

Building Evaluation Capacity: Integration of Evaluation and Technical Assistance

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Introduction

- How the Foellinger Foundation (Fort Wayne, IN) used evaluation to examine the implementation and outcomes of a project and improve subsequent project planning
- Project 1 – New Century Celebration Initiative (NCCI): community-wide capacity building project
- Project 2 – Technical Assistance Pilot Project: focused technical assistant project



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NCCI (Project 1) - Description

- Community-wide capacity building project
- Four intermediary organizations provided capacity building services to community nonprofit organizations
 - Three-year executive education program for 3 cohorts of Executive Directors
 - Expansion and enhancement of Foundation Collection services to create a Nonprofit Resource Center
 - Project to increase audience development for 15 member agencies and the umbrella organization's own ability to effectively respond to members groups' needs
 - Project to build organizations' individual capacity and the community's collective capacity to measure outcomes and conduct program evaluation



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Technical Assistance Pilot Project Description

- Three participating organizations
- Four consultants
- Four project areas
 - governance
 - communication
 - evaluation
 - strength-based practices
- Primary activities
 - ongoing assessment
 - directed technical assistance
- Four consultants assess current functioning and provide technical assistance in four project areas



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Technical Assistance Pilot Project – Overall Goals

- Growth in each organization in each of the four project areas
 - Within the area of *evaluation*, organizations will improve their ability to
 - Collect, analyze, and use data to make decisions
 - Use evaluation as an integral part of work
- The Foundation will have increased its knowledge of how to provide technical assistance for improved organizational effectiveness
- A plan will be in place to disseminate learning regarding effective methods of supporting organizations in increasing organizational effectiveness



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- Subsequent slides will
 - Identify lessons learned from the evaluation of NCCI (Project 1)
 - Describe how evaluation findings were applied to Technical Assistance Pilot Project
 - Provide some details about assessment and technical assistance within the area of evaluation within the Technical Assistance Pilot Project



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Efforts must be focused on most appropriate areas of organizational effectiveness (e.g., governance versus marketing)

Project 2 Planning

- Project areas should be aligned with Foundation goals
- Focus on governance, communication, evaluation, and strength-based practices



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Readiness for change and ability to fully engage in project were not measured at start of first project
- Some organizations were ill-prepared to manage or understand organizational change related to increasing evaluation capacity

Project 2 Planning

Participating Organizations:

- have some demonstrated organizational effectiveness;
- met selection criteria (e.g., readiness to participate, successful previous performance, etc.);
- are willing and capable of fully participating in the process;
- signed memorandum of agreement explaining participation requirements



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Evaluation capacity building was focused on many community organizations whose needs were varied and extensive
- Training a large number of organizations resulted in some efficiency of effort but training alone did not increase capacity
- One-on-one support to address unique issues was also required

Project 2 Planning

- Consultants conducted an initial assessment to identify each organization's strengths and needs in the four areas
- A technical assistance plan was developed for each organization
- Ongoing assessment will contribute to TA plan modifications
- Organizations have access to direct, confidential technical assistance to address their needs in the four areas



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Technical consultants must be skilled in facilitating change within organizations

Project 2 Goals

- With the assistance of the consultants, organizations will successfully change their practices in the area(s) of need.
- Changes in practice will lead to increased organizational effectiveness
- Organizations will develop a plan to sustain the efforts and changes that they made through the project



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Four intermediary organizations worked independently, there was no project synergy

Project 2 Planning

- Coordinated technical assistance
- Lead consultant coordinates services, serves as a resource, and maintains regular contact with stakeholders
- Technical assistance is provided with ongoing communication with the funder
- Process includes communication between Foundation, consultants, organizations, and evaluator



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Lessons Learned Applied to Project 2

Lessons Learned

- Project changes were not guided by data
- An interruption in the evaluation resulted in a weaker evaluation design and less implementation fidelity

Project 2 Planning

- Research and planning were conducted prior to project implementation
- Evaluation was incorporated in the planning stages
- Formative evaluation includes
 - Review of logic model
 - Review of implementation fidelity
 - Discussion of potential project modifications



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Project 2 – Evaluation Capacity Building

Lessons Learned

- Many participating organizations did not understand the role and potential importance of logic models
- Agencies had difficulty identifying appropriate outcomes to measure and methods of measurement

Project 2 Areas of Attention

- Program logic or theory (Logic Model)
- Quality of outcome statements in logic model
- Outcome sequences in logic model
- Type of elements targeted to measure
- Quality of indicators
- Quality of data sources & data collection
- Evaluation resources
- Data use



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Project 2 - Current Status

- Assessment phase has just been completed
- Assessment was conducted through group interviews with agency staff and board
- Assessment provided baseline, will help gauge degree of change, and will inform changes to technical assistance plans
- Outcomes of assessment in area of *evaluation*
 - Organizations focused on governance and communication, less so on evaluation and strength based practices
 - The three participating organizations demonstrate fairly good use of logic models and evaluation processes
 - The assessment process did not provide detailed enough information to develop a complete technical assistance plan in the area of evaluation



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