

Overview of 21CCLC Local Evaluation

NYS requires all 21st CCLC programs to have an independent Evaluator; this is a qualified individual or firm, external to the organization, who contracts with the program to study and report on the annual implementation efforts and effectiveness of programming. Their primary role is to analyze program data to learn, value, and help communicate insightful findings, and to track the program's progress achieving objectives.

There are important features of local, independent evaluation that distinguishes it from other data-gathering and review processes, such as standardized performance monitoring or in-house self-assessment.

1. Local evaluation is improvement-focused, not compliance-driven, and it is sensitive to the uniqueness of each program, not a one-size-fits all comparative assessment. It entails close, focused study of all change efforts and progress indicators, including signs of success and innovation. Evaluation of each individual program provides program stakeholders an opportunity to learn about what's working well for who; how leaders, staff and stakeholders are experiencing it; and what changes or improvements may enhance processes and outcomes for multiple stakeholders.
2. A qualified, independent Evaluator brings a set of specialized, applied research skills and offers valuable insights and wisdom to Program Leaders. Their partnership can help program stakeholders expand their perspectives and increase their knowledge about how their program operates.

The NYSED Program Office has determined that the most valuable and effective model of evaluation is one wherein the Evaluator serves as a collaborative partner, using an improvement-focused, culturally responsive lens, and is responsible for providing both formative and summative findings and actionable recommendations. Therefore, Evaluators selected by programs are required to utilize a **Participatory Approach** while performing in their role.

Required support activities provided by the Evaluator

- Participating in Advisory Board meetings as a non-voting member. The Evaluator will have the opportunity to share updates about the evaluation, including any recent findings and upcoming data collection activities.
- Participation with Program Leaders in the Evaluability Process, in Year 1, and an annual Planning & Readiness meeting in Years 2 - 5. This collaborative

meeting occurs in advance of the start of the program year; it involves a review of the Evaluation Plan & Logic Model/Theory of Change to incorporate updates and check alignment with the Program's annual Implementation Plans. The Evaluator can present these updated planning documents as part of the 1st Advisory Board Meeting, or in a separate planning meeting with Program Leaders.

- Two, annual Site Visits. The Evaluator conducts the 1st Site Visit within the first half of the program year, and the 2nd Site Visit in the second half of the year. Visits are coordinated with Program Leaders, Site Leaders, Site Staff, and the Education Liaison. Structured, mutually agreed-upon activities may include interviews with Program personnel, document review, observational walkthroughs (with a checklist/protocol), and other information gathering procedures. Formative reports summarizing key findings will be provided by the Evaluator shortly after each visit (see Findings Briefs, below).
- A facilitated, interactive Presentation of Findings & Recommendations at the end of the program year. This is a review of the Annual Evaluation Report (AER), where the Evaluator shares significant findings, an explanation of the actionable recommendations, and engages in an open Q & A to help clarify information and receive requests and feedback from Program Leaders. The Evaluator can present this at the 4th, year-end, Advisory Board meeting, or at a separate meeting with Program Leaders.
- Ongoing, active communication and correspondence. The Evaluator will help programs track progress and prepare for upcoming events/data collection activities through regular calls and messages. The Evaluator will be available and responsive to Program needs and requests, as per the mutually agreed-upon Communication Plan. This document can be a component with the Evaluation Plan (see, below), or a stand-alone Plan.
- Contribution to the Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Process. Evaluators can be asked to provide Program Leaders with information, and/or guidance, that assists in internal, self-study activities. *Program Leaders and Data Managers can check their contract or agreed-upon work plan with the Evaluator to confirm the Evaluator's role and contribution to this process.

Key Deliverables provided by the Evaluator

- Evaluability Checklist (co-created with Program Leaders in Year 1)
- Evaluation Plan with Logic Model/Theory of Change (updated annually)

- Findings Briefs. Concise, reader-friendly reports communicating the summary findings from Site Visits.
- Interim/Mid-Year Evaluation Report. Comprehensive mid-year summary of program progress, featuring a review of early implementation, formative results, and improvement-focused recommendations.
- Annual Evaluation Report (AER) featuring summative, end of year program results & recommendations.
- Contributions to Action Plans and the Sustainability Plan. Local evaluation findings and recommendations are to be included in the program's integrated strategic plans. Request assistance from the Evaluator, as needed.

For additional information, consult the [Evaluability Checklist](#) and the [NYS 21CCLC Local Evaluation Framework & Timeline \(Sept 2022\)](#).