

INNOVATIONS IN EVALUATION:

the **BIG PICTURE**

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August 3, 2009

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# Why Evaluate?

- 1. Improve Program Performance:** The most compelling reason; argues for continuous, flexible and honest evaluation methods that guides positive change.
- 2. Prove a Concept:** One might be testing a novel approach based on a new idea. Good rigor needed here.
- 3. Prove Worth for Survival:** Self-explanatory; may need powerful anecdotes, testimony, some emphasis on cost-savings and benefits.
- 4. Obligation by Grant:** Grant requirements may not fit your precise needs/priorities, but you need to play the game and follow grant evaluation guidelines as closely as possible.

# The Grant Game:

## Common Types of Funding

- **Research Grant:** Usually answers a question: E.g. “What’s going on? “What are the relationships here?”
- **Demonstration Grant:** Usually a competitive process; tests new or innovative programs or policies. Evaluation important to judge both efficacy and the possibilities of replication.
- **Replication Grant:** Takes an evidence-based approach to another location, population or outcome.
- **Targeted Capacity Expansion Grant:** Grants that fund increased levels of services considered needed, usually to programs already operating.

# Accountability

## The Politics of Evaluation

- **Congressional Concerns and Departmental Issues Informed by Evaluation**
- -- **“I like this program and it’ll get me votes; but I hope it works.”**
  - **Is the program justified?**
  - **Does it “work?”**
  - **Is it cost-effective?**
  - **Should it be continued?**

# Science vs. Practice?

## Evidence-based Practices

Programs, policies or other initiatives considered promising because of successes in demonstration type grants or experiments. Early results *seem* to justify replication.

## **The Replication Hypothesis**

## Practice-based Evidence

Programs, policies or other Initiatives innovated at the local level, seem to work well but not yet rigorously evaluated. May need good evaluation to “prove” utility, perhaps a special grant.

## **Applying Discoveries**

# Evaluation Science

## The Need for Innovation

- **Limitations of Traditional Science:** Rigor is good but classic controlled experiments do not fit the real world: static intervention, static populations, static environments not realistic. Advanced science going to open-systems approaches, quantum mechanics, dynamic and interactive variables. Watch for changes and flexibility of methods in future. [See B. Kibel, *Success Stores as Hard Data*, Plenum Press, 1999.]
- **Importance of Implementation:** Watch for explosion of emphasis on evaluating program implementation, influence of program implementers and leadership (e.g., teachers, principals) irrespective of program content. Now known intuitively but not emphasized empirically.

# Examples of Innovation

- **Paradigm Shift:** School Health & Student Safety should be regarded as necessary, not optional. Evaluation should shift from question of “does it work” to “how can it work better.”
- **Simplicity and Common Sense:** Look for more straightforward evaluation techniques—individual interviews, focus groups, simple questions on surveys; measuring only what you think you can influence. Look again at simple pre-post testing, especially post-testing that asks respondents whether the particular intervention made the intended difference.
- **Feedback Oriented Systems:** Look for iterative, sequenced systems such as “*Getting to Outcomes*” (Wandersman et al) and new ways of organizing, displaying and explaining data and effect sizes, e.g., the visual displays possible using Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

# Additional Powerpoint Copies

- Look on OSDFS Conference Website



The screenshot shows the website for the 2009 National Conference. At the top, it features the US Department of Education logo and the text "US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS" and "2009 NATIONAL CONFERENCE". A navigation bar includes links for "Conference Info", "Agenda", "Registration", "Tracks/Sessions", "Travel And Lodging", and "Local Info". The main banner displays the title "THE POWER OF ABC CHANGE" in large, colorful letters, with "ABC" in blue and "CHANGE" in yellow. To the right of the banner, it states "AUGUST 3-5" and "GAYLORD NATIONAL RESORT NATIONAL HARBOR, MD". Below the banner, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled "Conference Information" and describes the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) and its mission. The right column is titled "HOTEL INFORMATION" and provides details for the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, including the address "201 Waterfront Street, National Harbor, MD 20745" and the phone number "301-965-2000".

**US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
OFFICE OF SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

2009 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Conference Info Agenda Registration Tracks/Sessions Travel And Lodging Local Info

**THE POWER OF ABC CHANGE**

AUGUST 3-5  
GAYLORD NATIONAL RESORT  
NATIONAL HARBOR, MD

**Conference Information**  
**Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**  
The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) provides funds and technical assistance to States, schools, and communities for programs that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education. OSDFS programs emphasize positive, disciplined, high-achieving schools; strong parent and community involvement; effective school planning and preparedness; research-based prevention and education strategies; and the effective use of

**HOTEL INFORMATION**

**Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center**

201 Waterfront Street,  
National Harbor, MD 20745  
Phone: 301-965-2000

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