Ensuring a bright future for every child

Local Program Evaluation Guidance for Mississippi 21st CCLC Sub-Grantees

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As part of your application, you are required to submit a program plan that addresses the following[1]:

- A narrative explaining how the program will operate;
- How the program will address needs identified in the needs assessment;
- How activities will align with the MCCRS;
- A clear, concise description of how program activities are expected to improve student academic achievement and overall student success as well as family engagement;
- How the program will increase family support for student learning and ensure family members of participating students will be actively engaged in their children's education;
- Description of services that will provide adults with the tools necessary to support their student's academic achievement goals; and,
- How the program will link activities and services to student learning.

Additionally, as part of this plan, you are required to continue with a complete plan that:

- Utilized specifics goals, strategies, and action steps that outline objectives, activities, and a timeframe;
- Explains how strategies align with the MCCRS and are evidence-based and proven effective; and,
- For each main domain (Student Academic Achievement, Youth Development, and Family Engagement), you are required to list at least one goal and at least two objectives per goal. Each of these goals should be measurable, performance-based, challenging, and be assessed throughout the year.

Beginning in FY 2018, all sub-grantees are required to contract with an external vendor for a formative and summative evaluation of program effectiveness. By completing each of the respective areas above, you will provide a solid foundation for measuring your program's success (which directly impacts future funding).

[1] *This is not an exhaustive list of requirements. Please refer to RFP for official guidance.*

Formative Evaluations

Your vendor agreement should guarantee that all items required under section 3.4.2 of the RFP are addressed in the report, and that evaluators specifically address whether the program meets the measures of effectiveness established under ESSA, Section 4205(B)(1).

Summative Evaluations

Your vendor agreement should guarantee that the evaluators will meet the following requirements:

1. Provision of a written report addressing reporting outcomes as outlined in Section 3.4.3 of the *21st CCLC Request for Proposals* document dated July 21, 2017, including the explicit areas bulleted under that section.
2. In addition to addressing the minimum requirements under Section 3.4.3, the evaluators should structure the report as outlined in Appendix A, which is based on best practices as established by the American Institutes of Research for evaluation of after-school programs.
3. Report must clearly show progress in achieving program goals through the objectives, strategies, and activities established by the sub-grantee in the *Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Timeframe* section of the grant proposal. **It is critical that you dedicate time to analyzing the goals, objectives, activities, and timeframes that will be necessary to determine if your program has been successful, and that you include this information in your proposal**. Appendix B provides guidance on writing SMART program goals.
4. Programs must define at least one goal that addresses each of the following categories – Student Academic Achievement, Youth Development and Family Engagement. All goals must have at least two measurable objectives. These measurable objectives will be monitored and continued funding is likely to be dependent on achieving the objectives as proven by data.
5. Report should assess whether activities and strategies were implemented with fidelity and aligned with the Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards and applicable evidence-based practices (e.g., linkages between after-school activities and regular school day activities).

Evaluation Questions and Development of a Logic Model

In addition to providing the evaluators with the information above to guide their work, you and your staff should consider what additional, specific questions will help you establish whether your program has been effective or not (or what answers will help you improve it). These are known as evaluation questions, and should also be included as part of the contract scope of work so that you are assured the evaluator will address them.

To further help you in determining what you may want to know about your program, you should development a logic model. A logic model is a visual representation of how the program is intended to work, such as how activities will lead to expected outcomes and the types of performance measures that will indicate whether the program has been successful in reaching its intended goals and objective. This is a great way to begin the process of developing the necessary elements under Section 3.4.3.

Both of these concepts are explained in detail in the Government Accountability Office document, *Designing Evaluations: 2012 Revision* (specifically Chapter 2). To access this document, you may click here.

Appendix A: Evaluation Report Checklist

The American Institutes for Research provides significant guidance on evaluating after-school programs, including what a typical evaluation report should include. The following are areas that should be included as a framework for the summative report.

Evaluation Report Template – Checklist
Source: American Institutes of Research

Title Page	Name of the program and organization. Title of the evaluation. Names (and organizations, if external) of the individuals conducting the evaluation.
Table of Contents	Provide sufficient detail to guide the reader through the report, including page numbers. Include page numbers for boxes, figures, tables, and appendices.
List of Acronyms	Include definitions of all acronyms used in the report, in alphabetical order.
Executive Summary	Briefly describe the program you are evaluating. Explain the evaluation purpose and objectives, making sure to identify the intended users of the evaluation report. Describe the main methods and data collection tools used. Summarize the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. *Comment: The executive summary should serve as a stand-alone form of the evaluation report, as intended users of the evaluation report may refer to it independently of the report. The executive summary should not include any information that is not covered in the report.*

Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions	Define and explain the evaluation purpose. This section should address why the evaluation is being conducted now, the intended use of the evaluation's findings, and what practical decisions can be informed by the evaluation's findings, and the section should identify the intended audience of the report. Define and explain the evaluation questions detailed in the statement of work, linking these to the evaluation purpose.
Program Background	Describe the program that is being evaluated, detailing the various activities of the program. Describe the scale of the program, detailing the size of the target population. Describe the program's resources, providing details about the total human resources (staffing) and financial budget supporting activities. Identify and describe the key partners that collaborate with your organization in the delivery of the program. Explain how the program originated, relating this to the organization's mission, program vision, and population assets and needs. Support this presentation with research literature and findings from the market analysis, asset mapping, and community needs assessment findings where possible. Provide an overview of the program's vision and goals, including a description of the intended participants, geographic location, and the theory of change supporting the program's design. Describe and explain any changes to the program's goals or activities that have occurred since its inception. Describe any weaknesses in the design of your program and any resource capacity limits on your activities. *Comment: If you have a program logic model, you should include it here, making sure to explain the elements in detail.*

Evaluation Methodology and Limitations	Provide a description of the methods and data collection tools used in your evaluation. Describe the types of data collected (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed). Describe who information was collected from (e.g., program participants, staff members, community members, stakeholders) and how these individuals were selected to participate in the evaluation. Explain why these data collection tools were chosen and how the data produced were intended to answer the evaluation questions. Explain the tradeoffs that led you to decide on particular methods, making sure to describe data availability and quality, sampling strategies, and subject/site selection. Explain how stakeholders participated in the evaluation. Explain the ethical considerations you took into account while conducting the evaluation. Make sure to explain how you protected the confidentiality of respondents. Present evidence supporting the credibility of your findings. For example, explain how stakeholder involvement contributed to the credibility of your evaluation findings. Explain any limitations associated with your methodology (e.g., data issues such as selection bias or recall bias, or unobservable differences between comparison groups). Make sure to explain any challenges you faced in collecting data, and whether your methods changed over the course of the evaluation.
Findings	Present clear analysis of quantitative/qualitative evidence. Include findings that assess outcomes and impacts of the program. Describe your findings. For example, you could present frequencies, percentages, and averages or visual depictions of quantitative data; for qualitative data you could summarize patterns or clusters of respondent answers. Avoid interpreting your findings in this section: “interpretations” often refer to why the objectives were not achieved, and are presented in the next section of the report. *Comment: Consider structuring this section around the evaluation questions so that the user of the report can easily draw connections between what was asked and what was found by the evaluation.*

Conclusions and Recommendations	Conclusions and recommendations should synthesize and interpret the findings of the evaluation and make judgments supported by specific findings. Provide recommendations that are action-oriented, practical, and specific. Define who is responsible for the action. Evidence supporting conclusions and recommendations should be presented visually where possible to aid the readers' understanding of judgments made. *Comment: Consider structuring this section around the evaluation questions so that the user of the report can easily draw connections between what was asked and what was found by the evaluation.*
Appendices	Statement of work Methodology-related documentation, including the evaluation matrix and copies of the data collection tools used (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, and checklists) Lists of individuals interviewed, including position title List of sites visited for data collection purposes *Comment: Consider structuring this section around the evaluation questions so that the user of the report can easily draw connections between what was asked and what was found by the evaluation. If this is not possible for this section, put the recommendations in priority order.*
References	A comprehensive list of sources, including documents reviewed, external data sources, and key discussants

Appendix B: Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific – It is easy to create broad outcome statements that don't clearly mean anything. Instead, outcomes should be clear, and they should identify specifically what it is you will achieve with your program.

Measurable – Outcomes are not useful to you if you can't measure them. Make sure it is possible to measure the outcome so there is some concrete or tangible way to identify whether the outcome has been achieved.

Achievable – Nothing is more frustrating for staff, funders, and program leaders than creating lofty outcome goals that are impossible to accomplish. Your outcomes should be things you think your program can accomplish either in the short or long term. They need not be easy and basic—you should stretch yourself a bit—but they do not need to be so big that they are unattainable.

Relevant – Outcomes should be relevant to your program. Don't plan to have an impact on things that your program doesn't target. Choose outcomes that are specifically related to the program activities you are planning.

Time-Specific – Outcomes should be tied to a specific time frame, rather than being left open, in order to encourage staff members and partners to work toward them.