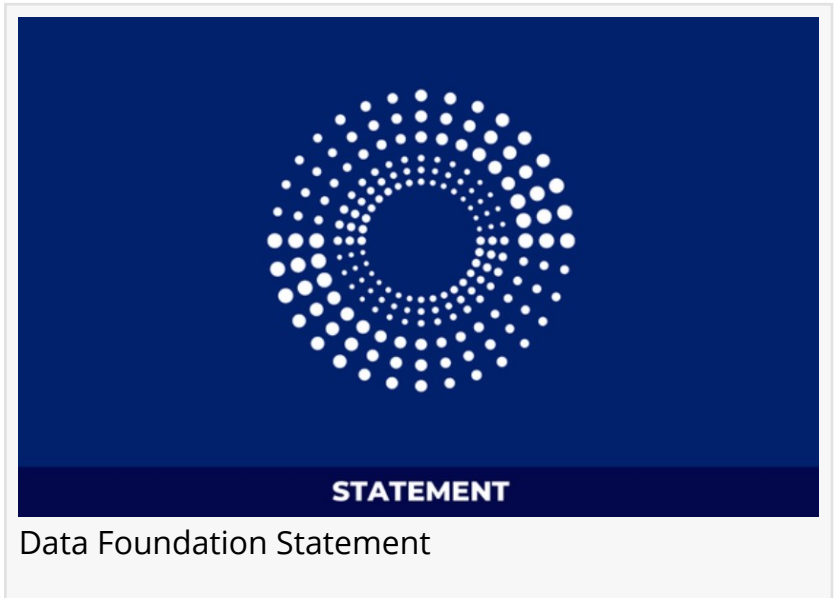# Data Foundation Statement on Changes to Federal Evaluation Activities

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, February 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Data Foundation continues to monitor significant changes occurring in federal evaluation and evidence-building activities that affect programs serving millions of Americans. These changes come just months after a [November 2024 survey](#) showed federal evaluation capacity reaching new levels of maturity, with 83% of federal evaluation officials reporting the Evidence Act was helping achieve their missions, and 95% of large agencies having published comprehensive learning agendas to guide evidence-informed decision-making.

STATEMENT

Data Foundation Statement

Recent changes in just the last three weeks include:
--Cancellation of nearly all research (85%) studying how to improve America's schools through the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences
--Announcement of the elimination of three-quarters of the staff studying solutions to homelessness and affordable housing at the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research
--Shutdown of teams evaluating foreign aid effectiveness and humanitarian assistance at the United States Agency for International Development
--Removal of public access to Environmental Protection Agency research and findings yesterday

--Removal of Department of Labor databases that helped policymakers and the public understand which job training and employment programs work, including the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research
--Effective elimination of the evaluation function at the Office of Personnel Management
--Elimination of the evaluation function at the Office of Personnel Management
--Substantial reductions to evaluation activities at the National Science Foundation and General Services Administration

"These abrupt changes to data and evaluation systems across government take away the very tools we need to understand program effectiveness and ensure public dollars are well spent," said Molly Irwin, Data Foundation Board Member and former Chief Evaluation Officer at the U.S. Department of Labor. "Federal research offices, like the Chief Evaluation Office in the Labor Department, house the capacity and oversee the rigorous research needed to understand things like which job training programs actually help meet America's labor market demand and help Americans find work.. Without this research infrastructure, policymakers lack the information they need to make sound investments and taxpayers have no way to know if their money is being well spent."

These changes directly impact Americans' daily lives and reverse five years of progress in building evaluation capacity. In November 2024, federal evaluation officers reported growing success in:
-- Using data to improve educational outcomes and recovery strategies
-- Identifying which emergency response systems save the most lives
-- Determining which mental health services best prevent veteran suicide
-- Tracking whether job training participants actually find employment
-- Evaluating which senior service programs help elderly Americans stay independent

"In my decades studying how the government uses evidence, I've never seen such a widespread elimination of evaluation capacity," noted Kathryn Newcomer, Data Foundation Board Member and public administration and evaluation expert. "These changes threaten our ability to learn from both successes and failures in government programs. Without evaluation capacity, agencies lose their ability to identify ineffective programs, scale successful interventions, and ensure taxpayer dollars are invested in solutions that work."

"As we look to optimize government operations and ensure efficient use of taxpayer resources, it's critical that we maintain our ability to measure what works," said Nick Hart, President and CEO of the Data Foundation. "Several months ago, our survey of federal evaluators showed agencies had successfully built evaluation systems since President Trump signed the Evidence Act that were informing strategic planning (57%), operational decisions (45%), and regulatory actions (22%). Without these evaluation capabilities, we lose not only our ability to measure current program effectiveness but also our capacity to understand the full value and impact of what's being cut. We encourage the evaluation community and businesses affected by these changes to share specific examples of impacts, so we can better understand the implications for government effectiveness and efficiency."

Of particular concern, several evaluation contracts have been terminated as they approached completion. This means substantial taxpayer investments in data collection and analysis may not result in findings being shared with the American public or government decision-makers - similar to halting clinical trials of new medicines before learning if the treatment worked.

The Data Foundation invites affected stakeholders to share impacts:

--SAFE-Track: The Data Foundation's secure portal for anonymous, encrypted submissions and examples: www.safe-track.org
--Public submissions for recorded video testimonials: https://vocalvideo.com/c/2025-data-impacts
--Written public examples can be sent to: impact@datafoundation.org

The Data Foundation remains committed to promoting evidence-informed decision-making through constructive engagement with all stakeholders to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent effectively on programs that work for the American people.

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About the Data Foundation

The Data Foundation is a Washington, DC-based, non-profit, non-partisan organization. It is a trusted authority on the use of open, accessible data to fuel a more efficient, effective, and accountable government; spark innovation; and provide insights to the country's most pressing challenges. The Data Foundation conducts research, facilitates collaborative thought leadership, and promotes advocacy programs that advance practical policies for the creation and use of accessible, trustworthy data and evidence.

The Data Foundation's Center for Evidence Capacity works to strengthen evidence-building functions across government through research, education, and technical assistance to support effective implementation of laws like the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. The Data Foundation is recognized by Candid Guidestar with the Platinum Seal of Transparency and by Charity Navigator as a 4-Star non-profit. To learn more, visit www.datafoundation.org. (LEI: 254900I43CTC59RFW495)

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