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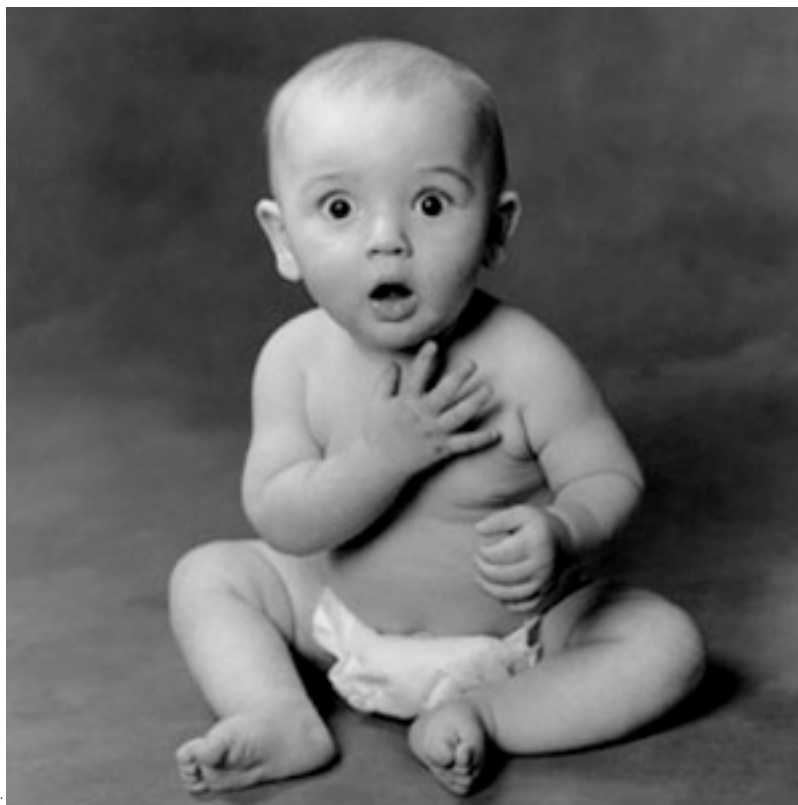


Steady Hand at the Wheel: Using an Incremental, Systematic Approach to Promote an Evaluation Culture in a Federal Organization

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There's an interesting story about evaluation brewing in DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy (EERE)

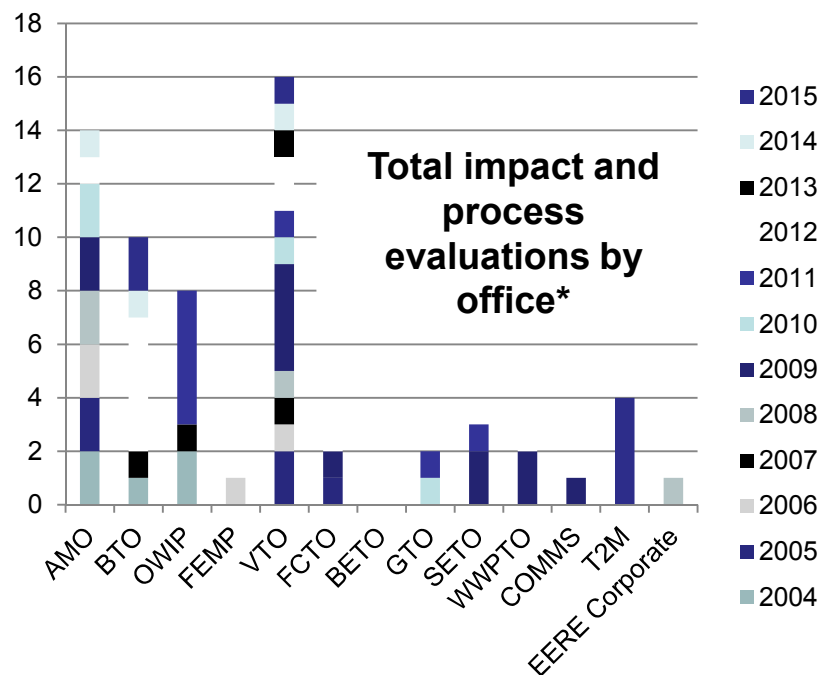


Prior to 2000...

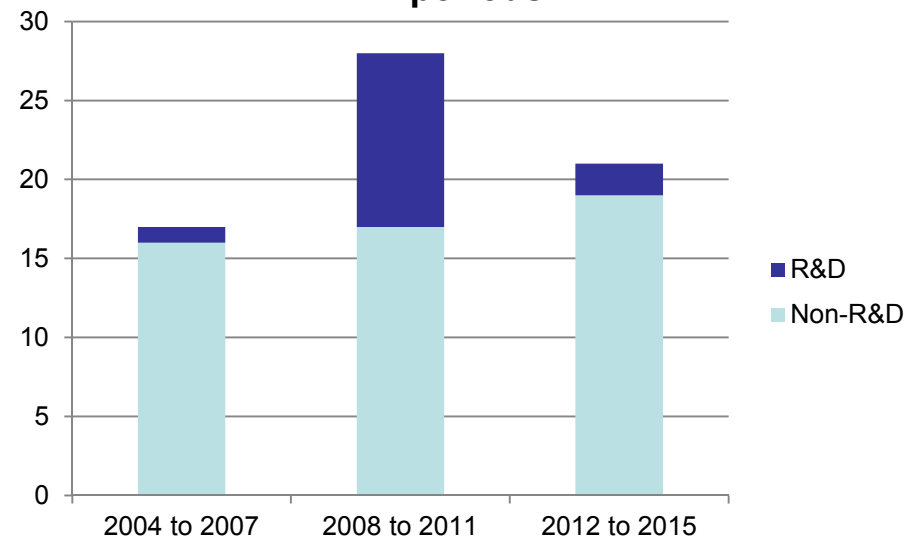
- There had only ever been 16 impact evaluations conducted across all of EERE
- And these were more outcome studies than impact studies with strong rigor
- There was scant evidence of the value to society from EERE's investments, going all the way back to the inception of the agency following the oil crisis of the 1970's

Then, a relative explosion: Program evaluations from 2004

EERE evaluations peaked in 2008-2011 period, due to collaborative OSP-program new evaluation starts (base appropriations) managed by OSP, plus several new ARRA evaluation studies



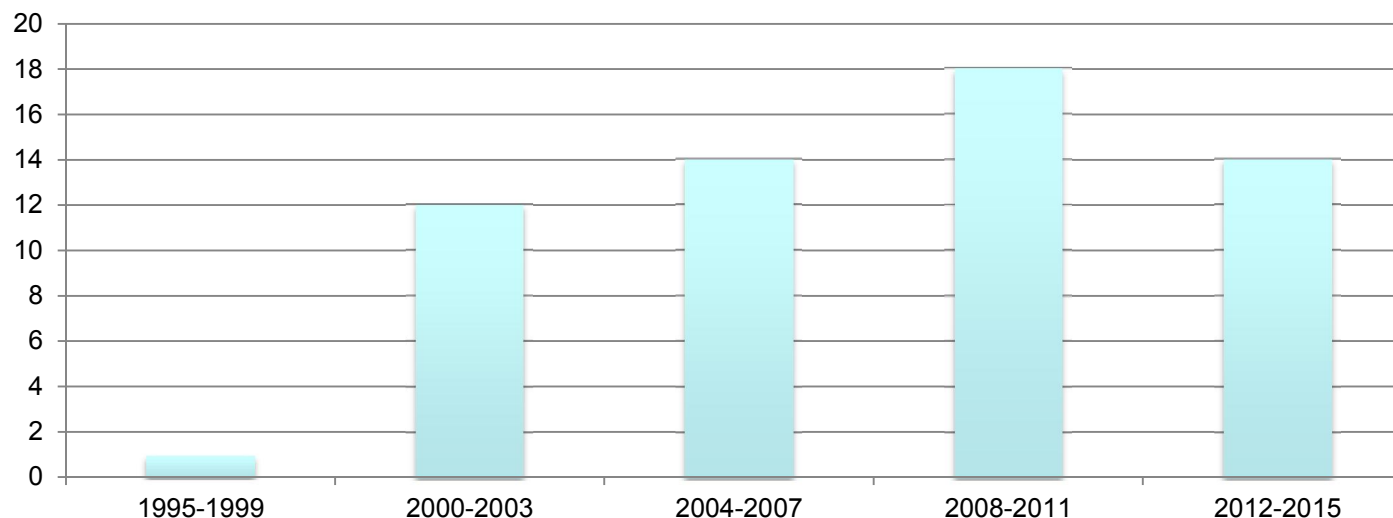
Total impact and process evaluations over 3 time periods*



* Excludes peer review type evaluations; also data does not take into account differences in level of rigor of evaluation studies

For programs with strong R&D portfolio, an even more telling rise....

Number of impact evaluations of EERE R&D investments, by year



- And the rigor of evaluations has improved over the years, especially since 2009, with 75% of 2015 studies having moderate* to strong rigor

* Example of a moderate rigor evaluation is a well executed counterfactual non-experimental study. Example of a study with strong rigor might be a well executed quasi-experimental type study.



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Why is this noteworthy?

**Not to toot the agency's horn,
but...**



These achievements have come against a very unfavorable backdrop

- **SPENDING**

- Even with the explosion, spending on impact evaluations has been on the order of 0.06% of overall EERE office spending over the past decade

- **EVALUATION-AVERSE CULTURE (AT THE TIME)**

- “It’s too difficult to evaluate R&D investments”
- “We can lose funding if results are negative”
- “Sr. Mgmt does not care about this stuff” (i.e., absence of leadership/champion to motivate program offices)
- “We already know our programs are effective”

* Example of a moderate rigor evaluation is a well executed counterfactual non-experimental study. A strong rigor is a quasi-experimental type study.

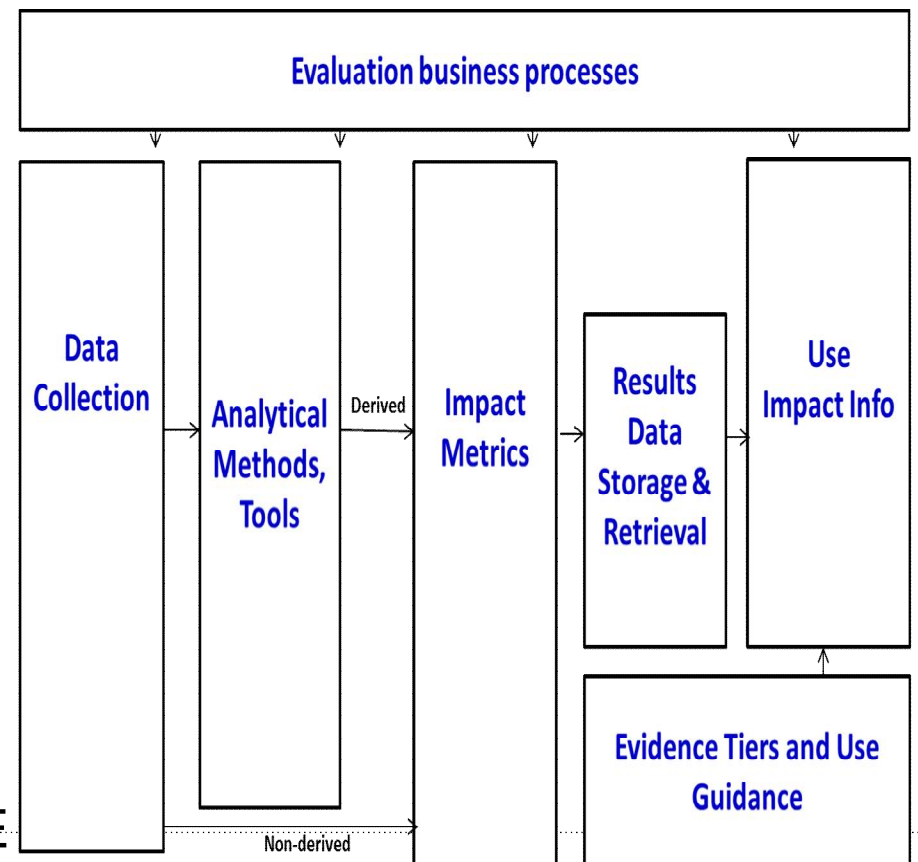
So, what was done to overcome the obstacles?

- A holistic plan, developed from a series of informal assessments of need. Plan components:
 - Establish data infrastructure for evaluation
 - Build staff capacity – for planning, managing and using evaluation results
 - Provide technical assistance
 - Set standards (multiple guides)
 - Commission third-party studies
 - Demand accountability
- In short, a multi-pronged approach to establish a culture of evaluation

Overall EERE systemic evaluation approach

Objective: Establish consistent and best practice evaluation planning and implementation, and mechanisms for effective use across EERE

- Builds on and improves the approaches and R&D evaluation methods employed by NIST and NRC
- Based on peer-reviewed and proven impact evaluation methods
- Held initial EERE-wide evaluation training in fall 2014; 2nd training in spring 2015
- Early implementation across EERE is underway



Plan is in line with literature on establishing a culture of evaluation:

- From Mayne (2008)*: Characteristics of an evaluative culture
 - ***Self-reflection and self-examination***
 - Purposeful seeking of evidence through M&E
 - Using results to challenge/support program activities
 - Valuing honesty and genuine dialogue
 - ***Evidence-based learning, which involves***
 - Making time to learn in a structural way
 - Learning from mistakes
 - Encouraging knowledge sharing
 - ***Experimentation and change, involving***
 - Supporting risk taking
 - Seeking new ways of doing business when evidence points to need for such

Mayne, J. 2008. *Building an evaluative culture for effective evaluation and results management*. ILAC Working Papers 8, Rome, Institutional Learning and Change Initiative.



Organizations get to culture of evaluation through

- **Leadership**
 - Demonstrated Sr. Mgmt leadership and commitment
 - Regular informed demand for results information
 - Building results management capacity
 - Establishing/communicating clear role and responsibilities
- **Organizational support structures**
 - Supportive organizational incentives
 - Supportive organizational systems, practices
 - Outcome-oriented and accountability regime
 - Learning focused evaluation and monitoring
- **A learning focus**
 - Build-in learning
 - Tolerating and learning from mistakes

What follows? Building on what has been achieved so far

- Sustain, nurture relationship with Sr. Mgmt. (creative reinforcement of evidence-based decision making)
- Specialized training for Mgmt. on effective uses of evaluation results
- Continue capability development through learning
- Highlight, share exemplary results management
- Share results information widely
- Incorporate evaluation training in regular staff/Mgmt training
- Make organizational units accountable for demonstrating that they are learning

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