Making the Most of Multisite, Multi level Evaluations

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Today’s Agenda

Definitions of Evaluation
Working in a multisite, multi level context
Models related to involvement in multisite evaluations
Suggestions to increase involvement
E’valu’ation is determining merit or worth

Evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives
Complements to Evaluation

- Monitoring
  - Consistent collection of data on various factors

- Performance assessment
  - Use of existing data

- Research
  - Determination of ‘truth’ or hypothesis testing
  - Questions of causality
  - Laws and conclusions vs descriptions and decisions
Why Evaluate Programs

• Optimize and justify the program
• Quality of the program
  – how a program operates
  – how its procedures combine
• Quality of the outcomes
  – on participants
  – on students
  – on others
Quality of the Program

- Are they doing what they said they were going to do?
- Are effective management structures in place to support participants?
- Are communication channels open and operating between providers, participants, and intermediate settings?
- Are goals understood and shared by all?
- Are personnel well qualified?
- Are interactions well planned?
- Are appropriate participants reached?
- Do the participants believe they have benefited?
- Do the participants expect to change their behavior?
Quality of the Outcomes

• Has the behavior of the participants changed?
• Have others benefited from the changed behavior of the participants?
• Have organizations been affected?
• Have secondary behaviors changed?
• Has expected impact occurred?
Evaluation Strategies

Delivery of Program

- Observations
- Participant observer
- Participant opinion
- Pre-post testing
- Discourse analysis
- Phenomenological studies
- Classroom observations

Effects on Direct Recipients

- Student or teacher opinion
- Ethnographies
- Student achievement
- Case studies
- Policy analysis
- Networking studies

Effects on secondary units (classrooms, students)

Other Effects (other organizations, industry)
Challenges in Multisite Settings

- Projects vary
  - Activities – Goals –
  - Budgets -- Stakeholders

- Projects may be geographically diverse
  - Distance -- Cost

- Programs each have multiple stakeholders so the “project” becomes a key stakeholder

- Power Differentials
What are challenges in your evals

- Think for a minute or two in silence
- Form groups of 3-4 and share challenges
- Selected groups present challenges to the full group
- Brief discussion of how some challenges might be addressed and relationship to involvement in the evaluation
Major issue is (site) involvement

- Affects quality of data through what data to collect, how to collect it, and its quality
- Relevant models
- Participatory evaluation
- Educative, values-engaged evaluation
- Culturally responsive evaluation
- Developmental evaluation
Participatory Evaluation (PE)

Range of definitions

- Active participation throughout all phases in the evaluation process by those with a stake in the program (King, 1998)

- Broadening decision-making and problem-solving through systematic inquiry; reallocating power in the production of knowledge and promoting social changes (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998)
Characteristics of PE

1. **Control of the evaluation process** ranges from evaluator to practitioners

2. **Stakeholder selection for participation** ranges from primary users to “all legitimate groups”

3. **Depth of participation** ranges from consultation to deep participation

(From Cousins & Whitmore, 1998)
Values Engaged Evaluation

- Strategies contribute to excellence and equity to increase STEM participation.
- Defines quality at the "intersection" of STEM content, pedagogy, and diversity.
- Inclusive of and responsive to multiple perspectives and interests in STEM education while simultaneously.
- mandates engagement with values of equity and justice.
Culturally Responsive Evaluation
Hood, Mertens Hopson etc.

• Methodologically, culturally and contextually defensible policy making.
• Requires substantive understanding of the character and influences of diverse cultural norms and practices.
• Encourage *culturally sensitive* and *culturally responsive research*
• Recognize ethnicity and position culture as central to the research process.
Developmental Evaluation (DE)

Patton

• DE is an evaluation approach that can assist social innovators develop social change initiatives in complex or uncertain environments.

• DE is particularly suited to innovation, radical program re-design, replication, complex issues, crises, etc.

• DE can frame concepts, test quick iterations, track developments, and surface issues
Figure 1.1. Dimensions of Form in Collaborative Inquiry

- (a) Control of evaluation process
- Researcher Controlled
- Consultation
- (b) Stakeholder selection for participation
- All Legitimate Groups
- Practitioner Controlled
- Deep Participation
- Primary Users
- (c) Depth of participation
What fosters involvement

– Meetings of all types; face-to-face best
– Planning for use
– The mere act of providing or collecting data
– Perception of a high quality evaluation
– Convenience, practicality, and alignment of evaluation materials (e.g., instruments)
– Feeling membership in a community
Implications for Practice

1. Set reasonable expectations for project staff
   – Consider different levels of involvement (depth OR breadth, not both necessarily)
   – Have projects serve as advisors or consultants
   – Have detail work completed by others/outsiders

2. Address evaluation data concerns
   – Verify understanding of data definitions
   – Check accuracy (Does it make sense?)
   – Consider multiple analyses and interpretations
Implications for Practice (cont.)

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate
   -- Personal contact matters

4. Interface regularly with the funder
   – Understand the various contexts
   – Garner support for the program evaluation
   – Obtain help to promote involvement and use
   – Represent the projects back to the funder
Implications for Practice (cont.)

5. Recognize life cycles of people, projects, and the program
   – Involve more than one person per project
   – Understand the politics of projects

6. Expect tensions and conflict
   – Between project and program evaluation
   – Among projects (competition)
   – About how best to use resources
7. Work to build community among projects and between projects/funder
   – Face-to-face interactions
   – Continuous communication
   – Asynchronous electronic communication
   – Explicit mechanisms for management, communication, and trust building
   – Be credible to project staff
     • Recognized expertise
     • “Guide on the side” not “sage on the stage”
Summary

- Involvement in MSEs is different from participation in single site evaluations.
- Involvement promotes higher quality evaluations and use.
- There are several ways to foster participants’ feelings of involvement.
- Communication with participants and funders is critical.
# Breakout Session Information

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<td>Pam Bishop</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Sondra LoRe</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Frances Lawrenz</td>
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