



Estimating Program Effects

SBCA Professional Development Workshop

June 15 and June 16, 2023

For more information and to register: <https://www.benefitcostanalysis.org/workshops>

Description: Estimates of the effects attributable to a program are critical to any effort to assess its benefits and costs. Making such estimates is complicated by the fact that while researchers can roll out a demonstration program and monitor progress, those observations are not enough; you also have to figure out what would have happened in the absence of the program. Furthermore, you have to be able to distinguish those effects caused by the program from other general trends and changes.

This workshop brings together experts with diverse perspectives to discuss the available methods for estimating program effects. We will start by discussing frameworks for conducting an evaluation and then give an overview of the most commonly used methods. We will then dig into the advantages and limitations of the various approaches, using results from prior evaluations to illustrate the issues. The discussion will pay particular attention to randomized control trials which are the strongest approach for attributing an observed effect to an intervention with a known degree of statistical precision. The workshop will close with discussions of how to assess the validity and generalizability of the findings as well as ways to present the findings to decision makers so that they can understand both the core results and the associated level of uncertainty.

The workshop is targeted on those interested in conducting these analyses and those interested in better understanding the strengths and limitations of the analyses they review. Prior to the workshop, participants will receive a list of optional readings. The workshop itself will consist of a series of presentations and case studies, with ample time for discussion.

Instructors



Craig Thornton specializes in evaluation design, benefit-cost analyses, and health/disability policy. He has helped design and implement dozens of evaluations, including studies of the Job Corps, National Supported Work Demonstration, and the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work and Transitional Employment and Training Demonstrations. These evaluations have used a wide variety of methods, including random assignment, and an equally wide array of survey and administrative data. Dr. Thornton has published widely. He is past president of the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis and a past board member of AcademyHealth.



Anu Rangarajan led Mathematica's International Research and Climate Change units, playing key roles on agriculture and energy evaluations, maternal and child health initiatives, and water and sanitation projects. She has studied the effects of technical assistance efforts to help cities reduce their greenhouse gas emissions using the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gases, and supported an evidence review of results based payment approaches to support its application in the climate change domain. Rangarajan holds a Ph.D. in economics from Brown University.



Randall Brown specializes in the evaluation design of complex interventions, focusing primarily on studies of care coordination, primary care reform, and long-term care, for Medicare and Medicaid populations. He has led many of the largest and most visible program evaluations funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Throughout his career, Dr. Brown has focused on bringing the strongest and most robust methodological approaches to program evaluations, and providing clear, heuristic interpretation for policymakers on why the results from these methods differ from conventional analysis.