

Editors' notes

This volume surveys the landscape regarding evaluation policy. According to Trochim et al. (2009, p. 16), evaluation policy includes “any rule or principle that a group or organization uses to guide its decisions and actions when doing evaluation.” Evaluation policy involves rules or principles that govern evaluation itself. Evaluation policies can be quite important because they are likely to “enable and constrain the potential contributions evaluation can make” (Mark et al., 2009, p. 3).

The current issue of *NDE* expands on and updates an earlier issue, *New Directions for Evaluation* (*NDE*, issue no. 123) (Trochim et al., 2009). Much has changed since the 2009 issue, including more widespread development of explicit evaluation policies in agencies and organizations; empirical studies of evaluation policies; important legislation at the U.S. federal level, particularly the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (the Evidence Act), which was signed into law in 2019; and ongoing changes in practices related to and emanating from evaluation policies, including those mandated by the Evidence Act. The current issue reviews many of these empirical, legislative, and practice developments, bringing readers up to date on evaluation policy and pointing the way to productive future directions. Most chapters in the issue focus primarily on the U.S. federal government. However, the volume gives attention to implications for the broader evaluation community.

The first chapter, by the issue editors, Nick Hart and Mel Mark, introduces the reader to the idea of evaluation policy, offers a brief history, examines the role of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), and sets the stage for the chapters that follow. Chapter 2 consists of the AEA's Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government, prepared by the Association's Evaluation Policy Task Force. In Chapter 3, Hind Al Hudib and Bradley Cousins draw on their research examining the written evaluation policies of a sample of international development agencies, a sample that, although global in scope, includes agencies of the U.S. federal government. Al Hudib and Cousins expand Trochim's (2009) definition of evaluation policy, review the components found in evaluation policies, and examine likely linkages between aspects of an evaluation policy and evaluation capacity building. Chapter 4, by Leslie Ann Fierro, Alana Kinarsky, Carlos Escheverra-Estrada, Nadia Bass, and Christina Ann Christie, presents results from an interview study examining the initial implementation of evaluation policies at the U.S. federal level.

Chapter 5, by Kathryn Newcomer, Karol Olejniczak, and Nicholas Hart, focuses on learning agendas, also known as evidence-building plans. Learning agendas are a requirement of the Evidence Act, but some federal agencies and other organizations had previously created this kind of strategic plan for evaluation and evidence. Newcomer and her colleagues

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discuss how learning agendas offer an opportunity to apply evaluative thinking, effective engagement, and learning to evaluative and other evidence-building activities. The sixth chapter, by Diana Epstein, Erika Lilledahl, and Erica Zielewski, outlines the human role in evaluative activities and in setting and implementing evaluation policy. Epstein et al. identify the role of members of the federal workforce in enabling evaluation and the partnerships that support effective evaluation. Chapter 7 ties together many of the themes from the issue through a case study of the U.S. Department of Labor's activities around its evaluation policy. Two former Chief Evaluation Officers at the department, Molly Irwin and Demetra Nightingale, illustrate how an agency can effectively develop and implement evaluation policy. This case study provides an example for agencies working to implement new requirements of the Evidence Act and for any other organization developing or revising its evaluation policy.

Chapter 8, by the issue editors, summarizes key points from the previous chapters and offers suggestions for future efforts to conceptualize, develop, implement, and study evaluation policy.

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Melvin M. (Mel) Mark, Professor of Psychology at the Pennsylvania State University, was co-editor, with Bill Trochim and Leslie Cooksy, of the 2009 NDE issue on evaluation policy, collaborated with Trochim on the establishment of the American Evaluation Association's (AEA) Evaluation Policy Task Force, and has been a member since its inception, including time as co-chair.

Nicholas R. Hart is President of the Data Foundation and Chair of the American Evaluation Association Evaluation Policy Task Force. He served as the Policy and Research Director of the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking. He previously worked at the White House Office of Management and Budget during the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations.