



Evaluation and Analysis in Action at FNS

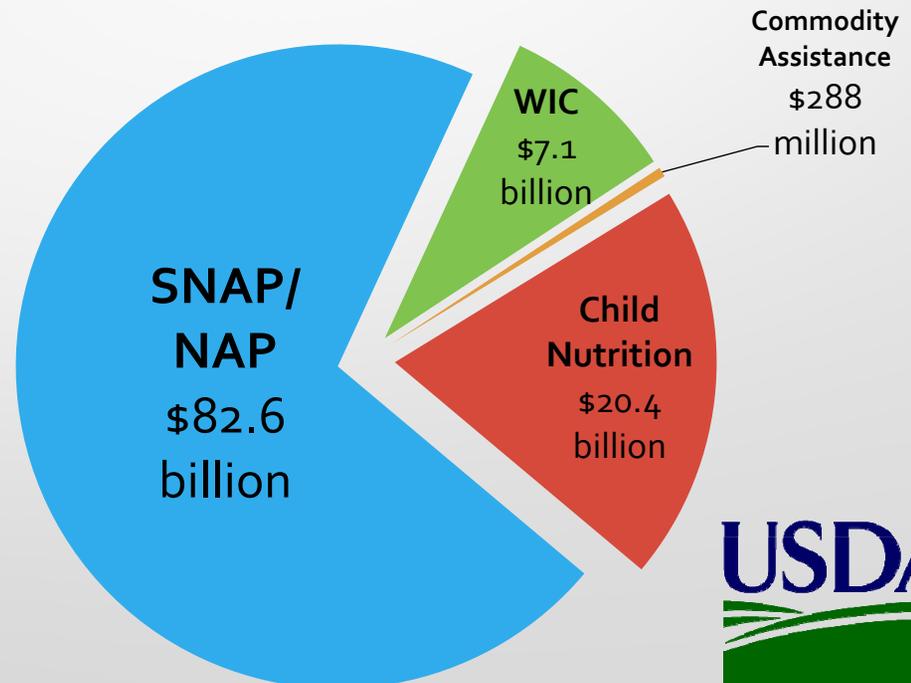
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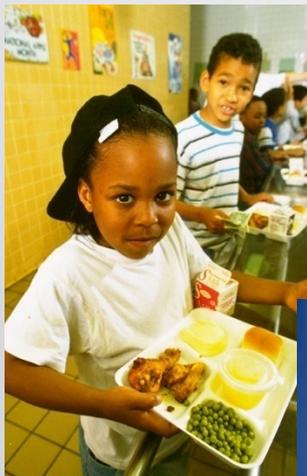
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FNS Programs: America's Response to Hunger and Poor Nutrition

- 15 Federal nutrition assistance programs
- Serves more than 1 in 4 Americans over the course of a year
- Annual spending:
>\$110 billion in FY 2013;
>\$102 billion in FY 2014



Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs



- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – formerly Food Stamps – serves over 47 million people; benefits redeemed electronically in 245,000 food stores nationwide
- **Child Nutrition Programs**, including the school meals programs, provide food to about 30 million children at schools, child care centers, and other away-from-home settings
- **WIC** meets the special nutrition and health needs of about 9 million at-risk pregnant women, infants, and young children
- **Food Distribution Programs** deliver food to those in need through food packages for households or foods provided to food banks and congregate feeding programs



How FNS Works

- Programs work through partnerships with State and local entities

FNS provides funding to cover benefit costs and most administrative expenses

State/local agencies agree to operate programs effectively and according to Federal standards

- Key **FNS** roles:

- Secure resources in the budget process and provide them to States;
- Set policies and rules for program operations consistent with Federal law;
- Provide oversight and technical assistance to ensure that programs are implemented effectively and perform well;
- Account for Federal resources used by programs to ensure integrity.



**What do
we mean by
evaluation?**

**How do we
use it?**

- Program impact evaluations
- Process evaluations
- Cost/benefit analysis
- Performance measurement*
and operational assessment
- Demonstration evaluations



What factors support evaluation use at FNS?

- Close connection to policy discussions
- Dedicated funding
- Consultation with customers
- Communication, communication, communication



Know your audience!

- Our customers are policy officials, program managers, and stakeholders.
- Share early and often.
- Translate the science into plain English.
- Offer multiple routes to inform your customer.
- Include the essential details – but many aren't.



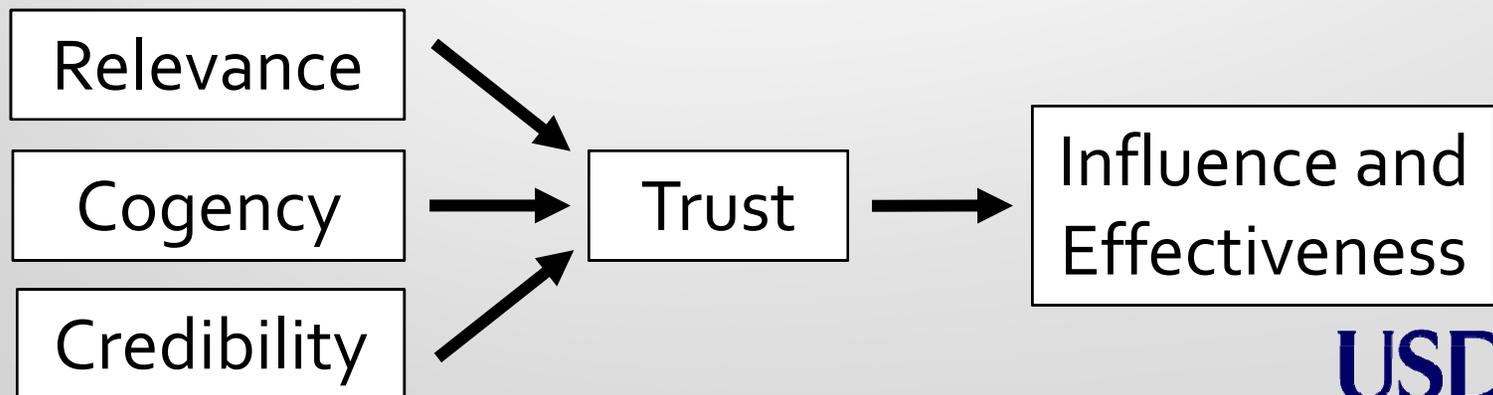
Think flexibly about:

- **Scope:** Focus on key questions; consider modular approaches.
- **Method:** Timeliness can trump definitiveness. (But communicate the limitations.)
- **Precision and granularity:** National trend indicators are limited – but not as limited as the study you can't afford.

(Precision ≠ validity or accuracy!)



Staying safe on the long road



- **Beware false precision.** Communicate uncertainties and the limits of your knowledge as part of what you *do* know.
- **Provide answers that you can live with over the long term.** The information may change as you learn more, but be ready to explain *why*.
- **Remember the bigger picture.** Evaluation is one piece of a complicated program/policy puzzle.

Thank you!

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis>
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