Fall 2020

New York State 21st Century Community Learning Center Program

Statewide Annual Evaluation Report
Executive Summary

Contract Year 3
(7/1/19 –6/30/20)

Prepared for

The New York State Education Department

Office of Student Support Services

MEASUREMENT INCORPORATED

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Evaluation and School Improvement Services

34 South Broadway, Suite 601
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 682-1969
Fax: (914) 682-1760

41 State Street, Suite 403
Albany, NY 12207
(518) 427-9840
Fax: (518) 462-1728

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Executive Summary

Project Overview

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has awarded Measurement Incorporated (MI) a 5-year contract (running from June 1, 2017 through May 31, 2022) to conduct the external statewide evaluation of the Round 7 funding cycle of the New York State 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) initiative. This initiative focuses primarily on children who attend high poverty and low-performing schools and provides expanded learning opportunities for academic enrichment, youth development, and family literacy to help students meet state academic standards.

MI's scope of work under the contract includes the following six deliverables:

Deliverable 1: Evaluation of NYSED's achievement of objectives related to statewide improvements in participating students' academic performance and behavior

Deliverable 2: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the 21st CCLC Technical Assistance Resource Centers (RCs)

Deliverable 3: Evaluation of the performance of local 21st CCLC programs

Deliverable 4: Review and assessment of the quality and completeness of local program-level annual evaluation reports

Deliverable 5: Provide guidance to NYSED on transition to a state-level data collection and reporting system

Deliverable 6: Provide support to local program evaluators

Summary of Year 3 Project Activities, Outcomes and Findings

Deliverable 1: Evaluation of NYSED's achievement of statewide objectives

Measurement Incorporated (MI) is tasked with conducting analyses of state-level outcome assessments specified by federal reporting requirements, which require associating student-level outcome measures, program participation data and demographic information. NYSED's Student Information Repository System (SIRS) and Counsel's offices have granted permission for MI to access student level data held by the state for the purpose of these analyses. However, most student level program data through Year 3 remain unavailable to MI due to the fragmented variety of data management systems that have been used by the sub-grantees until recently. Nevertheless, we have accessed participant identification codes and overall hours of participation through the attendance rosters, which have become increasingly reliable during Round 7 due to MI's implementation of a system of detailed validation checks.

By linking ID codes to state data, these sources will enable MI to conduct basic outcome analyses for Years 2 and 3. For Year 3, however, due to the nationwide cancellation of state testing resulting from the spring 2020 coronavirus pandemic, outcomes will be limited to behavioral data such as school attendance rates and suspensions. Detailed analysis plans are currently under development for these years, although the specific approach will depend on whether and how much non-participant data MI is able to access for a comparison study. These outcome analyses will be possible once quality control of Year 3 rosters is completed and state data are provided by NYSED.

As of fall 2020, all sub-grantees are now using a standardized data collection and reporting system (see Deliverable 5), which will enable future analyses to disaggregate findings based on the specific kinds of activities each student attends. These systems will allow for more nuanced impact analyses.

Recommendations

- In a non-experimental design, outcome analyses are extremely limited in the extent to which any student outcomes can be attributed to the program. The best available option for this study is to create a matched comparison group of non-participants. We therefore recommend strongly that NYSED allow MI access to state data for non-participating students. This access should include the broadest group possible, as a larger pool will facilitate a more accurate match.

- The new statewide data system is expected to support much more reliable and more detailed program data that would allow for more sophisticated state-level analyses. The quality of the data, however, will depend on correct use of the system, which is quite complex. It is critical that NYSED maintain internal technical assistance resources, available full time to all sub-grantees, to help local programs use the system correctly.

Status of Prior Recommendations

- *Emphasize federal analysis and reporting requirements, and federal and state laws, to encourage sharing of student data.*

The State Coordinator released a memorandum, which is cited as needed, to remind programs of state and federal policies around data sharing.

- *Ensure that the data systems vendor enable local evaluators with data security agreements to access student level data.*

The EZ Reports system would be able to support such access, but NYSED policies and the need to track district level data security requirements have made it impractical to implement.

- *Ensure that the data system vendor build validation rules into the system to minimize the amount of manual quality control needed after data are submitted.*

The vendor has worked closely with NYSED and MI to identify, and redefine or customize validation rules as necessary.

- *Require programs to further disaggregate attendance hours to better support quality control.*

The necessary disaggregations were built into the revised Year 3 attendance roster template, and beginning in Year 4, the EZ Reports system will support these data at even greater detail.

- *Remind program directors that providing State or District Student ID codes is required and provide support in helping them locate the codes as necessary.*

To date, all programs have provided student ID codes in the Year 3 attendance rosters most have included them in EZ Reports. However, we will not know whether they are accurate until we merge these data with data from the state's Student Information Repository System (SIRS).

Deliverable 2: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the 21st CCLC Technical Assistance Resource Centers (RCs)

Goals for effectiveness of the Technical Assistance Resource Centers (RCs) were defined by best practices and quality indicators derived from the literature, government guidance, and discussions with the state program coordinator. Data on effectiveness were obtained through conference and workshop observations, surveys of workshop participants, and interviews with Resource Center directors and key staff. MI's participation in the State's development of procedures and guides to support inter-rater reliability among Resource Center site monitors also contributed to our understanding of the Centers' effectiveness. Additional data to inform this deliverable will be derived from a survey of all sub-grantee program directors, which was administered in fall 2020.

A review of multiple data sources used to assess the success of the fall 2019 Statewide Conference and the spring 2020 Virtual Symposium revealed several positive aspects of these events.

- Both the in-person fall conference and the virtual spring symposium were **well attended** by program personnel. Average program representation from NYC across both conferences was 87%, and the average program representation from RoS was 85%.
- Utilizing two different modalities from fall to spring, both conferences exhibited **high quality** in their overall design and delivery.
- Participants attending these events were generally very satisfied with their learning experiences.
- Documentation of workshop attendance was considerably improved for both the fall conference and spring symposium.
- Although the survey response rates for the fall workshops were similar to Year 2, low on average and highly variable, there was a dramatic increase in response rates for the spring 2020 virtual breakout sessions, which were consistently very high.
- Both conferences placed an appropriate emphasis on funding sources and goals, training opportunities and site monitoring, high-engagement programming, and important themes in program implementation aligned with state priorities.

- The spring symposium focused on program management, accountability systems and engagement strategies, all with an eye to addressing the shifting needs emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the conferences remained a strong point of the Resource Centers' support services, there remained areas with room for improvement:

- Representation of RoS programs at the Schenectady conference could have been stronger.
- Response rates for the fall general session surveys were poor, while for the post-conference survey, response rates were slightly better but still mediocre at best.
- While documentation of workshop attendance was improved, the fall workshop survey response rates remained highly variable and often quite low, rendering the survey results uninterpretable.
- Diverging from their high ratings of most other conference activities, participants were largely dissatisfied with the second keynote speaker at the fall conference.
- Some participants perceived a missed opportunity in not inviting additional program staff.

Recommendations:

- While in-person conferences are widely appreciated and have obvious advantages, the virtual spring conference facilitated better attendance from both regions. Even after shelter-in-place is no longer required, using some combination of live and online conferences may help balance the advantages of each approach, including providing opportunities for staff other than program managers to attend.
- Once in-person conferences resume, avoid holding them between late fall and early spring, when weather conditions can make travel difficult and hazardous.
- Provide more clarity to participants about the value of the vendor-led presentations, which are sometimes seen as marketing opportunities.
- To help participants select the most relevant workshops and interactive sessions, obtain information about grade level appropriateness from presenters and include this information in the agenda.

Status of Prior Year Recommendations

- *Explore scheduling alternatives for multi-day conferences.*

NYSED and RC staff were unable to address this recommendation due to the shelter-in-place requirements preventing in-person conferences.

- *Survey participants to get better representation on workshop topic interests and needs.*

In September 2020, the RCs distributed a survey to all program managers asking them to describe their plans for the 2020-21 school year, including what professional development or resources they would need.

- *RCs collaborate with MI to improve response rates in conference and workshop ratings*.

A new system used at the fall conference, using real time URL and QR links, was not very successful for general session and workshop ratings. However, survey participation was greatly increased at the spring symposium.

Deliverable 3: Evaluation of the Performance of Local 21st CCLC Programs

The MI state evaluation team conducted exploratory site visits with ten new sub-grantees that had not been visited in Years 1 or 2, with the purpose of gaining insights into programmatic challenges and strategies that can inform statewide program improvement. Because findings from these visits were not intended for use in evaluating individual programs, results are aggregated across programs to maintain confidentiality. A summary of findings and recommendations for each focus topic is presented at the beginning of each topic. Topics explored included:

- **Distinguishing Priorities for Students**
- **Process of Developing Programming**
- **Providing Academic Programming**
- **Assessing Academic Performance Indicators**
- **Social Emotional Development and Learning**
- **Challenges and Successes Before and During the Pandemic**
- **Evaluator Feedback: Successes, Challenges, and the Logic Model**

Distinguishing Priorities for Students

Findings:

Determining student priorities for after-school programming relied mostly on informal meetings with school administrators, needs assessments, and the programs' student intake processes. All programs reported consistent and ongoing communication with and referrals from school administrators, staff, and counselors to determine changing needs. Most programs also collected information about interests and needs from students and parents at least annually through focus groups, surveys, informal communications, and analysis of student grades.

Recommendations:

- Continue to communicate regularly with school Principals and staff to ascertain current and changing needs of the students and school community, particularly when there is administrative turnover in either the school or CBO.
- Particularly during the pandemic, understanding the most critical needs of students and families is vital to providing programs with the ability to meet those needs. Consider meeting with families and students to ascertain how needs have shifted.

- Ensure that surveys and other methods of obtaining feedback include ways to determine specific student needs on an ongoing basis, and that this feedback is used to drive programming.
- Examine student and school-wide data to determine the areas of greatest academic need for the student body as a whole, for specific demographic sub-groups, and for individual students.
- Student and school needs are important considerations for program implementation, and findings about these priorities should be shared with the evaluator.

Drivers for Developing Programming

Findings:

Programs used multiple methods to develop specific programming for students. These included obtaining feedback from administrators, teachers, and students, as well as analyzing student intake forms and data such as grades, test scores, and attendance. Most struck a balance between what they were able to provide, what school staff and administrators wanted, what students wanted and needed, and the need to keep students engaged.

Four programs reported that their activities addressed both academic and social-emotional needs to similar degrees. Five programs reported that SEL programming was their primary focus, while one focused more on academics.

Recommendations:

- Provide a more active voice for students through ongoing interest surveys to help develop programming
- Create informal check-ins or more formal focus groups with students on an ongoing basis to get feedback on existing programming and to inform future activity planning.
- For programs with limited capacity for academic activities, work with the school administration to strategize the provision of targeted academic support where needed.
- Academic and SEL support need not duplicate school-day teaching. However, programs should be mindful of their performance indicators and ensure they are providing programming that aligns with and will likely lead to positive outcomes related to those indicators.
- Evaluators should remind program staff prior to fall site visit observations that the purpose of these visits is to indicate where the program can improve throughout the academic year.

Providing Academic Programming

Findings:

Provision of academic programming depended on the organization holding the grant. For LEAs, school staff provided academic activities, along with some support from other certified teachers or CBO staff.

Most CBO-held grants used a mix of CBO staff (some of whom were certified teachers or received academic training) and school staff; a couple used CBO staff exclusively and had informal arrangements with school-day teachers.

Recommendation:

- CBOs running a 21st CCLC program that do not have academically trained staff should reach out to the community to identify certified teachers, retired teachers, substitute teachers or other appropriately trained personnel to provide, or at least support, their academic programming.

Assessing Academic Performance Indicators

Findings:

Prior to the pandemic, evaluators were attempting to assess academic outcomes using a multitude of methods, including local assessments, state assessments, report cards, teacher surveys, and student surveys. Evaluators of New York City programs reported problems receiving academic data that was complete enough to make it meaningful, noting this had made it impossible to assess the academic impacts of the programs. Some evaluators (especially in NYC) also felt that district or state data were not received timely enough to be useable for impact assessment. In NYC, spring 2019 data for the APRs, at least, was received by November 1, which would not have been too late to conduct a pre-post impact analysis of Year 2 that could still inform Year 3 implementation. It may be, however, that additional data requests beyond the APR data may have been received considerably later. Some of the problem with insufficient data may also be related to quality control, either within the program and/or within the district/RPSG. Small errors in record keeping can make it impossible for the district or RPSG to find a student's records.

Of the ten programs included in this report, seven had no academic data to report for Year 2. Among the three that reported academic outcomes, none met their academic performance indicators.

Recommendations:

- To the extent that district/state data are complete enough to be meaningful (a bare minimum of 50% match rate or response rate), outcome analyses are still required.
- To the extent possible, NYSED should continue to apply leverage, based on funding eligibility, to ensure that all participating schools and districts adhere to mandated reporting of any data over which they have jurisdiction. In New York City, any data requests outside of those related to APRs might receive faster turnover from the RPSG if NYSED provided additional messaging to emphasize that local evaluations are also part of the federal requirement.
- When pre-post data are available, analyses should be completed and discussed with staff as soon as possible even if they cannot be completed in time for the AER deadline.

- As appropriate if indicated by the data, achievement results could still be used to inform activity programming and/or scheduling after the year has started, even if the results do not become available until mid-fall. The results should then be reported on the following year's AER.
- If there are large numbers of missing cases, program managers should collaborate with their evaluator and act as a liaison to school and/or district personnel to identify the discrepancies.
- Whenever district/state data are anticipated to be unavailable, evaluators should work with program staff to identify alternative measures for assessing academic outcomes (and submit program modifications as necessary).
- Even if outcome data do not become available until a full year behind the program schedule, it can and should still be used to assess program success from a long term perspective.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Findings:

Programs reported a wide range of challenges impacting their students, including poverty, trauma, mental illness, domestic violence and homelessness. A multitude of SEL strategies were targeted at supporting student needs, from more direct strategies such as conflict resolution, mindfulness/relaxation, counseling and crisis management, to culinary programs addressing the need for both job training and feeding hungry students. Some programs infused SEL strategies into all of their activities.

Nearly all programs (9 of 10) provided professional development in SEL strategies to their staff, and several CBOs specialized in delivering social-emotional support programs. Most of them rated themselves well on supporting the social-emotional needs of students. All ten programs reported varying degrees and methods for cross-sharing of information between the school-day and after-school staff to identify students' SEL needs and strategies for addressing them.

Recommendations:

- Continue providing professional development in SEL to staff. Align professional development with areas of greatest need for students, particularly in the years since the pandemic began.
- Continue to support students' specific and evolving needs through SEL activities.
- Ensure continued cross-sharing of information regarding students' needs by attending pertinent school-based meetings, and inviting school day staff to program meetings and relevant professional development activities.
- Evaluators should make particular efforts to capture SEL impacts of programming through student surveys, focus groups, or other means. Assessments should be tightly aligned to SEL performance indicators, which can be modified if necessary. Consider using methodological

strategies (e.g., individual codes on surveys) to link student survey responses with activity engagement to better track impacts back to specific activities.

- If the program or school is unable to fully meet students' emotional needs, provide families with referrals to other services and resources.

Program Successes and Challenges Before and During the Pandemic

Findings:

Program successes pre-COVID included student engagement (e.g., attendance and enrollment), parent engagement, positive student outcomes (e.g., improved graduation rates, ELA and Math performance and homework completion) and improved relationships within the school. While most program directors and evaluators thought they were adequately capturing program success, a few were concerned that numbers and graphs were not representing the services provided and/or the impacts on students and schools. Others were considering adding methods for measuring academic attitudes and behaviors, SEL impacts, and linking interventions to impacts.

Challenges pre-pandemic included staffing issues due to new clearance requirements for new hires, conflicts about after-school programs' use of space in the school, students being hungry during after school activities, and long student commutes to school. Challenges from the pandemic were typically centered around access to online learning and technology, and a lack of engagement on the part of students and, for younger children, parents. Programs felt their students and families needed more wrap-around support to help them through all of the traumas and challenges of the pandemic. It is notable that some CBOs had more success here, including those that were already organized to provide a wide range of services, and a handful whose programs were specifically focusing on SEL.

Programs addressed these challenges the best they could, providing laptop/tablet deliveries, emotional support, referrals, and virtual programming.

Lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis were centered around the themes of

- Need for equity in technology access and all other aspects of life
- Importance of serving and connecting with families
- Importance of SEL and relationships
- Moving in the direction of virtual interaction for special circumstances

Recommendations:

- Some academic and SEL student impacts as reported by program administrators and staff were not reflected in the programs' performance indicators. Evaluators should consider adding short-term or interim measures to better capture perceived impacts.

- Demonstrating that positive outcomes can be "linked to the intervention" is a laudable goal mentioned by some interviewees, but it can be extremely challenging for a small local evaluation to accomplish this quantitatively. However, qualitative data from surveys, interviews and observations can be designed to obtain insights into *why* the outcomes are occurring. Such evidence is no less valuable than statistical findings, even if it does not directly address official performance indicators.

- Wherever possible, programs should use the lessons learned from the pandemic to support:
  - Greater equity for students' access to and skills in navigating technology;
  - Engaging in more meaningful and direct ways with families;
  - Providing SEL support and putting more mechanisms into place to stay in contact with students through crises; and,
  - Working with their schools to have plans in place for what services will be delivered by 21st CCLC programs, and how they will be delivered, in crisis situations.

Evaluator Feedback: Successes, Challenges, and the Logic Model

Findings:

Evaluators' successes prior to COVID centered primarily on strong relationships built with programs and receiving data in a timely way.

Challenges encountered by evaluators pre-pandemic were mostly related to difficulties receiving or tracking data, as well as concerns with programs not on track to meet enrollment and attendance targets. Concerns during the pandemic were centered around the provision of virtual programming, low student participation, low survey response rates, maintaining consistent and broad communication, and the impacts of COVID-19 on students and how to frame that in reports.

A few evaluators wanted to make small changes to their data collection efforts, from including formal interviews with program and site coordinators to adding survey items related to trauma and burnout for students and staff.

The logic model was used primarily for internal reporting purposes, if at all, to check on the alignment of activities and outcomes. While some evaluators thought the logic model was too detailed and crowded, others thought it lacked specificity for different programs, especially when one logic model was used for a grant with multiple sites. Some suggested using a theory of change model instead, which they felt would be more intuitive and intentional for program directors and staff.

Recommendations:

- Program staff and evaluators should continue to strive for strong collaboration, with evaluators using program staff's insights to help interpret data, and programs using evaluator reports and recommendations to improve program quality.
- Strong collaboration might also increase the likelihood of receiving data in a timely way.
- To better understand program effects, outcome data should be disaggregated for different groups of students, to the extent that the evaluation contract and numbers of students in each subgroup allow. In districts that require data to be de-identified, district data can be merged with program data by the district, before it is de-identified.
- Aligned with the concept of participatory evaluation, program directors and evaluators should regularly review the logic model together to help keep the program accountable to its own performance indicators.
- Logic models should be written in as clear and concise a manner as possible, while providing adequate specificity for each program's design, even if this requires extra sections for each site.
- Evaluators should keep records on virtual programming efforts, participation rates, efforts to administer online surveys, and challenges encountered in their evaluation activities during the 2020-21 program year.
- Consider, for the next round of funding, requiring a theory of change (ToC) model in lieu of a logic model, which can better support stakeholders' conceptual and practical understanding of connections between activities and outcomes.

Deliverable 4: Review and Assess Quality and Completeness of Local Program-Level Annual Evaluation Reports

In Year 2, because of gaps in information found in quite a few of the Year 1 reports reviewed, MI created an AER Template that local evaluators were required to follow to help ensure responses for all components. In response to concerns from both evaluators and program staff, this format also allowed ample room for flexibility for evaluators to customize their reports to better meet their clients' needs. The rubric that MI had developed for assessing the quality and completeness of the Year 1 reports was modified for Year 2 to align with the new template.

The findings from the reviews of the Year 2 AERs were summarized for local evaluators at the July 2020 Evaluation Network meeting (see Deliverable 5), and described in a more detailed report released to all stakeholders later that month (see Appendix XV in the full report). This report took a more qualitative approach tosummarizing the findings than the prior year, providing examples of characteristics of various AERs that reflected a high quality response, and contrasting these with examples from reports that hadincomplete or problematic responses. There was fairly general consensus that this format was more helpful than the Year 1 report presentation had been.

Based on these reviews, the greatest strengths among the reviewed AERs were in how the evaluators arrived at and conveyed important, comprehensive themes for what the program was doing well, and how it could be improved. Point of service observations were found to be structured, intentional, and thoroughly discussed. All reviewed AERs included recommendations derived from the Year 2 study, and about two-thirds also included a discussion of the status of and impacts from implementation of the Year 1 recommendations.

Recommendations:

A selection of some of the most notable recommendations that our review generated for future AERs includes the following:

- Whenever possible, include sufficient detail in recommendations to make it clear how to implement them.
- Follow up on recommendations through participation in the Advisory Committee.
- Submit modification requests if needed to establish better Performance Indicators (PIs).
- Ensure that assessments of each PI address all targeted sub-populations.
- Ensure that all components of each objective are represented by at least one PI.
- A result that almost meets the target should still be reported as "Not Met;" but for program improvement purposes, the fact that you are "almost there" is important.
- Share evaluation findings with stakeholders other than the Project Manager.

Status of Prior Year Recommendations.

- *Strengthen focus on implementation quality review.*

Addition of an explicit subsection of Site Visit Summaries in the Year 3 AER template was successful in obtaining greater information about this aspect of local evaluations, although some evaluators still focused on point of service observations during both visits.

- *Disaggregate results by activities, dosage, and population representativeness where applicable.*

The extent to which such detail is provided remains highly variable. In some cases, disaggregation is not supported by the number of cases, as discussed under Deliverable 3.

- *Ensure all objectives/indicators are measured.*

Year 2 AERs were more complete, in large part due to the guidance provided by the required template structure. However, there remained a number of cases where measures were not properly aligned to performance indicators, as discussed in the Year 2 AER Review Summary.

- *Ensure that all stakeholders are informed of findings and recommendations, and actively involved in ongoing program improvement.*

The Year 2 AER reviews revealed that communications also remained variable. Evaluators felt that responsibility for ensuring communications lay primarily with the program directors. In response, questions about stakeholder communications were moved from the AER to the program director's Mid-Year Report.

- *To inform ongoing improvement, strengthen focus on existence of and reasons for program modifications and drift; and,*
- *Incorporate reasons for program drift, and any agreed upon modifications, in logic model updates.*

The disruptions during Year 3 caused by the coronavirus pandemic made it difficult to assess how programs might have responded to program modifications and drift under more normal circumstances.

Deliverable 5: Provide guidance to NYSED on transition to State-Level Data Collection and Reporting System

With support from MI, NYSED's Request for Proposals for a vendor to provide and manage a data management and reporting system was released in September 2019, and ThomasKelly Software Associates (TKSA) was selected in February 2020 to fulfill the contract using its EZ Reports system. Upon detailed review of this system, NYSED and MI raised concerns about whether the system would provide all desired functions. TKSA agreed to provide customizations for New York State, at no extra charge, that addressed these concerns, and the current system now appears to address all of the state's needs.

Throughout the adoption of EZ Reports, MI has provided extensive, ongoing supports to help ensure the success of this system. These supports have included advising on the specifics of missing functions and how to develop the needed customizations, assurance that the system would adequately support statewide analyses, assistance restructuring old data sources to make them compatible for populating the new system, and advising on user specifications.

The newly established system will address previous challenges surrounding standardization of data storage across programs, stronger and more consistent quality control and protection of confidentiality, and ensuring on-time, accurate reporting for APRs as well as custom reports needed by local evaluators and for statewide impact analyses. The system is, however, very deep and very wide, making it difficult for users to become familiar with all its components. On top of all of their other contractual responsibilities, Resource Center staff have stepped up to the task of learning the system's site and program level functions and providing guidance to local programs and evaluators. This is a heavy lift, and the support that RCs receive from TKSA staff is unlikely to continue indefinitely at its current level.

Because data security regulations are enforced at the individual district as well as state levels, the system also does not fully resolve the challenge of local evaluators gaining access to state/district records for individual students. Furthermore, while EZ Reports is expected to greatly improve accuracy of local program data, this system has no impact on local districts (or in NYC, the RPSG), where quality control of state data and timeliness of providing such data to evaluators can be problematic.

Recommendations:

- Using Resource Center staff to provide guidance on the EZ Report system seems to be working as a stop gap measure, but it is unclear whether it is viable for the long term. NYSED should continue to look for ways to fund a dedicated data systems technical adviser.
- Revisit the possibility—possibly for the next funding cycle—of providing student-level state data through EZ Reports, to those evaluators who have entered appropriate confidentiality agreements.

Status of Prior Year Recommendations:

- *Work to negotiate a data sharing agreement between NYSED and NYCDOE's data division.*

NYSED was successful in negotiating with NYCDOE to provide data needed for APRs to local programs/evaluators more timely. However, a full data sharing agreement could help expedite sharing of other state data currently controlled by RPSG.

- *Build flexibility into the state data system so that local evaluators who have obtained data security agreements can also use it to access student level data.*

This initiative was dropped due to the complexity of monitoring 138 security agreements, but we recommend that it be revisited as a possibility for the next funding cycle.

- *Have all program data submitted directly to NYSED through the State system, so that MI only needs to obtain a data security agreement with the State in order to receive data needed for analyses.*

The EZ Reports system makes all data at the site, program (grantee) and state levels available to all state users with the necessary permissions, including MI.

Deliverable 6: Provide Support to Local Program Evaluators

The state evaluation team is contracted to serve as "a resource for local program evaluators in order to improve the quality and consistency of local program evaluation throughout the state." Following conversations with the State Coordinator about how this role should be interpreted, MI has agreed that it should also include helping program staff learn to make the best use of their evaluation services (see, for example, Deliverable 4 above).

Throughout Program Year 3, MI continued to provide local evaluators with support through an Evaluators' Network, designed to raise awareness of State priorities, increase their access to resources, facilitate inter-program communication and sharing of best practices, and provide a platform for local evaluators to provide feedback and recommendations on State-wide policies and procedures. Supports have included:

- An Evaluators' Network listserv and toll free phone number,

- A web page for evaluators posting guidance and resource documents,
- Networking meetings to help the state evaluation team to better understand and support evaluators' needs.

Topics that have been explored through this network have included extending communications about upcoming events and opportunities, updating the network on the outcomes of past events, alerting programs to changes or clarifications about evaluation requirements, sharing documentation, and soliciting feedback on policies, procedures and instruments. This web page[1] has provided ready access to numerous important documents, including annual evaluation reports, conference presentation decks, templates, and Q&A and addenda to the Evaluation Manual.

Evaluation Networking meetings during Year 3 focused on updating the format of the attendance rosters, discussing approaches to tracking implementation fidelity, debriefing on evaluators' experiences applying the Year 2 AER Template, presentation of findings from the Year 2 AER reviews, and previewing the "Evaluation Policy Expectations" outline.

Participation In and Satisfaction with the Network.

Well over 2,000 emails were received from or sent out to the Evaluation Network listserv during Program Year 3, and inquiries are almost always answered within 24 hours. Attendance at the networking meetings was also improved, with participation increasing from 42 to 44 participants at the fall sessions, to 80 participants, from both regions, attending the July virtual session. Unfortunately, feedback on these sessions was unusable: survey response rates from the fall were too low to be interpretable, and because of the pandemic disruptions, surveys were not distributed after the July session.

Status of Prior Recommendations

Following is a summary of the status of recommendations previously proposed by MI and/or received from local evaluators:

- *Circulate a summary of types of technical assistance available to sub-grantees from the RCs.*

The suggestion was forwarded to the RCs but it is not known whether this occurred. It is clear, however, that the RCs maintain very open and frequent communication with sub-grantees.

- *Allow for a rolling submission process for program staff to submit TA requests.*

The RCs accept TA requests on an ongoing basis.

- *Develop a program director's manual analogous to the Evaluation Manual.*

One of the local evaluators offered to create a first draft of such a document, but did not follow through. It is recommended that such a manual be developed for the next round of funding.

[1] The "Evaluation" web page is complemented by the 21st CCLC web page under NYSED's Office of Student Support Services (www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/21stCCLC/), but the former is more narrowly focused on evaluation-related information.

- *Consider Year 2 as a pilot year for implementing the new AER structure.*

Results from the AERs are not used punitively. MI's presentation of findings from our Year 2 AER reviews, and training for RC staff on how to make better use of these reports to inform site monitoring visits, should help in continuing to improve the value of these reports.

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