21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

Grantee Evaluation Guidance

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INTRODUCTION

All approved grantees are required to formalize an independent evaluation within the third-year of the program. The SDE provides technical assistance to guide grantees through the planning process of evaluation. The following guidance is provided to help ensure grantees maximize the independent evaluation in order to refine, improve, and strengthen the program and to refine performance measures (ESSA, Sec. 4205(b)).

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Effective independent evaluation is important for program performance and continuous improvement. Evaluation allows grantees to assess their programs, find areas for improvement, and refine program operations. Grantees that work closely with an evaluator leads to greater likelihood of implementation for locally appropriate solutions, staff buy-in, and program improvements. Because Idaho's 21st CCLC grantees vary widely, local evaluation is also important in making the case for the statewide program as a whole. To ensure local evaluations are consistently rigorous and provide comparable information, SDE requires the following of third year grantees:

- Use of a formal assessment tool and site observation tool;
- Use of an independent evaluator that does not have a conflict of interest (i.e. employee of organization, partner with organization, family members in program, etc.); and
- A common evaluation outline (five sections) for local evaluation reports.

EVALUATION OUTLINE

Section 1: Background Information
- Evaluator information – name, contact information, organization, and brief descriptions of credentials.
- Year of the evaluation
- Program Description:
    o List of centers (site locations) and brief description of target population and recruitment strategies.
    o Activities provided, how often, and extent to which this matches original grant application.

- o Participation numbers, average daily attendance, and percentage of regular program participants (students attending 30 or more days).
- Program Rationale
  - o The program rationale (or "theory of change") is a statement of why the program design is the right approach to accomplish the program goals. The program rationale should include:
    - A logic model that shows the relationships between primary program components; and
    - A list of specific program goals and the performance indicator(s) (i.e. measurable objectives) used to track each goal.

Section 2: Evaluation Method

- Evaluation questions – Include a statement of the questions the evaluation answers. At a minimum, the evaluation questions should include:
  - o Is the program delivering the services and content according to the original grant application?
  - o Is it accomplishing what it said it would accomplish in terms of program impact?
  - o What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?
  - o How can the program improve?
- Types and sources of evaluation data – Provide at least three types of data:
  - o Performance data about participants. This data covers attendance, grades, standardized tests, etc.;
  - o Survey data from school teachers, program staff, key partners, students, parents, and other stakeholders;
  - o Observation data recorded using a structured observation tool during one or more visits to the centers.

Section 3: Evaluation Findings

- Data presentation – Organize and present data to help answer the evaluation questions identified in section 2. Describe how the analysis of the data.
- Conclusions and recommendations – Show how the data is relevant to the program goals listed in Section 1. Describe the program performance and improvements needed.

Section 4: Using the Evaluation

- Program planning – Describe the plan to use evaluation results to improve program operations. Describe plans to disseminate evaluation to stakeholders and the public.
- Reflection – Provide a description of the observation and reflection from grantee staff concerning the evaluation report.

Section 5: Optional Appendices

- Appendices may include:
  - Observation records;
  - Center activity schedules;
  - Outreach activities;
  - Recruitment strategies;
  - Surveys;
  - Performance data;
  - Testimonials; and
  - Other documents directly relevant to the evaluation process.