



CASE STUDIES FROM FOUNDATIONS

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT-STIFTUNG

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation sponsors top-flight, foreign scientists and scholars who come to Germany on the strength of its research fellowships and research awards to spend extended periods of time working together with German colleagues. Academic excellence is the premier criterion for selection. There are no quotas either for individual countries or for individual scientific disciplines.

Evaluation at the Humboldt Foundation is primarily an information and learning tool that assesses the extent to which the research fellowships and research awards reach their programme objectives and how their performance can be improved in the future.

Since 2006, an independent Academic Committee has steered the evaluation of the Humboldt Foundation's sponsorship programmes. The evaluation of a programme takes about two years. The Committee is responsible for monitoring and mentoring the evaluation, developing ideas based on the results of the evaluation report, and formulating tangible recommendations.

The Foundation's Evaluation and Statistics Division is responsible for the scheduling, planning and coordination of evaluations, the analysis of statistics and rankings, and the monitoring of programme activities. The division also supports the Academic Committee by drafting evaluation designs and suggesting indicators and instruments.

The main evaluation questions and issues are:

- > The extent to which the programme objectives are achieved
- > The extent to which the programme objectives are pertinent to the needs of foreign scholars and scientists who come to Germany

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

The Humboldt Foundation places great emphasis on the evaluation, quality control and reporting of its activities. Evaluation, which is carried out in cooperation with external partners (i.e. evaluation agencies, research institutes), does not only contribute to transparency and quality assurance but also helps to develop and optimise the Foundation's programmes. The purpose of evaluation at the Humboldt Foundation is:

- > To improve the quality of the programmes by providing an assessment of their success and impact
- > To contribute to the design and implementation of research fellowships and awards by recommending programme adjustments
- > To assist in an efficient allocation of resources
- > To report to the board of governors and the public funding bodies on the Foundation's achievements

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

In 2008, one of the Foundation's main pillars, the Humboldt Research Award, was evaluated by Technopolis Vienna. The awards are granted in recognition of a researcher's entire achievements to date. Award winners are also invited to spend

an extended period of time cooperating on a research project of their own choosing with colleagues in Germany.

The study assessed the success and impact of the programme in relation to the Foundation's general evaluation concept based on the following three programme targets:

- › To stimulate the German research landscape through collaboration with scientists and scholars from the leading scientific communities in the world for the benefit of individual researchers and institutions, as well as German science in general
- › To promote a network to facilitate scientific dialogue and, in so doing, build up lifelong personal relationships based on trust
- › To mediate a realistic image of Germany by establishing personal and cultural links, reducing prejudice and acquiring knowledge on the science system

The results of the evaluation confirmed the programme in its present design: the Humboldt Research Award has developed into a highly valued instrument for promoting excellence, which recognises the entire achievements of internationally renowned academics from countries all over the world, and it is respected worldwide.

However, in programmes based on networking and personal recommendation, there is a tendency to give emphasis to groups already well represented. Thus, the

evaluators recommended making a greater investment in disseminating information on the research programmes to researchers in the humanities and social sciences and, more generally, in those areas of research which are under-represented amongst award winners.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

Evaluating scholarship grants and awards is faced by a number of challenges, in particular defining appropriate indicators to analyse the output and outcome of research stays and their impact on the professional careers of the foundation's alumni. Other challenges include:

- › The variety of science and research fields
- › National and regional differences
- › Maintaining and analysing a worldwide network
- › Developing and adapting appropriate evaluation instruments, e.g. bibliometric tools
- › Design of databases and data management for surveys and biographic research

Visit <http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/evaluation-en.html> for additional information

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CARIPLO FOUNDATION EX-ANTE EVALUATION IN MULTI-PARTNER PROGRAMMES

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

This case study is focused on the AGER Project - a large cooperative research project that involves 13 grant making foundations based in Italy with an overall budget of 27 million Euros. The implementation of the project is overseen by a president, a project coordinator, and a senior officer. The project coordinator manages the AGER boards, the relationship with partners and is in overall charge of the project; the officer manages the peer review system and the direct relationship with referees. The officer is also in charge of daily management issues in strict cooperation with the coordinator and with the president.

The granting activity of AGER is based on a 2-step process: Call for ideas (short applications) and Call for full proposals. Hence also the evaluation process consists of 2 steps. The ideas submitted by the applicants are evaluated with an internal formal assessment aimed at discarding the ineligible partnerships and the proposals inconsistent with the research lines. Then, the full proposals are evaluated on the basis of an agreed peer review system with independent international referees. For each scientific domain (wheat production chain; wine growing; fresh cut produce...), a specific panel is appointed with a variable number of experts according to the issues of the projects (genetics, agronomic techniques, processing...). In particular, the AGER committees (Management and Scientific steering) indicate a long-list of independent experts to the AGER scientific officer, who has the relevant scientific background. The officer selects one or two experts for each issue from this list to form

an anonymous panel covering all the required expertise. The same panel, consisting of at least 4 experts, evaluates all the proposals related to the same scientific domain. The referees' work is conducted virtually (no Review Meeting) and they are asked to give scores and arguments for each project. Finally, the project coordinator reports the evaluations of each expert to the AGER Committees together with a synthetic judgement.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

The above described evaluation process aims at different goals.

Objectivity: multiple reviewers fulfill all the needed expertise, minimise error and avoid bias. Moreover, the selection of international and anonymous experts limits the possibility of conflict of interest.

Quality: the reviewers are chosen among senior scientists to assure state of the art knowledge and to cover the whole spectrum of disciplines.

Transparency: the original reviews and criterion scores are submitted to the applicants.

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

Due to the number of participating foundations and to the complexity of the partnership it is particularly important to share between the partners a strong methodology, in order to limit the emergence of local interests in the assessment of the applications. The AGER evaluation peer-review process allows an understanding of the overall needs of the relevant agro-food sectors to emerge, promoting at the same time scientific collaboration through the implementation of leading-edge research projects among the different bodies. The ex-ante evaluation system, of course, involves independent international experts and is aimed at funding the best projects.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

The main challenge is related to overcoming the practices used at individual level by the foundations and promoting cooperation within a large-scale initiative. A key role is played by the organisational structure design, by governance and management. In our opinion, it is very important to share between the partners the design of strong methodologies in the ex-ante evaluation process to assure both the funding institutions involved and the applicants.

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FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN

EVALUATING RESEARCH OPERATING FOUNDATIONS

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

At the Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência - a direct activity - there is a strong Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) who systematically advises on the process of selection of candidates for recruitment. Agreement of the Board is mandatory for the establishment of all groups at the Institute. The Board also organises regular, in depth reviews by external experts of the work by the various groups. As the Institute operates as a “host institution”, these reviews determine the continuation of the groups.

The most relevant process of evaluation, however, turns out to be that mediated by external granting agencies. Thus, as all groups must gain external support to finance their own research, their international competitiveness is constantly ascertained.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

The last criteria (competitiveness in obtaining external grant support) is essential to ensure that the institutional resources (space, personnel and technological platforms) are well distributed. The participation of the SAB in all critical aspects of the life of the Institute does provide for scientific coherence and, perhaps most importantly, for the institutional “profile” to be kept, together with the level of excellence, on a continual basis.

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

This strategy of combining “internal” with external evaluation is most useful, for it allows for the adjustment of the institutional criteria to the current values and levels of competition in the

international community, as well as to derive and measure the level of risk involved in the investments on each particular group or person. The results have been most satisfactory, for it has been possible, for all groups leaving the Institute, to find appropriate positions at other institutions. This result demonstrates that the institutional missions and objectives are entirely fulfilled.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

Challenges rest upon the risk of supporting “too conventional” research, as would be the case if we were to rely solely on “market” success. Truly innovative research does not often “sell” very well, for it is too ahead of its time for conventional reviewers and committees. Foundations, on the other hand, must support innovation and risk-research. Hence, a critical balance must be derived from these two opposing forces.

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JACOBS FOUNDATION

EVALUATING LARGE GIFTS TO UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTES

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

The Jacobs University provides monthly financial reports and quarterly president's reports to the Foundation. The CEO and Chairman of the Foundation are members of the Board at Jacobs University. In addition, joint working groups consisting of representatives of the University and the Foundation, with additional external expertise, have been established.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

The Jacobs Foundation is convinced that academic freedom is the central prerequisite for the success of any academic institution. Therefore, we do not interfere in academic issues, but rather offer our advice and support - in particular with regard to issues of management, governance, and finance.

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

The Jacobs University is an unparalleled academic success story. We do however see that there is room for improvement in the field of private funding for universities in Europe. Our experience with Jacobs University should inspire others to follow our example.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

As mentioned above, we need more private engagement and more companies and individuals need to be convinced to invest in academic research in teaching to educate the future generation of responsible leaders.

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THE LUNDBECK FOUNDATION/LUNDBECKFONDEN

EVALUATION IN A FOUNDATION WITH A SMALL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

For the ex-ante assessment of our project proposals (we received 1,055 project applications in 2009) we have a standing committee of eight members, who evaluate applications for the funding of biomedical research projects. Six out of the eight committee members are independent of the foundation, and four of these are not from Denmark. The foundation has three annual deadlines for biomedical research applications, and the committee has three annual meetings.

All committee members read and score all applications with the exception of cases where they declare a conflict of interest. For each application, two committee members are assigned as chief assessors, and they will deliver comments on the application.

The committee members' scores are entered into the foundation's electronic application and assessment system. They are not allowed to see each other's scores or comments until the round is closed and changes can no longer be made to the evaluations.

The committee meets at the foundation's premises to discuss the applications and decide which ones they will recommend to the foundation's Board of Trustees to receive a full or partial grant.

Prior to the meeting, the foundation's administration will rank the applications according to the committee's scores. This makes it possible to have the meeting in one day. The committee will discuss the highest ranked projects, but members also have the possibility of bringing to the attention of their colleagues applications that

have not received sufficiently high scores to be on the top of the list.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

By setting up a committee that works in a manner similar to the Danish Research Councils, we want to ensure that all applications are peer reviewed by expert researchers with long experience in evaluating research and research proposals. At the same time, we want the system to be manageable by a small in-house staff.

By having non-Danish experts on the committee, we seek to counteract the problems with national peer review in a small country where researchers in different research areas are very often working together and therefore cannot be impartial reviewers of each other's applications.

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

The foundation makes sure that all applications are reviewed in a fair and objective manner with the committee ensuring that the best projects headed by the best researchers and in the best research environment are supported.

At the same time, the composition of Danish and non-Danish experts makes it possible for the administration to collect from the committee's discussions very valuable input for discussions on future grant making strategies, based on their knowledge of research culture in different countries and their experience with different kinds of grant making instruments.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

The committee must cover the biomedical research areas that the foundation supports as widely as possible. At the same time, it is important to set up a team of peers that work well together. In order to have an experienced committee all the time, but also see to it that new members are taken in regularly, we have decided not to change all committee members at the same time.

Committee members are paid a fee for their work, and cannot apply for grants from the foundations as long as they are on the committee.

Our main challenge has actually been to find meeting dates where all members are able to come to Copenhagen!

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RIKSBANKENS JUBILEUMSFOND

EVALUATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

The foundation uses external experts/peers in the evaluation of its research support. The foundation makes ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluations. The mid-term activities can be both simple follow-ups and more in-depth evaluations. This case study focuses on the ex-post evaluation activities. The object of an ex-post evaluation can be for example the quality and the significance of an area of research or a certain form of research support. As background information, the reviewers have at their disposal various documents and studies, such as surveys/mappings of the research field, lists of funded projects and programmes, and peer reviewed results from projects. The foundation welcomes collaboration in evaluation activities with other institutions that are funding research, both private and public.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

The objective of the evaluation is to ensure that the results of the foundation's research support are in line with its statutes; to prove that the research grants are used in the ways intended; to give information, internally and externally on the research supporting activities, and to contribute to the quality assurance of the foundation's internal work, i.e. evaluation as a tool for learning.

The Board of the foundation has decided on some guiding principles for its evaluation activities. The principles are quite simple but nonetheless very important: the project plan for an evaluation must show why an evaluation is needed and what kind of information is sought after; how the evaluation shall be implemented; and how the results are to be used. Every evaluation is followed by a decision by the Executive Director. Feedback of the results should be disseminated: to the researchers whose research has been evaluated, to the Board of the foundation, to the review panels of the foundation and to its employees. In evaluations of research support the foundation uses external experts/peers.

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

The results help us to know more about how the different types of grants work. It is important to be able to account for the quality and the effects of the foundation's research support. This account is given to the board of the foundation, to its review panels, internally to the employees at the foundation's office, as well as to stakeholders and to the general public. It's important that the reviewers truly evaluate for example the results of a specific grant. The evaluations can also give useful information on for example the scientific quality and the productivity of the supported research and its overall strengths and weaknesses. It can also point out important issues for future research.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

Peer review as an evaluation method is a subjective method and has its methodological difficulties, but it is still the method that best suits the social sciences and the humanities.

Bibliometric analysis is problematic to implement and to use in the social sciences and the humanities. However these research areas still have to respond to bibliometric analysis as it has now become a tool when allocating public means. An important limitation is that different disciplines and schools have their own publishing strategies, which affect the outcome of the analysis. A bibliometric analysis can, however, give some indications about the quantity and quality of Swedish publications in an international context.

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TELETHON ITALIA

EVALUATING FUNDRAISING FOUNDATIONS

The peer review process at Telethon

All Telethon funding decisions are subordinate to a peer review process. The Scientific Office manages the development and implementation of policies and procedures that pertain to peer review, while leaving complete control over funding decisions to the Scientific Committee.

A staff of professionals (Research Program Managers) with a scientific background manages the peer-review of projects and is responsible for overseeing and implementing the strategic plan for Telethon research, ensuring that every aspect of research is consistent with Telethon's mission and priorities.

Criteria of evaluation

The evaluation of projects is based on a scoring system that takes into account the following criteria:

- a) scientific merit;
- b) proximity to cure (score is higher for projects that are closer to a clinical application)

The relative weight of the scientific merit being predominant in the overall score (90%), scientific excellence remains the main criterion for Telethon funding.

Renewal applications contain a final report on the previously funded project, which is also taken into consideration by reviewers.

General outline of the peer-review process at Telethon

Applications, which are submitted electronically, are initially screened for administrative compliance by the Telethon staff. In case applications to a Telethon call exceed the number of projects that can undergo full peer review (approximately 180 per call), a triage is needed, in order to exclude the less competitive ones. In this phase, each project is assigned to three members of the Telethon Scientific Committee, who are asked to score it on the basis of the scientific quality; this step usually excludes applications scoring within the bottom 30%.

The full evaluation procedure includes external and internal reviews; applications are sent to a minimum of two ad-hoc external reviewers chosen by the Scientific Office among experts in the field, as well as to three members of the Scientific Committee (internal reviewers). Reviewers are provided with guidelines highlighting the aspects of the project to be evaluated and evaluation criteria to be applied.

The Telethon Scientific Committee is composed of scientists of international standing, serving a four year term. To minimise potential conflicts of interest, Italian members working in Italy are currently less than 10%.

Final decisions are taken during a study section of the Scientific Committee. Written feedbacks, including reviewers' comments and a summary of the plenary discussion, are provided to applicants.

Highlights of the peer review process at Telethon

- A Scientific Office manages the process ensuring separation between reviewers and applicants and safeguarding the principles of fairness and independence of the evaluation
- The funding decisions are made by a Scientific Committee after a plenary discussion on the project's merit by Committee Members who are experts in the field of the proposed project and actually reviewed the application (internal review)
- Internal Reviewers are supported by External Reviewers competent for the topics addressed in each proposal; this guarantees each application a plural and competent evaluation in a situation where the organisation of multiple specific study sections is not feasible
- The risk posed by conflict of interest related issues is minimised though the massive involvement of reviewers whose activity is based abroad; this has proven to be an effective measure in a small country where the scientific community is highly interconnected
- Ex-ante evaluation also guarantees a thorough ex-post evaluation (not relying only on bibliometrics) of lines of research through the periodic submission of renewal applications

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

In the long term, the excellence of Telethon-funded research is measured by the fact that it leads to new discoveries and

that these discoveries will lead to clinical applications.

- Telethon's clinical pipeline includes projects ranging from the late pre-clinical phase to successful clinical trials for various hereditary disorders.
- Overall, through aggregate analysis on the translational component of our research portfolio, we found that the evaluation system applied promoted an increase of pre-clinical and clinical lines of research without penalising excellent basic research.
- As regards the scientific quality and impact of Telethon-funded research, the average citation index of Telethon-funded publications has increased through the years and is now higher than the Italian and European average, and comparable with the US average in five relevant areas of biomedicine.

(For facts and figures about Telethon and Telethon-funded research see 'The Telethon Book 2010' at <http://www.telethon.it/sites/researchers/SiteCollectionDocuments/TelethonBook2010.pdf>)

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU FACE AS A FUNDRAISING FOUNDATION CONDUCTING AN EVALUATION?

All our challenges and opportunities arise from the fact that we receive donations on the basis of a promise we make on how these will be spent, i.e. to fund the best research with the aim of advancing towards the cure of rare genetic diseases. For this reason safeguarding accountability and

transparency is of crucial importance in the evaluation process.

A major challenge is represented by the goal of funding excellent and mission-oriented research; we addressed this by focusing the eligibility criterion for relevance to diseases of proven genetic origin and familial forms of multifactorial diseases and introducing the 'proximity to cure' criterion to the 'scientific merit' one in the scoring system (see above).

Another challenge is that of applying the best possible tools to perform the evaluation compatible with our need of minimising the managing costs and devoting most of the raised funds to the actual research projects. This consideration led us to introduce external reviews to compensate for the impossibility to organise multiple study sections for each call. On the other hand, we consider the organisation of sessions for plenary discussion on the projects' merit an essential step, and a necessary cost, to fully exploit the potential of peer review based evaluation.

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VOLKSWAGENSTIFTUNG

EVALUATING RESEARCH FUNDING FOUNDATIONS

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

To strengthen quality management especially in the field of funding but also to provide a significant information basis for an overall evaluation, the Volkswagen Foundation established a systematic evaluation system in 2005. Before 2005 the main emphasis of quality assurance in the field of funding lay at the level of individual projects and on the examination of outlines and applications. To deal with the new evaluation task within the foundation a new position directly linked to the Secretary General was established.

The core element of the evaluation system of the Volkswagen Foundation is the “peer review” approach. Evaluations can only be conducted by an independent panel made up of high-ranking international experts. With a view to the overall evaluation, the panel will consist of researchers, research managers and experts in the fields of charitable foundations, asset management, and public relations to cover the wide range of funding and management activities.

The evaluation concept of the Foundation comprises different levels to achieve the aim of an overall evaluation at the end. In a first step, the Foundation started with several mid-term and ex-post evaluations on the level of single funding initiatives in different research fields. In 2009 the evaluation activities were

expanded to the level of funding areas and different management processes - asset management, press and public relations as well as finance and administration. For every evaluation, a particular panel with experts from the appropriate research or management fields was appointed.

In preparation for every evaluation, the Foundation compiles a reader with information and statistics about the Foundation in general and the specific funding or management area in particular. Furthermore, the reader includes a detailed self-assessment of the relevant staff members with a lot of statistical information.

During the evaluation process, the Foundation usually prepares and dispatches questionnaires to get the opinions, insights, and recommendations from (former) grant-recipient and rejected applicants or other target groups to base the evaluation results on comprehensive information.

All results and recommendations of the different evaluation committees were put down in a final evaluation report and discussed with the board of trustees. In addition, the overall evaluation will build on these findings.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

In 2012, the Volkswagen Foundation will be able to look back at the intentions of the founders as well as 50 years of funding activities - reason enough to take stock of its current position in the research system and in the foundation landscape as well as to explore the options for further advancement of the Foundation's profile and to set the course for the years to come.

Against this background the comprehensive evaluation intends to assess the priority-setting and development of the funding portfolio as a whole as well as the strategies and processes for its renewal. The comprehensive evaluation will look into the success of instruments and funding mechanisms in relation to both the main objectives of the Foundation and other national and international funding organisations. In addition, the evaluation is also geared towards the strategies and processes of other fields of function within the Foundation - asset management, press and public relations, as well as finance and administration.

On the one hand, the Foundation's declared policy is to remain open to change as a "learning organisation". On the other hand, there is a growing need for the legitimisation

of basic research and funding of it. With a view to this, a comprehensive evaluation system seems to be the most systematic and sustainable way - also with regard to the good governance guidelines of German Foundations - "20 Prinzipien guter Stiftungspraxis".

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

Until now, there are no results of the overall evaluation. They will, in due course, feed into the process of strategy development for the coming decade.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

At the moment, the Volkswagen Foundation is in the phase of planning and preparation of the overall evaluation. The special challenges of these preliminary steps of an overall evaluation are similar to more focused evaluations, but at the same time you have to deal with these challenges on a much higher level. The challenges are:

- > the composition of a panel
- > the preparation of material and statistics
- > the definition of the "Terms of Reference"
(Questions of the evaluation)

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THE WELLCOME TRUST

EVALUATION IN THE MEDICAL SCIENCES

WHAT APPROACH TO EVALUATION DO YOU USE AND WHY?

The Wellcome Trust conducts post-award (ex-post) evaluation at a range of levels in relation to its funding activity and has been working hard to strengthen this activity by integrating it into our funding streams and making the information we request and the processes by which we do this, consistent. We adopt a pragmatic approach that we think is inline with the things we are trying to evaluate - therefore drawing on both quantitative and qualitative information - and internal staff and external experts - to help us make the evaluation of progress and success.

At the organisation level, the Wellcome Trust has developed a series of high level outcomes that we want to achieve through our work (discoveries, applications, engagement, research leaders, conducive research environment and influence) and we have an associated set of indicators against which we report to monitor our progress against these high level outcomes (we report annually to our Trustees).

We also conduct assessments of individual grants - sometime during their life but always at the end of the grant. Grant holders are required to submit key information on progress and accomplishments in relation to our outcomes.

We also conduct funding initiative and programme-based evaluation, typically formative, conducted to assess the workings and operation of specific programmes and responsive to inform a funding decision on the future of specific initiatives. We sometimes do these internally or commission to an external agency if independence is specifically required.

In addition to post-award evaluation, the Trust supports evaluation-related Research and Development (R&D), essentially to refine and develop the methodologies that can be used in evaluation. R&D work typically involves working with others in the research community to refine approaches, share best practice and develop benchmarks where feasible.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN USING THIS APPROACH?

To enable the Trust to monitor its progress in relation to its goals and strategic imperatives. Though the specific reasons why we undertake post-award evaluation are broader and include:

- > **Accountability & validation** - to understand how well we are delivering against our goals; to enable us to assess whether we have made the best choices; to validate our decisions and satisfy reporting requirements
- > **Strategy & planning** - to explore the operation of funding initiatives; to identify the 'best' mechanisms to deliver on our aims; to identify priority areas to fund and inform funding strategy
- > **Policy & advocacy** - to build the evidence base of the requirements and impact of biomedical research. It is important to have examples for use in policy and advocacy work
- > **Assessing & understanding our role** - to identify research achievements and where our funding has made a difference; to identify the impact of our 'investment' alongside other funders and stakeholders in the research process

WHAT RESULTS DOES (WILL) IT YIELD AND HOW ARE THEY USEFUL?

Both quantitative and qualitative information is drawn together (from all our evaluation activity) and is linked to our outcomes and indicators.

Our Board of Governors is very keen to see these and the data are used to help us look at delivery of outcomes across our different portfolio areas. Though to make the judgement 'is that good?' and 'is that what we expect' is very difficult and subjective. We are increasingly drawing in our funding committees and external subject experts to provide the judgement.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE?

Evaluation is time-consuming and does require skilled resources in bringing together often disparate data sources. There is also a relative dearth of 'benchmarking' data across organisations which, if available, might help with the 'so what? Is that good?' type of question.

The issue of attribution is a complexity in evaluation - what can be attributed to a specific piece of funding - though we adopt a pragmatic approach to this; given that we know that most research is intertwined with other research often funded by a variety of actors, we are primarily interested in outcomes and impact where Wellcome has at least played a major role. To 'claim' attribution is to ignore the complexities and reality of scientific research and we are more interested to 'celebrate our contribution' alongside others.

It can be tricky to integrate evaluation with strategy and decision-making. It is important that evaluation is not a 'paper exercise' - an activity that it is good to be seen to be doing - thus a waste of resources. Evaluation needs the buy-in and involvement of decision-makers.

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