



2016 Classic Grant Competition – Evidence and Evaluation Overview Webinar Transcript

This document is a transcript of a webinar covering the 2016 Social Innovation Fund Classic Notice of Federal Funding Availability (NOFA). It has been very lightly edited for print, and is presented in a conversational, rather than a formal tone. For official guidance, please see the NOFA.



2016 Social Innovation Fund Classic Grant Competition Evidence and Evaluation Overview

Welcome to the 2016 SIF Classic Grant Competition “Evidence and Evaluation” Overview. Thanks for your interest in the Social Innovation Fund.



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Overview

1. Introduction of Presenters
2. Role of Evidence and Evaluation in SIF
3. Evaluation Requirements
4. Grantee Perspective
5. Q & A

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My name is Lois Nembhard and I am the Deputy Director of the Social Innovation Fund.

The purpose of this webinar is to provide you with an overview of the SIF’s evidence and evaluation expectations and requirements.

Hopefully you have listened to or participated in the SIF Overview and NOFA Overview webinars, because on today’s webinar, we will assume that you understand how the SIF works and will not be providing background information.

Our agenda today includes: Introduction of Presenters; Overview of role of Evidence and Evaluation in SIF; Description of evaluation Requirements; the Grantee Perspective; and questions and answers.

Your phones have been muted to reduce background noise. You can submit questions at any time in the Q&A section of the webinar on your screen, as well as by pressing *1 whenever prompted by the operator.

Presenters



Andrea Robles, Ph.D.
Research Analyst
Office of Research and
Evaluation, CNCS



Sarah Gallagher
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Corporation for Supportive Housing

Our presenter today is Andrea Robles, Research Analyst in the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation. Sarah Gallagher, Director of Strategic Initiatives from the Corporation for Supportive Housing, was going provide the grantee perspective. She had a family emergency. I will be reading her remarks.

I will now turn you over to Andrea.

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ROLE OF EVIDENCE AND EVALUATION IN SIF

Hi everyone and thank you for joining us today. I am going to begin with the role of evidence and evaluation in the SIF. But before we begin I just want to say a few things about where SIF fits in terms of program development.

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SIF Stages of Development

Start-up → Nascent → **Promising** → "Proven" as effective

SIF Focus: Promising Interventions

- At least preliminary evidence of results
- Ready for more substantial evaluation
 - Quasi Experimental Design (QED) or Random Control Trial (RCT)
- Poised for expansion to more people or new communities in need of promising innovations
- The competition and funds are for grant-making institutions; these grant making institutions
 - will implement and evaluate the promising innovation itself; or,
 - select subgrantees (e.g., non-profits, etc.) that will implement and evaluate promising innovations

The nonprofit marketplace offers many sources of funding for new ideas to be explored and tested. These new ideas are at the earliest stages of idea development and innovation. As you can see from this graphic, SIF is not intended for these start-ups but for models that have at least some existing evidence of results. In other words, SIF is intended for innovations that already have some research of evaluation that have shown positive results, and are ready for more substantial evaluation. By a more substantial evaluation we

mean implementing an intervention that can be evaluated using a Quasi-Experimental Design (also known as a QED) or a Random Control Trial (RCT).

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Additionally, SIF is intended for innovations that are poised for expansion to more people or communities; in other words, they are ready to be scaled up.

As you have heard while listening to the other webinar, it is important to note that the SIF competition is intended for grantmaking institutions that we refer to as intermediaries. It is the intermediary that will implement and evaluate the promising innovation itself; it is the intermediary that will select subgrantees (such as nonprofits) to implement and evaluate promising models and innovations.

Current Evaluation Portfolio – 86 evaluation designs

(As of July 2015)

Beginning levels of evidence

- Preliminary 72%
- Moderate 17%
- Strong 9%

Types of Designs

- Experimental 31%
- Quasi-Experimental 56%
- Non-experimental 14%

Targeted levels of evidence

- Preliminary 18%
- Moderate 56%
- Strong 27%

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We will discuss the evidence tiers in a few minutes but just so you know, as of July 2015, the majority or 72 percent, of SIF grantees started with interventions assessed at preliminary. As you see, with investments in rigorous evaluation designs, the majority or 83% are on the way towards reaching a strong or moderate level of evidence.

I should note however, that in 2010, our first funding year, interventions were not required to reach moderate or strong levels of evidence, thus you see

that there are some interventions that will reach only a preliminary level of evidence. And this is no longer allowed under the SIF. We will talk about this more in a few minutes.

Role of Evidence and Evaluation

Reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund, which employs evidence and evaluation in two primary ways:

1) To select experienced intermediaries

SIF examines:

- Intermediaries' experience with and capacity for using evidence to assess effectiveness of their programs and interventions, and drive impact
- Whether intermediaries are proposing or using program models with at least "preliminary" evidence of results

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As you know by now from listening to the SIF NOFA webinars and reading the NOFA or other information on the SIF website, reliance on valid evidence is a fundamental tenet of the Social Innovation Fund. The SIF employs evidence and evaluation in two primary ways:

First, SIF examines intermediaries' experience and capacity to use evidence to assess the effectiveness of their programs and interventions, and to drive impact. SIF also examines whether intermediaries are proposing or

using program models with at least "preliminary" evidence of results. I will expand on this further in just a few slides.

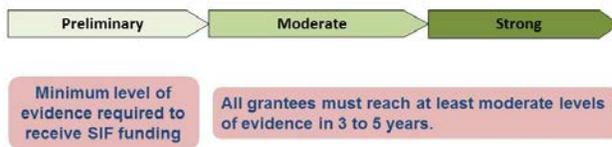
Role of Evidence and Evaluation

2) SIF aims to grow the body of evidence and evaluation for interventions that work

- Intermediaries commit to increase evidence base:
 - through rigorous evaluation for each intervention, and,
 - to achieve “moderate” or “strong” levels of evidence for each intervention

Second, SIF also aims to grow the body of evidence that exists regarding interventions that work and can demonstrate positive impacts. Intermediaries commit to increase their evidence base to achieve “moderate” or “strong” levels of evidence through rigorous evaluation for each intervention or program model. So, let’s unpack the evidence tiers and framework a little further.

Evidence Framework

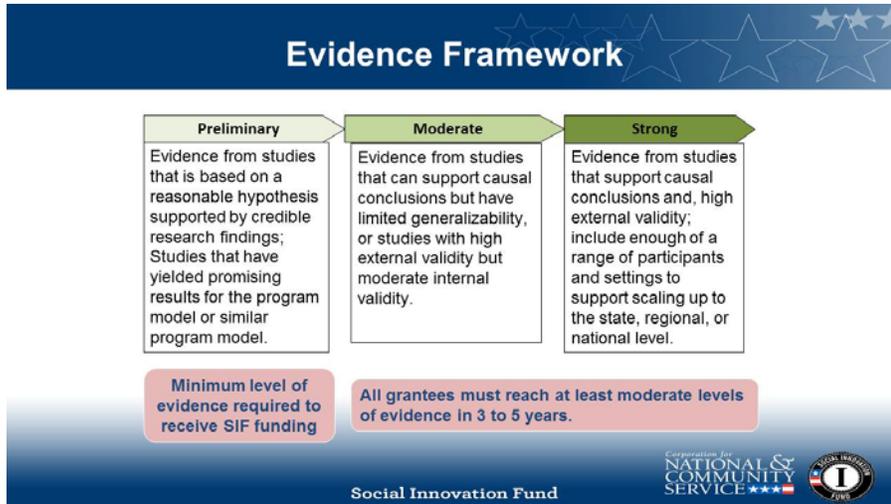


For more information and examples of qualifying studies, see pages 5 - 8 of the NOFA.

So in SIF, what does it mean to increase an evidence base of an intervention? This schematic of what we call the “Evidence Framework” and it helps to visualize an increase in an evidence base for an intervention within the SIF timeframe. The evidence framework is also sometimes referred to as the “evidence continuum.” Given that our end goal is to grow the body of evidence about program models and interventions that actually work, it is critical that we appropriately categorize each intervention or program model

within the continuum at their point of entry in the SIF program. Where an intervention or program model lands in this classification is what we consider the starting point or the incoming level of evidence.

The starting point or as we refer to incoming level of evidence for a program model may be preliminary, moderate or strong, depending on the existing body of evidence behind the intervention, which I will explain in more detail in the next slide. Then, during the SIF subgrant period of three to four years, the grantees’ goal is to construct and implement rigorous evaluation designs that will increase the body of evidence behind each intervention or program model and move them along this continuum.



What is a body of evidence? This includes the types of studies that have been already conducted on the intervention or program model, the methodologies used to conduct those prior studies, and the results of the studied interventions.

So how does a grantee increase the body of evidence? As I stated in the preceding slide, the grantees construct and implement rigorous evaluation designs by which we mean high quality, independent and unbiased evaluations that are consistent with the principles of

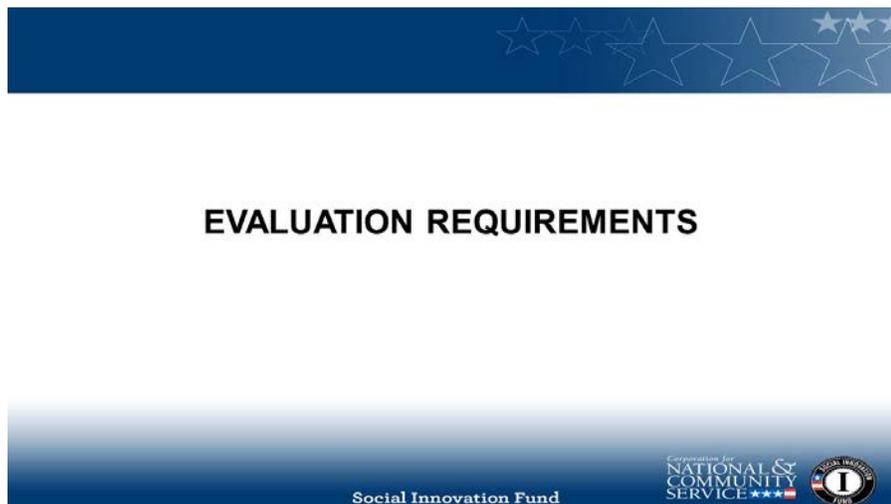
scientific research.

So just to give you an example, to obtain SIF funding, an intervention must, at a minimum, be assessed as having Preliminary level of evidence which means demonstrating that the program model or intervention has “yielded promising results for either the program or a similar program.” Specifically, the program must have at least some outcome information from a pre- and post-test without a comparison group, or post-test comparison between program and comparison groups, to just to name a few.

Thus advancement on the continuum for this type of intervention that shows positive results from an outcome evaluation using a pre- and post-test approach, may mean conducting an impact evaluation using a quasi-experimental or experimental design study that can get them to achieve a moderate level of evidence.

If for example, a program currently has positive results on a single site randomized controlled trial, advancing the evidence may entail conducting a random control trial across multiple sites.

And I want to reemphasize, it is the expectation of SIF that each program model or intervention you fund in your portfolio will achieve moderate or strong evidence as defined in this continuum by the end of its three to four year grant period.



Now that we have reviewed the fundamental roles that evidence and evaluation play in the Social Innovation Fund, I would like to discuss the most essential evaluation requirements for grantees once they have been selected into the SIF program.

Evaluation Requirements

1. Select interventions with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness
2. Execute systematic evaluation to increase evidence base

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Second, within the SIF timeframe, each intermediary will need to execute a series of systematic evaluation activities in collaboration with CNCS, your subgrantees, and your evaluation experts.

If you are selected and awarded SIF funds, there are two fundamental responsibilities that you will have in terms of evaluation:

First, if you are not proposing your own intervention but funding subgrantees' proposed interventions, the subgrantees you select will also need to demonstrate that they are proposing models or interventions with at least preliminary levels of evidence.

Second, within the SIF timeframe, each intermediary will need to execute a

Evaluation Requirements

1. Select interventions with at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness

- Any proposed intervention or program must enter with preliminary evidence – this includes the intermediary level but also at the subgrantee level
 - If selecting subgrantees proposing their own intervention, the intermediary will execute a competitive grant process and work in consultation with CNCS and its evaluation technical assistance provider to assess levels of evidence on proposed interventions
- See NOFA webpage: Assessing Levels of Evidence

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If your subgrantees will propose their own interventions, CNCS will work with you in a consultative manner to establish the incoming level of evidence for the proposed intervention of the short-listed subgrant candidates since they also must enter the program with at least preliminary levels of evidence.

SIF Rubric: Determining the Level of Evidence

Whether of design, you used the results of the research to inform implementation decisions?	Similarity to Proposed Intervention: How matched is the studied intervention to the proposed intervention?				
	By organization and delivery intervention(s) created done by:				
	A different organization doing an identical intervention? (The proposed intervention will be replicated with fidelity)	The same organization doing a combination of interventions that include the one studied?	The same organization doing an intervention that is similar, but not identical to the studied intervention?	The same organization, doing exactly the same intervention?	
None or none known	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation only	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-post testing	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary/ Preliminary (Depending on the extent of similarity)	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>
Pre and/or post only with non-matched comparison group, or interrupted time series with no comparison group	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Not yet preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>
Single site, well designed and implemented QED or RCT	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary/Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>
Two or three well designed and well implemented single site RCTs or QEDs	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary/Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>
National/large scale multi-site well designed and well implemented QED or RCT, or multiple (three or more) well designed and well implemented QEDs or RCTs in different locations	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Strong <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary/Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>	Strong <input type="checkbox"/>

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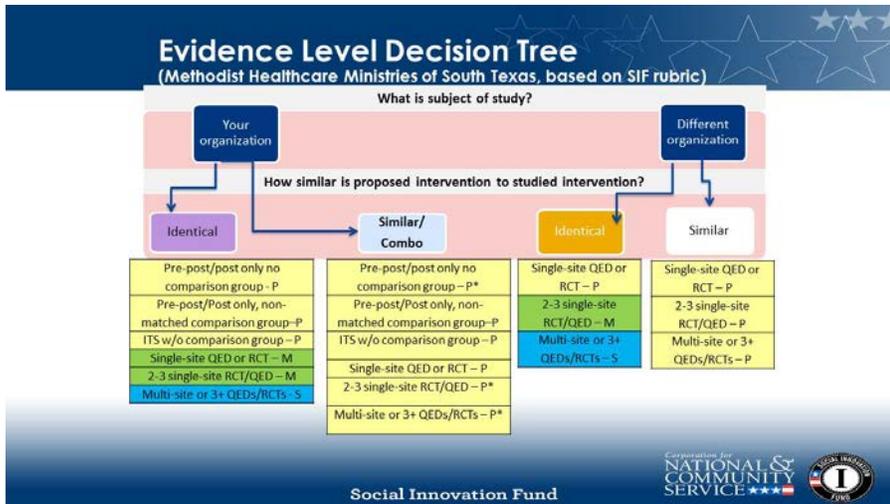


At this point, many of you are asking, how do you assess interventions' incoming levels of evidence? In a previous slide, I gave you a few examples of how interventions or programs may be assessed, but I also want to share with you a tool, that we also call a rubric, that we use and have shared with our grantees to determine incoming levels of evidence of their applicants' proposed interventions.

I know the rubric's print in this PowerPoint slide is small and hard to read, but the rubric, along with

instructions on how to use it, can be found on the SIF NOFA website under "Supplemental Evaluation

Resources.” Although the process of determining the incoming level of evidence for an intervention requires thoughtful assessment that can be complicated and often requires technical knowledge of research and evaluation design and methods, this rubric provides a framework for assessing the existing body of evidence behind an intervention based on past research and evaluation studies conducted on the program.



I don’t want to spend too much time on how one determines an intervention’s level of evidence, but I do want to share this wonderful decision tree based on the SIF rubric that one of our 2014 grantees, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, created to simplify some of the main steps to determine how a study may qualify. They were kind enough to share this graphic in the hope that it may be useful to some of you as you are looking at the rubric.

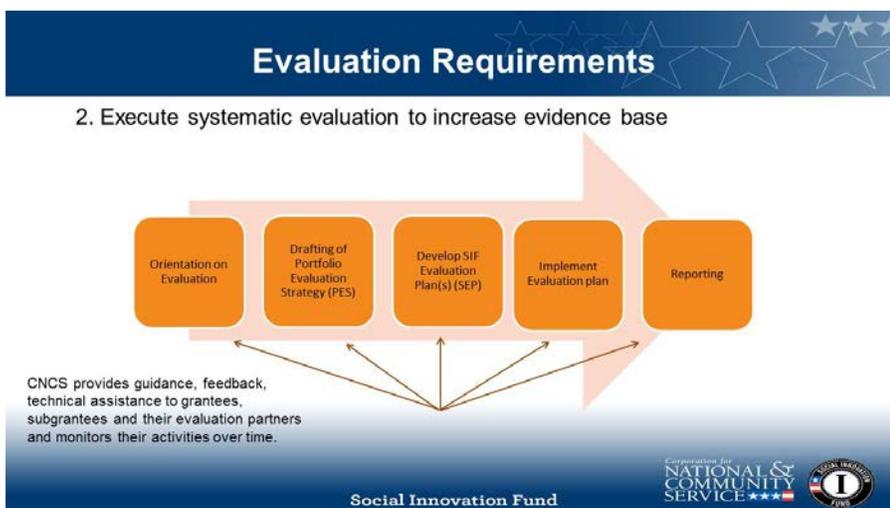
Assuming that the study shows positive results on relevant outcomes, the next question, and that’s the study that the subgrantee would present to you, the next question to ask is: what is the subject of the study?

Is the study your proposed intervention or a different organization’s intervention?

Is the proposed intervention:

- Identical to the studied intervention? (In other words, “replicated with fidelity.”)
- Similar to the studied intervention?
- Or a combination of the studied intervention and other interventions?

Lastly, what type of research design did the study use? Again, we direct you to the rubric for more detail.



Besides the evaluation requirement that an intervention enters the program with at least a preliminary level of evidence, the second main responsibility for the grantees, is that within the SIF subgrant period of three to four years, each intermediary will need to execute a series of systematic evaluation activities in collaboration with CNCS, your subgrantees, and your evaluation experts.

This slide presents a snapshot of the SIF Evaluation Program Process in order to better ground you in SIF’s

evaluation and evidence activities.

Once intermediaries are awarded a SIF grant, they receive further orientation on the initiative’s evaluation program.

Next each intermediary develops a *portfolio evaluation strategy* that provides a framework for CNCS and the SIF intermediary to enter a discussion on how the intermediary will approach the evaluation of its interventions or program models. Depending on the models and intended outcomes, this evaluation strategy determines whether sponsored interventions will be evaluated using multiple evaluation plans, or whether one evaluation plan will be used across a range of subgrants, or possibly both.

The next step in the planning process possibly is the development of SIF evaluation plans for all funded interventions that will build on and increase its evidence base. These plans go through a rigorous vetting process and must be approved by CNCS before they are implemented. It typically takes a little more than a year following the grant awards for intermediaries to have approved evaluation plans in place.

Once these plans are approved, the implementation and reporting phase begins. Intermediaries are expected to closely monitor all evaluation activities tied to their portfolio of funded interventions and report progress and results of those evaluations to CNCS.

Intermediaries *share results* of the conducted evaluations in their portfolio by submitting interim and final evaluation reports to CNCS and ultimately make final reports available to the public in order to increase the base of knowledge about your funded interventions.

Throughout the process, CNCS and its evaluation technical assistance provider will assist the intermediaries and their partner organizations in their evaluation efforts, offer an array of evaluation capacity building services including individualized feedback, advice, coaching, and other supportive services.

Also, during this time intermediaries are expected to provide *evaluation capacity building and technical assistance* to their subgrantees.

Other Considerations

Use of Contracted Evaluation Experts: Intermediaries are required to contract with independent evaluation experts and/or require their subgrantees to contract with such experts.

Funding for Evaluation Activities: Intermediaries and their subgrantees are expected to allocate appropriate resources to cover the many activities related to the evaluation of each program model's effectiveness.

CNCS Role: CNCS will provide technical assistance on the design, implementation, and monitoring of their SIF evaluation plans. We want you to succeed!

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I’m going to hand this over in just a minute but I want to emphasize three particular points for those of you that will go on to complete and submit an application to the program.

First, CNCS expects that intermediaries contract with independent evaluation experts and/or require their subgrantees to contract with such experts. As you have heard in this presentation, this grant will require time, energy, and technical expertise. Please carefully weigh the capacity and skillset on your own staff and consider how you might

partner with external advisors and experts who can support your Social Innovation Fund efforts.

Second, CNCS recognizes that rigorous evaluations are expensive and that nonprofits often are unfamiliar with these costs. Given the central role that evaluation plays in the success of the Social Innovation Fund, please be advised that intermediaries and their subgrantees are expected to allocate appropriate resources to cover the many activities we have reviewed here today.

Finally, I really want to emphasize that CNCS is committed to supporting intermediaries in their efforts to meet their goals and increase the evidence of program effectiveness within their portfolios. CNCS sees this process of ongoing evaluation and knowledge building that can improve grantee and subgrantee programs as a key aspect of the Social Innovation Fund.

Questions

???

To submit a question you may use the webinar Q & A function or dial * 1 on the phone for the operator to open your line.



Grantee Perspective



Susan Gallagher
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Corporation for Supportive Housing



I'll now pause for questions.

Please submit them via the Q&A section on your screen or press *1 for the operator.

[Questions asked during the webinar were added to the Frequently Asked Questions page available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/faqs>]

Now that I have covered the basics around the role of evidence and evaluation I will cover the remarks that Sarah Gallagher has prepared.

When we started on the SIF journey, CSH was looking to develop housing solutions for the cohort of homeless individuals with chronic health conditions who are super utilizers of crisis health services.

Our solution to this complex problem which we are testing through the SIF subgrantees in 4 distinct communities brings together the best of what we

know works in ending homelessness with some of the most innovative solutions for improving health and lowering health care costs. We are bringing together supportive housing, using a housing first approach that helps people move directly into affordable housing and then offers voluntary services to support housing stability, coupled with data driven targeting to identify and engage super-utilizers. Additionally, the model is underscored with the added component of care coordination, patient navigation, and direct linkages to primary and behavioral health care.

Through SIF, CSH saw a rare opportunity to broaden the conversation around the integration of health and housing and build the business case to a scale our efforts through new financing mechanisms available via Medicaid.

The CSH SIF initiative is a five-year demonstration program where we will house 549 individuals in this integrated model.

But our true goal in implementing SIF is to develop a model that we can replicate across the country... to create a blueprint for linking mainstream housing and health resources and scale the model.

This is what makes the evaluation component of SIF so crucial. Through analysis of administrative data, along with qualitative analysis, the evaluation will hopefully not only demonstrate positive impacts on individual lives but will also engage new systems, document the service delivery model and provide the lessons learned and policy recommendations needed to bring SIF to scale.

Given CSH's desire to have one single evaluation that captured the impact of the model as well as its distinctions across all four sites, we decided to design what is called a "UniSEP" Unified Subgrantee Evaluation Plan.

While utilizing the UniSEP model allowed us to support the sub-grantees in a more proactive way and take some of the evaluation responsibilities off of them, it brought to light some key considerations that CSH needed to address around:

- Relate to the selection of Subgrantees;
- The internal management of the SIF evaluation; and
- Technical support needed by the SIF grantees.

When thinking about your capacity in each of these areas there are some questions that you might want to ask of your organization and your potential sub-grantees

- Who on your staff has extensive knowledge of evaluation research designs and implementation?
- To what extent can you support the development of evaluation plans for other organizations or potential subgrantees?
- Have you conducted an RFP process before?

Based on your responses, you may need to think about centralizing some of the evaluation responsibilities within your organization and building the capacity of your organization in the areas you have identified.

At CSH, we dedicated a person to over-see the evaluation. Additionally each site has a TA liaison who works with them on-the ground to provide TA around implementation, evaluation and sustainability efforts.

Also, as part of your selection process, CSH recommends assessing the ability of each site to access the administrative other data you are prioritizing in your evaluation design as well as the evaluation readiness of potential subgrantees. This will allow you to gain an understanding of the organization's evaluation capacity.

While CSH has always prioritized evaluation in its own initiatives, the SIF allowed CSH to heavily invest in evaluation for the first time and to local supportive housing providers to build their capacity to collect data and imbed evaluation in their work. For many of our subgrantees, this was the first time they participated in a RCT design evaluation and this was an opportunity to support and build their capacity in this area.

CSH took two important steps that have been crucial to its journey as a SIF intermediary: we contracted with an interdisciplinary team at NYU and we created an evaluation team to support the technical assistance with each of the subgrantees.

Through SIF, each subgrantee received direct support in implementing the evaluation design, including RCT, in accessing and collecting administrative and client level data and in using early findings to support both implantation and scaling efforts.

Internally, CSH meets monthly with all staff working on the SIF to share updates, problem solve and coordinate across all aspects of the effort and we meet biweekly with the NYU team to ensure successful roll out of the

evaluation. In this call, we provide status updates from both CSH and NYU perspective, talk about data collection and quality assurance related to data and talk through the analysis and timeline. We also field site-specific requests, coordinate on presentations and ensure that we have real time interim findings that we can communicate out.

Each subgrantee had support from both the CSH technical assistance team as well as direct support from the NYU evaluation team through regular webinars, one on one calls and even an annual site visit.

Our evaluation partner is also a key participant in our annual subgrantee convening.

This direct connection between the evaluator and the sub-grantees has been extremely valuable in building subgrantee investment in the evaluation.

Summary

- **Program design:** promising interventions with at least preliminary evidence that can advance to at least moderate, if not strong; not for start-ups
- **Organizational Capability:** Need the experience and organizational capacity to adequately support and implement rigorous evaluations
- **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy:** Sufficient budget for rigorous evaluation of an intervention and if appropriate, sufficient budget for subgrantee support

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Just to briefly summarize, I know we've gone through a lot quickly:

First, SIF funds promising interventions or program models with at least preliminary evidence that can advance to moderate if not strong; it is not intended for start-ups.

Second, we are funding experienced intermediaries that have the organizational capacity to adequately support and implement rigorous evaluations. And you heard some of that from Lois' remarks.

And third, the budget needs to be adequate to fund an intervention and a rigorous evaluation and, if appropriate, there needs to be sufficient budget for subgrantee support.

There's more information on this in the NOFA; I think pages 16 to 17 have more in terms of the evaluation capacity. If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

[Questions asked during the webinar were added to the Frequently Asked Questions page available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/faqs>]

Key Documents and Resources

www.nationalservice.gov/SIF

Click on: 2016 Notice of Funding Availability

- NOFA and Application Instructions
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Evaluation resources
 - The rubric for assessing levels of evidence
 - An evaluation planning process guide
 - An evaluation budgeting guide
 - SIF Evaluation Plan Guidance
- Link to previous successful applications

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So one of the things we have now that we didn't have before is the Evidence Exchange where you can see some final reports that have come about through some of the grantees who have finished. So I would definitely say to look at that and see what that looks like. And again, these kinds of resources, such as the rubric, see what it means to have an incoming level of evidence, as well as the budget paper that spells out, again as Lois said, the early years but you can still see what people have, on average, spent. As well as the NOFA in terms of

what would be expected because these are rigorous evaluations, and again you don't want to come in with an intervention that hasn't been evaluated before.

We have some key documents and resources listed on the PowerPoint.

So in particular we wanted to draw your attention to the evaluation resources: the rubric that Andrea covered in her presentation; the evaluation planning process guide; and then the evaluation budgeting guide which I think you'll find helpful. And then we also have the SIF Evaluation Plan Guidance, please note however that's a very lengthy document that will be your key resource if you are approved for funding. If you wanted to flip through it, it gives you what will be expected of you.

Questions?

And then we'll end up with the how to reach us.

To submit a question you may use the webinar Q & A function or dial * 1 on the phone for the operator to open your line.

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How to Reach Us

SIFApplication@cns.gov

Email: SIFApplication@cns.gov

Voicemail: 202.606.3223

Updates: Sign up at www.nationalservice.gov/sif

Leave a message at 202.606.3223

Or you can sign up on our website for information and updates on SIF.

Thank you everybody. We appreciate your attendance and as Lois said, don't hesitate to contact us any of those different ways if you have any questions.

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