

Bright spot practices

More effectively putting decision-making at the center

Spreading these bright spot practices could help the field gain traction on a better future in which social sector organizations more effectively put decision-making at the center.

1 Information for on-the-ground decision-making is prioritized

- Reduce grantee reporting burden and simplify what's needed by funders to minimize diversion of time and resources
- Begin with data needed by front-line for decision-making and build reporting requirements from there
- Leverage data as by-product of user actions and transactions when possible
- Support the development of low-cost tools useful for front-line users
- Attend to totality of data collectors' and data users' experience, addressing individual motivations and abilities

2 Learning is embedded and continuous

- Embed experimentation, hypothesis-testing, and course correction to continuously improve
- Focus on what works and what doesn't for improvement rather than identifying success and failure
- Focus on closing feedback loops with behavior change as a result of new learnings
- Create incentives for data use, learning, and adaptation throughout the organization
- Maintain a supportive learning environment that is open to new ideas and differences of option, and that provides time for reflection
- Develop concrete learning processes and practices with clear purpose and goals
- Have leadership promote and reinforce the value of learning processes and practices

3 There is greater investment in monitoring, evaluation, and learning capacity

- Ensure nonprofits have sufficient resources for funder data requests, including funding for monitoring, evaluation, and learning design
- Promote broad and in-depth data-oriented capacity building that integrates data use into organizational culture and leadership practices, technology, data processes, and strategy development
- Provide "embedded resources" to help organizations better use data and evaluative thinking
- Promote peer, individual organization, and group learning and training
- Create time for more and deeper discussions between funders and grantees about learnings, including what hasn't worked

4 The data and methods needed to inform decisions are available

- Invest in data and analytics infrastructure needed for learning and decision-making
- Incentivize good data collection throughout the data supply chain by making sure it's relevant to data collectors and informed by user needs
- Support the development of tools for non-expert users
- Use compatible applications across the organization to enable timely and ongoing data sharing, with the ability to parse information in different ways

Bright spot practices

Better empowering constituents and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion

Broad adoption of these bright spot practices could help the field avoid the expected future and instead better empower constituents and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities.

1 Equity is consistently considered in and supported by MEL efforts

- Ensure AEA's statement on cultural competence essential practices is followed, including eliminating bias in language and using culturally appropriate evaluation methods
- Assess demographics and identify relevant existing inequities
- Consider equity implications of intervention and monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts, including intended and unintended consequences
- Collect disaggregated data on the effects of an intervention broken out by different groups of constituents. Look for gaps between groups
- Use an asset-based framing in data collection and analysis, including social and cultural resources that might otherwise be overlooked (e.g. informal child care or cultural sources of strength)
- Build more diverse and inclusive staff and partnerships for monitoring, evaluation, and learning roles
- Develop diversity, equity, and inclusion competencies and capacities for staff engaged in monitoring, evaluation, and learning

2 Constituent feedback is an essential practice

- Develop a process of ongoing constituent feedback for learning, collaboration, and improvement
- Engage and co-create with constituents throughout the feedback process, from design through action, in ways that make them feel valued and consulted
- Incorporate constituent feedback into decision-making to make course corrections
- Promote skill development and training to provide staff with the capacities needed to develop and use constituent feedback tools and technologies

3 Constituents are empowered to make their own choices

- Build community capacity to collect, analyze and use their own data
- Enable constituents to define what is most relevant and needed
- Enable constituents to guide development and changes to programs and initiatives
- Enable constituents to co-create together interventions that work for them

4 Data rights are secured

- Get consent from constituents for data collection and make clear how it will be used
- Enable constituents to access and remove their data where relevant if they choose
- Protect the privacy of constituent data and prevent them from being identified
- Protect how sensitive information is shared
- Destroy constituent data when it is not needed
- Act in ways that promote equity, fairness and the best interest of constituents when collecting and using personal information

Bright spot practices

More productively learning at scale

Spreading these bright spot practices could help us make real progress in more productively learn at scale for the issue areas in which we work.

1 Knowledge is shared openly and widely

- Create an open knowledge policy for sharing materials that have been funded or produced by your organizations
- Publicly share grantee and constituent survey results
- Publicly share evaluation results
- Adopt an open licensing policy that enables others to reproduce, distribute and adapt materials to promote learning and enable additional research and knowledge development
- Have grantees use open repositories to enable broad access to knowledge products
- Use open standards for your website knowledge materials to enable them to be more easily tracked and found

2 Knowledge gaps and learning agendas are collaboratively undertaken

- Map evidence gaps with others working in your issue areas to help identify strategic learning priorities
- Determine key learning questions for stakeholders in the field to drive knowledge development
- Create learning communities to promote ongoing collective learning

3 Data is integrated at scale needed to assess social impact

- Coordinate on shared metrics with organizations working in the same issue areas
- Create an open data policy for sharing data that has been funded or produced by your organizations
- Promote open data principles, standards and practices in the issue areas in which you work
- Where relevant, support the development of data collaboratives in your issue areas that share data across organizations and sectors
- Where relevant, support the development of integrated data systems in your issue areas that aggregate governmental administrative information for the purpose of learning which interventions are working and why.

4 Evaluation synthesis, replication, and meta-evaluation are supported

- Support the development of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in your issue areas
- Promote the use and dissemination of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, including of data that you have funded or created
- Support the creation of repositories and platforms for systematic reviews and meta-analyses

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