Administration for Community Living

Learning Agenda Approach

2018

A learning agenda is a broad series of questions that can help an agency focus work and policy priorities, resulting in more efficient and effective functioning. Learning agenda probes allow organizations to prioritize and establish a plan to answer short- and long-term questions of the highest value across relevant program and policy areas; particularly as they relate to evaluation and decision-making at the program and agency levels.

ACL’s learning agenda will balance the operational needs of program managers and the broader informational needs of the ACL leadership and focus on the Administration for Community Living’s (ACL):

1. [Mission](https://www.acl.gov/about-acl) to maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers.
2. Pillars 1) supporting families and caregivers, 2) protecting rights and preventing abuse, 3) connecting people to services, 4) expanding employment opportunities, and 5) strengthen the aging and disability networks.
3. Requirements defined in [authorizing statutes](https://www.acl.gov/index.php/about-acl/authorizing-statutes).

ACL is doing a number of things to maximize program results through evidence-based decision making, including establishing an [evaluation policy](https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2018-07/ACL%20evaluation%20policy%20FINAL%207-2-2018.docx), [performance strategy](https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2018-07/OPE%20PM%20Strategy%20FINAL%206-1-2018.docx), and building a learning agenda approach. ACL’s learning agenda focuses on the following three broad questions:

* Are our programs doing what they are intended to do?
* Are we reaching our target populations?
* Are we disseminating useful information to stakeholders?

ACL is piloting a process for developing Center-specific learning agendas that can guide cross-Agency learning. The approach, as proposed, involves annual reviews with each ACL Center to support the generation and use of evaluation findings to inform agency strategies and decision making. Specifically, a series of interviews with Center Directors will be conducted immediately prior to the development of Center funding proposals and include discussion of the most important questions that need to be answered in order to improve program implementation and performance; ways to strategically prioritize these questions given the level of current understanding, available resources, feasibility, and other consideration; appropriate tools and methods to answer each question; and approaches for information dissemination that are accessible and useful to Administration leadership. The overarching purpose is promote ACL’s ability to focus evaluation and evidence-building activities over a multi-year period to identify critical questions and the evidence needed to answer these questions.