



August 1, 2019

Reps. Lowey and Granger:

On behalf of the more than 7,000 members of the American Evaluation Association, we write today to ask for your consideration of targeted additional appropriations for fiscal year 2020 to support implementation of new requirements for Executive Branch agencies in the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.<sup>1</sup>

The Evidence Act, passed unanimously in the Senate and with a bipartisan majority in the House, includes requirements that agencies establish evaluation officers and the supporting infrastructure to conduct formal evaluations of government policies and programs. These requirements were based on the unanimous recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking in its final report to Congress.<sup>2</sup>

When the President signed the bipartisan Evidence Act into law in early 2019, the decisions about the administration's fiscal year 2020 budget proposal had already been finalized and largely did not include additional resources to support implementation of the Evidence Act. Nonetheless, because of the requirements in the authorization bill, the Executive Branch is still expected to proceed with implementation to comply with the law.

In July 2019, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued its first round of implementation guidance, directing agencies to designate evaluation officers and begin the process of developing an interim learning agenda, among other requirements.<sup>3</sup> Agencies will need to identify stable resources to effectively develop these capabilities and achieve the vision of the Evidence Act. During the first year of implementation, a small amount of resources targeted to the agencies with greatest need will allow the evaluation officers sufficient time to develop their own budget requests through the regular budget process.

When the Congressional Budget Office scored the Evidence Act in December 2017, it estimated Executive Branch agencies would need approximately \$7 million in 2019 to implement the evaluation requirements in the legislation.<sup>4</sup> We recommend that an appropriation be included in the Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill in a new, dedicated interagency fund maintained by OMB to allocate the additional resources to support new

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<sup>1</sup> Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Public Law 115-435.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking. 2017. *The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

<sup>3</sup> Vought, R. 2019. Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance (M-19-23). Washington, D.C.: White House Office of Management and Budget. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/M-19-23.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> CBO estimated \$7 million for the evaluation officers plus three additional FTE and \$7 million for the chief data officers with three additional FTE. See Congressional Budget Office. 2017. H.R. 4174 Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. Washington, D.C.: CBO. Available at: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/costestimate/hr4174.pdf>

evaluation officers. Suggested appropriations language is below for inclusion in the Financial Services and General Government bill:

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY FUND  
(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for the furtherance of the program evaluation requirements in the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, \$7,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That the Director of the Office of Management and Budget may transfer these funds to one or more other agencies to carry out projects to meet these purposes.

In addition, the appropriations committees should consider programs and agencies that may benefit from additional evaluation set-aside authorities from existing mandatory and discretionary appropriations.

The American Evaluation Association appreciates your consideration of this request. If we can be of assistance, or if you need more information about our organization, please feel free to contact Tessie Catsambas ([President2019@eval.org](mailto:President2019@eval.org)) or the American Evaluation Association's executive director, Anisha Lewis ([alewis@eval.org](mailto:alewis@eval.org)).

Sincerely,

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