

EDITORS' NOTES

Interest in the topic of evaluation policy has been growing over the last several years, spurred at first by policies related to methodology, but broadened since then by a realization that evaluation policy affects all aspects of our practice. In this issue, leaders in the field take various perspectives on evaluation policy, drawing on their expertise and experience. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to evaluation policy, highlights some of the themes brought up in the other chapters, and describes the origin of this *New Directions for Evaluation* issue. In Chapter 2, William M. K. Trochim, who in his role as president of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) selected evaluation policy as the 2008 conference theme, first outlines why evaluation policy is so important and then lays out a taxonomy of evaluation policies and a structure and set of principles to guide our thinking about evaluation policy making. Chapter 3 centers on the role of professional associations in evaluation policy, especially as global perspectives become increasingly important. Specifically, Lois-ellin Datta uses the metaphor of a pushmi-pullyu, an animal with two heads looking in two directions, to draw lessons from the past and reflect on directions for the future of AEA's activities in evaluation policy. In Chapter 4, through a series of examples from her experiences in the Government Accountability Office, Eleanor Chelimsky makes a powerful argument for evaluation policies to protect the independence and credibility of evaluation units in organizations.

Taking the discussion outside the U.S. context, Elliot Stern describes the evaluation policy landscape and institutional setting in the European Union (EU) in Chapter 5, including the policy instruments that have grown out of the EU's dual identities as supranational and decentralized. This is followed by a historical account of the development of evaluation policy in the Netherlands in Chapter 6; Frans L. Leeuw concludes the chapter by examining the current state of Dutch evaluation policy in the framework provided by Trochim in Chapter 2. The last chapter identifies some of the threads in the chapters and suggests next steps.

There are next steps, of course, because this issue covers only a sliver of the topic of evaluation policy. For example, there is no discussion of evaluation policy in political contexts outside the United States or Europe, and the chapters tend to focus on government policies rather than evaluation policies in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. The intent of the issue is not to be comprehensive so much as to fan the flames of interest in evaluation policy. Ultimately, we hope to increase our understanding of evaluation policy and how we might influence it. As noted in the first chapter, the authors



included in the volume offer some hope that the area of evaluation policy is one in which evaluators, individually and collaboratively, can make a difference.

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