The Sozosei Ripple Effect: Activating Partnerships to Decriminalize Mental Illness by Increasing Access to Mental Health Care

Correctional facilities in the US are considered the largest provider of mental health services.[1] The Sozosei Foundation is tackling the question–"What can be done to accelerate solutions so that we eliminate the inappropriate use of jails and prisons for mental health care?" But tackling the criminalization of mental illness is complex and there is no single solution or 'magic bullet' to eliminate the use of jail or prison for the treatment of people with mental illness. Identifying effective solutions is difficult, in part, due to the limited availability of data needed to evaluate whether solutions work.

To understand the Sozosei Foundation's approach to impact, a team from the RAND Corporation interviewed grantees, representatives from partner organizations and thought leaders; reviewed scientific and grey literature; and met bi-weekly with the Foundation's Executive Director. This document summarizes what the RAND team learned about the Foundation's approach to impact and an evaluation strategy that aligns with this approach.
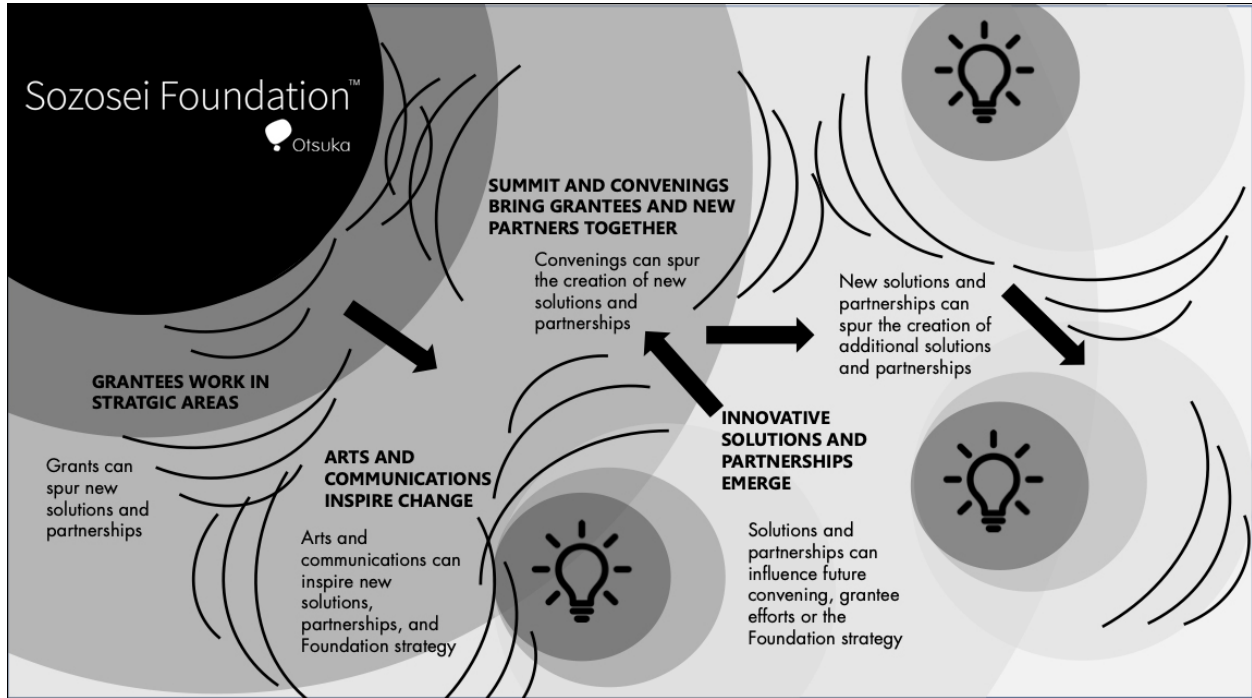
The Sozosei ripple effect

Tackling this complex issue will require partnerships with the public and across multiple sectors such as academe, higher education, housing, crisis care, behavioral health, health care, insurance, courts, political and public service systems. A "Big Tent" has become synonymous with an inclusive space for conversations about big policy issues where a group can identify common goals and concerns, with the idea that groups are better when they work together. Ideas inspired by "Big Tent" efforts can move beyond the tent, reaching new partners, sparking new partnership and advancing goals in a new direction. The Sozosei Foundation aims to create change within this complex ecosystem, acknowledging systems-level impacts such as civic engagement, climate change, and technology.

The Sozosei Foundation funds project and operational grants, pursues a creative campaign with GREY advertising, holds convenings, and annually convenes the Sozosei Summit to Decriminalize Mental Illness (the Summit) to bring together a diverse array of partners to find innovative solutions to the criminalization of mental illness. Taking a traditional "Big Tent" approach the Foundation looks for activators to create ripple effects (Figure 1, skinny black ripples) that ultimately spur new solutions and partnerships and catalyze communications that attempt to disrupt the status quo of jails and prisons being used as places for those with mental illness to receive treatment. The Foundation's strongest ripples are through their grants, annual summit and convenings (Figure 1, large gray ripples). These efforts generate innovative solutions and partnerships that continue beyond the grant funding and outside the walls of the convenings. It is in this way that the Foundation begins many ripples that together, they hope can create a tidal wave of effort to eliminate the inappropriate use of jails and prisons to diagnose and treat mental illness through improved access to comprehensive community-based mental health care.

Figure 1. The Sozosei Ripple Effect

A responsive hybrid evaluation framework to capture Sozosei's ripple effects

The complexity of the Sozosei Foundation's dynamic, interconnected and inclusive approach necessitates a responsive hybrid evaluation framework that blends both emergent and predictive evaluation approaches (Table 1).

Table 1. Key qualities of emergent and predictive evaluation approaches

Emergent Evaluation Approaches	Predictive Evaluation Approaches
• Captures intended and unintended ways that a foundation contributes to impact • Embraces complexity and is able to adjust to emerging strategies over time • Relies on participatory process to get input on key evaluation decisions and set shared goals with a broad and diverse set of stakeholders • Often use qualitative methods such as interviews, after action reviews,[2] narrative storytelling,[3] social network analysis,[4] and systems and ripple effect mapping[5]	• Allows for causal inference to be made between specific foundation activities and impacts • Selects a specific set of strategies and populations or settings based on what is hypothesized to affect the outcomes of interest[6-7] • Relies on more static processes that are implemented and tracked over time • Often uses mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) and, if feasible, gold-standard evaluation designs such as a randomized controlled trial

Use of an **emergent evaluation** promotes constant learning using rapid cycles of plan, do, learn and improve, and embraces complexity asking why did this work (or not) and acknowledging cause and effect (or lack thereof).[8-11] Data is collected concurrently and from multiple sources over multiple time points. Impact is documented through inductive approaches such as deriving patterns and themes from qualitative data and

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story arcs that can illuminate new or deepened collaborations. Novel or innovative efforts can also be documented through emergent evaluation, as well as the reach of stakeholders across relevant systems, and contributions to intended (and unintended) outcomes.

Predictive evaluation approaches generate evidence for the field about which approaches are most effective. Predictive evaluation data is often collected at multiple time points before and after foundation activities are implemented. The level of rigor can vary depending on the type of evaluation design that is feasible. Impact is captured by confirming expected changes using deductive approaches and aggregated measures are often used to document short- and long-term outcomes among target populations. Predictive evaluation is useful in describing the effectiveness or efficacy of well-defined and established activities.

Given the complex nature of the criminalization of mental illness and the multi-pronged strategy approach adopted by the Foundation to identify innovative solutions, a responsive hybrid evaluation framework that combines emergent and predictive evaluation approaches over time will enable impact assessments that allow for inclusive strategies, partnership and collaboration building, mutual and continuous learning, the power of external communications, and the identification of promising and best practices. As displayed in the Figure 3, shorter-term grants undergo emergent evaluations that guide the identification of efforts that will develop into longer-term, scalable solutions and predictive evaluations. This aligns with Sozosei foundation's core values of embracing creative solutions, collaboration, and building the evidence base of what works.

Figure 3. Example of How to Apply a Hybrid Emergent and Predictive Evaluation Framework
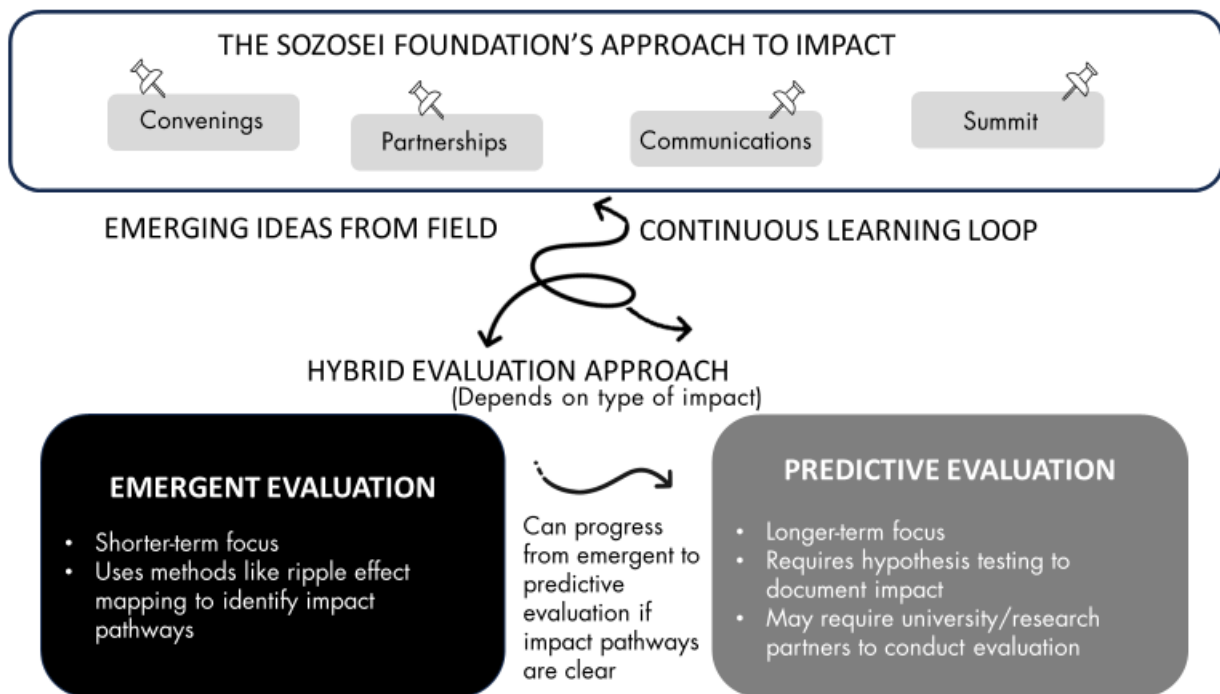
By blending emergent and predictive evaluation techniques a hybrid evaluation can facilitate continuous learning; account for complex problems that are dynamic; and accommodate non-linear solutions (i.e., emergent approaches). Using a hybrid evaluation framework can eventually lead to the identification of effective interventions that can be scaled up (i.e., predictive approaches).

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