

Idaho State Department of Education
21st Century Community Learning Centers

Guidance for Independent Evaluation

Introduction: All approved grantees (awarded after 2013-14 Rd. 8) are required to formalize an independent evaluation within the third year of program. Technical assistance will be provided by the SDE to guide grantees through the planning process. The following guidance is provided to help ensure grantees maximize the independent evaluation in order to refine, improve, and strengthen program and to refine performance measures (§4205(b)).

21st CCLC Independent Evaluation

Effective independent evaluation is important for program performance and continuous improvement. Evaluation allows grantees to assess their programs, find areas for improvement, and refine program operations. Working closely with an independent evaluator leads to locally appropriate solutions, staff buy-in, and greater likelihood that improvements will be implemented. Because Idaho's 21st CCLC grantees vary widely, local evaluation is also important in making the case for the statewide program as a whole. To ensure local evaluations are consistently rigorous and provide comparable information, SDE requires the following of third year grantees:

1. Use of a formal assessment tool and site observation tool
2. Use of an independent evaluator that does not have a conflict of interest (i.e. employee of organization, partner with organization, family members in program, etc.)
3. A common outline (five sections) for local evaluation reports (included below)

Independent Evaluation Outline

Section 1 – Background Information

1.1 – Evaluator – name, contact information, organization, and brief description of credentials

1.2 – Year of the evaluation

1.3 – Program Description

1.3.a – List of site locations and brief description of target population

1.3.b – Activities provided, how often, and extent to which this matches what was proposed in the original grant

1.3.c – Participation numbers, average daily attendance, and percentage of regular program participants (participants attending 30 days or more) based on what was proposed in the original grant

1.4 – Program Rationale

The program rationale (or “theory of change”) is a statement of why the program design is the right approach to accomplish the program goals. Once developed, the program rationale will stay the same in each evaluation report unless the program fundamentally changes. The program rationale should include:

1.4.a – A logic model that shows the relationships between the primary program components

1.4.b – A list of specific program goals and the performance indicator(s) (i.e. measurable objectives) used to track each goal

Section 2 – Evaluation Method

2.1 – Evaluation Questions

Include a statement of the questions the evaluation is designed to answer. At minimum, the evaluation questions should include:

- Is the program delivering the services and content according to the original grant?
- Is it accomplishing what it said it would accomplish in terms of program impact?
- What are the program’s strengths and weaknesses?
- How can the program improve?

2.2 – Types and Sources of Evaluation Data

Provide at least three types of data:

- Performance data about participants. This data covers attendance, grades, standardized tests, etc. Much of it is already collected through CoBro Consulting (Compass System).
- Survey data from school teachers, program staff, key partners, students, parents, and other stakeholders, as well as anecdotal information.
- Observation data recorded using a structured observation tool during one or more visits to the school site(s).

Section 3 – Evaluation Findings

3.1 – Data Presentation

Organize and present data to help answer the evaluation questions identified in Section 2. Describe briefly how the data was analyzed.

3.2 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Show how the data is relevant to the program goals listed in Section 1. Discuss how well the program is performing and what, if anything, needs to change (for example, the discussion may be presented in the form of program “strengths,” “challenges,” “recommendations,” and/or “key factors for success”).

Section 4 – Using the Evaluation

4.1 – Program Planning

Provide a brief description of the process by which evaluation results will be shared and used to achieve continuous improvement (i.e. how will the evaluation be incorporated into your program planning process? Will you meet with your staff to discuss? Will evaluator be involved? What stake holders will receive the evaluation report?).

4.2 – Reflection

How will the evaluation be used to update Annual Performance Reports and Principles of Effectiveness? How will the evaluation be used to strengthen, refine, and improve program operations?

Section 5 – Optional Appendices

5.1 Appendices may include:

- Observation records
- Site activity schedules
- Outreach activities
- Testimonials
- Performance data
- Other documents directly relevant to the evaluation process

Resources for Afterschool Evaluations:

- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory – Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation: Tools for Action. Web address: <http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/ost-tools.pdf>
- Harvard Family Research Project. Web address: <http://hfrp.org/>
- Harvard Family Research Project (2011). Measurement Tools for Evaluating Out-of-School Time Programs: An Evaluation Resource. Web address: <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/measurement-tools-for-evaluating-out-of-school-time-programs-an-evaluation-resource2#table1-1>
- Harvard Family Research Project (2011). Afterschool Evaluation 101: How to Evaluate an Expanded Learning Program. Web address: <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/afterschool-evaluation-101-how-to-evaluate-an-expanded-learning-program>

Examples of Afterschool Evaluation Reports:

- Community Education Partnership (CEP) of West Valley (2015). Final Report. Web address: http://centralpt.com/upload/545/19010_CEPPProgramEvaluation2015.pdf
- San Francisco Unified School District (2009-2010). Evaluation Report: Targeted Students After School Programs. Web address: http://web.sfusd.edu/Services/research_public/per_reports/Targeted%20After%20School%20Evaluation%20Report%202009-10.pdf

