Q1 Abt Associates

- SNAP and food assistance policy
  - Olsho, L, JA Klerman, S. Bartlett, and K Webb. 2013. “Impacts of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program on Child Fruit and Vegetable Intake.” Revise and resubmit at *Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*
Q1 Abt Associates

- Pre-TANF welfare reform
Q1 Abt Associates

- **Job Search**
  - For DOL/CEO: Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Evaluation (REA)

- **Job Skills Training**
  - For DOL/ETA: H-1B Technical Skills Training, Green Jobs, Transitional Jobs
  - For DHHS/ACF: Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency (ISIS)
Q4 Randomization: Yes!

- Random assignment is (rightly) the “gold standard”
  - Mimics thought experiment of “impact”; compares outcomes for otherwise identical groups
  - Not clear that alternatives (i.e., quasi-experimental methods) estimate “impact” (see Hotz, Imbens, and Klerman, 2006)

- So, why not?
  - Feasible
  - Required sample sizes are smaller/cost is lower
  - Results are easier to explain and less subject to manipulation
Q4 Randomization: Details

- Randomize counties/offices to capture entry effects
  - For job search programs
  - Seems unnecessary for job skills training programs

- Otherwise, this does not seem so complicated or to require special approaches

- Sample size (and relatedly—program size, data collection strategy) is always an issue
  - Less so for more intensive programs (e.g., job skills training)
  - More so for less intensive programs (e.g., job search assistance)
  - More so for cluster random assignment (e.g., to capture entry effects)
Q7 Data Issues

- Many outcomes are covered by administrative data
  - e.g., SNAP caseloads/benefit costs, employment/earnings

- Other outcomes would require a survey
  - e.g., hunger/food security, other measures of hardship, broader definitions of income

- Survey costs drive evaluation cost and design
  - So choice of outcomes is critical
  - Specifying survey-only outcomes is likely to lead to an under-powered evaluation (i.e., missing important impacts/measuring them very imprecisely)
Q9 Structural Issues

**FNS Issues**
- RFA to states

**Proposals**

**Implementation**
- RFQ to evaluators
Inter-Relation of RFA to States and RFQ to Evaluators

**FNS Issues**
- RFA to states
- RFQ to evaluators

**Proposals**
- States propose program designs
- Evaluators propose evaluation designs

**Implementation**

These proposals are inter-related: States and evaluators need to know the range of possible/allowable designs
Inter-Relation of RFA to States and RFQ to Evaluators

**FNS Issues**
- RFA to states
- RFQ to evaluators

**Proposals**
- States propose program designs
- Evaluators propose evaluation designs

**Implementation**

Random assignment needs to be built in ex ante and will affect (sometimes strongly) state implementation
Inter-Relation of RFA to States and RFQ to Evaluators

**FNS Issues**

- **RFA to states**
- **RFQ to evaluators**

**Proposals**

- States propose program designs
- Evaluators propose evaluation designs

**Implementation**

- States implement their programs *w/evaluation built in*
- Evaluators exploit *built in evaluation features*
From Bitter Experience, We Know a Lot about this

- Timeline is tight, so both
  - RFA to states for programs, and
  - RFQ to contractors for evaluations

- … must go out soon

- But,
  - States need to know about the nature of the evaluations
  - Evaluators need to know about the nature of the programs

- Which is impossible!

We hope this session helps with that “dealock”!