

# **Systematic Impact Evaluation of STI by Public Funding Agencies: Cross-Country Perspectives**

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A central challenge in STI policy design and implementation is to make impact evaluation an intrinsic component of the policy process. This is not a new concern as evidenced by efforts of the European Commission to institutionalize appraisal of new programs, earlier attempts for systematic impact evaluation across federal agencies in the United States through GPRA (since the 1990s) and PART (during 2000s), and more systematic approaches (but less well known to broader audiences) in countries like Australia, Korea, Japan, and Russia, to mention some. Since that time, the United States has regressed, abandoning the PART and downgrading the importance of GPRA. Other countries have gone in the opposite direction and intensified efforts. Overall, it may be fair to argue that in the United States as well as elsewhere impact evaluation of STI policies remains largely an *ad hoc* practice, sometimes undertaken in response to the formal demand of policy makers, sometimes carried out as initiative of R&D managers or of academic evaluators. Even when impact evaluation is integrated to a policy or program, it rarely defines clear methodological guidelines to be followed. To even a larger extent, occasions of systematic use of the whole evaluation cycle in public agencies, including foresight, ex ante investment appraisal, monitoring, and ex post impact evaluation, are still rare.

This is true for STI public funding agencies. In spite of recent developments in some countries, such as Sweden, Finland and Scotland - just to mention a few – where funding agencies have implemented inbuilt evaluation systems, most STI agencies around the world have not adopted routines in this manner. Nonetheless, the issue cannot be “wished” away: it remains a vital theme inside funding agencies, due to both internal and external pressures. Internally, managers and policy makers are looking for best practices to enable best designs of policies and programs. Externally, society is demanding a better and clearer understanding of what science, technology and innovation can do for economic and social development and the consequences over different categories of stakeholders.

This panel will promote an updated discussion on how funding STI agencies around the world are designing and implementing impact evaluation systematically, what are the trends and the main challenges to tackle. The session is organized as a round-table to address the following questions:

- Which *rationales* should be considered in institutionalizing impact evaluation in STI funding agencies?

- What is reasonable - and what is not - in building systematic impact evaluation in funding agencies?
- Which methodological approaches of impact evaluation are more suitable for funding agencies to adopt and develop?
- How to combine data based evaluation with in-depth qualitative understanding of impacts?
- How to cover multidimensional impacts – social, economic, scientific, capabilities etc.
- To which extent internal evaluation must be combined with external – independent - ones?
- Are trends for systematic evaluation around the world converging or diverging?

Panelists will include high-level managers responsible for the evaluation strategies of public research agencies or large integrated research institutes in the United States and abroad. The expected audience consists of evaluation practitioners, managers and decision makers in research organizations, and analysts/academics dealing with the evaluation cycle of science, technology and innovation.