OES@100
Celebrating 100 Collaborations Across Government

November 16, 2021
oes.gsa.gov
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## Overview

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<td>25 min</td>
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<td><strong>Session 2: Portfolio of evidence on equity and economic recovery</strong></td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<td><strong>Session 3: New frontier for evidence in government: what’s next?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Closing Remarks: What’s Ahead at GSA?</strong></td>
<td>5 min</td>
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Session 1: What leads to a successful collaboration? Reflections on 100 collaborations
OES BY THE NUMBERS
since 2015 OES has....

139 team members
Brought in talent from 83 institutions
106 completed collaborations
90 completed evaluations
21 different Federal Departments

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Who is OES?

Since 2015, OES has recruited over 139 interdisciplinary experts from 83 institutions into Federal government, representing a mix of Federal Employees, Fellows and Academic Affiliates.
What does OES do?

Our portfolio has spanned areas such as retirement security, reducing the cost of government operations, improving public health outcomes, and increasing educational opportunity.
OES has collaborated with 21 federal departments

The Office of Evaluation Sciences and collaborators have completed over 90 evaluations

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor
- Department of the Treasury
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- General Services Administration
- Small Business Administration
- Social Security Administration
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Reflection 1: A program change and evaluation approach don’t have to be ideal to be valuable.

- Working in government and at scale, we often encounter barriers to fielding the best possible program change and evaluation.

- Flexibility, collaboration, and problem solving can get us to launch and help learn about promising program changes.
Program changes requiring limited effort can be useful when the ideal intervention is infeasible.

Being flexible in the face of roadblocks can help build evidence -- and help us learn how to do the preferred change.

**Feasible:** One tip vs. many tips, no individualized data

**Preferred:** Individualized feedback and comparisons

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Learning from evaluation does not always require the ideal evaluation approach

When a randomized evaluation isn’t possible, other evaluation approaches can help us learn about promising interventions.

**Preferred:** Randomly select from participating families to receive new vs. old version of letters.

**Feasible:** Encourage 74 districts to use new letters, compare to 82 randomly selected that did not use new letters.
Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

Administrative data makes it possible to

quickly, rigorously, and at low-cost

build and use evidence to improve government programs.

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Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

How many individuals HAVE WE REACHED?

Our evaluations had a total sample size of OVER 44 million individuals TO DATE.

Informed more than half a million Americans about the benefits of GETTING VACCINATED with HHS and VA.

Informed 1.6 million people about the benefits of RETIREMENT SAVINGS OPTIONS with SSA and DOD.

Worked to improve higher education access and success for 5.3 million individuals with ED, HUD, the IRS and VA.
Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

A few results from 
RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS

- Increased clinic visits by women by **2.26** Percentage POINTS with USAID
- Increased requests for on-site **6.9** Percentage POINTS with USDA
- Designed outreach which REDUCED OVERPAYMENTS of **$5.91** per $1 spent with SSA

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Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

Time since evaluation launch...

- Days
- Weeks
- Months
- Years

Outcome measured using administrative data...

- Email opened
- Take-up of financial aid
- College enrollment
- College degree

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Reflection 3: There’s more to sample size than counting the number of participants in a program

- There’s more to precision than sample size
- And: there’s more to sample size than counting up the number of participants in a program
- Important to anticipate how sample sizes grow and shrink and how this influences a study’s precision
Reflection 3: There’s more to sample size than counting the number of people in your evaluation

Applications in the lottery: 1452

Unique businesses in the lottery after deduplication: 1418

Businesses we could match to outcomes data: 353
Reflection 3: There’s more to sample size than counting the number of people in your evaluation

- But, especially with administrative data, it’s not always bad news!

- Things that **grow** your sample size
  - Multiple time points
  - Larger control groups

![Sample Size Comparison]

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Reflection 4: Being transparent about implementation — as well as results — has enormous value.

OES Evaluation Policy: Core principles that guide how we design and conduct evaluations

- Rigor
- Relevance
- Transparency
- Independence
- Ethical practice

Our full Evaluation Policy is available on our website.

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Reflection 4: Being transparent about implementation — as well as results — has enormous value.

Increasing Utilization of Family Planning Services in Mozambique through an SMS Intervention: A collaboration between OES and USAID
## Intervention Pack: Sample text messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days since Message referral</th>
<th>5 days:</th>
<th>8 days:</th>
<th>33 days:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go to the hospital today for your family planning appointment.</td>
<td>Present your referral at the hospital and receive a health / family planning appointment.</td>
<td>Talk to [promoter] if you have questions about your health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Multiple, frequent reminders**
- **Prioritize key information**
- **Provide simple instructions**
- **Make it personal**

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Record of Implementation: Template

Captures departures from project plans, and unanticipated events

Record of Implementation
Project Name: [Title]
Project Code: [Code]

How this document is to be used:
Use this document to record notes on the implementation of the project — in particular, anything that did not go according to the plan laid out in the Project Design Document. This template contains prompts for information on specific aspects of implementation that may not go as planned, but these are not meant to be exhaustive. Any details about implementation that may be important for later analysis and interpretation of the results should be recorded — and can be recorded in the final section of the template if they do not fit elsewhere. Before OES takes possession of outcome data, the Analysis Plan should be reviewed in light of this Record of Implementation for any required revisions (i.e., while it is possible to revise the Analysis Plan and still report results as coming from planned/confirmatory analyses).
# Categories of Delivery Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention delivery cost</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No cost</td>
<td>No new change to delivery medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low cost</td>
<td>Added email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>Added printing; Added printing and mailing; Added phone carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate cost</td>
<td>Added staffing costs as part of intervention delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple or unknown</td>
<td>Multiple of the above changes Intervention not in a designated category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effects of Text Message Reminders on Family Planning Clinic Visits

Clinic visits for family planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Group</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>SMS messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N = 5,370 women who received a referral from a promoter)</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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139 team members
83 institutions
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21 different Federal Departments
Thank you for working alongside us!

- Using the findings to continuously improve
- Giving others the opportunity to learn too
- Tracking down administrative data
- Helping us understand your programs
- Trying something new
- Learning what works (and what doesn’t)
Learn more about building and using evidence to improve government programs
Session 2: Portfolio of evidence on equity and economic recovery
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Small businesses were hit hard by the pandemic and sought relief
Equity concerns affect all steps in a small business’ path to receiving funds

Business...

... learned about funding  ... applied  ... was eligible  ... was offered funding  ... received funding

OES developed three research themes:

1. **Access**: How do documentation requirements affect who applies?
2. **Selection**: How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?
3. **Impact**: How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?
Access: How do documentation requirements affect who applies?
1. Access: Which businesses apply for relief?

**Study 1**
Qualitative interviews in summer 2020

➔ **Findings:** documentation like Profit and Loss statements can pose particular burdens on underserved businesses

**Study 2**
Quantitative study of impacts of a change in documentation requirements

**Documents Required:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Change</th>
<th>After Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration certificate; Budget; Tax returns if available; Bank statements; Profit and Loss statement; Business plan; 3-5 year projections; Lease agreement; Liability insurance; Resumes</td>
<td>Registration certificate; Budget; Tax returns if available; Bank statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reduction in documentation burdens is associated with increased likelihood of submitting application among underserved businesses

Note: We use “underserved” to refer to minority, women, Veteran, and disabled-owned businesses. The city focused on other aspects of being underserved, such as neighborhood the business was located in and its industry.
Selection: How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?
## Allocation method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocation method</th>
<th>General method among businesses screened in as eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lottery</strong></td>
<td>• Put businesses in a lottery pool/lottery pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Some gave higher odds to underserved businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First come, first served</strong></td>
<td>• Assign businesses a number(s) based on submission time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Some created a fast-track for underserved businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Points system</strong></td>
<td>• Score businesses along various quantitative (e.g., COVID-19 revenue loss) and qualitative (e.g., reviewer-assessed survival probability) metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Some gave extra points to underserved businesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distribution methods that directly target underserved populations more reliably increase reward rates

Illustration: women-owned businesses in City A

Proportion of total awards given to businesses
(underserved characteristic: women-owned; at baseline: 0.29 of applicants)

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Impact: How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?
3. Impact: What is the impact of funding offers?

- Study two programs and use retrospective, quasi-experimental designs to estimate impact of funding on business outcomes in 2020

- Compare treatment and control businesses using micro-data:
  - Daily data on **closures** and **online services**
  - **Business activity** from credit card transaction data
  - Data on **bankruptcies** from the federal bankruptcy court
Quasi-experimental designs can help in rapid evaluation, but also face challenges

Impact of Funding Invitation and Receipt
(Point estimate with 95% CI)

- Days in week closed
- Offering online services (Delivery, online classes, etc.)
- Filed for consumer or business bankruptcy

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Takeaways

1 **Access:** How do documentation requirements affect who applies?
   ➔ Documentation burdens can fall more heavily on disadvantaged businesses

2 **Selection:** How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?
   ➔ Methods that target underserved populations increase award rates

3 **Impact:** How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?
   ➔ No evidence of impact, due to data challenges

Next Steps

- Balance documentation burden against need to verify eligibility
- What supports do small businesses need in navigating the path to funding

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New frontier for evidence in government: what’s next?
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Are you interested in working with OES?

Annual Fellowship Program

Apply Now! All fellowship positions will be remote and location flexible within the United States. Fellows will serve at least a one year term, with interest and availability to serve additional years preferred. Fellows are often on loan from a variety of home institutions such as a university or another Federal agency.

- Design Fellow Solicitation - open until Friday, December 10, 2021
- Fellowship Solicitation - open until Monday, January 3, 2022
- Federal Detail Solicitation - open until Monday, January 3, 2022

Not on the market this year? Full-time OES team members are selected annually, with applications often opening in early Fall.

- Join our mailing list at the bottom of our homepage (oes.gsa.gov) to be notified of our next recruitment cycle.
- You can also learn more about the position and what we look for at oes.gsa.gov/opps.
For further information on working with us to improve federal programs and policies: oes@gsa.gov

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