Mixed Methods: What’s Needed to Benefit More
Federal Perspective on Current Uses, Ongoing Challenges

Marsha Silverberg
Associate Commissioner
National Center for Education Evaluation

Presented at
APPAM/Westat Forum
June 5, 2019
Overview

► Context setting:
  ▪ Imperative
  ▪ Common and uncommon uses
► Challenges in doing more
► Next steps
From IES Director Mark Schneider
April 2019

*IES hasn’t done nearly enough to translate (our work) into actionable information that can transform behavior and outcomes.*

Mixed methods are essential
“Mixed Methods (MM)”
MM prevalent in federal evaluation now

**BEFORE** impact study

Deep interviews
Focus groups
Observations
Document analysis

Assess feasibility
Create study design
Develop instruments
MM prevalent in federal evaluation now

Observations with protocols/rubrics

Surveys of program implementers and participants

AS PART OF impact study

Determine contrast
Assess intervention experience
Rate implementation fidelity
MM not common or comprehensive

Data collection
BEFORE, PART OF, or AFTER impact study

Essential components
Implementation challenges
Implementation variation factors/role of context
Hypotheses for subgroup differences
Sustainability
Examples of good practice
“How to” replicate
Challenges

▶ Measurement
  ▪ Emphasis on prioritizing
  ▪ Development: common items, validation, open-ended coding

▶ Sampling
  ▪ Explicit, dependent on purpose

▶ Reporting
  ▪ Alternatives to long descriptions - tabulations, visualization
  ▪ Development of templates or models for tool kits
Next Steps

- Evaluation community
  - Convergence on measurement and validation approaches
  - Improvement in integration into report writing

- At IES:
  - Implementation study work group guidance
  - Methods and TA task order contract

STAY TUNED
Caution: Let’s be methodical

For every problem, there is a solution that is simple, obvious, and wrong.

--Mark Twain
THANK YOU