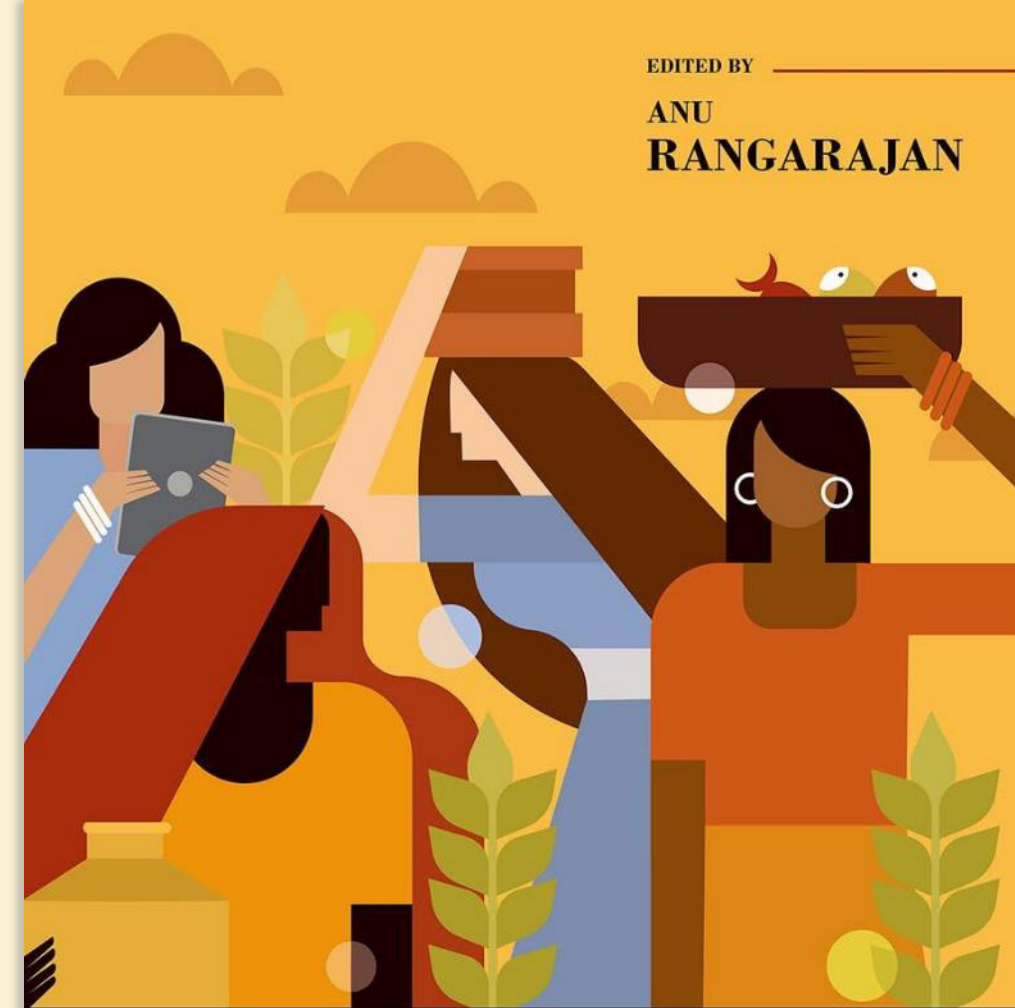# Improving the Impact of Social Programs Through a Comprehensive Approach to Design and Evaluation

Thursday, January 25, 2024

Washington, DC and Online

Mathematica — Progress Together

APPAM — ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

EDITED BY

ANU RANGARAJAN

The Oxford Handbook of PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

Welcome

Paul Decker
President and CEO
Mathematica

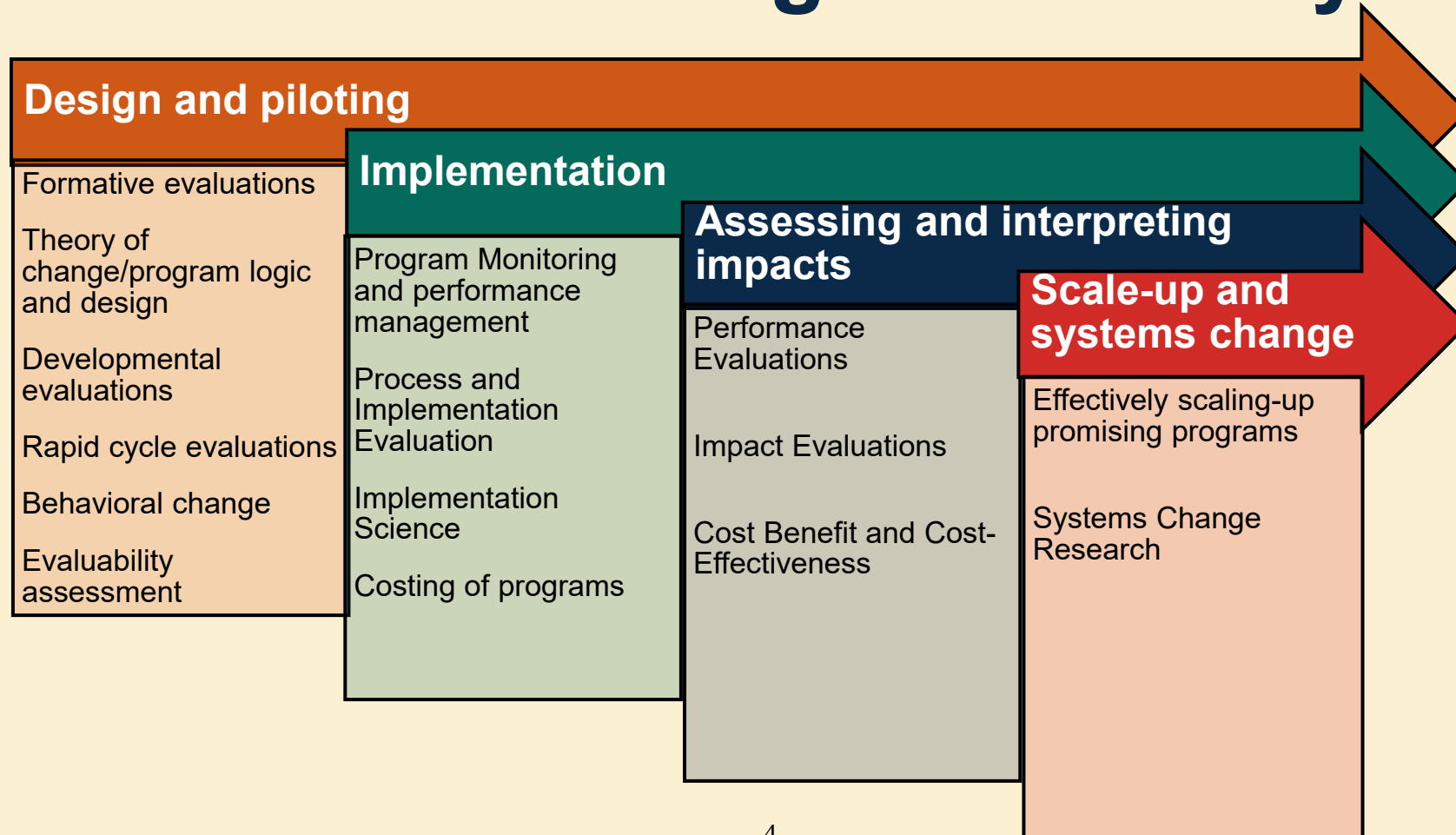APPAM | ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

Opening Remarks

Anu Rangarajan

Senior Fellow

Mathematica

Approaches and Evaluation Methods Relevant Over a Program's Lifecycle

Design and piloting

- Formative evaluations
- Theory of change/program logic and design
- Developmental evaluations
- Rapid cycle evaluations
- Behavioral change
- Evaluability assessment

Implementation

- Program Monitoring and performance management
- Process and Implementation Evaluation
- Implementation Science
- Costing of programs

Assessing and interpreting impacts

- Performance Evaluations
- Impact Evaluations
- Cost Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness

Scale-up and systems change

- Effectively scaling-up promising programs
- Systems Change Research

The Oxford Handbook *of*
PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

Contributors

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Craig Thornton, Bala Venkatachalam, Daniele Vidoni,
Delia Welsh, Josh Wright, Michael Woolcock,
Peter York, Alix Peterson Zwane

Agenda

Author presentations

/ Michael Woolcock,
World Bank – Process Evaluations

/ Alix Zwane,
Global Innovation Fund – Scale-up

/ Emilie Bagby,
Mathematica – Rapid Cycle Evaluations

Discussants

/ Melissa Chiappetta, USAID

/ Michelle Sager, U.S. Government
Accountability Office

Closing Remarks

/ Doug Besharov, University of Maryland

Questions and Answers

Wrap Up

5:00 – 6:00
Reception for in-person attendees

Author Presentations

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Process Evaluations

Michael Woolcock

Lead Social Scientist

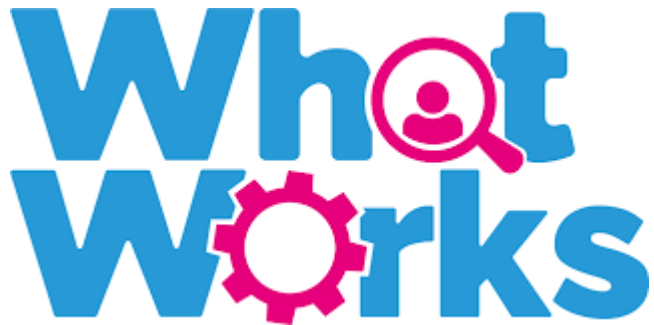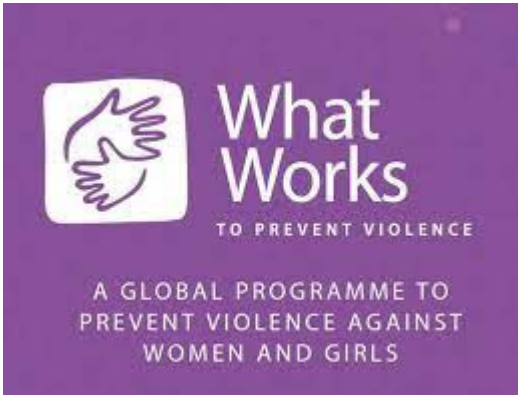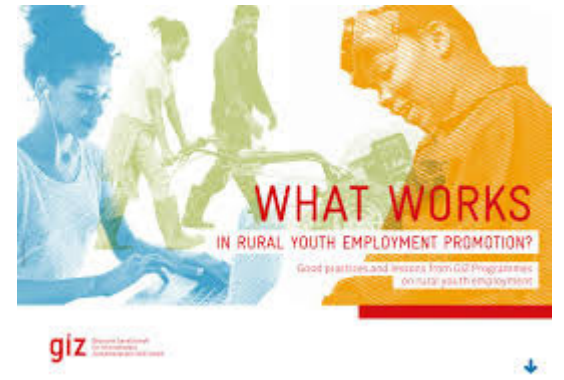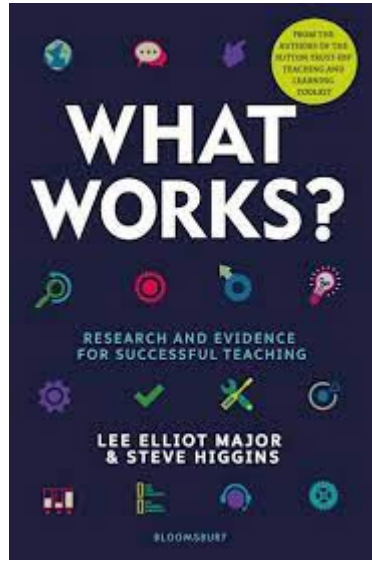**Development Research Group, World Bank**

Five Types of Process Evaluations:
What they are, what they do, why they matter

Patricia Rogers (Founder, *Better Evaluation*)

Michael Woolcock (World Bank)

25 January 2024

Introducing Chapter 14 of the *Oxford Handbook of Program Design and Implementation Evaluation (2023)*

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PROGRAM DESIGN AND
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EVALUATION

Why do many social programs have such a poor track record?

What can we do to maximize a program's chance of success?

If a program shows promise, how can we scale it up?

Process evaluations can help us answer these questions.

1. Chronicle
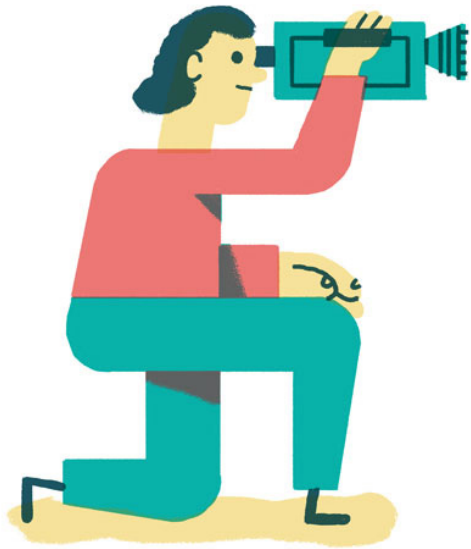
Detailed account of what happened during implementation

2. Compliance/fidelity

Whether intended activities were implemented appropriately

3. Translation

Understand contextual factors needed to achieve positive outcomes in new settings or at larger scale

4. Improvement

Enhance real-time implementation to improve outcomes and impacts

5. Adaptive management

Support ongoing learning and replanning in situations of uncertainty and unpredictable change

PLAN THE NEXT STAGE OF OUR JOURNEY.

USE OUR NEWFOUND KNOWLEDGE

LEARN ALONG THE WAY

Challenges for evidence-based policy and practice that process evaluations can address

Challenge	Type of process evaluation
Know what is actually involved in an innovation	Chronicle
Distinguish between implementation failure and theory failure	Compliance/fidelity
Understand in which contexts an intervention might work	Translation
Support ongoing improvement	Improvement
Acting under conditions of ongoing uncertainty and insufficient evidence	Adaptive management

A quick example from India: When an impact evaluation yields an "It didn't work" verdict...

Scale-up

Alix Zwane
Chief Executive Officer
Global Innovation Fund

Rapid Cycle Evaluations for Program Improvement

Emilie Bagby

Director, International Education

Mathematica

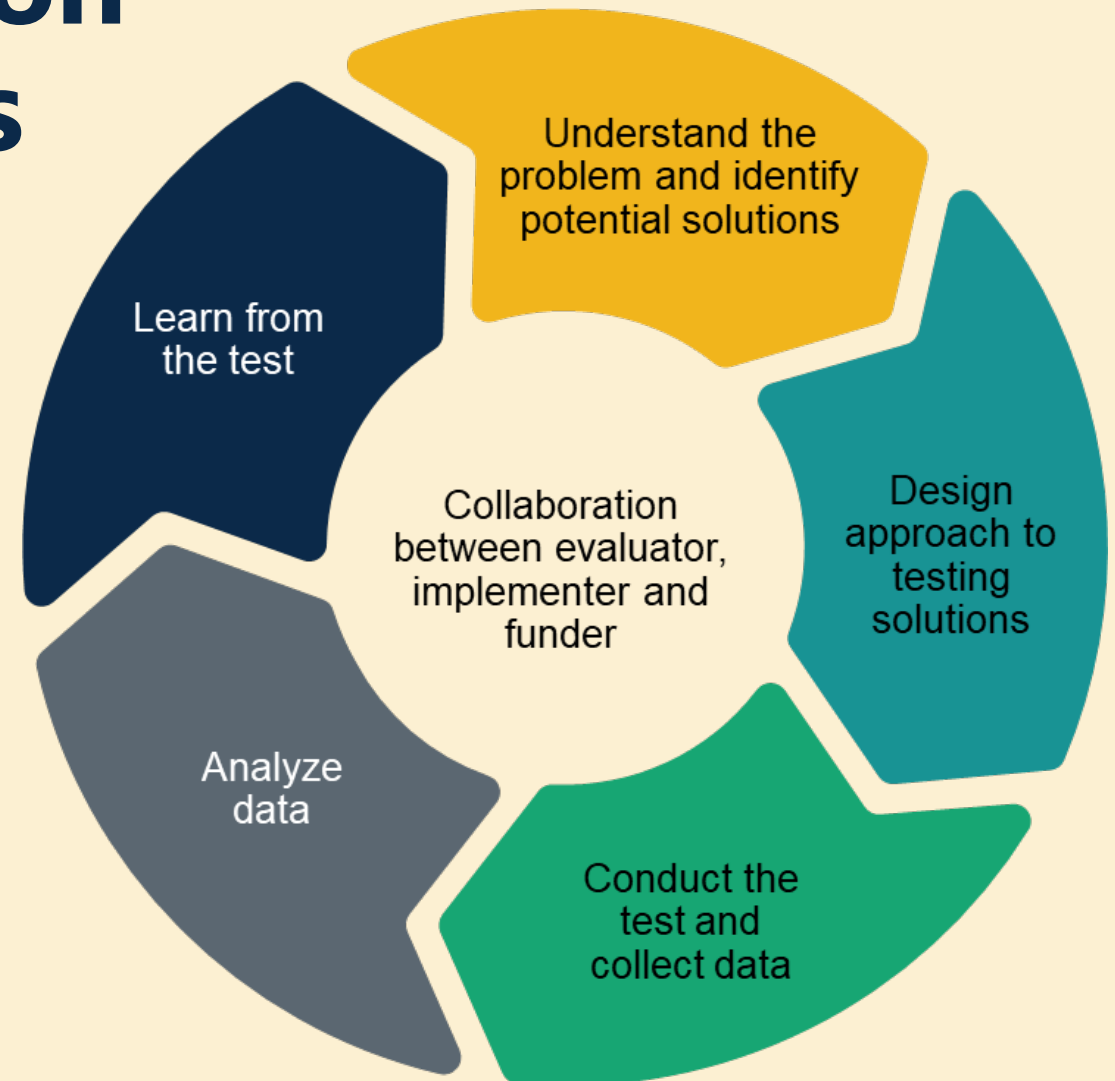# Rapid cycle evaluation (RCE) is broad and is usable across the program lifecycle

RCE is a systematic and iterative approach to facilitate learning around programmatic elements

Understand the problem and identify potential solutions

Design approach to testing solutions

Conduct the test and collect data

Analyze data

Learn from the test

Collaboration between evaluator, implementer and funder

RCE can be used for a range of purposes

/ **Diagnose challenges and identify operational choices**

/ **Identify facilitators to implementation and take-up of services**

/ **Pilot test and identify solutions for scaling-up**

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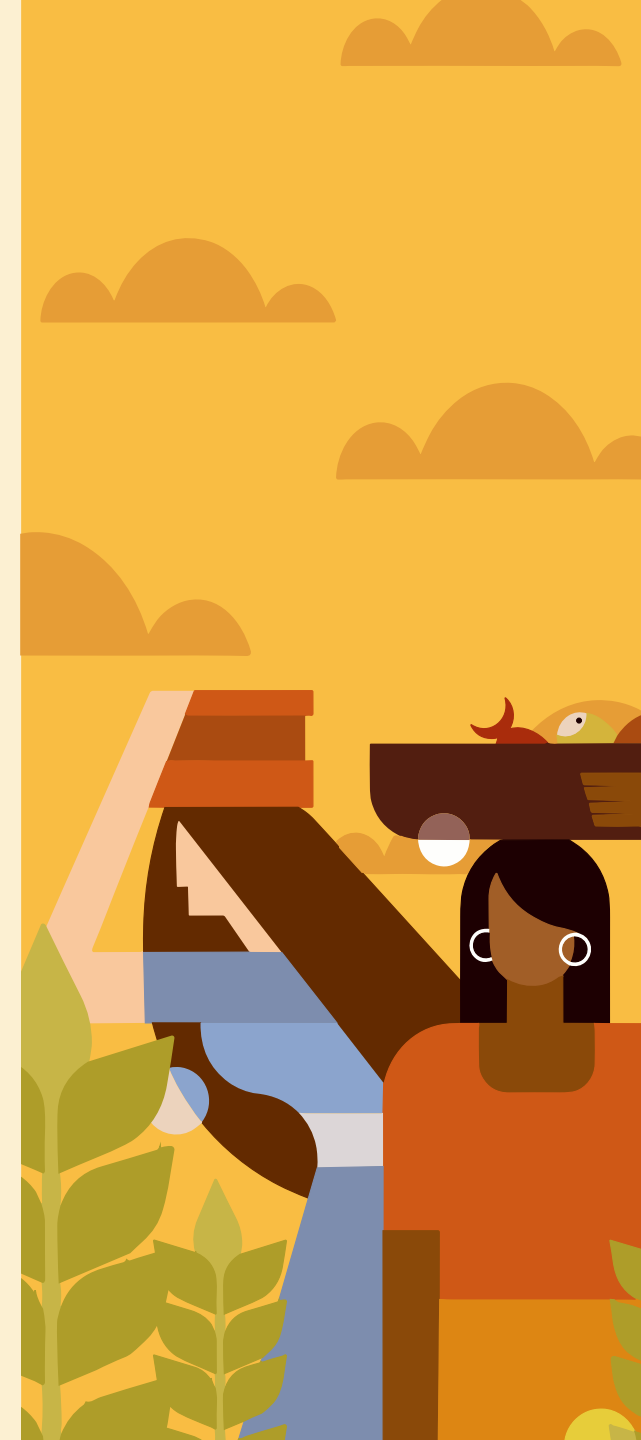
It encompasses a range of methods

Chart showing methods plotted by "Degree of certainty / attributability" (vertical axis) versus "Feasibility / ease of implementation" (horizontal axis):
- Large sample RCT
- Multi-phase optimization
- Small sample RCT & A/B testing
- Descriptive research and outcomes tracking
- Implementation studies
- Usability testing
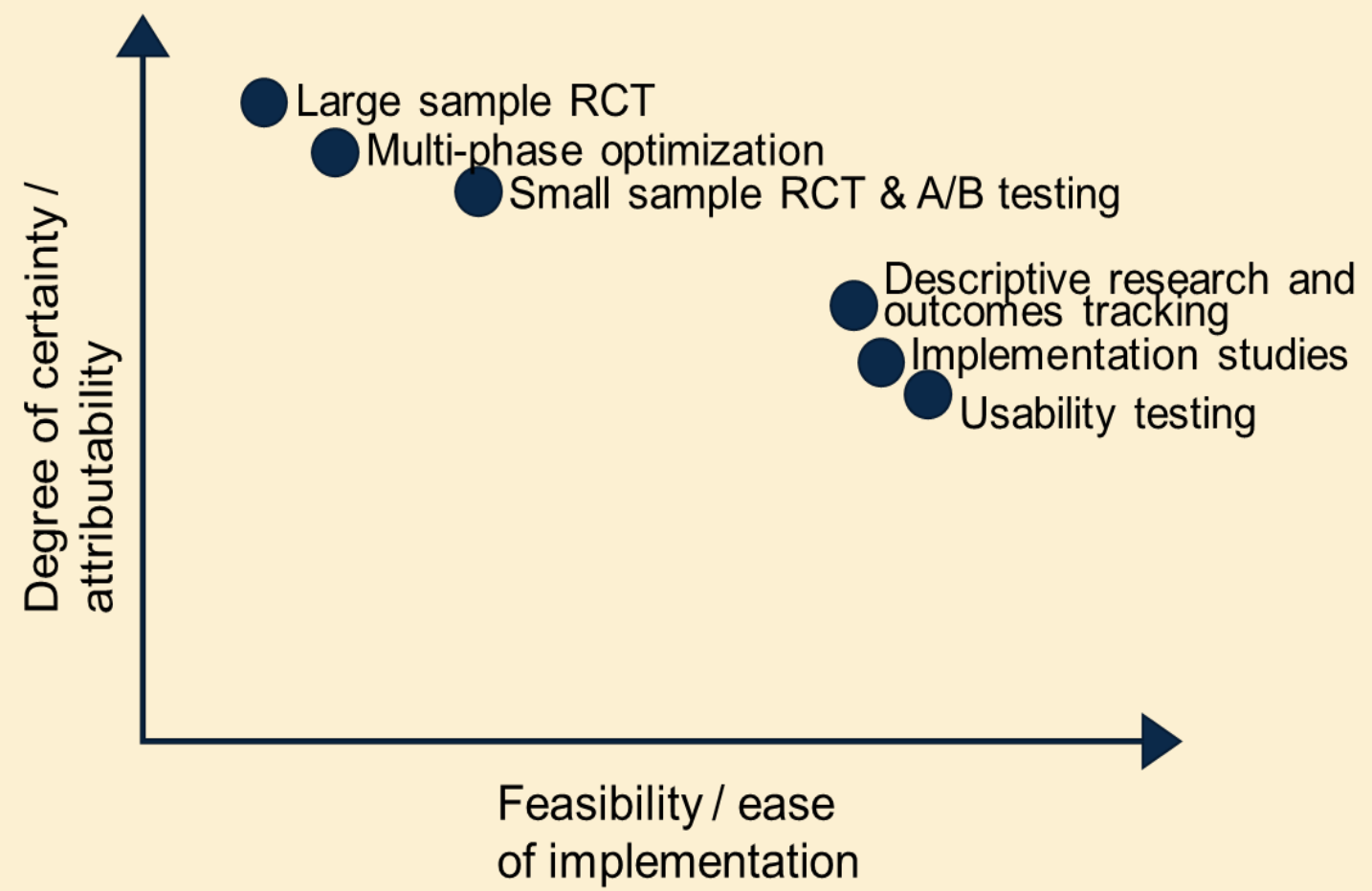
Case study
Education Project in Senegal

/ **USAID-funded technical assistance (2016-2021) to the Ministry of Education**

/ **Implemented at scale in public schools across ~half of the country**

/ **Learning during implementation was of key interest to USAID and project implementers**

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Case study Education Project in Senegal (cont'd)

⁄ **To answer early questions about specific elements of activities**
- In-person usability testing
- Simple A/B testing
- Semi-structured interviews

⁄ **To answer a more fundamental question about a core activity**
- Qualitative research of barriers and facilitators
- Followed by a small sample RCT

⁄ **To understand the short-term impact of one activity**
- RCT using Bayesian analysis
- Qualitative research

Discussants

Melissa Chiappetta

Senior Education Advisor, Latin America and the Caribbean

U.S. Agency for International Development

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Michelle Sager

Managing Director for Strategic Issues

U.S. Government Accountability Office

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Evidence-Based Policymaking

January 25, 2024

Michelle Sager
Managing Director
Strategic Issues

sagerm@gao.gov

Government Accountability & Evidence
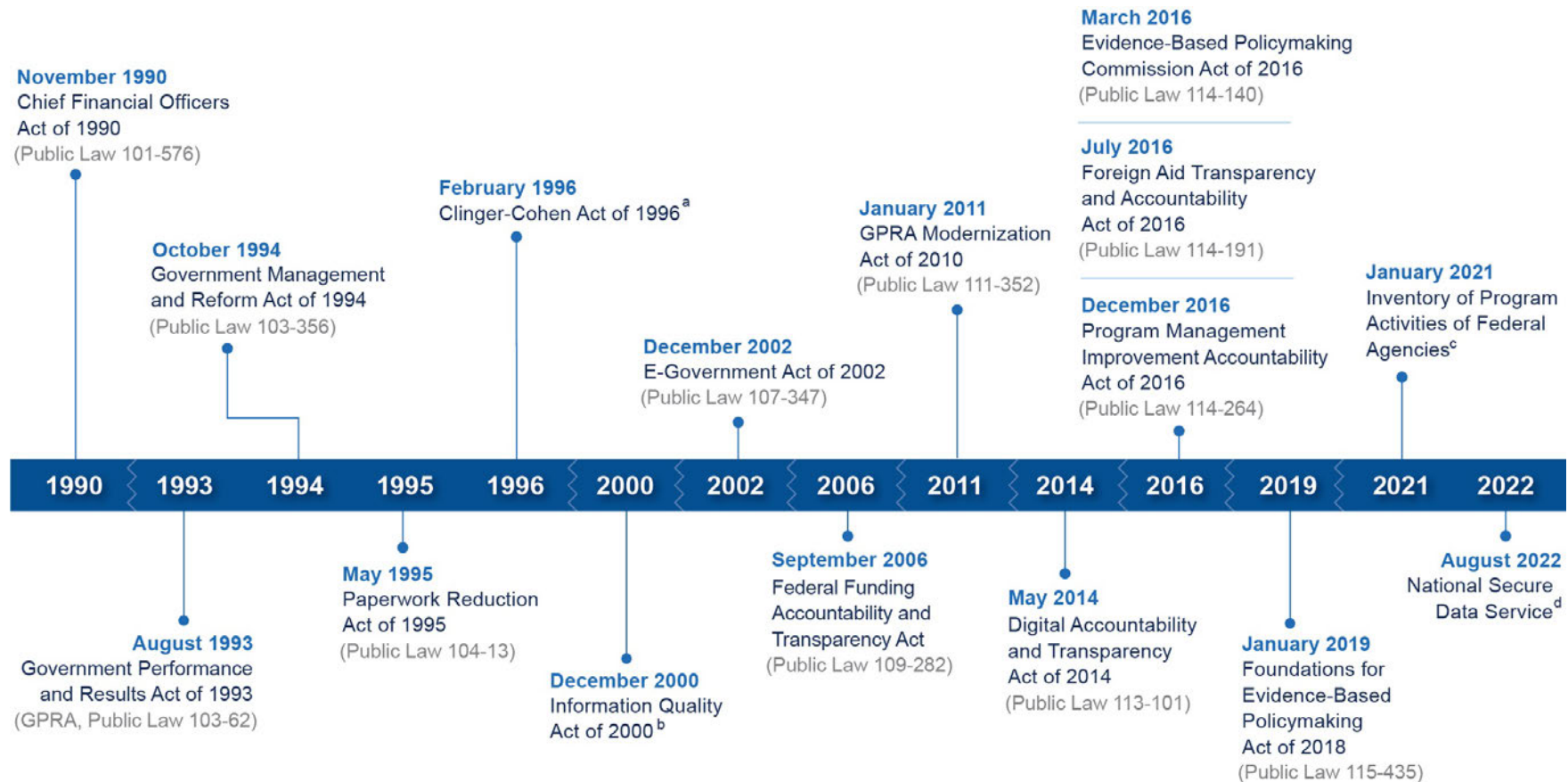
SERVING THE CONGRESS

Mission

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and ensure the accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.
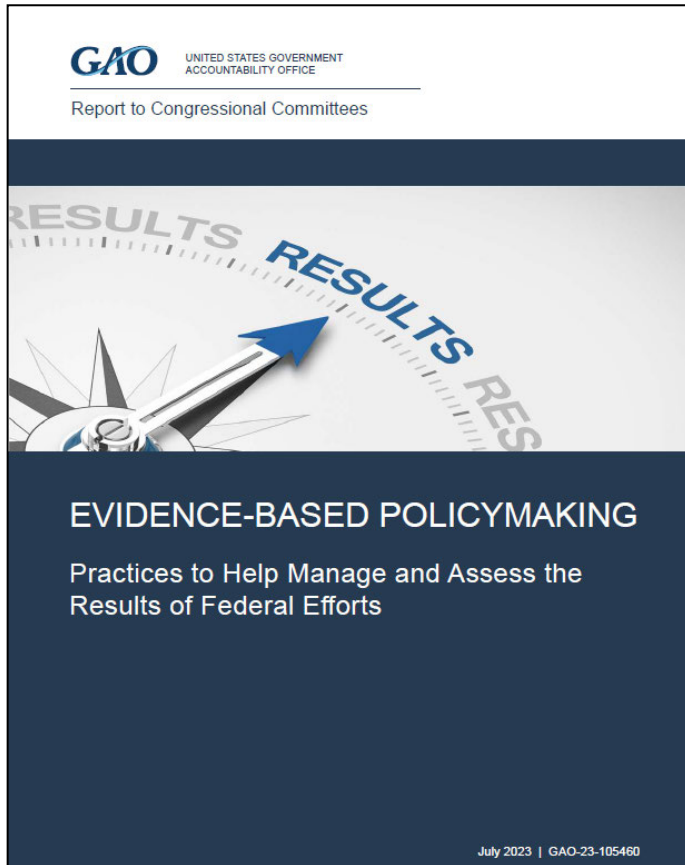
Scope of Work

GAO performs a range of oversight-, insight-, and foresight-related engagements, a vast majority of which are conducted in response to congressional mandates or requests. GAO's engagements include evaluations of federal programs and performance, financial and management audits, policy analyses, legal opinions, bid protest adjudications, and investigations.

# Multiple Laws Direct Evidence-Building and Performance Management Activities

November 1990
Chief Financial Officers
Act of 1990
(Public Law 101-576)

October 1994
Government Management
and Reform Act of 1994
(Public Law 103-356)

February 1996
Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996[a]

December 2002
E-Government Act of 2002
(Public Law 107-347)

January 2011
GPRA Modernization
Act of 2010
(Public Law 111-352)

March 2016
Evidence-Based Policymaking
Commission Act of 2016
(Public Law 114-140)

July 2016
Foreign Aid Transparency
and Accountability
Act of 2016
(Public Law 114-191)

December 2016
Program Management
Improvement Accountability
Act of 2016
(Public Law 114-264)

January 2021
Inventory of Program
Activities of Federal
Agencies[c]

August 1993
Government Performance
and Results Act of 1993
(GPRA, Public Law 103-62)

May 1995
Paperwork Reduction
Act of 1995
(Public Law 104-13)

December 2000
Information Quality
Act of 2000[b]

September 2006
Federal Funding
Accountability and
Transparency Act
(Public Law 109-282)

May 2014
Digital Accountability
and Transparency
Act of 2014
(Public Law 113-101)

January 2019
Foundations for
Evidence-Based
Policymaking
Act of 2018
(Public Law 115-435)

August 2022
National Secure
Data Service[d]

Timeline years: 1990 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 2000 | 2002 | 2006 | 2011 | 2014 | 2016 | 2019 | 2021 | 2022

Evidence-Based Policymaking Guide

GAO — UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE
Report to Congressional Committees

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

Practices to Help Manage and Assess the Results of Federal Efforts

July 2023 | GAO-23-105460

- Help executive branch leaders and employees at any organizational level build and use evidence

- Primer on federal evidence-building and performance management

- 13 key practices to effectively implement evidence-building and performance management activities

Key Practices for Evidence-Building and Performance-Management Activities

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-23-105460
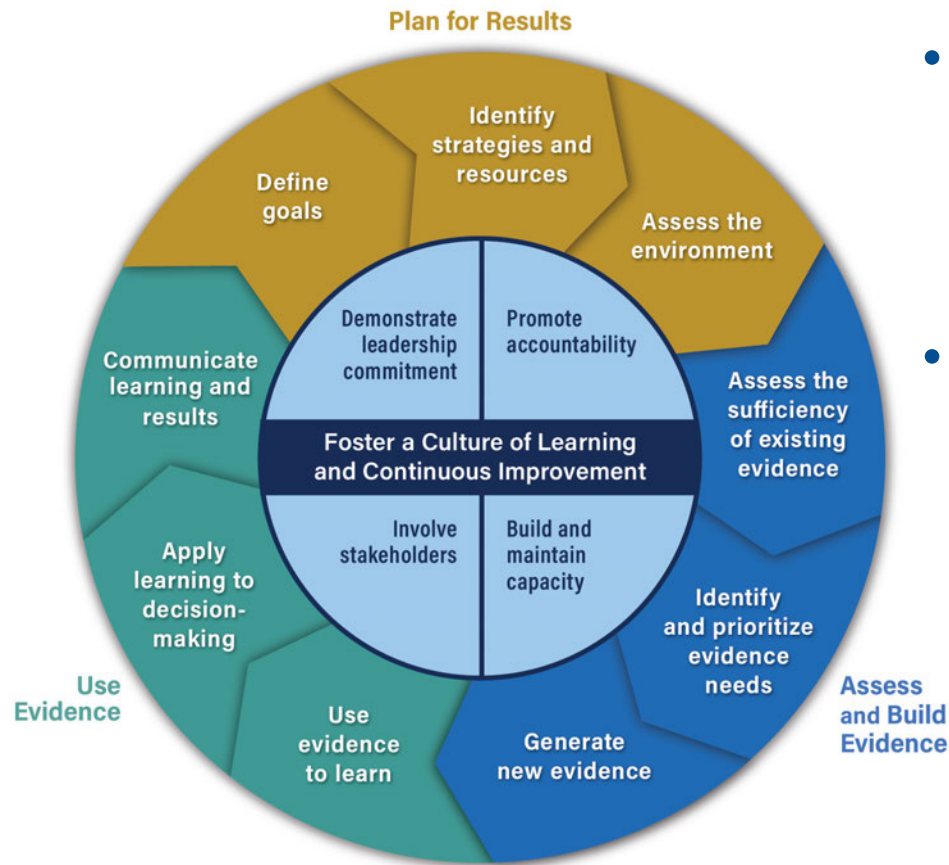
- The key practices are distilled from hundreds of actions identified in GAO's past work

- For each practice, we
  - identify key actions to implement it,
  - provide an illustrative example,
  - identify selected related legal requirements, and
  - list our related past work

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Closing Remarks

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Douglas Besharov

Professor

**University of Maryland
School of Public Policy**

Q & A

Questions?

/ **Virtual participants,** submit via the Slido panel on the right side of your screen

/ **In-person participants, raise your hand for the microphone, or** scan the QR code to submit electronically

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Wrap up

Supplemental Materials

/ Presenter Bios

/ Presentation Slides

/ 30% discount code

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Thank You!

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