M-20-12 - Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices

Section of Document	Synthesis
Summary of Federal Program Evaluation Standards	• To be useful, federal evaluations have to serve the information needs of stakeholders. • Federal evaluations have to produce trustworthy, clear findings for agencies and their stakeholders. • Federal evaluations have to be conducted to the highest ethical standards and protect participants and other stakeholders.
Summary of Evaluation Practices	• Federal evaluations have to identify and involve internal and external stakeholders.
Implementation	• Implementation should leverage knowledge from internal and external stakeholders.
Appendix B: Federal Program Evaluation Standards	• Evaluators should involve and consider stakeholders since stakeholder buy-in promotes the use of findings. This will help move an agency's mission forward. • Evaluators should solicit input and feedback through peer review, technical working groups, other consultation of independent, unbiased experts, and other methods to strengthen credibility. • Evaluators should engage an inclusive, broad range of stakeholders. • Evaluations should include a design plan which includes information about the process for selecting and engaging stakeholders and experts. • To ensure fair, just, and equitable evaluations, a broad range of perspectives -- including usually unrepresented voices – should be considered. This includes accounting for cultural and contextual factors like language, political and social climate, power, economic conditions, etc. • Evaluators should identify and inform affected stakeholders prior to the start of the evaluation and if it is significantly modified and communicate findings to them after it is finished.

Appendix C: Use Expert Consultation Effectively	• Consulting internal and external experts can strengthen an evaluation, expand the content and technical expertise of the evaluators, provide critical review of the evaluation, and make its findings more likely to be seen as credible. • Expert consultants should be selected based on their expertise and with transparency around their independence, objectivity, and any conflicts of interest. • A list of experts and how to engage them should be developed at the start of the evaluation. • Expert consultants can be engaged through technical work groups, expert groups, or peer reviews.
Appendix C: Establish, Implement, and Widely Disseminate and Agency Evaluation Policy	• Agency Evaluation Policies should be widely shared with stakeholders. • Agency Evaluation Policies should be written in plain language and avoid jargon. • Agency Evaluation Policies should be shared publicly and promoted with internal and external stakeholders.
Appendix C: Engage Key Stakeholders Meaningfully	• Stakeholder engagement can build support and interest in evaluation, ensure that evaluation design is well informed, and lead to better evaluation findings. Agencies should identify key stakeholders, including federal leadership and staff in the agency doing the evaluation and other agencies, state and local agencies, service providers, practitioners, experts, program recipients or participants, representatives from communities, organizations, or others affected by policies being evaluated, etc. • Stakeholder engagement plans should be developed early and discuss whom to engage, when, why, and how. • Engaging relevant and diverse stakeholders can ensure evaluations are responsive to current needs. • Stakeholders should be engaged at different stages of an evaluation.
Appendix C: Establish and Uphold Policies and Procedures to Protect Independence and Objectivity	• Incorporating stakeholder feedback should be balanced with the need to release findings in an objective, timely manner. For example, some agencies allow stakeholders to provide feedback and then share react publicly to the final product if they feel their feedback wasn't sufficiently addressed.