

Center to Improve Project Performance (CIPP), Westat

Guidelines for Working with Third-Party Evaluators

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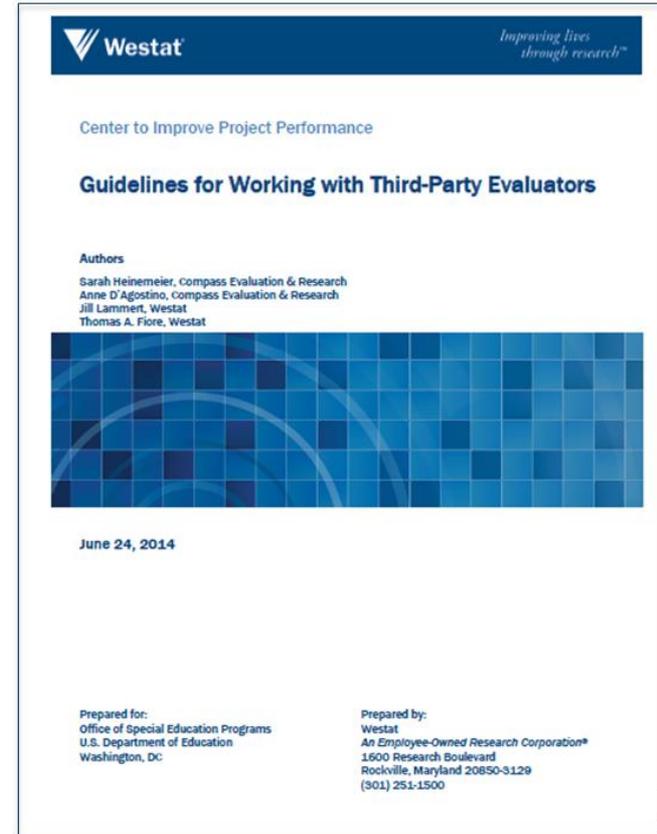
Goal of Presentation

- Offer strategies and practical tips for working with third-party evaluators
 - Key points and tips
 - Essential strategies and tools
- Products: Checklists and guides for use in working with third-party evaluators

For Your Reference

- Guidelines for Working with Third-Party Evaluators

Available to OSEP grantees on the CIPP site:
<https://www.cippsite.org/>



Getting Started Working with a Third-Party Evaluator

- Benefits and Limitations
- Top 5 Tips
- Critical Points to Remember
- The Key to Success

You better show great results if you want to stay funded



Why, what do you know, I have great results right here



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Benefits & Limitations of Working with a Third-Party Evaluator

Benefits

Third-party evaluators can:

- Bring technical expertise in research methodology, statistics, or related topics to the project team
- Provide credibility and objectivity by acting as an external “critical friend”
- Take on responsibility for completing some or all of the (formative and summative) evaluation tasks, allowing project staff to focus on project implementation

Limitations

Third-party evaluators may:

- Add unanticipated or additional cost to the project
- Add to project monitoring and management tasks focused on the work of contractors
- Not know the project background or content area as well as project staff
- Be less available or accessible, as compared to project staff

Top 5 Tips for Working with Third-party Evaluators

- Hire as early as possible
- Devote time to the evaluation
- Conduct an evaluation needs assessment
- Communicate regularly
- Receive interim reports and work products at regular intervals

Critical Points to Remember

- The Principal Investigator is responsible for all aspects of the project—including a timely, comprehensive, and rigorous evaluation
 - A third-party evaluator may contribute to some or many pieces of the evaluation
- Identify the project's specific third-party evaluation needs and work with a third-party evaluator as early as possible
 - This provides the greatest flexibility in how you work with a third-party evaluator
- The project's evaluation goals and design may dictate the need for third-party assistance and the total (desired) budget for the evaluation
 - A third-party evaluator can help identify the most cost effective way to use his or her services

The Key to Success

- Be knowledgeable about evaluation!
 - Appendix A of the Guidelines

What kind of evaluation
did you need?



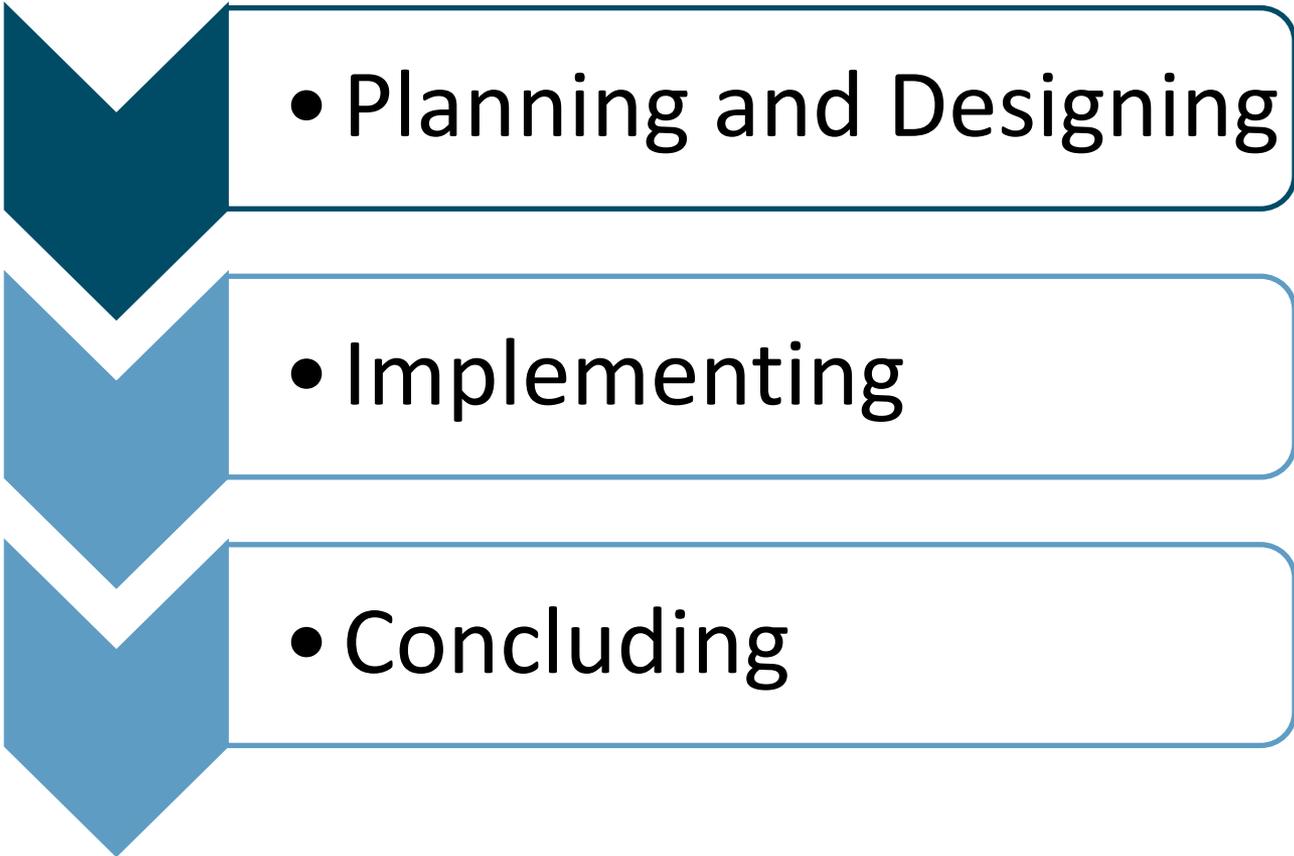
Our 3 year project is coming
to an end and were told we
needed an evaluation.

What kind is that?



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Essential Strategies and Tools for Your Evaluation



- Planning and Designing

- Implementing

- Concluding

Planning Your Project and Designing its Evaluation

1. Conduct an Evaluation Needs Assessment
2. Decide When to Hire the Evaluator
3. Creating an Evaluation Scope of Work
4. Creating an Evaluation Budget
5. Develop a Request for Proposals
6. Navigate the Proposal Process
7. Execute a Contract

Conducting an Evaluation Needs Assessment

Question	Check the best option...	Possible Third-Party Evaluator Tasks
<p>(3) Can internal staff be sufficiently allocated to perform all evaluation tasks & responsibilities?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes—proceed to question 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unsure or No — complete the checklist at right to identify possible third-party evaluator tasks</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Create/pilot test data collection instruments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Collect data on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation progress <input type="checkbox"/> Service Statistics (e.g., numbers served; numbers of services provided) <input type="checkbox"/> Fidelity of implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes/impact <p><input type="checkbox"/> Perform data entry/management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct data analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide performance feedback to project team</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Write reports</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p> <hr/>

Determining When to Bring A Third-party Evaluator on Board

	Third-Party Evaluator is Hired Early in the Evaluation	Third-Party Evaluator is Hired Late in the Evaluation
Evaluation Questions	The third-party evaluator can contribute to the development of formative and summative evaluation questions.	The third-party evaluator will be limited in his or her ability to provide recommendations or guidance on formative and summative questions. The evaluator may be able to identify the limitations of existing evaluation questions.
Evaluation Design	The third-party evaluator can contribute to and provide significant guidance on the evaluation's design.	The third-party evaluator will be limited in his or her ability to provide guidance. The evaluator likely will not be able to revise, modify, or correct design features. Evaluation questions may not be addressed at all or answered incompletely by a poor design.

Developing A Third-party Evaluator

Scope of Work

Question	Check the best option...	Possible Third-Party Evaluator Tasks
<p>(1) Can internal staff be sufficiently allocated to perform all evaluation tasks and responsibilities?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes—proceed to question 4</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unsure or No — complete the checklist at right to identify possible third-party evaluator tasks</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Create/pilot test data collection instruments</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collect data on</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Implementation progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Service Statistics (e.g., numbers served; numbers of services provided)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fidelity of implementation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outcomes/impact</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perform data entry/management</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conduct data analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide performance feedback to project team</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Write reports</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>

Creating an Evaluation Budget

- Common Budget Items
 - Personnel
 - Non-personnel costs of data collection
 - Travel
 - Training
 - Software and data systems
 - Security of hard copy and electronic data

- Appendix C: Budgeting Guidance
- Appendix D: Time Frame Estimates for Common Data Collection Activities

Developing a Request for Proposals

- Common RFP components
 - Description of the project or program
 - Description of services required
 - Deliverables
 - Evaluation budget
 - Contract terms and forms
 - Proposal requirements
 - Proposal evaluation criteria
 - RFP schedule

Navigating the Solicitation & Review Process

- Assess the applicant's qualifications, background, and experience
 - Educational background
 - Specific content knowledge
 - Experience
 - Evaluation philosophy or approach
 - Location
- Check references
 - Good questions to ask

Preparing the Third-party Evaluation Contract

- Basic contract elements:
 - Scope of Work
 - Definition of project staff responsibilities
 - Data ownership and sharing
 - Nature of the financial arrangement and payment schedule
 - Timeline
 - Exit Clauses
 - Deliverables and Reports
 - Expectations/requirements for human subjects protections and protecting data confidentiality

Implementing the Evaluation and Working with the Third-Party Evaluator

1. Establish Expectations
2. Commit to Ongoing Communication
3. Track and Manage Evaluation Progress
 - Evaluation Progress Checklist

Establishing Expectations

- Set reasonable goals and expectations
 - TIP: Don't expect unlimited access!
- Define decision-making roles and responsibilities.
- Try to keep third-party evaluations independent
 - especially evaluations of outcomes and impact

Committing to Ongoing Communication

- Identify a liaison to work with the third-party evaluator
 - Serve as the evaluation team's primary point of contact for the evaluation
 - Ensure the evaluation team has the information it needs to conduct the evaluation tasks
 - Keep track of deadlines and deliverables
 - Review and authorize mid-course corrections if the evaluation seems off track or if problems arise
- Schedule regular meetings or phone check-ins

Tracking and Monitoring Evaluation Progress

- The evaluation liaison must
 - Know how the separate pieces of the evaluation fit into the “big picture”
 - Have a sense of what should be happening and when (e.g., date, time, and location data collections should be occurring)
 - Receive timely and relevant information from project staff and the third-party evaluator
 - Know how to discern higher quality from lower quality work

Sample Evaluation Elements to Track and Monitor

- Timing and deadlines
- Evaluation planning and design
- Communications
- Data collection
- Data entry, management and quality
- Data analysis
- Reporting

Completing an Evaluation Progress Checklist

Questions to Consider	Evaluation is On Target If... (one or more of the following may apply)	Evaluation is Experiencing a Challenge If... (one or more of the following may apply)
Timing and Deadlines		
(1) When did the third-party evaluator get hired?	<input type="checkbox"/> Third-party evaluator was hired prior to the project's first day of implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Third-party evaluator was hired on schedule (according to the project management plan).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The process for hiring the evaluator is more than one month delayed. <input type="checkbox"/> The third-party evaluator is in the process of being hired or has not yet been hired.
(2) Is the evaluation meeting its deadlines?	<input type="checkbox"/> The evaluation has met all deadlines. <input type="checkbox"/> The evaluation has met most deadlines, with 1 or 2 delays.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The evaluation has not established any deadlines. <input type="checkbox"/> There have been 3 or more delays in meeting deadlines.

What If Things Aren't Going Well?

- Determine if problems originate with the project staff or with the evaluator, or a combination
- Identify strategies for getting the evaluation back on track
 - Action plan
 - More frequent communication
- Review contracted terms and consider:
 - “Pros” and “cons” of ending the contract

Concluding the Evaluation Project

1. Receive all evaluation documents
 - Ensure transfer or destruction of data and files, as necessary
2. Review and respond to outstanding contractual items
3. Establish a chain of communication for future needs

Receiving All Evaluation Documents

- As negotiated in the evaluation contract
- May be hard-copy, electronic, audio, video...
- Per your institution's requirements:
 - Maintain documents for a specific amount of time
 - Destroy documents using specified methods

Completing All Contracted Terms

- Receive all documents and products
 - Data
 - Reports
 - Other deliverables, including in-person presentations
- Make final payments

Establishing a Chain of Communication

- Who should individuals contact in the future about the project evaluation?
 - Decide on formal or informal agreement regarding future communication
 - Obtain primary and secondary contact information

Questions?

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