

Commission Evaluation Institute

Developing Commission and Subgrantee Evaluation Capacity



AmeriCorps State and National 2015 Symposium



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

AmeriCorps

Planning Team

Commissions

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Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Why is Evaluation Capacity Building Important?
- Evaluation Basics
- Roles – CNCS, Commissions, Local Experts
- CNCS Role/Resources
- Commission Promising Practices
- Hot Topics (Round Tables)

Discussion



Why is it important to build subgrantee and commission evaluation capacity?



Evaluation Basics

Diana Epstein, Ph.D., CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation



AmeriCorps State and National 2015 Symposium



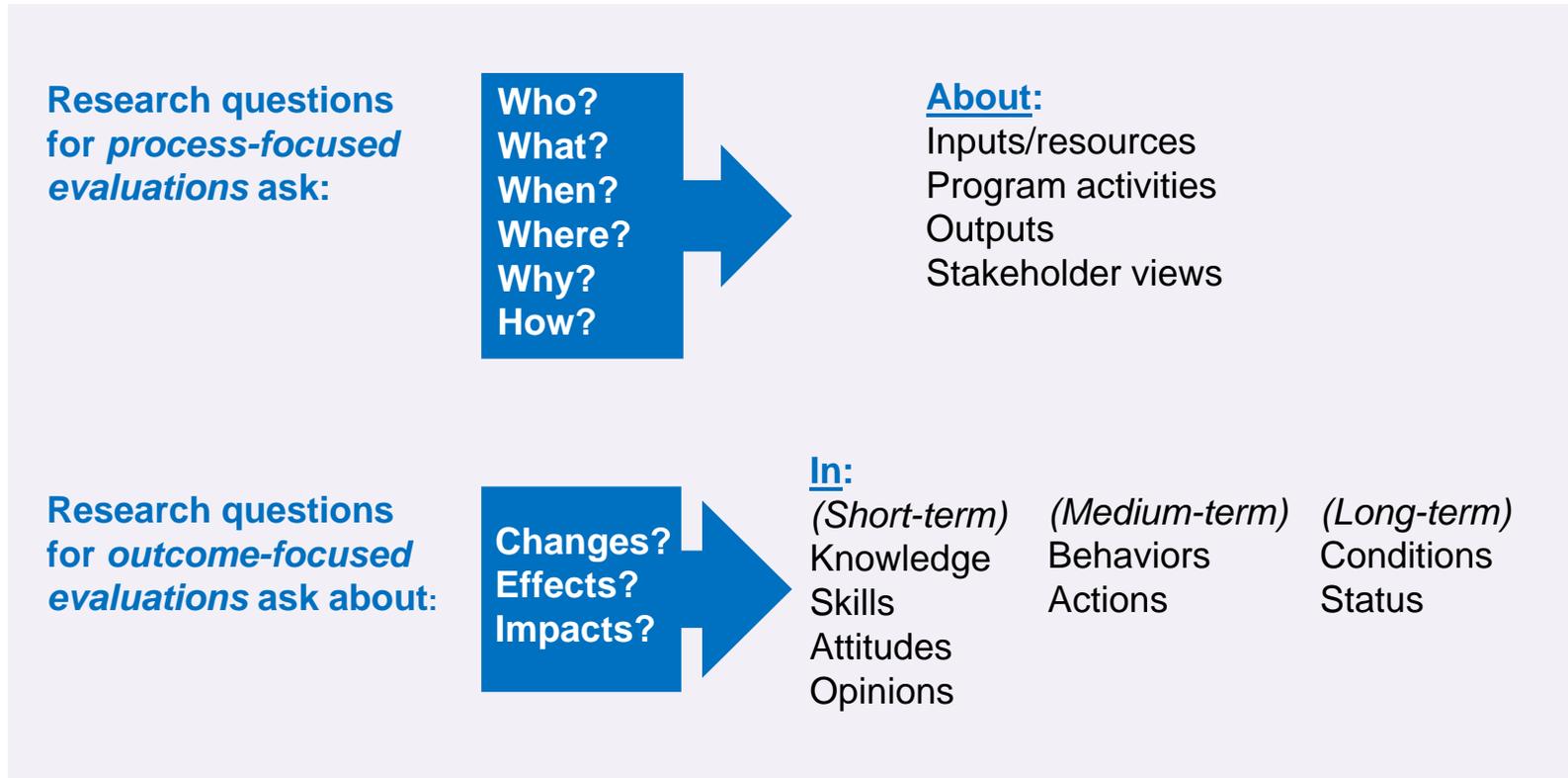
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Performance Measurement and Evaluation

	Performance Measurement	Evaluation
What is it?	A system of tracking progress in accomplishing specific pre-set targets (activities, outputs, and/or outcomes)	A formal scientific process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data about how well a program was implemented (process evaluation) or how effectively the program accomplished desired outcomes/impacts (outcome/impact evaluation)
Why is it typically used?	To gauge program delivery, quality, participant satisfaction and engagement; to improve products, services, and efficiency; to inform/enhance decision making, and support planning and program development	To assess program effectiveness and determine whether the program is responsible for changes found
How does it work?	Monitors a few vital signs related to program performance objectives, outputs, and/or outcomes	Comprehensively examines programs using systematic, objective, and unbiased procedures in accordance with social science research methods and research designs
Who typically does it?	Program staff	An experienced researcher (often external to the program) who has formal training in evaluation
When is it done?	Ongoing Basis	Periodically



Evaluation Types: Process vs. Outcome



Note: Impact evaluation is a type of outcome evaluation that uses a comparison/control group!



Evaluation Designs



Evaluation Study Designs	Comparison	Ability to make statements about causal attribution
Experimental Design Studies	Randomly Assigned Groups	
Quasi-Experimental Design Studies	Statistically Matched Groups	
Non-Experimental Design Studies	Not Statistically Matched Groups or Group Compared to Itself	



CNCS Evaluation Requirements: What

- State Service Commissions
 - State competitive: see below
 - State formula: set by commission
- State Competitive and National Directs
 - Large grantees (>\$500K/yr): external impact
 - Small grantees (<\$500K/yr): external or internal, process or impact

CNCS Evaluation Requirements: When

If you are competing for...	Submit evaluation plan	Submit evaluation report	If funded...
Your first three-year competitive grant			Begin the evaluation planning process.
Your second three-year competitive grant	✓		Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.
Your third three-year competitive grant	✓	✓	Complete evaluation during the three-year period.
A competitive AmeriCorps grant beyond your third three-year grant	✓	✓	Complete evaluation during the three-year grant period.

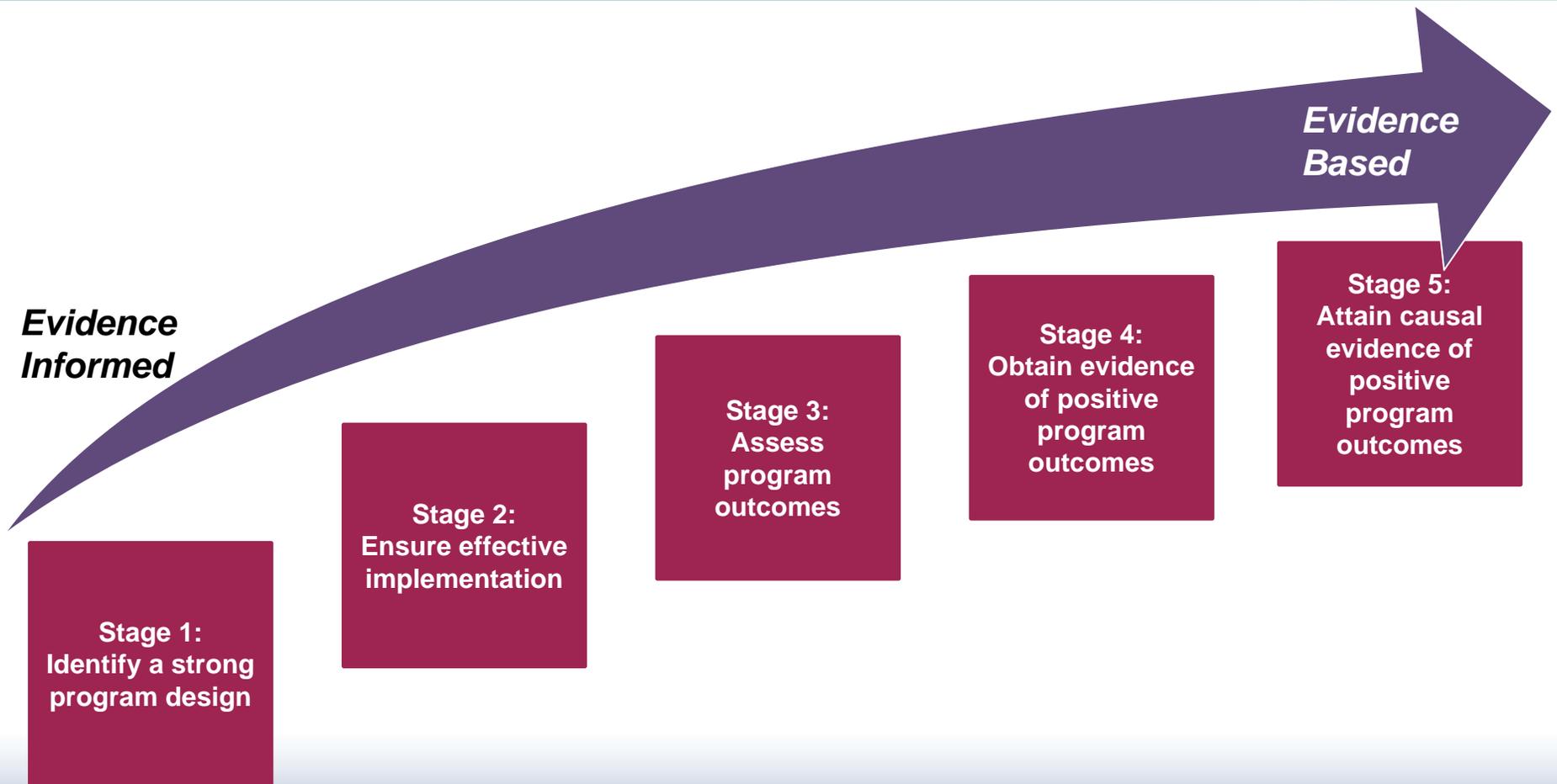


Evaluation Designs and CNCS Requirements

Evaluation Study Designs	Meet Requirements	
	Large Grantees	Small Grantees/ EAP Programs
Process Design (Non-Experimental Design Studies)	No	Yes
Outcome Design (Non-Experimental Design Studies)	No	Yes
Outcome (Impact) Design (Quasi-Experimental or Experimental Design Studies)	Yes	Yes



Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Roles

What roles do CNCS, commissions and local evaluation experts play in evaluation capacity building?



CNCS Perspective on Commission Role

- Partners in grant-making
- Set the tone for subgrantees
 - Be an engaged learner
 - Model a “no fear” attitude
 - Emphasize learning and improving over compliance/NOFO points
 - Place evaluation in broader context



CNCS Perspective on Commission Role

- Understand evaluation requirements
- Understand basic evaluation concepts
- You don't have to be an expert. You should be clear about:
 - What you know
 - What you don't know
 - What you need to learn, and from whom
 - How you will connect subgrantees to experts/resources



CNCS Role in Supporting Evaluation



CNCS Role

- Office of Research and Evaluation + contractors
 - 1:1 evaluation coaching for large grantees
 - Feedback on small grantee evaluation plans
 - Evidence review (GARP)
 - Monthly webinars
 - Peer connections
 - Online resources
 - Webinars w/ facilitator notes and supporting materials
 - Sample RFPs, evaluation plans, data sharing agreements

CNCS Online Evaluation Resources

National Service Knowledge Network → Evaluation
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>

Courses available:

- How to Develop a Program Logic Model
- Overview of Evaluation Designs
- How to Write an Evaluation Plan
- Budgeting for Evaluation
- Data Collection for Evaluation
- Managing an External Evaluation
- Asking the Right Research Questions
- And more!

Evaluation Resources Page

The screenshot shows the 'Evaluation Resources' page on the National Service website. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with links like 'Programs', 'Focus Areas', and 'Special Initiatives'. A sidebar on the left lists various resource categories, with 'Evaluation' highlighted by a red oval and an arrow. The main content area is titled 'Evaluation Resources' and contains a definition of evaluation, a circular diagram with four stages: 'Planning', 'Implementation', 'Analysis and Reporting', and 'Using Evaluation Results for Action and Improvement'. Below this, there are sections for 'Explore Resources' and 'Featured Resources'. On the right side, there is a search box and a Facebook link.



Commission Promising Practices





onestar
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Commission Evaluation Institute

Promising Practices: Training and Monitoring

September 15-17, 2015

Emily Steinberg, Director of National Service Programs

Evaluation Is...

Important for:

- Accountability/Stewardship
- Learning about Impact – Driving Program Design
- Communicating Impact – to staff, board, volunteers, funders and community stakeholders
- Multiplying your Impact – increasing the knowledge-base of the field



Learning and Leadership

- Learning is key to leadership:
- Good leaders are good learners:*
 - Only one in four nonprofits are “well led”
 - Only one in four nonprofits are effective “learners”

*York, P. (2010). “Evaluative Learning.” TCC Group: Philadelphia, PA.

Our Trajectory with Evaluation

- 2004-2008: Beginning Stages
 - Began implementing National PMs
 - Focused more on evaluating our non-AmeriCorps capacity building initiatives
 - Did not have a framework for reviewing AmeriCorps subgrantees' evaluation plans and final reports (honor system)



Our Trajectory with Evaluation

- 2009-2012: AmeriCorps Statewide Evaluation
 - Competitive RFP
 - Selected external evaluator: UT-Austin RGK Center
 - Based on previous research from longitudinal AmeriCorps study by Abt Associates
 - Organizational capacity assessments – TCC and RGK
 - Instruments:
 - Program director surveys
 - AmeriCorps member surveys
 - Organizational capacity surveys



Our Trajectory with Evaluation

- 2013-Present: Coaching, Training, and Monitoring
 - Program-Specific Evaluation Design and TTA
 - Ongoing coaching on bi-monthly calls with Grants Officers as needed
 - Topic at Annual Grantee Meetings, Regional Training Conferences
 - Evaluation Plan and Report Checklists during Grant Review
 - Data Quality Review as part of routine monitoring (once/3 year cycle)



Evaluation Checklist Reviews



AmeriCorps™ Texas Evaluation Plan and Report Review

Overview	
When is the review conducted?	As part of new/recompete grant application review
Who completes it?	It is completed by the Grants Officers-Program.
What is the purpose of the review?	To ensure the evaluation plan/report meets CNCS and OneStar requirements.
What is the purpose of evaluation?	Evaluations are a vital tool that can help organizations strengthen their program and their impact. Not only can evaluations measure the impact on participants and beneficiaries, they can provide feedback on the extent to which program implementation aligns with the program model and whether impacts differ for different aspects of the program or different populations. These findings can provide data for improvement, adjustment, and future action. Grantees will have the opportunity to refine their evaluation
Follow Up:	Follow-up will occur as part of grant clarification.

Using this Template

If a program is competitively or formula funded and receives an average annual CNCS grant of \$500,000* or more, use the plan and report checklists on the tabs titled "Plan Checklist for >\$500,000" and "Report Checklist for >\$500,000." If a program is either formula or competitively funded and receives an average annual CNCS grant less than \$500,000*, use the checklists on the tabs titled "Plan Checklist for <\$500,000" and "Report Checklist for <\$500,000."

First time applicants for AmeriCorps funding are not required to submit an evaluation plan with their application and grantees are not required to conduct an evaluation during their initial three-year grant period.

If a program participates in a national evaluation commissioned by CNCS, that program may be exempt from the requirement to provide an internal or independent evaluation for the next grant cycle if the evaluation provides findings that fulfills the grantee's evaluation requirements. The program should describe its participation in the national evaluation when presenting their evaluation plan for that grant cycle. Results must be disaggregated by program to ensure consistency across the entire national portfolio, although those individual results are not always made public, due to confidentiality constraints. Nevertheless, the program is required to submit its evaluation results as part of their re-compete application in order to meet the evaluation requirement.

If the grantee re-competing for funding for their third (or fourth, fifth, etc.) three-year grant cycle, they should continue to submit evaluation plans for the next grant period, as well as evaluation reports of their past evaluation efforts, with their re-compete applications.

Special note about IRB Clearance: IRB clearance must be obtained prior to the beginning of any research involving human subjects. The definitions of "research" and "human subjects" below are in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46 (45CFR46): Protection of Human Subjects.
 Research - a systemic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge
 Human Subjects - living individual(s) about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information.

**The \$500,000 threshold is calculated by averaging the AmeriCorps grant funding amounts over the last three years the grantee has received CNCS funding at the time of the re-competition. Calculator provided below.*

CALCULATOR:

Amount of CNCS funding received in year prior to re-competition:

▶ ▶ **Instructions** / Plan Checklist for >\$500,000 / Plan Checklist for <\$500,000 / Report Checklist for >

- 4 checklists
 - Plan Checklist
 - Under \$500K
 - Over \$500K
 - Report Checklist
 - Under \$500K
 - Over \$500K
- Conducted during Grant Review
- CNCS + Texas-Specific Requirements



Evaluation Checklist Reviews

Items for Clarification	Resolution		
Overall Strengths	Overall Weaknesses		
	Yes	No	Unsure
Does the report meet the requirements for a CNCS grantee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OneStar Grants Officer Signature and Date Review Completed:			



Data Quality Reviews



Performance Measures Data Quality
Optional Self-Assessment

February 2013



Corporation for National and Community
Service

- Conducted as part of routine Monitoring Visits
- Once per 3-year grant cycle
- Grants Officers complete on-site in collaboration with subgrantee staff
- Kept in grantee file with section added to Monitoring Report
- Tool for discussion and improvement

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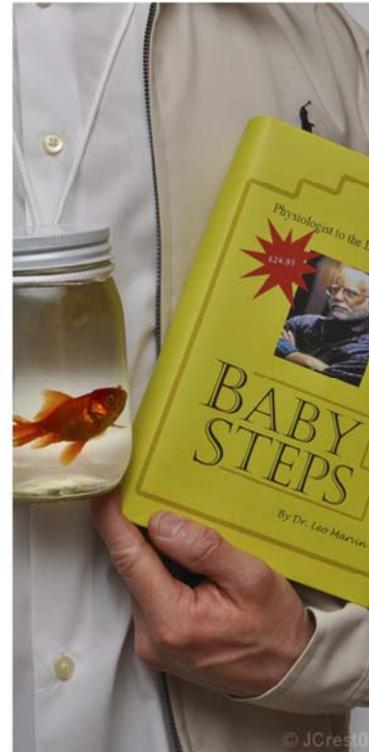
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Current Philosophy + Approach

- **Back to basics – You have to get ‘down in the weeds’ at some point – we have to specialize in each grantee’s program design to a basic extent, to empower them to make smart evaluation decisions and to ask the right questions.**
- **Evaluation begins at accountability, but is really what should really drive decision-making – both for funders AND grantees.**
- **Good leadership is what drives a culture of evaluative learning; we make it part of everything we do from the top down.**
- **‘Practice what you preach’ to grantees + ‘There’s always room to grow’ (Commission logic model and Theory of Change, Annual grantee survey, training event surveys, member experience and inclusion survey, etc.).**

In Other Words...



Current Tools + Resources

Performance Measurement

- [CNCS AmeriCorps Performance Measurement Core Curriculum](#)
- [CNCS Performance Measurement Home Page](#)
- [CNCS Performance Measures Data Quality Assessment Tool](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: How to Use the CNCS National Performance Measure Instructions](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: Overview of Performance Measurement](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: Designing Effective Action for Change](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: Building Evidence of Effectiveness](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: High Quality Performance Measures](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: Collecting High Quality Outcome Data, Part 1](#)
- [Self-paced Tutorial: Collecting High Quality Outcome Data, Part 2](#)
- [Steps in Performance Measurement \(PDF\)](#)
- [Common Methods for Collecting Data \(PDF\)](#)
- [Developing Performance Measurement Instruments \(PDF\)](#)
- [Instrument Formatting Checklist \(PDF\)](#)
- [Collecting Performance Measurement Data \(PDF\)](#)
- [11 Proven Ways to Improve Data Collection \(PDF\)](#)
- [Analyzing Performance Measurement Data \(PDF\)](#)

GRANTEE RESOURCE LIBRARY:

<http://onestarfoundation.org/amicorpstexas/grantee-resources/>

Current Tools + Resources

Evaluation and Evidence Building

- CNCS Evaluation Resource Library Page
- CNCS AmeriCorps Evaluation FAQs
- Theory of Change Logic Model Worksheet
- OneStar Evaluation Plan Review Checklist
- Evaluation Requirements and Resources (Handout)
- Evaluation Plan and Report_Template Outline (Handout)
- Sample Evaluation Plan
- The Evaluation Cycle
- GEO Evaluation Essentials
- Evaluation Principles and Practices Working Paper by Hewlett Foundation

GRANTEE RESOURCE LIBRARY:

<http://onestarfoundation.org/ameriCorpstexas/grantee-resources/>

Contact Information

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Break



Commission Promising Practices

Building a Long-Term Evaluation Strategy Ia Moua

CV Evaluation Policy Context

- Evaluation treated as a compliance issue in the past
- Competitive programs are required to follow CNCS evaluation requirements
- No evaluation requirements for formula programs

Current Approach

- Assure high quality performance measures prior to contracting
- Assure instruments and data collection systems in place prior to contracting; verified at site visits.
- Make evaluation part of regular commission activities
 - Grant-making
 - Monitoring
 - Coaching and TTA delivery

Current Approach

- Beginning in 2015, implement program capacity assessment (CAP) to establish a baseline understanding of each program's evaluation capacity
- Based on CAP results, include developing a long-term research agenda as an objective in program's coaching plan
- Waive cost per MSY requirement in order to increase funds to support evaluation (using unexpended funds)
 - 6 formula programs received additional grant funds to support evaluation

Current Approach

- Assist the first cohort of programs to develop a long-term research agenda
- Continue to build commission capacity to support grantees' evaluation efforts
 - Have select staff complete CNCS evaluation courses
 - Engage an external evaluation expert to assist in TTA delivery and evidence review
 - Explore partnerships with higher education institutions to support evaluation and research in select focus areas

Contact Information

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Commission Promising Practices

Engaging Local Experts
Kristin Honz and Jessamyn Luiz

Evaluation Challenges

- Cost prohibitive
- Making it meaningful
 - Technical evaluation vs. useable for program improvement
- Program capacity and capability
- Commission capacity and capability

Seeing Impact Project (SIP)

- What we mean by impact:
 - Lasting change that's created by a program
 - DOES NOT refer to evaluation methodology required by CNCS
- History
 - Led by Steve Patty, PhD of Dialogues in Action
 - 2014 - Pilot project in Oregon in with 6 Oregon Volunteers subgrantees
 - 2015 - Oregon & Serve WA partnered to implement with 10 subgrantees
 - 2015 - ICVCS implemented in with 6 subgrantees

SIP Goals

- Build comfort, capacity, and culture of evaluation
- Produce credible self-studies of program impact that lead to continuous program improvement
- Develop durable and sustainable habits for evaluating impact
- Keep costs low (relatively)

SIP Model

- Program evaluation efforts designed by the program with support from consultant (and commission staff)
- Primary focus on qualitative evaluation through in-depth 1-on-1 interviews
- AmeriCorps members engaged as a leadership opportunity (and manpower)
- Engagement of organizational and site leadership to build sustainability and increase buy-in

SIP Model

- Combination of webinar and in-person training to build evaluation knowledge:
 - Module 1: Defining Intended Impact
 - Module 2: Articulating a Theory of Change
 - Module 3: Designing a Qualitative Evaluation protocol
 - Module 4: Developing a sampling plan and conducting qualitative interviews
 - Module 5: Designing quantitative instruments
 - Module 6: Data analysis, thematics, and findings
 - Module 7: Program Improvement and communication
 - Module 8: Building Habits of Evaluation

What We Learned from SIP

- Meaningful evaluation takes a lot of time and effort for programs and commissions
- Has to be meaningful or it will sit on the shelf
- In-depth qualitative interviews lead to new and deeper insights into program design
- Connects to other training and resources from CNCS (What to do in First Three Years, Managing an External Evaluator, PM 201)

What Made this Work

- “Participation is Powerful”
 - AmeriCorps member involvement was critical (and transformative for them)
 - Program staff and stakeholders engaged at a different level
- Building capacity of commission staff along with program staff to enable us to support them ongoing
- Evaluation report is useful and immediately applicable
- Capitalizing on relationships with local evaluators

Iowa State Cooperative Extension

- Higher education representative
- Non-formal education environments and measuring and articulating engagement between community partners
- Training and technical assistance for commission staff and programs
- Connecting us to evaluation resources, journal articles and research methodology

Oregon Program Evaluation Network

- Local affiliate of the American Evaluation Association (AEA)
- Membership has its privileges!
 - Monthly meetings, monthly newsletter, workshops, and annual conference
 - Send an email to OPEN members with questions
 - Post RFPs for evaluation projects in newsletter
- Very interested in the “program” perspective

Hot Topics



Wrap Up

