Evaluators' Responses to AER Template:
Summary of themes

Purposes of the AER[1]:

Per Evaluation Manual (referenced by RFP):

- **Inform program managers** of program successes and needed improvements.
- For NYSED [and RCs] to **identify program technical assistance** needs [and to inform RC's during **monitoring visits**]
- "*The State Evaluators will work with the state to indicate what needs to be reported on the AER*"; this process will result in a **"template" to be appended** to the evaluation manual by the beginning of January.
- [p. 38]: "New York State is also requiring evaluators to **provide grantees** with two narrative reports, one Interim Evaluation Report and one Annual Evaluation Report each year. Evaluation first and foremost should be useful to the program managers at all levels of the system…
  The Annual Report's primary function is to present findings on the degree to which program objectives, both the implementation objectives and the outcome objectives were met. This report should include the methodology used in the study, the findings of the data analysis and interpretation, and any recommendations or conclusions that are pertinent."

Per requests from NYSED:

- To help program staff become better informed **consumers of evaluation**
- To identify patterns of **strengths and challenges**
    - In program implementation
    - In program evaluation
    - In communication of findings
- To identify preliminary trends in how well NYS is doing **meeting objectives**
- To enable NYSED to provide state-level findings to USED.

Purpose of Proposed New Format for Y2 Template
- In Y1 reports, required content was very difficult to find, and often missing entirely or insufficiently detailed
- New structure would make details easier to find for summarizing and encourage greater specificity and clarity in reporting

How does the new template differ?
- Structurally very different – last year did not have a required structure
- The only new content requested includes:
    - Descriptions of program activities including best practices
    - Implementation and impacts of Y1 recommendations

Comments from Evaluators on the Y2 Template
- They consider AER as a client report

---

[1] This may need to be verified or clarified in order to guide how the purposes can best be met – through the AER as well as other sources.

- Template format is not client friendly, therefore requires extra effort to meet all stakeholder needs, but evaluation budgets are already set. Changing the format will confuse their clients
- Information about program content (activity descriptions, school-day alignment, fidelity, best practices, stakeholder involvement, etc.) would need to come from program staff.
- Can't describe individual activities in detail – too many; provide summary by category, or description of those that were observed (student activities only – parent/family activities not observed).
- Hard to define fidelity – grant proposals didn't define activities in detail
- Timing of release doesn't allow them to collect requested information

Selected suggestions from local evaluators
- Consider Y2 as a pilot year for the new structure
- Create a data warehouse that combines key elements from multiple sources (evaluators reports, program mid-year reports, SMV reports, modification applications, risk assessments, etc.) to avoid duplication of effort
- Require grantees to have a written program implementation plan for the upcoming year
- Report activity summaries/examples rather than describe every activity
- Add a requirement for reporting on observations
- Use a reporting structure that "allows us to meet the clients' needs" (e.g. put details in appendix)