



# Leading **Effective** Foundations

The CEP Conference

# Getting Evaluation Right

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

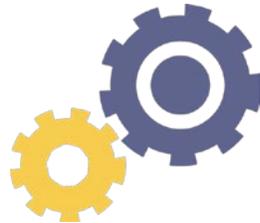


# Purpose of Study

We wanted to understand:



**staffing and  
structure**



**relationship  
with strategy**



**investment  
and support**



**activities**



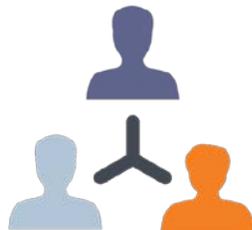
**usefulness  
and use**

# Methodology

We surveyed the most senior evaluation or program staff member at U.S. and Canadian independent and community foundations that either:



provide **\$10M or more** in annual giving



are members of the **Evaluation Roundtable**

# Respondent Demographics

Survey Period	Number of Responses	Survey Response Rate
Sept – Oct 2015	Total: 127	Total: 50%

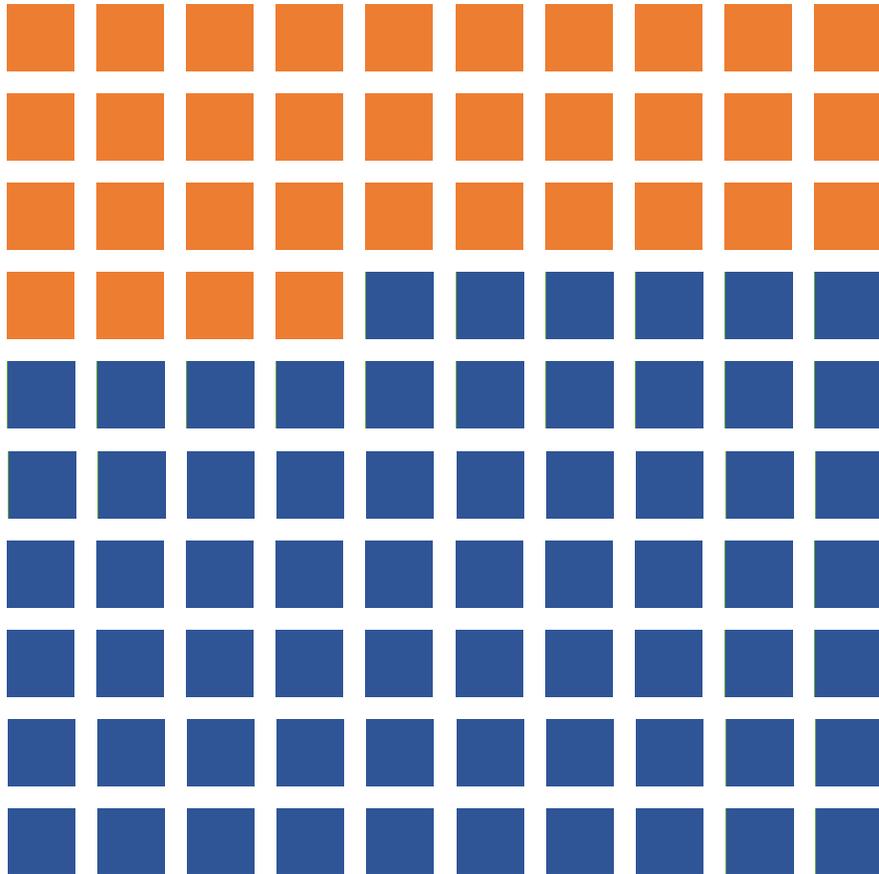
Respondent Characteristics	Range	Median Value
Assets	\$2M to >\$11B	\$533M
Giving	\$1M to >\$590M	\$28M

# Staffing and Structure

How many full-time equivalent (FTE) staff are regularly dedicated to evaluation work?

	Overall Median	< \$20M in giving	\$20M-\$49M in giving	\$50M-\$200M in giving	>\$200M in giving
2015	1.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	4.0

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# 34%

house the evaluation function in its own department.

Of those departments, 79% had their own budget.

If evaluation is not its own department, it most often is embedded in program departments.

In the most recent fiscal year, how much did your foundation spend on evaluation?

	Overall Median	< \$20M in giving	\$20M- \$49M in giving	\$50M- \$200M in giving	>\$200M in giving
2015	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$80,000	\$500,000	\$5.5M

Only 35% of respondents were quite or extremely confident in the accuracy of their estimate.

# Focus of Role

32% say compiling or monitoring metrics to measure foundation performance is a top priority

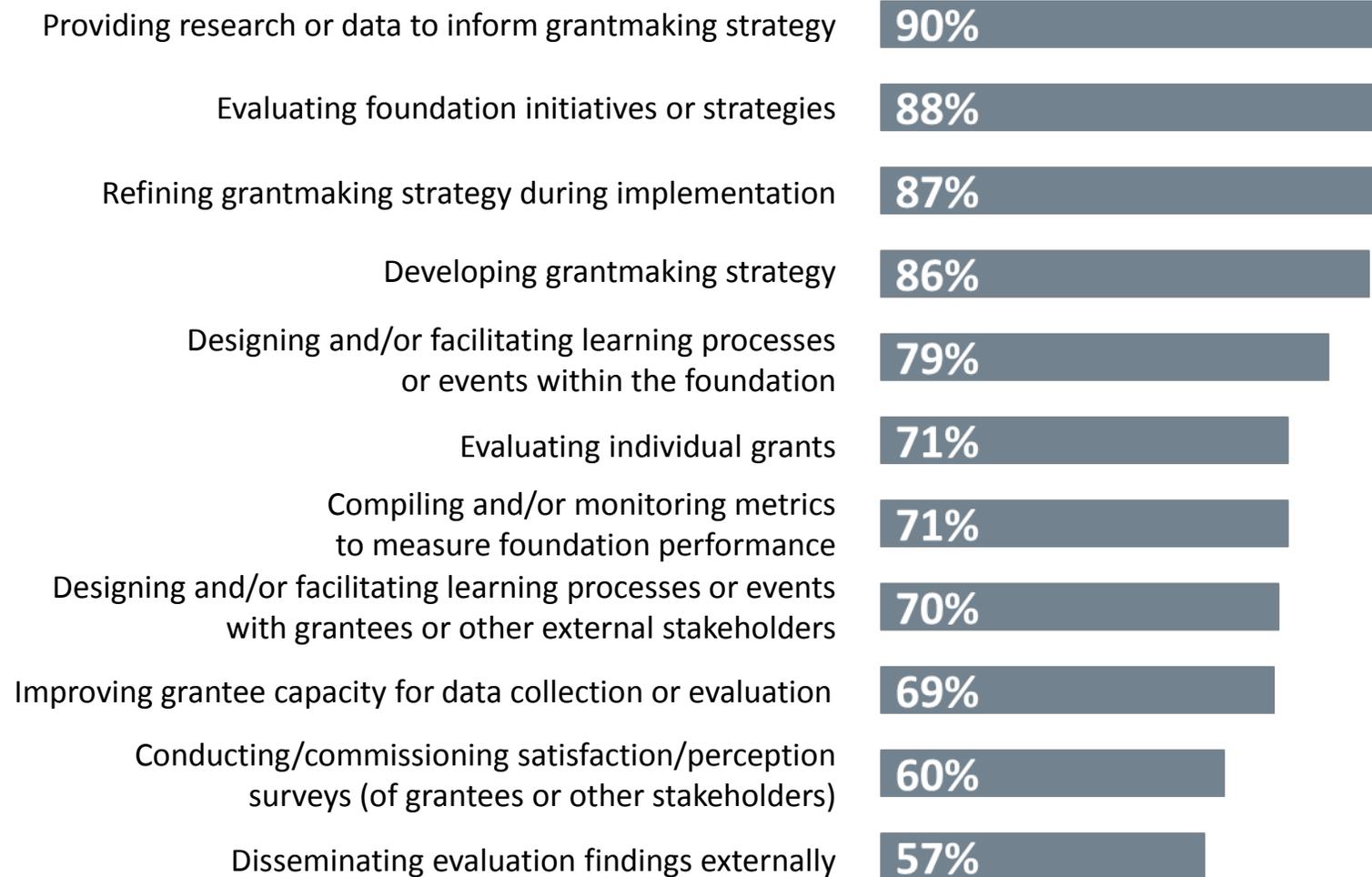
Foundation

Initiatives or Strategies

**51% say evaluating foundation initiatives or strategies is a top priority**

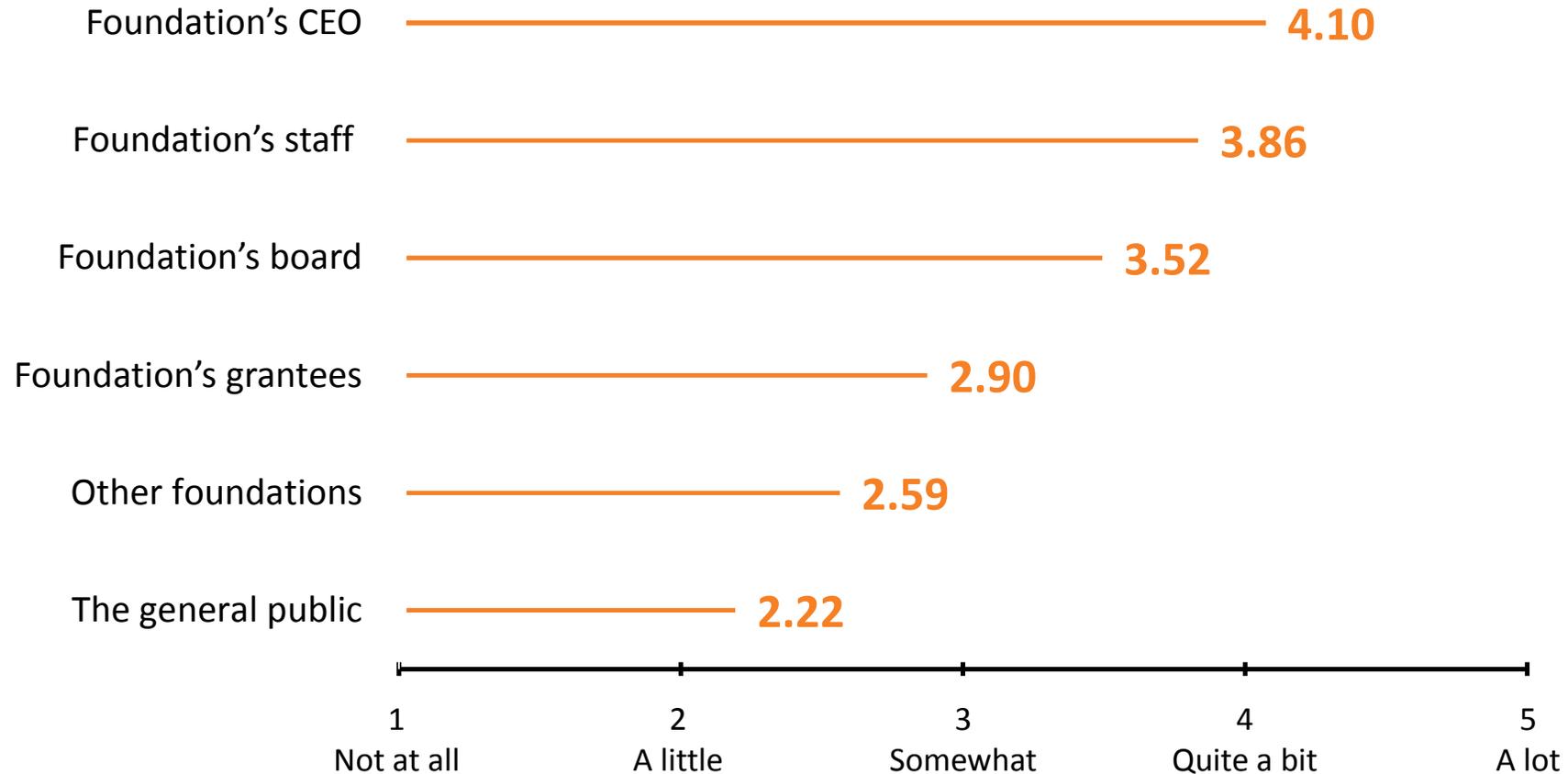
34% say evaluating individual grants is a top priority

Individual Grants



# Challenges: The Sharing and Use of Evaluation Information

## To what extent are evaluation findings shared with the following audiences?



Percentage of respondents who say the following practices have been at least **somewhat challenging** in their foundation's evaluation efforts

83%

Having evaluations result in useful **lessons for the field**

82%

Having evaluations result in useful **lessons for grantees**

76%

Having evaluations result in meaningful **insights for the foundation**

# Evaluations that Strengthen Grantees' Practices: A Possible Tool for Foundations

Edward Pauly, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation  
The Wallace Foundation  
April 5, 2017

Center for Effective Philanthropy 2017 Conference, Boston, MA

# Many foundations seek to strengthen their grantees' practices

... as a way to improve services that benefit people in need...

# With good reason...

- Practices matter, and they are complicated!
- That's because the quality of services depends on the practices of the organizations delivering them – that is, on implementation (AKA execution)
- Weak implementation is common
  - Insufficient planning
  - Insufficient participation and dosage
  - Inadequate follow-up
  - Staff training and turnover ...
- Implementation shortfalls weaken services and therefore impact

# Implementation is where it's at

- “Implementation – rather than the adoption of a technology, the availability of information about it, or the level of funds committed to it – dominates the innovative process and its outcomes.”
  - Paul Berman and Milbrey Wallin McJaughlin, *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Vol. IV: The Findings in Review* (1975)
- “Public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers.”
  - M. Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1980

# Implementation *can* be strengthened

- Stronger implementation comes from
  - Capacity-building
  - Adaptation to the local context
  - Aligning strategy with operations
- Foundations often support grantees' efforts to strengthen practices and services through:
  - Training and/or other forms of technical assistance
  - General operating support
  - Promoting policies that prioritize and fund quality
  - Strategy alignment consulting (clarifying the theory of action)
- *But these valuable efforts overlook a central problem: It's often unclear how to strengthen implementation – and which approaches are most helpful*

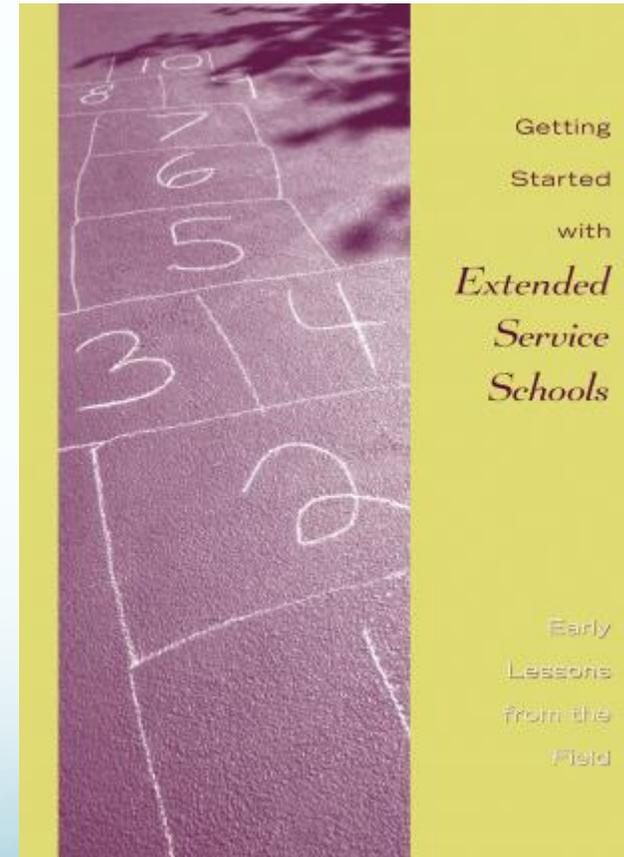
# What evaluations that strengthen practices do

- Map and unpack planning activities, quality aspects of plans
- Examine practices, operations and improvement efforts
- Determine who is served – and who doesn't participate; why they participate (or don't); how much they participate
- Analyze staff training, turnover, supervision, service-quality factors
- Identify barriers & enablers of high quality practices and services
- Analyze adaptation (note – fidelity topics get less attention)
- Identify, clarify, and refine the theory of action (strategy alignment)
- *Compare operations* across grantees – on quality, adaptation

**Bottom line: Based on real-world evidence, evaluations can point grantees, funders and others to ways they can strengthen practice**

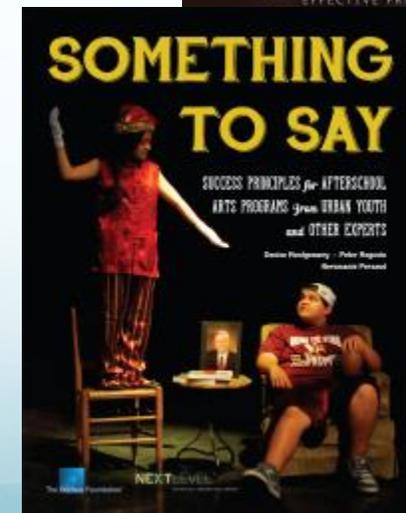
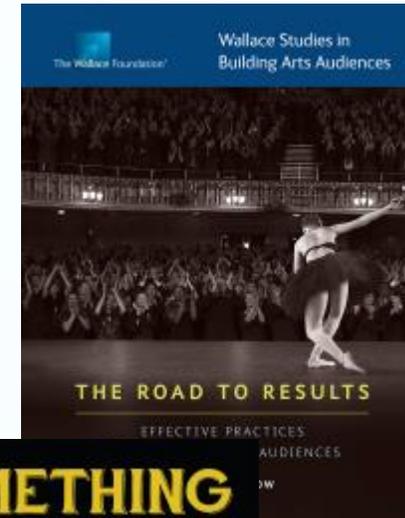
# An example of lessons on strengthening practices

- *Getting Started with Extended-Service Schools* (2000)
  - Problem of practice: How can schools and CBOs collaborate to plan and start up high-quality afterschool programs?
  - Answer: Lessons on the start-up phase of programs like 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers show who needs to be at the table for planning, and how to manage the start-up process



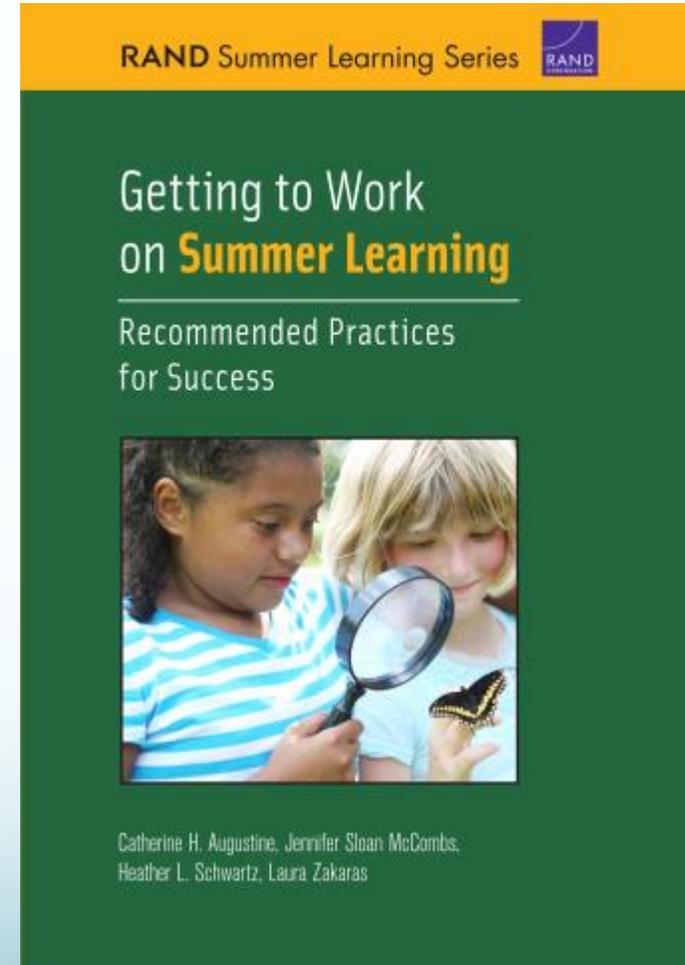
# More examples of evaluations that strengthen practices

- Problem of practice: How can arts organizations improve their practices for building new audiences?
  - Answer: *The Road to Results: Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences* (2014) shows the key role of market research
- Problem of practice: How can after-school organizations implement high-quality arts programs?
  - Answer: *Something to Say: Success Principles for Afterschool Arts Programs From Urban Youth and Other Experts* shows how professional artists and positive climate create high quality for young people



# Designing evaluations that strengthen practices

- Select topics whose lessons will be useful to practitioners
  - Ask, “What is it you don’t know that, if you knew it, would enable you to make breakthroughs in your work?”
- Design evaluations that use reliable, credible evidence
  - Weakly supported recommendations from experts about what they see as “best practices” aren’t as useful as concrete evidence from real-world practices and improvements that produce high quality services
- Example – *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success* (2013)

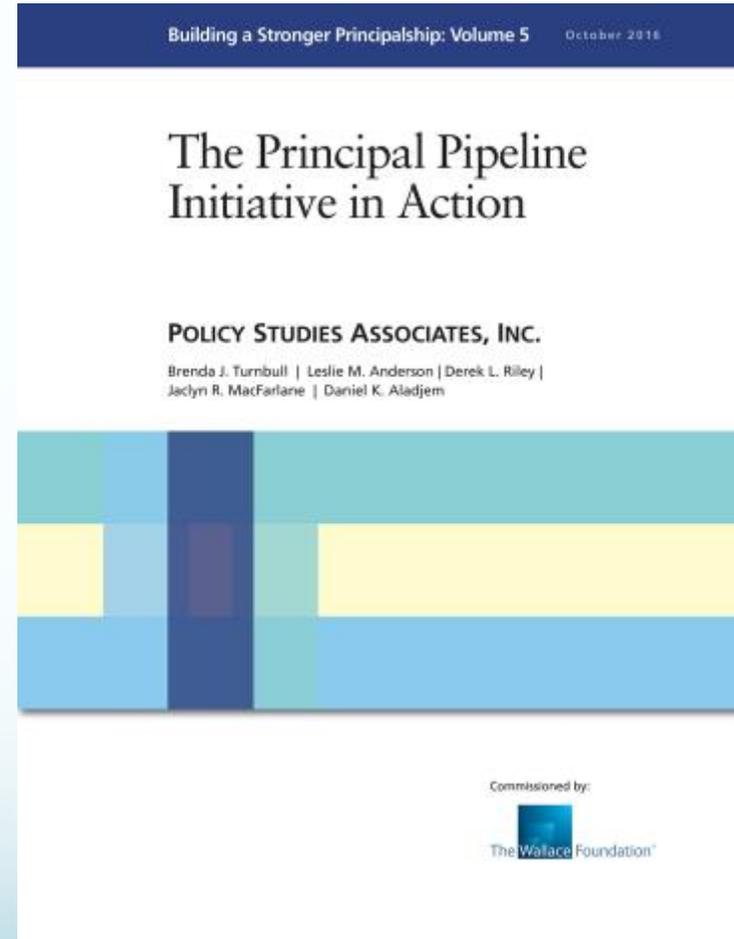


# The payoff for grantees – and for non-grantees

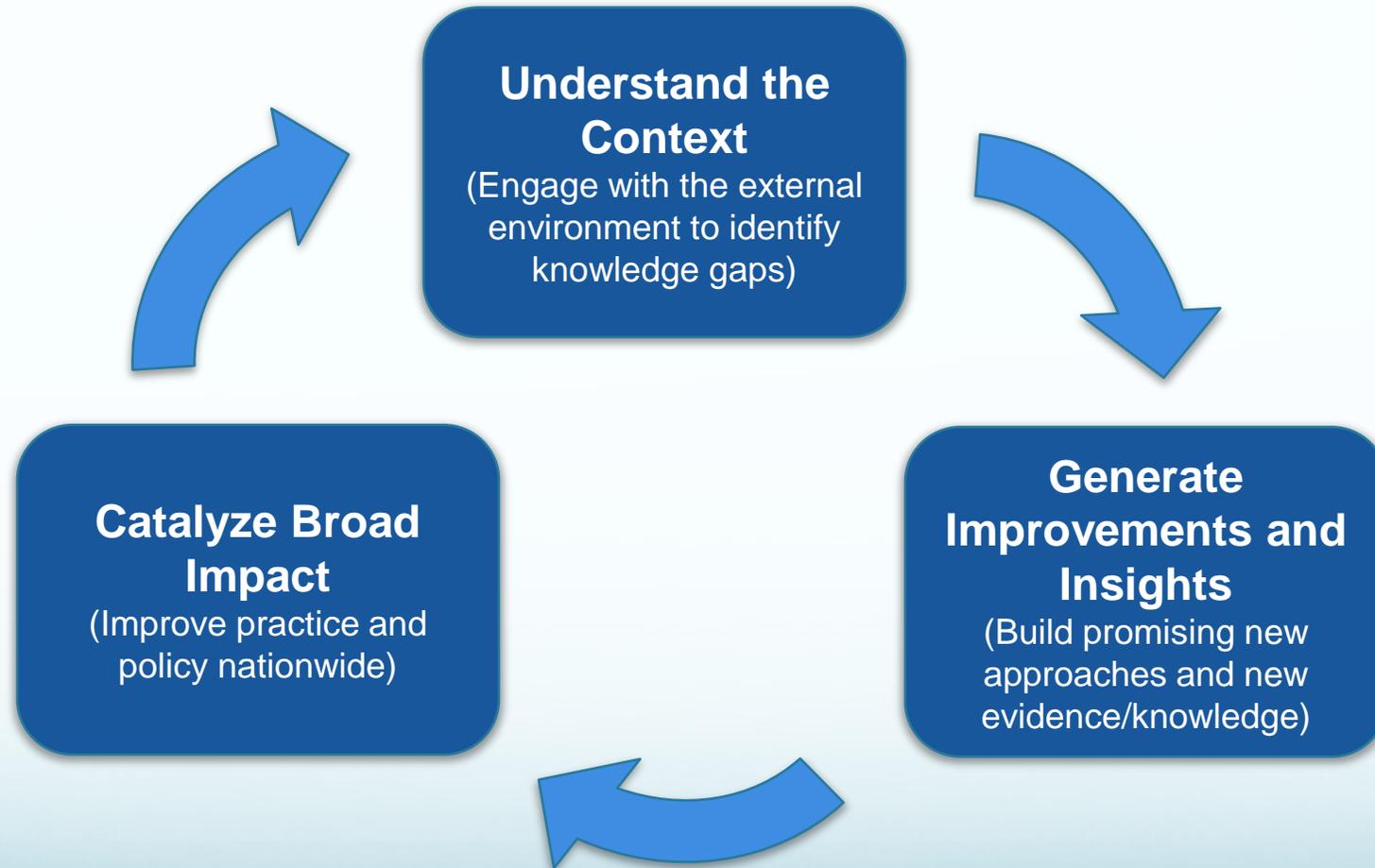
Evaluations that strengthen practices are:

- Useful to the foundation’s grantees
  - To guide them on *how* to strengthen practice
  - To identify good practices to sustain internally
- *And* useful to non-grantees (evidence: thousands of downloads)
  - To help the foundation reach others who then don’t have to ‘re-invent the wheel’

Example – *Building a Stronger Principalsip: The Principal Pipeline Initiative in Action* (2016)



# The Wallace Foundation's Approach

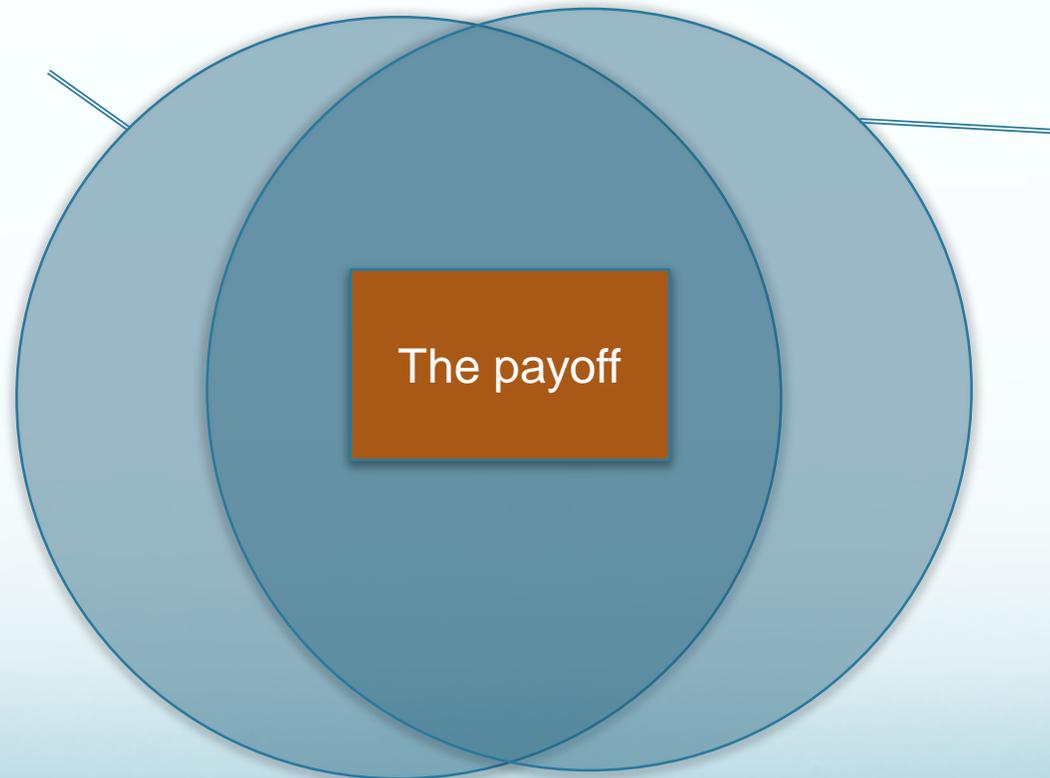


Wallace listens to others to identify gaps, works with grantees to build improvements, new knowledge and evidence of what works and then seeks to spread that knowledge widely.

# Two kinds of benefits

Direct benefits for grantees and those they serve, e.g. improved plans, and capacity

Indirect benefits for non-grantee practitioners and the field through credible knowledge



# Evaluation and Learning at The Walton Family Foundation

**Marc Holley, PhD**

**Evaluation Unit Director**

**April 5, 2017**

# Setting the Stage

- The Walton Family Foundation Board is committed to ensuring that effective evaluation and learning are a core part of the Foundation's practice.
- Evaluation plays a central role in providing actionable information – including informing priorities for projects and organizations to be funded, as well as informing the Board and staff about the Foundation's progress toward achieving its overarching Strategy and Initiative goals.

# Defining Evaluation at WFF

Definition:

***Evaluation is a systematic and intentional process of gathering and analyzing data (quantitative and qualitative), to inform learning, decision-making and action. (Gopal & Preskill)***

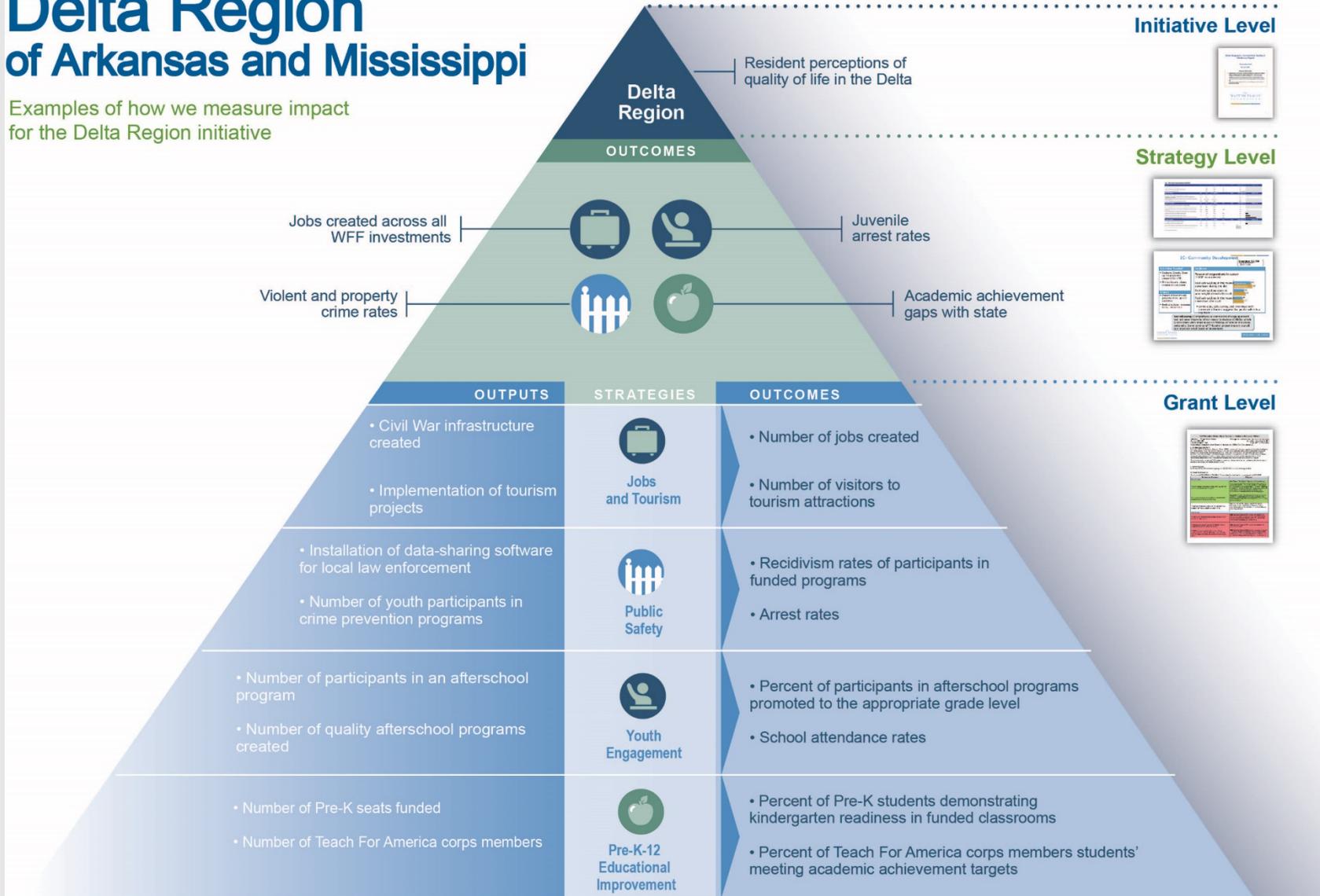
We include the full range of evaluative activities in our practice, including research.

# History of Formal Evaluation at WFF

- **Initially handled by Focus Area program staff**
- **Single Evaluation staffer 2006-2009**
- **Staff Evaluation Task Force established Fall 2009**
- **Evaluation Unit established Summer 2010**
  - Formal evaluation expertise and content knowledge
  - Integrated, but separate to promote objectivity

# Delta Region of Arkansas and Mississippi

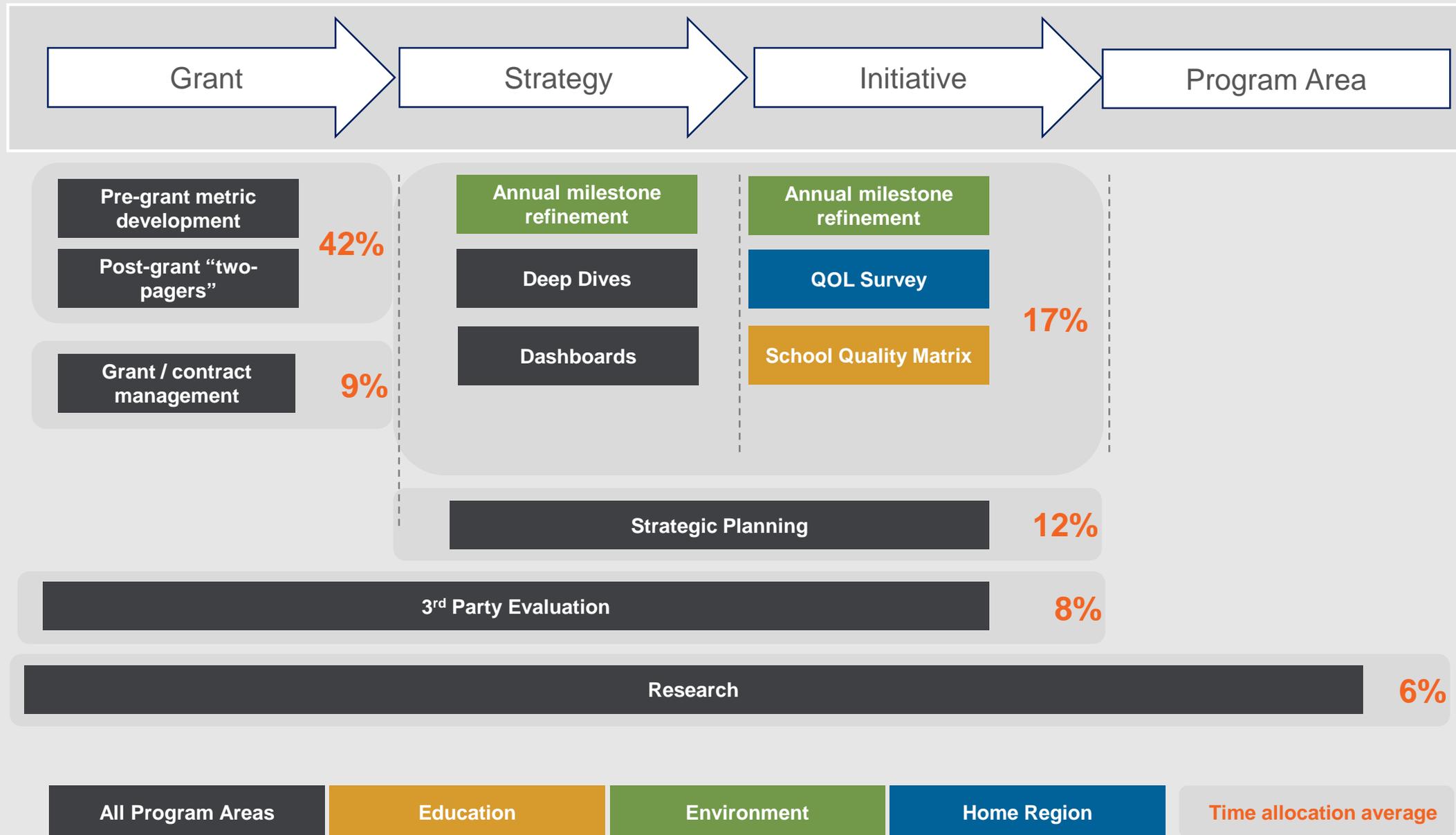
Examples of how we measure impact for the Delta Region initiative



# Scope of Unit's Work

As Evaluator/Researcher	As Consultant
Complete grant evaluations	Metric reviews
Conduct strategy and initiative evaluations (dashboard metrics)	Train program staff
Complete research projects internally	Strategic thought partner
Grant/contract management	Advise on program funded research projects
Review non-funded external research of WFF orgs or strategies	Review external communications

# On average, 51%\* of the Evaluation Unit's time is spent on grant-level activities



Note: This visual does not include evaluation activities for Individually Directed \*Time allocation comes from WFF Evaluation Unit team averages

# Context Matters – As it changes, so should we

- **Walking our talk: Important to reflect constantly on our own practices and ask - Are we providing maximum value to the organization?**
  - *Punchline: there is no single right way to do this*
- **New Board structure**
- **New Executive Director**
- **Evolving strategies**

# Changes Being Considered

## Exciting potential changes

- Create regular cadence of learning events internally
- Share out lessons through multiple venues
- Create explicit list of strategic learning questions in all programs and revisit regularly
- Create schedule of cluster and strategy level evaluations
- Use more external third-party evaluations
- Use more qualitative metrics and approaches
- Streamline dashboards

## Potential Obstacles

1) Time on agendas 2) EU staff time 3) Some limitations on what can be shared out 4) Pace of change



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