



Improving Design Rigor for Participatory Evaluation:

Lessons from a Multi-Site Nutrition Intervention Program

Presented by:
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Presenter Disclosures

Carolyn D. Kitzmann Rider

- (1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose



The mission of the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* is to create innovative partnerships that empower low-income Californians to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security with the goal of preventing obesity and other diet related chronic diseases.



- Since 1997, the *Network* has led a statewide movement of local, state, and national partners collectively working toward improving the health status of **7 million low-income California parents and children**.
- Multiple venues are used to facilitate behavior change in homes, schools, worksites, and communities to create environments that support fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity.
- This includes **85 local assistance contracts** to qualifying school districts, local health departments, food banks, health centers, Indian tribal organizations, and other public and non-profit entities.



Network Impact/Outcome Evaluation (IOE)

- **Objective:** identify successful interventions and potential best practices and provide contractors direction for program improvement, refinement, and redirection of effort.
- **Participants:** local projects receiving >\$350,000 Federal Share required; a few smaller contractors participate voluntarily.
 - Many contractors have little evaluation training; therefore, this project provides contractors with quality evaluation tools and resources and one-on-one evaluation guidance.
- State level analysis of compiled contractor data enables the *Network* to better look at overall project accomplishment.



The Problem:

“Individual contractors do not have the resources to develop or hire people with expertise in [evaluation]. Without the state support, the IOE evaluation process would be a great challenge and potential obstacle to contractors.”

- Local *Network* Project Coordinator





TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR BUILDING CAPACITY



Evaluation Tools & Resources Available to Programs

- Workshops offered regionally throughout California
- Website
- Evaluation Handbook
- Templates for creating evaluation plans and reports
- Compendium of Surveys & Standardized Surveys
- Data Entry Templates & Instruction FAQ
- Planning Teleconferences
- One-on-one technical assistance



Annual Evaluation Timeline

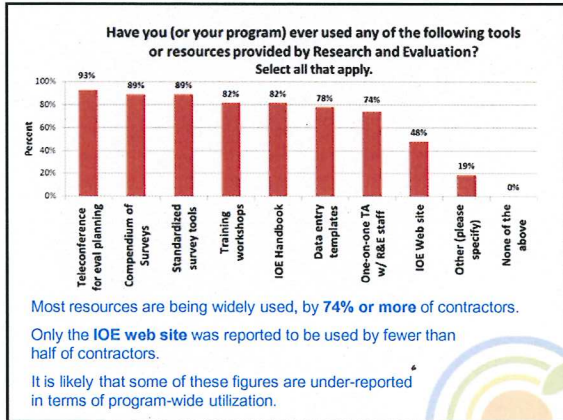
July 31 programs submit (*from templated forms*):

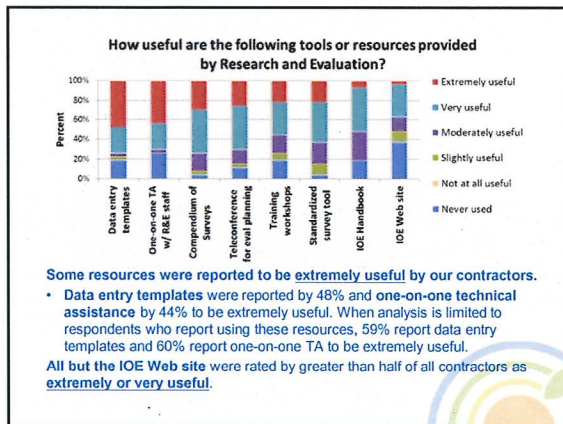
- Report of current year's activities and results
- Plan of next year's activities and evaluation

August-November conduct planning teleconferences including:

- Program staff
- Research & Evaluation staff
- Program Manager
- Nutrition Education Consultant (for school-based programs)



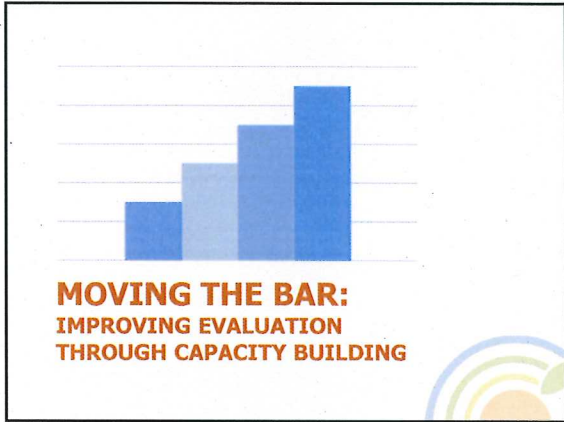


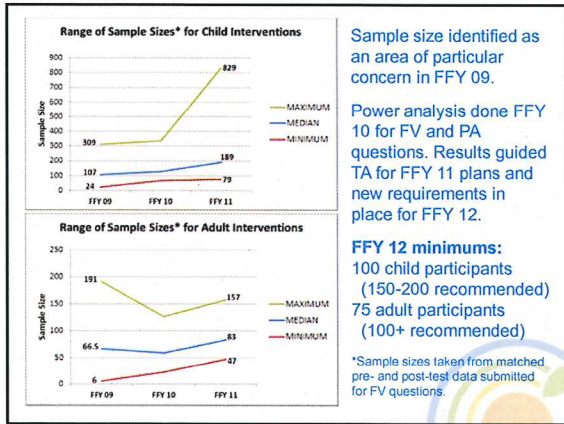


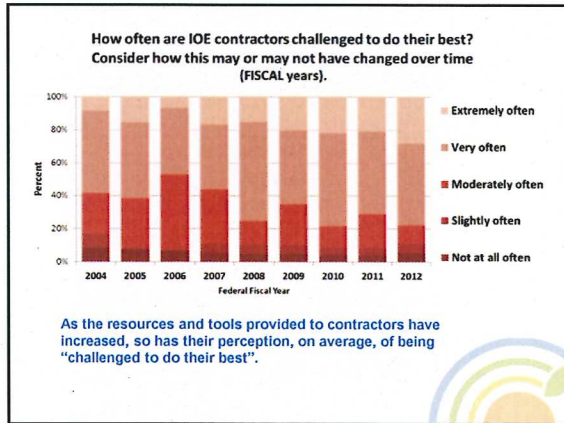
“...over the years the *Network* team has listened and responded to my needs by standardizing the survey tool, providing data entry templates that are easy to use and produce immediate results, standardizing protocols for survey administration and by being available (sic) for a phone call or email to assist.”

“The research and evaluation team has expanded the number of surveys available including the *Network High School Survey*.”

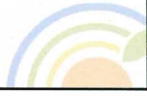
“Teleconference with the research team has been useful in clarifying issues pertaining to IOE, such as barriers, design, implementation, and analysis.”

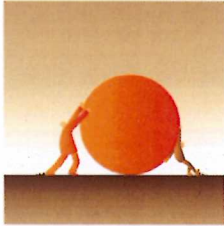






"When I first joined [our program], I appreciated the many opportunities to attend Evaluation Workshops. As a new person who would be facilitating the evaluations, getting that information was important in completing what the project needed to do. The REU staff members have been great at helping me problem solve, giving me resources (including research articles) in order to help me interpret my data, and templates to assist in presenting the data in a different way that would be more 'friendly' (such as cups of fruits [sic] and vegetables vs. the code)."





LOOKING FORWARD: CHALLENGES AND GOALS



Challenge: Balancing Disparate Needs

"From my perspective, I'm not challenged to do my best evaluation because of the need to fit into the prescribed framework. Like I said, I understand the need to collect a standard set of data across programs and years. I just think it's too bad that the standard set of data interferes with evaluation of program components that might be as or more meaningful to a specific district program."

"Why do we need to have so much autonomy? It would be easier if an intervention, evaluation design, survey instrument, etc. was given to us."



**Challenge:
Balancing Disparate Needs**

"It would be helpful if the State reviewed how schools and health departments differ in their approach to nutrition ed efforts. Many of the current forms and examples relate to students and school-based projects. It might be helpful to have health department-LIAs (Local Incentive Awardees) meet separately."



New for FFY 2012

- Recommended sample sizes from FFY 2011 have become mandatory
- Standard administration protocols for *Network Youth Survey* and *Network High School Survey*



Planned during FFY 2012

- We will resume workshops after a year without them, incorporating new USDA guidance out in January 2012 (transition from SNAP-Ed to NEOP)
- Substantially revised Compendium of Surveys – lots of new measures!
 - Adding measures for new age groups and new constructs
- More tools to be added to the website
 - Responding to feedback from surveymonkey



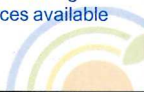
Summary & Conclusions

- Practical tools and resources, combined with training and ongoing technical assistance, facilitate the process of local program evaluation.
- Supporting multi-site local program evaluation requires a balancing act of standardization and structure with sensitivity to the unique needs of local programs.



Thank You!

- Former and present colleagues on this multi-site evaluation: Jennifer Gregson, Amanda Linares, Sharon Sugerman, Andrew Fourney, Andrew Bellow, Patrick Mitchell
- The many colleagues on our local projects, especially those who were quoted within this presentation!
- The program managers and Nutrition Education Consultants who guide our local projects in choosing and developing the best educational resources available



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