



Discovering better ways
to solve social problems

Connecting Strategy, Evaluation, and Learning in Your Organization

Presented by FSG

April 9, 2014

Today's Agenda

- ❖ **Overview of a Strategic Learning and Evaluation System**
Katelyn Mack, FSG
- ❖ **Panelist**
Rebekah Levin, Robert R. McCormick Foundation
- ❖ **Panelist**
Brenda Solórzano, Blue Shield of California Foundation
- ❖ **Panelist**
Medina Haeri, Oak Foundation
- ❖ **Audience Questions & Answers**
Hallie Preskill (Moderator), FSG

Follow the conversation on Twitter #StrategicEvaluation

An Overall Strategy for Learning and Evaluation Has the Potential to Help Organizations...

...connect the dots in the organization to create cohesive evaluation practices



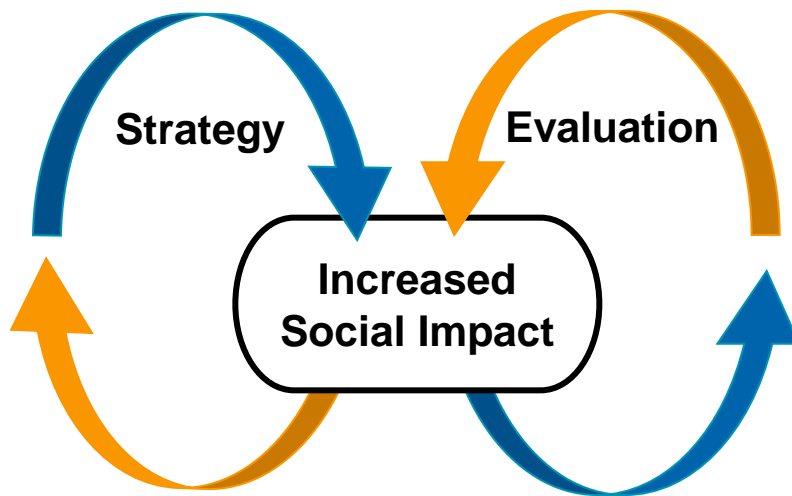
...fill in the blanks and create a holistic evaluation strategy across the organization



Having more comprehensive and cohesive evaluation practices helps organizations learn from their learning and evaluation activities

Strategic Learning and Evaluation Systems (SLES) Provide Organizations with a Coordinated Approach to Evaluation

Based on the reinforcing relationship between strategy and evaluation...



SLES help organizations describe...

Why

How

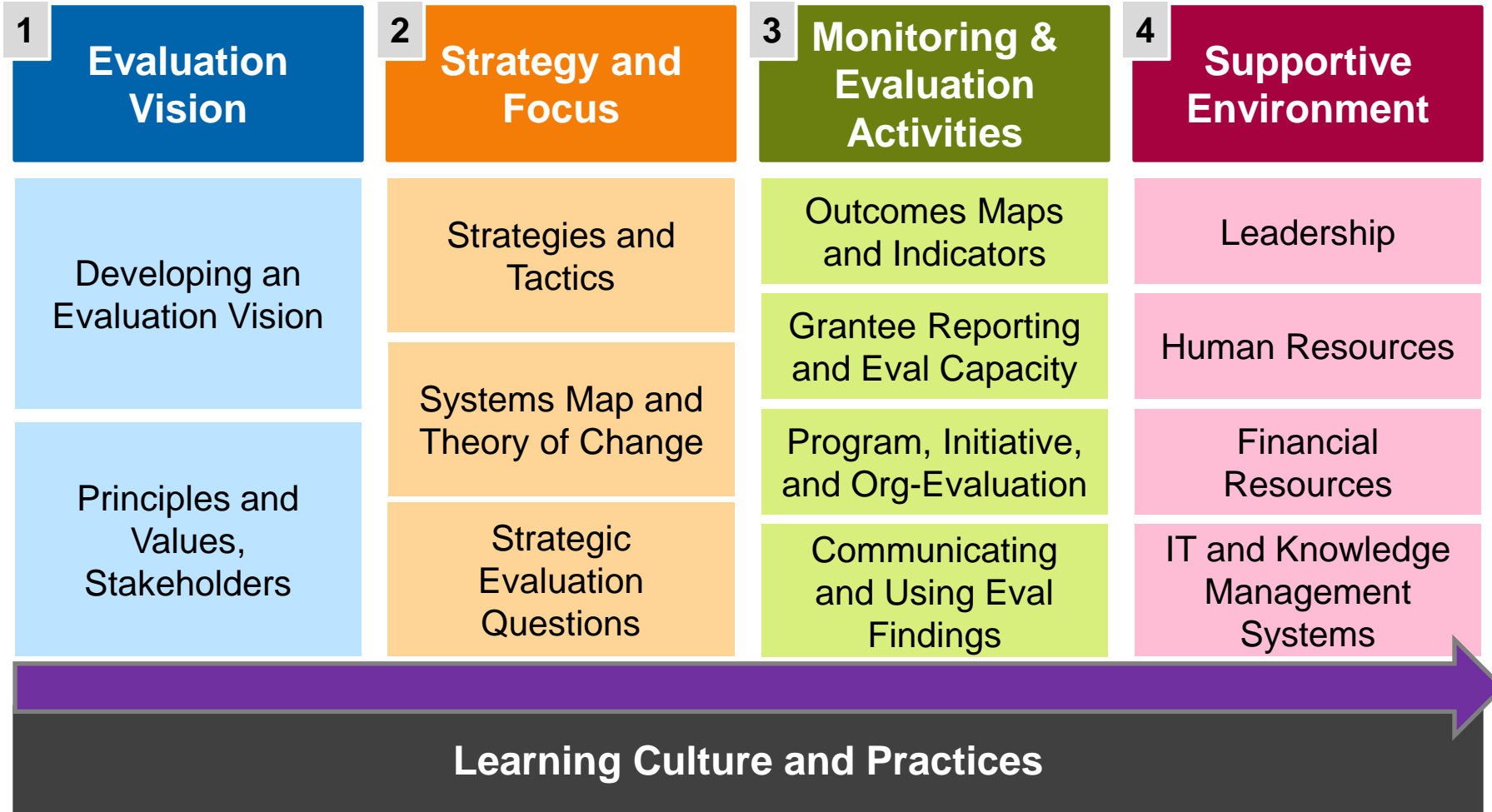
When

By and
with whom

To what
extent

...various programs, initiatives, processes, or policies in the organization will be evaluated and with what resources

SLES Include Four “Pillars” and Are Underpinned by Learning Culture and Practices



A SLES helps ensure that learning and evaluation activities result in meaningful and actionable information

Moving from the Abstract to Something Real

Developing a SLES for McCormick Foundation

- Issue Areas: Education, Journalism, Civics, Communities, Veterans
- 500 Acre Park – two museums, two golf courses, hundreds of acres of gardens
- \$1.5 B endowment; \$50 M grants, \$80 M including park
- 2011 – New direction in foundation
- Director of Evaluation and Learning, reporting to CEO

Why did we consider a SLES?

- Abstract notions of increasing impact
- Power of evaluation as a tool for understanding and change
- Goals for Foundation and Grantees:
 - Routinize the use of evaluation
 - Develop evaluative thinking as the norm
 - Develop systems to ensure the application of knowledge gained through evaluation and other activities

Our goals aligned with the true purpose of a SLES

Organization Culture as a Driver Towards and/or Barrier to Learning

Going Well

All four 'pillars' are moving ahead well (Evaluation Vision, Strategy and Focus, Monitoring and Evaluation Activities; Supportive Environment)

- Organic Process
- Slow down the drive for quick creation
- Evaluative thinking

Still Working On

Creating a culture that supports learning

- Making hierarchy more porous
- Challenges to trust
- Willingness to be open

Results from Using Evaluative Processes in Foundations: Challenges and Solutions
EXERCISE 1: McCormick Foundation as a learning organization

Directions: Read through the entire list of characteristics of learning organizations. Then place an **S** on the line by up to 3 characteristics that you think are current **STRENGTHS** of McCormick Foundation, in supporting organizational learning and a **W** by up to 3 characteristics you think are significant **WEAKNESSES** of McCormick Foundation as a learning organization. You may also write in your own ideas about strengths and weaknesses regarding learning. The characteristics are organized by domain. You may distribute your votes across domains or concentrate them in one or more areas depending on your own experiences.

Characteristics of Learning Organizations			
	W	S	
CULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rewards experimentation
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports learning from mistakes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Values asking questions
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports open discussion and critical feedback
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages collective reflection
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Views information as common property
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes cooperation over competition
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Builds and maintains trust
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes big picture perspective among individuals
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holds individuals accountable for organizational outcomes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Demands periodic reassessment of organizational goals
	STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Invests in knowledge management
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Has effective channels for flow of learning between levels
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Rewards staff and grantees for basing action on information
			Has explicit learning goals

* Adapted from *Challenges to the Role of Evaluation in Supporting Organizational Learning in Foundations* (Bickel, Millett and Nelson, Council on Foundations, 2002)

The Circuitous Evaluation and Learning Road in Philanthropy

Reflections on Designing and Implementing a SLES

- Establishing a SLES requires simultaneous work on both the evaluation front as well as the learning culture
- These process have to grow from within the organization, or they will fail
- These processes require humility, tenacity, tremendous patience, and love

Why a SLES at Blue Shield of California Foundation (BSCF)?

Who is BSCF?

- A statewide health funder
- **Program Areas:** Health Care Safety Net and Domestic Violence
- **Population Focus:** Vulnerable communities in CA
- **Budget:** \$30M grant making and programmatic budget; 10% dedicated to learning and evaluation
- **Role:** Chief Program Director

Why did we consider a SLES?

- Strong desire to become a “learning organization,” for example:
 - Develop a culture of asking questions
 - Support experimentation and creativity
 - Increase trust between leadership and staff
- Be able to tell the story of our impact
- Ad-hoc approach to evaluations
- Lack of clarity on how to move evaluation and learning work forward

SLES Mixed Bag: Successes and Works in Progress

Going Well

Strategy and Focus

- Cross departmental logic models tied to shared organizational outcomes

Evaluation Vision

- Answers the “why”
- Simple and clear

Still Working On

Supportive Environment

- Building organizational culture
- Identifying and deploying needed human and IT resources

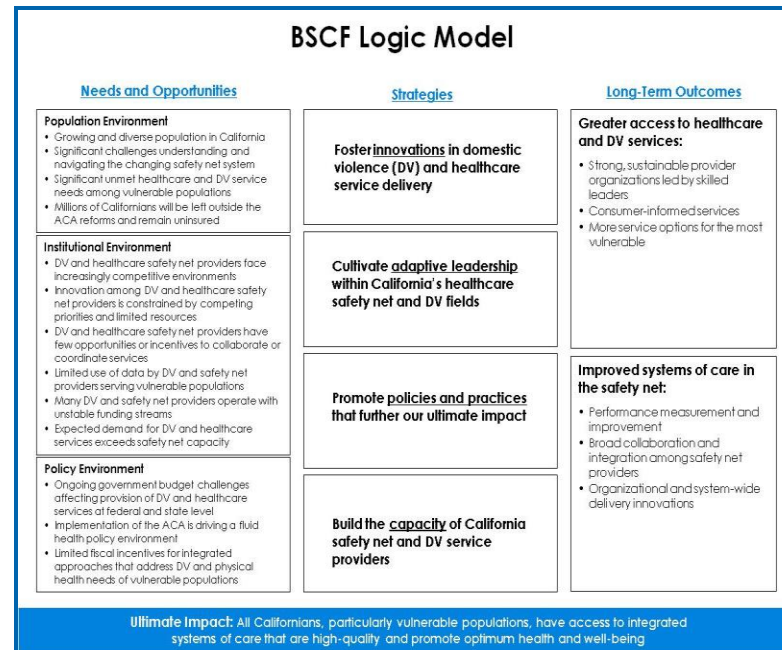
Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

- Performance measures that define success and how it will be measured

It's about the SLES journey, not just the destination!

Reflections on Designing and Implementing a SLES

- Building a culture of learning across the organization is critical
- All SLES elements are needed
- Be creative about the data sources
- This work takes time and requires flexibility and iteration
- On the road to becoming a learning organization



SLES Serves as a Roadmap For Implementing Our Strategy

Developing a SLES for Issues Affecting Women Programme, Oak Foundation

- Focus on women rights, notably in the areas of violence against women and movement building
- 2014 grantmaking budget = \$12.2 million USD
- 4 Staff Members (3 programme staff + 1 administrator)
- No dedicated M&E staff or budget – learning, monitoring, and evaluation is integrated into programme work

Why did we consider a SLES?

- 2011 – IAWP developed its first ever strategic plan
- 2012 – SLES was integrated into the strategy to serve as a road map for its implementation
 - ✓ Flexible, adaptive, and mindful of limited resources (ours and our grantees)
 - ✓ Test underlying assumptions driving the strategy
 - ✓ Integrate learning and feedback from our grantees
 - ✓ Share our learning with the field

The Value-Added Versus the Additional Work Load of Bringing a Learning Frame to Your Work

Going Well

SLES was very well received by grantees and other partners in the field:

- Received useful and relevant feedback to our learning questions
- 1st annual “SLES Update Report” produced in September 2013

IAWP is able to adapt strategy and assumptions based on learning:

- Learning Summit – three days dedicated to reviewing and articulating our learning and adapting our strategy as needed (“built-in” learning time and space)

Still Working On

Challenge to fully integrate SLES into the foundation’s grantmaking forms and processes:

- It is still an add-on that we send to grantees which results in additional work for us and them

Challenge to develop evaluation methodology to track global outcomes and impact:

- To date, learning has focused more on process & unpacking our assumptions
- Next step is to evaluate clusters to understand impact

A positive IAWP experience is sharing with other programmes in the foundation to encourage learning approach to M&E

Integrate Learning From the Start and Don't Stop

Update on Issues Affecting Women Programme's Strategic Learning and Evaluation System

IV. Summary of 2013/2014 Programmatic Strategic Evaluation Questions

Movement Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we best catalyse the necessary elements of movement building through our grant-making? • How do Women's Funds (WFs) see themselves contributing to movement building?
Ending Family Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we best catalyse the necessary elements of movement building through our grant-making? • How do Women's Funds (WFs) see themselves contributing to movement building? • To what extent do WFs strengthen the capacity of their grantees and how can we best contribute to this process? • Is the resource allocation between IAWP and WFs optimal with regards to supporting women's groups? • To what extent are we helping WFs make the case that they are advancing women's rights? • Which other actors and partners could contribute to movement building, and how can we best support them? • What else can we do to build strong movements (e.g. other levers and/or strategies beyond grantmaking)?
Ending Trafficking and Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What drives our grantees to address prevention at different levels (e.g. primary prevention targeting the general population; secondary prevention targeted specific risk and/or vulnerability factors; and tertiary prevention focusing on breaking the cycle of violence)? • How can we best support the adoption of a rights based model to prevent and respond to trafficking at the organisation, national and international levels? • How can we best support self-representation of victims and groups at risk in decision making that promote rights based anti-trafficking policies? • How does broadening our grantmaking from trafficking to "severe forms of exploitation" impact the expansion of Oak's T&E program? • To what extent, and how are Oak's grantees addressing victims of trafficking as well as victims of severe forms of exploitation? • What are the most relevant, realistic and impactful interventions that we can support to reduce vulnerabilities to, and mitigate risks of trafficking and exploitation?
Ending Situations of Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does our funding have an added value for advancing women's rights in the situations of crisis in which we're engaged?

Reflections on Designing and Implementing a SLES

- Benefit of integrating SLES design into strategic planning process is saving time and resources
 - Cadillac\smart-car approach
- Important to harmonize internal forms and processes with SLES
- Most important value of SLES for IAWP is the "forced" time for reflection on learning as a team

Audience Q&A



Rebekah Levin
Robert R. McCormick
Foundation



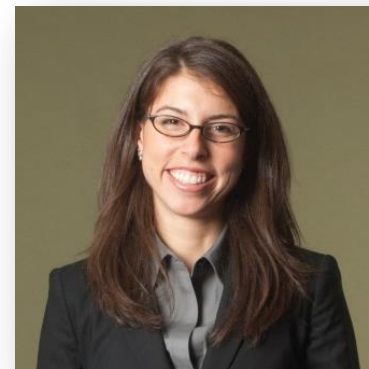
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Thank You!

- Thank you for joining the conversation today
 - Please take a moment following the webinar to complete our exit survey
 - The presentation slides and other resources are available for download at www.fsg.org/SLESwebinar
 - If you would like to access the recording of today's webinar, you can do so using the same log in information you received when you registered

