

# HHS/ASPE Webinar Series: Developing and Using a Learning Agenda Approach to Evidence-Building

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## Webinar 7:

**Dr. Demetra Nightingale (Urban Institute)**

**Thursday, August 29, 2019**

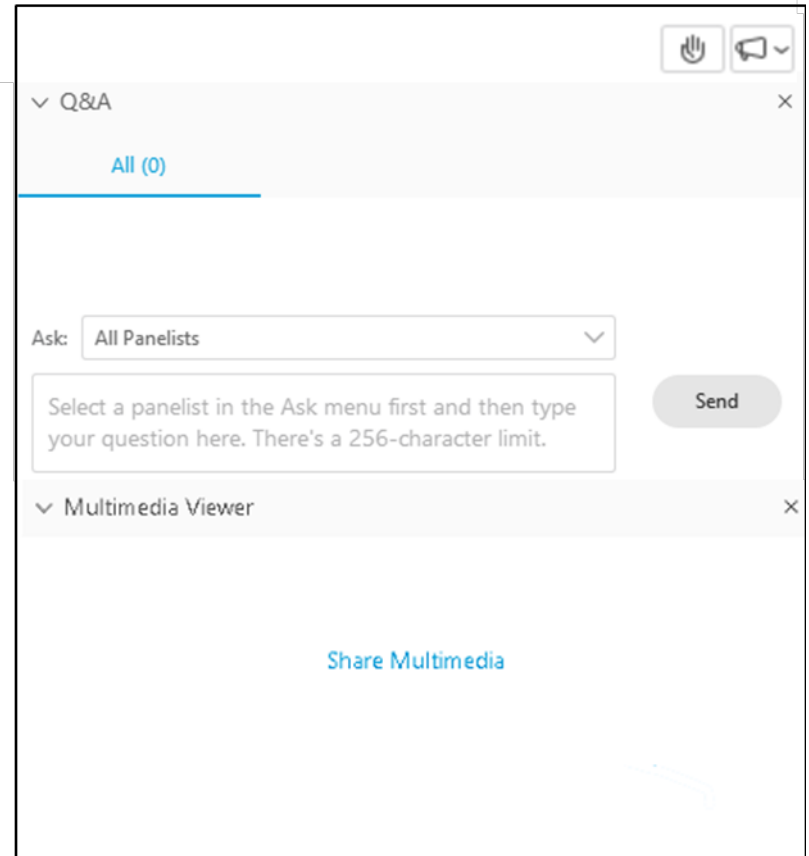
**12:00–1:00 p.m. EDT**



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

# Webinar Logistics

- Mute phone, unless speaking
- Q and A
- Hand raising
- Closed-captioning (multimedia viewer)



# Agenda

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<b>12:00–12:05</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Jessica McNab (Mathematica)</b>
<b>12:05–12:15</b>	<b>Recap of webinar series and events to date</b>	<b>Amanda Cash (ASPE)</b>
<b>12:15–12:45</b>	<b>Speaker presentation</b>	<b>Demetra Nightingale (Urban Institute)</b>
<b>12:45–12:55</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>12:55–1:00</b>	<b>Wrap-up and next steps</b>	<b>Jessica McNab</b>

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# Meet the Speakers

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## **Jessica McNab, Researcher and Task Lead (Mathematica)**

Jessica leads curriculum development and facilitates shared learning for technical assistance projects focused on quality improvement and delivery system reform. In previous roles, she led a team of improvement specialists at a managed care hospital system and directed technical assistance focused on rapid cycle improvement in hospitals.



## **Amanda Cash, Acting Director, Division of Data Policy (ASPE)**

Dr. Cash's portfolio includes research on evaluation methodologies that are appropriate for complex federal programs. She co-leads the federal Task Force for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria. Her office is coordinating and leading implementation of Title I of the Evidence Act, which is focused on implementing evidence-building and evaluation plans. An epidemiologist by training, Dr. Cash now works primarily on evaluation, evidence, and antimicrobial resistance.



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# Meet the Speakers – Cont'd

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## **Demetra Smith Nightingale, PhD, Institute Fellow (Urban Institute)**

Demetra Nightingale is an Institute fellow at the Urban Institute, where her research focuses on social, economic, and labor policy issues. She was the chief evaluation officer at the US Department of Labor from 2011 to 2016, where she developed what is recognized as one of the premier evaluation units in the federal government. Before joining the Department of Labor, Nightingale was at the Urban Institute for three decades, conducting research and evaluations on employment, labor, welfare, and other social and economic policies and programs, and at the Johns Hopkins University for seven years, where she taught graduate courses in social policy and program evaluation. She is also a professorial lecturer at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University, teaching graduate courses in program evaluation, integrating evaluation, and performance management in the context of evidence-based policymaking.

# Series Objectives

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- The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) is the policy think tank for the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Our office is leading the implementation efforts for Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act).
- The webinar series aims to do the following:
  - Consider the array of strategies to create and implement evidence-building and evaluation plans as required by the Evidence Act.
  - Support an ongoing, readily accessible resource for federal agency staff and others who may be implementing evaluation planning efforts.
  - Support the creation of a summary report that will draw from the webinar series and other relevant literature.



# Series Recap

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Webinar 1: July 18, 2019 - NIH, Drs. Marina Volkov and Ajay Vatave

Webinar 2: July 23, 2019 - USDA, FAS, Ellie Morefield

Webinar 3: July 30, 2019 - CNCS, Dr. Mary Hyde

Webinar 4: August 8, 2019 - NSF, Cynthia Phillips and Rebecca Kruse

Webinar 5: August 13, 2019 – SBA, Brittany Borg

Webinar 6: August 28, 2019 – ACF, Emily Schmitt



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# Polls: Baseline Data

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- Learning interests
- Stage of implementation



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**URBAN**

· I N S T I T U T E · E L E V A T E · T H E · D E B A T E

# Learning Agendas & Evidence to Inform Programs and Policies

Demetra Smith Nightingale, PhD  
Institute Fellow, Urban Institute  
HHS-ASPE Webinar Series  
August 2019



# Overview

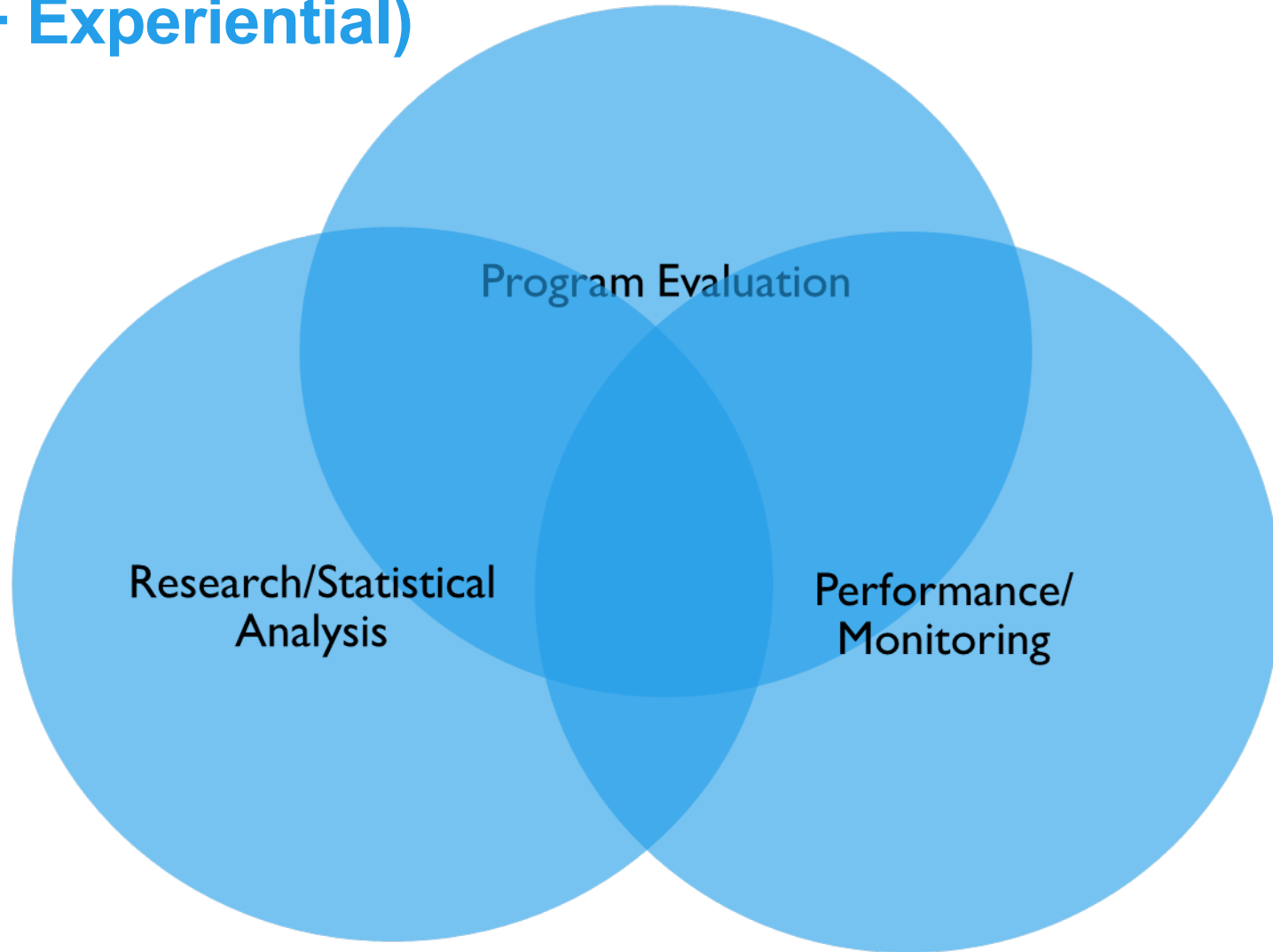
- Context
- Lessons and insights from Department of Labor experience
- Ways agencies can use learning agendas to strengthen their use of evidence regardless of current capacity
- Urban Institute Federal Evaluation Forum
  - Webinars, workshops, conferences, website
  - <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/evidence-based-policy-capacity>

# Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act & Draft Data Action Plan

- **Learning Agenda.** Requires a multi-year “systematic” plan (Learning Agenda) to identify and address key research/evaluation questions related to policies, programs, regulations; and with input from stakeholders
- **Evaluation Plan.** Requires an “evaluation plan” about how the key questions will be addressed; broad definition of “evaluation”
- **Senior Chief Officers.** Requires each agency to have an Evaluation Officer and a Statistical Officer (in the statistical unit) who, among other duties coordinate in developing the learning agenda and evaluation plan; requires a Chief Data Officer for data access and privacy.
- **Data Access and Privacy.** Requires federal data be publicly available (as the default) with privacy and confidentiality provisions; and develop, maintain and update a data inventory.
- **Evidence Capacity.** Agency activities (e.g., plans, clearinghouses) and cross-agency coordination (e.g., data access, data synchronization, open data, joint studies and evaluation).

\*\*\*NO SINGLE WAY THAT ALL AGENCIES MUST PROCEED\*\*\*

# Evidence = Program Evaluation + Performance Monitoring + Research & Statistical Analysis (+ Experiential)

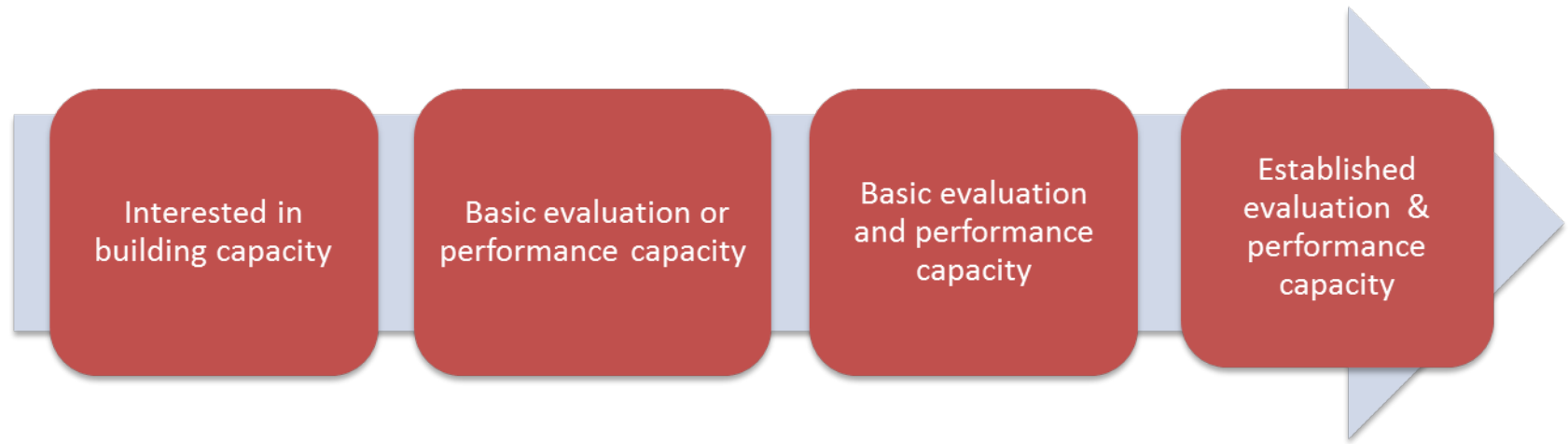


# Many types of “evaluations”

Type of Evaluation	Recognizable Features
Experimental Net Impact Analysis	Causal impact; Random assignment; control group
Quasi/non-experimental Net Impact Analysis	Causal impact; multivariate statistical modeling; comparison group(s)
Cost-Benefit/Cost-effectiveness Analysis	Cost analysis, ROI
Statistical, Performance and Outcome Analysis	Program outcome analysis and performance measurement; participant tracking; statistical simulations
Implementation & Process Analysis/Implementation Science	Field-based organizational analysis; program and service descriptions; observational analysis; surveys; qualitative & quantitative analysis

# Evidence capacity “continuum” and models

- Agencies are at different stages in terms of their evidence culture and activities:



# Agencies have different types of departmental-level Evaluation Offices/Officers

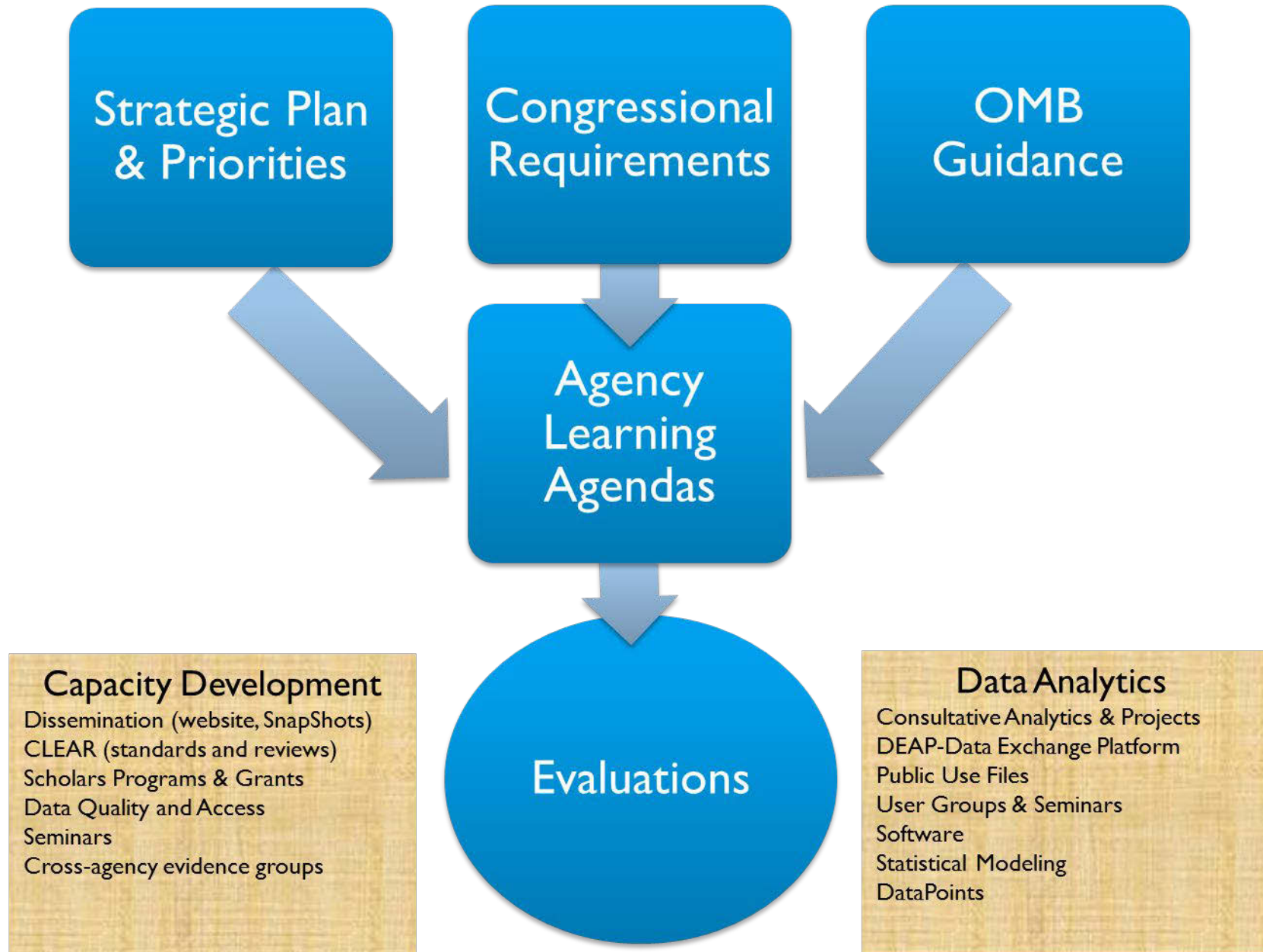
<p><b>Broad Chief Evaluation Office/Officer (mid-size and small departments)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Responsibility :</b> Provides expertise, coordination &amp; guidance on evaluation policies and activities department-wide; funds/directs many evaluations</li> <li>• <b>Autonomy:</b> Officer leads an independent evaluation-only (or primarily) office and dedicated evaluation staff</li> <li>• <b>Funding:</b> Dedicated funding for evaluation staff and evaluations</li> <li>• <b>Sub agency role:</b> Sub agencies may also have evaluation offices, funding, responsibilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordinating Chief Evaluation Office/Officer (large departments)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Responsibility:</b> Provides expertise, coordination &amp; guidance on evaluation policies and activities department-wide; funds/directs few if any evaluations</li> <li>• <b>Autonomy:</b> Officer leads an evaluation-only (or primarily) office; small staff</li> <li>• <b>Funding:</b> Minimal if any dedicated funding for evaluation</li> <li>• <b>Sub agency role:</b> Sub agencies have main responsibility for evaluations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating Chief Evaluation Officer</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Responsibility:</b> Provides expertise, coordination &amp; guidance on evaluation policies and activities department-wide; funds/directs few if any evaluations</li> <li>• <b>Autonomy:</b> Office and Officer have evaluation responsibilities but also other related responsibilities (e.g., planning, policymaking, performance, budgeting)</li> <li>• <b>Funding:</b> Minimal if any dedicated funding for evaluation</li> <li>• <b>Sub agency role:</b> Sub agencies have main responsibility for evaluations</li> </ul>

# Many agencies and sub-agencies also have learning agendas and evaluation plans

- **Learning agendas** prioritize questions/issues on which there are questions that research and evaluation might address
  - Ideally multi-year
  - Ideally multiple dimensions of one or more issues
  - Priorities reflect administration, statutory requirements, management and operational issues and needs
  - May be public in some form
- **Evaluation plans** include expected evaluations and research to address priority questions/issues to be initiated
  - Evaluation plans are annually
  - Depends on resources/funding
  - Public in some form (e.g., forecast notice, Fed Register, website notice)
- Some agencies/subagencies use the terms interchangeably



# DOL Example: Learning Agenda Process



# DOL Example: Learning Agenda Components

- **Multi-year Learning Agenda**
  - 5-year Agenda developed at subagency level and rolled up to departmental level for the annual evaluation plan
  - Update annually to remain relevant, reprioritize, etc.
  - Voluntary inclusion in sub-agency strategic/performance plans
- **Learning Priorities:** key topics/issues/questions for research or evaluation (~ 3-5 per subagency/agency), e.g.:
  - A. Performance issues (e.g., factors associated with particular outcomes for particular agency or program)
  - B. Program operational issues (e.g., impact/effectiveness of particular strategies/ services/programs; exploratory studies)
  - C. Special initiatives (e.g., effect of new or proposed initiative or program; background analysis)
  - D. Evidence-building issues (e.g., cross-agency data sharing, analytic skills, topical briefings, TA/training, data access, data synchronization, methods, coordination)

# DOL Example: Eval. Plan Outline/Categories

- Annual Departmental Level Evaluation Plan specifies studies, evaluations, and evaluation-related activities planned for the coming year and funded mainly by CEO, to address priority questions in the Learning Agenda
  - Includes new evaluations and continuing studies and activities
  - Annual Plan submitted to Congressional committees (required before exercising evaluation set-aside funding)
  - Summary Plan published in public notice (Federal Register); & posted on website
- Outline/Categories in Departmental Evaluation Plan:
  - I. **Statistical and Analytic Studies** (e.g., economic/demographic statistical analysis, simulations, evaluability assessments, implementation evaluations, background data analysis)
  - II. **Performance Analysis** (e.g., statistical analysis of activity, outputs/outcomes, performance and metrics)
  - III. **Basic Evaluations** (e.g., descriptive statistical analysis of program activities, trends, costs, services, performance/organizational assessments)
  - IV. **Impact Evaluations** (causal [net] impact studies, experimental or non-experimental, clinical trials)
  - V. **Capacity-building Activities** (e.g., logic models, open data principles, learning agendas, methodological skills, data integration/synchronization, evidence-based clearinghouses, research registries/archives, staff seminars, internships, evaluation TA, cross-departmental collaborations)

# Lesson: Important to Obtain Stakeholder Input for Evaluation Plans/Agendas

- Internal stakeholders
  - Collaborative effort of program/operational offices and evaluation specialists (webinars, requests for priorities/interests)
  - Field office input (either at initial stage or to review drafts)
  - Agency leadership input
- External stakeholders
  - Congressional committees; OMB offices (retain inquiries)
  - Research/academic community (Request for Information, webinars)
  - Public comment (e.g., Request for Information, or public notice of draft plan in Federal Register)
  - Optional contractor assistance to obtain and compile stakeholder input

# Lesson: Include capacity-building in Learning Agendas

- In addition to specific evaluations and specific learning questions, learning agendas should include capacity-building activities, e.g.:
  - Staff development—training
  - Systems capacity development –TA and training for field offices, services providers, evaluators/researchers
  - Data systems improvement—access, sharing
  - Public Use Guidelines
  - Evidence-based clearinghouses, archives, registries

# Lesson: Use Learning Agenda to Include Evaluation in Budgeting

- Use Learning Agendas to draft a chapter (or section) in the annual agency budget submission to OMB
- Cite relevant findings from research or evaluation for new budget requests
- Indicate evidence-building in budget narrative when possible
- Consider tiered funding for discretionary grants when possible (e.g., higher grant amounts for scale-up replication of evidence-based strategy; basic grant amount for innovation with rigorous evaluation to test concept or effectiveness)
- Consider budget request for capacity-building as indicated in learning agendas (e.g., clearinghouses, fellowships, staff development, data analytics/sciences)
- Consider creative/flexible funding mechanisms to fund evaluations in learning agenda (e.g., evaluation set asides, pooled/blended funding across agencies and subagencies)

# Lesson: Use Learning Agenda in Strategic Plan

- Include an evidence chapter in Strategic Plan
- Align evaluations to strategic priorities
- Include cross agency topics in learning agenda; consider CAPS (cross-agency priorities) and cross-agency evidence-building (e.g., pooled funding, data sharing/data access)

# Urban Institute Federal Evaluation Workshop Series

- Facilitates an exchange of information across agencies to share lessons and practices
  - Building evidence
  - Expanding rigorous analysis
  - Using results of evaluations and evidence in decision-making and management
  - Sessions cover issues at different points on the maturity continuum
  - Options to participate via Webinar or phone



# Information and Contact

- Demetra Nightingale [dnightingale@urban.org](mailto:dnightingale@urban.org)
- Urban Institute web site <https://www.urban.org/>
- Evidence Capacity-building page  
<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/evidence-based-policy-capacity>

# Q&A

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What questions do you have for Demetra?



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials

The screenshot shows the Mathematica website homepage. The browser address bar displays <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/>. The navigation menu includes links for [About](#), [Careers](#), and [Contact](#). Below the navigation menu, the main content area features a large green banner with the text "Progress together" and a sub-headline: "Mathematica's expertise at the intersection of data, methods, policy, and practice helps improve well-being around the world. We collaborate with our partners to translate big questions into insights that enrich programs, refine strategies, and enhance understanding." A "VIEW VIDEO >" button is located below the text. A red arrow points to the "EVIDENCE" link in the navigation menu. Below the banner, there are two sections: "TOPICS IN THE NEWS" (partially obscured by a dark blue bar) and "Featured Evidence & Insights".



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials – Cont'd

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Mathematica website. The address bar shows the URL <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/evidence>. The page header includes the Mathematica logo with the tagline "Progress Together" and a navigation menu with links for "About", "Careers", and "Contact". Below the navigation menu, there are links for "EVIDENCE", "INSIGHTS", "FOCUS AREAS", "SERVICES & PRODUCTS", and "EVENTS". A search icon is located to the right of the "EVENTS" link, with a red arrow pointing to it. The main content area features a "HOME" breadcrumb, "EVIDENCE" sub-header, and a "PRINT SUBSCRIBE SHARE" menu. The "Evidence" section contains a paragraph of text and a list of categories: "EVIDENCE", "Publications", "Projects", and "Working Papers". Red arrows point to each of these categories. Below the list is a "RECENT EVIDENCE" section with a link for "Value-Based Care Service for States".



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials – Cont'd

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/evidence/projects#q=aspe&sort=relevancy>. The browser's address bar and search bar both contain the text "aspe". A red arrow points to the search bar. The website header includes the Mathematica logo with the tagline "Progress Together" and navigation links for "About", "Careers", "Contact", "EVIDENCE", "INSIGHTS", "FOCUS AREAS", "SERVICES & PRODUCTS", and "EVENTS". Below the header, there are links for "HOME", "EVIDENCE", and "PROJECTS", along with "PRINT", "SUBSCRIBE", and "SHARE" options. The main content area displays search results for "aspe". On the left, there are two filter panels: "Content Date" with a range of "Nov 15, 2010 - Dec 31, 2019" and "Focus Area" with checkboxes for "Health" (12 results) and "Human Services" (9 results). On the right, the results are sorted by "RELEVANCY" and show a result titled "Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making". A brief description of the webinar series is provided below the title.

Content Date

Nov 15, 2010 - Dec 31, 2019

Focus Area

- Health 12
- Human Services 9

Results 1-10 of 23 for aspe

RELEVANCY DATE

[Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making](#)

This webinar series and summary report consider the array of federal agency strategies to create and implement evidence-building and evaluation plans (i.e., learning agendas) as a result of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act).



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials – Cont'd

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Mathematica website. The URL is <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/webinar-series-and-summary-report-on-developing-and-using-evidence-building-and-evaluation-plans-for>. The page features the Mathematica logo with the tagline "Progress Together" and a navigation menu with links for EVIDENCE, INSIGHTS, FOCUS AREAS, SERVICES & PRODUCTS, and EVENTS. The main content area is titled "Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making" (2019–2019). It includes a "Prepared for" section listing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. A paragraph of text describes the webinar series and summary report. To the right, there is a "Related Staff" section listing Jessica Heeringa, Daniel Finkelstein, and Leslie Foster, each with a "Read More" link. A red arrow points to a green button labeled "RELATED PUBLICATIONS" at the bottom of the staff list.

HOME PROJECT PRINT SUBSCRIBE SHARE

## Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making

2019–2019

**Prepared for** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

This webinar series and summary report consider the array of federal agency strategies to create and implement evidence-building and evaluation plans (i.e., learning agendas) as a result of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act ([Evidence Act](#)). These materials serve as ongoing, readily accessible resources for federal agency staff and others who may be implementing evidence building and evaluation plans. Please visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation's website to access a listing of select [federal evaluation resources](#).

**Related Staff**

**Jessica Heeringa**  
[Read More](#)

**Daniel Finkelstein**  
[Read More](#)

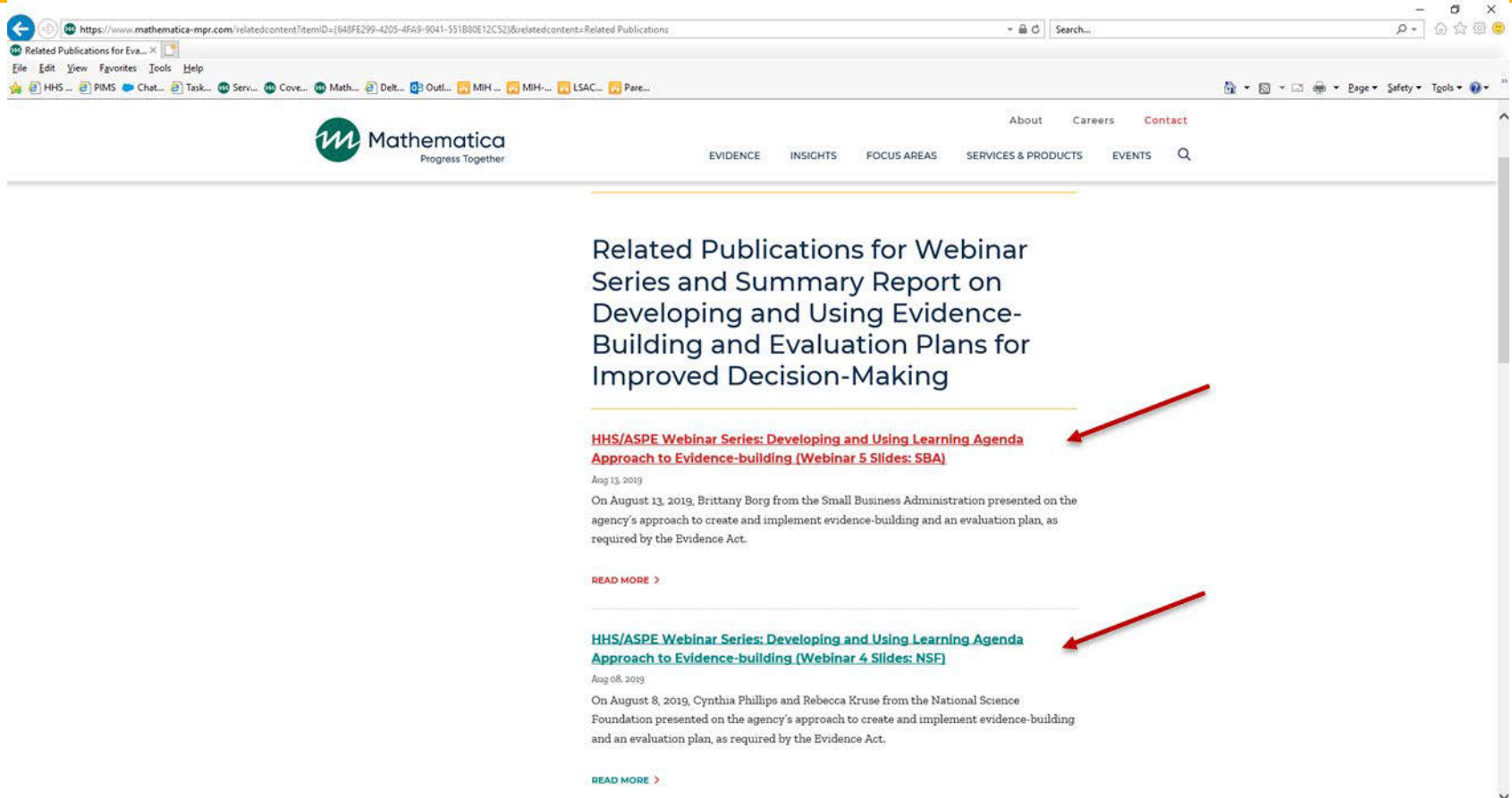
**Leslie Foster**  
[Read More](#)

**RELATED PUBLICATIONS**



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials – Cont'd



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Mathematica website. The URL is [https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/relatedcontent?itemID=\[648FE299-4205-4FA9-9041-551B80E12C52\]&relatedcontent=Related Publications](https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/relatedcontent?itemID=[648FE299-4205-4FA9-9041-551B80E12C52]&relatedcontent=Related%20Publications). The page features the Mathematica logo with the tagline "Progress Together" and a navigation menu with links for "EVIDENCE", "INSIGHTS", "FOCUS AREAS", "SERVICES & PRODUCTS", "EVENTS", "About", "Careers", and "Contact".

## Related Publications for Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making

**[HHS/ASPE Webinar Series: Developing and Using Learning Agenda Approach to Evidence-building \(Webinar 5 Slides: SBA\)](#)**

Aug 13, 2019

On August 13, 2019, Brittany Borg from the Small Business Administration presented on the agency's approach to create and implement evidence-building and an evaluation plan, as required by the Evidence Act.

[READ MORE >](#)

**[HHS/ASPE Webinar Series: Developing and Using Learning Agenda Approach to Evidence-building \(Webinar 4 Slides: NSF\)](#)**

Aug 08, 2019

On August 8, 2019, Cynthia Phillips and Rebecca Kruse from the National Science Foundation presented on the agency's approach to create and implement evidence-building and an evaluation plan, as required by the Evidence Act.

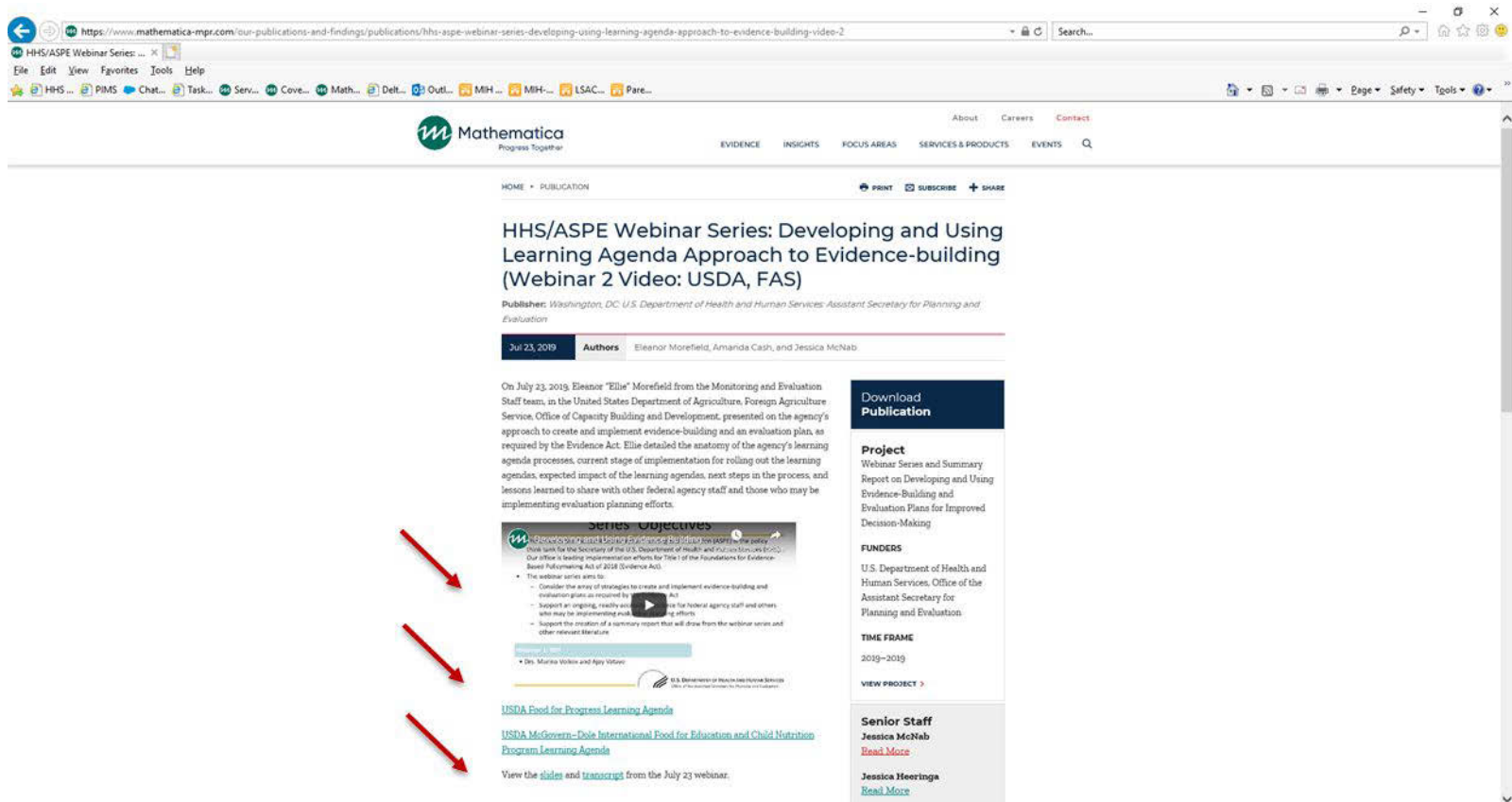
[READ MORE >](#)

Two red arrows point from the right side of the page to the two publication entries.



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# Wrap-up: Access to Materials – Cont'd



<https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/hhs-aspe-webinar-series-developing-using-learning-agenda-approach-to-evidence-building-video-2>

**Mathematica**  
Progress Together

EVIDENCE INSIGHTS FOCUS AREAS SERVICES & PRODUCTS EVENTS

HOME • PUBLICATION

PRINT SUBSCRIBE SHARE

## HHS/ASPE Webinar Series: Developing and Using Learning Agenda Approach to Evidence-building (Webinar 2 Video: USDA, FAS)

**Publisher:** Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

**Jul 23, 2019** **Authors:** Eleanor Morefield, Amanda Cash, and Jessica McNab

On July 23, 2019, Eleanor "Ellie" Morefield from the Monitoring and Evaluation Staff team, in the United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agriculture Service, Office of Capacity Building and Development, presented on the agency's approach to create and implement evidence-building and an evaluation plan, as required by the Evidence Act. Ellie detailed the anatomy of the agency's learning agenda processes, current stage of implementation for rolling out the learning agendas, expected impact of the learning agendas, next steps in the process, and lessons learned to share with other federal agency staff and those who may be implementing evaluation planning efforts.

**Download Publication**

**Project**  
Webinar Series and Summary Report on Developing and Using Evidence-Building and Evaluation Plans for Improved Decision-Making

**FUNDERS**  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

**TIME FRAME**  
2019–2019

**VIEW PROJECT >**

**Senior Staff**  
Jessica McNab  
[Read More](#)  
Jessica Heeringa  
[Read More](#)

**Series Objectives**

Our Office of Health and Human Services is leading implementation efforts for Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act).

- The webinar series aims to:
  - Consider the array of strategies to create and implement evidence-building and evaluation plans as required by the Evidence Act
  - Support an ongoing, readily accessible resource for federal agency staff and others who may be implementing such efforts
  - Support the creation of a summary report that will draw from the webinar series and other relevant literature

**Presented At:**  
Dr. Marina Wilson and Ajay Vohra

**USDA Food for Progress Learning Agenda**

**USDA, McGovern–Dole International Pool for Education and Child Nutrition Program Learning Agenda**

View the [slides](#) and [transcript](#) from the July 23 webinar.



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# Webinar Evaluation

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- Quality
- Expectations (objectives)
- Content
- Actionability



# Wrap-Up

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- Project page: <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/webinar-series-and-summary-report-on-developing-and-using-evidence-building-and-evaluation-plans-for>



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# Thank You!

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Please send feedback, comments, or questions to the following address:

ASPE Evidence-Building Team

[aspevidencebuilding@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:aspevidencebuilding@mathematica-mpr.com)



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