NCI Corporate Evaluation: Converging Approaches to Maximize Utility

James Corrigan, NCI, NIH
Larry Solomon, NCI, NIH
Kevin Wright, NIAID, NIH

Thursday, November 6, 2008
American Evaluation Association

Session sponsors:
Research, Technology, and Development Evaluation TIG and Environmental Program Evaluation TIG
Today’s Presentation

• About the National Cancer Institute (NCI)

• Developing a Corporate Evaluation Policy

• Supporting a Corporate Evaluation Policy

• Tools and Resources to Enhance Evaluation Capacity

• Next Steps / Future Opportunities
About NCI

• Scope & Size of Enterprise
• Extramural & Intramural
• Investigator-Initiated & Solicited
• Peer Review
• Varied Approaches to Evaluation
DEVELOPING A CORPORATE EVALUATION POLICY
Current Evaluation Policy

Background

- Focus – solicited extramural initiatives
- Asks consistent questions about programs
- Developed by senior leadership – NCI Executive Committee
- Informs decision making process of senior leadership
- Flexible – varied approaches to addressing questions
Current Evaluation Policy
Levels of Initiative Concept Review Process

NCI Division / Office / Center Director

Clinical Trial? Yes -> Clinical Trials Operations Committee

No -> NCI Executive Committee (EC)

NCI Board of Scientific Advisors (BSA)
Current Evaluation Policy

Key Components

Background
- Description of new scientific opportunity & why a high priority
- How opportunity was identified (e.g., scientific workshops)

Current Portfolio Analysis
- Analysis of related projects funded in the last two years by NCI and other NIH components

Evaluation Criteria
New Initiative Concepts

- Establish evaluation criteria / metrics to evaluate progress

Renewal Initiative Concepts

- Report on whether evaluation criteria were met – include clinical advances, advances with high potential for clinical translation, publications, inventions, patents, collaborations

Large Infrastructure Initiatives

- Evaluation panel reviews documentation on initiative progress and makes recommendation to Division/Office/Center director
SUPPORTING A CORPORATE EVALUATION POLICY
Policy to Procedures

Initial Feedback
- Questions About Requirements
- Need for Clarification

Response to Feedback
- Procedures/Resources Consistent with Policy
- Procedures/Resources Reviewed by EC Members
Assess Evaluation Needs

- Clarify Program Goals
- Identify Evaluation Criteria
- Conduct Outcome Evaluation
- Prepare Report for EC Review
Consider Available Resources

• Program Budget
• NIH Evaluation Set-Aside Program
• Other Collaborations
Other Contextual Constraints

- Time
- Expertise
- Data Availability
- Data Accessibility (OMB Clearance)
Develop an Evaluation Plan

- Consistent with EC Policy
- Maximize Utility
  - Executive Committee
  - Program Director
  - Generalizability
- Feasible Given Contextual Constraints
Execute Evaluation

• Contractor vs. In House
• Data Collection
• Data Analysis
• Expert Panel Judgment
Produce Evaluation Report

• Summarize Expert Panel Responses to Evaluation Questions

• Provide Summary Data Used by Evaluation Panel

• Provide Supporting Data and Materials
TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO ENHANCE EVALUATION
Evaluation Capacity

Operational Definition

- Ability to Recognize Need for Evaluation
- Ability to Recognize Value of Evaluation
- Ability to Conduct Evaluations
- Ability to Utilize Evaluation
Individual Capacity

Evaluation Training
• Set-Aside
• Seminars

Evaluation SIGs
• Seminars
• Workshops
• Peer to Peer

Communication
• Standard Operating Procedures
• Policy and Procedure Flow Diagram
• Website
Corporate Capacity (Rising Tide)

Program Evaluation Database
- Program-specific Goals
- Evaluation Designs
- Evaluation Contractors
- Evaluation Reports

Evaluation Metrics Matrix
- Program-specific Metrics
- Options but Not All-inclusive
Corporate Capacity (continued)

Evaluation Support Contract

• Consultation
• Program Logic Modeling
• Quick-Response Assessments
• Portfolio Analyses

NIH Evaluation Set-Aside Program

• Needs Assessment
• Developing Performance Measures
• Feasibility (Evaluation Design) Study
• Process Evaluation
• Outcome Evaluation
• Evaluation Training
NCI Evaluation-Related Projects
Next Steps / Future Opportunities

• Systematic collection & analysis of initiative evaluation criteria
• Increased emphasis on early data collection
• Continued emphasis on resources to enhance evaluation capacity