Service-Learning Evaluation: An Overview

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Agenda Overview

- Why evaluate?
- Characteristics of effective evaluations
- Evaluation questions
- Using a logic model as a guide
- Evaluation designs
- Methods
- Sample survey subscales
- Sampling
- Human subjects protections
- Analysis
- Drawing conclusions
- Elements of a quality report
- Using results for improvement
- Resources

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Why Evaluate?

Please individually write down the most important reason you think that LSA should evaluate its programs.

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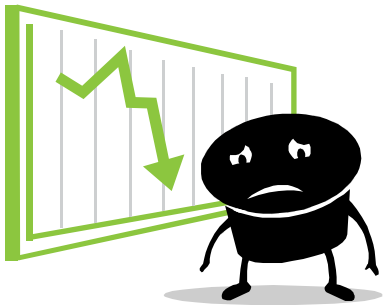
Common Answers

- To document outcomes
- To see whether objectives were met
- To improve programs
- To procure additional funding
- Because it's required!



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Characteristics of Effective Evaluations

- **Accurate:** *valid and reliable evidence presented.*
- **Pertinent:** *answers the evaluation questions.*
- **Objective:** *does not insert evaluators' opinions but faithfully represents the data*.
- **Well organized and readable**: *relatively jargon-free and easy to understand.*
- **Logical:** *shows relationships between data and conclusions.*
- **Useful:** *provides information for improvement.*

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Sample From RMC Research Work

- This cluster includes evaluation of Learn and Serve programs in multiple states and national programs who agreed to use:
  - the same core evaluation questions, designs, survey subscales, and analytic framework
  - a limited number of customized evaluation questions, survey subscales, and analysis

Cluster is more efficient, less expensive, and allows for cross-state aggregation.

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Typical SL Evaluation Questions

IMPACT

- What is the impact of participation in service-learning on the youth and adult participants? (Need to specify areas of impact)

- What is the impact of service-learning on the community or those receiving service? (Need to specify areas of impact)

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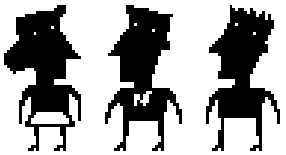
RMC Research Cluster Common Outcome Areas

- *Academic Engagement:* Affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement and academic self-efficacy or competence.
- *Academic Performance/Achievement:* Scores and proficiency levels on state tests and assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and, science, if available; attendance; and disciplinary referrals.
- *Dropout Prevention:* Measures of student academic engagement and for older students (middle and high school), aspirations for graduation and postsecondary/career, and actual dropout rate.



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Optional Additional Outcome Areas

- *Acquisition of 21st Century Skills:* Problem solving and decision making, ability to work on teams, curiosity, autonomy, goal orientation, communication skills, and other factors reflected in the 21st century skills framework.
- *Acquisition of and disposition toward STEM skills*: Orientation towards science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- *Environmental stewardship*: Knowledge, skills, and dispositions, aspirations

Optional Additional Outcome Areas

- *Civic engagement:* Activities, responsibilities, school attachment, community attachment

- *Social-emotional learning:* self-management, conflict management, empathy for those in need

- *Quality of Service-Learning Programming:* As defined by the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice (e.g. youth voice, meaningful service, reflection, diversity, etc.).

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Another Set of Typical SL Evaluation Questions

MODERATORS/MEDIATORS

- Are there differences in impact based on participant characteristics (e.g., demographics, student achievement levels, teacher experience – need to specify potential moderators)?

- What program design factors serve to influence impacts, such as quality of program delivery or professional development (need to specify potential moderators)?

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RMC Research Moderators and Mediators

- Participant characteristics:
  - E.g., gender, age, SL experience, content expertise, SES and other demographic variables
- Program design characteristics:
  - E.g., quality indicators, direct v. indirect service

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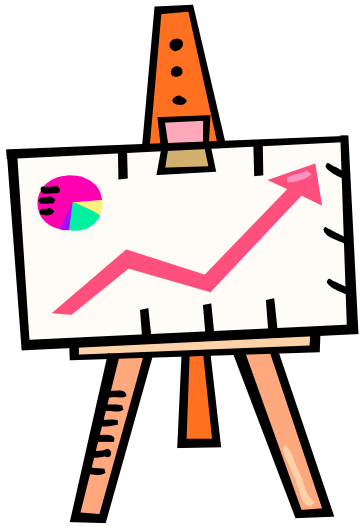
Using a Logic Model as a Guide

The logic model specifies inputs, outputs, outcomes/impacts, and factors that may serve to moderate outcomes.

The logic model should guide the evaluation.



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Sample Logic Model

Inputs

LSA Funding
Professional development in programs.

Community Partner Supports

District and/or School Supports

Outputs

ACTIVITIES

Teachers:
- Develop and deliver curriculum that integrates content standards and service activities.
- Facilitate SL activities
- Facilitate reflection

Students:
- Investigate community needs
- Plan an SL activity
- Provide service
- Engage in reflection
- Demonstrate impact on community and self/celebrate

Student Outcomes - Impact

SHORT-TERM

Academic Achievement
- Learning content/Mastering course objectives/improved test scores accrual

Academic Engagement
- Valuing school/SL class
- Interest in core content area
- Paying attention/coming to class

Civic Engagement
- Civic responsibility
- Civic efficacy
- Involvement with community

21st century Skills
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Communication

Dropout prevention
- Attending school
- Completing courses
- Post-secondary aspiration
- College/career readiness
- Decreased behavioral incidents

MEDIUM-TERM

Academic Achievement
- Learning content/Mastering course objectives/improved test scores accrual

Academic Engagement
- Valuing school/SL class
- Interest in core content area
- Paying attention/coming to class

Civic Engagement
- Civic responsibility
- Civic efficacy
- Involvement with community

21st century Skills
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Communication

Dropout prevention
- Attending school
- Completing courses
- Post-secondary aspiration
- College/career readiness
- Decreased behavioral incidents

LONG-TERM

Academic Achievement
- High school completion
- College attendance
- College graduation rate
- Other post-secondary learning opportunities

Civic Engagement
- Ethic of service
- Political participation
- Volunteerism

College/career readiness
- High school graduation
- Workplace skills

Major Types of Evaluation Designs

- Experimental designs (random assignment)
- Quasi-experimental designs (matched comparison groups)
- Pre/post design
- Case study

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Experimental Designs

- Most rigorous of all designs – allows attribution.
- Random assignment requires that some unit is assigned to treatment and some to control. The unit may be a district, school, classroom, student, or program.
- It is often difficult to get people to agree to random assignment --- and it can be very costly.
- Need sufficient sample size to detect a potentially small effect.

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Quasi-Experimental Designs

- Next most rigorous of all designs.
- Utilizes matched comparison groups – treatment and comparison. Must try to control for other influences through matching carefully.
- Still need sufficient sample size to detect a potentially small effect.

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Pre/Post Designs

- Measures differences before and after a program.

- Weaker measure because you cannot attribute outcomes to the intervention. There are too many other possible explanations that have not been eliminated.

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Case Studies

- Typically includes indepth qualitative investigation of a site.
- Often uses focus groups, interviews, observations.
- Particularly good for exploratory work or illuminating specific practices.
- Rigor is in the way that the case study is conducted – using highest standards for evaluation for qualitative work.

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Which Design Should You Use?

- Depends upon the evaluation questions, costs, timeline, and more.

- Strong advantages and disadvantages to each of the designs mentioned – see handout.

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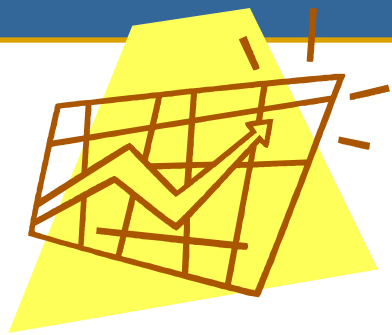
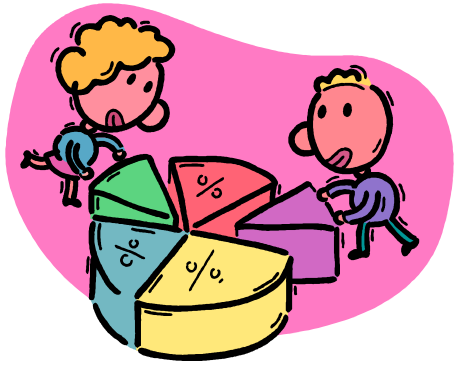


- Uses quasi-experimental design – matched comparison groups.
- Started with “retrospective pre/post” as pilot and baseline.
- Currently uses pre/post for semester and year-long programs.

Methods

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Observations
- Objective data (e.g., test scores)
- Essays
- Others



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Sample Survey Subscales

- Need to relate to the logic model or impact areas
- Need for validity and reliability
- Need for survey coherence
- Need to have appropriate length
- Need for appropriate readability

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Sample Survey Subscales

Construct	**Community Engagement**
Source	**RMC Research (2007). Survey of Community Engagement. Denver, CO.**
Population	**Grades 6-12**
Validity	**Face & Content**
Reliability	**Alpha=.82; .84 (pretest; posttest)**
Stem •	**Please think about the community as the agencies, businesses, and neighborhoods <u>outside your school</u> and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.**
Items	**a. I do things to make the community a better place.** **b. I am aware of the important needs in the community.** **c. I pay attention to news that affects the community.** **d. I talk with my friends about community problems.** **e. I help to address problems in the community.** **f. I try to encourage others to work on community problems.**
Response Categories	**1 = Strongly Disagree** **2 = Disagree** **3 = Agree** **4 = Strongly Agree**

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Sample Survey Subscales

Construct	Civic Responsibility Survey
Source	Furco, A., Muller, P., & Ammon, M.S. (1998). Civic responsibility survey for K-12 students engaged in service-learning. UC Berkeley, CA: Service-Learning Research & Development Center.
Population	High School
Reliability	Alpha: .88 (civic awareness)
Stem	Please indicate how strongly you disagree or agree with each statement.
Items	a. I often discuss and think about how political, social, local or national issues affect the community. b. It is my responsibility to help improve the community. c. I am aware of the important needs in the community. d. I am aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in the community. e. Helping other people is something that I am personally responsible for. f. It is easy for me to put aside my self-interest in favor of a greater good. g. Becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community. h. Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody. i. Being actively involved in community issues is everyone's responsibility, including mine. j. I understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community.
Response Categories	1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = Slightly Agree 5 = Agree 6 = Strongly Agree

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Sample Survey Subscales

Construct	**Academic Engagement**
Source	**RMC Research Corporation. (1999) Survey of academic engagement. Denver, CO: Author.**
Population	**Grades 6–12**
Validity	**Face**
Reliability	**Cronbach's alphas =.86.**
Stem	**How much do you agree with each of the following statements?**
Items	**a. I like being in school.** **b. I am interested in the work at school.** **c. I pay attention in class.** **d. Time seems to pass quickly when I am doing schoolwork.** **e. I like schoolwork best when it is challenging.** **f. I feel that the school work I am assigned is meaningful and important.** **g. My courses are interesting to me.** **h. I think that the things I am learning in school will be important for my future.** **i. I feel that school is worthwhile.**
Response Categories	**1 = Strongly disagree** **2 = Disagree** **3 = Agree** **4 = Strongly agree**

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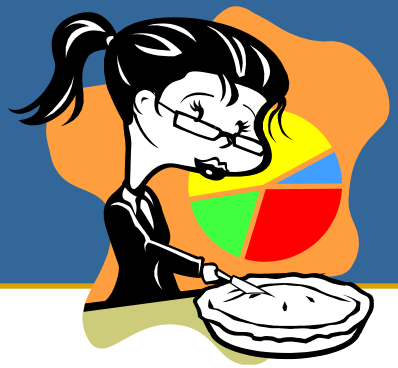
Sampling



- Most LSA grantees use a census approach (everyone).
- Representative samples are okay as long as you represent the entire population for which you intend to generalize.
- Hard to get good matched comparison groups – but it is worth the time.

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Human Subjects Protections

- Those receiving federal funds are usually subject to federal guidelines for human subjects protections.
- Protections include specific protocols for informing subjects about the study, preserving confidentiality, treatment of data, and more. Includes parent consent and participant assent.
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval should be obtained for SL evaluations.

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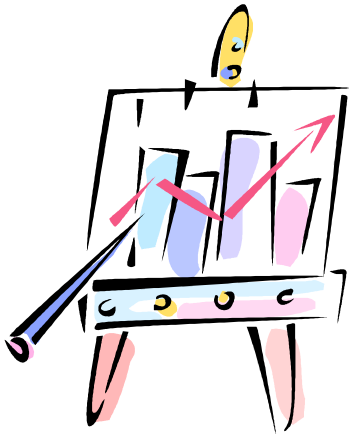
Analysis

Quantitative – need to use the right statistics – RMC is using R-MANOVAs, determining effect sizes, examining moderators, and more.



Qualitative – need to use appropriate data coding, reduction, and summary techniques

Triangulation – using multiple methods to measure the same thing – good practice for analysis.

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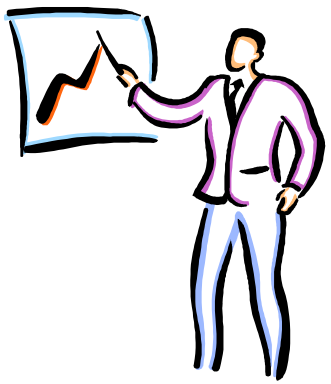
Elements of a Quality Reports

- Contains key elements… executive summary, introduction, methods, results, conclusions, and recommendations
- Often organized around the evaluation questions
- Clear and easy to understand
- Accurate and helpful for improvement



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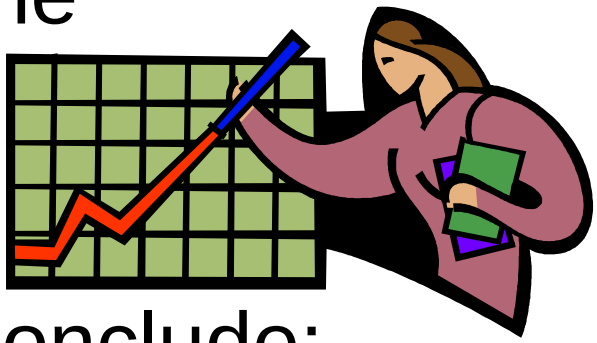
Drawing Conclusions

Seems obvious but…

the data must be related to the conclusions!



So far, we have been able to conclude:

- (as usual) quality matters

- very promising results with 21st century skills, engagement, achievement

Using Data for Improvement

- A major purpose of evaluation is to improve programs and outcomes.
- Stakeholders should work closely with evaluators to understand findings and use the data for improvement.
- Many great models for feedback loops, but your relationship with the evaluator is key.

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Logic Model Resources

- University of Wisconsin-Extension Program Development and Evaluation, www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande (2008)

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation www.wkkf.org
  - *Evaluation Handbook*, 1998
  - *Logic Model Development Guide*, 2001

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Some Evaluation Resources

- RMC Research (2006).The Educators' Guide to Service-Learning Evaluation, www.servicelearning.org/toolkits
- RMC Research guides on conducting focus groups, classroom observations, constructing surveys – www.rmcdenver.com/products
- Research hub….National Service-Learning Clearinghouse – www.servicelearning.org
- Bringle, R., Phillips, M. & Hudson, M. (2004). *The Measure of Service Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences*, Washington DC: American Psychological Association

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