Assessing K-12 Outreach Programs

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Overview

• Why assess K-12 outreach programs
• What to assess
• How to assess
• Assessment tips
• Assessment resources
Why Assess K-12 Outreach?

• 2/3 of U.S. government-funded STEM programs have not been evaluated since 2005 (Mathematica)
• Evaluation serves to improve, not prove
• Project quality – find out what works
• Project products – what impact happens
• Improve science, pedagogy, and equity/diversity
• Improve STEM, youth development, and organizational development
Why Assess K-12 Outreach?

The Push for Public Value
- NSF broader impacts
- Standards-based movement (K-12)
- Program planning and reporting
- Evidence-based movement
- Return on investment movement
- The political context-government relations
- Need more than feeling good about work with youth
What to Assess

Personal
- Outreach competency
- Team process
- Adult/youth partnerships
- Cultural competence
- Personal interests
What to Assess

Project processes
- Educational delivery
- Outreach context
- Educational materials
- Inclusion
- Participation
- Attrition
What to Assess

Project products
- Learning change
- Behavior change
- Condition change
  - Social
  - Economic
  - environmental
What to Assess

Organizational Development
- Infrastructure
- Finances
- Staffing
- Policies
- Public value
- Other metrics
How to Assess

• Map the project
  – Logic model, concept map, or text
• Decide the focus of assessment
  – Let the questions guide the methods
• Collect and analyze data
  – Observation, case study, interviews, secondary data, survey
• Tell the story
How to Assess

• Youth as evaluators
• Participatory/empowerment assessment
• Diverse and multiple methods vs. death by survey (network analysis, delphi technique, mapping)
• Some agencies want experimental approaches
Assessment Tips

• IRB is your friend
• 10% of grant towards assessment
• Evaluator as co-PI
• Supplement youth self report
• Use assessment that is developmentally appropriate
• Include a youth development specialist on the assessment team
Assessment Tips

• Speak logic modelese
• Assessment should support STEM education and youth development
• Include stakeholders in all stages of assessment
• Provide evidence in a variety of ways using a variety of methods
• Match assessment reporting to the audience
Assessment Resources

• University of Wisconsin Extension
  http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/index.html
• New Directions for Evaluation #106
• Getting to Youth Development Outcomes
• New Directions for Youth Development
• Program evaluation texts (Sage, Wiley)
Final Thoughts

• You must believe in youth development, not just STEM education to be successful in assessing K-12 youth outreach

• There is more to life than a randomized control trial

• Work with others for more successful assessment (i.e. RISE)

• Condition change must guide your work