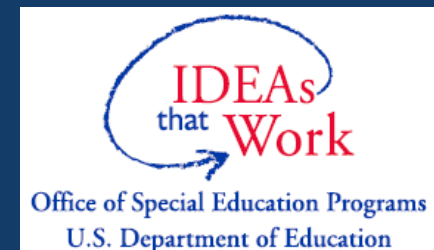


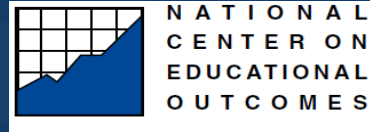
Get Your "Party" Started: Establishing a Successful Third-party Evaluation

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Guidelines for Working with Third-Party Evaluators

Top 5 Tips for Working with Third-party Evaluators

- Hire as early as possible
- Devote time to the evaluation
- Conduct an evaluation needs assessment
- Communicate regularly
- Receive interim reports and work products at regular intervals

Key Points to Remember

- The Principal Investigator is responsible for all aspects of the project—including a timely, comprehensive, and rigorous evaluation
 - A third-party evaluator may contribute to some or many pieces of the evaluation
- Identify the project's specific third-party evaluation needs and work with a third-party evaluator as early as possible
 - This provides the greatest flexibility in how you work with a third-party evaluator
- The project's evaluation goals and design may dictate the need for third-party assistance and the total (desired) budget for the evaluation
 - A third-party evaluator can help identify the most cost effective way to use his or her services

Content of the Guidelines

- Part 1. Making the Most of a Third-Party Evaluation
- Part 2. Finding and Hiring a Third-Party Evaluator
- Part 3. Monitoring and Managing the Third-Party Evaluator's Work
- Part 4. Concluding the Evaluation Project

Part 1. Making the Most of a Third-party Evaluation

- Determining what is needed from the third-party evaluation
 - Appendix A: Evaluation Primer
 - Appendix B: Evaluation Needs Assessment
- Benefits and limitations of working with a third-party evaluator
- Determining when to bring a third-party evaluator on board
 - Exhibit 3: Influence of Timing on Expectations for Third-Party Evaluations

Part 1. Making the Most of a Third-party Evaluation (continued)

- Developing a third-party evaluator scope of work
- Creating an evaluation budget
 - Appendix C: Budgeting Guidance
 - Appendix D: Time Frame Estimates for Common Data Collection Activities

Part 2. Finding and Hiring a Third-party Evaluator

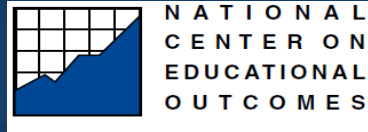
- Developing a Request for Proposals
- Navigating the solicitation and review process
- Preparing the Third-Party Evaluation Contract

Part 3. Monitoring and Managing the Third-Party Evaluator's Work

- Establishing a strong working relationship with a third-party evaluator
 - Exhibit 4: Keeping Third-party Evaluations Independent
 - Appendix E: Common Practices for Protecting Personally Identifiable Information
- Maintaining regular communication
- Keeping track of evaluation progress
 - Exhibit 5: Evaluation Progress Checklist
- Addressing problems with the third-party evaluation

Part 4. Concluding the Evaluation Project

- Identifying and responding to outstanding contractual items
- Ensuring the receipt of all evaluation documents
- Establishing a chain of communication in the event of future information requests
- Completing the appropriate transfer or destruction of data and files
- Exhibit 6: Evaluation Close-Out Tasks



Martha Thurlow, Ph.D., NCEO Director, Senior Research Associate

Bringing a Third-party Evaluator on Board: Lessons from the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO)

National Assessment Center – National Center on Educational Outcomes

Mission:

- To support the development of inclusive assessment in a rapidly changing state (and consortium) assessment system environment in order to promote improved educational results for students with disabilities.

Hiring a Third-party Evaluator at NCEO

- Preparing an RFP that meets NCEO's needs
- Conducting the third-party evaluator hiring process
 - Qualifications and experiences that support NCEO's work
 - References from experts from the field of educational assessment and evaluation
- Developing EEC's evaluation contract
 - Addressing financial arrangements
 - Outlining requirements for the University of Minnesota human subject protection and data confidentiality
 - Identifying deliverables from EEC

Monitoring and Managing EEC's Work

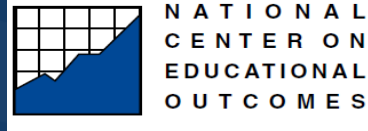
- Establishing a strong working relationship between NCEO and EEC
 - Goals and expectations
 - Decision-making processes
- Regular communication with EEC
- EEC's support in keeping track of evaluation progress
- Addressing problems with the evaluation facilitated by EEC

Benefits of Working with EEC

- Bring technical expertise in research methodology, statistics, or related topics to NCEO
- Provide credibility and objectivity by acting as an external “critical friend”
- Take on responsibility for completing some or all of the (formative and summative) evaluation tasks, allowing NCEO staff to focus on project implementation

Limitations

- Add unanticipated or additional cost to NCEO
- Add to NCEO's monitoring and management tasks focused on the work of contractors
- Not know NCEO's background or content area as well as project staff
- Be less available or accessible, as compared to NCEO staff



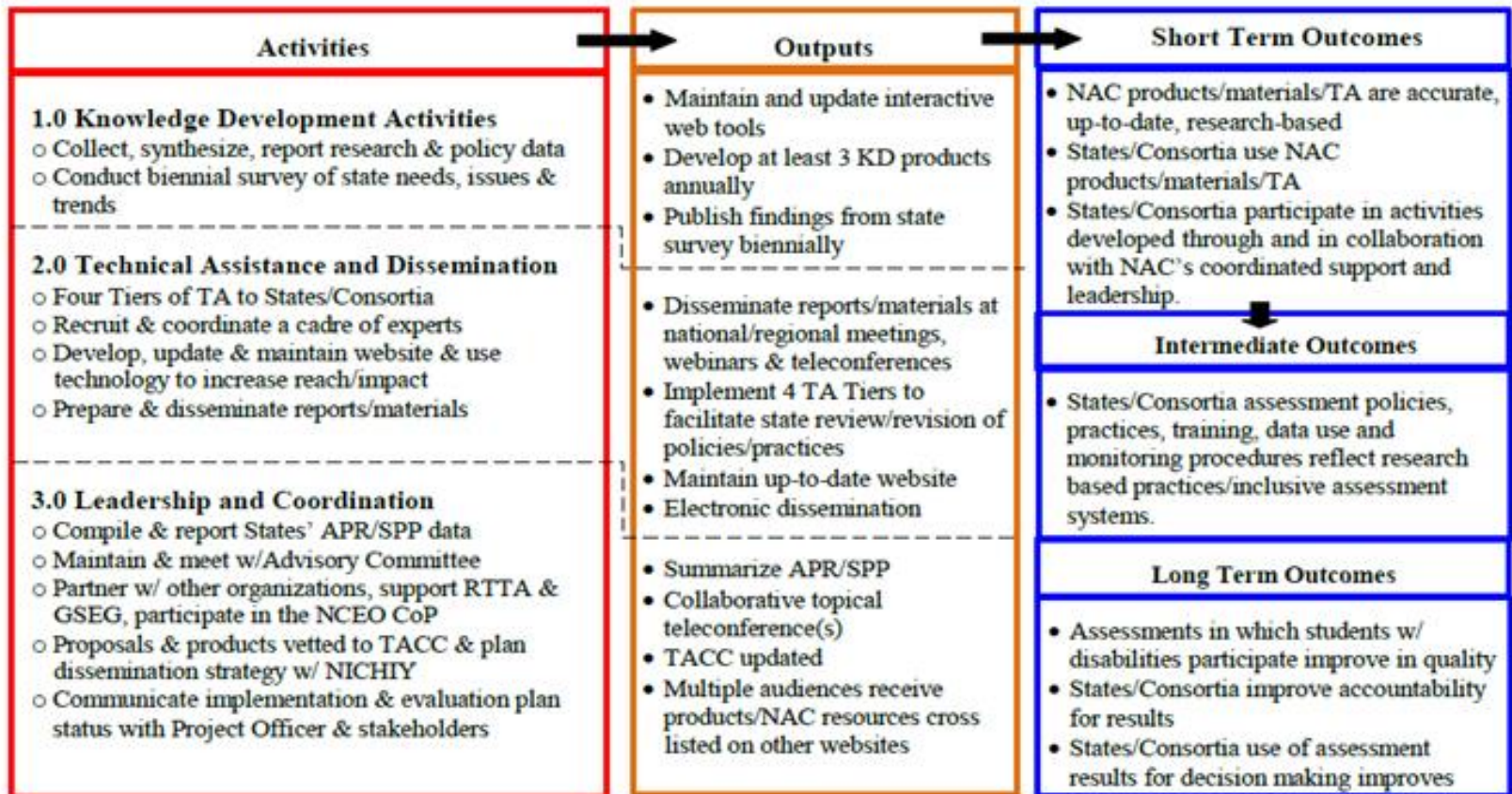
Vitaliy Shyyan, Ph.D., NCEO, Research Associate

Getting Started with the Evaluation: NCEO's Experience

NCEO Logic Model

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT CENTER (NCEO) LOGIC MODEL (V7)

- Goals:**
1. To provide & document research based information about high quality assessment systems for students with disabilities.
 2. To provide TA&D to States & Consortia to support appropriate inclusion of students with disabilities in assessment systems.
 3. To provide leadership & coordination to ensure that students with disabilities are included in and benefit from existing and emerging approaches to high quality assessment.
 4. To use resources efficiently across all activity areas so that project outcomes are achieved.



PM = Performance Measures have been incorporated in the Evaluation Plan.



Evaluation Plan

- Strategies
- Performance measures
- Implementation
 - Evaluation questions
 - Data sources
 - Methods/analysis
 - Party responsible
 - Timeline

Year 3 Data Collection Schedule

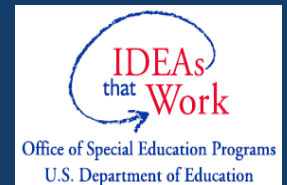
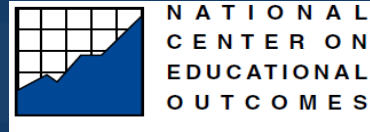
- Prepare and attend the AC meeting
- Review 3+2 recommendations
- Revise Evaluation Plan & Data Collection Schedule based on 3+2 Review, if needed
- TA Database, WW NCEO, & NIRS formative report
- Develop and administer a QAR survey
- Develop and conduct QAR follow-up interviews

Year 3 Data Collection Schedule (continued)

- Design assessment of NCEO collaborations (on-site)
- Prepare a QAR survey/interview report
- Finalize “Rate the States” tool
- Conduct a TACC database/collaboration review
- Prepare and submit 524B Annual Performance Report
- Discuss evaluation findings with NCEO key staff
- Plan for Year 4 evaluation activities (on-site)

Ongoing Activities

- Staff entries into the TA Documentation Tool, Where in the World Is NCEO Tool, and NIRS
- Quarterly reports on tool entries
- Monthly calls with EEC and NCEO internal evaluation team to co-develop instruments and protocols
- Monthly progress report with meeting minutes sent to PI
- Monthly conference calls with the Project Officer, including EEC as requested



David Merves, MBA,CAS, Evergreen Evaluation and Consulting

Developing and Maintaining a Strong Relationship with the Third-party Evaluator

Agreement on Roles and Responsibilities

- Defining the work
 - Goals, expectations and timeframe
- Creating an evaluation workgroup
 - Internal and external evaluators as members
- The elephant in the room
 - Dynamic tension is a good thing

Managing the Working Relationship

- Balancing internal and external perspectives
 - It's a partnership
- Communication and decision-making
 - Keep minutes of all meetings
 - Establish schedules
 - Data collection schedule
 - Project management schedule if necessary
 - Be consistent in your reporting
 - Method and timeframe