



District Program Evaluation

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Summary

Key Observations

To mitigate bias in program selection, collaborate with district administrators to select high-priority programs to evaluate each year. At District H, department heads recommend programs for review to a program evaluation committee that includes the Director of Research and Evaluation and district administrators from the departments of Teaching and Learning and School Leadership. This committee scores all recommended programs across seven categories, such as alignment with strategic plan, program cost, and community and stakeholder interest. The committee then proposes evaluations for six to seven programs with the highest average scores, pending approval from the board and superintendent. This standardized approach allows departments to contribute to the evaluation process and thus mitigates potential misperceptions of program evaluation staff bias. By collecting feedback from departments, the program evaluation committee promotes collaboration with—and ultimately staff engagement in—the program evaluation process.

Customize the evaluation process for each program under review to account for program-specific characteristics. Program evaluation staff at most profiled districts develop customized evaluation processes, including customized success metrics, for each program under review based on program characteristics (e.g., program objectives, cost). Contacts at District C and District E note that, through a customized evaluation process, program evaluation staff can adapt the structure and scope of each evaluation to the context of the program. For example, program evaluation staff at District A, District D, District E, and District F create logic models during individual program evaluations that outline the relationships between program resources, activities, and desired outcomes.¹ Program evaluation staff then develop evaluation questions related to specific logic model components.

Most profiled districts task one to three staff members to conduct program evaluations. At profiled districts, district size correlates with the size of the program evaluation team. For example, administrators at District A, District C, District D, and District E—districts that serve between 14,000 and 91,000 students—dedicate one to three staff members to the program evaluation team. In contrast, administrators at District B—which serves 157,000 students—dedicate 13 to 16 staff members to the program evaluation team.

To maximize stakeholder education and engagement, use different formats to communicate program evaluation findings. Program evaluation staff at profiled districts use different formats to communicate evaluation results and recommendations to internal and external stakeholders. For example, program evaluation staff at multiple profiled districts create comprehensive reports to provide in-depth information on every step of the program evaluation process. In contrast, evaluation staff can create executive summaries to present a more concise, high-level-overview format for stakeholders who may possess varying levels of knowledge of and involvement in the program and have limited time to read a full, comprehensive report.

1) "W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide," W.K. Kellogg Foundation: 1, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>.

2) Program Selection

Program Type

Multiple Profiled Districts Prioritize Student-Facing, Academic Programs for Evaluation

Program evaluation staff at District B, District D, and District H primarily evaluate academic programs. Contacts at District H state that program evaluation staff do not evaluate programs related to facilities or operations. Contacts at District D note that the district's research office is housed in the Department of Instruction. Thus, program evaluation staff most frequently conduct evaluations of academic programs within this department.

Similarly, contacts at District B state that 70 percent of evaluations involve academic programs. Program evaluation staff at District B also prioritize evaluations for student-facing programs (academic or student support services) that receive Title I, II, III, and IV funding.

Examples of Programs Evaluated in 2018-2019 at District B²



District-Funded Programs

- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Early college high schools
- Dyslexia program
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- City Year (academic and behavioral intervention program)



Title-Funded Programs

- Academic tutoring program for English language learners (ELLs)
- Special education program for ELLs
- Early learning
- Refugee support services
- Summer programming
- College access program

Notably, program evaluation staff at District A also evaluate operational programs, in addition to academic programs. For example, program evaluation staff recently evaluated the teacher leave policy and implementation of the time and attendance system [Kronos](#).

Program Prioritization

Use Multiple Factors to Select High-Priority Programs to Evaluate

Program evaluation staff at District B, District D, and District H use different criteria to identify programs for evaluation, such as district and community interest and program cost.

2) "Program Evaluation," District B, accessed December 11, 2019.

Criteria to Select Programs for Evaluation at Profiled Districts

1

2

3

District and Community Interest	Program Cost and Scale	Program Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators at District A, District B, District G, and District H prioritize programs that align with the district's strategic plan. Administrators at District H consider cross-departmental interest in the outcomes of specific programs. Administrators at District A and District D consider community interest, such as community concerns about equity in access to a program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators at District B and District H prioritize program cost. For example, administrators at District B prioritize evaluation of Title-funded programs because these programs consistently receive significantly more money than district-funded or school-funded programs. Contacts note that administrators need to justify high program costs with strong outcomes. Administrators at District A and District B prioritize programs with upcoming funding decisions. Administrators at District H consider program scale (e.g., school-level, district-level) and availability of program effectiveness data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators at District A and District H consider the date of last program evaluation. Administrators at District H require program evaluation staff to evaluate all new programs in the first two years to assess initial outcomes.

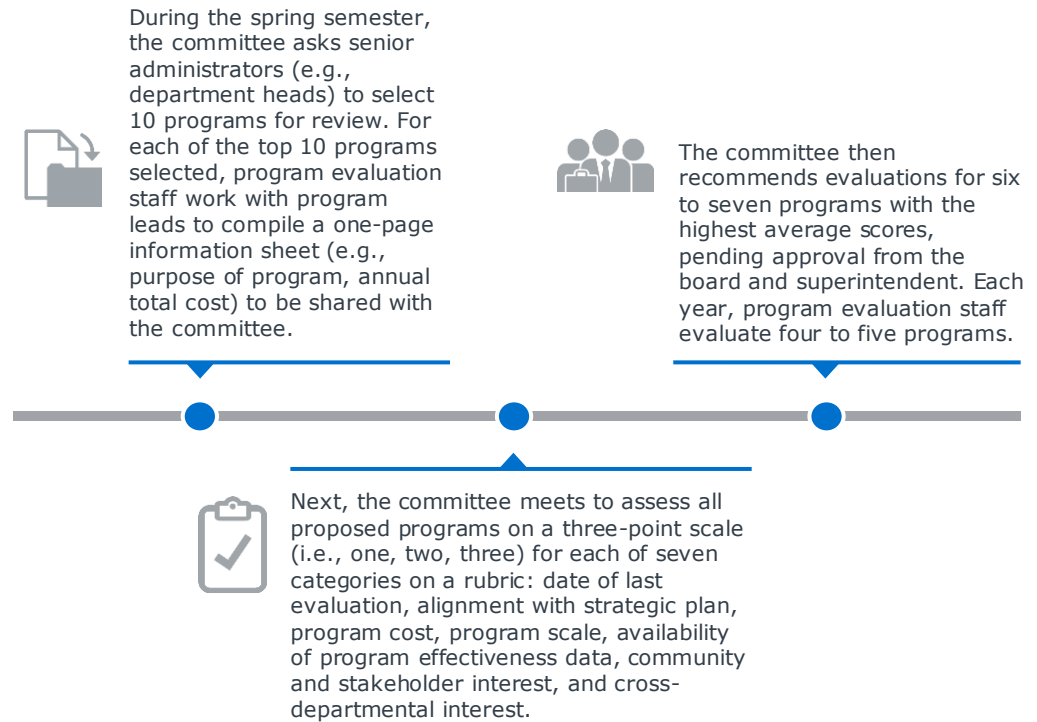
Collaborate with District Administrators to Identify Programs to Evaluate Each Year

To mitigate bias in program selection, program evaluation staff at District A, District D, and District H work with district administrators to select high-priority programs to evaluate each year. By collecting feedback from multiple stakeholders, program evaluation staff increase collaboration—and ultimately staff engagement—in the program evaluation process.

For example, at District D, the assistant superintendent of instruction, senior staff (e.g., directors and supervisors who report to assistant superintendents), school board, and program evaluation staff collaboratively identify programs to evaluate. Since the assistant superintendent of instruction participates in district-level committees (e.g., advisory committee to increase the achievement of minority students), they may also contribute topics surfaced by parent and teacher committee members—thus expanding the scope of feedback.

At District H, a program evaluation committee—comprising the Director of Research and Evaluation and district administrators from the departments of Teaching and Learning and School Leadership—collaborates with multiple school-level and district-level stakeholders to identify high-priority programs to evaluate each year.

Program Selection Process at District H



By using the above standardized approach, contacts at District H note that program evaluation staff effectively mitigate potential misperceptions of program selection bias by staff.

Evaluation Frequency

Staffing Capacity Impacts the Number and Frequency of Program Evaluations Each Year

Administrators at most profiled districts do not review programs on a fixed cycle (e.g., annual, biannual). Instead, administrators at all profiled districts—except District B—select two to five programs to evaluate each year. Contacts at most profiled districts highlight that district program evaluation offices do not maintain adequate staff to assess all programs regularly.

In contrast, administrators at District B dedicate a larger team—13 to 16 staff members—to the program evaluation process. As a result, program evaluation staff evaluate significantly more programs each year, compared with other profiled districts that have smaller staff numbers (for more information on program evaluation staffing at profiled districts, review **page 22**). For example, in 2018-2019, program evaluation staff at District B evaluated a total of 39 programs. While administrators at District B do not establish a fixed cycle for all programs, program evaluation staff do review Title-funded programs every three years because these programs receive significantly higher funding than other district programs. Contacts note that administrators must justify high program costs for Title-funded programs by regularly reporting on program outcomes.



Evaluate New and Existing Programs to Ensure Program Viability and Identify Opportunities for Improvement

Program evaluation staff at District B, District E, and District H evaluate both new and existing programs. Prior to 2007, program evaluation staff at District H only evaluated new programs to ensure strong implementation and confirm initial positive outcomes. In the 2007-2008 school year—during the national economic downturn—administrators added very few new programs. The superintendent decided to evaluate existing programs to improve use of limited educational funding. Thus, administrators added a new school board policy to expand program evaluation to existing programs to assess program viability (i.e. cost-effectiveness). Currently, administrators mandate that each new program (e.g., a new learning management system) undergo two consecutive years of evaluation.

3) Program Evaluation Process

Formal Framework

District H Formalized the Program Evaluation Process in a School Board Policy

At District H, administrators present a formal, in-house evaluation framework in the district's school board policy. The school board policy presents a "systematic approach" that administrators apply to "all educational programs and initiatives that impact students or staff that are currently in operation or being planned for implementation that operate with local resources." Administrators do not apply this policy to programs and initiatives funded solely by external grants or programs funded solely through school-based funds and managed by a specific school.³

Contacts at District H emphasize the importance of establishing a formal school board policy to communicate program evaluation expectations to program leads and other stakeholders. Through a formal policy, administrators mitigate perceptions of program selection bias, increase transparency of evaluation procedures, and convey a district-wide commitment to continuous improvement. Contacts note that—rather than select a preset framework—program evaluation staff designed the below framework to document the types of evaluations that staff were already conducting.

3) Evaluation of New and Existing Programs, District H, accessed December 11, 2019.

Program Evaluation Framework for New and Existing Programs at District H⁴

Program Type	Evaluation Objective
New	Year One: Implementation Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluates fidelity of program operation or implementation based on the program plan (e.g., program elements, staff selection, student selection)
	Year Two: Outcome Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses initial program outcomes (i.e., specifically reports on progress toward program goals)
Existing	Process Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to “Year One: Implementation Evaluation” (i.e., evaluates operation of program components)—but applies to existing programs
	Outcome Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines the extent to which the program meets goals and whether the program is effective at improving outcomes above those of students who do not participate in the program. Program evaluation staff use control groups to determine program effectiveness. Contacts note that a program that achieves its goals is not necessarily effective if individuals not in the program achieve the same, or stronger, outcomes (e.g., higher performance on the state assessment).
	Comprehensive Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses all aspects of the program including operation of program components (i.e., Process Evaluation) as well as attainment of identified program outcomes and program effectiveness (i.e., Outcome Evaluation) May span several years for a Multi-Year Evaluation. Example: Program evaluation staff recently conducted a multi-year evaluation of the district’s school-based counseling program. They focused on academic counseling during the first year, college and career counseling the second year, and social-emotional counseling the third year.
	Evaluation Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts a follow-up analysis of data after an evaluation has been completed Focuses on specific areas that could benefit from additional monitoring Example: At the end of a 2017-2018 comprehensive evaluation that evaluated the district’s charter school, program evaluation staff recommended conducting an evaluation update in 2018-2019. In the comprehensive evaluation, program evaluation staff only had available data for one graduating cohort, which meant that staff could only evaluate some long-term program goals (e.g., graduation rate, degree attainment, college plans) with one cohort. For the 2018-2019 evaluation update, program evaluation staff gathered data from an additional cohort. Administrators also investigated previously assessed areas (e.g., personalized learning plans), where administrators noted a decline in student and teacher perceptions.

4) “Program Evaluation Policy and Process,” District H, provided November 14, 2019; “Program Evaluation/Research,” District H, accessed December 19, 2019.

At the end of evaluations of both new and existing programs, program evaluation staff at District H recommend one of the following:

- Continue the program without modifications
- Continue the program with modifications (with recommended modifications included)
- Expand the program
- Discontinue the program

Contacts at District H note that, for most programs, program evaluation staff deliver a recommendation to continue the program with modifications.

Customized Process

Most Profiled Districts Customize the Evaluation Process for Programs Under Review

Program evaluation staff at most profiled districts develop customized evaluation processes, including customized success metrics, for each program under review based on program characteristics (e.g., objective, scope). Contacts at District C and District E note that, through a customized evaluation process, program evaluation staff can effectively adapt the structure and scope of each evaluation to the context of the program.

For example, at District C, program evaluation staff recently conducted a comprehensive review of the district's gifted and talented program that combined an "audit" and an "evaluation." For the audit component, program evaluation staff benchmarked the district's program against best practices and standards for gifted programs across the U.S. For the evaluation component, program evaluation staff gathered and analyzed qualitative program data (e.g., perception data) by conducting observations of gifted and talented classrooms, interviewing students in gifted and talented classes from elementary to high school, and examining the curricula with teachers and principals.

Use External Evaluation Principles to Inform District's Program Evaluation Process

In this report, an evaluation **framework** is a formal, structured (i.e., step-by-step) evaluation approach that administrators apply to specific programs or to all programs. In contrast, **guiding principles** are recommendations from research that administrators use to informally guide customized evaluation processes.

To guide their customized program evaluation approach, program evaluation staff at multiple profiled districts use evaluation guiding principles from external organizations. Drawing from guiding principles presented below, program evaluation staff overarchingly seek to engage program stakeholders to map out the theoretical function of a program, create evaluation objectives, and identify success metrics.

Throughout this process, program evaluation staff aim to ultimately maximize the relevance of evaluation findings to each program.

Program evaluation staff at District A, District B, and District E use guiding principles developed by the [American Evaluation Association](#) and evaluation recommendations by the [Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation](#). Program evaluation staff at District A also reference the [CDC Framework for Program Evaluation](#) for program evaluation in public health (which broadly applies to education).

Select External Evaluation Principles Based on Recommendations from the Literature

At District A, prior to 2015, schools and departments would report annually data aligned with the district's strategic plan to the school board. In 2015, the school board decided to evaluate programs more strategically. In response, district administrators established a new, half-time position for a staff member to conduct program evaluations. Through classes and literature reviews, this staff member learned about external evaluation guiding principles from the American Evaluation Committee, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and decided to apply these to the district's program evaluation process. By following industry-recognized external principles, administrators can help increase the methodological rigor of evaluations.

Evaluation Guiding Principles Used by Profiled Districts⁵

Organization

American Evaluation Association



Overview of Principles

- **Systematic Inquiry:** "Evaluators conduct data-based inquiries that are thorough, methodical, and contextually relevant."
- **Competence:** "Evaluators provide skilled professional services to stakeholders."
- **Integrity:** "Evaluators behave with honesty and transparency in order to ensure the integrity of the evaluation."
- **Respect for People:** "Evaluators honor the dignity, well-being, and self-worth of individuals and acknowledge the influence of culture within and across groups."
- **Common Good and Equity:** "Evaluators strive to contribute to the common good and advancement of an equitable and just society."

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation provides a checklist of 30 standards related to these categories that district administrators can use to evaluate the district's program evaluation process.

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation



- **Utility** (e.g., timely and appropriate reporting)
- **Feasibility** (e.g., effective project management strategies, efficient use of resources)
- **Proprietary** (e.g., clarity and fairness in evaluation, transparency of findings)
- **Accuracy** (e.g., justified conclusions, sound analyses)
- **Accountability** (e.g., evaluation documentation)

The CDC offers Evaluation Resources, including guidance on how to assemble an evaluation team, address time and cost constraints, develop logic models, and create an effective evaluation report.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Framework for Program Evaluation



Standards:

- Endorses standards by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (above)

Steps of Program Evaluation:

- Engage stakeholders, describe the program, focus evaluation design, gather credible evidence, justify conclusions, ensure use and share lessons

5) "American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles For Evaluators," American Evaluation Association, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>; "Program Evaluation Standards," Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://icsee.org/program/>; "Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health," Center for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/eval/>.

Consult External, Program-Specific Evaluation Frameworks to Develop Evaluation Questions for Specific Programs


Program evaluation staff at District A, District D, and District H use external evaluation frameworks—when available—to create evaluation questions, select customized success metrics, and/or identify appropriate data collection methods for specific types of programs under review, such as professional development programs. By adapting external frameworks, program evaluation staff leverage industry-recognized expertise and reduce time spent on building a new process from scratch.

Although program evaluation staff at District H use their own formal, district-created evaluation framework, contacts note that occasionally program evaluation staff do adopt external frameworks—such as Guskey’s for a professional development program—for programs that do not fit into the existing district framework.

For example, at District D and District H, program evaluation staff apply Thomas R. Guskey’s [evaluation framework for professional development](#) to the districts’ professional development programs. This framework presents five hierarchical levels that address increasingly higher-order outcomes of professional development.⁶ Recently, program evaluation staff at District D used this framework to evaluate [Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners \(ExC-ELL\)](#)—a three-day training series for middle and high school teachers of core content areas. Specifically, program evaluation staff used Guskey’s framework to develop evaluation questions and identify appropriate data collection methods.

6) Guskey, Thomas R, Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development (Educational Leadership, 2002), 45-51.
https://pdo.ascd.org/LMSCourses/PD130C010M/media/Leading_Prof_Learning_M6_Reading1.pdf.

Application of Guskey's Evaluation Framework to ExC-ELL Professional Development Workshop at District D⁷

Guskey's Evaluation Objectives	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods/Success Metrics
 Participants' Reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the teachers and principals satisfied with the quality of the workshop training? • Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys of middle and high school teachers and principals on the quality of the training sessions
 Participants' Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the principals, coaches, and central office administrators provide sufficient support to teachers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation checklist for effective school-wide implementation of the ExC-ELL model • The checklist tracks progress on 14 core components of the ExC-ELL model. Checklist components include the frequency of observed instructional strategies and the presence of follow-up professional learning opportunities
 Organization Support and Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the English Language (EL) and core teachers work collaboratively toward an effective implementation by co-planning lessons, sharing successful problem-solving strategies, and coaching each other? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observations (using an ExC-ELL-provided checklist) to determine the extent to which teachers implement the ExC-ELL instructional strategies in the classroom
 Participants' Use of New Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the teachers demonstrate fidelity in the use of ExC-ELL vocabulary, reading, and/or writing instructional strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student performance on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)'s Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) exam
 Student Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did ELLs demonstrate growth on district outcome measures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student performance on state standards of learning exams

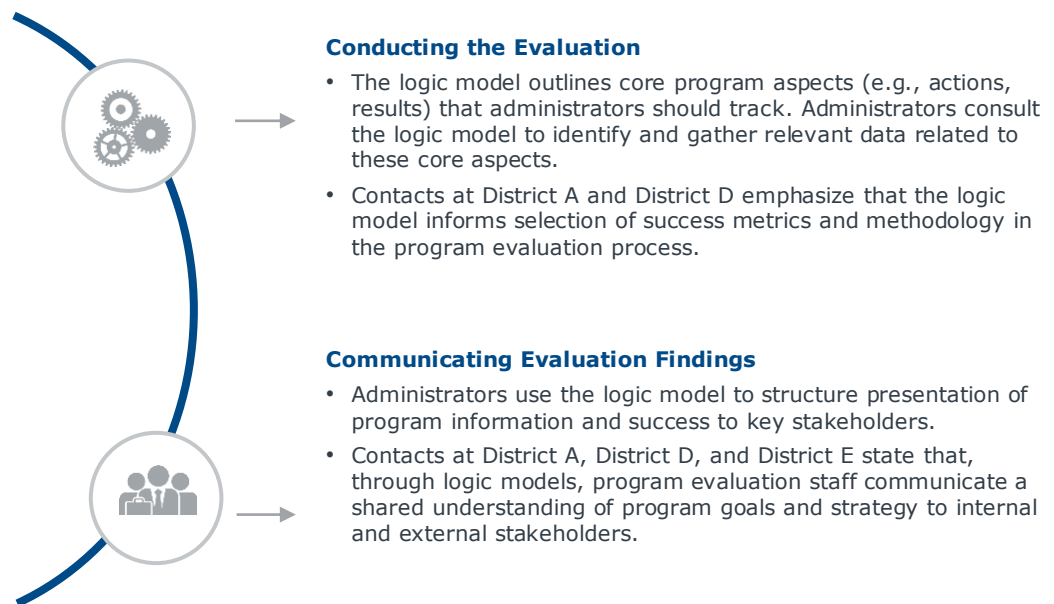
7) Thomas R Guskey, *Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development* (Educational Leadership, 2002), 45-51, https://pdo.ascd.org/LMSCourses/PD130C010M/media/Leading_Prof_Learning_M6_Reading1.pdf; "Program Evaluation Results: Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners," District D, accessed December 11, 2019.

Use Logic Models to Establish a Shared Understanding of Program Strategy and Guide Evaluation Questions

Program evaluation staff at District A, District D, District E, and District F create logic models at the beginning of individual program evaluations. Logic models outline the relationships between program resources, activities, and desired outcomes—essentially, how program stakeholders believe the program will work.⁸ Program evaluation staff create logic models to clearly establish expectations of how a program addresses a specific challenge or need. Through logic models, program evaluation staff “create shared understanding of...program goals and methodology” with program staff and district administrators by “relating activities to project outcomes.”⁹ Specifically, program evaluation staff at profiled districts create evaluation questions based on logic model components (e.g., inputs, outcomes).

Program evaluation staff at District A, District D, and District E work with program leads and/or district-level administrators to develop logic models. This collaborative approach boosts stakeholder investment in the program evaluation process. Since program leads help articulate program goals, and program goals shape evaluation questions and success metrics, program leads are more likely to find evaluation findings useful (e.g., aligned with their understanding of the program). Contacts at profiled districts assert that logic models increase the likelihood that evaluations provide actionable recommendations tied to specific, agreed-upon program outcomes.

Value of Logic Model at Different Evaluation Stages¹⁰



Program evaluation staff at District A reference the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s logic model for the district’s program evaluations.¹¹

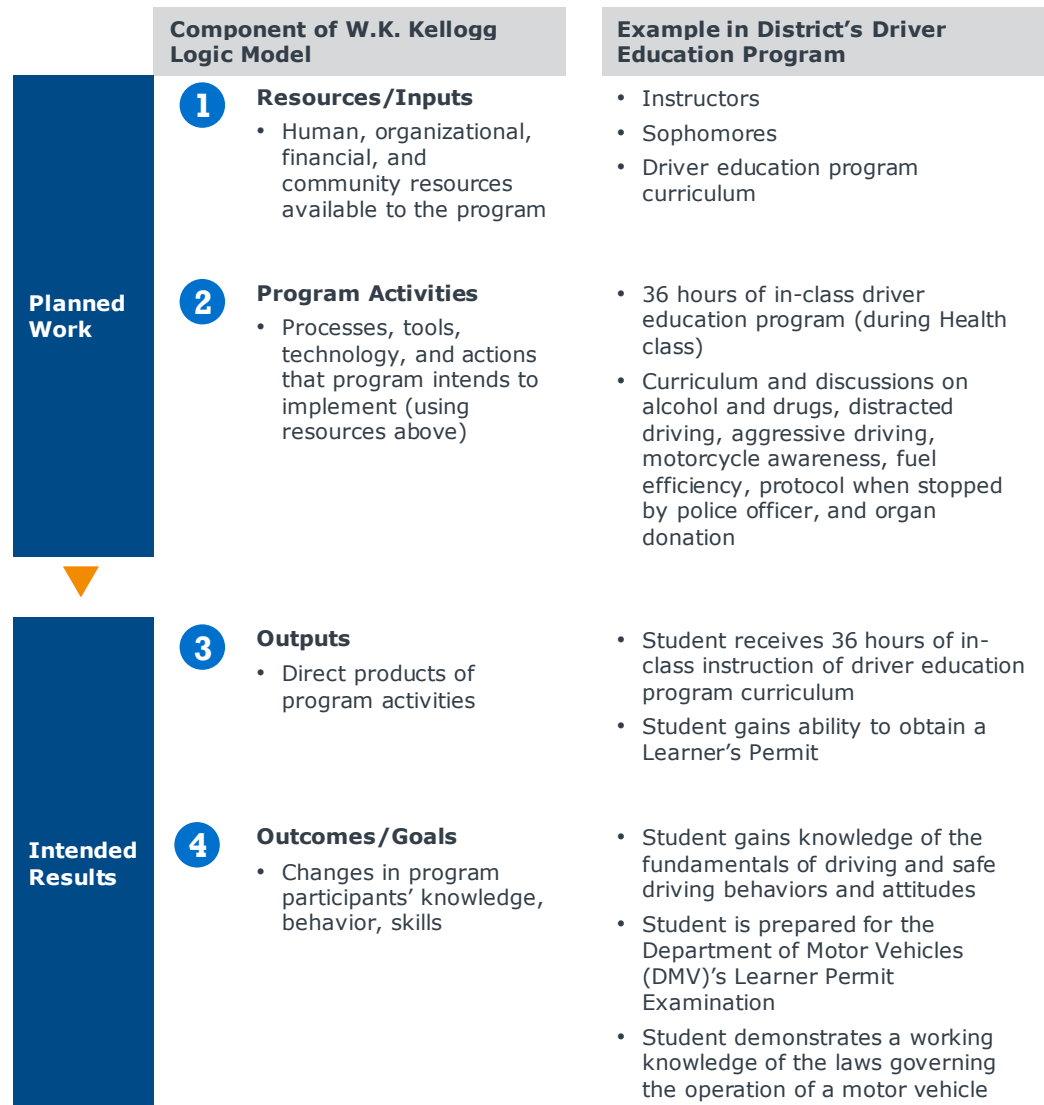
8) “W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation: 1, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>.

9) “W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation: 5, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>.

10) Ibid.

11) “W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>; Thomas R Guskey, *Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development* (Educational Leadership, 2002), 45–51.

Application of W.K. Kellogg's Logic Model to Driver Education Program at District A¹²



12) "W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide," W.K. Kellogg Foundation: 2, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>; Evaluation of Student Driver Education Program, District A, accessed December 10, 2019.

Use Logic Models to Create Evaluation Questions and Develop Success Metrics for Programs

Program evaluation staff at profiled districts customize success metrics for each program evaluation. For example, program evaluation staff at District A, District D, and District E identify program-specific logic model components (e.g., inputs, outputs, outcomes) and develop evaluation questions related to those components. For example, to evaluate program inputs, program evaluation staff might design a question on whether students most in need of services can access the program under review. Program evaluation staff then select success metrics and methodology (e.g., data sources) to answer each evaluation question. Thus, program evaluation staff differentiate success metrics not solely across program types, but across all programs.

For example, program evaluation staff at District A—using the above logic model—selected the following evaluation questions based on program inputs and outputs, which then informed success metrics below.

Development of Success Metrics for Evaluation of Driver Education Program at District A¹³

District administrators designed the driver education program to encourage all students, including underrepresented students (e.g., Black, Hispanic), to obtain the Learner Permit. Program evaluators sought to determine if underrepresented students participated in the driver education program at high rates.

Logic Model Component

- **Input:** Students (sophomores)

Evaluation Question

- Is the driver education program serving the intended audience?

Success Metric

- Number of students who participated in the program, compared to the number of students who were eligible to participate by demographic

Data Source

- PowerSchool: number and demographics of students who participated in the program

¹³ Evaluation of Student Driver Education Program, District A, accessed December 10, 2019.

Create Research Proposals to Establish Program Evaluation Objectives and Increase Report Utilization

Program evaluation staff at District B, District C, and District E create research proposals at the beginning of the program evaluation process. At all three profiled districts, program evaluation staff design research proposals to communicate program goals, evaluation objectives/questions, and methodology (e.g., sources of data, data analysis techniques). Administrators and program stakeholders review the proposal prior to evaluation launch and confirm the approach aligns with their understanding of program strategy and goals. Thus, research proposals align program administrators' and evaluators' views of the evaluation's purpose and methodology, which may increase the likelihood that program administrators will find evaluation results useful.

Notably, administrators at District B also use proposals to create accountability for evaluation timelines—proposals include internal deadlines for report drafts. At District B, administrators generally request that program evaluation staff complete evaluation reports by the end of August. Contacts note, however, that sometimes evaluators would wait until the summer (when testing data become available) to begin drafting program evaluation reports. Contacts emphasize the challenge of conducting multiple rounds of edits on report drafts—for multiple program evaluations—in a very limited window of time (i.e., between June and August). By building in progress checkpoints in advance of the summer (through draft deadlines), contacts at District B state that program evaluation staff ultimately produce higher-quality reports and thus more useful recommendations.

Structure of Research Proposal for 2019-2020 Evaluation of Special Education Program at District B¹⁴

Evaluation Team



- Evaluator, program evaluation manager, program evaluation executive director, assistant superintendent

Description and Purpose



- Program overview
- Evaluation goals (e.g., "Report trends in academic achievement for students served by special education and applicable comparison groups, including the state and other large urban districts, as appropriate")

Major Evaluation Questions and Methodology (Example)



- **Question:** What are trends in the academic performance of students served by special education?
- **Sample:** All special education students enrolled in the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 school years and comparison groups (e.g., general education)
- **Data Collection:** State assessments and end-of-course data for each year, Measuring Academic Performance (MAP) data from the 2019-20 beginning- and end-of-year periods
- **Analysis:** State assessments/end-of-course data: one-and two-year trends in the percentage of students at the Approaches Grade Level or Above performance standard; rates of students at each state assessment progress level (i.e., limited, expected, accelerated). MAP: growth among groups. Results will be aggregated by subject and grade level and compared to state and other urban districts.

Cost and Funding Source (Example)



- Funds from a special education grant will support this evaluation.

The **context draft** comprises background information on the program, demographic data of program participants, evaluation questions, methodologies, and initial results. The **process draft** includes everything except for summer assessment data, summer data analyses, and final recommendations.



Products and Deadlines (Example)

Product	Due to	Date
Research proposal	-	Oct 30, 2019
Context draft	Executive director	Jan 31, 2020
Process draft	Manager	May 22, 2020
Final draft	Executive director	July 16, 2020
Final report	Assistant superintendent	Aug 31, 2020

Communication of Results

To Maximize Stakeholder Education and Engagement, Communicate Program Evaluation Findings in Different Formats

Program evaluation staff across multiple profiled districts use different formats—comprehensive reports, slide presentations, and executive summaries—to

14) "Project Plan: 2019-2020 Evaluation of Special Education," District B, provided December 2, 2019.

communicate program evaluation findings to internal and external stakeholders. Contacts at profiled districts state that each format presents distinct advantages.

Mediums of Communication of Program Evaluation Findings at Profiled Districts



Comprehensive Report

Structure

- Program evaluation staff at District D produce reports of 15 to 25 pages.
- While program evaluation staff at District B produce significantly longer reports (e.g., up to 90 pages), contacts note that administrators would like to aim for 20-25 pages in the future.
- Reports typically consist of multiple sections related to program background, evaluation objectives and success metrics, methodology, results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Audience

- All internal and external stakeholders can access comprehensive reports.
- Often, program evaluation staff at District B and District D districts upload comprehensive reports to the district website for public access.

Value

- Reports provide detailed information on every step of the program evaluation process, such as methodology (e.g., survey questions asked) and results (e.g., data from every cohort).



Slide Presentation

Structure

- Program evaluation staff at District D create PowerPoint presentations of 20-25 slides.
- Program evaluation staff at District G create PowerPoint presentations of 5-7 slides for a 10-minute presentation.
- Slides typically focus on key findings and recommendations.

Audience

- At multiple profiled districts, program evaluation staff present slides to school board members, district-level administrators (e.g., superintendent), program leads, and/or community partners that contribute program funding.

Value

- Presentations offer a more interactive way for program evaluation staff to present summarized findings and recommendations to a live audience of key stakeholders.



Executive Summary

Structure

- Program evaluation staff at both District B and District D create briefs of 2-4 pages that summarize program evaluation findings.

Audience

- All internal and external stakeholders can access executive summaries.
- Program evaluation staff at both profiled districts often publish executive summaries on the district website.

Value

- Executive summaries provide a more digestible format for stakeholders who may possess varying levels of knowledge of and involvement in the program and who may have limited time.

At District B, program evaluation staff create an executive summary for each program evaluation report.

Structure of Four-Page Executive Summary of 2018-2019 Evaluation of Summer Programs at District B¹⁵



Background

- Overview of summer programs (i.e., academic, enrichment) offered by the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Department
- **Length:** half-page



Methodology

- Analyses used to gather quantitative data (e.g., demographic characteristics, EL status)
- Protocol used (e.g., student focus group interviews, parent surveys, evaluator observations) to gather qualitative data (i.e., perceptions about the program)
- **Length:** less than a quarter-page



Funding

- Allocation of funding to programs
- **Length:** less than a quarter-page



Results

- Explanation of student eligibility, purpose of program, site location(s)
- Academic Programs: Summary of quantitative data (e.g., student enrollment rates, course-passing rates, retention rates, grade trends)
- Enrichment Programs: Summary of qualitative data (e.g., student engagement, perception of teaching style, students' self-perception of social-emotional (SEL) competencies)
- **Length:** two pages



Recommendations

- Six recommendations (one paragraph each) focused on areas such as community partnerships, affordability and access, and teacher professional development
- **Length:** less than one page



References

- Bibliography
- **Length:** half-page

15) "AAG Summer Learning," District B, provided December 2, 2019.

4) Implementation

Staffing

Most Profiled Districts Designate One to Three Staff Members to Conduct Program Evaluations

At profiled districts, district size (e.g., student enrollment) correlates with the size of the program evaluation team. For example, administrators at District A, District C, District D, and District E—districts that serve between 14,000 and 91,000 students—dedicate one to three staff members to the program evaluation team. In contrast, administrators at District B—which serves 157,000 students—dedicate 13 to 16 staff members to the program evaluation team.

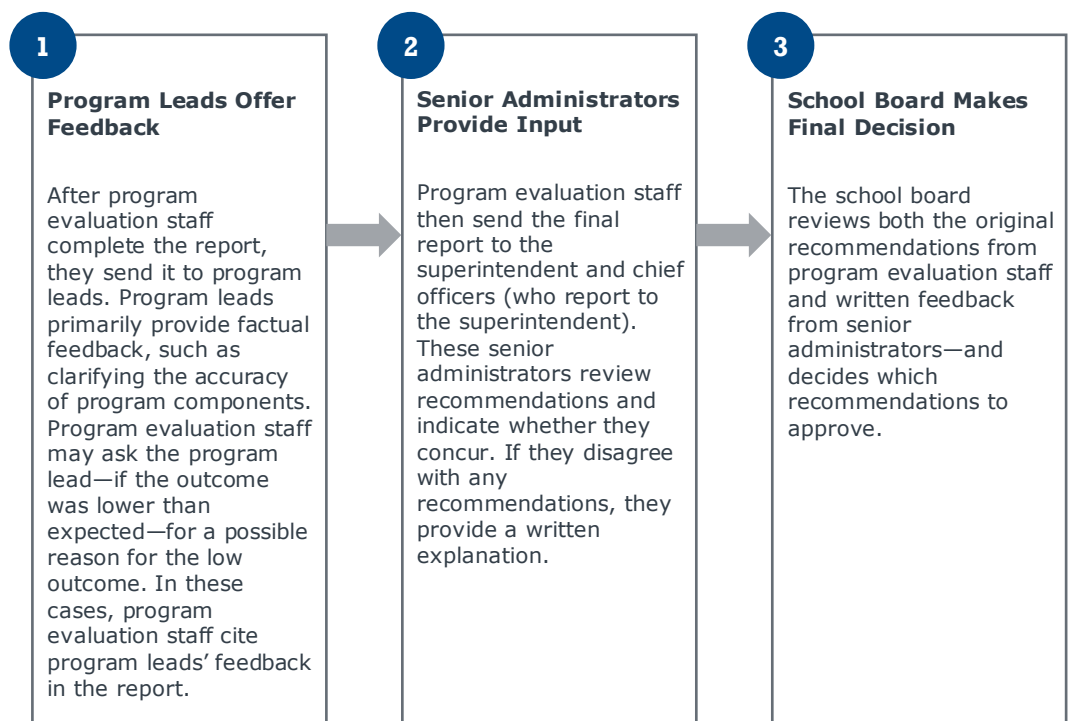
Because administrators at District B employ more program evaluation staff members, administrators designate staff to specialized roles. For example, the executive director oversees three program evaluation managers, who each manage a team of three to four evaluators. These evaluators collect and analyze data and write the program evaluation reports. The executive director oversees the entire program evaluation process; this director allocates program evaluations to each manager, reviews select drafts of each program evaluation report, and provides general support to the program evaluation managers.

Increasing Staff Engagement

Gather Feedback from Program Leads and Administrators on Initial Recommendations

Program evaluation staff at District H solicit input from program leads and district-level administrators before presenting final recommendations to the school board. Contacts note that the below process creates opportunity for other stakeholders—beyond program evaluation staff—to contribute their knowledge of the program to the evaluation process and to provide feedback on recommendations.

Process of Developing and Presenting Program Evaluation Recommendations at District H



Contacts at District H state that administrators rarely significantly disagree with program evaluation staff’s recommendations. However, contacts state that by using the above process, program evaluation staff provide opportunity for different stakeholders to contribute to the final recommendations—which increases investment in continuous improvement of the program. If program leads feel that they contributed to continuous improvement recommendations, they may be more likely to implement these recommendations with fidelity.

Provide Explicit Training to Educate Staff on Program Evaluation Process

To increase transparency in the program evaluation process and to boost staff engagement with the process, program evaluation staff at District B and District F provide training on the evaluation process to administrators. At District B, program evaluation staff recently delivered a training to the Teaching and Learning department (programs within the Teaching and Learning department comprise the majority of evaluated programs each year) and plan to deliver a follow-up training next spring. In the training, program evaluation staff presented evaluation guiding principles from the American Evaluation Association and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation.

Contacts at District D plan to create a self-study manual that describes the program evaluation process (e.g., logic model development) to help staff members understand the purpose and function of evaluations. Contacts envision that administrators will give the self-study manual to new staff during their onboarding process. Contacts note that such a document would also contribute to the institutional memory of the district, so that administrators can track how the program evaluation process evolves over time.

Frame the Program Evaluation Process as Continuous Improvement to Mitigate Perceptions of Punitive Action and Promote a Culture of Innovation

Contacts at District A, District C, District D, and District F state that when administrators decide to evaluate a program, program leads and individuals who operate the program on a day-to-day basis often view the evaluation as punitive. Individuals may feel apprehensive in response to the uncertainty of program evaluation outcomes. To mitigate apprehension, program evaluation staff at District A and District D employ an assets-based approach when communicating with program leads. Contacts at District D state that program evaluation staff verbally communicate to program leads that the goal of program evaluation is to showcase program strengths and identify areas of growth and innovation (instead of identifying problems and unmet needs).

Program evaluation staff at District A and District F, in addition to conducting program evaluations, support school-level administrators in school improvement plans. Contacts at both districts note that this dual role helps reinforce a culture of innovation over a culture of apprehension.

Accountability and Assessment

Establish Accountability Procedures to Encourage Program Leads to Execute Evaluation Recommendations

Program evaluation staff at District D and District H gauge the effectiveness of the program evaluation process by the extent to which program leads and stakeholders understand the strengths and areas of growth of the program and follow up on recommendations. Contacts at District D note that, occasionally, program leads develop checklists to plan progress towards executing evaluation recommendations. To increase accountability and encourage a culture of continuous improvement, program evaluation staff at District H use the following three strategies.

Strategies to Ensure Accountability and Promote Continuous Improvement at District H

- ☒ **Indicate the department responsible** for executing the recommendation, for each recommendation proposed in the program evaluation report. Thus, each stakeholder understands their specific role in program improvement.
- ☒ After the school board approves the final recommendations, **follow up with program leads** to communicate recommendations and answer any questions
- ☒ **Describe program leads' actions** in response to recommendations from the prior evaluation in a dedicated section. Program leads may be more likely to follow through on evaluation recommendations if they must report action steps taken in the next evaluation process.

Survey Administrators Who Oversee Programs to Gather Feedback on the Program Evaluation Process

To assess the effectiveness of the program evaluation process, contacts at multiple profiled districts recommend that program evaluation staff survey internal stakeholders. For example, program evaluation staff at District F recently began to administer a survey to program stakeholders (e.g., department head, program lead, administrators in the Curriculum and Instruction department) at the end of the evaluation process. In the survey, administrators explain their understanding of

program evaluation findings and how they aim to use the findings to improve the program.

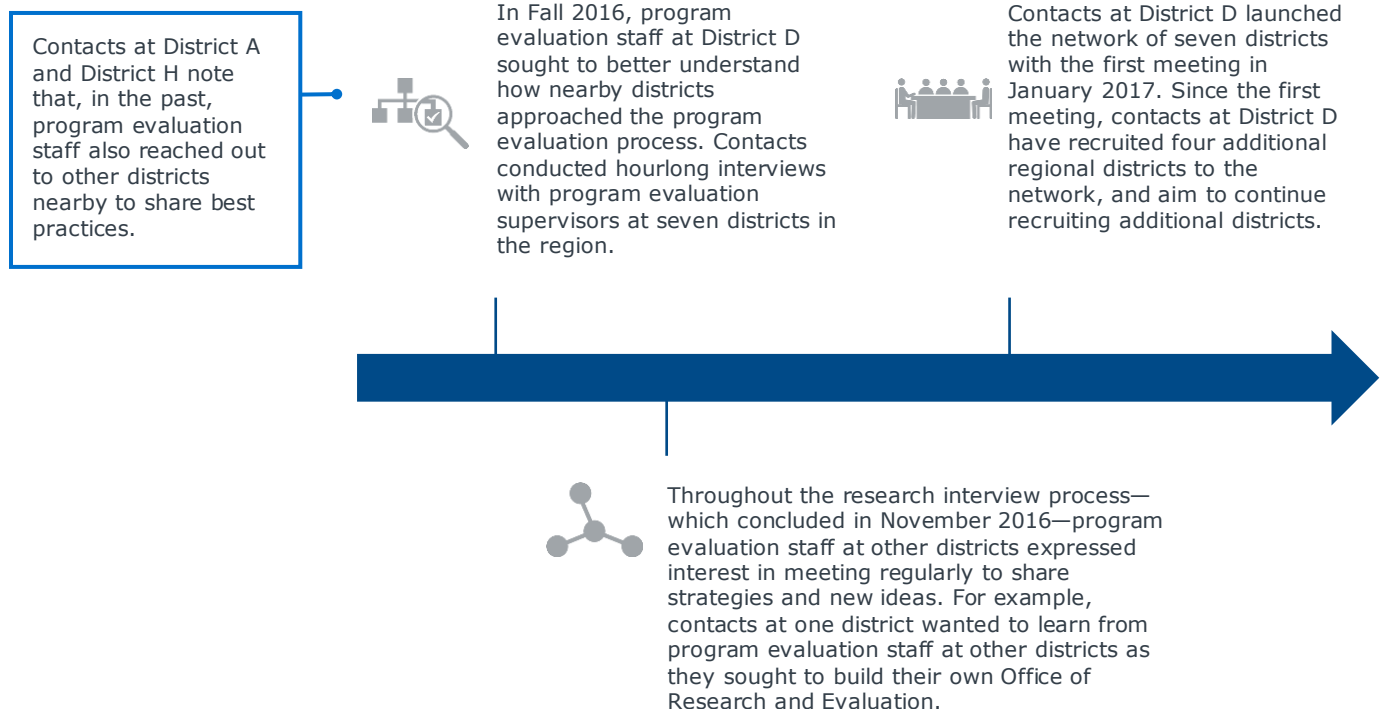
At District B, program evaluation staff recently solicited in-person feedback from the Teaching and Learning Department—which oversees 70 percent of programs evaluated each year—during a training on the evaluation process. Contacts note that program evaluation staff received overall positive feedback. For example, administrators appreciated the evidence-based recommendations and executive summaries as more digestible versions of the reports. Administrators requested that program evaluation reports use more data visualization (e.g., infographics, charts) to further increase readability. Contacts at District B state that program evaluation staff plan to develop a more formal, regular process for gathering feedback.

Continuous Improvement

Benchmark and Share Ideas with Other Districts to Hone Program Evaluation Process

Administrators at District D established a regional network of 11 districts—including District E—that regularly meets to exchange best practices in program evaluation and workshop challenges. Contacts at District D state that, through the network, member districts periodically assess the effectiveness of their program evaluation process through benchmarking.

District D's Timeline to Establish Regional Program Evaluation Network



Features of District D's Program Evaluation Network



Meeting Logistics

- **Frequency:** The network convenes twice a year, generally for four-hour-long meetings on a school day.
- **Location:** Member school districts alternate hosting and facilitating the meeting. The hosting school district organizes an online poll to survey members' availability for the meeting. Program evaluation staff at District E will host the next meeting.
- **Participants:** Program evaluation supervisors and specialists from member districts attend meetings.



Meeting Structure

- **Topic:** Hosts structure the meeting around a specific topic and aim to make meetings as interactive as possible through group discussions.
- **Guest Speakers:** Hosts often invite guest speakers from partner universities to present on the topic. For example, a representative from a local university recently presented on how to use multiple datasets to perform predictive analytics.



Meeting Topics

Contacts at District D state that example topics include how to:

- Design surveys and questionnaires to gather perceptual data,
- Improve data visualization to increase utilization of report findings,
- Use predictive analytics to project outcomes of a proposed change to a program,
- Increase collaboration in the evaluation process (e.g., work with program leads to create logic model for evaluation),
- Understand implications of state and federal policy changes' (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)) on program evaluation processes



Online Consultations

- The network also offers online consultations, in which a member district submits a specific program evaluation question (e.g., climate surveys) and another district responds to their question. Program evaluation staff at the two districts workshop the question or challenge through a conference call via Skype.
- Contacts at District D state that online consultations exemplify network support outside of biannual meetings.

Contacts at District D report that network meetings help evaluation staff improve their program evaluation process. For example, administrators used information from meetings to develop training material for staff on evaluative thinking.

As an alternative to establishing a new network, contacts at District D recommend that program evaluation staff can seek existing professional organizations and networks dedicated to program evaluation. For example, the [Oregon Program Evaluators Network \(OPEN\)](https://oregoneval.org/about/)—founded in 1997 as an affiliate of the AEA—welcomes professionals (e.g., universities, non-profits) who are involved with or interested in program evaluation. OPEN's mission is to "provide a regional, interdisciplinary forum for professional development, networking, and exchange of practical, methodological, and theoretical knowledge in the field of evaluation" through training, professional development opportunities, and networking opportunities.¹⁶

16) "About OPEN," Oregon Program Evaluators Network (OPEN), accessed December 11, 2019, <https://oregoneval.org/about/>.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenges

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

1. What program evaluation method/model do contacts districts use?
2. How did contacts districts select their program evaluation method/model?
3. When did contact districts implement this method/model?
4. To what types of programs and/or initiatives do contact districts apply the evaluation method/model?
5. What success metrics do contact districts use to evaluate district programs?
 - a. How did contact districts select these specific metrics?
 - b. How do contact districts differentiate success metrics across program types?
 - c. How do contact districts use the program evaluation method/model to promote innovation and continuous improvement in individual programs?
6. What staff at contact districts execute and oversee the program evaluation process?
7. How often do contact districts conduct program evaluations? Why?
8. How do contact districts communicate program evaluation findings to internal and external stakeholders?
9. How do contact districts increase staff engagement with the program evaluation method/model?
10. Do contact districts assess the effectiveness of their program evaluation method/model? If so, how?

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Research
Parameters

The Forum interviewed district-level program evaluation staff at the following districts. Profiled districts are EAB partners and/or articulate their program evaluation process online.

A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	Region	Approximate Enrollment
District A	Mid-Atlantic	14,000
District B	South	157,000
District C	South	76,000
District D	Mid-Atlantic	81,000
District E	Mid-Atlantic	91,000
District F	Pacific West	60,000
District G	Midwest	28,000
District H	Mid-Atlantic	69,000