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Valuing evaluation evidence in policy, program and resource allocation decision making

R Rist, R Cummings, P Hawkins, S Premakanthan

Symbiotic International Consulting Services (SISC), Ottawa, Canada

A generic definition of evidence in its broadest sense is a useful starting point. Evidence can be defined as "facts or testimony in support of a conclusion, statement or belief" and "something serving as proof (Shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles). Such a definition is devoid of context and does not specify what counts as evidence, when, and for whom. In the evaluation context, we are producing and using evaluative evidence to determine the quality and worth by assessing the relevance, effectiveness and consequences of specific policies, programs and interventions. Evidence based decision making is an endeavour in which there is informed, explicit, and judicious use of evidence derived from a variety of science and social research and evaluation methods.

The four member international panel will discuss how the available evaluation evidence is used or not used by decision makers, with examples from their own experience or drawn from research studies. The panel will also discuss the supply of quality, credible, timely evaluation evidence and some of the issues in gathering the needed evidence. The underlying assumption is that there is a demand for quality, credible and timely evaluation evidence by decision makers. More specifically, the panel will explore the following:

1. How evaluation evidence could be most useful for policy, program and resource allocation decision making;
2. The supply of quality, credible, timely evaluation evidence for policy, program and resource allocation decision making; and
3. Lessons learned on the impact of evaluation evidence on policy, program and resource allocation decision making (panel will provide examples of current use of evaluation evidence, some of the issues with the evidence that is currently available).