Consultation Summary

Measurement and Evaluation at the Trump Foundation: Summary of the Expert Consultation

The Trump Foundation, 2026

Ahead of the International Advisory Council's discussion on data, measurement and evaluation, the Foundation held a consultation in August 2026 with the experts Tirzah Margolin, Sigal Reinders Kafri, Michal Beller and Sasha Trump-Weiss. This summary is based on that meeting and on the discussion the Foundation team held after it.

The meeting reinforced our view that the Foundation is starting from an advanced position. It has a strong data culture, systematic tracking of timelines, budgets and outputs, targets set in advance, and growing use of AI tools to analyze and manage information. The main challenge is not to add more measurement, but to shift the center of gravity from tracking grants and programs to evaluating strategic initiatives and the change they bring about in the field, while keeping measurement proportionate and avoiding measurement overload.

Key insights

1. **Start from the change we seek, not from the data that is easy to measure:** Measurement should begin with the problem the Foundation sets out to address and the final outcome it is working toward. Measures of activity, outputs and participant satisfaction cannot tell us whether the problem itself is changing, and long-term initiatives also need interim indicators that show early on whether they are on the right track. The experts suggested starting with one initiative as a pilot, with a short measurement framework (the problem, an overarching outcome, three to five interim outcomes, key assumptions and system-level indicators), without a rigid linear model and without dozens of indicators.

2. **From evaluating a single program to cross-cutting evaluation of a cluster of programs (Cluster Evaluation):** The impact the Foundation seeks usually comes not from one program, but from a combination of grants, knowledge, policy and catalytic action. The right unit of analysis is therefore usually the initiative or the cluster of programs, and evaluation needs to examine changes in the system as well: professional language, practices, institutions, policy and the behavior of actors in the field. The experts suggested a periodic review of each initiative with a few shared indicators. The review should not rank organizations or apply one standard where contexts differ. It should also be careful not to credit the Foundation with too much, since its contribution is usually partial, not exclusive.

3. **A theory of change or logic model as a "living" management tool, not a linear diagram:** Its main value lies in the process, which requires partners to agree on the change they seek, what should lead to it, and which assumptions the initiative rests on. The model should be updated along the way and serve as a basis for learning and conversation.

4. **Distinguishing between three different needs (management, learning and proving impact):** The organizations implementing the programs need operational data and formative evaluation to improve. The Foundation needs strategic data to make decisions. Only at key decision points is a rigorous evaluation of impact needed. Hence the proposal for three levels: basic monitoring for every grant, formative evaluation for selected initiatives, and rigorous evaluation of a small number of strategic questions.

5. **Evaluation built in from the planning stage:** The experts suggested that before a major initiative is approved, a short evaluation plan be written, including a theory of change, measures of success, warning signs and a premortem ("Suppose that five years from now we have failed. Why did that happen?"). The plan should not become a bureaucratic document written only to obtain approval.

6. **Routines for using data matter as much as collecting it:** Even an excellent measurement system loses its value if the data do not feed into management and strategy discussions. The experts suggested a learning discussion twice a year for each initiative, an in-depth midcourse review every three to four years, and board meetings that look not only at "what should we approve now?" but also at the progress and results of initiatives already approved, without cluttered dashboards that have no clear management question behind them.

Additional directions

- Build a small network of evaluation experts in Israel and abroad, organized by type of expertise. The Foundation should not hand the thinking over to outside experts, since the learning questions need to remain its own.
- Use AI to reduce the cost of measurement, not to increase its volume, by automating the collection, merging, initial analysis and anomaly detection of existing data. "Because we can measure it" is not a reason to measure, and care is needed to avoid data overload, bias and overreliance on automated analysis.

Conclusion

Less measurement of the Foundation and its grants, and more measurement of whether the strategic initiative is moving toward real change in the problem the Foundation is working to address.

The existing dashboards remain a strong basis for managing the work, and the next step is to add a thin but meaningful strategic layer on top of them. The measure of this effort's success is not "how much new information we collected", but whether we made better decisions, earlier, as a result of measurement and evaluation.