



The Wrong End of Science

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Drowning in Data

- Grantees increasingly have to prove that their programs “make a difference”—i.e., they have to conduct *summative evaluations*



Jargon Decoder

Summative	Formative
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Tests whether program “worked”● Conducted at end of program● Focused on judging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Helps program improve● Conducted throughout● Focused on learning



Two Ends of Evaluation

Summative	Formative
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Drowning in Data

- Grantees increasingly have to prove that their programs “make a difference”—i.e., they have to conduct *summative evaluations*
- Grantees oblige by collecting lots of dubious data
- Grantmakers rarely fund these studies or even use these data



The Gold Standard

- Control group
- Random assignment
- Lots of participants



Evaluation Budget Items

- Consultant to design study
- Staff time to recruit subjects, run study, and enter data
- Study materials
- Subject payments
- Consultant to analyze data
- Staff time to write report



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Instead of Conducting Summative Evaluations....

1. Constantly check whether your theory of change makes sense
2. Use proven-effective programs
3. Make sure staff are faithfully implementing the program
4. Encourage learning and experimentation throughout



Foundations and nonprofits are
focusing on the wrong end of science!



Back-End Science





Back-End Science





Front-End Science





Front-End Science





Leave Back-End Science...

...to people who have the time,
expertise, and budgets to do it



Take Front-End Science...

...including the science of accumulated evidence, logical analysis, and principled experimentation for yourself