



# Using Data and Evaluation Practices to Improve Early Childhood Programs

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## Learning Objectives



- Learn about the evaluation process and current evaluation resources
- Understand the key evaluation practices that can serve as a tool for systemic program planning to support professional development in the early childhood field
- Engage in an interactive activity to experience how the evaluation process can support day-to-day practice and benefit programs
- Receive tools to support the use of evaluation findings in program planning and decision-making

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## Introductions



### In pairs, discuss:

- What types of data (e.g., parent sign-in sheets, ECERS scores, etc.) do you collect as part of your job responsibilities?
- How does evaluation and data collection support the work you do?
- How does evaluation and data collection impede the work you do?



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## Current Landscape



- **Accountability → Mandated Data Collection**

- Development of QRIS
  - Focus on child outcomes
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- **Smart Start**

- Regular independently conducted evaluations “have addressed a variety of issues at the Population, System and Program levels” (2011, p. 1)

## Evaluation Defined



**A form of research that involves "the systematic assessment of the operation and/or outcomes of a program or policy, compared to explicit or implicit standards, in order to contribute to the improvement of the policy or program" (Weiss, 1998, p. 4)**

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**Primary purpose is to “improve the quality of education and other services provided to young children and their families” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003, p. 15)**

## What Is Evaluation?



### Types of Evaluation

- Context (e.g., needs and organizational assessments)
- Process (implementation, formative)
- Summative (outcome)



### Types of Data

- Quantitative
- Qualitative



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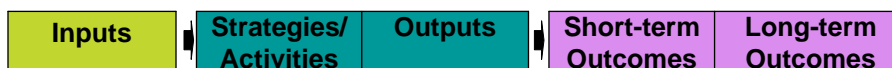
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## Stages of Evaluation



### Stages of Evaluation

- **Understand the program**
  - Logic model
    - Inputs (e.g., resources)
    - Strategies and Activities (e.g., services or approaches)
    - Outputs (e.g., measures of effort)
    - Outcomes (e.g., changes in knowledge, skill, etc.)



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## Stages of Evaluation continued



- **Identify stakeholders**
- **Establish evaluation team**
- **Planning and implementation**
  - Identify key questions to be answered
  - Determine methods
  - Measurement development
  - Data collection
  - Analysis
  - Reporting
  - Dissemination
- **Use evaluation findings**
  - Quality improvement
  - Funding decisions



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## Opportunities and Barriers



### Group Discussion

- How does evaluation and data collection support the work you do? (Are you a willing contributor to the evaluation process?)
- How does evaluation and data collection impede the work you do? (What limitations have you observed?)



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## Planning for Evaluation: Building Practice



### Logic Model Components

- Form groups of 4 people
- Review scenario
- Identify assigned logic model component
- Post responses



## Workforce Development Project Case Study



The *Best Start LA Workforce Development Project* is identifying best practices and core competencies for the prenatal through three (P-3) workforce in Los Angeles County. This is a multi-disciplinary project partnering with the work sectors of **early care and education, early intervention, mental health, physical health, and social services/child welfare**



## Guiding Evaluation Theories



- **Empowerment:** The use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination
- **Participatory:** Partnership between trained evaluators and practice-based decision-makers as well as others directly involved with the program



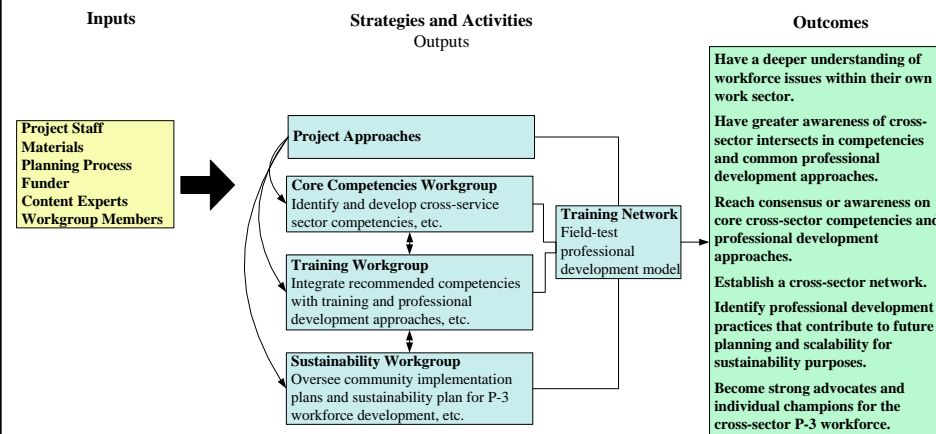
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## Understand the Program



- **Developed Logic Models: Program and Theory of Change**



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## Determine Methods and Measurement Development



- **Evidence-based Practice: A decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values using the 5-steps of:**
  - 1) Ask an answerable question;
  - 2) Find the best available research evidence;
  - 3) Appraise the evidence quality and relevance;
  - 4) Integrate research with values and wisdom; and
  - 5) Evaluate (Buysse & Wesley, 2006, pp. ix-x)

## Organizing Data Collection Model (Field-Test): Planning and Implementation



- **Level 1: Participants' reactions**
- **Level 2: Participants' learning**
- **Level 3: Organization support and change**
- **Level 4: Participants' use of new knowledge and skills**
- **Level 5: Student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002)**



## Identify Stakeholders and Establish Evaluation Team



- **Reflective Practice: Collaborative and Inclusive Strategies**

- Community of Practice: A group of people who share a concern, goal, or interest engage in discussion and reflection of their experiences in order to refine best practices and increase knowledge (Buysse & Wesley, 2006)



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## Workgroup Member Outcomes: Analysis and Reporting



- **Deeper understanding of workforce issues within their own sector**
- **Greater awareness of cross-sector intersects in competencies and professional development approaches**
- **Reached consensus on core cross-sector competencies and professional development approaches for the P-3 workforce by creating shared meaning**
- **Became strong advocates and individual champions for the cross-service P-3 workforce**

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## Dissemination and Use of Evaluation Findings



- **Disseminate Findings**
  - Regularly shared with project staff, funder, and project participants to create a feedback loop
  - As appropriate, shared with community stakeholders and the general public
- **Continuous Quality Improvement**
  - Informs selection of activities and agenda for Workgroups and Training Network orientation
  - Aid participants in planning in order to meet deliverables
  - Inform revision of professional development model

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## Consumers of Evaluation



- **Why Evaluate?**
  - Evaluation aids program planning and data can be used to tell a story
- **What's Missing?**
  - Data needs to be collected to gauge impacts and systems change, as well as to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability (LeMoine, 2008)
- **Resources**
  - American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles (2004)
  - Habits of Effective Evaluators (Bruner, 2005)

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## Final Reflections



- **Project Challenges**
  - Creating shared meaning
  - Ensuring everyone is at the planning table
  - Capacity building
  - Data collection from multiple participants
  - Allocation of resources
  - Availability of existing instruments aligned to project
- **Next Steps**
  - Continue to collect process and outcome data
    - Professional development orientation
    - Professional development community implementation
    - Sustainability Workgroup

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## Final Reflections continued



### Based on the resources and practices you learned from today's session

- Identify 2 ways you plan to become involved in data and evaluation efforts within your program
  - Write these plans and your address on postcard
- Share your plan with 3 people



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**Remember, you are an important contributor to the evaluation and data collection process, so become involved and make your voice heard**

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**THANK YOU!**