund   | World Wildlife Fund (WWF)                                 |
| Implementers (grantees, businesses, nonprofits) | Peter York           | Founder, CEO, and Chief Innovator   | Algorhythm  |
|   | Gale Berkowitz       | Deputy Director   | CalEQRO   |
|   | Ellie Buteau         | Vice President, Research  | Center for Effective Philanthropy                         |
|   | Julia Coffman        | Founder and Director  | Center for Evaluation Innovation / Eval Roundtable        |
|   | Lori Bartczak        | Vice President, Programs  | Grantmakers for Effective Organizations                   |
|   | Heidi McAnnally-Linz | Manager, Communications and Development   | Innovations for Poverty Action                            |
|   | Lindsey Shaughnessy  | Research Manager  | Innovations for Poverty Action                            |
|   | Sue Sheridan         | Director of Patient Engagement  | Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)      |
|   | Patti Patrizi        | Independent Consultant  | Patrizi Associates / Evaluation Roundtable                |
|   | Jeff Milder          | Lead Scientist, Evaluation & Research   | Rainforest Alliance                                       |
|   | Nathan Huttner       | Principal   | Redstone Strategy Group                                   |
|   | Kathy King           | Project Manager   | Redstone Strategy Group                                   |
|   | Lance Potter         | Independent Consultant  | The Potter Group  |
|   | George Overholser    | CEO and Co-Founder  | Third Sector Capital Partners                             |
|   | Julie Rainwater      | Director  | UC Davis Evaluation Team                                  |
|   | Stuart Henderson     | Associate Director  | UC Davis Evaluation Team                                  |

# Appendix

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