



# Evaluation Guide for Program Directors



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## Why Program Evaluation?

Formal evaluation helps greatly when you want to measure your program's success at implementing and achieving its goals. Use evaluation to compare the activities and outcomes you intended to implement and achieve to the activities and outcomes you actually implemented and achieved. Your evaluation should explore well beyond the basic information and data points that go into your annual performance report (APR). It is important to realize that evaluations are not meant to judge whether you have a "good" or "bad" program, but to determine how effective your current strategies are at improving student outcomes. You can answer questions like these: What is working? What is not working? What are our strengths? How can we improve? What intended and unintended outcomes have we seen? The answers to these questions can provide guidance toward the most effective and sustainable program possible. A great example is given by Erin Harris of the Harvard School of Education (2011):

*"If you have created an OST [out-of-school time] program that highlights recreation and nutrition education, with the goal of improving children's abilities to make healthy choices, an evaluation can help you determine if your program has been implemented in a way that will lead to positive outcomes related to your goals (e.g., whether activities offer opportunities for physical activity or learning about better nutrition). In addition, an evaluation can help determine whether participants are actually making healthier choices, such as choosing recess games that involve physical activity, or selecting fruit as a snack rather than cookies."<sup>1</sup>*

In addition, your evaluation should tell the story behind your data. It is your opportunity to include qualitative data that illustrate your quantitative data. Including stories, highlights and explanations provides a richer look at your overall program and its outcomes. Your evaluation should provide a clear picture of where you started, where you ended, and exactly what occurred in between, including highlights and challenges.

## Evaluation Requirements

All 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) programs should conduct an independent local evaluation of their program's effectiveness as a best practice. Specific requirements for what the evaluation should include and how frequently to conduct an evaluation vary according to your state or territory department of education. Consult your grant guidance and department of education for specific requirements.

## Common Evaluation Considerations

Program leaders and their evaluators may choose a variety of ways to format an evaluation and a variety of methods to gather and analyze data. The following descriptions will help you understand common evaluation considerations and components.

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, E. (2011). *Evaluation 101: How to evaluate an expanded learning program*. Harvard Family Research Project. Available at <http://www.hfpg.org/files/2214/5194/1686/Afterschool.Eval101-120911-FINAL.pdf>





## Evaluation Guide for Program Directors

### Logic Model

A logic model is a one-page visual representation of what your program plans to do to achieve its desired and proposed outcomes. Logic models help to define program goals and to focus your evaluation by identifying core elements of the evaluation strategy. They are a concise way to show how a program is designed and how it should progress to make substantial change in the lives of the participants and even the community. The goal of a logic model is to show the relationship between a program's key elements and its desired outcomes.

Like evaluations, logic models may vary in format. Generally, the main components of a logic model are these:

- **Inputs/Resources:** These are the elements of your program that you use to work toward your goals. These can include staff, partners, funding sources and other resources.
- **Outputs:**
  - *Activities:* These are the services and activities you plan to offer to reach your goals. They should be directly related to your program goals.
  - *Participation:* This is where you should show the target audience for the activity, its intended dosage and its duration.
- **Outcomes:**
  - *Short-term:* These are often your activity-level SMART goals. They should focus on what can be achieved within the semester or, at most, the year.
  - *Long-term:* These outcomes are often your program or grant goals. They should center on overall change and the greater impact of your program.

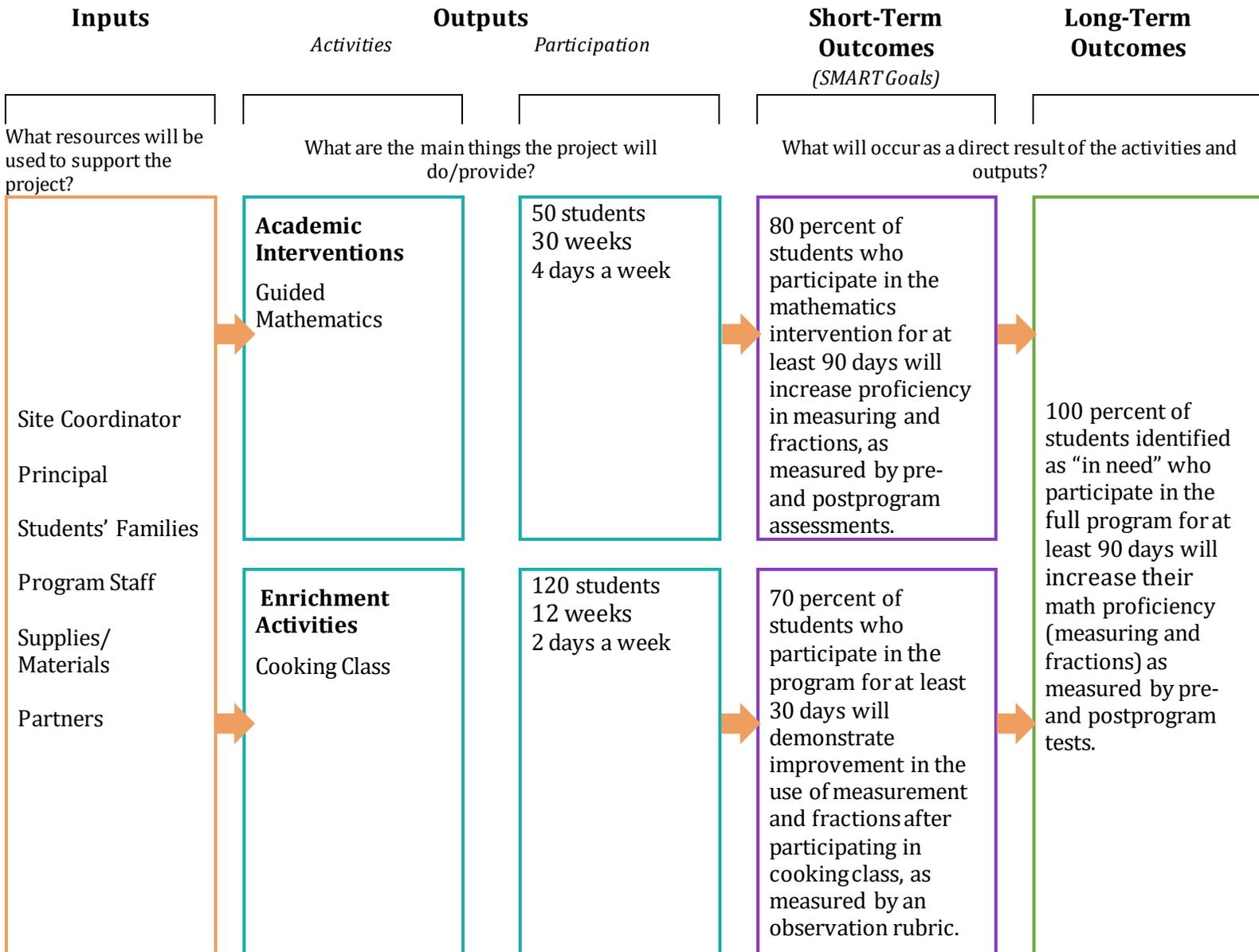




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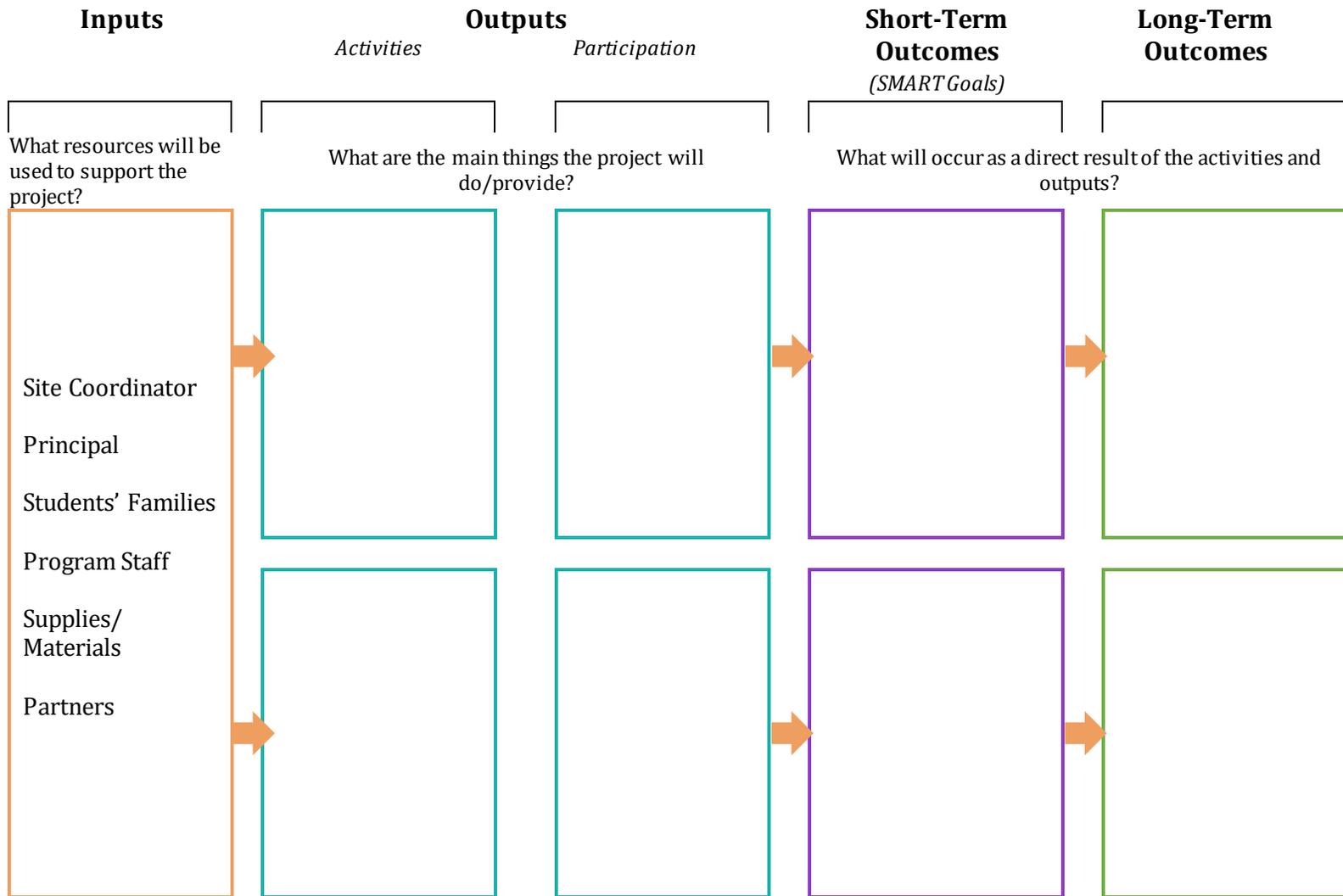
## Logic Model Example

This example of a logic model can give you some ideas for constructing one yourself. Every grantee program has its own focus, so your logic model will look different from another program’s logic model. If your program has more than one site, each site may have a unique focus, so each may need a separate logic model. Just be sure the site-level logic models align with the program-level model. You can use the blank logic model on the next page to create a model for your program.





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### External Evaluator

An external evaluator is someone from outside your program who conducts an independent evaluation of your program. Your external evaluator should have had no part in writing, developing or implementing your grant.

**Qualifications.** The quality of your evaluator will have a substantial influence on the success of your evaluation. When looking for an external evaluator, key considerations should be educational background and experience. Some higher education programs offer degrees in program evaluation, and many offer certificates in program evaluation. Also, graduates of the sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, public administration, education) have taken courses in research methods. At a minimum, your evaluator should have experience with qualitative and quantitative research methods, because he or she will collect and analyze both types of data. Here are some qualifications to seek:

- Bachelor's degree or higher in education, psychology, statistics, public administration or political science with course work in research methods, evaluation and/or statistics, *or* master's or doctoral students working toward certification in program evaluation;
- Previous experience with program evaluation (request samples of previous program evaluations and their results); and
- Operational knowledge of out-of-school time and summer learning programs.

**Compensation.** The amount you pay an external evaluator will vary depending on your evaluator's experience, the type and complexity of evaluation work, your region and other factors. Keep in mind that the expense should be reasonable and necessary for the product you are receiving. Remember to consult your state-specific grant guidance for any cost standards or guidelines. You must also follow the procurement policy of your district or organization.

**Find a qualified evaluator.** A great place to start your search for an external evaluator is with your state or territory department of education. The department may have an evaluation office with qualified staff, or it may maintain a list of approved evaluation providers. Other good resources are local colleges or universities. The departments of sociology, psychology, public administration, and education, or research centers/institutes that focus on those areas, are potential sources within college and universities. You may find a reputable researcher or evaluator at one of these institutions, or the staff may be able to direct you to other organizations that conduct program evaluations. Also consider professional organizations for evaluators, which can connect you to professional evaluators in your area.

**Job description/scope of work.** After you have identified possible sources for an external evaluator, you will need to develop a job description and/or a scope of work. This should clearly identify the qualifications required of your evaluator or evaluation team, and provide a reasonably detailed synopsis of work you expect to have done for the year.





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**Contract.** There should be a formal contract between you and your external evaluator. Your evaluator will be conducting very detailed tasks, using sensitive information, and working on a specific timeline with critical deliverables. Therefore, you want to protect yourself and your program to the best of your ability. Below you will find some sections that should be included in your contract. Your district or organization may have a contract template that you must follow. You may even need to open a formal bidding process. Be sure to check your district or organization policies regarding contracts.

- **Ownership of data.** It is extremely important to specify who owns the data (you) and with whom the data can be shared. For your evaluator to use the data for any purpose outside of the evaluation, the request must be cleared with you and any other necessary parties (possibly the district and the state). If you do allow your evaluator to use data for other purposes (and permission is granted by all appropriate parties), specify that all articles, posters and other presentations or avenues for dissemination are discussed and cleared beforehand.
- **Deliverables.** A typical evaluation will consist of three to four parts that will be submitted to you for review throughout the year. Depending on state policy, you may have other reporting requirements to consider and may need to submit your evaluation reports to your state department of education. Your evaluator should write these reports and you should approve them. It is smart to specify in the contract that the evaluator will receive payment only after delivery of each document.

### Protocols and Reporting

Typically, at the beginning of the program year, you (with your team) and your evaluator will meet to establish the standards and protocols for the evaluation. The evaluation plan that results from this meeting should include the logic model, and it should define many details about the work, including how often your evaluator will provide reports. Here are logical times to expect reports:

**Mid-year report.** At the mid-year point, meet with your evaluator to discuss program progress. The evaluator should present preliminary results and discuss how they connect with activities and grant goals. You can talk about potential action items, and also address any potential problems with data collection or analysis.

**End-of-year report.** At the end of the year, the program planning team should meet with the evaluator to discuss the final findings of the evaluation, which should include the results of surveys, observations, interviews and focus groups (as applicable). It should also include any analyses the evaluator conducted on existing data and progress from the mid-year report.

**Summer report.** If you run a summer program, you may want to include that programming in your evaluation. Because summer learning programs may be quite different from school-year programs, you may want a separate logic model and evaluation plan for this program session.





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## Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan is your blueprint. It provides details about the context of the evaluation, the data that will be collected, and how the data will be analyzed to answer the evaluation question(s) and assess progress toward the stated goals and objectives. The evaluation should not be implemented until the evaluation plan is complete.

Typically, your evaluation plan will include several elements:

- **Program background and context:** Describe the importance of the program for the community and school and any substantial changes that were observed over the past year. Describe the community, demographics, and school and student characteristics.
- **Program goals and objectives:** This section should explicitly describe the goals and objectives as stated in the original grant application. The goals and objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound).
- **Logic model:** The logic model should be a collaborative effort between you and your evaluator as it sets the tone and foundation for the remainder of your evaluation report. This is where the evaluation questions can be outlined and described in terms of their relation to the logic model (program goals).
- **Data collection and methods:** Describe the types of data that will be collected, how the data will be collected, and the sample size (number) involved. Here, the evaluator will outline exactly how data will be analyzed to address the evaluation questions and assess the progress toward program goals. Appendixes should include copies of any tools that will be used (e.g., surveys or focus group protocols).
- **Timeline.** This timeline should outline the specific tasks of the evaluator. These may include (but are not limited to) data collection, meetings with the program planning team, report due dates, and tool development.
- **Findings related to impact and effect.** This section of the mid-year, end-of-year, and summer reports will address the extent to which the project achieves its intended purposes.
  - The key evaluation question needs to address how the program is being implemented with fidelity. Is the program being implemented as described in the grant application? Have there been modifications and, if so, why?
  - This section should also discuss the program's goals and objectives to get at program impact. Data that may be used in this section include grades, test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates, behavior reports and family involvement rates.
- **Discussion.** This section is where the evaluator describes how the findings are linked to the program goals and evaluation questions. This is an appropriate place to include some of your powerful qualitative data and link them to your quantitative data.
- **Recommendations.** The evaluation report should include recommendations that are linked to the program goals and that emerge from the data analyses. These recommendations should address areas of strength and areas for improvement that are directly related to the goals and objectives.



# Evaluation Guide for Program Directors

## Evaluation Tools

Your evaluator will employ a variety of methods to gather data and feedback about your program. Focus groups and surveys are two common methods of gathering feedback from your program stakeholders. See the final pages of this document for sample focus group questions and sample surveys you can customize to use with stakeholders.

## Ethical Considerations

Evaluators should use procedures that meet ethical standards and safeguard participants. This includes maintaining confidentiality and adhering to the ethical standards set forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA regulations allow external evaluators to have access to student data if the evaluations are designed to “conduct studies for, or on behalf of, educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of developing, validating, or administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, and improving instruction, if such studies are conducted in such a manner as will not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by persons other than representatives of such organizations and such information will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purpose for which it is conducted, and contractual partners with (Name of District) schools.”

## Sample Focus Group Questions

### Parent Focus Group Questions

- Do you think there is a need for this type of program in your community?
- Why did you enroll your child in this program?
- Does your child enjoy going to the out-of-school time program?
- Do you think the program has affected your child in the following areas:
  - Behavior
  - School performance
  - School attitude/motivation
- Is the program convenient for you? (time, transportation, etc.)
- Have you been involved with the program in any way?
- What are the best things about the program in your opinion?
- What are some things you would like to see changed?

### Student Participant Focus Group Questions

- Why did you join/start participating in the program?
- Do you enjoy the program?
- Do you look forward to attending the program?
- Do you feel comfortable talking to the program staff?
- Do you think you are doing better in school since you started coming to the program?
- How exciting are the things that you do here?
- What would you tell other students who don't participate about the program?
- What would you be doing after school if you weren't coming to the program?
- Do you have any ideas to make the program better?
- What is your favorite part of the program?





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### Staff Focus Group Questions

- How did you become involved in the out-of-school time program?
- What are the goals of the program?
- Do you think the participants enjoy coming to the program?
- Do you think the program has affected participants in the following areas:
  - Behavior
  - School performance
  - School attitude/motivation
- How often do you communicate with school-day staff? With the site coordinator? With the teachers of your participants? What systems are in place for communication (e.g., student logs, regular meetings)?
- What are some challenges you have experienced in the program so far?
- What are some successes you have experienced in the program so far?
- How do you plan what activities/programming you offer?
- What types of training have been offered to you?

### Sample Surveys

Find all sample surveys in the Data Tracking Packet