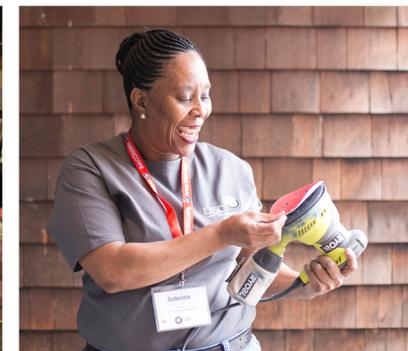




Barriers to Evaluation and How to Overcome Them



AmeriCorps State and National Symposium

SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2019 | ARLINGTON, VA



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 



Opening Activity

Take a few minutes to look at the “Barriers and Supports” handout located on your table.

- Which of these barriers, if any, do you relate to?
- Does anything on this handout surprise you?
- Are any important barriers or supports missing from the handout, and if so, what are they?
- Are there any “success stories” you can share, either from your own program or from a subgrantee program, related to overcoming one or more of these barriers?



Panel Discussion

- Kathy Brennan, AARP Foundation
- Heather Foster, Volunteer West Virginia
- Martha Galvez, Urban Institute
- Peter Nelson, ServeMinnesota

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Evaluation Barriers : Organizational Readiness



Examples:

- Insufficient support from organizational leadership
- Low organizational/strategic priority given to evaluation
- Staff place low value on using evaluation for program development and management



Evaluation Barriers: Program Readiness



Examples:

- Change/evolution in program model over time, and/or intentional design modifications to respond to local needs
- Perceived conflicts between evaluation, service delivery, and requirements of funder(s)
- Perception that evaluation diverts resources that could otherwise be used to reach more people in need
- Belief that evaluation consumes staff time that should be dedicated to direct services



Evaluation Barriers: Staff Readiness & Expertise



Examples:

- Lack of experience/don't know where to start
- Limited staff knowledge or comfort with evaluation
- Disconnect or lack of communication between program staff and evaluation staff/contractors
- High staff turnover – training/retraining core processes associated with evaluation
- Not knowing how/where to find and engage an external evaluator



Evaluation Barriers: Financial Readiness



Examples:

- Insufficient financial resources to support rigorous evaluation
- Lack of knowledge of how to budget for evaluation expenses
- Funding insecurity (tendency to focus on immediate outputs vs. long term outcomes)
- Funding timelines: grants funded for limited number of years that don't encompass medium or long term program outcomes



Evaluation Barriers: Readiness to Embrace a Culture of Learning



Examples:

- Negative experiences with evaluation in the past
- Fear of null or negative results
- Stakeholder resistance to change
- Disagreements between the organization and its funder(s)/stakeholder(s) about how evaluation results should be interpreted/used



Evaluation Barriers: Evaluation Readiness



Examples:

- Lack of internal capacity for oversight, training, and technical assistance for staff involved in evaluation
- Logistical challenges to evaluation implementation: participant recruitment, data collection, administrative data access, privacy and human-subject protections
- Identifying an appropriate control/comparison group; navigating fears that a control group will limit the program's ability to provide services to beneficiaries



Group Breakout Activity

- Each table has been identified with a barrier category (Readiness Element) and will have one or more panelists and/or facilitators located at the table.
- Please select a table to join for a discussion of best practices in overcoming these types of barriers to evaluation. Make sure you have a designated spokesperson for your table/topic!
- Report out: Share one barrier your table discussed and a possible solution you came up with to overcome the barrier.



Thank you!

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