Goldilocks Toolkit: Monitoring for Learning and Accountability

At the Goldilocks Initiative, we argue that organizations should be doing two things: monitoring what they do and evaluating the impact of what they do. And we've argued that the impact part of the equation is often prioritized over the monitoring part. As a result, we are often evaluating the impact of programs before we know whether they are well implemented.

Consider what happens if we boil down the recipe for organizational impact to a simple formula: A x B = Impact

In this formula, "A" means doing what you said you would do and doing it efficiently, and "B" means choosing good ideas that actually work.

If only life were that simple.

Although not everything sorts quite so cleanly, the terms monitoring and evaluation roughly align with this formula. Think of monitoring as "A" and evaluation as "B." Much academic work focuses on "B," evaluating the social impact of programs, particularly the work of development economists running randomized evaluations. But organizations should never lose sight of "A," and in this book we argue that good monitoring is seriously undervalued.

Consider what happens if A is forsaken, for example. Good ideas implemented poorly are unlikely to produce impact. We can all agree that bad ideas don't work, but without information on implementation, we can't really distinguish between a bad idea and a good idea poorly carried out. This chapter focuses squarely on A – how to use your theory of change and the CART to better understand and improve what you do.

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