

Leveraging Evaluation & Evidence for Equitable Recovery

Building a Strong Foundation

Government policymakers have the opportunity to improve the lives of residents and the quality of their communities by identifying and investing in programs that are proven to work. Achieving outcomes like economic mobility and gender and racial equity, requires an understanding of which programs do – and do not – work. Impact evaluations provide vital insights into which programs are successful, for whom, and in what contexts. This knowledge empowers government leaders to innovate and refine their services, ensuring that they are able to deliver the highest quality services for their residents. By investing in evaluations, leaders demonstrate their commitment to making informed, effective decisions that can truly benefit their communities.

Wherever your government currently stands in its journey to embedding evidence-based decision-making into its processes, this framework will help you assess what capacities you should invest in, in order to develop an impactful evaluation policy. There are dozens of distinct factors in evaluation readiness that can help a jurisdiction build and sustain a culture of evidence and evaluation. Some of these are more traditional; the ability to collect and use data or developing a logic model, while some reflect a growing movement to center equity by engaging residents to solicit their input on policy priorities and solutions. As you build your own internal culture of data and evidence, we hope that this framework can help you navigate the process.



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The framework is divided into four capacity areas:

- Readiness Foundations
- Practices and Policies
- Leadership and Culture
- Evaluation Planning

Together, all of the components help governments develop their capacity to invest in what works in order to equitably improve outcomes for all residents.

Assessing Your Government's Needs

It can be difficult to start making progress without an assessment of where you are starting from. This assessment tool will help you to identify what skills you already have in your government and where you need to build more, in order to achieve a sustainable culture of evidence and evaluation.

For each section, select whether your team's capacity is "not at all," "somewhat," or "yes." Once you've made your selection, add the totals for each column. At the end of your assessment, you will add the totals up and see where your government falls along the evaluation readiness continuum. Buckle up, it is time to begin your evaluation journey!



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Focus Area #1: Readiness Foundations

Evaluation Readiness Foundations are your essential capacities, meaning that without at least one or more of them, building a culture of evidence-based decision-making would be difficult. These include:

- Striving for equitable outcomes
- Excitement and understanding from your leadership team
- Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data
- Genuinely incorporating the voice of community members

Think of your government's strengths and areas of opportunity in these evaluation readiness foundations. When you're ready, rate your government's readiness using the rubric below.

Area	Capacity	Definition	Not at All	Somewhat	Yes
Foundations	Aiming for Equitable Outcomes	You have an equity definition that reflects your community and you start your planning and budgeting with the equitable outcomes you want to achieve in mind.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Supportive Executive Leadership	Your executive leader and their senior team believe that evaluation and evidence are essential and incorporate them into leadership structures.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Knowing Your Data Basics	You know what kind of data you are able to collect, how to disaggregate data to better understand your work and you know how to use intake forms and surveys to collect current, actionable data that will help with program implementation.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Collecting Community Input	You build trust with community members by including their input in your government's plans, practices, and decisions and use a variety of engagement tactics to understand community voice.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐

Add Columns

TOTAL

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Focus Area #2: Practices & Policies

Knowing when and how to invest in evaluations and evidence-based initiatives – and regularly engaging in work that incorporates these practices – enables your government to more effectively identify and address systemic inequalities. This portion of the assessment clarifies the capacities needed to create sustainable practices and policies around evidence and evaluation.

Reflect on your government's evaluation practices and policies and use the assessment below to determine your government's capacity. When you're ready, rate your government's evaluation practices and policies using the rubric below.

Area	Capacity	Definition	Not at All	Somewhat	Yes
Practices & Policies	Investing in Evidence Based Initiatives	You know how to identify evidence-based models, figure out whether they meet your community needs, and adapt them in your local context.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Embedding an Evidence and Evaluation Policy	You have created an evaluation policy that commits to rigorous evaluations and guides evaluation design within planning processes.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Using Logic Models	You regularly develop logic models for your initiatives to help plan program implementation and evaluation.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Committing to Equitable Practices	Your approach to evaluating programs and practices is aligned with your equity goals and considers the effects of research on community members.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐

Add Columns

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TOTAL

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Focus Area #3: Leadership & Culture

Leadership and culture are the human elements that make up your decision-making systems. Developing a culture of evidence and evaluation, focused on equity, is a long-term endeavor requiring time and commitment. This portion of the assessment can help identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth, making the cultural transformation more manageable.

When you're ready, rate your government's leadership and culture evaluation capacity using the rubric below.

Area	Capacity	Definition	Not at All	Somewhat	Yes
Leadership & Culture	Building a Culture of Evidence and Evaluation	You have incorporated the importance of evidence and evaluations into onboarding and training and have professional development for staff to build their ability to use data.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Getting Internal Buy-In	Across the government, you have a culture that supports evidence-use and understands why it is critical for the success of their work and initiatives.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Budgeting for Evaluations	You have resources that are available for rigorous evaluations and have an understanding of the costs and processes associated with evaluation planning.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Committing to Evidence and Evaluation	Your executive leader publicly commits to the government's use of evidence and evaluation and uses data and evidence in external communications.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐

Add Columns

TOTAL

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Focus Area #4: Evaluation Planning

Having a robust capacity for evaluation planning enables you to know what you're looking for when you design your impact evaluation process, how to manage essential partnerships, and how to share your findings.

When you're ready, rate your team's evaluation planning capacity using the rubric below.

Area	Capacity	Definition	Not at All	Somewhat	Yes
Evaluation Planning	Designing Evaluations	You are able to scope and design feasible and ethical evaluations that assess programs' impacts on your community.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Selecting the Right Evaluator	You have a process to identify and select an external partner to run rigorous evaluations and a contracting process for those partnerships.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Managing Evaluation Partnerships	You have a senior leader and team with the capacity to manage partnerships with external researchers to run evaluations.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐
	Sharing What You Learn	You are committed to and have plans for communicating the results of any evaluation with your community members in formats that are accessible and usable.	0 ☐	1 ☐	2 ☐

Add Columns

TOTAL

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Scoring Guide

Tally up the points you earned based on your completed assessment in each category and see which category your government falls into. Follow the next steps listed under each category to continue along your evaluation journey.

Leader (24-32 points):

You have made excellent progress on your capacities.

As a next step you might:

- Apply for our [2024 LEVER training sprint](#) to formalize these practices by creating an evaluation policy and action plan; or
- Apply for [the 2024 Evaluation Incubator](#) to learn how to run a randomized evaluation on a program you're piloting.

Explorer (12-23 points):

You have been building your capacities, but may want to consider learning more about the capacities that you haven't prioritized in the past.

As a next step you might:

- Explore joining [the What Works Cities program](#); or engage with our [State Standard of Excellence](#) to learn more and see examples of best practices.
- Email us at recovery@results4america.org to learn about a monthly LEVER Learning Community to learn more about the different components of this evaluation framework, and what tools and resources will help you achieve your evidence and evaluation goals.
- [Sign up](#) to receive our Evaluation Policy Playbook launching in early 2024.

Beginner (0 - 11 points):

You haven't spent a lot of time developing these capacities, so it's a great time to start building!

As a next step you might:

- Use our [landscape analysis tool](#) to build a team that can help you start your evaluation journey; or
- [Sign up](#) for our LEVER mailing list to receive new resources throughout 2024 and stories from other jurisdictions on their evaluation journeys.

We have many resources available to support you through the process. Reach out to us at recovery@results4america.org to find out more about the resources we have available.