

# IMPROVING FEDERAL GRANTS MANAGEMENT

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**The BETTER Project**

*(Bringing Everyone Together To Enhance Results)*

[BETTERproject.info](http://BETTERproject.info)

*OMB/Grants CAP Goal Innovation Exchange*

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# ● IBM Federal Grants Management Report + 2 white papers

- **Grants Management: Improve Outcomes**

- [http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Federal%20Grants%20Management\\_0.pdf](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Federal%20Grants%20Management_0.pdf)

- **Grants Management : Improve Operational Quality** (*service, stewardship*)

- <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Improving%20Operational%20Quality.pdf>

- **Grants Management : Improve Transparency** (*to improve outcomes & operational quality, strengthen accountability, build understanding of and trust in government*)

- <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Improving%20Transparency.pdf> 

# ● Areas of Opportunity for Improvement

- Q's grant programs, grantees, policy makers ask
    - Where to focus and how to improve
    - What works, what works better, and in which situations
    - Outcome progress made, problems needing attention
  - Data, analytics, and well-designed trials
  - People – roles, responsibilities, skills
  - Communication & community – to improve, strengthen accountability, build understanding of government
  - Processes and routines – connect people with each other & w/ relevant evidence to understand evidence, decide next steps
  - Accountability expectations and incentive structures
- 

# ● 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**
  - **GAO and other oversight bodies**



# ● 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 outcomes including GPRAMA, Foundations of Evidence Act, DATA Act, GREAT Act, Taxpayer RTK Act, and more!**
  - **Grants CAP Goal & Grants Playbook call for rebalancing**



# ● 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 infrastructure evident in words and steps in OMB/GAO grant life cycle charts
- Data & analytic advances create unprecedented opportunities for outcome improvement
- Also need attention to:
  - People
  - Communication and community
  - How data and other evidence are used



- **Graphics & words matter. From oversight to insight generation, from using assessments to judge to using them to find ways to improve; making progress on goals, not meeting them all.**

**Grants Playbook => State Department language**

### **Grants.gov, GAO language**

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

- Reviewing reports
- Site visits
- Audits

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



# ● **Manage Grants to *Improve Outcomes*** ***Find, Build, Share, Analyze & Use Evidence***

- **What is evidence – data analytics, not just evaluation**
  - Evaluation not to find and fund what works but what works and what works better, situational differences affecting effectiveness, lessons from failed trials
  - Also, evidence to inform where to focus, both action and knowledge building
- **For 3 distinct purposes – 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 and other useful analyses
      - Those outperforming peers in recent periods and growth – “Moneyball players” to learn from or hire
      - Other useful analytic methods inc.: 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 uptake 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

# ● Grants Management :

## *Improve Operational Quality*

- Service

- Grant recipients a service priority
  - Process quality
  - Knowledge relevance and diffusion
- Beneficiaries
- Others

- Stewardship

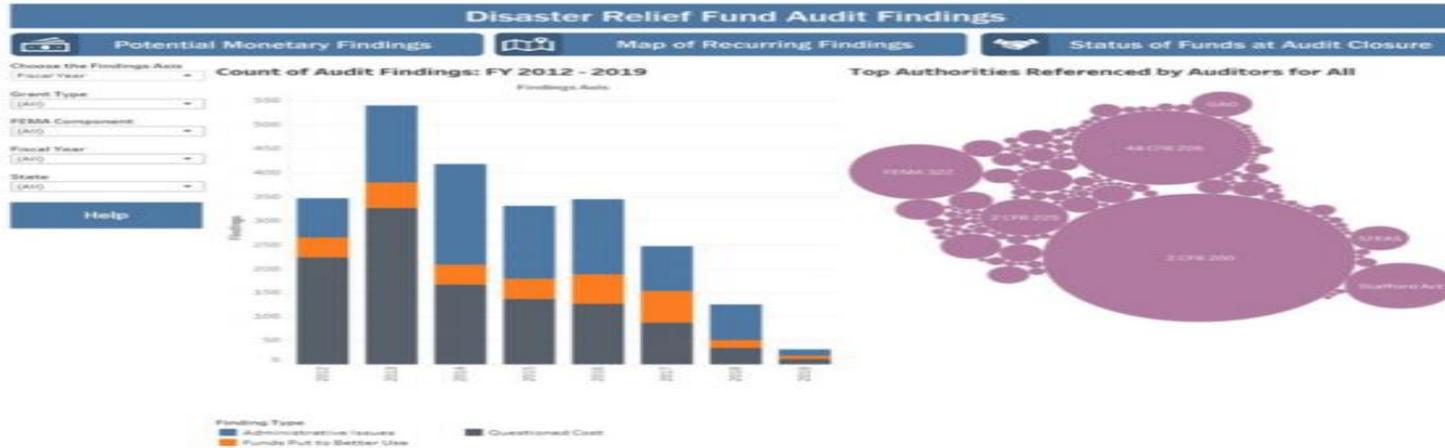
- Cost effectiveness
- Wise risk management
- Bias management

- Data collection, analytics, and communication important to improve op quality, too, within and across grant programs



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

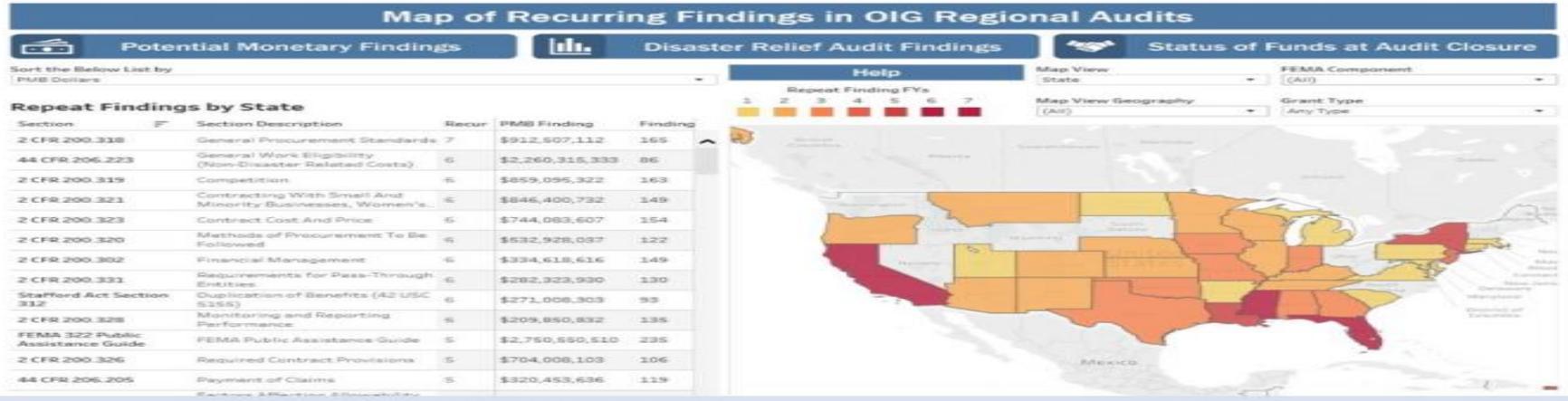
Figure 1: Example of How FEMA Presents Analyses Graphically



The bubble chart on the right groups all findings by the regulatory authority cited by the auditor. This group allows the audit findings to be analyzed according to the keywords in the chapters, sections, and paragraphs in the regulatory text itself, allowing for easier comparisons across fiscal years and audit teams. The table below the charts (not shown) follows the tables of contents of the CFR.

The map on the right shows the location of recurring DRF audit findings. An audit finding is considered to recur, if the same Section is cited for a particular geography in multiple fiscal years.

The table on the left shows the most frequently recurring Sections nationally. This list can be sorted either according to the amount of PMB or according to the count of findings, by changing the selection in Sort the Below List by.

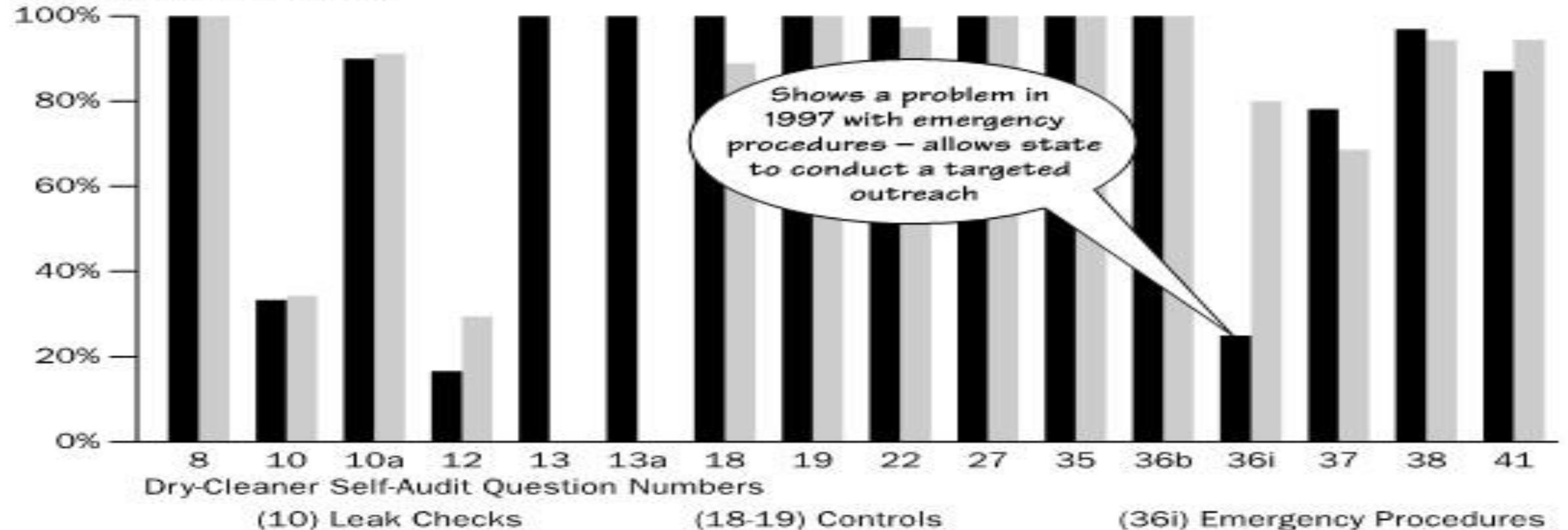


Source: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration (2020, January 23). "Compliance Dashboard." Presented at National Academy of Public Administration Grants Management Symposium. Retrieved from: [https://napawash.org/uploads/FEMA\\_COD\\_Handout.pdf](https://napawash.org/uploads/FEMA_COD_Handout.pdf).

- 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

Frequency of Compliance



# ● Grants Management: *Improve Transparency*

## *Communicate to:*

- **Improve outcomes and operational quality**
  - **Analyses**
  - **Findings of well-designed trials (RCTs, integrated into operations), other studies that inform focus and trial design – and not just averages**
- **Strengthen accountability**
  - **Mutual – grantor and grant recipients and other goal allies (who will do what when and why)**
  - **Democratic – what goals, measures, and strategies are, why they were chosen, and planned next steps to support democratic debate about these**
  - **Performance – not accountable for meeting targets or doing better than others but for using and communicating data and other evidence to inform focus, find ways to improve, and increase adoption of better practices**
- **Build understanding of and trust in government**
  - ***Ridiculously hard to find trends, other accomplishments of grant programs***//////

# ● **Data viz, shared platforms and research to inform focus, find ways to improve, increase uptake-e.g.,**

- ***Within and across***

- **Individual grant programs can help grant recipients**

- **Decide where to focus within grant program's outcome goals**
- **Improve outcomes**
- **Enlist and engage support**

- **Grant programs can help each other help grant recipients improve**

- **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 use of PubMed, ClinicalTrials.gov, dynamic learning agendas**



**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**

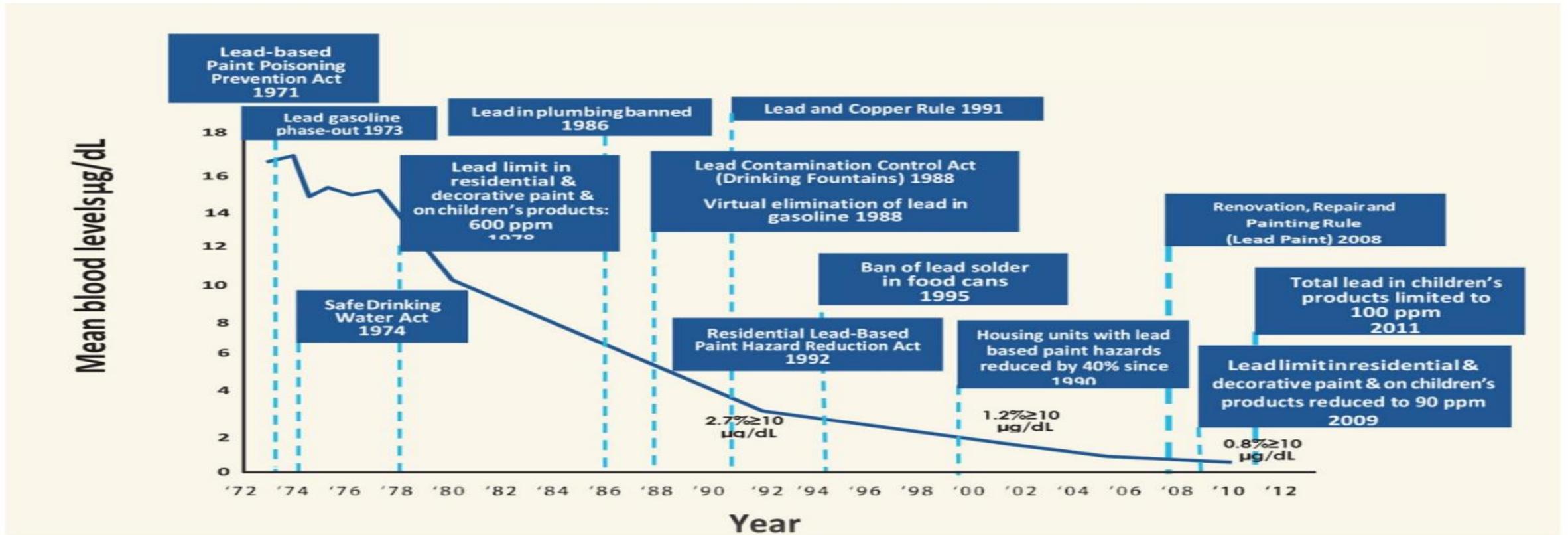


Figure 1: Source - Adapted from [https://ptfeh.niehs.nih.gov/features/assets/files/key\\_federal\\_programs\\_to\\_reduce\\_childhood\\_lead\\_exposures\\_and\\_eliminate\\_associated\\_health\\_impacts/presidents\\_508.pdf](https://ptfeh.niehs.nih.gov/features/assets/files/key_federal_programs_to_reduce_childhood_lead_exposures_and_eliminate_associated_health_impacts/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.**

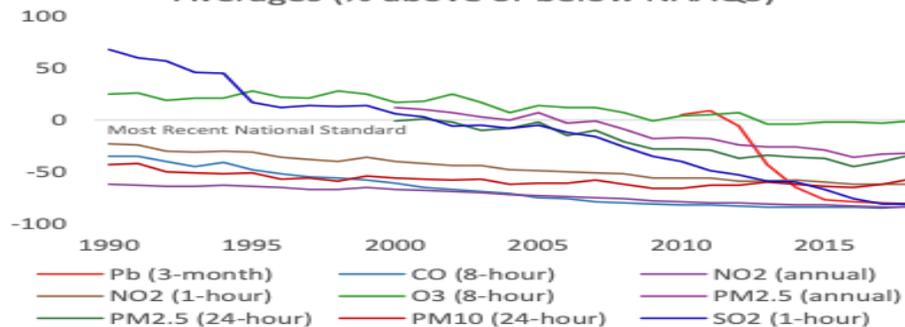
#### Performance toward target over time

Number of measures by percent of target achieved

■ 75-99% of target met (Y)



#### Declining National Air Pollutant Concentration Averages (% above or below NAAQS)



#### 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 (SO<sub>2</sub>) 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 SO<sub>2</sub> and 84% in nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) emissions from 1990 levels through the Acid Rain Program and reduction of 91% in SO<sub>2</sub> and 73% in NO<sub>x</sub> from 2005 levels through the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule.
- Issued Affordable Clean Energy rule to reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions while providing affordable and reliable energy; EPA expects U.S. power sector CO<sub>2</sub> 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 NO<sub>x</sub> 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.



# Communicate to 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.

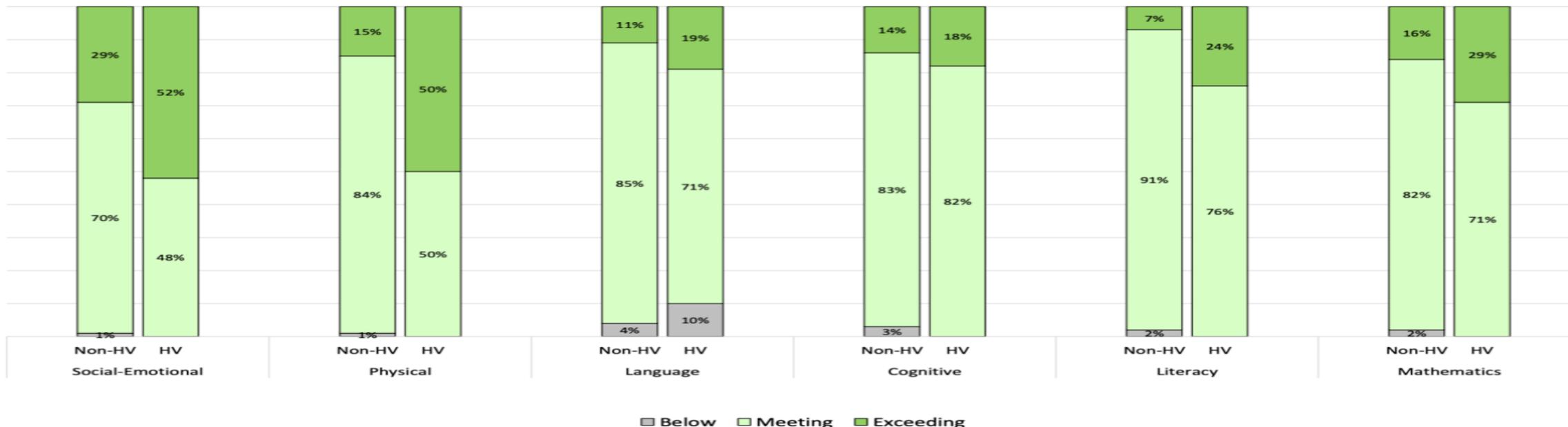
[Sarah Taub Webinar Series: Uncovering Racial & Ethnic Disparities In Reported Experience & Outcomes Among People with IDD](#)

# 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

### End of Year Preschool Data Impact of Home Visiting (0-3) on Child Outcomes



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

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

### How Award-Winning Schools Help Students Achieve at High Levels

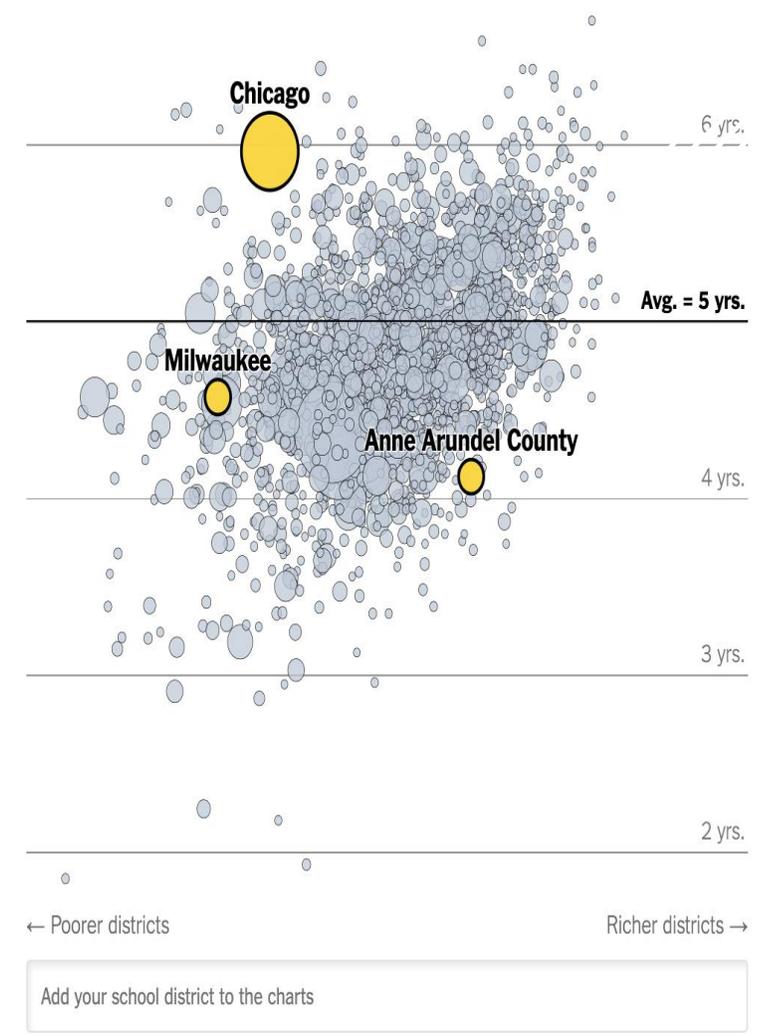
- What You Will Find in These Pages +
- Criteria Used to Identify Dispelling the Myth Schools +
- Sharing Lessons From Those Who Are Getting It Done +

## School Directory

### Elementary Schools



Change in test scores between 3rd grade and 8th grade

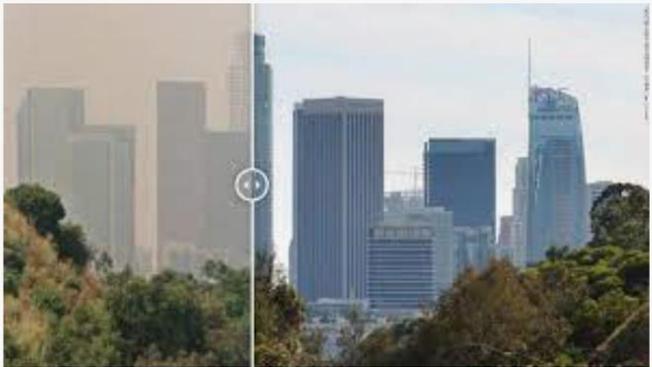


<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/05/upshot/a-better-way-to-compare-public-schools.html>

● Communicate using photos, maps re progress, lack of it, who not managing w/ data (Flint MI drinking water, WV opioid use) + build/share evidence on effective data communication for increased use by target audiences

Google

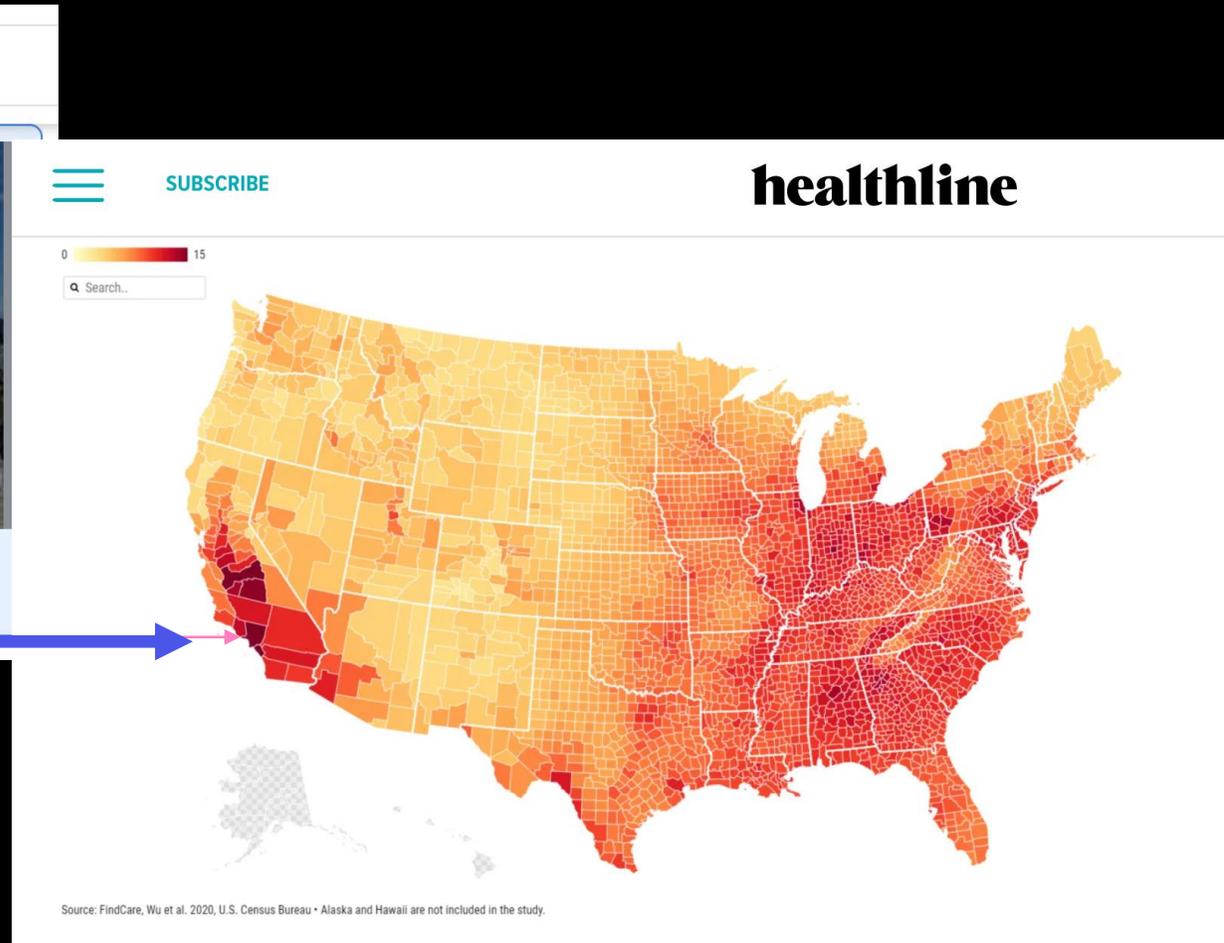
before and after photos los angeles air pollution



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>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/west-virginia-opioid-involved-deaths-related-harms>

# ● Federal grants management:

## *Improve Transparency*

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



# ● What data and how data are collected, shared, analyzed, used matters

- **Data standards recommended**
  - 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
- **Structure data to facilitate learning, improvement, community**
  - Timing, timelines, temporal and geographic frequency
  - Granularity/units of analyses
- **Data analytic capacity needed**
  - Within and across grant programs and agencies
  - For shared outcomes and common processes
- **Knowledge communication capacity to policy makers, field, public needed**



# ● **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)**
  - Key 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 work with each other!!!***

