MAST
Marriage Strengthening
Research & Dissemination
Center

Communicating Through Implementation Challenges: Conversations for Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships

September 24, 2020

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation; the Administration for Children and Families; or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Welcome and introduction to the MAST Center

Mindy Scott, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator, MAST Center

The MAST Center conducts research on marriage and romantic relationships in the U.S. and the healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs designed to strengthen these relationships. It is a partnership between Child Trends, Public Strategies, and the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University.

https://mastresearchcenter.org/

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Three-part webinar series on researcher-practitioner conversations during evaluation

- **Webinar 1—Researcher-practitioner partnerships: What to consider in the early days of program evaluation**

- **Webinar 2—Communicating through implementation challenges: Conversations for researcher-practitioner partnerships**

- **Webinar 3—Now what? Conversations for researcher-practitioner partnerships on disseminating evaluation results**

Purpose

To address the types and timing of researcher-practitioner conversations needed during program implementation to:

- Ensure the evaluation design continues to align with program delivery
- Identify opportunities for evaluation data to feed back into programming and vice versa
- Provide examples of implementation challenges and communication needs during COVID-19 and virtual program delivery and evaluation

Meet the presenters

- **Mindy Herman-Stahl, Ph.D.**
  Senior Researcher, Public Strategies

- **Lauren Mattox**
  Project Manager, Public Strategies

- **Ryan Carlson, Ph.D.**
  Associate Professor, College of Education, University of South Carolina

- **Nakita Carroll, M.A., LMFT**
  Assistant Director of Family Services,
  University of Central Florida Marriage and Family Research Institute

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Our program evaluation approach

- **Program evaluation** is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about program implementation and effectiveness.

- Includes implementation and outcome assessment

- Within context of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programs (HMRE)

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Viewing the evaluation from different angles

EVALUATION PRIORITIES

- Rigor
- Technical complexity
- Control/comparison groups
- Slow and careful
- The more the better

SERVICE DELIVERY PRIORITIES

- Feasibility and usefulness
- User-friendly
- Timely service to all
- Rapid need
- Participant burden

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Messaging and Communication for evaluation buy-in

- Evaluation Messaging should be crafted for the intended audience to encourage buy-in for:
    - Internal staff
    - External stakeholders
    - Participants

Messaging and Communication for evaluation buy-in

- Messages that connect:
  - Are personal and relevant to the intended audience
  - Show respect and communicate the benefits of the evaluation to that audience
  - Offer the audience something they need and/or value
    - Align with the audience/organization's mission and goals
  - Use terms and language appropriate to the audience

- Create a communication and engagement plan appropriate to each audience segment or stakeholder

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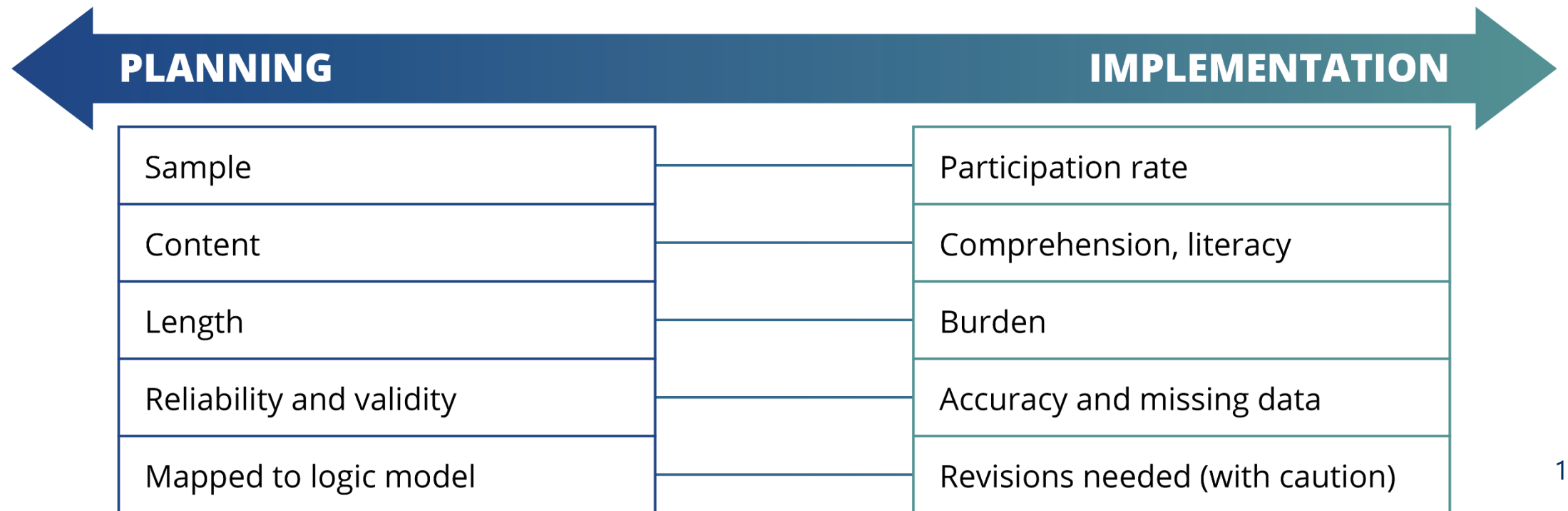
Conversations from the field

01

How have you created messaging around evaluation for staff, participants and other stakeholders to get buy-in?

02

How have you handled differences in viewpoints when making major evaluation decisions?

Evaluation check-ins:
Potential challenges in measures

PLANNING — **IMPLEMENTATION**

PLANNING	IMPLEMENTATION
Sample	Participation rate
Content	Comprehension, literacy
Length	Burden
Reliability and validity	Accuracy and missing data
Mapped to logic model	Revisions needed (with caution)

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Mapping program goals, activities, and measures

Our program aims to ...	We will make the change by...	We will measure that change by...
Increase communication skills	Happy Homes Curriculum, Sessions 2-4, Skills reinforcement Sessions 10-12	Couple Communication Satisfaction Scale
Decrease couple conflict	Happy Homes Curriculum, Sessions 7-8, Coaching sessions with case manager	
Improve stress management skills	Three sessions with case manager	The Ways of Coping Checklist
Increase job readiness	Five meetings with job readiness training, Employment specialist partner	Number of days worked in past 30 days
Improve parenting skills		Parent and Family Adjustment Scales

Conversations from the field

01

What kinds of conversations about measuring program process and effects have arisen for you during program implementation?

02

Do you have tips for measuring context—events outside of the program that could impact program effectiveness, such as pandemics, natural disasters, school closures, and job loss?

Evaluation check-ins: Potential challenges in methods

PLANNING ←→ **IMPLEMENTATION**

PLANNING	IMPLEMENTATION
How to collect data?	Are the data collectors properly **trained**?
From whom?	Are data collectors **missing** a proportion of the sample?
By whom?	What **barriers** are interfering with data collection?
When?	Are data collection processes interfering with program **delivery**?
Qualitative or quantitative **methods**?	Is the evaluation creating a **burden** to program staff and participants?
	How can data collection be **improved**?

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Conversations from the field

01

What kinds of issues have arisen that have required conversations around collecting data for your program evaluations?

02

Do you have any tips for handling virtual data collection?

Using program data to improve evaluation design:
Customer journey mapping

- o **Step 1: Create "Persona"—**Whose journey will you map? A persona is a compilation of common participant characteristics, a representation of your typical client.

- o **Step 2: Touchpoints—**Which activities will you map, what level of detail?

- o **Step 3: Thoughts—**What is your customer thinking?

- o **Step 4: Emotional Responses—**What is the customer feeling at each touchpoint?

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Using evaluation data to improve program delivery

- Continuous quality improvement
  - Continuous quality improvement, or CQI, is a management philosophy that organizations use to increase efficiency and increase internal and external satisfaction. It is an ongoing process that identifies and analyzes strengths and problems, helps to implement testing, and revises solutions.

Using evaluation data to improve program delivery (cont.)

- CQI Process
  - Identify areas for improvement and set goals
  - Develop strategies for improvement
  - Test the strategies
  - Assess improvement

- Implementation teams
  - Include three to five people who are actively and regularly involved in program implementation
  - Include your evaluator in your implementation team

Conversations from the field

01

Can you share some best practices or examples of using evaluation data during program implementation to improve service delivery?

02

What about examples of using program data to improve evaluation design?

We hope to see you soon!

Webinar 3: TBD

Now what? Conversations for researcher-practitioner partnerships on disseminating evaluation results

This webinar addresses how researchers and practitioners collaborate to interpret and disseminate evaluation findings to key stakeholders. Presenters will offer conversation starters and examples to ensure program evaluation findings are shared with diverse audiences to maximize their usefulness.

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Thank You!

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