

Building Internal Evaluation Capacity via a Mentorship Model

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Outline

- Background
- Group composition
- Group function
- Successes and Lessons Learned
- Critical Success Factors



Organizational Context

- Publically funded health care system in Canada
- Health care services are administered by provinces
- Alberta Health Services is the health service provider in Alberta, Canada

Organizational Context

- Alberta:
 - Population: > 3.5 million
 - Area: 660,000 km²
256,000 mi²
 - Metropolitan cities to remote areas
 - ~1.8 million people in two metropolitan cities
 - Ethnically diverse



Setting

- Support the “planning arm” for population and public health initiatives for Alberta Health Services – content experts in health promotion
- Evaluation team is a separate entity – content experts in evaluation
- One evaluator assigned to support the department with focus on pre-conception to young adulthood health
- Approximately 50 staff members in the department
- Project leads whose upcoming projects have high priority evaluation needs were identified

Group Composition

- 6 project leads
- Different levels of prior experience with evaluation
- Health promotion projects ranged from preconception youth issues
- These individuals were expected to lead the evaluation portion of their projects in consultation with the evaluation team

Group Function

- Met every month initially with a special topic
- Topic suggested by participants
- Covered topics:
 - Logic model
 - Evaluation questions
 - Indicators and data collection techniques
 - Ethical considerations for evaluation
- One-on-one consultations provided outside of the monthly meetings for in depth discussions

Successes – Evaluator

- Allowed for evaluation support across more projects
- Became aware of different types of projects
- Challenged previous thinking about population and public health initiatives
- Improved content knowledge to serve other project leads
- Mentored project leads were better able to frame their evaluation needs

Successes – Participants

- Project leads reported:
 - Improved their confidence in evaluation
 - Increased awareness in data collection methods
 - Increased level of commitment to use the evaluation findings
 - Served as “local experts” for evaluation for project leads not on the mentorship group

Challenges – Evaluator

- Projects in different stages of development (planning vs. launching)
- Time pressure and other commitments preventing project leads from attending meetings
- Topics relevant to participants' needs
- Project-specific questions and topics

Challenges – Participants

- Organizational changes
- Shifts in project priorities
- Topics relevant to their work
- “Just in time” information required – e.g., data collection techniques may not be relevant to a project lead currently engaging stakeholders
- Unsure of what evaluation information they need

One Participant's Experience

- Positive experience
- Intrinsically motivated, already taking a course from university
- Learned lots, applied the information to her own project and to her course
- Project was actively launched with regular meetings with stakeholders
- Provided evaluation information to other project leads
- One-on-one consultation was valuable

Critical Success Factors

- Management buy-in
- Flexibility to include project leads as information and support is needed
- Participants intrinsically motivated to learn
- Connection between evaluation tools and information and their own projects

Future Ideas

- Continue one-on-one consultations
- Seminar format with rotating topics
- Link in with other evaluation groups
- Other suggestions?

Thank you

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