

Addressing Evaluation Costs:

Producing Rigorous Evaluations on a Shoestring Budget

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The Financial Costs of Program Evaluation

- Recognize that it's a cost-competitive environment
- Acknowledge your clients have limited financial, time & human resources
- Work within budget constraints
 - but don't compromise standards

Collaboration is Key to Reducing Costs

- 1) Train your clients to complete some evaluation tasks
- 2) Subcontract evaluation duties when possible
- 3) Limit your typical evaluation costs through technology utilization & collaboration

Clients' Role

- Your clients can assume roles related to:
 - Data collection for:
 - Qualitative (artifacts) &
 - Quantitative (counts data, frequencies & %'s)
 - Administration of:
 - Assessments
 - Standardized survey protocols, &
 - Field work (observations)

Client Strategy

- Train your clients to complete some evaluation tasks
 - Data collection
 - Gathering artifacts
 - Learning histories

Subcontract Strategy

- Subcontract evaluation duties when possible / needed
 - Specialized services
 - Accounting
 - Technology
 - Overflow
 - Independent contractors, as needed

Possible Subcontractors' Role

- Data support services such as:
 - Data entry (blind key & optical scanning)
 - Web-based surveys
 - Database management

Technology Strategy

- Utilize technology when possible to reduce costs
 - Specialized shareware
 - Video-conferencing
 - E-mail surveys

Collaborate With Other Evaluators

- Planned Dataset Sharing
 - Shared comparison (control) group for federally mandated evaluations
 - 1) Scientifically-based research (*No Child Left Behind* legislation)
 - 2) Evidence-based research (*General Performance and Reporting Act: GPRA* measures)

Reduce Sample size

- ❑ Comparison group data is costly and time intensive
- ❑ Consider reducing the sample size to the smallest possible without reducing power
- ❑ You'd be surprised to see that an N of 50 or less still could yield significant differences at the $P < 0.001$ level

Use what's available

- Use existing instrumentation when possible (surveys, protocols, assessments)
 - Don't sacrifice your standards, but
 - Be creative
 - Be open to alternatives

Evaluator's Role

Doing what you do best

The Evaluator's Role in the Design Phase

- Provide expert knowledge
- Formulate evaluation questions
- Design logic model
- Create evaluation plan
- Pose and select performance indicators
- Select data analyses procedures

Evaluator's Role during Implementation

- Implement the evaluation as designed
- Utilize data from the clients
- Archive the database
- Complete analyses of datasets as prescribed
- Make recommendations for improvements as warranted

Evaluator's Role in Formative Evaluation

- ❑ Utilize your expert knowledge
- ❑ Gather evidence related to the merit and worth of the evaluation
- ❑ Gauge the level of attainment for project goals and objectives
- ❑ Suggest alternative procedural methods
- ❑ Provide continuous feedback

Evaluator's Role in Summative Evaluation

- Complete data analyses
- Formulate claim statements
- Describe findings & results
- Make recommendations for further and continued study
- Write the internal and external evaluation reports
- Present & disseminate findings

Budget Concerns

Adding value to your
client's work

Strategies that Reduce Costs

- 1) Clients responsible for data administration & data collection
- 2) Use existing instrumentation when possible (surveys, protocols, assessments)
- 3) Utilize technology to reduce travel
- 4) Contract out temporary services as needed
- 5) Share the costs of evaluation across sites

Cost & Time-Saving Examples

- ❑ Communities of learners
- ❑ Technology utilization
- ❑ Informal & formal networks to combine human, financial resources
- ❑ Focused efforts:
 - For example: Combine school and district-based program initiatives in one SIP umbrella
 - What about this potential savings in your projects?

Keep Your Overhead Low

- ❑ Consider how much office space you actually need to perform your evaluation tasks, &
- ❑ Carefully weigh the costs of hiring part-time and / or full-time staff to help when business flourishes.

Forget % of Grant Costs

- Consider your own budget proposals
 - Are they %-based or
 - services based?

Budget Example

Category of Service	Days of service
Planning Meetings with Project Staff	
Meeting with State/Federal Evaluators	
Planning Meetings Subtotal	
Instrumentation Development	
Administering assessments/Fieldwork	
Consultation	
Database Management	
Data Collection	
Data Analyses	
Research & Assessment Subtotal	
5 <i>annual performance reports</i> (Federal)	
1 <i>final performance report</i> (Federal)	
Annual dissemination of findings	
Evaluation Reporting Subtotal	
Total Number of Days	

Relationships

- Some one else can always:
 - Duplicate your services at a lower price,
 - Copy or create a similar product,
- But they can't duplicate your relationship with your client.
 - This is your competitive advantage.

Michigan Mathematics Partnership

Cost-effective Evaluation
Example

Design, Collaboration, Budget

- Advantages of collaboration in project designs
 - Greater expert knowledge with combined talents
 - Greater potential impact upon student learning
 - Realized cost savings to districts

Design Requirements

- Federal and state mandated scientifically-based research (NCLB) & evidence-based research (GPRA) requires:
 - Comparison/control group data
 - Experimental or quasi-experimental research designs
 - Future funding to be based on past success

Shared Comparison Group

- ❑ Designed not to deny services to teachers & students
- ❑ Share the costs among participants
- ❑ Logistics
 - Non-participants from Macomb County ISD (round 1) served as the comparison group
 - Non-participants from Washtenaw ISD (round 2) played a similar role
- ❑ Resulted in a rigorous evaluation design at a reduced cost

Collaboration is Essential

- At the administrative-level
 - Focused efforts
 - Reduction in costs
 - Time savings
- At the teacher participant-level
 - Create a community of learners
 - Increased knowledge base
 - Utilize technology to save time and increase learning
- Maximize the benefits for student learning

Budget Implications

- Staffing & human resources
 - Expert knowledge through collaboration without the consultant fees
- Financial resources
 - Reduce travel & professional development costs
 - Limit design costs for comparison groups, scoring and administration of instruments
- Time allocation
 - Extend the learning day

Bottom Line for Design

- Collaborate to:
 - Increase available knowledge base
 - Maximize time constraints
 - Decrease financial costs
- Maximize impact & effect upon student learning

Michigan MSP Information

- ❑ Michigan MSP website
www.michigan.gov/mspartnership
- ❑ MTTC Study Guide
http://www.mttc.nesinc.com/MI_viewSG_opener.asp
- ❑ Survey of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) www.seconline.org
- ❑ Learning Mathematics for Teaching (LMT)
<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/lmt>
- ❑ SAMPI
<http://www.wmich.edu/sampi/>

Presenter's Information

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