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David Woll,

General Counsel.

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. 6620-N-01]

### HUD Evaluation Policy

**AGENCY:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This policy articulates the core principles of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's evaluation and research activities. This notice updates the Department's Evaluation Policy and reaffirms HUD's commitment to conducting rigorous, relevant evaluations, adhering to the tenets of Executive Order 14303, "Restoring Gold Standard Science," and using evidence from evaluations to inform policy and practice.

**DATES:** Effective date of this notice: September 24, 2026.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For information about this notice, contact Jennifer Turnham, Evaluation Officer, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Washington, DC 20410, email [PDREPublicComments@hud.gov](mailto:PDREPublicComments@hud.gov), or telephone (202) 402-6021. The listed telephone number is not a toll-free number. HUD welcomes and is prepared to receive calls from individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as individuals with speech and communication disabilities. To learn more about how to make an accessible telephone call, please visit <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs>.

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### I. Background

Evaluation activity occurs in several offices at HUD, but the special mission of HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) is to improve life in American communities by building evidence to inform and strengthen housing and community development policy and practice and accelerate progress on HUD's priorities. PD&R builds evidence by conducting, supporting, and sharing research, surveys, demonstrations, program

evaluations, and best practices. Within HUD, PD&R is responsible for most, but not all, program evaluations. The office also conducts regulatory impact analyses that accompany regulations proposed by the Department.

In 2016, PD&R published its first Evaluation Policy describing the core standards guiding its evaluation and research activities.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, PD&R revised the Evaluation Policy to align with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 ("Evidence Act"),<sup>2</sup> expand the scope of the policy to include all of HUD, and reflect PD&R's experience since publishing its initial policy.<sup>3</sup>

This 2026 revision reaffirms HUD's commitment to the program evaluation standards required by OMB Circular A-11 Section 290.5, consistent with the Evidence Act<sup>4</sup>—rigor; relevance and utility; transparency; independence and objectivity; and ethics—and affirms HUD's commitment to the tenets of Gold Standard Science (GSS) in producing and communicating evidence, consistent with Executive Order 14303, "Restoring Gold Standard Science" (May 23, 2025). Executive Order 14303 seeks to ensure that federally-funded research is transparent, rigorous, and impactful, and that Federal decisions are informed by reliable scientific evidence. The Executive Order requires federal agencies to conduct scientific activities in a manner that is: reproducible; transparent; communicative of error and uncertainty; collaborative and interdisciplinary; skeptical of findings and assumptions; structured for falsifiability of hypotheses; subject to unbiased peer review; accepting of negative results as positive outcomes; and without conflicts of interest. HUD reports annually on its efforts to implement Executive Order 14303.<sup>5</sup>

#### II. HUD Evaluation Policy

The Evaluation Policy covers evaluation, as defined by the Evidence Act,<sup>6</sup> as well as other research and

evidence building projects and regulatory impact analyses. The policy applies to HUD's contractors, grantees, and staff involved in these activities and affirms HUD's commitment to federal evaluation standards (rigor, relevance and utility, transparency, independence and objectivity, and ethics).

#### Rigor

HUD is committed to using the most rigorous methods appropriate to the research questions and feasible within budget and other constraints. Rigor is necessary in all types of evaluations (impact evaluations, implementation or process evaluations, outcome evaluations, formative evaluations, and other types of scientific research) and applies to both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Rigor requires identifying well-founded inferences about cause and effect; understanding and correcting for bias in research questions and methods; using measures that capture the intended information; and clarity about the generalizability of findings. Where feasible and appropriate, rigorous research uses experimental or quasi-experimental methods to enable the falsification of hypotheses and assignment of causation, aligning with the GSS tenet of structuring (science) for the falsifiability of hypotheses.

HUD ensures that contractors and grantees conducting evaluations have appropriate expertise to apply rigor by evaluating applicants' experience and the skillsets of the proposed team members. HUD employs staff from a range of disciplines to ensure they have the technical and subject matter expertise to develop, oversee, and conduct high-quality evaluations that advance the agency's mission. HUD staff critically review all steps in the research and evaluation process, question findings, and assess underlying assumptions, consistent with the GSS tenet of skepticism of findings and assumptions. Evaluations must also clearly communicate uncertainty, margins of error, and limitations in findings, consistent with the GSS tenet of communicating error and uncertainty.

#### Relevance and Utility

HUD's evaluation and research activities reflect legislative requirements and HUD policy priorities. Relevance and utility are key considerations at all stages of the research process. Early input from stakeholders on research topics and questions helps ensure that

policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency." See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4174/text>.

<sup>1</sup> PD&R's 2016 Evaluation Policy can be found here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/12/06/2016-29215/hud-program-evaluation-policy-policy-statement>.

<sup>2</sup> Public Law 115-435, January 14, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> HUD's 2021 Evaluation Policy can be found here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/08/13/2021-17339/hud-program-evaluation-policy-policy-statement>.

<sup>4</sup> The standards are set forth in Section 290.5 of the Office of Management and Budget's Circular No. A-11, August 2025. See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/a11.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.hud.gov/gss](https://www.hud.gov/gss).

<sup>6</sup> Section 101 of the Evidence Act defines evaluation as "an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs,

final products are relevant and useful to their audiences. Expert panels, including researchers and other subject matter experts, can also provide strategic guidance at key junctures over the course of the study. By incorporating a range of expertise and perspectives into the research and evaluation process, HUD ensures that resulting policy recommendations are actionable and reflect the GSS tenet of promoting collaborative and interdisciplinary research.

Once research is complete, ensuring its relevance and utility requires sharing findings with the public and key stakeholders in an accessible manner. HUD seeks to disseminate research and evaluation findings in ways that are useful to policymakers, practitioners, and communities affected by HUD programs and policies. This includes providing policy briefs, infographics, webinars, and/or stakeholder briefings to complement traditional research and evaluation reports.

#### *Transparency*

HUD strives for transparency in all phases of the research process. Each year, HUD communicates its research agenda through the annual Agency Evidence Plan.<sup>7</sup> When it undertakes a methodologically complex project, HUD will publish the research design to provide transparency to the research community and ensure that the researchers are accountable to the original design, explaining any deviations if necessary. Requirements for researchers regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in producing or informing evaluation findings and regarding the disclosure of AI use in published reports are communicated through grant agreements, contract documents, or publication guidelines.

To the extent possible, HUD shares all interim and final reports within six months of completion and typically permits contractors to publish their findings within six months of the contract ending (if HUD has not already published them). Reports must present comprehensive results (including favorable, unfavorable, and null findings) and clearly communicate caveats and areas of uncertainty, reinforcing the GSS tenet of accepting negative results as positive outcomes.

To aid in the replication and verification of findings, HUD publishes final datasets, analytic code, and model documentation to the extent feasible. HUD also archives administrative and

evaluation data for secondary use by interested researchers where possible, including working with the U.S. Census Bureau to store datasets from major research studies. External researchers may access these data through data licenses, data use agreements, inter-agency agreements, and/or formal research agreements with relevant entities. These practices support the GSS tenets of reproducibility and transparency.

#### *Independence and Objectivity*

Independence and objectivity are core principles of evaluation. HUD seeks input into its research agenda from a broad range of stakeholders and conducts most of its research and evaluation through competitively awarded grants and contracts with external experts. Reflecting the GSS tenet of unbiased peer review, HUD ensures all sponsored research and evaluation projects are conducted without undue influence, including the appearance or reality of bias. All applicants must document that they are free from conflicts of interest related to the research subject. During the application review process, HUD reviewers also disclose any conflicts of interest with applicants and recuse themselves if a conflict exists, consistent with the GSS tenet of science without conflicts of interest. Once a study is underway, HUD staff and expert panel members review study designs and findings for objectivity.

#### *Ethics*

HUD-sponsored evaluations must be conducted in an ethical manner and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants. Evaluations must comply with relevant regulations, such as those governing human subjects research. HUD is a signatory to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, generally known as the "Common Rule." 24 CFR part 60 includes its own requirements for protecting the privacy of human research subjects.<sup>8</sup> In addition, PD&R protects the privacy of individuals through the Rule of Eleven,<sup>9</sup> which prohibits disaggregated disclosure of data for any group of individuals or households numbering less than eleven. The Rule of Eleven applies to all research conducted by PD&R staff, contractors, grantees, or data license recipients.

HUD does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication, or deliberate mischaracterization of data by staff, contractors, grantees, or data licensees engaged in any evaluation activity. In all cases, HUD expects evaluations and studies to reflect the expertise and original thought of the researchers.

#### *Application of these Principles to Economic Analysis of Regulations*

Economic analysis of both existing and proposed regulations, properly conducted, is a critical tool in improving public policy. Economists at HUD rely on the insights, data, and empirical estimates from rigorous program evaluations when predicting the economic impact of an incremental change to the program. In any HUD regulatory impact analysis:

- HUD analyzes whether the issues addressed by the regulation stem from a market failure, government failure, or other systemic problem, and whether the regulation addresses the root causes of those problems.
- HUD uses and as necessary produces the best objective estimates of the benefits, costs, and transfers resulting from the regulation, taking into account gaps and uncertainties in the available data and methodologies.
- HUD assesses the economic benefits, costs, and transfers of proposed regulatory actions as required by Executive Order 12866.<sup>10</sup>
- Where clear alternatives to the regulatory actions exist, HUD objectively estimates, where feasible, the benefits, costs, and transfers of those alternatives as well.

#### **Reid Wilson,**

*Deputy Chief of Staff, performing the Delegable Duties of the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research.*

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## **DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**[Docket No. FR-6619-N-01]**

### **Notice of Informal Presentation of Views**

**AGENCY:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Housing—Federal Housing Commissioner, HUD.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.archives.gov/files/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12866.pdf> for the original order, and see <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/william-j-clinton/1993> for citations of, and links to, other executive orders that amended or supplemented this order.

<sup>7</sup> The Evidence Plan and related documents can be found at [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/about/pdr\\_agenda.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/about/pdr_agenda.html).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?n=pt24.1.60>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/PDR-Privacy-Rule-of-Eleven.pdf>.