

FOOTPRINTS:

Strategies for Non-Traditional Program Evaluation

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Strategies for Non-Traditional
Program Evaluation**

Edited by:

**Joy A. Frechtling
Westat, Inc.**

Prepared for:

**Susan Gross, Program Officer
Division of Research, Evaluation and Dissemination
Directorate for Education and Human Resources
National Science Foundation
Arlington, VA**

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Prepared by Westat, Inc., Rockville, MD,
for the Division of Research, Evaluation and Dissemination (RED),
Education and Human Resources (EHR) Directorate,
Susan Gross, Program Officer

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Daryl E. Chubin <i>Foreword</i>	v
Joy A. Frechtling <i>The Search for Footprints: Nontraditional Approaches to Evaluating NSF's Programs</i>	1
Susan Gross <i>Dear Reader</i>	3
The Papers and Discussants	
Robert F. Boruch and Erling Boe <i>The Use of Science and Mathematics Education Indicators and Studies: A Briefing</i>	7
Sylvia T. Johnson <i>Searching Near, Far, and Wide: A Plan for Evaluation</i>	15
Robert K. Yin <i>New Methods for Evaluating Programs in NSF's Division of Research, Evaluation, and Dissemination</i>	25
Valena White Plisko	37□
David Jenness	39□
Malcom Phelps	43□
Richard T. Hezel <i>Considerations for the Evaluation of the National Science Foundation Programs</i>	45
Norman L. Webb <i>Communicating the Value of the National Science Foundation's Contributions to Research and Innovative Technical Applications for Mathematics and Science Education</i>	53
M. Christine Dwyer <i>Footprints on Surfaces: A Nontraditional Approach to Evaluation of National Science Foundation Programs</i>	75
Robert Mac West	91□
Senta Raizen	93□
Zoe A. Barley and Mark Jenness <i>Conceptual Underpinnings for Program Evaluations of Major Public Importance: Collaborative Stakeholder Involvement</i>	97
Robert E. Stake <i>The Virtual Reality of Systemic Effects of NSF Programming on Education: Its Profession, Practice, Research, and Institutions</i>	107
Eleanor Chelimsky	127□
David B. Rymph	129□

Table of Contents (continued)

Concluding Comments

Michael Scriven

Overview131

Laure Sharp and Joy Frechtling

Footprints: A Search For New Strategies For Evaluating EHR Programs139

Index 155□

Foreword

Daryl E. Chubin
Director, Division of Research,
Evaluation, and Dissemination

A major responsibility of the Division of Research, Evaluation and Dissemination (RED) is to provide conceptual and technical assistance for the evaluation of projects and programs throughout NSF's Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR). The "Footprints" conference was organized in the spirit of "research on practice." We called on innovative thinkers and seasoned practitioners in the educational research community to propose fresh ideas and new methodologies that might inform the design of EHR evaluations. The result is this "Footprints" publication.

As a conference participant (in my waning pre-NSF days) and reader of the papers and discussions reported in this volume, I was especially struck by the call for two tasks which we in RED have begun to undertake:

- Identify and differentiate the audience for EHR program and project evaluations. Our immediate audience for a given evaluation is likely to include program managers and division directors, but we must also consider the information needs of the broader federal community, given its emerging emphasis on evaluation.
- Develop a clear policy with respect to the link between evaluation and dissemination. We see dissemination as a simple concept that denotes a range of activities as one of our primary responsibilities to EHR. We are committed to sharing widely research findings that can be translated into innovative classroom practice and help us achieve national goals for the improvement of mathematics and science education, for all students.

We hope that by building on this volume, we can expand and fine-tune our repertoire of evaluation strategies, and determine better ways of matching different evaluation needs with different approaches. My EHR colleagues and I see this as a major way of contributing to the success of reform initiatives nationwide. We cannot do this alone. Therefore, I welcome your comments on this volume and RED's other evaluation products.

Finally, I am grateful to Westat's Laure Sharp and Joy Frechtling, and to Susan Gross of the RED Evaluation staff for bringing the "footprint" metaphor to practical function. I am privileged to be positioned within NSF so as to apply the lessons of this conference to EHR's formidable schedule of program evaluations.