

EVALUATION OF 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMS

A GUIDE FOR STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

The Harvard Family Research Project's (HFRP) Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation briefs are short, user-friendly documents that highlight current research and evaluation work in the out-of-school time field. These documents draw on HFRP's research work in out-of-school time in order to provide practitioners, funders, evaluators, and policymakers with information to help inform their work. This second brief, Evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs: A Guide for State Education Agencies, offers an in-depth look at 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) evaluation requirements and provides practical suggestions about how to implement state and local 21st CCLC evaluation.

Why Evaluate 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs?

For many states, after school programming is uncharted territory. Because of their newness, relatively little is known about after school best practices, program implementation, cost effectiveness, and impact. However, in these times of decreasing public resources and increasing and competing demands for public investments, it is necessary for funders, policymakers, and their constituents to know which investments are effective and how programs can be improved.

This situation makes it imperative that those developing policies and implementing after school programs are able to learn, over time, whether after school investments are working, how they can be improved, and whether they should be expanded. In other words, states need to begin to grapple with the issue of *evaluation*. Many funders, including the Department of Education (DOE), through the 21st Century Community Learning Center

(21st CCLC) program, are mandating evaluation as part of their grant making.

As 21st Century Community Learning Center funds devolve to the states, those that evaluate their after school programs will be in the forefront, able to capitalize on evaluation results to create sustainable after school programs that best serve the children and youth of their state in a cost-effective manner. Results from after school evaluations nationwide indicate that after school programs *do* make a difference—they contribute to increased student performance, provide a safe haven for children and youth during non-school hours, and reduce school violence.¹ The depth and breadth of the 21st CCLC grants offer a unique opportunity to collect data nationwide and build a strong, data-driven case to support after school programs throughout the country. It is essential, therefore, that state education agencies (SEAs) administering 21st CCLC grants develop a manageable plan for designing and implementing evaluation.

The core components of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation are mandated through existing federal legislation.² This guide, geared for state education agencies who are charged with implementing 21st CCLC programs, examines the 21st CCLC legislation and provides SEAs with information about what it means for them. It addresses three main issues relevant to designing and conducting evaluation of 21st CCLC programs:

1. 21st CCLC evaluation—balancing demands for accountability with the need to evaluate for continuous improvement and program effectiveness
2. 21st CCLC data requirements—understanding and aligning data reporting
3. 21st CCLC evaluation infrastructure—SEA oversight and funding

This guide concludes with a “getting started” checklist to help state education agencies begin to make important evaluation decisions. A glossary of common after school evaluation terms is provided at the end of the guide.

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21ST CCLC OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS*

Objective 1: Participants in 21st CCLC programs will demonstrate educational and social benefits and exhibit positive behavioral changes.

- 1.1 *Achievement Outcomes.*** Increasing percentages of students regularly participating in the program will meet or exceed state and local academic achievement standard in reading and mathematics.
- 1.2 *Behavior Outcomes.*** Students participating in the program will show improvements on measures such as school attendance, classroom performance, and decreased disciplinary actions or other adverse behaviors.

Objective 2: 21st CCLC programs will offer a range of high-quality educational, developmental, and recreational services.

- 2.1 *Core educational services.*** More than 85 percent of centers will offer high quality services in at least one core academic area, e.g., reading and literacy, mathematics, and science.
- 2.2 *Enrichment and support activities.*** More than 85 percent of centers will offer enrichment and support activities such as nutrition and health, art, music, technology, and recreation.
- 2.3 *Community involvement.* Centers will establish and maintain partnerships within the community to increase levels of community collaboration.
- 2.4 *Services to parents and other adult community members.* More than 85 percent of centers will offer services to parents, senior citizens, and other adult community members.
- 2.5 *Extended hours.* More than 75 percent of centers will offer services at least 15 hours a week on average and provide services when school is not in session, during the summer, and holidays.

Objective 3: 21st CCLC programs will serve children and community members with the greatest needs for expanded learning opportunities.

- 3.1 *High-need communities.* More than 80 percent of centers are located in high-poverty communities.

* As stated in Appendix A of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program Annual Performance Report, available on the Internet at www.ed.gov/21stcclc/eval.html.

** Indicators required under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

21st CCLC Evaluation: Accountability and Program Evaluation

According to Federal 21st CCLC evaluation guidelines, SEAs must ensure that programs:

- *meet the principles of effectiveness* based on the assessment of objective data, an established set of performance indicators, and scientifically-based research on helping students meet a state's high academic achievement standards;
- *use performance indicators and performance measures* for evaluation;
- *conduct a periodic evaluation* of how the program or activity is providing high quality academic enrichment;
- *use evaluation findings for continuous improvement* of the program, broader dissemination of promising practices, and for the general information of the public;
- *receive ongoing technical assistance and training* that enables them to implement effective program and evaluation strategies.³

Additionally, SEAs must conduct state-level evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the 21st CCLC program throughout the state. As with local grantee program evaluation, statewide evaluation must use performance indicators and measures for evaluation.

These guidelines indicate that the goals of the 21st CCLC evaluation, and the consequent responsibilities of the SEAs are twofold. First, SEAs must conduct performance measurement for accountability. Second, they must ensure that 21st CCLC programs are effective and continuously improving through program evaluation carried out at both the grantee and state levels.⁴ Both of these evaluation approaches, and their implications for SEAs, are described below.

Performance Measurement for Accountability

Performance measurement (also called performance monitoring) is defined as “the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward pre-established goals” (sometimes also called outcomes).⁵ Performance measurement is typically used as a tool for accountability and the 21st CCLC program is no exception.

As in former 21st CCLC evaluation guidelines, local sites are required to submit Annual Performance Reports (APRs) that provide SEAs with center-level data collected on most of the 21st CCLC performance indicators listed in the box on this page. While only discretionary grantees (i.e., grantees that are receiving 21st CCLC funding under the “old” legislation⁶) are still required to report on all the indicators, all grantee local sites, new

and old, are encouraged to collect data on all performance indicators.

The performance measurement data from APRs submitted by local sites will be used for accountability at the state level. As SEAs begin to collect performance measurement data on 21st CCLC participants, they can assess and report to the public on the well-being of children in 21st CCLC after school programs. Further, they can strengthen the argument that public investments in after school contribute to that well-being. However, it is important to stress that performance measurement *does not* provide conclusive evidence that the program has caused changes in performance. To determine this, 21st CCLC evaluation guidelines also require program evaluation.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is complementary to performance measurement. While performance measurement provides a broad, shallow snapshot of program functioning, program evaluation provides a narrower, deeper examination of program functioning. Because of the greater rigor of inquiry and depth of knowledge that program evaluation provides, it, rather than performance measurement, is called for when policymakers need “evidence” that a program works or validated information about the way in which programs are operating. Table 1 offers a

comparison of performance measurement and program evaluation.

As in current 21st CCLC evaluation guidelines, there are two levels of program evaluation required in the new authorizing legislation: comprehensive state level program evaluation and local grantee level periodic evaluation. These two levels of program evaluation will serve to assess the effectiveness of the 21st CCLC program in achieving its goals and provide information necessary for continuous improvement at both the local and statewide program levels.

State Program Evaluation

According to non-regulatory *21st CCLC Guidance*, states must “conduct a comprehensive evaluation (directly or through a grant or contract) of the effectiveness of programs and activities provided with 21st CCLC funds.”⁷ This evaluation will allow SEAs to learn about the implementation of the 21st CCLC program across the state, the cumulative impact of the program on all the state’s children, and circumstances that are fostering and hindering success in the achievement of statewide goals for the program. Unlike the performance measurement that the SEAs will be overseeing, state-level program evaluation does not necessitate the involvement of all 21st CCLC grantees—a sampling of a select group of grantees may be more appropriate to the evaluation goal.

Table 1: Differences Between Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation

	<i>Performance Measurement</i>	<i>Program Evaluation</i>
<i>Purpose</i>	Provides a broad, shallow snapshot of program functioning. Typically answers the question of whether a program has achieved its objectives, expressed as measurable performance standards.	Provides a narrower, deeper examination of program functioning. Typically answers questions of why a program worked, unintended benefits or consequences of a program, and how a program might be improved or changed.
<i>Components</i>	Identification of program goals or outcomes, indicators to measure progress, and regular collection and reporting of data.	Collection of broader range of information on program performance and its context. Information often includes both qualitative and quantitative data.
<i>Scope</i>	Usually involves data collection from all sites.	Usually involves data collection from only a subset of sites.
<i>Timeframe</i>	Annually, or at least at pre-determined intervals.	As needed.
<i>Uses</i>	To examine progress over time, to compare sites, to understand progress toward pre-established outcomes. Can serve as an early warning system to management and a tool for improving accountability to the public.	The more in-depth nature of program evaluation allows for an overall assessment of whether the program works and identification of adjustments that may improve its results. Program evaluation is also used to determine whether a program “caused” outcomes to be achieved.

To meet program evaluation requirements, SEAs must acquire and utilize “scientifically-based” information about the 21st CCLC program statewide. They must also ensure that local sites use scientifically-based information to meet principles of effectiveness. Title IX of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines scientifically-based research as having the following components:

1. Systematic, empirical methods that use both experiments and observation
2. Methods that provide reliable data across evaluators, measurements, and different studies
3. Rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test hypotheses
4. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs, or at a minimum, designs that allow for comparisons among groups
5. Sufficient detail of evaluation design to allow for replication across the state
6. Scientific review and approval by independent experts in the field

In essence, these guidelines strongly urge SEAs to conduct replicable program evaluation studies that allow for rigorous statistical analyses and generalizable conclusions. This may require the allotment of funds for external evaluation consultants. Table 2 provides a comparison of the main features and benefits of using different

evaluation designs. While the legislation does not require the use of experimentally designed evaluation, it is clear from Table 2 that experimental studies are the most desirable when trying to make generalizable statements about effectiveness.

Models Available to Help SEAs with Program Evaluation

When considering a program evaluation that will meet their own states’ needs, SEAs can turn to the national 21st CCLC program evaluation model. As described in greater detail in the box on page 6, the 21st CCLC national evaluation is a large-scale effort, conducted by an independent evaluator working with the DOE to determine the effectiveness of the 21st CCLC program in raising student achievement and fostering positive youth development (including safety, self-care, and behavior).

States that are already evaluating their after school programs, independently of the 21st CCLC program, can also serve as models to others newly charged with evaluation under the 21st CCLC program in structuring and legislating evaluation of after school programs. The excerpts in the box on page 5, from actual state legislation, may help states craft proposals that meet their needs.

Local Program Evaluation

In addition to conducting state-level program evaluation, SEAs must help local sites conduct some form of evalu-

Table 2: Program Evaluation Design Options

	<i>Main Feature</i>	<i>Benefits/Trade-Offs</i>
<i>Experimental Design</i>	Random assignment of individuals to either treatment (i.e., an after school program) or control groups (i.e., no after school program); groups are usually matched on general demographic characteristics and compared to each other to determine program effects.	The strongest design choice when interested in establishing a cause-effect relationship. Experimental designs prioritize the impartiality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the information generated. They allow for causal and generalizable statements to be made about a population or impact on a population by a program.
<i>Quasi-Experimental Design</i>	Features non-random assignment of individuals to treatment and comparison groups, as well as the use of controls to minimize threats to the validity of conclusions drawn. Often used in real-life situations when it is not possible to use random assignment.	Quasi-experimental designs prioritize the impartiality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the information generated. However, non-random assignment makes causal and generalizable statements harder to ascertain than when using an experimental design.
<i>Non-Experimental Design</i>	No use of control or comparison groups; typically relies on qualitative data sources such as interviews, observation, and focus groups.	Non-experimental designs are helpful in understanding participants’ program experiences and in learning in detail about program implementation. No causal or generalizable conclusions can be drawn using a non-experimental design.

ation that will contribute to their own program improvement and/or demonstrate that their site is effective in producing positive academic outcomes for participants. This necessitates that 21st CCLC grantees conduct program evaluation to answer questions about their programs and their effectiveness. Program evaluation at the local level is subject to the same standards of scientifically-based research as evaluation at the state level. The legislation gives some leeway in the types of evaluation questions that grantees can explore. Below is a list of questions commonly addressed in after school program evaluation:⁸

- Is my after school program responding to participant needs?
- Who is participating in my after school program?
- What is the staffing for my program? What training do they have/need?
- What after school resources are available in my community? What are the service gaps?
- What services does my after school program provide?
- How can I improve my after school services? Are participants, families, and the community satisfied?
- What is the impact of my after school program? Academic achievement (e.g., increased school attendance and homework completion)? Youth Development (e.g., increased positive school behavior)? Workforce Development (e.g., employment preparation and supporting families transitioning from welfare to work)? Prevention (e.g., reduced drug and alcohol abuse)?
- What are the costs of my after school program?

Technical Assistance

Providing technical assistance about evaluation to local grantees is a key responsibility of SEAs under the 21st CCLC guidelines. One element of this technical assistance will be to support programs in their performance measurement and their regular reporting of performance indicators through the APR by helping them handle the collection and reporting of large quantities of data. Since the 21st CCLC authorizing legislation does not prescribe a specific way in which programs must conduct program evaluation, there is more uncertainty as to the type of program evaluation technical assistance that programs will require. Some grantees may carry out program evaluation themselves, while others may require an outside evaluator to answer the types of evaluation questions that interest them. Consequently, programs will need technical assistance both in the area of conducting program evaluation and in the area of knowing when, and if, to hire an outside evaluator.

There are dozens of approaches to evaluation. De-

scriptions of two approaches that are well-suited to after school program evaluation are presented below: the five-tiered approach to evaluation and continuous improvement management.

The Five-Tiered Approach

As its name suggests, the five-tiered approach⁹ to program evaluation describes the evaluation process as a series of five steps that organizations can take to evaluate their program. The step on which a program starts an evaluation is largely determined by its developmental stage. For example, a new program may want to begin by assessing its needs, while an older, more established program might focus on refining its services and disseminating program results. The five steps are:

1. *Conduct a needs assessment.* Identify the after school services already available in the community as well as services needed, but not provided.

CURRENT LEGISLATION FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM EVALUATION

In **California**, legislation establishing the *After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program* defines explicitly the type of performance data to be reported and how these data might be used: “As required by the State Department of Education, programs established pursuant to this article shall submit annual outcome based data for evaluation, including measures for academic performance, attendance, and positive behavioral changes. The State Department of Education may consider these outcomes when determining eligibility for grant renewal.” (§8484)

In **North Carolina**, legislation establishing the *Support Our Students Program* has explicit language about the purpose of the evaluation system: (1) to provide information to the Department and to the General Assembly on how to improve and refine the programs; (1a) to develop information for dissemination to potential grant applicants on the design of programs that experience has shown are likely to be successful; (2) to enable the Department and the General Assembly to assess the overall quality, efficiency, and impact of the existing programs; (3) to enable the Department and the General Assembly to determine whether to modify the S.O.S. Program; and (5) to provide a detailed fiscal analysis of how state funds for these programs were used. (§143B-152.7)

CURRENT 21ST CCLC EVALUATION: A BLEND OF APPROACHES

In response to performance reporting requirements mandated by the federal Government Performance and Results Act, the Department of Education (DOE) collects data on key indicators of performance from all after school programs receiving 21st CCLC funding. These data allow the DOE to understand how the program is working on a national level and where additional attention is needed. Also, they enable the DOE to report to the U.S. Congress on the performance of the program. This is the accountability side of the national 21st CCLC evaluation.

In order to understand the program in greater depth and to obtain evidence of its impact, the DOE is undertaking a comprehensive program evaluation using a subset of 21st CCLC sites. It consists of an impact and an implementation evaluation of the 21st CCLC program. These evaluation components are funded by the DOE. The foundation for this evaluation work is a logic model, based on available research and practice knowledge that lays out the hypothesized relationship between program context, program implementation, intermediate effects, and long-term effects. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and several subcontractors are conducting the program evaluation.*

The multi-year evaluation employs experimental and quasi-experimental designs and relies on multiple data collection methods, including: participant and family survey and questionnaires, secondary source data review, academic tests and assessments, and participant and family interviews. The evaluation has both formative and summative components.

- The *formative* component examines how 21st CCLC programs are locally implemented in order to identify ways to increase effectiveness and sustain local projects beyond the federal grant. The DOE expects that the program evaluation will complement the annual GPRA reporting by providing a more extensive look at these factors.
- The *summative* component examines how 21st CCLC programs impact students' academic skills and test scores, sense of safety and self-care, and behaviors in the classroom and out of school. The study will also examine what types of students are most affected by programs and what program factors are related to improved outcomes.

* Moore, M., Dynarski, M., Mullens, J., James-Burdumy, S., & Rosenberg, L. (2000). *Enhancing the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation: A concept paper*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Available on the Internet at www.mathematica-mpr.com/PDFs/enhancing21.pdf.

2. *Document your service.* Monitor the program by systematically documenting the after school services it provides; establish indicators of success and a set of benchmarks to record progress.
3. *Compare program intent to actuality.* Look at original goals and who the program is serving and gauge whether the program is meeting benchmarks.
4. *Fine-tune program services and evaluation methods.* Discuss evaluation data with staff and brainstorm about program improvement; refine indicators and benchmarks; begin to document program outcomes.
5. *Produce evidence of effectiveness.* Determine research design and evaluation measures; demonstrate your program's worth to participants, the community, and funders.

The five-tiered approach underscores some important points about evaluation. First, all programs are able to do at least some evaluation—tier 1, conducting a needs assessment, is something that every program can do. Second, a program's information needs evolve as it develops and evaluation must be nimble enough to accommodate program change. Finally, evaluation is an ongoing, cyclical process—feedback from one phase of the evaluation can be used to shape the next phase.

Continuous Improvement Management

A second, and not necessarily mutually exclusive approach to evaluation, is evaluation for continuous improvement. Simply stated, evaluation for continuous improvement answers the question, "What can I do even better?" While the demonstration of program effectiveness (tiers 4 and 5 above) may require the help of an outside evaluator, evaluation for continuous improvement can be conducted independently by programs. To help with this process, the U.S. Department of Education has prepared *A Guide to Continuous Improvement Management (CIM) for 21st Century Community Learning Centers*.¹⁰ This guide is a complete resource on how to conduct an evaluation that will help 21st CCLC sites strengthen program design, monitor and reflect on program implementation, and assess and communicate program results. It outlines a three-step process for continuous improvement management, and includes tools and resources that can be replicated and used in multiple 21st CCLC sites.

Pulling It All Together

The task of administering and conducting both performance measurement and program evaluation may seem daunting at first, but there is already a good evaluation model in place to help SEAs. The current national 21st CCLC evaluation shows how performance measurement and program evaluation can be conducted simultaneously to meet the dual purposes of providing account-

ability and assessing program impact. The box on page 6 describes this evaluation and illustrates the blended approach to evaluation that SEAs can adapt for use in their states.

21st CCLC Data Requirements

Data collection is an important part of any evaluation. To assist SEAs in the collection of performance measurement data, the U.S. Department of Education has already developed an Annual Performance Report (APR) that is required of all 21st CCLC sites under current legislation. The APR is a set of forms that is used to (1) demonstrate substantial progress has been made toward meeting the objectives of the project as outlined in the grant application and (2) collect data that addresses the performance indicators for the 21st CCLC program. Annual submission of the APR is a requirement of 21st CCLC grants. 21st CCLC sites are required to submit annual reports that coincide with the school year and include the sum-

mer prior to the school year. For example, the APRs due in April 2002 cover the reporting period beginning in June 2001 and continuing through most of the 2001–2002 school year. All 21st CCLC grantees are now expected to complete the web-based version of the APR, available online at www.ed.gov/21stcclc/eval.html.

The APR requires the collection of two types of data: descriptive data at the grant and center levels, and achievement data on participants who attend the program on a regular basis. Additionally, the APR requires centers to administer teacher surveys and includes optional participant surveys for all regular participants in fourth grade or above. Table 3 lists the specific types of information collected using the APR. Although the new legislation requires that SEAs collect data on fewer performance indicators, they are encouraged to collect all APR data to get a comprehensive assessment of program quality.

In addition to the APR data, local sites may want to consider administering surveys to 21st CCLC staff and

Table 3: Annual Performance Report Data

<i>Type of Data</i>	<i>Information Required</i>
Descriptive Grant-Level Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program objectives • Project goals, focus, status • Lessons learned and planned adjustments • Budget • Community collaboration
Descriptive Center-Level Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of 21st CCLC center • Characteristics of staff members • Characteristics of host school • Center participation • Hours of operation (school year and summer) • Student characteristics • Number of regular attendees (more than 30 days) • Activities (how many, times offered, staffing, grade levels served, average attendance, frequency of offering) • Linkages to school day
Achievement Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement success stories and problems • Center information (grades served, name of host school, regular attendees, sampling method if over 200 participants) • Student grades in math and reading • Standardized achievement test results (if administered by the state/district)
Teacher Survey*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral changes/attitude toward school
Student Survey**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' attitudes toward school • Students' attitudes toward 21st CCLC program

* Administered at year end to a regular school day teacher

** Optionally administered to center participants in grades 4 and above at program outset and at the end of the year

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING IN CALIFORNIA AND KENTUCKY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

California: Using the broad areas of outcomes identified in the legislation as a guideline, those implementing California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program convened a group of after school stakeholders to develop the specific indicators to be used for reporting. This group identified indicators in each area:

- Academic achievement (SAT/9, California Content Standard Scores, limited English Proficiency status, and promotion/retention rates)
- Attendance (number of days student was enrolled in school, absent from school, and attended the after school program during the school year)
- Behavioral changes (results from the 21st CCLC student survey that gauges students' attitudes toward school, studying, safety, and homework)

Grantees report these data annually. A narrative section of the reporting form enables programs to interpret results and provide additional information, including staffing, collaboration, reimbursement procedures, and integration of the program with the school program and teachers.

Kentucky: The legislation establishing the Kentucky Extended School Service Program sets clear evaluation requirements by requiring annual reporting of:

- Student performance
- Attendance
- Promotion and graduation

These data are collected annually from each site and reported to the state legislature.

parents. While teacher surveys provide an important perspective on changes in school-day behavior and academic performance, it is also important to tap into the knowledge that 21st CCLC program staff have about youth experiences in their after school programs and how these experiences have helped improve attitudes toward school. Similarly, parent satisfaction is an often overlooked measure of program quality. Collecting data on how parents perceive their child's after school experiences can be valuable information to feed back into programs interested in continuous improvement.

On a local level, some 21st CCLC sites currently use commercial software packages such as Microsoft Access or Excel to assist in the collection and management of APR data. A few sites work with data management consultants.¹¹ The benefit of using these types of management information systems is that they help consolidate large quantities of multi-site data. A disadvantage is that you need to expend resources to train staff to use the systems properly. Some states have already invested in statewide management information systems to help programs collect and report information in a cost effective way. As SEAs contemplate management information systems for data reporting, they can investigate what technology is already available in the state.

Reduce Data Burden Through Alignment

Data burden is a reality for most after school programs. 21st CCLC programs typically receive funding from many different sources, which have different data requirements and reporting cycles. Data requirements that are aligned across funding sources go a long way toward both reducing data burden and increasing the likelihood of more accurate data. Using already existing data can also ease the burden of data reporting.

Align Data Requirements with State Accountability System. SEAs can play an important role in ensuring that data collection is not overly burdensome to after school programs. One way to do this is to align 21st CCLC data reporting with reporting already established as part of the state's larger accountability system. As Table 3 shows, the APR requires standardized test scores for those sites that are already required to administer achievement tests as part of their district or state accountability system. This means that sites are only collecting one set of achievement data for multiple purposes, and students are not subjected to multiple tests for different reporting requirements.

Align Data Requirements with Other State After School Programs. In addition to alignment with state account-

ability systems, 21st CCLC sites should consider the data being collected by other after school initiatives in the state. The box on page 8 shows reporting requirements for after school programs already underway in California and Kentucky. Like the 21st CCLC data reporting requirements, both states require the collection of student performance data. In addition, like the 21st CCLC APR, the California after school program also collects information on student behavior and attendance using the 21st CCLC student survey. As 21st CCLC grant money is awarded to states, it is helpful for SEAs to understand what state after school programs already exist, and how they can work to align both service delivery and effective data management.

Coordinate Data Requirements with Title I Reporting Requirements. Another way for SEAs to align data reporting is to coordinate performance indicator data requirements with Title I requirements. Not only is Title I the largest single federal investment in education, but over 47,000 schools nationwide use Title I funds to provide extra academic support and learning opportunities, e.g., after school programs, to help low-income students meet their state's academic program standards.¹² Recent changes to Title I place an increased emphasis on assessment and accountability, and require states to implement annual reading and math assessments for children in grades 3–8 in schools receiving federal funds. Further, state education officials must produce an annual report card assessing the state's progress compared to that of other states. Under ESEA legislation, each Title I program must coordinate and integrate federal, state, and local services and programs, including 21st CCLC. Part of this coordination ought to be around performance indicators and the collection of data.

Complete coordination among all service sectors providing after school programming in a state is probably unrealistic. However, SEAs administering 21st CCLC grants can show leadership by aligning data reporting with other state and local agencies to help reduce data burden for after school programs.

21st CCLC Evaluation Infrastructure

Evaluation infrastructure includes all the systems, individuals, and resources that go into carrying out an evaluation and disseminating the results. In the case of 21st CCLC programs, state education agencies will provide the infrastructure necessary to implement evaluation at the state and local levels.

SEA Oversight

It is important to clarify the roles of the SEA as well as its relationship with other state agencies prior to implementing the evaluation. As the SEA oversees the perfor-

mance measurement component of the evaluation, it makes process decisions. For example, it decides how often to report data to other entities, coordinates inter-agency cooperation necessary for success, and designates the agency responsible for providing technical assistance to programs should they require it.

When the SEA oversees program evaluation, its task is dual: to conduct a statewide evaluation and to oversee local program evaluations. The statewide evaluation requires SEAs to first articulate the evaluation purpose in an RFP (request for proposal). If necessary, it must then locate and select an evaluator. Once selected, the SEA works with the evaluator to assist with access to and standardization of key data, serves as a liaison between programs, policymakers, and the evaluator, and ensures evaluation technical assistance is provided to programs during the evaluation if necessary.

In providing oversight to local grantees as they conduct program evaluation, the SEA needs to support local programs though the provision of technical assistance. Technical assistance may be needed to help programs articulate evaluation goals, select an evaluator as needed, and/or conduct the evaluation themselves, ensuring that it meets the standard of scientifically-based research as defined in the ESEA.

Funding for Evaluation

An integral component of evaluation infrastructure is funding. SEAs must set aside adequate resources for the evaluation, including funding the development of data collection instruments and other research tools as needed. The 21st Century Community Learning Center legislation states that a state educational agency may use not more than 3% of its grant for any and all of the following activities: monitoring and evaluation of after school programs; comprehensive evaluation to determine effectiveness; and capacity building, training, and technical assistance to eligible grantees, including technical assistance for evaluation.¹³

Since performance measurement is more strictly defined by 21st CCLC guidelines, the cost of program evaluation is more variable. This means that SEAs need to think through their evaluation needs carefully, understanding that the issue of program evaluation cost is intricately related to the goals of the evaluation. Different types of evaluation questions cost different amounts to answer. Generally speaking, program evaluations that are conducted over a longer period of time, that have more rigorous designs (i.e., experimental outcomes studies), and that involve more program sites are more expensive than those that do not meet these criteria. Using pre-existing data sets from state and national organizations can greatly reduce data collection costs, freeing up scarce resources for other evaluation purposes.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is critical to the success of after school programming nationwide. As state education agencies assume the responsibility for administering 21st CCLC grants, they must implement both performance measurement for accountability and program evaluation for continuous improvement and assessing program effectiveness. To do so effectively, they must align their data requirements with other programs serving school-age children, such as Title 1 and other state after school initiatives, as well as with state accountability systems.

The state examples inserted throughout this document serve to underscore an important point about evaluation and accountability at the state level—states are entering the realm of 21st CCLC administration with a range of evaluation experiences that they can draw on as they craft their 21st CCLC programs. Taking stock of what specific states already have in place, who is already working in after school programming, and what kind of data is already being collected will make the task of SEAs just starting out that much easier. In other words, to get the most out of your after school evaluation, take a “don’t reinvent the wheel” approach.

The changing context of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program means that state legislatures will play an increasingly important role in program design and sustainability of new after school programs. This offers state education agencies the unique opportunity to capitalize on their strengths and draw from past experience to shape the outcomes for school-age children and youth.¹⁴ States that take evaluation seriously will be able to place after school programming at the top of the political and public agendas, while ensuring positive experiences and outcomes for the children and youth of their state.

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Karen Horsch, Research Associate

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Notes

¹ U.S. Department of Education. (1998). *Safe and smart: Making the after-school hours work for kids*. Washington, DC: Author. Available on the Internet at www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart.

² Unless otherwise noted, current federal 21st CCLC evaluation guidelines will remain the same when the program becomes block granted to the states.

³ Excerpt from 21st CCLC program manual, in draft. Provided by U.S. Department of Education staff, January 2002.

⁴ Title IV, Part B of the 2002 Elementary and Secondary Education Act also authorizes the Secretary to reserve up to one percent for, among other things, national evaluation activities. This discussion is beyond the scope of this guide.

⁵ U.S. Government Accounting Office, April 1998.

⁶ Prior to the changes made to the program in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

⁷ Department of Education. (February 2002). *21st CCLC guidance*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁸ Based on a review of 21 after school program evaluations in the Harvard Family Research Project Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database. Available on the Internet at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html.

⁹ Jacobs, F. (1988). The five-tiered approach to evaluation: Context and implementation. In H. B. Weiss & F. H. Jacobs (Eds.), *Evaluating family programs* (pp. 37–68). Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

¹⁰ Pane, N., Mulligan, I., Ginsburg, A., & Lauland, A. (1999). *A guide to continuous improvement management (CIM) for 21st Century Community Learning Centers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available on the Internet at www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/21cent/cim226.pdf.

¹¹ Information on 21st CCLC software use is based on Harvard Family Research Project monitoring of the after school listserv hosted by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

¹² The Finance Project. (2002). *Using Title I to support out-of-school time and community school initiatives*. New York: Author. Available on the Internet at www.financeproject.org/Brief10.pdf.

¹³ H.R. 1. Part B—21st Century Community Learning Centers. Sec. 4202, b(3). January 2002.

¹⁴ Langford, B. (2001). *State legislative investments in school-age children and youth*. New York: The Finance Project. Available on the Internet at www.financeproject.org/oststatepaper.pdf.

Additional Harvard Family Research Project Resources in After School Evaluation

- *The Evaluation Exchange* Newsletter (Volume VII, No. 2 and Volume VI, No. 1), available on the Internet at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval.html
- The Harvard Family Research Project Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, a searchable database of out-of-school time evaluation profiles, available on the Internet at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html
- After School Evaluation Symposium Proceedings, a collection of materials, including audio files and transcripts of key researchers and practitioners in the out-of-school time field, available on the Internet at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/symposium/intro.html

All of these resources can be accessed from the Harvard Family Research Project website: www.hfrp.org.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED EVALUATION TERMS

Accountability A public or private agency, such as a state education agency, that enters into a contractual agreement to perform a service, such as administer 21st CCLC programs, will be held answerable for performing according to agreed-on terms, within a specified time period, and with a stipulated use of resources and performance standards.

Benchmark (1) An intermediate target to measure progress in a given period using a certain indicator. (2) A reference point or standard against which to compare performance or achievements.

Data Collection Methods

Document Review: A review and analysis of existing program records and other information collected by the program. Information analyzed in a document review is not gathered for the purpose of the evaluation. Sources of information for document review include information on staff, budgets, rules and regulations, activities, schedules, attendance, meetings, recruitment, and annual reports.

Interviews/Focus Groups: Conducted with evaluation and program/initiative stakeholders, including: staff, administrators, participants and their parents or families, funders, and community members. Can be conducted in person or over the phone. Questions posed are generally open-ended. The purpose of interviews and focus groups is to gather detailed descriptions, from a purposeful sample of stakeholders, of the program processes and the stakeholders' opinions of those processes.

Observation: An unobtrusive method for gathering information about how the program/initiative operates. Observations can be highly structured, with protocols for recording specific behaviors at specific times, or unstructured, taking a more casual "look-and-see" approach to understanding the day-to-day operation of the program. Data from observations are used to supplement interviews and surveys in order to complete the description of the program/initiative and to verify information gathered through other methods.

Secondary Source/Data Review: Sources include data collected for other similar studies for comparison, large data sets such as the Longitudinal Study of American Youth, achievement data, court records, standardized test scores, and demographic data and trends. Data are not gathered with the purposes of the evaluation in mind; they are pre-existing data that inform the evaluation.

Surveys/Questionnaires: Conducted with evaluation and program/initiative stakeholders. Usually uses a highly structured interview process in which respondents are asked to choose answers from those predetermined on the survey and administered on paper, through the mail, or more recently, through email and on the Web. The purpose of surveys/questionnaires is to gather specific information from a large, representative sample.

Tests/Assessments: Data sources include standardized test scores, psychometric tests, and other assessments of the program and its participants. These data are collected with the purposes of the evaluation in mind.

Evaluation Design

Experimental Design: Experimental designs all share one distinctive element—random assignment to treatment and control groups. Experimental design is the strongest design choice when interested in establishing a cause-effect relationship. Experimental designs for evaluation prioritize the impartiality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the information generated. These studies look to make causal and generalizable statements about a population or impact on a population by a program or initiative.

Non-Experimental Design: Non-experimental studies use purposeful sampling techniques to get "information rich" cases. Types include: case studies, data collection and reporting for accountability, participatory approaches, theory based/grounded theory approaches, ethnographic approaches, and mixed method studies.

Quasi-Experimental Design: Most quasi-experimental designs are similar to experimental designs except that the subjects are not randomly assigned to either the experimental or the control group, or the researcher cannot control which group will get the treatment. Like the experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs for evaluation prioritize the impartiality, accuracy, objectivity, and validity of the information generated. These studies look to make causal and generalizable statements about a population or impact on a population by a program or initiative. Types include: comparison group pre-test/post-test design, time series and multiple time series designs, non-equivalent control group, and counterbalanced designs.

Formative/Process Evaluation Formative evaluations are conducted during program implementation in order to provide information that will strengthen or improve the program being studied—in this case, the after school program or initiative. Formative evaluation findings typically point to aspects of program implementation that can be improved for better results, like how services are provided, how staff are trained, or how leadership and staff decisions are made.

Indicator An indicator provides evidence that a certain condition exists or certain results have or have not been achieved. Indicators enable decision-makers to assess progress towards the achievement of intended outputs, outcomes, goals, and objectives.

Performance Measurement (also called Performance Monitoring) According to the U.S. Government Accounting Office, it is "the ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward pre-established goals" (sometimes also called outcomes). Performance measurement is typically used as a tool for accountability. Data for performance measurement is often tied to state indicators and is part of a larger statewide accountability system.

Summative/Outcome Evaluation Summative evaluations are conducted either during or at the end of a program's implementation. They determine whether a program's intended outcomes have been achieved. Summative evaluation findings typically judge the overall effectiveness or "worth" of a program based on its success in achieving its outcomes, and are particularly important in determining whether a program should be continued.

APPENDIX B

GETTING STARTED: ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING AN EVALUATION OF YOUR STATE'S 21ST CCLC PROGRAM

The following is a checklist of issues to consider as you begin to craft an evaluation of your state 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. (Asterisks indicate requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act guidelines.)

Does my state's evaluation meet federal 21st CCLC guidelines? Does it:

- Include a plan for comprehensive scientifically-based evaluation at the state level?*
- Ensure that programs receive technical assistance as needed?*
- Hold programs to the "principles of effectiveness," including use of objective data, an established set of performance indicators, and scientific research to help students meet high academic standards?*
- Ensure that programs use performance indicators and measures for evaluation?*
- Require programs to conduct periodic evaluation to see whether and how they are providing high quality academic enrichment?*
- Ensure that programs use evaluation findings for continuous improvement, dissemination of promising practices, and the general information of the public?*

Which accountability systems will my state use?

- 21st CCLC annual performance reporting forms*
- Another state accountability system

What information will my state collect?

- Program goals*
- Budget*
- Community collaborations*
- Characteristics of centers, staff, and students*
- Number of regular attendees*
- Data about activities*
- Program links to school day*
- Academic achievement success stories and setbacks*
- Student grades in math and reading*
- Standardized achievement test scores*
- Teachers' perceptions of student behavioral/attitudinal changes*
- Students attitudes toward school and program
- Parent satisfaction
- Staff perceptions of student behavioral/attitudinal changes
- Data about services to adults and other community members
- Other information: _____

What questions does my state want to answer with state-wide and local program evaluation?

- What are the needs of the state and/or community

- for after school programming?
- Who is participating?
- What services does the program provide?
- What is the staffing of the program? What training do they have/need?
- Are participants satisfied?
- What is the impact/effectiveness of the program?
- What are the costs of the program?
- Other questions: _____

What technical assistance can my state provide to 21st CCLC grantees?

- Training in use of the five-tiered approach
- Training in continuous improvement management
- Statewide management information system to facilitate the APR
- Training in data collection and management for the APR
- Training in selecting an outside evaluator

How can I ease data burden for 21st CCLC grantees?

- By aligning reporting requirements with other state accountability systems
- By aligning reporting requirements with other state after school initiatives
- By aligning reporting requirements with Title I performance indicators
- By using pre-existing data sets to answer evaluation questions
- By using tests and assessments collected for other purposes

What infrastructure is necessary for successful evaluation administration?

- Choose a reasonable timeline for reporting to and by the SEA.
- Establish necessary inter-agency coordination and facilitate communication.
- Identify entities responsible for providing technical assistance to grantees.
- Learn about existing after school infrastructure in other state agencies.
- Hire an outside evaluator.

What influences evaluation costs?

- Type of evaluation: experimental vs. quasi-experimental vs. non-experimental
- Data collection methods
- Number of sites included
- Length of evaluation
- Use of an outside evaluator
- Availability of pre-existing data sets
- Other influences in my state: _____