Developing an Evaluation Plan

Sections that are highlighted and italicized support equity-driven decisions.

What is evaluation? Evaluation involves making judgments about something (e.g., a program, a person's performance, a product) based on valid data collected from reliable sources (e.g., assessments and other data collection tools). The evaluation judgments or conclusions should align with the program goals and inform potential improvements and future program decisions.

This document aims to identify the steps needed to ensure that valid data are collected from reliable sources based on program goals. Quality evaluations involve all stakeholders, including funders, program managers, program implementers, participants (and often their families/caretakers), and the community. The evaluator(s) and stakeholders collaborate on developing the evaluation plan, data collection tools, and performance benchmarks. In addition, data collection tools should be aligned with the program goals to ensure adequate data are collected in a timely manner.

Key Steps in the Development of an Evaluation Plan

❐ **Identify the key stakeholders in the program to be evaluated.** *Who are the people making decisions about program implementation, funding, management, reporting, etc.? Who is impacted by the results of the evaluation?*
 - *The key stakeholders should help to build or review the evaluation plan.*

❐ **Review the funding requirements.** If applicable, review what was promised in the funding agreement and the funders' expectations for reporting program outcomes.
 - Identify the timeline of the program

❐ **From the beginning, the evaluator should be actively involved in developing the program to be evaluated.**
 - Evaluation should not occur after a program has been completed. Instead, an evaluation plan should be developed alongside program development or immediately before program implementation.
 - *Help to build consensus with key stakeholders by clarifying assumptions and expectations when programs are being designed.*

❒ **Identify the program goals and objectives.** The wording of the goals or objectives should lead to evaluation outcomes; in other words, the objectives should be measurable. A measurable goal has the following components

- A verb that identifies the change that should occur after the program component or intervention has been implemented
- Who will receive the intervention
- What the intervention is (briefly)
  - Example: *Increase ELL students' achievement in language development*
    - Verb: increase
    - Who: ELL students
    - What: achievement in language development
  - The necessary data to collect becomes somewhat obvious. After conversations with teachers, the appropriate classroom assessments can be identified.

❒ **Develop a logic model or evaluation flow chart** from objectives to identify data that can speak to achieving objectives. See attached sample logic model.

- **List the stakeholder-identified measurable objectives in the first column**
- **List the Investments.** Investments are the personnel and financial investments into achieving the objective
- **Identify the Outputs.** The outputs are the activities or opportunities that will move the program toward achieving the objective. A list of the participants who will conduct or participate in the activity or opportunity should be included. The participants are also members of the stakeholder group.
- **Identify the Outcomes.** Outcomes are the intended results of participants' participation in the activities. The duration of the outcomes (short-term or long-term) depends on the time needed to realize the impact of the activities. The duration is also based on the timeframe of the program being evaluated.
- **Identify the needed Performance Measures.** Performance measures are the data collection tools needed to evaluate the program's effectiveness in achieving the objectives. Measures could include both qualitative (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, success stories) and quantitative (e.g., assessments, attendance, demographics, rating scales) data collection. Data can be collected using the identified measures at short-term (at key points during program implementation) and long term (annually or at the end of the program). *It is up to the evaluator to ensure that the appropriate data collection tools are identified or developed to result in valid data that can appropriately inform the program goals.*

- **Develop Benchmarks.** Benchmarks are the anticipated levels of change expected to gauge program progress or success. Benchmarks could be short (e.g., annually) or long-term (e.g., by the end of the program/funding period)
- ***Ensure all stakeholders have provided input and agree to the contents of the logic model.***

❐ **Identify data analysis methods.** These can be adjusted as needed, but planning ensures adequate resources (e.g., software, personnel) to manage the data analysis and interpretation appropriately.
- *Determine how disaggregating data by demographic variables can inform the evaluation findings.*
- *Collect demographic data when there is a justifiable reason to do so. Ensure that demographic data are being respectfully and appropriately collected about the population(s) and determine how the data will be disaggregated based on the demographic variables.*
- *Identify a reporting rule for small numbers in disaggregated groups to ensure anonymity (e.g., masking fewer than ten people in a reporting category)*

❐ **Identify data reporting methods.** The funding agency usually structures annual performance reports. However, stakeholders may request additional reporting methods (e.g., website, brochure, flyer, narrative report).

❐ **Create a timeline for**
- **The development of data collection tools**
- **Conducting data collection events**
- **Conducting data analysis**
- **Developing reports**
  - This timeline should be developed to aggregate findings into a summary report based on the reporting requirements. The timeline for reporting can be determined by funding requirements, such as for Federal grant Annual Performance Reviews (APRs), or by the request of stakeholders, such as for an annual or semi-annual event.

❐ **Summarize the evaluation findings in a narrative format**, with supporting documents such as the logic model. In a summary report, the evaluator should include the following:
- A description of the program, including funding stream(s)

- A description of the participants with as much detail but retaining individuals' anonymity
- Descriptions of the data collection and analysis methods used
- The data presented in easy-to-understand formats and for a specific audience (To whom will you be presenting the report?)
- *An evaluation of program effectiveness to that point*
- *Descriptions of the limitations of the data collection and a determination about generalizing the impact to other participants or populations*
- *A determination about the program's applicability to other locations, organizations, etc.*
- *Suggestions for improving the program for the upcoming year*
- *Identification of cost savings and guidance on costs in relation to benefits*
- *A determination about the fidelity of the program's implementation*
- *A determination about cultural bias and the implications for bias that has been detected*
- *Attach supporting documents, including the logic model, qualitative summaries, etc.*

Logic Model Example
Family Literacy Logic Model

	Objectives	Investments	Outputs		Outcomes (Change)		Performance Measures	
			Activities	Participants	Short term	Long term	Measure	Benchmarks
1	Increase student achievement in language development	● School Building Personnel ● City Libraries ● Cultural Liaisons ● Federal Programs	● PACT Time ● ELL classes ● Classroom Instruction ● Prime Time (LCLs) ● CLC activities	● Students ● Parents ● Teachers & school staff	● Satisfactory progress on quarterly report card measures ● Classroom summative assessments	● Students on or above grade level	● Classroom assessment results ● Language screening results ● ELL Level	● Students performing at or above grade level, disaggregated by key variables
2	Support adult (parent) academic goals through literacy development	● Program funders are listed here	● Childcare ● Parenting Classes ● Adult Literacy Classes ● Presentations ● Technology ● College and career planning	● Child Care Staff ● Community Partners Staff ● Parents ● School Staff	● 60 hours of participation in program ● Consistent attendance	● Consistent literacy progression ● Meet goals ● Self-empowerment, confidence, self-efficacy, independence ● Increase school visits	● Adult assessments of progress ● Initial/post survey ● Attendance in program	● Progress for adult literacy ● Progress on adult basic education ● 60 hours of participation
3	Increase parents' participation in students' social, emotional, and cognitive growth	● Family Service ● School Building Personnel ● Federal Programs ● Cultural Liaisons	● Parent Time ● Community Speakers ● Childcare for preschoolers	● Cultural Liaisons ● Child Care Staff ● Parents ● School Staff	● 2 hours/week participate ● Consistent Attendance ● Active Participation ● Problem-Solving Skills ● Personalization of	● Independent application of information learned ● Increase parental effectiveness (self-report)	● Initial/post survey ● Attendance in program	● 90% attendance in Parent Time ● Self-report of progress ● Teachers report parent progress

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Objectives	Investments	Outputs		Outcomes (Change)		Performance Measures	
				information learned from speakers			● Parents report progress
4 Increase literacy-related parent-child interactions	● School Building Personnel ● City Libraries ● Cultural Liaisons ● Federal Programs ● Family Service	● PACT Time ● Parent-child interactions at home ● Identifying personal literacy goals (e.g., # of books in the house, reading log, trips to the library)	● Parents ● Students ● Child Care Staff ● Cultural Liaisons ● Teachers & school staff	● Attendance in PACT Time ● Active engagement between parent and child ● Progress on personal literacy goals	● Progress on personal literacy goals ● Self-report of increased parent engagement	● Attendance in program ● Initial/post survey ● Success Stories	● Achievement of personal literacy goal ● Improved parent attitude toward interactive literacy

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