Answering the Research Question: How Do We Add Value?

Greg Fugate, CGAP, CFE
Audit Manager
Colorado Office of the State Auditor
Agenda

- Values and Goals
- Evidence Considerations
- Communicating the Results
Values and Goals

POLLING QUESTION #1:

Which of the following is the most important value or goal for you when conducting research for legislators?

a. Objectivity
b. Accuracy
c. Thoroughness
d. Conciseness
e. Timeliness
Values and Goals

POLLING QUESTION #2:

Which of the following is the most important value or goal for your agency when conducting research for legislators?

a. Objectivity
b. Accuracy
c. Thoroughness
d. Conciseness
e. Timeliness
Values and Goals

• Objectivity
• Accuracy
• Thoroughness/Completeness
• Conciseness
• Timeliness
Defining the Question

- What is the research question?
- What are the boundaries, expectations, and deliverables?
- Are there any “questions beneath the question”? 
Evidence Considerations

• Sufficiency of the Evidence
• Appropriateness of the Evidence
Sufficiency

- A measure of the *quantity* of the evidence.
  - Has enough evidence been obtained to persuade a knowledgeable person that the conclusions are reasonable?
Appropriateness

• A measure of the *quality* of the evidence.
  – Relevance
  – Validity
  – Reliability
Communicating the Results

• Readers vs. Writers
• Be Focused
• Be Concise
# Key Differences Between Readers and Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Busy Reader</th>
<th>Earnest Writer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brevity</td>
<td>Completeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in anecdote</td>
<td>Interest in data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point first, then parts (deductive)</td>
<td>Parts first, then point (inductive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skims, pauses, and skips around</td>
<td>Moves linearly item by item</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Differences Between Experts and Non-Experts

Expert (Writer)
• Working from long-term memory
  – Material is already learned
  – Retrieval takes little effort

Non-Expert (Reader)
• Working from short-term memory
  – New information is being acquired
  – Attention is used up learning facts
Focus

- We want our writing to be **focused** on the main points.
  - Keep the reader’s attention on the important points while eliminating distractions.
Photography Analogy

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LENS

FOCAL LENGTH - ANGLE OF VIEW COMPARISON
Photography Analogy

70mm
Photography Analogy
Photography Analogy
Photography Analogy
Conciseness

• We want our writing to be concise.
  – Provide enough detail so that someone can understand what you’re saying without being overwhelmed.
Conciseness

How much “stuff” does your reader need to know?
How are you delivering it to them?

- Broad statements with no evidence
  - No detail

- Lots of detail with no context or main point
  - Too much detail
Conciseness

- Limit the volume of information to only what’s necessary
- Organize the information in a manner that is manageable for the reader to consume
In Conclusion

There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept.

Ansel Adams