Evaluation Challenges and Innovations in NSF-Funded ATE Centers

Amy M. Gullickson, PhD
Western Michigan University
AEA Conference, San Antonio, TX
November 12, 2010

Agenda

- Mainstreaming Evaluation
- Research Process
- Challenges
- Common Historical Factors
- Integrating Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Questions
Mainstreaming Evaluation
The integration of systematic evaluation into organizational culture and practices

Mainstreaming Evaluation
- Continuous engagement*
- Owned organizational value*
- Internal and external
- Varied purposes and uses

*Sanders, 2002
### The Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Identify ATE centers likely to be mainstreaming evaluation</td>
<td>ATE survey responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explore leadership, culture, capabilities, systems, structures, history, and practices related to evaluation in those centers</td>
<td>In-depth case studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Common Historical Factors

- **External requirement**
- **Data use → data valuing**
- **Evaluation champion**

*Katz, Sutherland and Earl, 2002; Sutherland, 2004
† Cousins, Goh and Clark, 2006
Integrating Evaluation
Successful strategies and innovations

- Project mapping
- Collaborative relationships
- Parsimonious design
- Web-based platforms
Project mapping

- Evaluation questions and responsibilities mapped alongside project goals, objectives, and milestones
- Evaluator conducts quarterly implementation audit with staff
- Evaluation efforts prioritized based on program needs
- Staff members work with evaluator to ensure evaluative data is specific and useful in their areas of responsibility

Collaborative relationships

- Schedule regular communication to get ideas and feedback
- Piggyback advisory committees onto other professional events
- Shorter, more frequent surveys
- Use the Listening-Learning Loop
Listening-Learning Loop

Reflect and articulate

Assemble experts

Ask questions

Listen to answers, dialogue

Reflect on answers, interpret

Respond

Report*
Parsimonious design

Instruments

- Items for improvement (specific) and outcome (general)
- Use the same outcome items across programs and years
- Pre-test items on course/workshop applications
  (i) place participants appropriately,
  (ii) create high performing teams, and
  (iii) serve as baseline data

Web-based platforms

- Rapid feedback during events
- Materials dissemination
- Participant and advisory committee surveys
- Paper responses entered into web-platform to centralize data cache
- Survey forms and responses in a single location, accessible via internet
- Registration for web-based services enables long-term tracking for follow-up
Challenge and Opportunity

Contextual Variations
- Clarity of organizational purpose
- Organizational structure and capabilities
- Understanding of and value placed on evaluation

Role of evaluator

Questions
References


