

**Recommendations for Program- and Site-Level Data Collection  
to Support the Evaluation of the Missouri AfterSchool Network, Missouri Afterschool Resource Center,  
and Program Outcomes**

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Scope of Consultant Role

The Missouri AfterSchool Network has contracted with the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED) to prepare recommendations related to data collection and organizational effectiveness in four areas: 1) Afterschool Program Mapping, 2) MASN Effectiveness, 3) MOARC Effectiveness, and 4) Afterschool Program Quality. This brief focuses on Afterschool Program Quality data collection, although it should be noted this data would contribute to the overall evaluation of both MASN and MOARC (recommendations to be outlined in separate briefs).

Purpose

Currently, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) grantees are required to conduct an annual evaluation of their program. Given that significant resources are allocated to evaluation (average evaluation cost per grant = \$5,683, with a range of \$35 to \$70,000<sup>1</sup>), DESE and MASN have a vested interest in seeing that evaluation dollars are wisely spent. This brief review outlines my findings from reviewing evaluation plans in the grant applications (Cohorts 4, 5, and 6) and a sampling of the evaluations submitted for 2010-11 and includes recommendations for changes to the grantee-level evaluation process.

Review of Applications and Evaluations

Because afterschool programs differ greatly in their scope of service, ages served, and goals for students, it is not surprising that the grant applications, despite a common format, differ widely with respect to how measurable objectives are articulated. However, in many instances, grantees did not put forth clearly measurable objectives. For example, one grantee listed “The percentage of students, in the aggregate and for each subgroup, who are at or above the proficient level in reading/language arts and mathematics on the MAP.” This objective does not indicate how much improvement is expected, nor does it address how current performance is related to baseline performance. Another example that lacks specificity: “40% of FRL subgroup participating will demonstrate improvement in reading.” Although the grantee does indicate that a variety of data from different measures will be used (e.g., MAP, DIBELS, DRA), what constitutes improvement is not specified. For example, an increase in one point on the DRA is not qualitatively the same as increasing from “Below Basic” to “Basic” on the MAP.

Although grantees are given clear directions about how to report annual evaluations of their programs, the evaluations from 2010-11 also differed widely with respect to evaluation methods and the extent to which the evaluation actually addressed the goals and measurable objectives outlined in the grant application. Many of the evaluations clearly followed the annual evaluation directions and provided appropriate evidence and analyses in addressing the goals stated on their applications. However, other evaluation reports were not as successful in documenting grantee effectiveness. One grantee listed the following objective—“Pre- and post reading/language arts, science, and math grades will be evaluated on a semester basis to determine proficiency levels of students enrolled in 21CCLC”—but nowhere in the evaluation are average grades reported by time and subject. The grant evaluator does report that 78% of afterschool students showed significant or moderate improvement in

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<sup>1</sup> Based on MASN’s review of the evaluation costs included in the available grant applications for Cohort 4, 5, and 6.

homework, based on teacher surveys, but actual grades are not mentioned. One evaluation report failed to mention anything quantitative about program outcomes, except for a range of daily attendance for the program. Some evaluations reported district-wide data for MAP rather than scores specific to the students attending the afterschool programs.

For a few grantees, evaluators drew conclusions about the effects of the program that were not warranted by the data. For example, one evaluator indicated that “Significant progress was made in communication arts and science,” although the data table did not support this conclusion. In addition, this evaluator also declared without appropriate evidence that the 21CCLC program was directly responsible for the district making Adequate Yearly Progress with respect to No Child Left Behind. Another evaluator concluded that the program had “positive impacts on participating students’ achievement as measured by MAP scores,” but neither data nor analyses were provided to substantiate this claim.

### Review of the Missouri Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides excellent information regarding aggregate performance across the grantees. However, it appears that not all grantees and sites use the Kids Care Center system consistently, which prevents some important aggregate outcomes, such as MAP score changes, from being reported.

### Recommendations

Based on this review, the following recommendations are suggested to help make the evaluation of 21CCLC programs more transparent and consistent, thereby facilitating the gathering of evidence needed to make the case that grant resources—and other initiatives designed to improve afterschool program such as the Missouri Afterschool Resource Center—have been effective at both grantee and state levels. The first three recommendations address the current evaluation process. The last two recommendations suggest some possible strategies for gathering program- and child-specific data that would be standardized across grantees—and that would directly address program quality and student outcomes.

- *Continue to provide direction for grantees in articulating measurable objectives during the grant application process.*

Although the grant application provides some good information on this topic, a more stringent review of objectives and how they could be measured would benefit grantees and DESE by ensuring more specific accountability. This could be done by requiring applicants to address the specific objectives in the evaluation plan.
- *Hold grantees accountable for the quality of the evaluation report.*

Grantees naturally hope that evaluators (either in-house or hired) will fulfill the requirements in the application for evaluation, and that they will complete an appropriate evaluation process. However, it is crucial for grantees to be actively involved in the evaluation process and to feel confident that the conclusions drawn and evidence cited by the evaluators truly reflects the scope of their program. One of the biggest shortcomings in many evaluation reports was the lack of commentary on why objectives were not reached. Grantees should partner with evaluators to ensure that all objectives are addressed in the evaluation report, including those for which evidence is lacking or contradictory.
- *Ensure that all grantees use Kids Care Center and required survey data from the statewide evaluator as part of their annual evaluation report.*

Many evaluation reports included Kids Care Center data along with the results of the surveys as evidence for effectiveness; others did not. Since grantees are required to enter Kids Care Center Data and report all data to the statewide evaluator, it is appropriate for individual grantees to use these results as evidence for the success of individual grants.

- *Implement a standardized observation protocol to gather data on program quality.*

Missouri's Quality Rating and Improvement System, *Show Me Quality for Kids*, is in the process of revamping its school-age model. One of the suggested changes in the model is to substitute the Weikart Center's Program Quality Assessments (PQAs) for the SACERS and School-Age Intentional Teaching Checklist. Currently, the OPEN Initiative is managing a cadre of reliable observers who provide services for *Show Me Quality for Kids* as well as other quality improvement contracts (such as OSAP, On-Site Assessment Project). It would be ideal to leverage this existing resource by looking into requiring programs to participate in the OSAP process utilizing the PQA, which would benefit the entire afterschool population in the state by giving providers a common vocabulary for quality, as well as standardized data for measuring progress at site, grantee, and state levels.

- *Implement standardized instruments for gathering data on student outcomes.*

Given that enhancing outcomes for children and youth is the primary goal for afterschool programs, it is critical that useful data are gathered to demonstrate effectiveness. Although MAP scores provide strong evidence for how much programs have helped students, there are many other important outcomes that need to be documented that are more proximal to students' experiences of the program. The current evaluation surveys regarding teachers' and parents' beliefs about program effectiveness are based on their retrospective evaluation of the year. Stronger evidence for student outcomes would be gathered if standardized measures with good psychometric properties, such as the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO), were used. It is suggested that a committee be appointed to evaluate possible instruments to use, making certain that they cover the desired student outcomes in the desired age ranges with sufficient evidence for their reliability and validity.