



U.S. General Services Administration

U.S. General Services Administration FY 2022 Annual Evaluation Plan

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Introduction

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (“Evidence Act”) requires federal agencies to undertake a number of activities to build and use evidence. These include establishing an Evaluation Officer (EO) position, developing a multi-year Learning Agenda and an Annual Evaluation Plan (AEP), and completing a capacity assessment. Implementation of the Evidence Act offers an opportunity to improve how the General Services Administration (GSA) builds and uses evidence and better align performance, budget, strategic planning, policymaking, data, and evidence-building activities.

In developing the AEP, GSA engaged internal and external stakeholders. Internally this engagement included key stakeholders from across the agency, as they advised and helped develop draft questions for inclusion in the AEP. Externally this engagement included hearing insights shared by the Office of Management and Budget partners in the budget, performance, and evidence teams. These engagements came together as a final recommendation to the Administrator to ensure alignment with GSA’s overarching priorities and strategy. GSA’s EO worked closely with varied stakeholders with expertise in the program areas to ensure that the AEP is relevant, realistic, and meaningful. The EO convened an Evaluation Working Group to provide input into the criteria to select priority evaluations¹, review potential evaluations against these criteria, and provide input into the final set of proposed priority evaluations to comprise the AEP.

GSA’s AEP is a set of priority evaluations for this fiscal year that build on the GSA Learning Agenda. The AEP will support progress on the Learning Agenda, however these efforts will also have additional and independent workstreams and thus not fully overlap. Additional evaluations may be prioritized over the course of FY 2022, not yet scoped or described here.

GSA’s FY 2022 Annual Evaluation Plan includes four priority evaluation topics on the following policy and operational areas:

- What resources are most important for supporting employees and teams in a remote work environment?
- What, if any, impact would increased reliance on flexible work policies have on the demand for federal real property?
- What acquisition program or policy changes can address and reduce administrative barriers for GSA customers, especially those that have a disproportionate impact on underserved communities?
- What programs or policies are effective at promoting greening of the fleet, including use of electric or other zero emission vehicles?

¹ GSA uses the term priority as a proxy for “significant”.

Each priority evaluation topic includes a description of the case for evaluation, notes on possible evaluation approaches and methods, anticipated challenges and solutions, and initial notes on dissemination of results.

Learning Question 1: Real Estate Solutions

What technologies and solutions does the federal workforce need to work effectively in a more responsive remote work setting?

Context

GSA has been leading the Workplace 2030 (WP2030) initiative studying agencies' space use during and before the COVID-19 pandemic and discussing evolving needs, which will drive long-term workspace solutions and decisions. Building on our FY 2021 progress, GSA will proactively and regularly engage customers to understand the changing mission needs and guide their workspace strategies based on their evolving needs. GSA will develop and deploy customer-driven solutions beginning in FY 2022, which will enable agencies to align people, processes, and tools. GSA will also continually monitor and quantify variables like space utilization and changing demand, which will enable GSA and agencies to make data-driven decisions. This initiative is critical to GSA's efforts to right-size the federal real estate footprint. Our work will examine the effects of distributed, virtual, and asynchronous work, rapid adaptations in information technology, and changes to interior space planning and building operations.

Strategic Goal

Financially and environmentally sustainable, accessible, and responsive workspace solutions that enable a productive federal workforce.

Evaluation Topic 1.1

What resources are most important for supporting employees and teams in a remote work environment?

Overview

GSA is planning two evaluations to understand more about how providing workspace solutions to employees in remote locations can help to improve employee and agency outcomes. These pilot evaluations will initially involve GSA employees, with a goal of informing governmentwide services and policy.

The first evaluation is currently underway and is a formative test of delivering monitors, keyboards, and mice to employees. This is a smaller formative study to understand both some of the logistics around providing employees with equipment for a home office (e.g., shipping, policy, technological) and to get descriptive information on the employee experience. This first study is helping to inform a larger effort to design permanent offerings to supply home office equipment as part of the WP2030 initiative called “Home Office in a Box.” The Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) is working with the Public Buildings Service (PBS) and other stakeholders at GSA to understand options for embedding an impact evaluation with the first phase roll out of the program, planned for Q2-Q3 FY 2022.

Separately, OES is engaging with GSA leadership and other federal agencies to understand where there are opportunities to learn from the re-entry period. Where possible, GSA will try to leverage appropriate comparisons to understand more about how the shift to a hybrid environment—one in which some employees are remote, some are in the office, and some split time between the two—affects employee, team, and agency outcomes.

Evaluation Questions

- Does the provisioning of office equipment (e.g., chairs, monitors, keyboards, and mice) increase employee engagement, satisfaction, health, and productivity?
- How will the return to facilities impact employee engagement, satisfaction, health, and productivity?
 - To what extent do team structures (e.g., all remote, hybrid, all in the office) affect individual outcomes (including equity), team outcomes, and agency outcomes?

Evaluation Approach and Timeline

- Outcome evaluation of the monitors, keyboards, and mice pilot:² Equipment distribution to employees is planned for Q4 FY 2022. Outcome data will be collected in Q1 FY 2023 from surveys, administrative data, and where possible, targeted conversations. An implementation analysis will help to uncover successes and challenges in supplying remote and hybrid employees with equipment and will also help to determine if causal inference of the pilot is appropriate through the identification of an appropriate comparison group.
- Formative and impact evaluation of “Home Office in a Box” program: The distribution of initial products is planned for Q3 FY 2022. OES is working with PBS to assess the feasibility of embedding an impact evaluation in the first-stage rollout of the program. Early analysis is tentatively planned for late FY 2022 into early FY 2023 with a desire for longer-term observation of outcomes like recruitment and retention in FY 2023-2025.
- Implementation and impact evaluation of re-entry pilots: GSA is tentatively planning for a return to facilities in Q2 FY 2022. GSA will assess the feasibility of using the transition period to embed evaluation activities. To the extent possible, re-entry decisions will be evaluated using a combination of implementation and impact evaluation with the goal of assessing not only short-term outcomes but also looking into possibilities for understanding longer term outcomes in FY 2023 and beyond.

	FY 2022				FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025			
Evaluation Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Evaluation of monitors, keyboards, and mice pilot																
Evaluation of Home Office in a Box																
Evaluation of re-entry pilots																

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

There are specific legal and regulatory questions that need to be addressed before launching the pilots, for example, what are the processes for recovery of government property if employees separate or move and the equipment needs to be returned. There also are open questions about distribution methods, for example, will home delivery be

² In this document pilot refers to the small-scale introduction of a new policy, process, or service offering and is not an evaluation activity or method.

available versus delivery to central locations. To the extent that these distribution methods are flexible, GSA may evaluate various options for efficient compliance.

The pandemic has created a difficult environment for any inference that uses point-in-time measurement that coincides with a return to the physical office space and the wider reopening of society. Drawing too strong of an inference on employee engagement, for example, could be conflated with general trends like positive shifts in mindset due to a return to a more “normal” or different pattern of life (e.g., a person’s partner returns to the office and allows for more concentrative work at home or reduces stress over shared use of space). Where possible, re-entry pilots should try to observe not only short-term (1-3 months post re-entry) outcomes but also longer term outcomes (1+ years post re-entry) to disentangle temporary shocks from steady-state differences.

A second challenge is related to causal identification and likely personnel selection issues. It is likely that some amount of employee choice will be allowed that will sort employees into those who for whatever reason are more inclined to work remotely or in the office. Simple comparisons of employees in different environments are likely to be biased or incomplete. While it may be possible to create experimental comparisons in some earlier pilots, it is likely that employees will be allowed to self-sort in the short-term. This presents some possible tension between strong inference of short-term outcomes which may not reflect a steady-state environment, and less rigorous long-term comparisons.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

- Evidence from the formative monitor, keyboard, and mice pilot will contribute to the rollout of “Home Office in a Box” program (along with multiple other points of stakeholder engagement).
- Early evidence from an initial pilot of the “Home Office in a Box” program will provide customer feedback to inform adjustments to service offerings, with the ultimate goal being to refine the program into a governmentwide service offering.
- Evaluations from re-entry pilots can help inform both short-term policy decisions for GSA and can potentially be designed in a way that allows for tracking longer-term outcomes of interest including, employee recruitment, retention, and advancement as well as informing Evaluation Topic 1.2: What is the impact of more flexible work policies on the federal real property inventory?

Evaluation Topic 1.2

What, if any, impact would increased reliance on flexible work policies have on the demand for federal real property?

Overview

Even before, and now accelerated by, the COVID-19 pandemic, the workspace allocated per person is decreasing. The pandemic has demonstrated that telework is a viable option and the future will include a mix of office-based work and telework. It presents a unique opportunity to restructure GSA's real property portfolio.

GSA will proactively and regularly engage customers to understand the changing mission needs and guide their workspace strategies based on their evolving needs. Beginning in FY 2022, GSA will develop and deploy customer-driven solutions, which will enable agencies to align people, processes, and tools. GSA will also continually monitor and quantify variables like space utilization and changing demand, which will enable GSA and agencies to make data-driven decisions. Evaluation Topic 1.2 focuses on these activities as a key component to right-sizing GSA's real estate footprint.

GSA is leading the Workplace 2030 initiative studying agencies' space use and discussing evolving needs, which will drive long-term workspace solutions. Through this effort, GSA has identified existing service offerings to expand, as well as new service offerings to provide, all of which are designed to strengthen federal government future workplace practices. Our work will examine the effects of distributed, virtual, and asynchronous work, rapid adaptations in information technology, and changes to interior space planning and building operations.

Evaluation Questions

- What features of new, adaptive workspace solutions satisfy customer needs and real estate demands in the short and medium term?
- What is the demand for PBS to provide other services and how will that demand influence holding and reinvestment strategies for real property so that assets retained are viable and sustainable?
- How are space requirements changing in terms of needed space and use of space in a more flexible work environment?

Evaluation Approach and Timeline

- Outcome evaluation of Flex Hub: The Flex Hub concept provides a multi-agency, multi-functional office space that supplies a tailored set of resources to support different work styles (e.g., collaborative and contemplative) and needs (e.g., special use resources like large format printers). An initial pilot space is being planned for GSA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to open around Q3 FY 2022. An initial formative stage of learning will focus on user feedback to understand demand and use of certain space configurations and resources. This formative evaluation will inform the potential for expanding the pilot to additional locations, at which point there may be the possibility for transitioning to outcome evaluation.
- Descriptive study and/or formative evaluation of office utilization applications: GSA is in early stage planning for development of a multi-agency office reservation application to be launched concurrently with the Flex Hub pilot in Q3 FY 2022. The application has the potential to provide a rich source of user data, including reservation behavior that can be a proxy for space use. With a focus on customer experience, we will explore what aspects of the application can be improved, and descriptive data can help to define user demand for different services.
- Descriptive study of space requirements data: As agencies transition to more of a hybrid work environment upon re-entry, it is likely that some will need to update space requirements for office space. OES will work with PBS to analyze space requirements data to understand changing trends and potentially identify patterns that suggest the possibility for developing new space requirement tools or new service offerings. Requests for changes may be most likely in the first half of FY 2022 as most federal agencies find an equilibrium in office-based and remote work in the post-re-entry context.

	FY 2022				FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025			
Evaluation Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Descriptive study and/or formative evaluation of office utilization applications																
Outcome evaluation of Flex Hub																
Descriptive study of space requirements data																

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

A major challenge, as described above, is related to timing. In the short term, it will be difficult to understand if usage patterns are reflective of the short or long-term excitement of returning to a physical office space or more lasting. It will be important to include data collection that can help to tease out how employees are interacting with space over time and not draw conclusions about demand for space or resource usage too quickly.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

GSA sees an opportunity to offer an integrated federal real estate strategy, based on nearly two years of federal employees working from home and in federal buildings under GSA's jurisdiction, custody or control during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence generated from these early stage efforts will help to inform choices on a different set of space service offerings from GSA. For example, GSA will use this evidence to evolve and expand workspace solutions for agencies, including the development and deployment of an integrated set of services that blend real estate, people, and information technology. GSA will use this evidence to further partner with agencies to validate and expand solutions that meet customers needs, including using a mix of on-site and remote work. Finally, this evidence will be used to develop and deploy the means to track space utilization so that agencies may make data-driven decisions about their future space needs.

Learning Question 2: Acquisition

What strategies are most effective at increasing participation in procurement and contracting opportunities for underserved communities and small businesses?

Context

While GSA has always been strong in industry engagement, it recognizes the need to grow and expand post-award support for new contractors, especially small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs), under its multiple award vehicles. GSA will work with industry to develop a more robust post-award strategy to help interested contractors understand expectations, identify resources, and explore opportunities for success. GSA will coordinate with the Small Business Administration (SBA) where there are opportunities for SBA to support learning objectives.

GSA concluded it can best support the Administration's equity objectives by putting greater emphasis on means to increase equity within its governmentwide acquisitions vehicles such as the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS), Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs), and other governmentwide multiple award contracts such as One Acquisition Solution for Integrated Services (OASIS) and OASIS Small Business (OASIS SB).

Strategic Objective

A modern, accessible, and streamlined acquisition ecosystem and a robust marketplace connecting buyers to the suppliers and businesses that meet their mission needs.

Evaluation Topic 2.1

What acquisition program or policy changes can address and reduce administrative barriers for GSA customers, especially those that have a disproportionate impact on underserved communities?

Overview

GSA selected the Multiple Awards Schedule (MAS) program as the initial focus of our equity assessment. The MAS program has a long history serving as the entryway for SDBs to the public sector marketplace. The MAS program—as the government’s largest commercial acquisition vehicle program—contains approximately 12,000 small businesses of which over 5,000 are disadvantaged. The MAS program contains unique features that make it the entryway point; such as continuously open to add new small businesses, small business teaming, socio-economic set-asides, access to free eTools, ability to sell to state and local governments under certain authorities, education and outreach support and ability to grow in size while holding a single 20-year contract spanning all commercial categories of spend. The MAS program has outperformed the governmentwide small business and socio-economic goals.

Evaluation Questions

- Which aspects of the multiple award schedule process are most important for improving small disadvantaged business performance on multiple award schedule (MAS)?
- What characteristics of small businesses are related to successfully being awarded contracts?
 - What services are most effective at supporting SDBs that struggle to win contracts when they are on schedule?
- How can processes for small business certification be improved?

Case for Evaluation

As part of its equity analysis for Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), GSA assessed its FSS, GWACs, and other governmentwide multiple award contracts such as OASIS and OASIS SB. GSA found that although underserved businesses fared better in obtaining GSA business than they did governmentwide, too many were not awarded task or delivery orders. Initially, GSA will focus on the Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) and

improving equity outcomes for SDBs in the MAS to support the new fifteen percent target for SDBs.

Evaluation Approach and Timeline

- Descriptive study of MAS and other contracting data: GSA is currently analyzing contracting data to better understand where SDBs can be better supported. Data analysis may reveal correlations between business characteristics and contracting success. These data may be supplemented with additional foundational fact finding, for example, understanding if generally accepted practices and requirements for federal contracting (e.g., minimum sales criteria, reporting cycles, Request For Information (RFI) and Request for Quote (RFQ) processes) have disproportionate and unintended negative impacts on SDBs. These analyses will take place in the first half of FY 2022.
- Impact evaluation of MAS process changes: As key barriers are identified, GSA will test the effectiveness of modifications to the bidding process, with the goal of implementing changes tentatively in Q4 2022.
- Impact evaluation of interventions to reduce barriers to small business certification: GSA is exploring a collaboration with SBA to identify and test the effectiveness of modifications to various certification processes, for example through the HUBZone program. The first part of the exploration may involve foundational fact finding in early to mid FY 2022, which will inform intervention design and an impact evaluation extending from late FY 2022 into FY 2023. Short-term outcomes will be observed in FY 2023 with longer term outcomes possibly being observed through FY 2025.

Evaluation Activity	FY 2022				FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Descriptive study of MAS data for SDB outcomes	■	■	■													
Impact evaluation of MAS process changes to improve SDB outcomes				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Foundational fact finding of barriers to small business certification processes (with SBA)		■	■													
Impact evaluation of interventions to reduce administrative burden in small business certification (with SBA)			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

While there is high quality administrative data available to identify which businesses are more and less likely to win contracts, these data may not capture the reason why some businesses struggle. Collecting additional data may require the approval of additional information collections and using additional qualitative methods for understanding customer journeys. The GSA Office of Customer Experience has the capacity to provide some support to these efforts to better diagnose procedural bottlenecks.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Evidence from smaller pilots will help to understand which, if any, changes should be made to acquisition policy and what types of support can increase equity for SDBs within the current policy framework. The evaluations are also intended to help understand where scarce resources like technical assistance can be targeted most effectively.

The study and pilot results will baseline and increase FAS's understanding of the drivers of contracting success, increased equity and impeding factors for SDBs doing business with the government. Results could include a list of both SDB characteristics and contracting touchpoints that contribute to successful and equitable participation in the federal marketplace. This understanding will inform future studies and changes in policies, processes and approaches to improve SDBs engagement with FAS vehicles. Further, FAS will leverage the methods, instruments and the learning will help FAS better understand and improve its overall small business outreach, engagement and successful equitable contracting in the most targeted, cost-effective ways.

Learning Question 3: Digital Government

How can GSA Technology solutions support effective service delivery to the public?

Context

The GSA Technology Transformation Services (TTS) strives for a digital government that delivers for the public through trusted, accessible, and user-centered technologies. TTS helps agencies make their services more accessible, efficient, and effective with modern applications, platforms, processes, personnel, and software solutions and to empower the public with better access to government information and resources. With a focus on unifying, improving, and standardizing the experience the public has while interacting with the federal government, TTS has a number of digital platforms it has developed. Evidence on how to best leverage these solutions, improve and expand the solutions and meet customer and public needs will be in direct service to GSA's Learning Agenda.

For example, TTS leads login.gov, USAGOV, and US Web Design Systems. Login.gov offers users simple, secure access to online government services. Users will be able to sign in with a single set of credentials for all participating government programs. USAGov connects people with government information more than 700 million times a year through its websites (USA.gov and USAGov en español), social media, publications, email, and phone calls to the USAGov Contact Center. And the U.S. Web Design System (USWDS) makes it easier to build accessible, mobile-friendly government websites for the American public. Given the reach and scale of TTS offerings, further evidence on how to best leverage these services to better serve the public will be key in assisting GSA in delivering on its mission.

Strategic Objective

A digital government that delivers for the public through trusted, accessible, and user-centered technologies.

Evaluation Approach and Timeline

There are no evaluations currently planned in FY 2022 in support of this Learning Agenda question. Instead, OES will focus on engaging with TTS in foundational fact finding and other evaluation planning in the second half of FY 2022 to identify the best opportunities for implementing evaluation in FY 2023 and beyond. Potential areas of interest include:

- Understanding the effects of digitizing federal forms
- Testing program improvements to increase utilization of public facing websites and improve public outcomes
- Understanding the effects of identity verification through login.gov on equitable access to government programs

	FY 2022				FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025			
Evaluation Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Foundational fact finding to identify evaluation opportunities for improving TTS services.																

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Measurement of reach and impact on the public, resulting from TTS services and offerings, will continue to pose a challenge when developing evidence moving forward. Data on user outcomes on a broad scale are not consistently collected currently, and will require significant effort and resources to capture reliably. Further complicating these efforts, such user outcomes are often one or more degrees separated from the user’s contact with TTS. As GSA explores promising modifications to programs and platforms with potential to enhance impact, statutory requirements may pose some limitations inhibiting the range of possible modifications. Further, embedding evaluation into TTS offerings and outreach may require changes in terms of client engagement and operations, adding additional complexity and requiring additional capacity.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Foundational fact finding activities will be used to target at least one priority evaluation in FY 2023, and OES will work with TTS to outline additional evaluation activities in FYs 2024-2025.

Learning Question 4: Government Operation

How can GSA strengthen shared solutions to improve operations and deliver value for the American people?

Context

GSA's Office of Government-wide Policy's (OGP) mission is to provide innovative solutions for the future of government. OGP helps agency partners prepare for the future of mission delivery by leveraging smart policy, analytical data, and dynamic program implementation across government. OGP aims to be the trusted partner for a government that delivers results through solutions and innovations in driving governmentwide mission support excellence and leading to better government with improved citizen experiences and savings.

This effort supports the overall mission by modeling how we build and use evidence to improve internal operations and inform policy guidance across the government. Our focus will be to drive governmentwide operational savings, efficiencies, and evidence based policies. The goal will also be to improve the use of data for decision-making and accountability for the federal government, including for policy-making, innovation, oversight, and learning. This effort includes opportunities to use existing data to run rapid low cost tests, identify effective policy changes, and an opportunity to prioritize and make progress on data gaps.

Strategic Objective

A government that capitalizes on interagency collaboration and shared services to make informed management decisions and improve operations, delivering value for the American people.

Evaluation Topic 4.1

What programs or policies are effective at promoting greening of the fleet, including use of electric or other zero emission vehicles?

Overview

GSA Fleet will play a major role procuring electric vehicles (EVs) for the federal fleet to proactively address the climate crisis. GSA is the mandatory source for executive agencies purchasing non-tactical vehicles in the United States, so it will continue to expand the available EV options for agencies to purchase.. GSA's end-to-end vehicle leasing program for the federal government includes over 227,000 vehicles. In support of Executive Order 14008 (Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad), GSA will continue to use the federal government's buying power to electrify the federal fleet.

Given this executive order and GSA's extensive fleet operational experience and automotive industry expertise, GSA is working closely with federal agencies in:

- Developing an aggressive action plan to rapidly electrify the federal fleet;
- Participating in the White House's Council on Environmental Quality steering committee and working groups to craft the best solutions for electrifying the federal fleet and tackling charging station infrastructure; and
- Co-leading (with the Department of Energy) an interagency working group that meets monthly to tackle fleet electrification.

Currently, 35 federal agencies have procured EVs from the GSA Fleet. These EVs include electric sedans, cargo vans, minivans, and SUVs.

Evaluation Approach and Timeline

GSA will identify key targets for foundational fact finding in FY 2022. This fact finding will be used to identify data gaps, understand customer needs, identify potential barriers to purchasing, leasing, and using electric vehicles, and investigate the physical infrastructure needed to promote EV use. The foundational fact finding is intended to identify evaluation opportunities in FY 2023.

	FY 2022				FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025			
Evaluation Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Foundational fact finding to identify evaluation opportunities for greening the federal vehicle fleet.																

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Due to COVID-19, governmentwide travel will likely be curtailed for an extended period of time. This will affect the ability to initiate evaluations of standard travel behavior. GSA does not have access to all agency fleet or travel data, which continues to be an ongoing challenge. GSA will identify partner agencies and initiate data sharing activities to expand the available data. Fleet data, in particular, will require further investment and cooperation from partner activities, both within and outside of GSA, to serve as reliable indicators and outcomes for future evidence building activities.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Foundational fact finding in FY 2022 will be used to target at least one priority evaluation in FY 2023 related to the greening of the federal fleet. GSA will continue to coordinate with internal and external stakeholders to refine evaluation plans for FYs 2024-2025.