Working with Evaluators
ISBE 21st CCLC Statewide Evaluation

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Goals for the Session

• Learn best practices for working with local evaluators:
  – Finding an evaluator
  – Collaborating with your evaluator
  – Using your evaluation, and your evaluator effectively

• Share experiences, strategies, and challenges with each other
Before we start.... Why are you here?

Stand up if...

– You need to find an evaluator
– You have an external evaluator already but don’t know what happens next
– You’ve worked with an evaluator before
– You’ve ever been frustrated by your evaluator
What burning question brought you to this session?
Local evaluations: What’s required?

- Annual Local Evaluation (Conducted by internal or external evaluator)
- Show progress toward meeting program goals and objectives
- Used to refine, improve, and strengthen program

EDC has provided a template to guide your reporting.
## Finding an evaluator: Internal or External?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal Evaluator</th>
<th>External Evaluator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expertise</strong></td>
<td>• Firsthand knowledge of the project, content, organization’s policies and practices</td>
<td>• Skills and exposure based on a wide range of methods, practices that can be useful to incorporate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived bias</strong></td>
<td>• May be perceived as “too close” to the program</td>
<td>• Perceived impartiality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Availability</strong></td>
<td>• Readily available for meetings, spontaneous data collection</td>
<td>• If local, can be available or use telecommunications when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>• If on salary, can cost less; however, depends on other roles/projects/responsibilities</td>
<td>• Fees can be high; can be cost-effective when evaluation is part-time or limited in duration</td>
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<td><strong>Org. Investment</strong></td>
<td>• Can build organization’s capacity to support evaluation</td>
<td>• Can bring in outside expertise and build a culture of evaluation within an organization</td>
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# Finding an evaluator: Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education, training, background</th>
<th>Content expertise</th>
<th>Experience with complexity</th>
<th>Cultural Competence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A degree in education research or evaluation?</td>
<td>Experience in afterschool, education, and/or youth development?</td>
<td>Comfort with managing multiple sites, components, and kinds or levels of reporting?</td>
<td>Familiarity with and sensitivity to the population and community being served?</td>
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Finding an evaluator: Where to look?

• American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org)
• Contact nearby universities (education, community development, evaluation depts)
• Ask local school districts and youth-serving organizations for referrals
Collaborating with your evaluator: Planning the evaluation

• Ideally, your evaluator wrote the evaluation plan for your proposal
  – Described evaluation approach and design
  – Described methods to gather, organize, analyze, and present data
  – Identified data to be collected and instruments
  – Included plans for evaluation use and dissemination
Collaborating with your evaluator: Roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Director Responsibilities</th>
<th>Evaluator Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitor funder reporting guidelines and communicate them to the evaluator</td>
<td>Clarify how the evaluation will meet guidelines and agree about process and expectations for reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarify outcomes and articulate definitions of success</td>
<td>Check that the evaluation design is appropriate and aligns with outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with staff about data collection activities and expectations</td>
<td>Develop data collection protocols, instruments, and timelines and allow staff to review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that during data collection activities are as consistent as possible</td>
<td>Collect data in a timely and efficient manner at designated times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate regularly</td>
<td>Communicate regularly</td>
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Using your evaluation: Getting a useful report

I’ve been sort of overwhelmed lately. I only read reports if they’re full of cartoons or cat videos.
Using your evaluation: Getting a useful report

• Shape your report with your evaluator
  – Think of the reporting process as an exchange between the program and the evaluator
  – Allow for internal review of drafts; your evaluator should be interested in your feedback
  – But, don’t whitewash results
Using your evaluation: Getting a useful report

• Ask for an executive summary
  – This shorter document may be more appropriate and useful to share with wider audiences
  – Include highlights and findings that are most relevant and/or powerful, including recommendations
Using your evaluation: Communicating results

• Work with your evaluator to identify key audiences to share results with
  – Staff, partners, parents, community

• Ask your evaluator to participate in dissemination activities
  – For example, have evaluator present findings to program staff
Evaluation Team Contact Information

Contact the evaluation at 21stCCLC.Evaluation@edc.org

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