Writing an Evaluation Plan

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Why Evaluate?

- Funding sources require it... and you also need to know
  - To improve your program/project
  - To see the impact of your program
Where do you start?
Analyzing the Solicitation

• What is the solicitation asking for?
  ▪ Differs within and between agencies
    • NSF

Describe how the research and education will be evaluated (internally and/or externally).
Analyzing the Solicitation

- NSF

*All proposals must include an appropriate evaluation plan.* A number of resources for developing evaluation plans are available at http://caise.insci.org/resources including the 2010 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects (Framework), and the Impacts and Indicators Worksheet.

**Evaluation design:** Evaluation questions, design, data collection methods, analyses, and reporting/dissemination strategies must be detailed in the evaluation plan, *including formative and summative evaluation goals and strategies* that seek to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation design must emphasize the coherence between the proposal goals and evidence of meeting such goals, and must be appropriate to the type, scope, and scale of the proposed project. Logic models or theories of action, as an example, can help describe the project inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts. All project types must include a **summative evaluation by an external evaluator.** NOTE: details of the evaluation plan may be included as a **Supplementary Document.**
Analyzing the Solicitation

• NIH

Evaluation Plan (6 pages, total)

Provide a comprehensive Evaluation Plan to be used to monitor the conduct and track the progress of proposed TCC research, implementation and dissemination activities. Describe how the evaluation will be conducted, the principal measures and metrics to be used, and the potential sources of data. Also include a detailed self-evaluation plan to assess achievement of short- and long-term TCC goals. The Administrative Core is responsible for implementing the Evaluation Plan.

Since the major purpose of the evaluation is to provide information to assist with TCC planning and management, the plan should address both administrative and scientific function and accomplishments. The Evaluation Plan should address the following areas of particular importance: translational activities; scope and impact of research; innovation; collaboration and communication; integration and synergy; and funds management. Describe timelines, key milestones and expected outcomes for each area as appropriate.

While evaluation should be a continuous process, a formal evaluation by an outside, independent group selected by TCC leadership and approved by NIMHD staff should be conducted at least every two years. TCCs may also be called upon to gather data and participate in the development of a national TCC Program evaluation.
Types of Evaluations

- Internal
- Independent
- External
Types of Evaluations

- Formative Evaluation, two components:
  - Implementation (or process) evaluation
  - Progress evaluation

  ➢ Provides information to improve programs
Types of Evaluations

• Summative Evaluation
  ▪ Did the program meet its goals and objectives?
    • What evidence can serve to show this?
      • Baseline information
      • Summative information
Developing the Evaluation Plan

- Program context
  - What is the problem or need for the program?
  - What are the goals and objectives of your program?
    - Who is involved?
    - What activities will take place?
  - How will you measure progress and impact?
Selecting Indicators for Assessment

• What do you expect to see if program/project is correctly implemented and progresses toward stated objectives?

*Researchers:*
• Program plan
• Meetings

*Participation:*
• Activities
• Assessments

*Implementation:*
• Recruitment
• Selection
Select Appropriate Indicators
Quantitative Data

• Provide for easy comparisons; can come from existing or created sources
  ▪ Records
  ▪ Surveys
  ▪ Learning assessments

➢ Thought should be given to validity and reliability
Qualitative Data

• Provide for descriptions about program activities, context, and participants’ behaviors
  ▪ Document review
  ▪ Observations
  ▪ Focus Groups
  ▪ Interviews
  ▪ Open-ended questions on surveys

➢ Have guidelines in place
Create a ‘Logic’ Model

• Illustrate the relationship among your program/project elements:
  ▪ Inputs: Resources necessary for program implementation
  ▪ Activities: Interventions that will be implemented to achieve outcomes
  ▪ Outputs: Direct products obtained as a result of program activities
Create a ‘Logic’ Model

- Outcomes: The impacts, changes, or results of the program activities and outputs; link to your objectives and your goals

  **Short-term:**
  - knowledge
  - skills
  - attitudes
  - motivation
  - awareness

  **Intermediate-term:**
  - behaviors
  - practices
  - policies
  - procedures

  **Long-term:**
  - environmental
  - social conditions
  - economic
  - conditions
  - political
  - conditions
Create a ‘Logic’ Model

Inputs and Project Resources → Activities → Outputs → Impacts

Process and Implementation Evaluation Questions

Impact Questions

Impacts
Short-Term/Intermediate/Long-Term
Contextual Factors
## Create a ‘Logic’ Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOGIC MODEL EXAMPLE</th>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES (Participant)</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
<th>MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
<th>LONG-TERM IMPACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project leaders, scientists, support staff, educators,</td>
<td>• Learn about project protocol</td>
<td>• Amount of volunteer-collected data</td>
<td>• Increased engagement with science and nature</td>
<td>• Increased public access to scientific institutions</td>
<td>• Increased public support of science</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteers’ interest, time, skills, prior knowledge, and motivation</td>
<td>• Collect and submit data</td>
<td>• Publicly accessible database</td>
<td>• Increased knowledge of science content</td>
<td>• Sustained change in the way participants collect high-quality data</td>
<td>• Increased public appreciation and stewardship of nature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Partnering institutions</td>
<td>• View and explore data</td>
<td>• Individuals engaged with program</td>
<td>• Improved data collection skills</td>
<td>• Participants serve as project ambassadors to promote project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Funding sources</td>
<td>• Provide feedback to project staff</td>
<td>• Interactive and educational web site</td>
<td>• Improved species identification skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Communicate with others via groups, list serves, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>• Number of staff</td>
<td>• Participants express understanding of project protocol</td>
<td>• Number and quality of data submitted</td>
<td>• Change in quantity of communications between scientists and participants</td>
<td>• Detection of changes in long-term data submission records</td>
<td>• Increased private and public funding for science institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Available resources</td>
<td>• Participants demonstrate confidence in collecting &amp; submitting data</td>
<td>• Number of people accessing database</td>
<td>• Participants serve as project ambassadors to promote project</td>
<td>• Data is of higher quality and more valuable over time</td>
<td>• Improved environmental conditions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Baseline data of participants interest, knowledge, skills, etc.</td>
<td>• Web analytics of project web site</td>
<td>• Number of people engaged; frequency, duration, and intensity of engagement</td>
<td>• Amount of publicity and project exposure by participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality &amp; quantity of communication between staff and participants</td>
<td>• Web analytics of project web site; quality of web-based educational materials</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep it Simple!

- Don’t assume
- Don’t get too complex
- Don’t get too fancy
- Don’t overdo it
Keep it Simple!

If I'd known they wanted me to use all this info— I would never have asked for it!
Tips for writing your plan

• Know your audience
• Drop the jargon and be straightforward, clearly stating what you plan to do
• Try to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods
• Be honest, note any challenges you may face and how you may overcome these
Writing your plan

• Two examples
Budgeting for the Evaluation

• May range from 5 – 10% (or more) of the grant amount

*Evaluation Activities*

• Consultation and analysis
• Development of plan
• Literature review
• Coordination with stakeholders
• Data requests
• Periodic and final reports
• Etc.

• Development of measures
• Surveys
• Interview and focus group questions & logistics
• Tests
• Etc.
• Data collection
• Data analysis & results
Finding an Evaluator

• American Evaluation Association:
  ▪ http://www.eval.org/find_an_evaluator/evaluators_found.asp?where=TX

• Institute of Organizational and Program Evaluation Research:
  ▪ http://www.cgu.edu/pages/506.asp
Sources


Questions?