Evaluating Induction & Mentoring Programs

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Why do evaluation?

- In field of education, systematic evaluation became prevalent with the federal government's spending money in the 1960's poverty programs (Title I).

- Since then, program evaluation has become an expected part of accepting grant funds from state or federal government or foundations.

Types of Evaluation

- **Formative Assessment**: assessment for learning, done early and often in the process

- **Benchmark Assessment**: periodic checks

- **Summative Assessment**: assessment of learning, usually done toward the end of a time period

Evaluation for internal purposes

- Formative assessment
- Purpose is to understand and improve.
- Identify problems and challenges
- Celebrate successes
- Possibly reveal hidden patterns – positive or negative
- Explore work in progress
- Make mid-course corrections

Evaluation for External Purposes

- Summative assessment
- Purpose is to show impact or progress.
- Justify resources spent on project
- Help decision making
- Direct future efforts
- Accumulate evidence
- Define reasonable expectations

Outside evaluator vs. self-assessment

- Self-assessment is useful. Insiders know the program well.
- Outside evaluator has to learn "who's on first."
- Outside evaluators <u>can</u> bring objectivity, experience, insights and comparisons with others doing similar work.
- They may know multiple methods.
- They are often more persuasive or believable to other outsiders (e.g., funders).

Measuring Impact

- How can we measure impact?
  - Set up goals or targets in advance.
  - Monitor progress toward meeting stated goals.
  - Identify objective or concrete measures, sometimes "proxy" measures.
  - Include **process** measures also.

Thinking about Data

- What data should we collect?
- How should we organize it?
- How do we analyze it?
  - In answering all three, ask "What would be most useful for both internal and external purposes?"

What data are being collected about induction & mentoring?

- State has contracted with a national entity (SRI) for an external evaluation.
- Other projects (not funded or affiliated) may be doing similar work.
- What is recommended by the research literature on mentoring & induction?

Evaluation as integral part of initial program design

- Good program design has evaluation built in from the start.
- It is useful to start with evaluation questions and work backward.
  - How could we show evidence of success in _____? E.g., "selecting good mentors"
  - What evidence is persuasive to us?
  - What evidence is persuasive to others?
    - E.g., legislators, ISBE

Context matters

- An experienced evaluator would not look for the same activities in a beginning project and a project that has been in existence for a couple of years.
- Where are you in the process?
- How cohesive is your group?
- How detailed and specific is your design/proposal?

Evaluation as story-telling

- What is the best way to "tell the story" of your project? Who is the best story-teller?
- What **artifacts** or **evidence** help your story be more persuasive and convincing?

Bias in Evaluation

- Problem of bias in any self-report data
- Solution: **triangulation**
  - Find evidence in more than one form or from more than one source.
- Charts and graphics can help break down a complex story and show multiple viewpoints.

Questions?

- Pose questions from your project and we will try to illustrate these concepts with your real examples.