

# Section A: Introduction & Overview

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## Letter to State Directors

*The Program Evaluation Toolkit* is the third in a series of three resource documents developed by the Office of Migrant Education (OME). Previous documents include the *Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit* and the *Service Delivery Plan Toolkit*.

Taken together, these three toolkits provide a guide for a continuous improvement cycle of program planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this cycle, states identify the current needs and priorities of migrant students and families, select appropriate strategies to meet those needs, implement the services that reflect such strategies, and assess the degree to which planned services have been successful at meeting identified needs. States complete the cycle by reflecting on the evidence they have gathered and consider where program recalibrations or improvements need to be made, what new or remaining needs exist, and whether to re-design existing programs or create new ones.

The *Program Evaluation Toolkit* is intended to help you plan and conduct an evaluation that is aligned with such a continuous improvement cycle and framed by the program strategies and measurable outcomes laid out in your Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Service Delivery Plan. It also provides program evaluation templates and resources that will help facilitate effective state Migrant Education Program (MEP) evaluations. Because the Evaluation Plan itself is part of the service delivery planning process, evaluation planning is also covered in the *Service Delivery Plan Toolkit*.

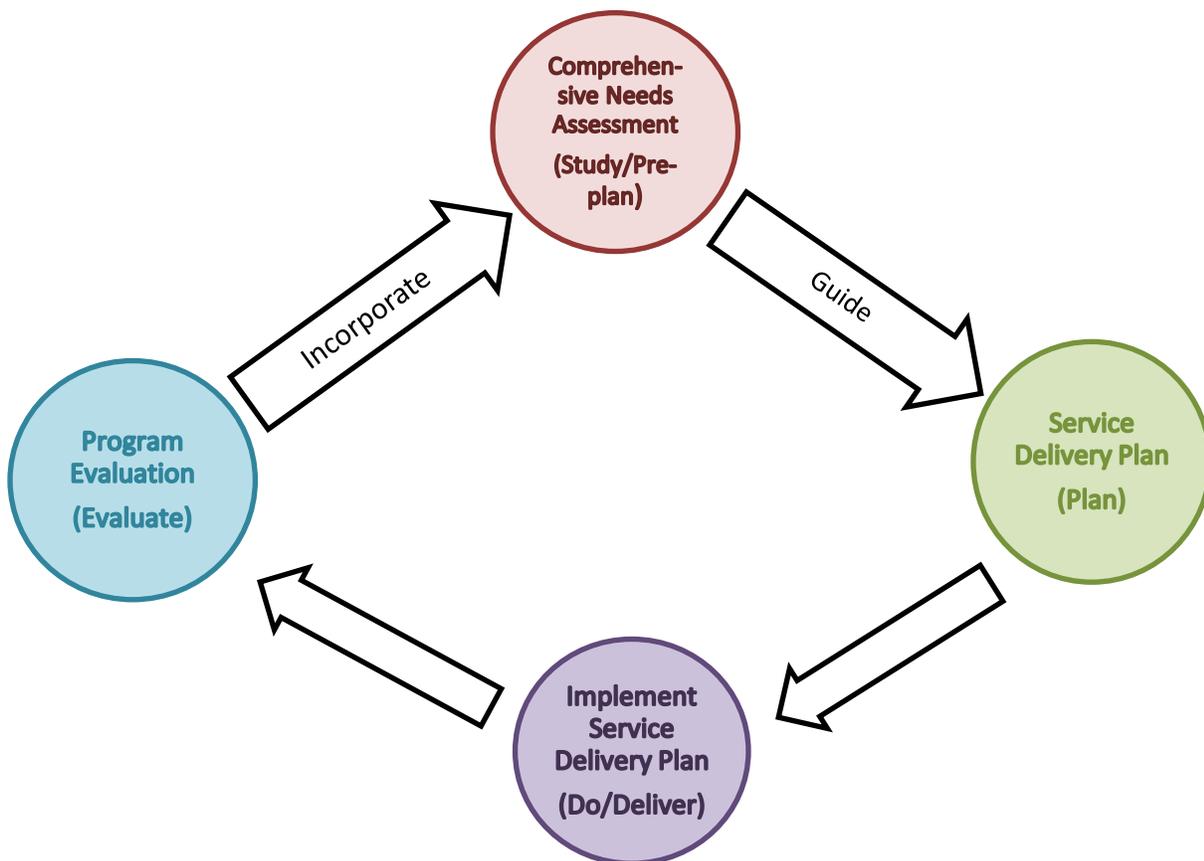
We hope that you find the *Program Evaluation Toolkit* useful, and we invite you to send us your comments and share your administrative and governance best practices. We would like to express our gratitude to those states that shared their policies, procedures, and forms with us and made their usage available as examples.

Thank you,

The Office of Migrant Education

### A.1 Purpose of the *Program Evaluation Toolkit*

The purpose of this *Program Evaluation Toolkit* is to provide state and local directors of Migrant Education Programs (MEPs) with guidance and resources to conduct useful evaluations of the services provided to migrant students and their families. A useful evaluation is one that generates reliable information about the quality of program implementation and the results that have been accomplished through MEP program activities. Using this information, state and local education agencies can revise or re-design program plans as needed to improve results and help more migrant students achieve academic success. Program evaluation is an important step in the Continuous Improvement Cycle (CIC) of a state MEP. It serves to inform and improve both the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and the Service Delivery Plan (SDP). (See *Appendix A.1 Terms and Definitions Related to the MEP Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Service Delivery Plan, and Program Evaluation* for a list of terms and definitions used across all three processes: comprehensive needs assessment, service delivery planning, and program evaluation.)



State Migrant Education Program Continuous Improvement Cycle  
(Office of Migrant Education, 2011)

While using data to guide decision making is part of every stage of a CIC, the following resources offered in the *Program Evaluation Toolkit* may be particularly helpful to guide program improvement in each stage of the planning and implementation of the MEP:



When you reach the point of developing an evaluation plan for your SDP, the tools described in *Section C: Planning The Evaluation* will help you organize the plan. The data collection methods described in *Section D Collecting Evaluation Data* will help you decide which methods to use to gather meaningful data.



When you are ready to make sense of the data you have gathered, *Section E Analyzing And Interpreting Data* will explain several ways to analyze and learn from your data. *Section F Communicating Evaluation Findings* will show you how best to report and display your data to communicate what you have learned.



And finally, when you have analyzed and interpreted your data and are ready to reconvene the CNA and SDP committees to review progress toward state MEP performance targets, *Section G Using Evaluation Findings* will guide you through a process for using your evaluation data to decide what to do next.

## A.2 General Approach to Developing the *Program Evaluation Toolkit*

The *Program Evaluation Toolkit* addresses common problems in MEP program evaluation reports that were identified from a sample of nine MEP evaluation reports. (See *Appendix A.2 Summary of Findings from a Review of a Sample of State Migrant Education Evaluation Reports* for a summary of the findings included in a review of the nine evaluation reports.)

The following are areas of improvement that were identified in the review and are directly addressed in the *Program Evaluation Toolkit*:

- Using state performance targets to determine the gap between actual migrant student performance and where they should be performing
- Using consistent data disaggregation, including the disaggregation for priority for service migrant students, all other migrants, and non-migrant students
- Developing strong Measurable Program Outcomes (MPOs) that define concrete expected outcomes for migrant students who received specific educational or educationally related services

- Including contextual information related to specific needs, baseline performance, barriers, and MPOs and related results to increase the significance of reported findings and the implications for reassessing needs and strategies
- Understanding the difference between description and evaluation
- Evaluating systematically the local program implementation aggregated in the state report
- Using expenditures and related outcomes to reconsider or prioritize strategies for helping migrant students achieve academically and personally

With these challenges in mind, the *Program Evaluation Toolkit* was developed to fill in the gaps between the available guidance and OME’s expectations for high-quality evaluation reports. OME drew upon the expertise of its program staff, state MEP directors, and program evaluation experts to develop the information in the *Toolkit*.

### **A.3 Organization of the *Program Evaluation Toolkit***

The *Program Evaluation Toolkit* is divided into seven sections, beginning with this *Introduction and Overview (Section A Introduction & Overview)*.

*Section B Overview Of Statutes, Regulations, And Non-Regulatory Guidance Related To Program Evaluation* summarizes the statutes, regulations, and *Non-Regulatory Guidance for Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children* governing evaluation of the implementation and results of MEPs and clarifies state and local requirements.

*Section C Planning The Evaluation* describes steps in the evaluation planning process and includes tools to help you organize your thinking and present the final plan.

*Section D Collecting Evaluation Data* describes different ways to collect meaningful information about the quality and effectiveness of MEP activities and services.

*Section E Analyzing And Interpreting Data* explains how to analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative evaluation data.

*Section F Communicating Evaluation Findings* suggests ways to organize evaluation reports and data displays to communicate effectively with your intended audiences.

*Section G Using Evaluation Findings* describes how to use evaluation results to re-assess needs, re-think strategies, and re-design programs as needed for the benefit of continued progress toward state performance targets.

In each section, there are illustrative examples and links to online resources that address each topic in more detail. In most of the sections, there are sample forms and templates that can be adapted to suit your needs.

#### **A.4 How to Use the *Program Evaluation Toolkit***

Clearly, there is no “one size fits all” or one “best” way to evaluate programs in the complex world of migrant education. However, there are some methods and tools that can help improve the quality and relevance of MEP evaluations. The *Toolkit* provides some tools and resources to increase your understanding of evaluation methods and your capacity for using these methods to customize evaluation plans for your own state. If your state budget is adequate to pay for an external program evaluation, the information in this guide will help prepare you to be an informed contributor to the evaluation plan and a knowledgeable consumer of the evaluation findings.

As a state director, you need to assess what your expertise is, and that of those who may be able to assist you through the MEP evaluation process, as well as determine how the *Toolkit* will best benefit you. Some state directors will want to read the *Toolkit* as a total document, while others will want to utilize only those sections and tools that they feel they need.

Some state directors may feel unprepared to understand the technical information on data analysis and interpretation. While not all state directors have the background needed to conduct a program evaluation, any can benefit from the material presented in the *Toolkit* to develop a greater understanding of the methods and analytic approaches that underlie strong program evaluation. This information will help you define what you need for the MEP program evaluation and oversee the process in an informed way as you solicit the expertise of an experienced program evaluator.

The *Toolkit* is made available on the OME website in two formats. One is a downloadable document that includes all sections and appendices. The other is a list of individual sections and appendices that may be downloaded individually.

Please note that the *Toolkit* provides only suggestions and recommendations for conducting the MEP evaluation. While the state is required to evaluate its migrant program, it is not required to utilize the methods, tools, and resources provided in the *Toolkit*.

#### **A.5 How to Adapt the Process for Small States**

If you are a MEP director in a small state (defined as those with \$1m or less in MEP funding), you will need to develop an evaluation plan that is appropriate for the size of your program and budget. The following are some considerations to help you evaluate the MEP in a quality, yet practical, fashion:

- Prioritize evaluation questions according to those that will provide the most important information to help you improve the MEP, and select a limited number of questions for the evaluation
- Enlist help from data experts in your state agency to guide you in conducting a program evaluation

- Work with a local college or university that may assist with the evaluation for free or provide interns or graduate students who can assist while building their skills
- Hire an external consultant and work with this person on developing an evaluation plan that will enable you to get the most out of what you can budget for the process
- View program evaluation as an ongoing initiative and identify a limited set of questions to explore each year over a period of several years
- Small states have the advantage of having fewer local programs for which to develop and oversee a consistent data collection process that will contribute to the state MEP; work with local project directors to develop a consistent set of tools and processes for data collection and provide technical assistance and opportunities for them to communicate with you (or your consultant) and other project directors during the evaluation process

## **A.6 Resources and Tools in Appendix A**

Appendix A.1 Terms and Definitions Related to the MEP Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Service Delivery Plan, and Program Evaluation

Appendix A.2 Summary of Findings from a Review of a Sample of State Migrant Education Evaluation Reports

## Appendix A.1 Terms and Definitions Related to the MEP Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Service Delivery Plan, and Program Evaluation

**Concern Statements:** Clear and consistent interpretations of the points that the NAC discussed that should be used to guide the work in developing the CNA. Concern Statements identify particular areas that require special attention for migrant students.

**Expert Work Groups:** Technical experts who provide input on research and evidence-based strategies that support solutions which contribute to closing the gaps identified during the needs assessment.

**Implementation Question:** An evaluation question that addresses the extent to which a strategy is implemented.

**Management Team:** A core group of advisors that helps develop the management plan and oversees the process.

**Measurable program outcomes (MPOs):** Outcomes (i.e., objectives) that a State's migrant education program will produce to meet the identified unique needs of migratory children and help migratory children achieve the State's performance targets.

**Need:** The difference between "what is" and "what should be."

**Needs Assessment Committee (NAC):** A broad-based committee of stakeholders that provide input and direction throughout the CNA process.

**Need Indicator:** A measure that can be used to verify that a particular gap/discrepancy exists for migrant children and sets a parameter to specify the severity of that gap.

**OME Seven Areas of Concern:** A broad area based on the root causes of the unique characteristics of the target group. The Office of Migrant Education has identified seven areas of concern which are: Educational Continuity, Instructional Time, School Engagement, English Language Development, Educational Support in the Home, Health, and Access to Services.

**Priority for Services:** Section 1304(d) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act establishes a Priority for Services (PFS) requirement. In accordance with this requirement, MEPs must give PFS to migrant children who are failing, or are most at risk of failing, to meet the state's content and performance standards and whose education has been interrupted during the regular school year.

**Results Question:** An evaluation question that addresses the level of improvement resulting from a program or strategy.

**Service Delivery Plan:** A plan for delivering and evaluating Migrant Education Program-funded

services to migratory children. It is based on the results of an up-to-date statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment and is intended to meet the unique needs of migrant children and their families.

**Solution Strategy:** A strategy that addresses an identified need.

## Appendix A.2 Summary of Findings from a Review of a Sample of State Migrant Education Evaluation Reports

In 2012, the Office of Migrant Education (OME) oversaw a review of a sample of nine state Migrant Education Evaluation reports in order to identify areas of need that could be addressed in the *Program Evaluation Toolkit*. The project began with a review of evaluation requirements specified in the statutes, regulations, and *Non-Regulatory Guidance for Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children*. In addition, OME posed four questions to provide a full picture of expectations for high-quality evaluation reporting:

1. How does the state document its effectiveness in improving the results of migratory children in meeting state performance targets in reading, mathematics, high school graduation, and (where applicable) school readiness?
2. How does the state measure progress toward performance measures related to other strategies designed to overcome barriers that prevent migratory children from participating effectively in school?
3. How does the state determine that it has effectively implemented other requirements of the program and state-level activities, especially for Priority for Services (PFS) students?
4. What is there that expenditures are aligned with activities and outcomes supported by the expenditures?

The following is a summary of the major challenges identified in the evaluation reports:

- The states in the sample presented data using state performance indicators but did not include the related state performance targets. Instead of noting gaps between actual and expected performance, some states reported gaps between migrant student performance and the performance of all students (including migrant students themselves).
- Across these states and even within individual state reports, the categories used for data disaggregation were inconsistent. Performance data were rarely presented in mutually exclusive categories for PFS migrant students, all other migrants, and non-migrant students.
- Measurable Program Outcomes (MPOs) took different forms in the reports reviewed. Many states used state performance targets—reported for the state as whole—as their MPOs. Other states used subjective perceptions of effectiveness to define results for categories of services (e.g., all instructional services). MPOs rarely defined concrete expected outcomes for migrant students receiving specific educational or educationally related services.
- Contextual information related to specific needs, baseline performance, barriers, and strategies was generally not reported in relation to MPOs and related results. Therefore,

the significance of reported findings and the implications for reassessing needs and strategies could not be determined.

- The state evaluation reports described rather than evaluated the implementation of state-level administrative programs. At the local or service delivery level, the implementation of instructional and support services was evaluated by administering state MEP surveys to small samples of local staff and parents to gather their subjective assessments of the effectiveness of broad categories of services. The state evaluation reports did not include any examples in which the implementation and results of specific services were systematically evaluated at the local or service delivery level and then summarized or aggregated in the state report.
- None of the states reviewed used expenditures and related outcomes to reconsider or prioritize strategies for helping migrant students achieve academically and personally. States will be required to collect this information when the OME's selected measures for compliance with the Government Performance and Results act (GPRA) are approved by the Office of Management and Budget.<sup>1</sup>

The *Program Evaluation Toolkit* was developed with these findings in mind, in order to build state MEP capacity to develop strong evaluations that will inform program improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> **The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993** was enacted by Congress to provide for the establishment of strategic planning and performance measurement in the Federal Government (made up of an annual performance plan and an annual performance report). Federal programs are required to establish GPRA indicators to measure the progress of their program.