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EVALUATION REPORTING

The evaluation plan developed at the beginning of a project should be used to guide evaluation reporting. The purposes of the evaluation and the questions posed at the start of the project need to be addressed by the planned methodology. Conclusions and recommendations should follow from the data analysis results and should refer specifically to the goals and parameters of the evaluation.

When and how the evaluation information is reported will be influenced by the needs of the stakeholders involved, the overall project timelines, and the common understandings of the participants. If good planning and documentation procedures have been followed throughout the project's implementation, all of the necessary information will be available when it is time to complete a formal report.

Evaluation Reports typically include a number of standard sections and elements. The following list was compiled from several contemporary sources, including Frechtling, et al. (2002) and Blue and Hageboeck (2006).

Parts of an Evaluation Report:

- Background
 - Problem or needs addressed by program
 - Literature review (if relevant – not generally included in interim reports)
 - Stakeholders and participants and their information needs
 - Project goals and expected outcomes
 - Brief outline of project objectives and activities (or those completed to date for interim reports)
 - Timelines and current status of project
 - Sustainability plans, when relevant
- Evaluation study questions
 - All formative and summative evaluation questions initially outlined in the evaluation plan
 - Which questions are addressed in the report, as determined by:
 - Audience for report
 - Current point in project time line
 - Available data
- Evaluation methodology
 - Description of how the methodology pertains to the evaluation plan
 - Discussion of groups participating in study, including selection or inclusion criteria if necessary
 - Sample or whole population
 - Composition of subgroups being compared



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- Types of data collected and instruments used, such as:
 - Data for identified outcome indicators like grades, test scores
 - Ratings from questionnaires and how developed
 - Observations and the protocols used to record or evaluate them
 - Checklists and the records or methods used to complete them (attendance sheets, self-report, receipts, etc.)
- Data Analysis
 - Clear description of the techniques used to analyze the data collected that is comprehensible to the report audiences
 - This section will follow different formats depending on the type of study being conducted and which questions are being addressed in the report
 - For experimental and quasi-experimental studies, this section describes the statistical analyses performed, control techniques used, how the sample was determined to be representative of the population (or not), what levels of significance were used, and any limitations of the findings
 - For less rigorous studies, this section describes how the data was summarized (e.g. scores for all students were averaged for each grade) and evaluated (e.g. averages were compared to baseline averages for that grade from last year) and limitations of the findings
 - The data analysis section should also explain the suitability of the analyses to the evaluation questions and any prospective weaknesses that may affect the way conclusions are drawn
- Findings
 - Results of each analysis, organized by evaluation questions
 - Which data/analyses were used to address each question
 - Can any questions be answered by the analysis results
 - Tables or charts to summarize quantitative data
 - Include baseline data against which measures are evaluated
 - Include the calculations that address the evaluation questions or outcomes (e.g. if the goal is to increase pass rates on a math test, list the percent change with the data).
 - Descriptive summaries of qualitative data
 - May be simplified by creating matrices showing categories of responses
 - Avoid excessive listing of details (may be included in an appendix)
 - Point out where this information contrasts, supports, or helps explain relevant quantitative data
 - Summary of each data section
 - Point out outcomes on key indicators and significant findings (where statistical analyses are performed)



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- Indicate how those outcomes answer the evaluation questions
- Note which data was inconclusive
- Note which questions could not be answered because of missing data
- Conclusions
 - Statements that reflect more general findings than the specific data summaries
 - Triangulation of several data elements to address the broader purposes of the evaluation
 - Relation of all results to the goals of the overall program
- Recommendations
 - Specific suggestions for program changes that are either minor (e.g., strengthening certain components) or extensive (e.g., removing components altogether) that stem from results of formative assessments
 - General proposals about the utility, scope, or purpose of the project that stem from results of summative assessments
 - Based solely on the data analyses, not anecdotal evidence or preconceived ideas
 - Should be practical and identifiable to targeted stakeholders

Aligning Report Elements for Effective Presentation

Each element of the report listed above needs to relate to the overall purpose of the evaluation and lead into the overall conclusions and recommendation. Keep in mind the needs of the audience; should the data be summarized to give an overall picture of progress, or do project participants need to see some details to understand changes that need to be made? Be sure to fully address all evaluation questions; if the data is not available or conclusive enough to answer a question, state what is being done to address this gap. Remember that, even if the outcome data does not appear strong, the evaluation will be received positively if the full range of information included leads to recommendations that can improve the outcomes in the long run.

Here are some examples of good and poor alignment of elements in evaluation reports:

Case 1: Good alignment of implementation, process and outcome data to draw conclusions

LEA 1 is planning to improve reading scores by placing renewed emphasis on Response to Intervention instructional practices and creating Professional Learning Community structures to help facilitate this. Evaluation questions in the first annual report include “did we complete all PD activities as planned” and “are teachers implementing RtI strategies in the classroom” along with the summative question on the extent of reading score improvement.

The findings in the first year evaluation report show that summative measures did not meet interim outcome targets. The findings section also includes implementation data showing that all PD activities were completed, but were held late, near the end of the school year, instead of in the first half of the year as planned. Additionally, a summary of the survey data showed that after completing all training, teachers are much more confident about the instructional practices than they were mid-year. The classroom observations completed in the last quarter of the year also show a 20% increase in the use of the practices being targeted as compared to those observed in the first quarter. Aligning the implementation, process and interim outcome data, the evaluator is able to conclude that the LEA is still on target toward their long-term goals, despite not meeting interim targets. The implementation data show all year one activities currently underway despite delays. The process data (surveys and systematic classroom observations) provide a good indication that teachers are finally implementing the new practices. These two data sources, combined with the project time line (found in the Background section) that shows the additional PD planned in the upcoming year is on schedule for the summer, justify the conclusion that LEA 1 will close any gaps in the coming year and that the project, as a whole, has made good progress in the first year.

Case 2: Mismatch of evaluation questions and report

At LEA 2, a new tutoring program is being implemented with the goal of improving 3rd graders' scores on the state math test. Based on the original needs assessment and the focus of the grant sponsoring the program, several evaluation questions relate to the impact of the program on new transfer students, who are regularly among those not achieving proficiency on end-of-year state tests. These evaluation questions include “are we identifying at-risk transfer students in a timely fashion?” and “what percentage of at-risk transfer students are being served by the tutoring program?” and “what is the increase in the percentage of transfer students achieving proficiency on the state test?”

However, students are assigned to the tutoring sessions based on classroom math assessments at the start of each semester. Therefore, the 50 students accommodated by the tutoring program are among those most at-risk, but are not necessarily all the at-risk *transfers*. The report to stakeholders includes the percentage of students scoring proficient and above at the end of the year for the 50 tutored students and for the 3rd grade as a whole. The analysis evaluates the impact of the tutoring on the 50 students. It does not include any breakdowns for new transfers, nor does it report what proportion of new transfer students was included in the tutoring class.

This report may provide information about the general effectiveness of the tutoring program, but it does not address the needs expressed in the evaluation question or the concern of the stakeholders. Even if overall math proficiency rates for the 3rd grade improve, transfer students may still be lagging behind.

Case 3: Recommendations not linked to data

An extensive program to improve STEM education in LEA 3 includes incorporating 21st century skills into math and science classes. This project includes new classroom equipment, professional development on using technology in the classroom and revising lesson plans to align with the afterschool 21st Century science enrichment program, and a summer school program for at-risk students in math. The original evaluation plan included fidelity and process evaluation questions addressing each component of the program. Outcome goals are increases in state science and math scores.

The annual evaluation report discusses only the outcomes, noting that 4 out of the 6 schools involved in the program met their outcome targets of increasing average scores on the state science test, and 3 schools increased scores on math tests. It also presents an extensive list of PD activities completed in the system, the total number of students participating in the summer school program, and the response rates for each item on a satisfaction survey completed by students participating in enrichment activities. However, no breakdowns or analysis of this data is provided – such as comparisons among schools for percentage of at-risk students participating in extracurricular programs or an evaluation of whether PD sessions were translated into classroom changes. However, a recommendation is made to use a standardized protocol to evaluate math and science class lesson plans for 21st Century Skill content in the upcoming year.

This report actually creates more questions than it answers. It does not link the recommendation to evaluate lesson plans to any data. Appearing to show all activities have been completed as planned but hinting that not all teachers are fully integrating the technology into the curriculum, the report leaves people wondering what information about implementation has not been shared. It may also raise questions about where the real problem lies (Teacher buy in at some schools? Adequacy of PD?), which may fragment efforts among stakeholders to improve the program.



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WORKS CITED

Blue, R. & Hageboeck, M. (2006) Constructing an Evaluation Report. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADI500.pdf.

Frechtling, J., Frierson, H., Hood, S., & Hughes, G. (2002). The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation. Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.