

*Trachtenberg School GWU/REI Grants Management Breakfast*  
*May 24, 2021*

**Shelley Metzenbaum**

The BETTER Project (BETTERproject.info)  
*Bringing Everyone Together To Enhance Results*

**Improving Federal Grants Management to  
Improve Outcomes, Operational Quality,  
Transparency**

<https://www.betterproject.info/writing/federal-grants-management-improving-outcomes>

# Why Focus on Grants

- \$765 billion annually before Covid, , 30% > contracts!
  - More than \$ value – leverage additional in-kind, financial investment
- ~ 1700 grant programs
- Grants management has historically gotten little attention
  - e.g., GPRAMA mandates priority goals in 5 mgt areas, but not grants
  - 3 federal “acquisition” universities; none for grants
  - Attention more to grant spending, closeouts, non-compliance, and other problems than to outcomes (trends, accomplishments) and improvement opportunities
- Happily, starting to change!
  - Multiple laws increase focus on grants and on managing to improve outcomes including GPRAMA, Foundations of Evidence Act, DATA Act, GREAT Act, Taxpayer RTK Act, and more
  - Grants CAP Goal & Grants Playbook call for rebalancing!

# Federal Grants Management Report/2 white papers *IMPROVE!*

Improve Outcomes – *First and Foremost!*

Improve Operational Quality

- Service – process quality, but also and especially knowledge finding, building, sharing
- Stewardship – cost-effectiveness, risk mgt., fair management

Improve Transparency. Communicate successfully, fairly, and efficiently to:

- Improve outcomes & operational quality
- Strengthen accountability – mutual, democratic, performance
- Build understanding of and trust in government

# My objective today

- Share a vision for change – long term but with actions that can start now
- Share examples of what's worked well in the past
- Enlist you in change efforts or
- If you disagree with recs, challenge you to i.d. areas of disagreement and think about, suggest what might work better in areas where change is needed

# Report and White Paper Content

- Identify issues needing attention and opportunities for improvement
- Find examples worth continuing and copying
- Encourage the search for even better practices
- Identify past problems to avoid
- Recommendations for future improvement:
  - Grant programs, especially but not only outcome brokers
  - Cross program action to support learning and collaboration
    - OMB
    - Others – GSA, Census, Treasury, HHS, many others
  - GAO and other oversight bodies

# Areas of Opportunity for Improvement

- ?'s grant programs, grantees, policy makers ask
  - Where to focus and how to improve
  - What works, what works better, and situational differences affecting effectiveness
- Data, analytics, and well-designed trials
- People – roles, responsibilities, skills
- Communication & community
- Processes and routines – connect people with each other & w/ relevant evidence to understand evidence, decide next steps
- Accountability expectations and incentive structures

# Manage Grants to *Improve Outcomes First and Foremost*

- Easy to say, but hard to do
  - Lack of clarity about outcome objectives and responsibility for outcome improvement
  - Difficulty finding and sharing relevant data
  - Emphasis imbalance: oversight infrastructure overwhelms insight-generating (R&D survey – 40%+ time on administrative matters rather than advancing outcome objectives; similar problem in other grant programs)
- Fortunately, data & analytic advances create unprecedented opportunities for outcome improvement but ...

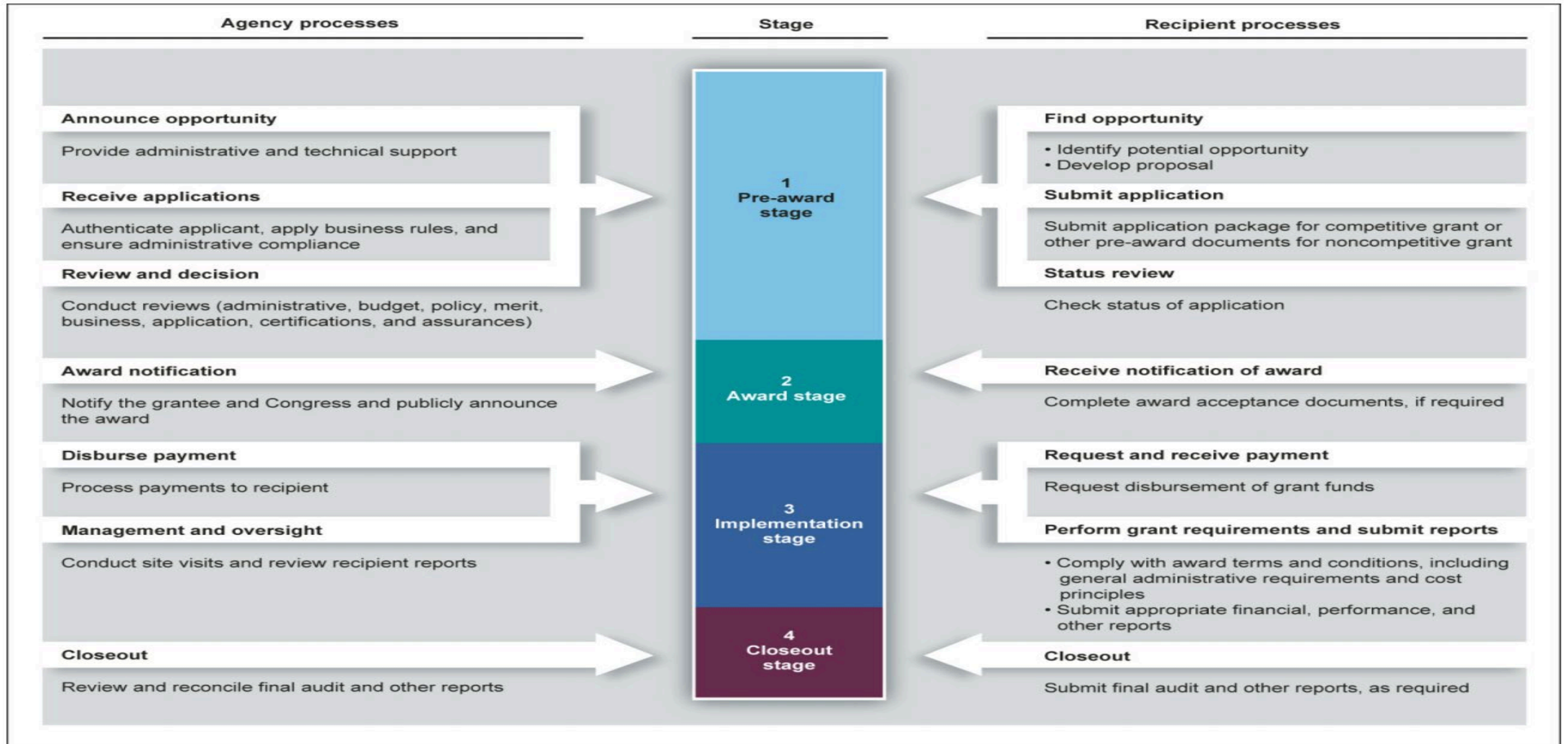
# Also need attention to:

- People
  - Outcome brokers and outcome teams
  - Incentives to pay attention to outcome improvement
  - Incentives to work across programs
- Communication and community
- How data and evidence are used



# GAO Life Cycle Chart

**Figure 1: Grant Life Cycle for Federal Grant-Making Agencies and Grant Recipients**



# Grants.gov Lifecycle Chart

1. **Pre-Award Phase** - Funding Opportunities and Application Review
2. **Award Phase** - Award Decisions and Notifications
3. **Post Award** - Implementation, Reporting, and Closeout

**Language in implementation section says support, but verbs tell a different story...**

- **Reviewing reports**
- **Site visits**
- **Audits**

**Missing in Action: insight generation to inform focus & find ways to improve + Action/info to increase uptake of better practices, reduce use of less good ones**



**Grants Playbook =>  
State Department  
language**

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Program-Design-and-Performance-Management-Toolkit.pdf>

*(A cautionary note: evidence suggests a few stretch targets lead to better performance so want progress on goals, not to meet them all)*

# Consider...

1. Do you work on increasing the beneficial outcome impacts of your grant program?
  - If you don't, do you know who does?
  - If you do, do you talk often with the person who does to figure out how your work can better help them improve outcomes, as well as operational quality?
2. Is It important to know what each grant program's outcome objectives are?
3. Is it important to know who is leading efforts to make progress on those outcome objectives, the outcome brokers?

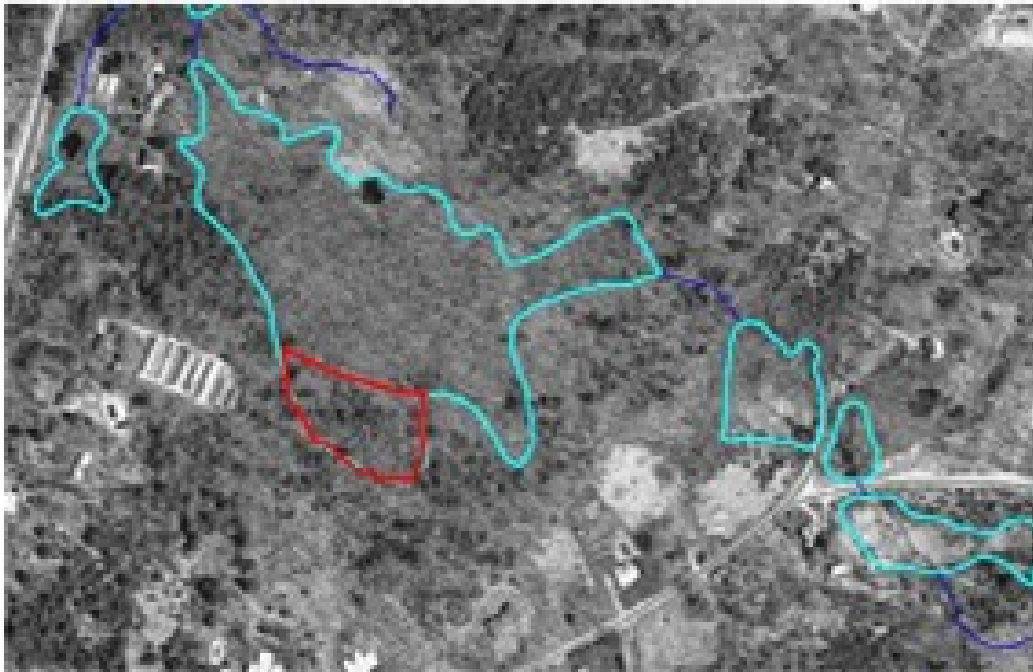
*I would argue that the answers to 2 and 3 need to be “yes” to avoid the risk of doing what you think helps advance each grant program's outcome objectives without knowing that it in fact does, nor knowing how to allocate time and resources in the future.*

# *To Improve Outcomes, Find, Build, Share, Use Evidence*

- To:
  - Inform where to focus – which problems/opportunities get attention long/short term (grant program/grantee/community goal setting)
  - Find ways to improve
    - Positive outliers, “Moneyball players” – those outperforming peers from which to learn or to hire.
    - Other useful analyses – e.g., correlation for prediction, causal factors can influence, clusters, sudden or unexpected change, anomalous statistics
    - Well-designed trials – RCTs, trials integrated into operations (structure of collected data matters)
  - Increase adoption of better practices, products & providers. Reduce use of less good ones.
    - Effective, cost-effective, equitable data and evidence sharing to improve outcomes/op. quality
    - Find, build, share, use evidence about successful knowledge diffusion and uptake practices
- What is evidence? Data analyses, not just evaluation
  - Evidence to inform where to focus both for action and knowledge building
  - Evaluation not to find and fund what works but what works and what works better, situational differences affecting effectiveness, lessons from failed trials

# Data & analytic advances open unprecedented opportunities for outcome improvement – inform focus

## Massachusetts Wetlands Loss



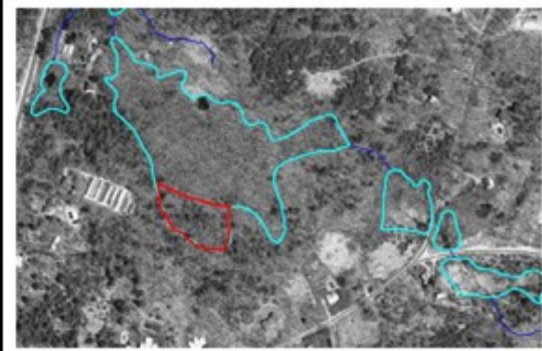
April 1996



April 2001



# Relentless focus on outcome improvement more important than tech

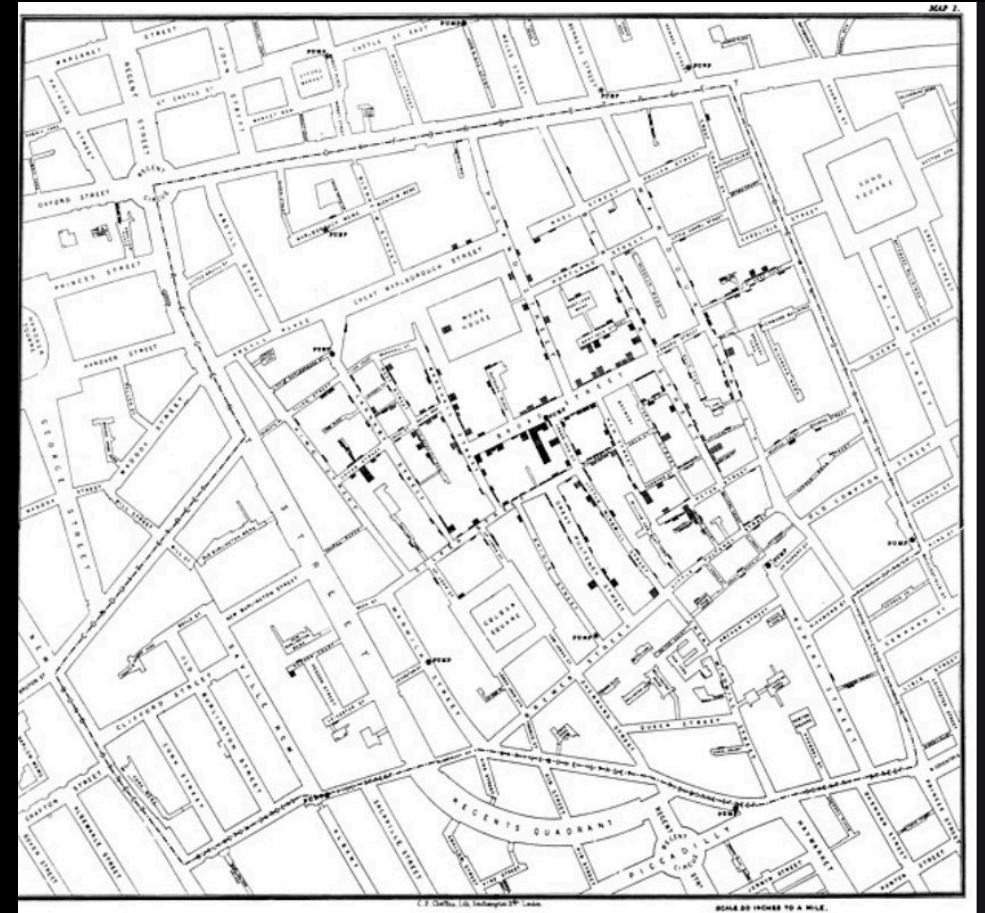


April 1996



April 2001

John Snow's 1854 Cholera Map

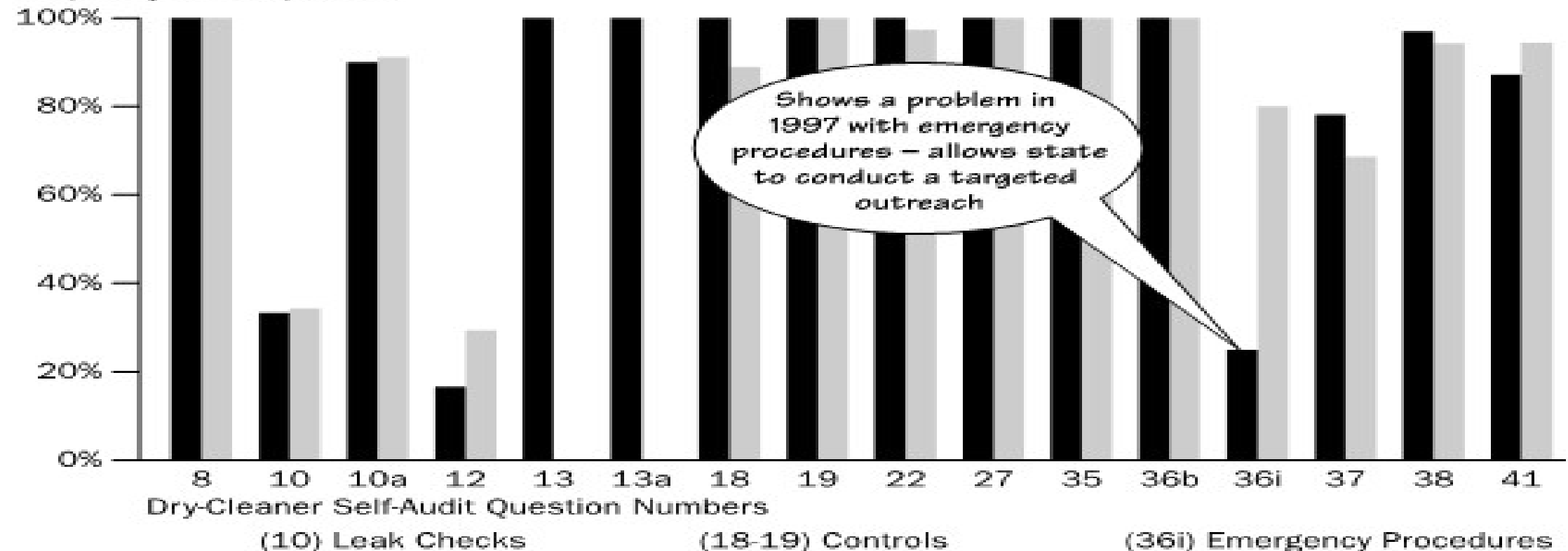


# Analyze and communicate monitoring/inspection findings to inform where to focus and find if actions taken worked as hoped (of grantees and help grantees)

Analysis of Inspection Data, Massachusetts  
Environmental Results Program, 1997 & 1998

1997 1998

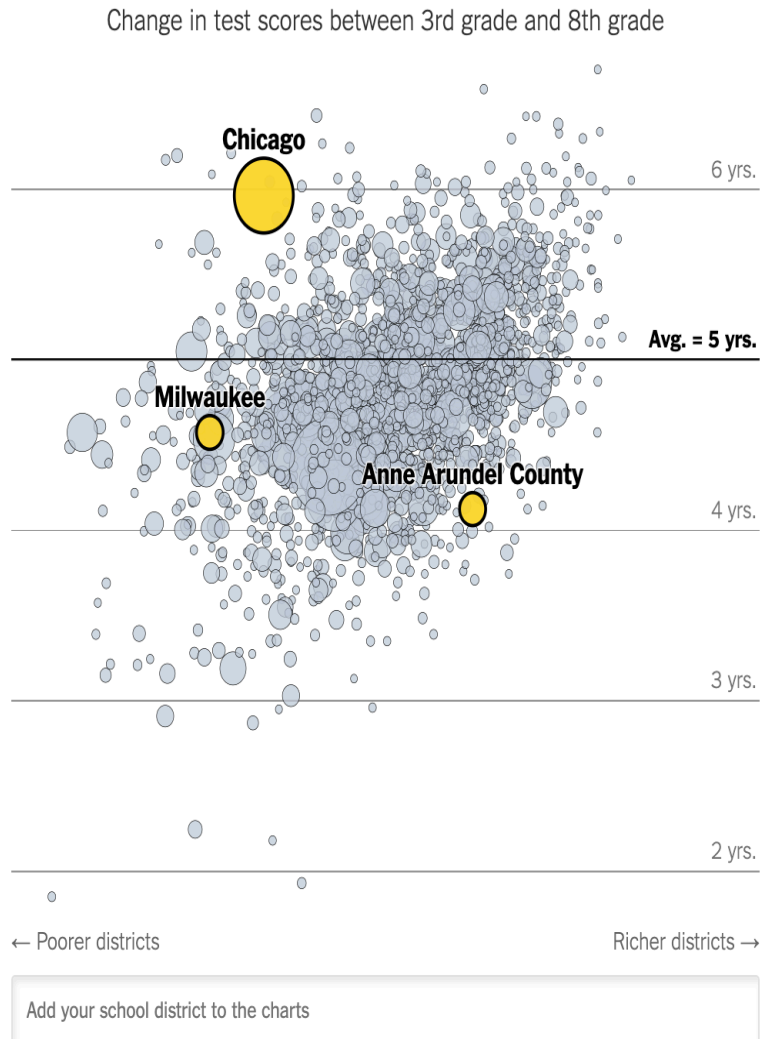
Frequency of Compliance





# External NGOs, researchers, journalists search for positive outliers w/ fed \$. But who and how is this used?

**THE UPSHOT** | How Effective Is Your School District? A New Measure Shows Where Students Learn the Most



How Award-Winning Schools Help Students Achieve at High Levels

What You Will Find in These Pages

+

Criteria Used to Identify Dispelling the Myth Schools

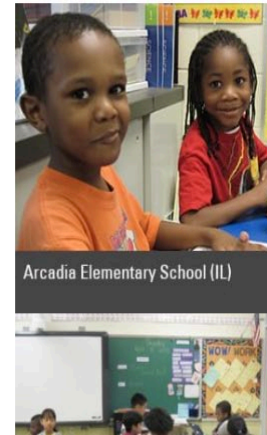
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Sharing Lessons From Those Who Are Getting It Done

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## School Directory

### Elementary Schools



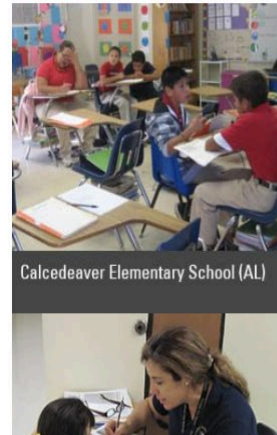
Arcadia Elementary School (IL)



Baylor-Woodson Elementary School (MI)



Brimley Elementary Schools (MI)



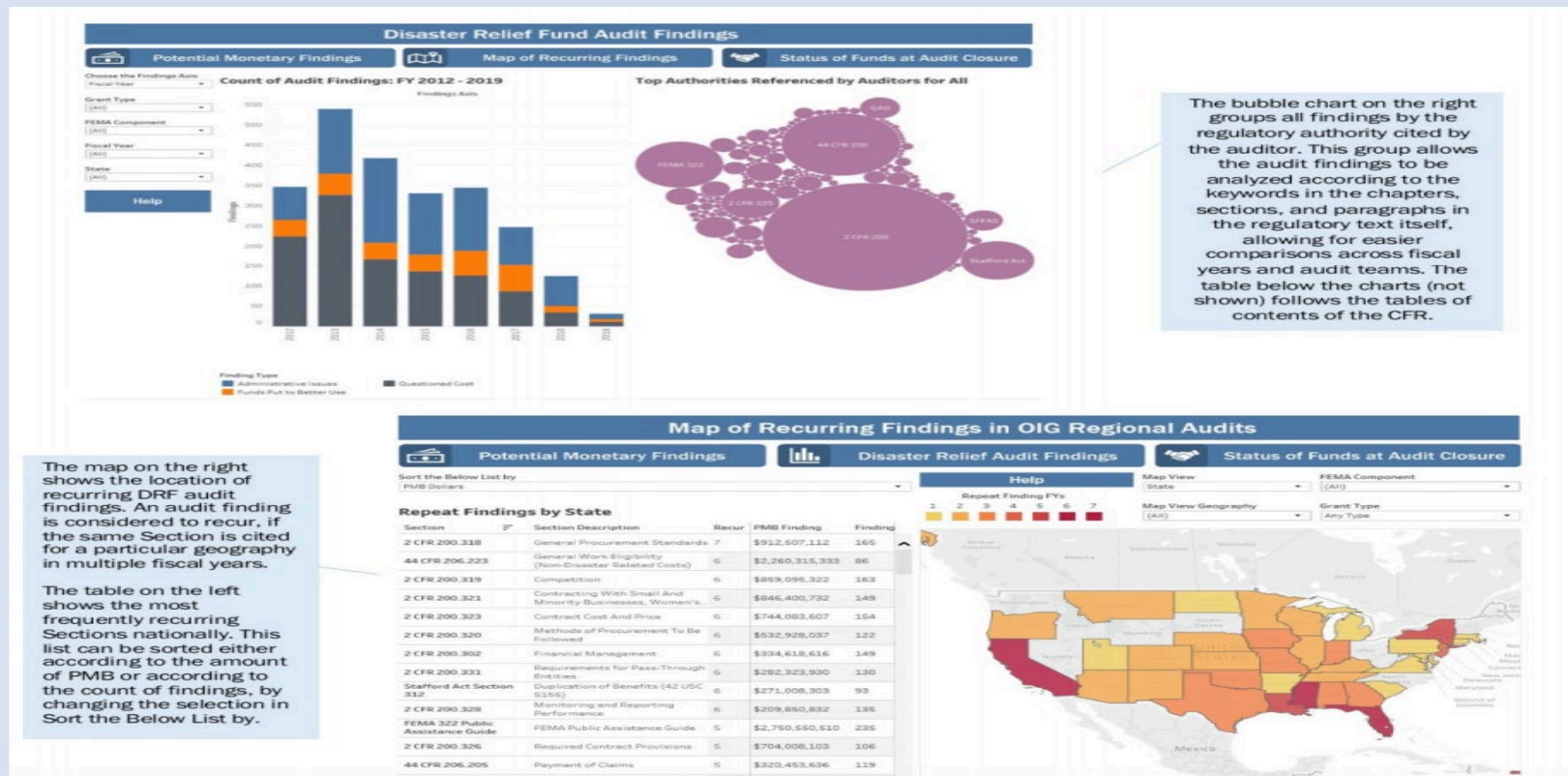
Caldecaver Elementary School (AL)

[https://edtrust.org/dispelling\\_the\\_myth/](https://edtrust.org/dispelling_the_myth/)

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/05/upshot/a-better-way-to-compare-public-schools.html>

# Data collection, analytics, and communication important to improve operational quality, too, within and across grant programs

Figure 1: Example of How FEMA Presents Analyses Graphically



Systematically code, analyze, and communicate monitoring & audit info to reduce non-compliance problems (confirming compliance requirements align with real-world risks)

**Source:** U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration (2020, January 23). "Compliance Dashboard." Presented at National Academy of Public Administration Grants Management Symposium. Retrieved from: [https://napawash.org/uploads/FEMA\\_COD\\_Handout.pdf](https://napawash.org/uploads/FEMA_COD_Handout.pdf).

# Help grant recipients decide where to focus, find ways to improve, enlist and engage support, increase use of better practices

nationalcoreindicators.org/resources/presentations/

STATE LOGIN



HOME ABOUT NCI STATES SURVEY REPORTS CHART GENERATOR STAFF STABILITY SURVEY RESOURCES NEWS CONTACT

## Presentations

Overview

Using the Data

Methodological Reports

Data Briefs & Highlights

Presentations

Publications

Recent PowerPoint presentations about NCI are described below and may be viewed or downloaded by clicking on the underlined link.

Presentations are listed by event, in chronological order.

Sarah Taub Webinar Series: Uncovering Racial & Ethnic Disparities In Reported Experience & Outcomes Among People with IDD

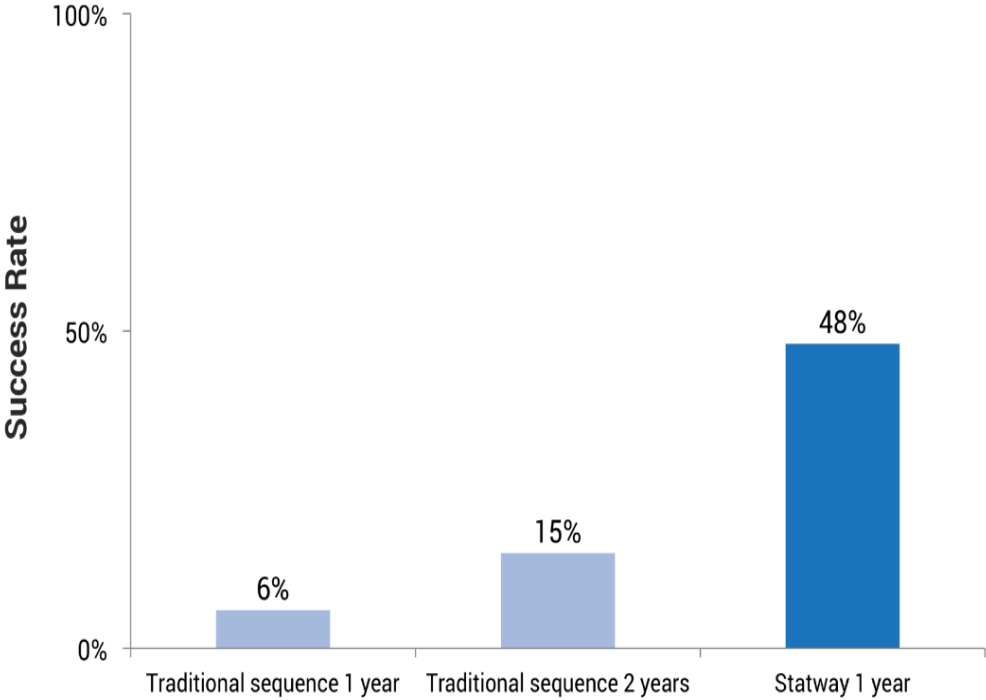


# Networked Improvement Communities

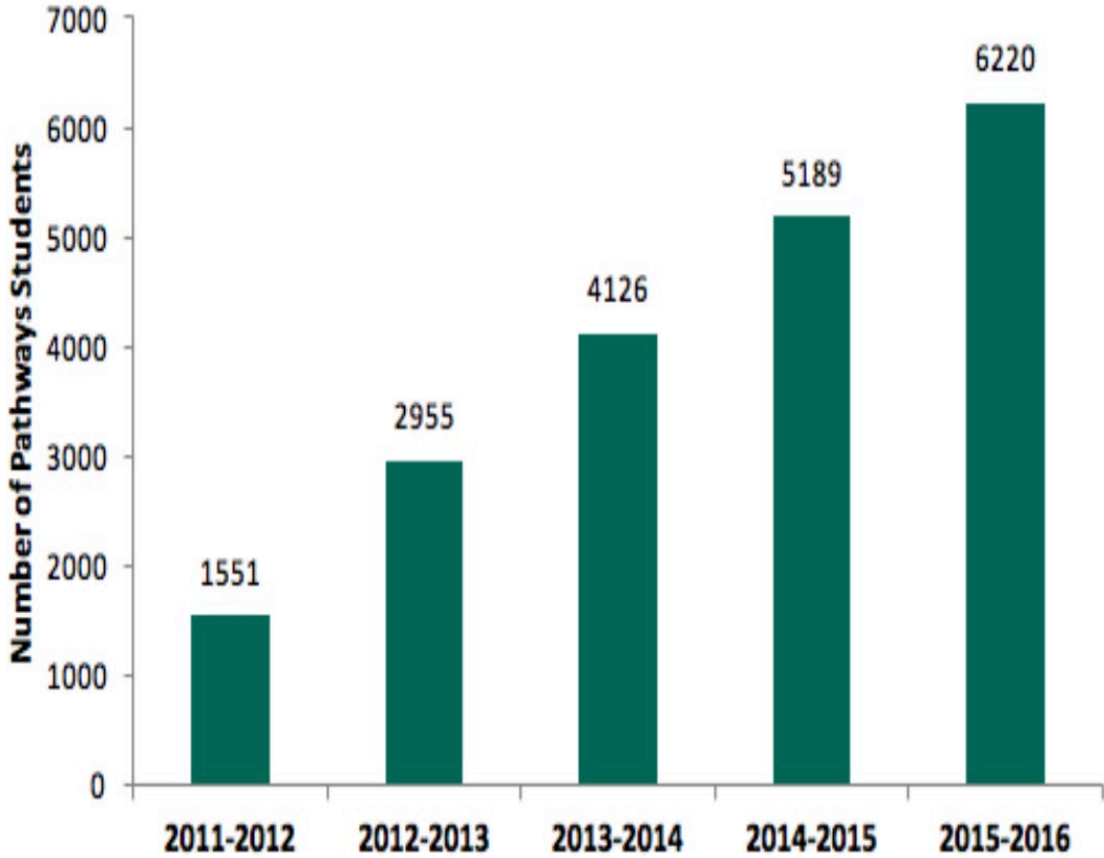
[https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/pathways\\_vignette\\_01-13-17.pdf](https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/pathways_vignette_01-13-17.pdf)

## HOW A NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY IMPROVED SUCCESS RATES FOR STRUGGLING COLLEGE MATH STUDENTS

STATWAY HAS TRIPLED THE SUCCESS RATE IN HALF THE TIME



PATHWAYS ENROLLMENT OVER FIVE YEARS

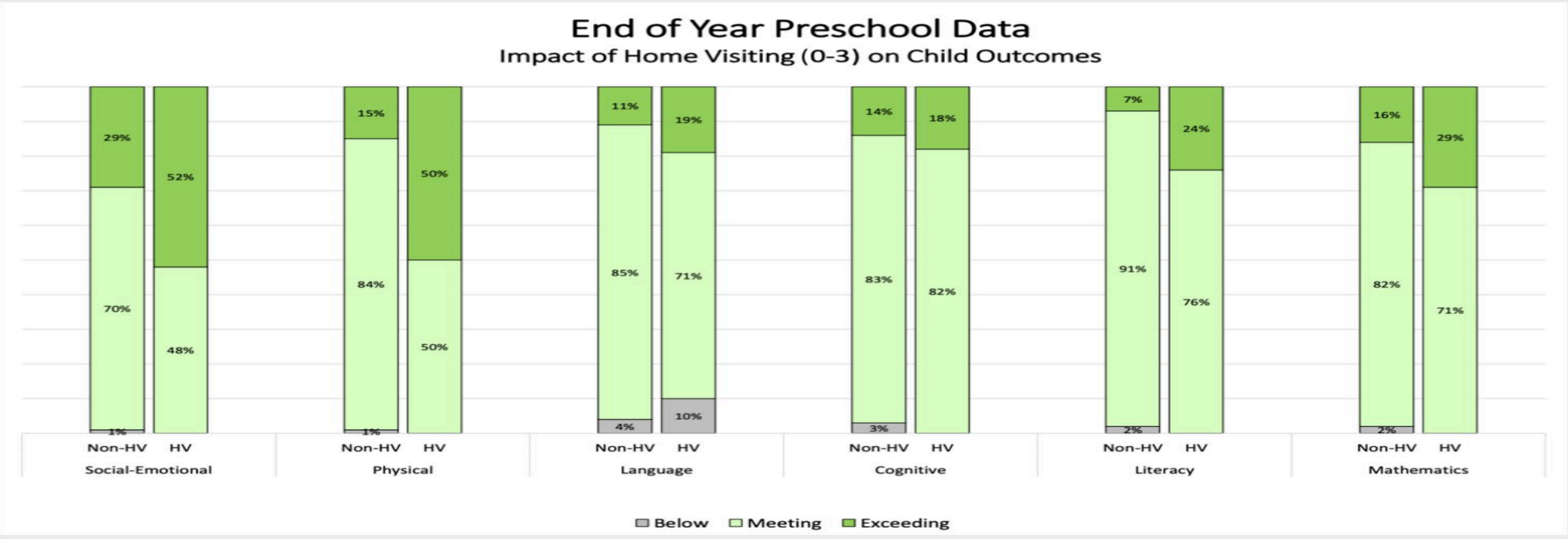


# Grant recipient network finding, building, and sharing analytic capacity to find ways to improve and inform where to focus (data.nhsa.org)



## What is the impact of home visiting on school readiness?

< Back



# Improve Transparency.

**Communicate successfully, fairly, efficiently to:**

Improve outcomes & operational quality

- Return data to data suppliers with value added through analyses
- Communicated evidence successfully in fair and cost-effective ways

Strengthen accountability

- Mutual – between grant program and grant recipient re goals and who will do what when + other goal allies
- Democratic – support democratic discussion and decision-making about goals, measurement, strategies
- Performance – not for making all targets or outperforming others, but for managing to make progress on outcome objectives informed by evidence in fair, cost-effective ways while managing risks wisely

Build understanding of and trust in government

# Communicate to Build Understanding of and Trust in Government + Inform Focus:

NOFO linked to action plan indicating next steps plus narrative, visualization of past progress showing likely contributing government actions

**Figure 1: Lead Poisoning Prevention Policies Impact Mean Blood Levels among Children in the U.S., 1972-2020**

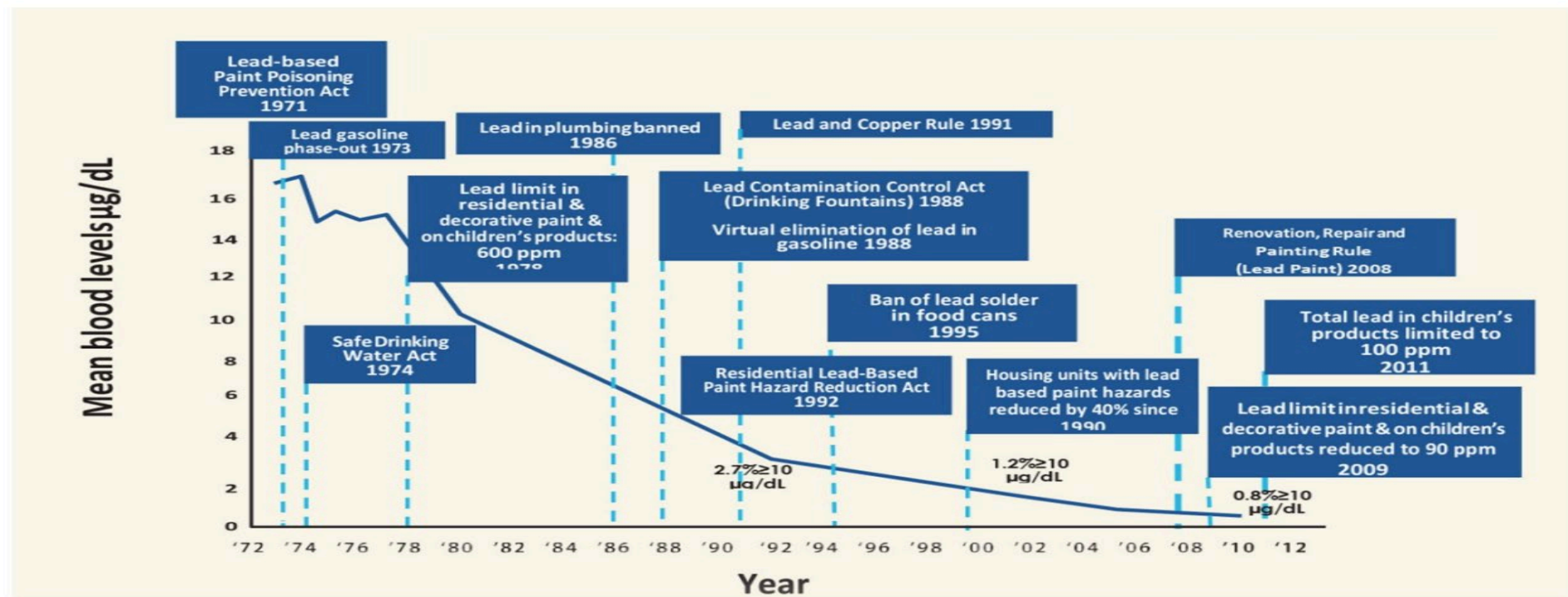


Figure 1: Source - Adapted from [https://ptfceph.niehs.nih.gov/features/assets/files/key\\_federal\\_programs\\_to\\_reduce\\_childhood\\_lead\\_exposures\\_and\\_eliminate\\_associated\\_health\\_impacts/presidents\\_508.pdf](https://ptfceph.niehs.nih.gov/features/assets/files/key_federal_programs_to_reduce_childhood_lead_exposures_and_eliminate_associated_health_impacts/presidents_508.pdf) and Brown MJ and Falk H. Toolkit for establishing laws to control the use of lead paint. Module C.iii. Conducting blood lead prevalence studies. Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (2017)

# Trends to which grant programs contribute:

## Can we make trends and accomplishment lists easier to find? (EPA annual performance report)

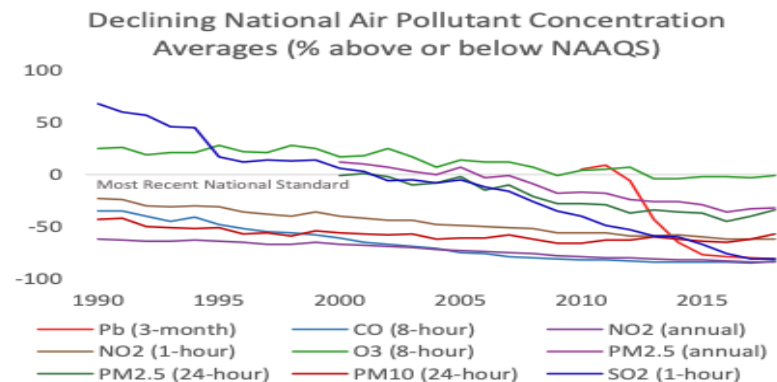
### GOAL 1: A Cleaner, Healthier Environment

**Objective 1.1 – Improve Air Quality: Work with states and tribes to accurately measure air quality and ensure that more Americans are living and working in areas that meet high air quality standards.**

#### Performance toward target over time

Number of measures by percent of target achieved

75-99% of target met (Y)



#### Summary of progress toward strategic objective:

- Redesignated 12 areas to attainment for various National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Also took final action to redesignate four additional areas with effective dates that occurred in October 2019. EPA is on track to meet its long-term performance goal of 101 by FY 2022.
- For the 2016-2018 period, 80% of monitored counties in the U.S. met the 2015 ozone NAAQS, and 98% of monitored counties met the 2010 sulfur dioxide (SO2) NAAQS.
- Took timely action on State Implementation Plans (SIPs) consistent with Clean Air Act (CAA) deadlines and reducing the SIP backlog by working closely with state and local air agencies. Acted on over 360 SIPs, 165 of which were backlogged.
- Published Air Trends Report which shows combined emissions of six key pollutants dropped by 74%, while the U.S. economy grew more than three times between 1970-2018 (see graph on the lower left).
- Issued over 4,700 certificates of conformity for engines, vehicles, and complementary pieces of equipment allowing manufacturers to enter products into commerce in the U.S.
- Issued Automotive Trends Report on new light-duty vehicle data and auto manufacturers' performance in meeting national standards; demonstrating auto manufacturers' continued innovation to increase fuel economy and reduce pollution.
- Issued 4th Diesel Emissions Reduction Act Report to Congress showing 67,300 legacy diesel vehicles replaced/retrofitted since 2008.
- Delivered a reduction of 92% in SO2 and 84% in nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions from 1990 levels through the Acid Rain Program and reduction of 91% in SO2 and 73% in NOx from 2005 levels through the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule.
- Issued Affordable Clean Energy rule to reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions while providing affordable and reliable energy; EPA expects U.S. power sector CO2 emissions to fall by up to 35% below 2005 levels resulting in annual net benefits of \$120-730M.
- Submitted Final Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Rule to adjust national automobile fuel economy and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions standards.
- Launched Cleaner Trucks Initiative to further decrease NOx emissions and help communities attain NAAQS while reducing regulatory burden to industry.
- Saved approximately 370B kWh of electricity and avoided \$30B in energy costs with GHG emission reductions of 290M metric tons through ENERGY STAR.

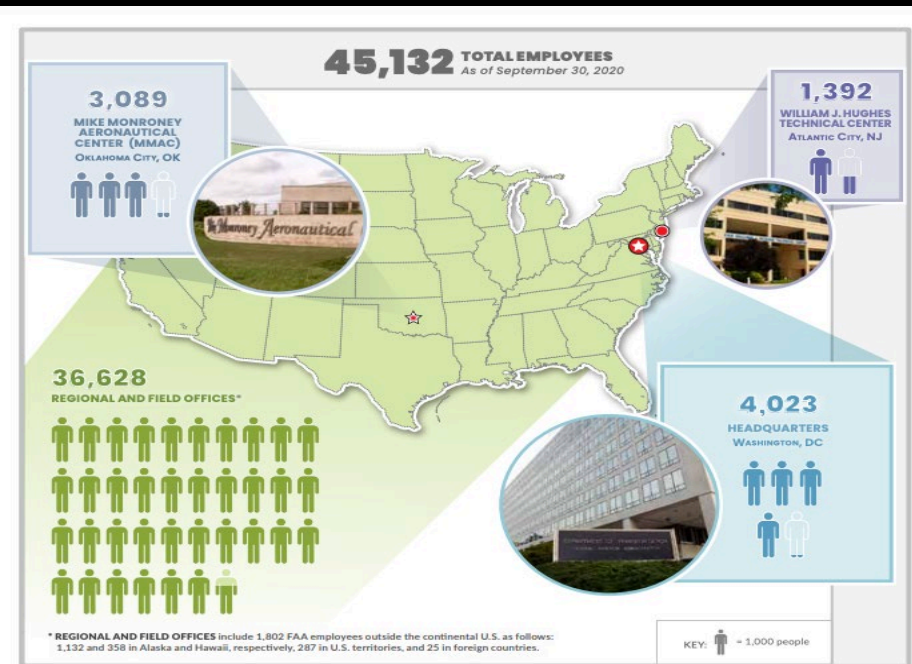
#### Challenges:

- While EPA is making steady and expected progress redesignating areas to NAAQS attainment, under the CAA, states are responsible for initiating the redesignation process, a process that demands time and resources from states.



# Put \$, Supply, Demand in Picture

## FAA Performance Report FY2020



### SAFETY

Reduce Aviation and Commercial Space Transportation-Related Fatalities and Serious Injuries in Commercial and General Aviation.

Performance Measure	Org.	FY 2017 Results	FY 2018 Results	FY 2019 Results	FY 2020 Target	FY 2020 Results	FY 2020 Status
<b>Commercial Air Carrier Fatality Rate*</b> Reduce the commercial air carrier fatalities per 100 million persons on board by 50 percent over 18-year period — FY 2008-2025. Target for FY 2020 is 5.7.	AVS	0.3	0.1	0.6 <sup>1</sup>	5.7	0.7 <sup>2</sup>	✓
<b>Commercial Surface Safety Risk Index</b> Manage the weighted surface safety risk index at or below 0.35 per million airport operations for commercial aviation.	ATO	New measure for FY 2019	New measure for FY 2019	0.094	0.35	0.029 <sup>3</sup>	✓
<b>Non-Commercial Surface Safety Risk Index</b> Manage the weighted surface safety risk index at or below 0.60 per million airport operations for non-commercial aviation.	ATO	New measure for FY 2019	New measure for FY 2019	0.532	0.60	0.220 <sup>3</sup>	✓
<b>Hazard Risk Mitigations</b> Implement 75 percent of approved mitigation activities in association with ATO's Top Five identified trending safety issues in the national airspace system.	ATO	93%	89%	93%	75%	85%	✓
<b>General Aviation Fatal Accident Rate*</b> Reduce the general aviation fatal accident rate to no more than 0.89 fatal accidents per 100,000 flight hours by 2028. FY 2020 Target: 0.97.	AVS	0.83	0.87	0.94	0.97	0.90 <sup>2</sup>	✓
<b>Commercial Space Launch and Reentry Safety</b> Ensure there are no fatalities, serious injuries, or significant property damage to the uninvolved public during licensed or permitted space launch and re-entry activities.	AST	0	0	0	0	0	✓

\* This performance measure supports a DOT Agency Priority Goal.

✓ Target met


✗ Target not met

- 1 Preliminary estimate. National Transportation Safety Board will confirm in March 2021. We do not expect any change in the result to be significant enough to alter our year-end status of achieving the target.
- 2 Preliminary estimate. National Transportation Safety Board will confirm in March 2022. We do not expect any change in the result to be significant enough to alter our year-end status of achieving the target.
- 3 Preliminary estimate until the final result becomes available in March 2021. We do not expect any change in the final result to be significant enough to alter our year-end status of achieving the target.


# Communicate using photos, maps re progress, lack of it, who not managing w/ data + build/share evidence on effective data communication for increased use by target audiences (Flint & opioid abuse?)

Google

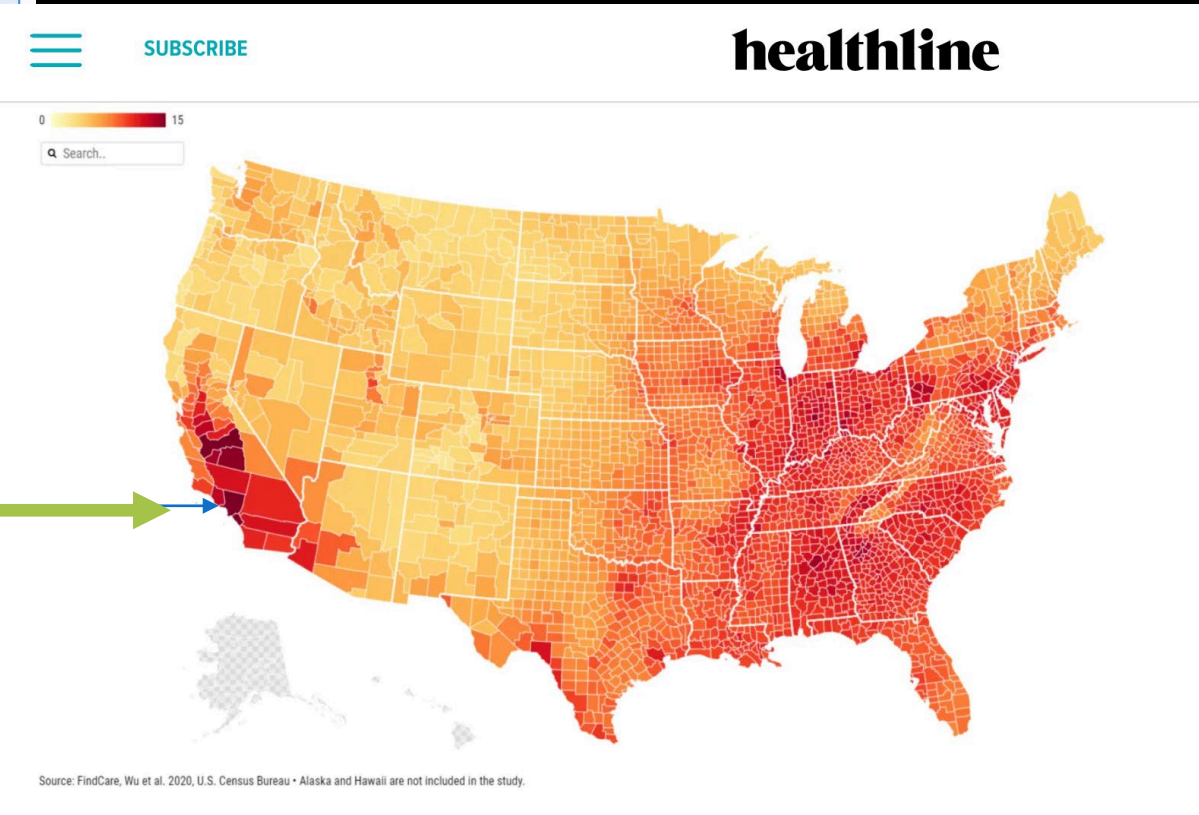
before and after photos los angeles air pollution



Los Angeles has notoriously polluted ...  
cnn.com



Order Reduced Los Angeles Notorious Smog  
businessinsider.com



## Opioid Prescriptions

In 2018, West Virginia providers wrote 69.3 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons, compared to the average U.S. rate of 51.4 prescriptions. This was among the top ten rates in the U.S. that year; however, it was also the lowest rate in the state since data became available in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

# Communicate to build understanding of and trust in government

Figure 1: Lead Poisoning Prevention Policies Impact Mean Blood Levels among Children in the U.S., 1972-1990

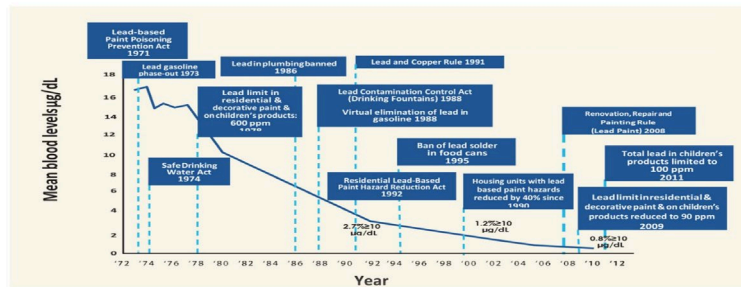
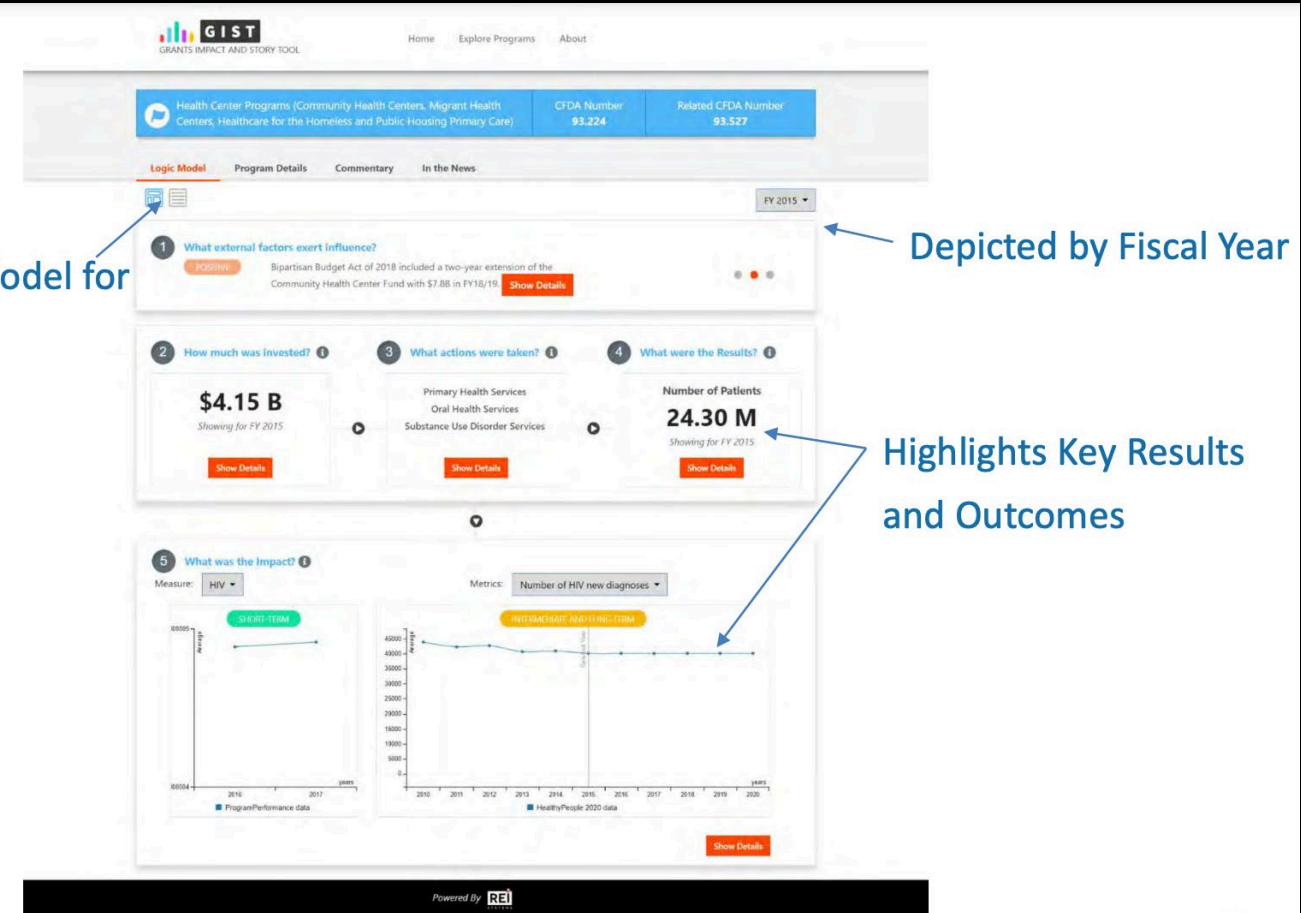


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Consistent Logic Model for each Program





# Find, build, and share evidence about evidence communication – purpose and effectiveness

## 2019 Treated Drinking Water Data - Indianapolis, Morgan County

The chart below gives you a quick look at some of the substances the EPA requires Citizens to test for. The contaminant is listed to the left, followed by the maximum amount allowed by regulations, then the amount we found in our water. The tests are done on treated or “finished” water (excluding those listed under “Untreated Source Water”). See page 11 for definitions of terms used in this chart.

Contaminant	MCLG (Goal)	MCL (Limit)	Average of All Samples	Maximum of All Samples	2019 System Wide Range	Compliance Achieved	Possible Source
<b>Inorganics:</b>							
Barium (ppm)	2 ppm	2 ppm	0.12 ppm	0.29 ppm	0.043 - 0.29 ppm	YES	Erosion of natural deposits
Chromium (ppb)	100 ppb	100 ppb	BDL	2.6 ppm	ND - 2.6 ppm	YES	Natural deposits
Fluoride (ppm)	4 ppm	4 ppm	0.70 ppm	1.4 ppm	0.16 - 1.4 ppm	YES	Natural deposits & treatment additive
Nitrate (ppm)	10 ppm	10 ppm	0.79 ppm	4.5 ppm	ND - 4.5 ppm	YES	Fertilizer, septic tank leachate
<b>Other Regulated Organics:</b>							
2,4-D (ppb)	70 ppb	70 ppb	0.25 ppb	2.0 ppb	ND - 2.0 ppb	YES	Herbicide runoff
Atrazine (ppb)	3 ppb	3 ppb	0.50 ppb	2.8 ppb	ND - 2.8 ppb	YES	Herbicide runoff
Simazine (ppb)	4 ppb	4 ppb	BDL	0.30 ppb	BDL - 0.30 ppb	YES	Herbicide runoff

# Find, build, and share evidence about what and how to communicate evidence for accurate interpretation and appropriate application

## READING RECOVERY STANDARD EFFECT SIZE

First year results from a large randomized field trial of Reading Recovery (13 initiative)



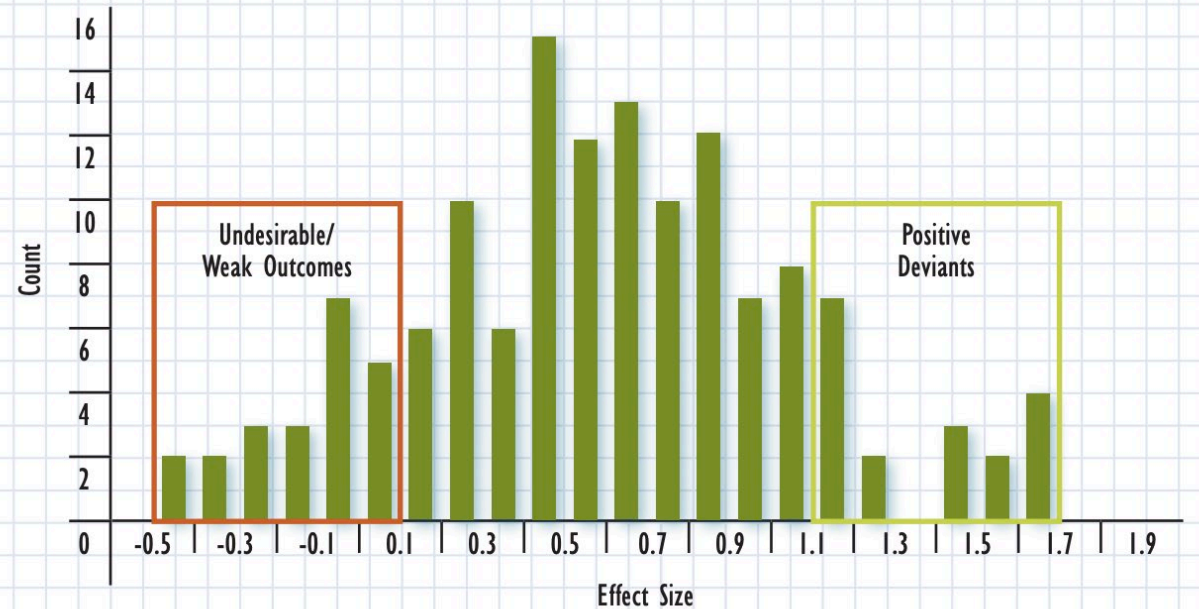
Reading  
Recovery  
Council  
of North America

We open doors to a literate future  
for children who initially struggle  
in learning to read and write.

Effect Size

0 -0.5 -0.3 -0.1 0.1 0.3 0.5 0.7 0.9 1.1 1.3 1.5 1.7 1.9

## VARIATION IN READING RECOVERY EFFECTS AMONG SCHOOLS (N=141 SCHOOLS)



# Find, build, and share evidence about what and how to communicate evidence for accurate interpretation and appropriate application

IES WWC

What Works Clearinghouse

MENU

Search

Go

Find What Works based on the evidence

Filter by topic

Literacy

Mathematics

Science

Behavior

233 Results filtered by:

Literacy

Compare Selected

Clear Selected

Evidence of effectiveness

Intervention

Grades examined

Compare

Literacy Express

PK

Phonological Awareness Training

PK

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)Reading Recovery®READ 180®Sound PartnersPhonological Awareness Training Knowledge TrainingInstructional Conversations and Logs

Literacy Outcomes									
	Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)	Literacy Express	Phonological Awareness Training	READ 180®	Reading Recovery®				
Alphabetics	Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured				
Communication/ Language	Not Measured		Not Measured			Not Measured		Not Measured	
Comprehension	Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured				
English language arts achievement		Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured	
Literacy achievement	Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured			Not Measured	
Oral language	Not Measured			Not Measured		Not Measured		Not Measured	
Phonological	Not Measured				Not Measured		Not Measured		

*Communicate goals, measurement and other data, analyses, and trial findings to:*

- **Nominate**
- **Illuminate**
- **Motivate**
- **Allocate**
- **Stimulate innovation**
- **Enlist and engage**
- **Inform choice of goals and better practices, products, providers**
- **Build understanding of and trust in government**

# Rec: Tap data viz, shared platforms and research

- *Within and across*
  - Individual grant programs
    - Decide where to focus within grant program's outcome goals
    - Improve outcomes
    - Enlist and engage support
  - Across grant programs
    - Coordinate and learn on shared outcome objectives, beneficiaries
    - Share analytic and visualization methods
    - Find, build, share evidence about evidence repositories, T/TA, other uptake promoting methods sortable by audience and goal type
- Grants Playbook and guidance evolution – v. 2 and beyond?
  - Find and share examples + how-to's
  - Evolved guidance and playbook formats using user-centered design principles
- Share platforms - NASA using PubMed, ClinicalTrials.gov, dynamic learning agendas



# Recs: what and how data are collected, shared, analyzed, used

- Data standards in SAM.gov, USASpending, Performance.gov, etc.
  - Outcome categories to facilitate collaboration around outcomes, strengthen democratic and performance accountability, build public understanding
  - Goal types and grant mechanism categories to build and share knowledge about effective grant practices
  - Operational risk categories to manage risk, bias, cost-effectiveness and learn across programs
  - Add unique grant program identifiers to outcome info – data systems, evidence repositories, learning agendas
- Data structured to facilitate learning, improvement, community
  - Timing, timelines, temporal and geographic frequency
  - Granularity/units of analyses
- More data analytic capacity needed
  - Within and across grant programs and agencies
  - For shared outcomes and common processes
- More capacity needed to find, build, and share knowledge about how to communicate effectively, efficiently, and equitably to the field, policy makers, others

# Manage Grants to Improve Outcomes and Op. Qual.

## *People, Accountability, Incentives*

- People – evolving roles for federal officials
  - Outcome brokers
  - Problem solvers and opportunity pursuers
  - Continuous-learning-and-improvement communities organized around outcomes – nurture and create where needed
  - *Identify and network outcome brokers and others working on outcomes improvement*
- Effective communication (transparency)
  - Identify users and uses
  - Find, build, share, and use evidence to boost use of shared evidence
- Evidence-informed accountability expectations and incentive structures

Questions? Concerns? Suggestions?

Ready to lead progress or contribute to progress on next steps?

*Contact me via:*

***BETTERproject.info***

*(Please be patient if it takes a while to respond.)*

***...and, please work with each other to bring about needed change!!!***