

Finding and Flipping Orthodoxies

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Measuring social impact is too hard

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

It's too hard to apply lessons learned from one project or program to others

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Including constituent voice in M&E is nice, but not necessary

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

We can't really measure systems-level change

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Evaluation is for experts

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Data collection and analysis are expensive

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Formal evaluation is necessary to judge whether a project is successful

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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It's too hard to integrate learning from M&E efforts into our decision making

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More information means better decisions

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

If we have the right information we will make better decisions

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Randomized Controlled Trials are the only real way to know if a program works

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Evaluation is primarily about methods

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Developmental evaluation is the answer

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Developmental evaluation is not the answer

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Establishing causality is the goal

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Good enough isn't good enough when it comes to evaluation

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Hitting metrics equals success

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We do evaluation to satisfy our *board's* needs

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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A poor result or lack of impact means failure

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Evaluation ends the conversation

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Evaluation will give us a clear answer

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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We care most about attribution

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Data are quantitative

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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We provide enough funding to allow nonprofits to measure well

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Every grantee needs to provide us with M&E data

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

We operate in a world of data scarcity

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Context makes it too difficult to compare across circumstances

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

The measurement needs of every foundation are unique

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Common data standards are impractical

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

There is agreement about what success looks like

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Funders can't agree on shared metrics

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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M&E staff are the best judge of what works

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Program staff are the best judge of what works

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People on the ground are not the best judge of what works

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Constituents do not own their own data

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Evaluation is done for the funder

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Conducting evaluation doesn't require specialized training

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Conducting evaluation does require specialized training

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Constituents are participants, not beneficiaries, of evaluation

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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We can impartially judge the results of our own programs

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Outputs and impacts in the social sector cannot be rolled up

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M&E should be a distinct function

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M&E is the responsibility of specialized staff

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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M&E is primarily an auditing function

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

We can't share evaluation findings because it might hurt grantees

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

Collaborating with other funders on evaluation is too hard

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Failures are something to avoid or hide

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
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Our strategy should focus on things that are measurable

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M&E and data analytics are distinct

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We need numbers to know what works

- This orthodoxy exists in my organization
- This orthodoxy exists in the field

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Deal out the full deck of cards around your table.** It doesn't matter if people have slightly different numbers of cards in their hand.
- **Look at your hand of cards.** For each card, think about the orthodoxy described and consider: Does it still hold true for you? Should it be changed? Do you know others—in philanthropy or elsewhere—who are challenging the orthodoxy? What would it look like if you flipped it and did things differently?
- **Choose the card with the orthodoxy that is most interesting to you.** Why is it interesting? What would it look like if you flipped it—partially or completely?
- **"Play" the card at the center of the table.** Explain the orthodoxy you chose to the group, and tell why you chose it and what it might look like if you flipped it. Go around the whole table, with each person playing one card. Don't take more than 30 seconds explaining your card to your group.
- **Discuss the cards on the table. Choose or vote on one orthodoxy that the table finds most interesting.** Write one sentence directly on the card about why it was so interesting to the group.
- **Share back with the full group** in 30 seconds or less.

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