

CTSA EVALUATION IS NO PIECE OF CAKE:

Evaluators' Recipes for Learning about Clinical and Translational Science Award Institutes

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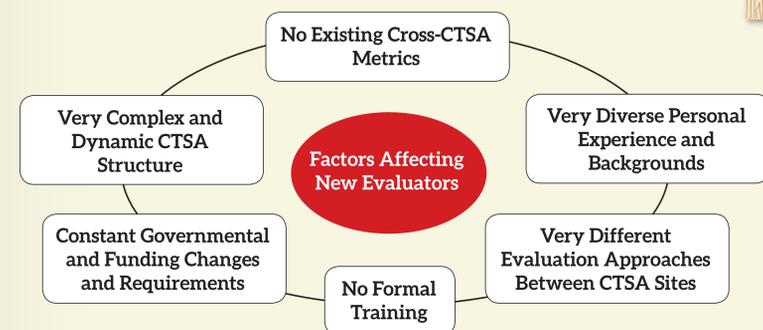
From the kitchens of:

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Baking Background and Purpose

- Clinical and Translational Science Award Institutes (CTSAs) are programs that facilitate translational science from basic to community-based research by providing research resources to investigators.
- Each of the 61 CTSAs, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), are located across the U.S. and each includes a tracking and evaluation component for process improvement and accountability.
- In 2013, the Institute of Medicine recommended that the NIH provide more formalized and standardized evaluation practices.



Purpose

- This study explores how each new evaluator approached learning about CTSAs and provides popular practices and suggestions for formalized training.

Preheat the Oven

- A literature search yielded little guidance for training CTSA evaluation staff.
- Next, the researchers:
 - Reflected about their own orientation to their CTSAs
 - Iteratively developed the questions using reflections and feedback from colleagues and the CTSA Evaluation Leadership Group
 - Sought and received IRB approval from both institutions
- After the protocol was finalized, the researchers:
 - Recruited volunteers using the CSTA Evaluation listserv and professional networking
 - Collected demographics from participants and scheduled interviews
 - Conducted 30-minute phone interviews
- After completing the interviews, data were analyzed using both quantitative (i.e., frequencies, means, and ranges) and qualitative (i.e., theming) methods.

Gather the Equipment

- 16 Number of participants
- 18 Months working for institution (inclusion criteria)
- 69 Percent who had previous evaluation experience before working for their CTSA
- 6 Average years of experience for those with previous evaluation experience
- 10 Average months participants had worked for their CTSA
- 56 Percent of participants who were 100% FTE in evaluation
- 1 Month the least experienced evaluator has been working with their CTSA
- 18 Months the most experienced evaluator has been working with their CTSA
- 12 Number of Masters Degrees (in public health, education, life and social sciences)
- 6 Number of PhDs (public health, education, and life & social sciences)

Prepare the Pans

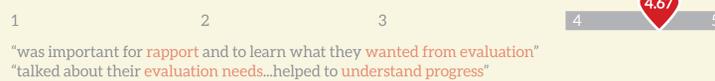
- Researchers expected the following training strategies to be rated most helpful:
 - Meeting with key function/core (research resource providers) directors (e.g., biostatistics or informatics director)
 - Core site visits (e.g., touring Clinical Research Units)
 - Creating personal reference materials (e.g., charts, notes, tables)
 - Discussing the history of their CTSAs

The Cake

- The strategies below were considered to be the most and least helpful from the options provided to participants.
- Participants rated the strategies that applied to them on a Likert scale from 1, not helpful at all, to 5, extremely helpful, for learning.

Most Helpful Strategies

Attending/conducting meetings with key function directors about previous tracking efforts



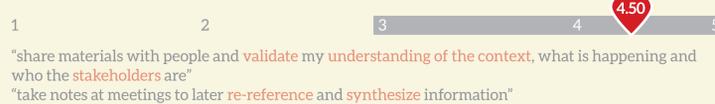
Attending CTSA Evaluation Face to Face Meetings



Asking your supervisors or colleagues questions



Creating personal reference materials



Least Helpful Strategies

Visiting CTSA Central/ROCKET



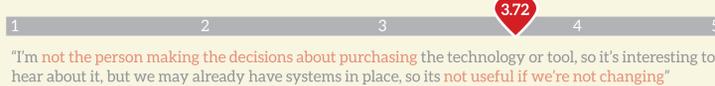
Attending/shadowing large group administrative meetings



Participating on conference calls for Key Function Committees or Interest Groups

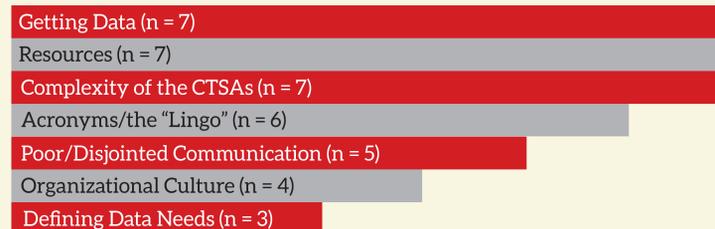


Participating on conference calls for new technology



Challenges to the Baking Process

The new evaluators identified the following items as particularly challenging to navigate at their CTSAs:



Supervisors should address these challenges in their training plans.

Recommended Training Ingredients

National

- Host a pre-F2F conference for new evaluators with networking and professional development opportunities and encourage evaluators to attend.
- Provide a message board or mentoring program that allows new evaluators to ask questions of experienced evaluators.
- Develop an evaluator toolkit including commonly used metrics, a description of the Common Metrics project, and a how-to guide for techniques such as logic models.
- Provide a reference guide or formalized training including CTSA history, infrastructure, and goals.

Local

- Encourage evaluators to ask questions about the history and current state of the CTSA.
- Customize the above-recommended national training based on the structure of your CTSA's evaluation team.
- Provide opportunities for new evaluators to attend and participate in meetings.
- Map out the key players at the CTSA and encourage evaluators to build relationships.
- Develop formalized training outlining the national and local CTSA goals, and how local data ties into those goals.
- Encourage accurate and efficient data collection from cores.

Personal

- Review CTSA documents (e.g., grant proposals and annual progress reports).
- Consider your strengths and learning styles when addressing training and orientation.
- Develop an acronym sheet for reference.
- Create your own reference materials (e.g., schematics of your organization, and logic models).

Icing on the Cake

- New evaluators are using national, local and personal resources to learn about evaluation in the CTSA environment.
- Of the top 4 strategies, 3 involve communicating with more experienced colleagues either locally or nationally. Supervisors should support and encourage communication for new employees.
- The participants recommended the following learning processes:
 - Review documents from local CTSAs.
 - Talk to colleagues to pursue networking, mentoring, and understanding the context and environment.
 - Develop formalized resources about the CTSAs or recommendations about how to conduct evaluation locally (recommended by 50% of participants).

Next Steps

- Given the importance of networking to orienting new evaluators, the CTSA Evaluation Group should consider developing a "New Evaluators Group" for discussion of questions and experiences.
- With some additional exploration into these results, the researchers may submit an article for publication which could be used to provide formalized recommendations and/or strategic training for new CTSA evaluators.

And a Toast!

- Thank you Don Yarbrough, Jan Hogle, Paul Moberg, and the CTSA Evaluation Leadership Team for their guidance and support of our project.
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