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USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MICHIGAN'S 21ST CENTURY
COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMS

by

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USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS IN MICHIGAN'S 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMS

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Western Michigan University, 2004

There is a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating the use of evaluation findings within grant programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs (CCLCs). This study was designed using Michigan's federally-funded CCLCs to meet the following purposes: to explore the use of evaluation findings; to determine the relationship of the use of evaluation findings by local school administrators to the employment of an internal or external evaluator; to identify evaluator qualifications connected to evaluation use; and to determine whether there are relationships between the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility domains and use.

The methodology used in this project was survey research, distributing an 83-item questionnaire to the 43 federally-funded CCLCs in Michigan with a useable response rate of 51.2%. The results indicated that summative uses of evaluation findings are most common and using evaluation findings to revise program goals and objectives was least common. A higher percentage of respondents employing internal evaluators instrumentally used the evaluation findings. Evaluator qualifications, type of evaluator, and the utility standards could not be correlated with reported use because all respondents reported use of evaluation findings. Secondary analysis determined that prior knowledge of community and prior CCLCs experience were moderately positively correlated with stakeholder satisfaction of the evaluation. The utility standards with the strongest relationship to stakeholder satisfaction were report clarity and report

timeliness and dissemination. Report clarity also had a moderate positive correlation to instrumental use, a composite variable derived from four instrumental use survey items.

The most important findings are that evaluator knowledge of the community, evaluator knowledge of the CCLC grant program, and clear and timely reports are of paramount concern to CCLC grantee directors. The results from the study can help current and future CCLCs grantees make informed decisions about employing internal or external evaluators and how to improve the use of evaluation findings, while also providing evaluators with research to support decisions they make in designing such evaluations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

Influenced by the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which required educators to evaluate their own efforts (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997), a focus of many educational programs has been to identify evidence that their programs are positively impacting the lives of the students. Because the transdiscipline (i.e., discipline focused on studying and improving tools for other disciplines; Scriven, 1991) of evaluation has only been developing as a profession for the past forty years, there are still many viewpoints about the ways evaluation should be implemented and used. Numerous techniques have been developed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to clarify and analyze the data collected through evaluation efforts (Herman, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Scriven, 1991; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991; Stufflebeam, 2001; Worthen et al., 1997). There is some agreement that evaluation findings do serve three primary purposes: rendering judgments, facilitating improvements, or generating knowledge (Patton, 1997; Worthen et al., 1997).

In addition to using various evaluation techniques, organizations also tend to

employ evaluators in different ways. Some organizations choose to employ evaluators on a full-time basis as internal evaluators, while some assign evaluation roles to internal staff members along with many other job responsibilities. Other organizations hire external evaluation consultants on an as-needed basis for specific programs and purposes. While internal evaluators know the culture and philosophy of an organization and have good connections within an organization, external evaluators usually have more credibility with funders and outside audiences and possess more specialized skills (Love, 1991). Because of this, many federally funded programs, such as the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs), encourage grantees to hire external evaluators to supplement monitoring and evaluation work done internally by the grantee (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). However, it is traditionally thought that evaluation findings will have more of an impact for an organization if an internal evaluator is there to ensure the use of the findings (Love, 1991; Stevenson, 1980).

Furthermore, the impact of evaluator qualifications in determining evaluation use is critical in developing credibility as an evaluator. Establishing credibility enables a more consistent and open dialogue with the client (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). To establish credibility, the evaluator can prove knowledge of relevant jargon, subject matter, political environment, etc. (Scriven, 1991). Evaluator qualifications can include knowledge, skills, and sensitivities (Mertens, 1994; Worthen, 1975; Worthen et al., 1997).

Beyond the type of evaluator employed and the evaluator qualifications, there are also significant debates centered on the definition of evaluation “use” (Alkin & Coyle, 1988; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; King, 1988; Patton, 1978, 1988; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). The definition of “use” impacts the determination of whether the evaluation was useful or not for the organization.

Evaluating 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grants

The U.S. Department of Education’s CCLCs grant program funds before school, after school, and summer programming for youth, particularly in high-risk communities. School districts that are awarded a CCLC grant are required to submit reports every six months to the U.S. Department of Education that help determine if the programs are progressing as they should (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). While many grantees would classify this as evaluation, it is really monitoring. “Project monitoring is an important management support task that bears some relation to program evaluation. Monitoring is often described as checking to see what projects, or programs, are on-time, on-task, and on-budget” (Scriven, 1993, p. 17).

Beyond the required grant monitoring, some school districts have staff members who spend part-time or full-time working on evaluation, while other school districts use grant funds to pay for an external evaluation consultant to work on specific projects. While internal evaluators may be biased towards favorable findings because of pressure from their superiors, external evaluators may also be biased towards favorable findings because they want to generate repeat business (Scriven,

1993). However, internal evaluators may have the ability to be involved in long-range planning that includes evaluation, and external evaluators may provide more credibility to the general public for any findings (Love, 1991). Regardless of positive or negative evaluation findings, it is the responsibility of both the internal and external evaluator to collect and report useful and accurate information (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994).

The topic of evaluation use relates to an issue that has been extensively discussed in the literature. Use, usefulness, and utilization have varied definitions within the evaluation field, and there appears to be little information available about the use, usefulness, or utilization of evaluation findings based on the work of internal or external evaluators. The primary purposes of evaluation such as policy formation, policy execution, accountability in decision-making (Chelimsky, 1987), and program improvement (Cronbach, 1963) are related to the multiple uses of evaluation findings such as program development, resource allocation, termination of programs, planning, and budget justification (Ewing, 1977). However, there are no clear empirical relationships established between the usefulness of evaluation findings and employment of an internal or external evaluator.

Statement of the Problem

This study developed out of an interest in the reported use of evaluation findings by CCLC grantees. Additionally, since internal monitoring was required and internal and/or external evaluation was optional per the grant regulations, the

relationship between the type of evaluator and evaluation use also became an interest. The CCLC grantees were an excellent fit for this study because the federally-funded program was in the process of transitioning to state-run programs, and each state was developing separate evaluation requirements. Findings from this study could greatly impact how the states decide to set up their evaluation requirements. The research problem for this study is as follows: How do evaluator roles and qualifications relate to the use of evaluation findings by local school administrators (in Michigan's federally-funded CCLCs)?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, *use* will refer to the direct and immediate application of evaluation findings for program improvement or decision-making and/or the influencing of thinking about issues related to the project (Patton, 1997; Rich, 1977; Rossi, 1999). The *reported use* of evaluation findings, in this study, is defined as the response of a local school administrator to the question, "Were the evaluation findings in the reports used by your program?" The *stakeholder satisfaction* with evaluation findings is defined as the response of a local school administrator to the question, "Do you feel satisfied with the efforts of your evaluator?" The *instrumental use* of evaluation findings is defined as the mean score from four questionnaire items focusing on specific types of use. An *internal evaluator* is part of the organization's staff, usually dedicated solely to evaluating projects within the system as directed by management (Love, 1991; Scriven, 1993;

Stevenson, 1980). An *external evaluator* is someone who is not part of the program's regular staff (Scriven, 1993). *Evaluator qualifications* are based on the utility standards related to evaluator credibility including advanced degrees in evaluation, evaluation experience, program experience, and community knowledge (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). Finally, *local school administrators* are defined as the directors of the CCLC programs in each school district receiving a CCLC grant.

Purposes of the Study

The study was designed to meet the following purposes: to explore the use of evaluation findings in CCLCs; to determine the relationship of the use of evaluation findings by local school administrators to the employment of an internal or external evaluator in CCLCs; to identify evaluator qualifications connected to evaluation use in CCLCs, and to determine whether there are differences in the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility domains when use of evaluation findings is high or low. The results from the study will help current and future CCLC grantees make informed decisions about employing internal or external evaluators and how to improve the use of evaluation findings, while also providing evaluators with research to support decisions they may make in designing and implementing such evaluations.

Research Questions

In order to explore the research problem supporting research questions need to be answered. Those questions are:

1. Are evaluation findings for Michigan's 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees being used? If so, how?
2. What qualifications of the evaluator are related to the use of evaluation findings?
3. Does the employment of an internal or an external evaluator relate to the use of evaluation findings? How?
4. How are the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility standards related to use?

While the U.S. Department of Education ensures that local evaluation findings are submitted as part of the Annual Performance Report (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a), there is no guarantee that the findings are used beyond the fulfillment of grant requirements. This study will look at how those evaluation findings are used and what factors influence use.

Significance of the Study

With many federally funded grant programs having the funding reduced or eliminated, it is important to know if evaluation is an expense that is necessary.

Currently, significant grant funds are being spent on evaluation efforts, and this is one study that can help show how evaluation findings are being used.

Only one study has looked at multiple CCLC grantees. The study, performed by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. was a meta-analysis of the monitoring reports from CCLC grantees across the country, compiling statistical information and reporting the aggregate growth or decline of various indicators (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b). The study did not look at any evaluation reports from the grantees, what those evaluation findings meant, or how those findings were used.

In fact, very few studies have empirically measured the use of evaluation findings (Henry & Mark, 2003). In one study, Nielsen (1975) found low rates of the use of evaluation findings, so he was unable to determine if the relevance of the evaluation findings had any impact on the use of those findings. Cousins and Leithwood (1986) did find that evaluation use was increased if the evaluation report was a combination of oral and written materials presented in non-technical language. During the evolution of the understanding of evaluation use in the late 1980s and early 1990s more researchers presented ideas for improving evaluation use (Barrios & Foster, 1987; Patton, 1991; Turner, Hartman, Nielsen, & Lombana, 1988), but these studies did not demonstrate empirical evidence connecting evaluation use to other variables. These limited studies are more theoretical and do not provide enough insight into the actual use of evaluation findings or the impact of an internal or external evaluator (Henry & Mark, 2003).

With federal funding projected to substantially decrease in the 2004 fiscal year, especially for the CCLC grants, this study will be helpful for local grantees to determine how to allocate funds for evaluation. In the U.S. Department of Education's 2003 fiscal year budget, \$993,500,000 was allocated to the CCLCs. The President's 2004 recommendation represents almost a 40% reduction in funding, suggesting only \$600,000,000 should be allocated for the programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2003c). No specific amounts are allocated to evaluation within that budget since the local programs decide how much to spend on evaluation. However, with overall funding for the programs decreasing, it is fair to assume that funding for evaluation of those programs will also decrease and may even be first to be cut. If program personnel do not understand the use of evaluation findings, then they will cut such indirect costs before cutting any programmatic costs.

Beyond the practical and immediate application of the findings for local grantees, this study will also add to the body of research looking at the differences between internal and external evaluators and the use of evaluation findings. Conclusions may be drawn that indicate the impact an internal or external evaluator may have on the use of evaluation findings, the impact of evaluation experience and expertise on the use of evaluation findings, the usefulness of internal or external evaluators, and the relationship of the utility standards to use.

Limitations of the Study

There are no previous studies examining the influence of internal and external evaluators on the use of evaluation findings. Therefore, the decisions made for moving forward with this study are based on theoretical discussions about internal and external evaluators and evaluation use. In addition, three years of association and experience with CCLC grants and the federal evaluation and funding processes helped inform many decisions made by the researcher.

This study is only focusing on CCLC grantees in Michigan. Previously, this program was funded through the U.S. Department of Education and local grantees reported directly to that department. In 2002, the federal government decided to give the money to the state departments of education for dispersal and monitoring within each state. While the study focuses on the federally funded grantees because they have been involved in the project for at least one year, it only examined grantees in Michigan because future decisions for the program will be made on a state-by-state basis. In addition, the demographics (e.g., urbanicity, ethnicity, district size) represented by the CCLC grantees in this study do not necessarily represent the demographics found in other states.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that a complete census of the 43 CCLCs in Michigan was not completed. Eleven of the CCLC grantees had ended their projects just prior to the surveys being distributed, so they did not respond to the survey. Two CCLC grantees did not respond, despite nine separate contact attempts.

Therefore, the respondents only represented the 30 CCLCs that were still continuing at the time of the survey. Of the 30 CCLC grantees who did respond to the survey, four of the respondents employed both internal and external evaluators. In order to be the most clear about the differences between internal and external evaluators and evaluator qualifications, those four surveys were eliminated from the analysis. Another four surveys were eliminated because they did not use evaluators, leaving only 22 surveys for analysis in this study.

Outline of the Study

Chapter II continues with a review of the literature focused around the use of evaluation findings, qualifications of the evaluator as they relate to use, and the employment of internal and external evaluators. Chapter III is a description of the research design and implementation. Chapter IV presents the findings from the survey and analysis of the findings. The study concludes with a summary of the study, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future study in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“Prompted by the U.S. congressional members’ criticism in the late 1960s that evaluation results were not being used, evaluation researchers fervently sought to better understand the full range of evaluation use” (Preskill & Torres, 2000, p. 26). In this chapter, the definitions and historical evolution of the use of evaluation findings, including instrumental use, conceptual use, and persuasive use; the suggested ways for improving use; the advantages and disadvantages of internal and external evaluators; the qualifications of evaluators, and the development of CCLCs will be presented.

Use, Utility, and Utilization

Definitions

The definitions of *use*, *utility*, and *utilization* have been debated for more than the past two decades. Weiss (1979) did not like the term *utilization* because she felt it sounded too concrete, and the practice of using evaluation findings is more fluid than that. Stevenson (1980) felt that too much credence was being given to *utility* and

utilization is the more appropriate term. He thought *utility* only looked at the evaluator's work while *utilization* also focused on unintended evaluation consequences and multiple evaluation finding uses.

Alkin (1982) clarified the definitions further by getting one step closer to what is accepted by this current study. He said that an evaluation has *utility* if it is presented in a way that makes it useful, and an evaluation is *utilized* if there are immediate and direct applications of the evaluation findings. King and Pechman (1982) felt *utilization* was a term that could be easily misunderstood, while *use* is a term with few inappropriate connotations. Daillak (1982) disagreed with King and Pechman by explaining that *utilization* was simply *use* with the understanding that it has beneficial, profitable, or productive outcomes.

After spending a decade arguing over semantics and trying to clarify *use*, *utility*, and *utilization*, theorists began to broaden the definitions. Cousins and Leithwood (1986) classified *use* as the processing of evaluation information, decision-making, and education. King (1988) said if the definition of *use* was broader, basically including compliance with legislated evaluation requirements (specific for federally-funded program), then most evaluation findings are *used*. An expanded explanation of *use* includes the following: basic knowledge and understanding of the evaluation plan and findings, possible justification for decisions already made, and the impetus for action (program improvement and/or decision-making) based on the evaluation findings (Owen & Rogers, 1999; Patton, 1997; Rich,

1977; Rossi, 1999). Kirkhart (2000) has taken the definition a step further, making it broader than *use*,

The term *influence* (the capacity or power of persons or things to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means) is broader than *use*, creating a framework with which to examine effects that are multidirectional, incremental, unintentional, and noninstrumental, alongside those that are unidirectional, episodic, intended, and instrumental (which are well represented by the term *use*). (p. 7)

However, because the movement towards *influence* instead of *use* as the key idea would take this study into the study of phenomena much too complex to study in public school settings, *use* will be the term used herein. For the purposes of this study, *use* will refer to the direct and immediate application of evaluation findings for program improvement or decision-making and/or the influencing of thinking about issues related to the project (Patton, 1997; Rich, 1977; Rossi, 1999).

Categories of Use

There are three generally accepted types of evaluation use: instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive (King & Pechman, 1988; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Pelz, 1978; Rich, 1977; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999; Shadish et al., 1991; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). Instrumental use refers to the specific and immediate ways evaluation findings are used for decision-making. Conceptual use affects how people think about an issue but may not have immediate use. Persuasive use occurs when the evaluation findings are used for personal gain or to support or refute political positions. Traditionally, evaluators praise the instrumental use of

evaluations, but the long-term impact derived from conceptual use may be more important (Patton, 1987). In a study Patton completed in 1986, he found that conceptual use was most important to decision-makers because it helped reduce uncertainty, speed up decision-making, and get things started (Patton, 1997). Long-term impact of evaluation findings can lead to systemic and lasting changes, but it should be noted that the long-term impact is often felt in ripples and not in waves like evaluators would prefer (Patton, 1997). The categories of use do have three common elements: a description of the use or source of use, the timeframe in which use occurs, and how an evaluator can facilitate use or the intentions behind the use (Kirkhart, 2000; Shadish et al., 1991).

Instrumental use follows the traditional definition of use as explained by Burry (1984), "...planned actions that result from applying evaluation information and processes to the resolution of specific problems, questions, or concerns" (p. 1). In this category of use, program managers could track the logical path from the analysis of the data to the recommendations of the evaluator to the decisions about program improvements (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). The effects of the evaluation findings were immediate, observable, and traceable (Owen & Rogers, 1999; Shadish et al., 1991). The problems with only focusing on instrumental use are that not all evaluations include recommendations, decisions are not always immediate – they may occur several years later but still be a direct result of the evaluation findings, other factors (e.g., money, politics, other recommendations) may outweigh the

significance of the evaluation findings, or suggested changes may have already been in process (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980).

Conceptual use created an answer to some of the problems facing instrumental use. Evaluation findings that are conceptually used may result in changes many years later, possibly causing a greater impact because time has passed for more information to be gathered (Patton, 1987, 1997; Shadish et al., 1991). Conceptual use may even go unnoticed because the user has the ability to consciously or unconsciously adopt the evaluation information (King, 1988). Therefore, conceptual use is likely more prevalent than instrumental use because the impact on the user can be as simple as a broader understanding of the issues (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980).

The final typical category of use, persuasive use, is more intentional than the other types of use. Persuasive use involves interpersonal influence in the use of the evaluation findings. The evaluation findings are used to convince others about political positions or issues of personal gain (Knorr, 1977; Leviton & Hughes, 1981). The evaluation findings are sometimes intentionally used for covert purposes (Rutman, 1980). Some would speculate that persuasive use is a form of misuse (Rutman, 1980; Stufflebeam, 2001).

Preskill and Caracelli (1997) surveyed members of the American Evaluation Association to further explore types of use. Process use is defined as the “cognitive and behavioral changes resulting from users’ engagement in the evaluation process” (Preskill & Caracelli, 1997, 217). Survey results indicated that 90% of the respondents felt that process use is an important indicator of evaluation use (Preskill

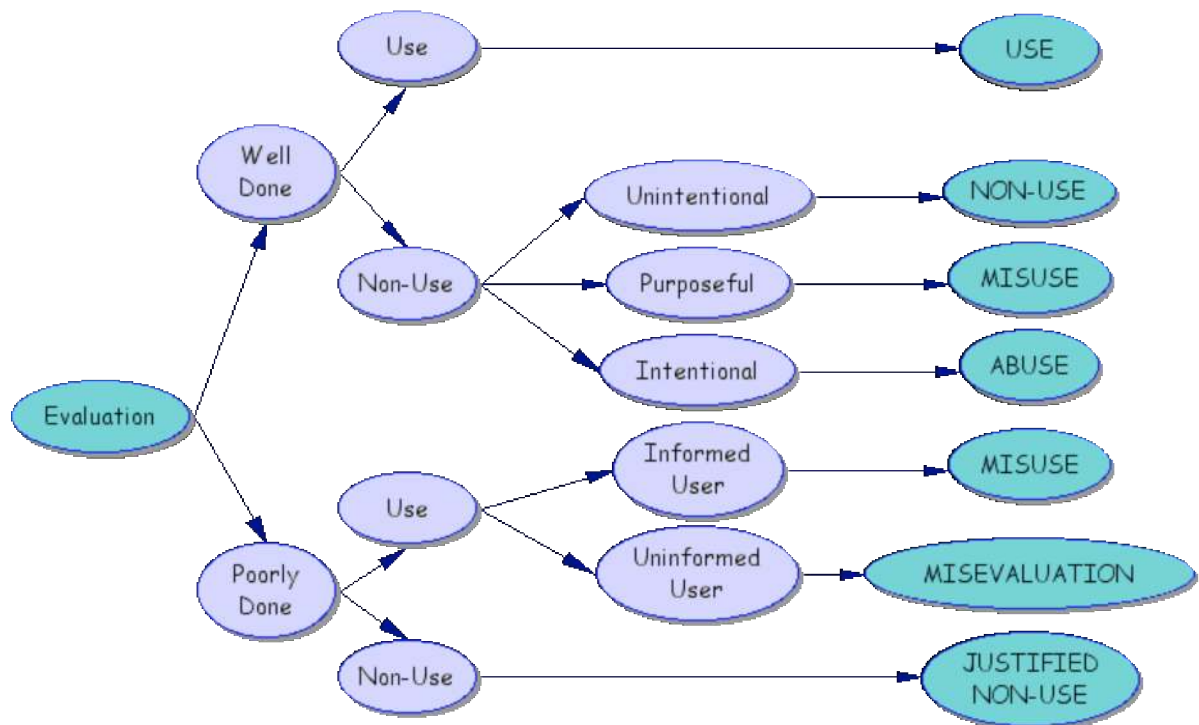
& Caracelli, 1997). This type of use, although not included in the three categories of use previously discussed, may actually be as important to the stakeholders as the instrumental or conceptual use of the evaluation findings (Cousins, Donahue, & Bloom, 1996; Preskill & Torres, 2000). Through process use, the institutionalization of evaluation can occur.

Use and Misuse

Patton (1988) explained that evaluation use exists on a continuum from utilization to nonutilization and from misutilization to nonmisutilization, which aligns with King and Pechman's (1982) distinctions of appropriate and inappropriate use and nonuse of results. Utilization represents the instrumental, conceptual, or persuasive use of evaluation findings. Nonutilization represents the unintentional ignoring of evaluation findings. Misutilization represents the intentional manipulation of an aspect of the evaluation in order to gain something, sometimes including persuasive use (Alkin & Coyle, 1988). Nonmisutilization represents the intentional ignoring of evaluation findings.

Alkin and Coyle (1988) developed a chart to clearly illustrate the different types of evaluation use and misuse. However, in order to properly diagnose which type of use or misuse is occurring, it must first be determined if the evaluation was done well. Included in the chart are explanations of when it is also appropriate to not use evaluation findings.

Figure 1. Evaluation Use and Misuse.



Application of Use

Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) outlined several questions that can be helpful in the application of evaluation use.

1. What is used?
2. How direct is the derivation from the study?
3. By whom is it used?
4. By how many people is it used?
5. How immediate is the use?
6. How much effort is required?

These questions are valuable in determining what category of use is occurring and where efforts can be concentrated to ensure better future use. Instead of asking those questions during the evaluation or after the evaluation findings are released, the ideal evaluation situation would include the planning for evaluation use at the beginning stages during the evaluability assessment (King, 1988; Rutman, 1980). The evaluability assessment helps determine if the right circumstances exist to allow the successful implementation of the evaluation plan, including political context, stakeholder participation, client willingness for evaluation, etc.

“Evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use” (Patton, 1997, p. 20). Not all evaluations can have use, especially if the evaluations do not adhere to a certain level of quality and some standard information. Scriven (1993) would argue that the quality of the evaluation is more critical than the instrumental use of the evaluation findings. Scriven (1993) states, “Even if an evaluation is used, this does not establish that it was useful (had utility), only that it was usable...After we discover that an evaluation was used, there still remains the question of whether the evaluation was valid...” (p. 76). King (1988) continues that the high quality of an evaluation does not ensure its appropriate use. While these three opinions of how the evaluation affects use appear to differ, all three authors are contending that an evaluation has to be conducted with high quality in order to have

utility and that intentional efforts to appropriately use the evaluation findings must be made.

In order for an evaluation to be useful, it needs to be reliable, brief, timely, comprehensible, conclusive, and have quality findings (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Ewing, 1977). The most widely recognized understanding of utility comes from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) and includes issues like stakeholder identification, evaluator credibility, information scope and selection, values identification, report clarity, and report timeliness and dissemination. If an evaluation abides by the utility standards, then it has the potential to be useful.

The organization using the evaluation findings also needs to have commitment for use, the decision-making ability, a suitable political climate, and the necessary financial climate in order to make appropriate use of the findings (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; King, 1988). Since most organizations do not include evaluation as part of the typical programming loop, it is difficult to plan to make evaluation findings useful (Chelimsky, 1977). In fact, Patton (1997) discovered through a study of twenty federal health evaluations that “decision makers, program officers, and evaluators typically devoted little or no attention to intended uses prior to data collection” (p. 64). There is more potential for use if the organization wants the evaluation to occur and is willing to base decisions on the evaluation findings (King, 1988). The lack of use of many evaluations occurs because of their irrelevance to current politics or lack of contribution to the budgetary process (Mitchell, 1990; Rutman, 1980). Sometimes evaluation findings are intentionally underused because

they are negative, yet the organization publicizes they completed an evaluation so they still look good (Banner, Doctors, & Gordon, 1975). Excessive emphasis on use, however, puts pressure on the evaluator to adjust the evaluation findings based on what the decision-makers are willing to do (Scriven, 1991). Instead of an obvious attempt to promote use, it may be more beneficial to integrate the promotion of use through the regular channels of the evaluation such as the choice of issues addressed in the evaluation, the role potential users have in the evaluation, and the communication channels between the evaluator and users (Shadish et al., 1991).

Improving Use

At the moment there seems to be no indication that evaluation, although the law of the land, contributes anything to educational practice, other than headaches for the researcher, threats for the innovators and depressing articles for journals devoted to evaluation (Rippey, 1973, p. 9).

While Rippey's statement is pessimistic, there are many factors that can potentially positively impact evaluation use. All of the factors listed are observations by practitioners that have not yet been empirically verified. Some of the typical factors related to the contextual or political environment include: information needs, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics of stakeholders, organizational commitment to evaluation, history of program, staff attitudes and knowledge about evaluation, funding sources, decision-making structure, and impetus for evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997). Additional factors affecting use related to the evaluation implementation include:

evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, plausibility of findings, timeliness, dissemination, and communication between evaluators and users (Burry, 1984; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981). The evaluator can intentionally address some of those factors, while others will have to just be dealt with when appropriate.

The most widely encouraged suggestion for improving the use of evaluation results is to ensure the key stakeholders of the evaluation are involved at every level of the process, from the evaluability assessment to evaluation planning to implementation to reporting (Feldman, 1990; Joint Committee for Standards on Educational Evaluation, 1994; King, 1988; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Solomon & Shortell, 1981; Worthen et al., 1997). Stakeholder involvement can be affected on many dimensions: the relationship between the evaluator and the potential users, the control of the evaluation process, the scope of the user involvement, the number of key stakeholders involved, the variety of key stakeholders involved, and the timeline for the evaluation (Patton, 1997). By involving the key stakeholders, the evaluator is able to evoke a sense of commitment to the evaluation and its use.

The next critical step for improving evaluation use, although these steps are not necessarily linear, is to clarify the intended uses of the evaluation while involving the stakeholders in the process (Cohen, 1977, Feldman, 1990; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997). Explanation of the purpose of the evaluation as generating knowledge, facilitating improvements, or making overall judgments helps reduce the

hesitation of key stakeholders to become involved in the evaluation process (Patton, 1997). By creating an awareness of the purpose of the results with the intended users, it increases the likelihood of consideration of the evaluation findings during decision-making and policy development (Cohen, 1977).

Another suggestion for improving evaluation use is to focus on the benefits of evaluation through teaching about the evaluation process (Feldman, 1990; King, 1988; Scriven, 1991). By educating stakeholders on the evaluation process, needs, and purposes, the stakeholders feel empowered and self-determined to participate in the evaluation (Fetterman, 2001). The evaluator builds a network for support for evaluation and that increases the potential for use. Knowledge about evaluation methodologies helps reduce the apprehension stakeholders may feel about evaluation because an understanding of the process demystifies it (Feldman, 1990).

Despite the variety of suggestions for improving the use of evaluation findings, there is still controversy over whether the suggestions actually have any relationship to evaluation use. Patton believes the utilization-focused advice successfully impacts programs and decisions, yet Weiss thinks this traditional advice has not increased the impact of evaluations on program decisions (Smith & Chircap, 1989). While some may view changes in an organization as the impetus for evaluation use, an alternative view is to view the measurable behavioral and organizational changes as an indication of the use of evaluation findings (Stevenson, 1980). Without extensive studies on the impact of these suggestions, the debates will continue. However, there is agreement that the concern for evaluation use should be

a driving force in evaluation, using the utility standards in the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) to ensure the evaluation will continue to serve the information needs of the intended users (Patton, 1997; Worthen et al., 1997)

Internal and External Evaluators

An internal evaluator is part of the organization's staff, usually dedicated solely to evaluating projects within the system as directed by management (Love, 1991; Scriven, 1993; Stevenson, 1980). An external evaluator is someone who is not part of the program's regular staff (Scriven, 1993).

Internal and external evaluators each have advantages and disadvantages. The table below illustrates those strengths and weaknesses, drawing on a variety of resources.

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Internal and External Evaluators.

Internal Evaluators	External Evaluators
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias toward favorable findings because they are involved with the project, possibly even helping to develop it (Worthen et al., 1997) • May overlook important variables because is lost in the details (Worthen et al., 1997) • Not enough time for meaningful evaluation because lost in minutia of little data-gathering projects (Patton, 1997; Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 1999) • Tendency to report favorable findings because of pressure from superiors (Patton, 1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not as familiar with the program being evaluated (Worthen et al., 1997) • Reporting inaccurate favorable results in hopes of gaining repeat business (Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991) • Results not well-utilized (Love, 1991)

Table 1. continued.

	Internal Evaluators	External Evaluators
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can encourage use of findings (Love, 1991; Scriven, 1991) • Established relationships with program staff leads to internal credibility (Love, 1991; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Scriven, 1991) • Involvement in planning creates shared understandings (Love, 1991; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Patton, 1997) • Less costly than external (Shadish et al., 1991) • Thorough knowledge of organizational philosophy and structure (Love, 1991; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Worthen et al., 1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can speak openly about negative findings (Scriven, 1991) • Less likely to succumb to internal pressures to report favorable findings (Love, 1991; Shadish et al., 1991) • More credibility to outside organizations (Love, 1991; Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991) • Often more highly trained in evaluation (Scriven, 1991; Torres et al., 1999) • Specialized skills for the project at hand (Love, 1991; Worthen et al., 1997)

Despite significant advantages and disadvantages for both internal and external evaluators, no absolute solution has been developed. Each organization must choose which type of evaluator will be the best fit based on the situation (Shadish et al., 1991). Typically, organizations shift from working with external evaluators to internal evaluators primarily because of the poor quality of the external evaluators they have worked with, cuts in evaluation funding, or poor use of evaluation findings (Love, 1991). That does not mean that the internal evaluators are doing any better, though. Early on in the discussion of internal and external evaluators, Connor (1988) proposed that the best ways to ensure a successful evaluation from either an internal or external evaluator is to make some organizational changes such as making evaluation become a part of the regular order of business, incorporating both summative (often external) and formative (often internal) approaches, and linking the evaluators to the decision-makers so they are communicating throughout the process.

The theoretical links between internal and external evaluators and evaluation use have been repeatedly made. In this study, survey research will be used to determine if there is an actual link between the type of evaluator and the use of evaluation findings.

Evaluator Qualifications

Evaluators are credible to the extent that they exhibit the training, technical competence, substantive knowledge, experience, integrity, public relations skills, and other characteristics considered necessary by clients and other users of evaluation findings and reports. (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994, p. 31)

The Guiding Principles for Evaluators, as defined by the membership of the American Evaluation Association (Shadish, Newman, Scheirer, & Wye, 1995), implore evaluators to use systematic inquiry, provide competent performance, ensure integrity and honesty, have respect for people, and take into account the diversity of values related to public welfare. A comparison of the Guiding Principles for Evaluators and the Program Evaluation Standards by Sanders (1995) concluded that there are not major inconsistencies between the two documents, that the overall advice is very consistent, and both documents place a high value on regard for the welfare of the evaluation stakeholders.

Beyond the general characteristics that create professionalism among evaluators, there are some commonly referred to competencies that evaluators, specifically in the educational arena, should possess. Sanders (1979) proposed eleven important competencies for evaluators to be able to accomplish including conceptualizing the framework for the evaluation, selecting appropriate evaluation techniques, and determining the value of the object of the evaluation. Many of these competencies are woven into the *Program Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994), so the understandings of a quality evaluator are consistent across publications. The relationship of evaluator qualifications to evaluation use is a critical step in developing credibility as an evaluator, which enables a more consistent and open dialogue with the client (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994).

Despite the common understanding of evaluator competencies across the literature, those are not the items typically reviewed by clients when choosing an evaluator. Unless the evaluator is trusted and perceived to have credibility as an evaluator, then the evaluator will not be chosen and the evaluation will likely not have high validity (Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991). To establish credibility, the evaluator can prove knowledge of relevant jargon, subject matter, political environment, etc. (Scriven, 1991). Evaluator qualifications can include knowledge, skills, and sensitivities (Mertens, 1994; Worthen, 1975; Worthen et al., 1997). While evaluator competencies are important, it is usually these evaluator qualifications that play the strongest role in picking the evaluator.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Historical Perspective

The concept of after school programs began in Flint, Michigan in 1935 when a physical education director, Frank Manley, approached Charles Stewart Mott about opening schools for recreation programs after school hours. The partnership between the C.S. Mott Foundation and school districts spread throughout the country. In 1997, a truly unique private-public partnership began when the C.S. Mott Foundation, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, introduced the CCLCs (C.S. Mott Foundation, 2003).

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is designed to provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet State and local student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics. 21st Century Community Learning Centers offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2003d)

Evaluating 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The CCLC grants require monitoring of grant activities through the Annual Performance Report, but it is also strongly encouraged to engage in local evaluation either through an internal or external evaluator (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Realizing the lack of capacity in many school districts for evaluation efforts, the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the National Center for Community Education and National Community Education Association, offer training sessions focusing on the nuts and bolts of evaluating after school programs for people who have no formal evaluation training (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a, 2003d).

Other groups, such as the Harvard Family Research Project, have helped move the implementation of theory for trained evaluators forward in evaluating after school programs. In a recent publication, Harris and Little (2003) helped clarify the role local evaluation plays in the CCLC programs:

According to the (Non-Regulatory) Guidance, local-level 21st CCLC grantees must conduct periodic evaluation of their programs and use the findings to refine, improve, and strengthen the programs and improve performance measures. Evaluation results must be made public on request. Local programs must meet Principles of Effectiveness as outlined in NCLB (No Child Left Behind), which mandate that 21st CCLC program activities be based on: assessment of objective data regarding need for programming in schools and communities; an established set of performance measures aimed at ensuring high quality academic enrichment opportunities; and scientifically based research that provides evidence the program or activity will help students meet state and local academic achievement standards. (p. 6)

While this clarification is necessary for local evaluators to understand how to abide by federal regulations while also meeting local needs, no work has been done to investigate the implementation of local evaluations or the use of findings. Several publications have discussed the impact of after school programs and the relationship between support variables (i.e., caring adults and engaging activities) and academic achievement (Gambone, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2003b), but none have explored the actual effect of those findings and use to “refine, improve, and strengthen the programs and improve performance measures” (Harris & Little, 2003) as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education.

Summary

Despite decades of debate, there are still many definitions of use, utility, and utilization of evaluation findings. However, it is clear that evaluation findings must first be read in order to be used at all. Program staff may need assistance in understanding evaluation findings and applying the findings to practical applications.

It is the duty of the evaluator to be aware of how to promote the use of evaluation findings from the beginning of an evaluation, primarily including the involvement of key stakeholders throughout the process (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994).

There is no conclusive evidence about the circumstances in which an internal or an external evaluator is more beneficial for an organization. The combination of an internal and external evaluator may be the most appropriate way to avoid many of the pitfalls of each category, however funding situations usually preclude such a lavish arrangement. Therefore, organizations must look closely at the expertise and education of an evaluator before determining how to move forward, paying close attention to the evaluator's ability to communicate with program staff.

There is also no conclusive evidence of the relationship between internal or external evaluators and the use of evaluating findings or how evaluation findings are used, specifically in 21st Century Community Learning Centers. As federal budgets decrease and program elements are eliminated, it is critical to have empirical evidence to demonstrate the use of evaluation findings and the best ways to implement evaluations using trained evaluators.

While specific evaluator qualifications, such as experience and knowledge, are expected to enhance the credibility of an evaluation, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support which types of qualifications improve the use of evaluation findings more. Such evidence would be helpful to clients who are seeking evaluation

help and are unsure what the evaluation entails let alone what qualifications an evaluator should possess.

This study focuses on the issues at several levels. First, it must be determined if the evaluation findings for the CCLC grantees are even being used in Michigan and what that use looks like. Next, the relationship of the use of evaluation findings to an internal or external evaluator and the qualifications of the evaluator will be analyzed. This information will help shape future evaluation efforts, not only with the CCLC grantees, but also with other grantees who have the flexibility and funding to shape their own evaluation efforts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The relationship between internal and external evaluation, the qualifications of evaluators, and the use of evaluation findings has not been closely examined, nor has the use of evaluation findings specific to the CCLC grants funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This study will explore these relationships.

Review of the Research Questions

The study was designed to meet the following purposes: to explore the use of evaluation findings in CCLCs; to determine the relationship of the use of evaluation findings by local school administrators to the employment of an internal or external evaluator in CCLCs; to identify evaluator qualifications connected to evaluation use in CCLCs; and to determine whether there are differences in the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility domains when use of evaluation findings is high or low. The results from the study will help current and future CCLC grantees make informed decisions about employing internal or external evaluators and how to improve the use

of evaluation findings, while also providing evaluators with research to support decisions they may make in designing and implementing such evaluations.

The research questions below were developed in order to understand the differences in the type of the evaluator and the qualifications of the evaluator as they relate to the use of evaluation findings. Those questions are:

1. Are evaluation findings for Michigan's 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees being used? If so, how?
2. What qualifications of the evaluator are related to the use of evaluation findings?
3. Does the employment of an internal or an external evaluator relate to the use of evaluation findings? How?
4. How are the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility standards related to use?

Population and Sample Size

The population for this study was the 44 grantees in the state of Michigan who received CCLC grants through the U.S. Department of Education that were still in operation during the 2002-2003 school year. Because of the transition of the funding for the CCLC grants from the U.S. Department of Education to the state departments of education in 2002, focusing on one state for data collection and analysis will provide more specific findings. Also, because this population size is relatively small,

the entire population was surveyed (with the exception of Battle Creek Public Schools because they were part of the field test).

Survey Instrument

Isaac and Michael (1997) describe the four guiding principles for surveys to be: systematic, representative, objective, and quantifiable. A survey is systematic when it is carefully planned and executed, representative when it closely reflects the population, objective when the data are observable and explicit, and quantifiable when the data can be expressed numerically. Worthen et al. (1997) add that it is important to think about the sequence of questions, wording of questions, developing rapport through questions, and clear instructions when designing your survey instrument. The questions for the survey were developed using this advice, conversations with state and federal CCLC officials, and a review of the related literature. A copy of the instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Design

The actual design of the survey incorporates all of the necessary variables while also basing the majority of the questions on the utility standards from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994). Reported evaluation use is a quantitative, dichotomous variable focusing on the use of evaluation findings by stakeholders and can be found in question 37 for CCLCs that use external evaluators

and question 73 for CCLCs that use internal evaluators. Questions 37 and 73 stated, “Were the evaluation findings in the reports used by your program?” Additional items (38-43 and 74-79) provide more data, specifically focusing on instrumental use (i.e., program improvement, revision of goals, policy changes, effective programming, and fulfilling grant requirements), to explain the answers in items 37 and 73. Stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluator (dichotomous items 44 and 80) is also used to further explain reported use. Questions 44 and 80 stated, “Do you feel satisfied with the efforts of your external/internal evaluator?” A composite variable for instrumental use was also developed by calculating the mean value for 4 dichotomous items (38-41 for external evaluators and 74-77 for internal evaluators).

Those four items were:

- Did the evaluation findings help improve some programmatic aspect of your 21st CCLCs?
- Did the evaluation findings cause you to revise some of your goals and objectives?
- Did the evaluation findings help inform policy and procedure decisions?
- Did the evaluation findings help determine if your program was effective and if it should continue/expand/end?

The employment of an external evaluator is a quantitative, dichotomous variable that can be found in question 4, and the employment of an internal evaluator is a quantitative, dichotomous variable that can be found in question 6. Question 4 stated, “Did you use an external evaluator (i.e., an evaluator that is a consultant and

not an employee of the school district or any partner agencies) for your 21st CCLC grant?” Question 6 stated, “Did you use an internal evaluator (i.e., an evaluator that is an employee of the school district or a partner agency) for your 21st CCLC grant?” Evaluator qualifications are broken into four dichotomous variables (i.e., evaluation degree, evaluation experience, CCLC experience, and community knowledge) and the questions related to those can be found in items 10-13 for external evaluators and items 46-49 for internal evaluators. Evaluator qualifications were looked at individually and summed together for an analysis of the number of qualifications an evaluator possesses.

Evaluation methods believed to contribute to the utility of an evaluation were broken into seven domains. Each variable is comprised of two to ten dichotomous items on the survey, identified through information within the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). The mean of the items in each of the seven variables is then calculated as the value for each of the seven utility standards. For example, utility standard 1 is comprised of 10 dichotomous items (19-28 for external evaluators), which were then averaged together to develop a mean value for utility standard 1.

Table 2 illustrates the type of information gathered through each survey question and which survey items are related to each utility standard. All respondents answered items 1-7 and 81-82, items 8-44 were for respondents employing external evaluators, and items 45-80 were for respondents with internal evaluators.

Table 2. Survey Question Characteristics.

Questions	Information Covered
1-3	Data on urbanicity, poverty, and ethnicity
4-7	Data on use of external and/or internal evaluators
8-9, 45	Selection information about the external and/or internal evaluators
10-13, 46-49	Utility standard 2: evaluator credibility (also known as evaluator qualifications)
14-18, 50-54	Utility standard 3: information scope and selection
19-28, 55-64	Utility standard 1: stakeholder identification
29-32, 65-68	Utility standard 4: values identification
33-34, 69-70	Utility standard 5: report clarity
35-36, 71-72	Utility standard 6: report timeliness and dissemination
37-43, 73-79	Utility standard 7: evaluation impact (also known as instrumental use)
44 & 80	Data on stakeholder satisfaction with evaluation
81-82	Future potential evaluation use plans

The survey was field-tested with individuals at different levels in the federal CCLC program in Battle Creek, the state CCLC program in Farwell and Harrison,

and the state CCLC evaluation team. Field-testers included the director of The Coordinating Council of Calhoun County (the multi-purpose collaborative body which has some oversight for grants in this county), the director of Battle Creek Public Schools' CCLC program, the director of the Clare-Gladwin CCLC program, and the Michigan Department of Education's evaluation team for the state CCLC grants. Feedback from the field-testers was incorporated into the final version of the survey.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the survey instrument was determined through the field-testing process. A total of six field-testers were used because the feedback had become redundant, indicating similar understandings of the questions. Through the feedback, ambiguous questions were identified and clarifications of the questions were made to avoid interpretation errors. While the redundancy of interpretation indicates reliability, validity still needs to be determined. "Reliability is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for validity" (Hopkins & Antes, 1990, p. 6).

Trochim (2002) identified six types of validity and the methods for assessing each type: face, content, predictive, concurrent, convergent, and discriminant. Face validity was achieved through the field-testing process. All of the field-testers were involved at some level with the CCLC programs, so they were asked if the questions appeared to be measuring what they were intended to measure. The content validity of the instrument was determined by developing a table of specifications (see Table 2

on p. 39) to ensure that each content domain was being covered in the survey instrument.

In this study, the four types of criteria-related validity were impossible to determine. Giving the survey instrument to a group that possesses some of the variables the survey is trying to predict is predictive validity. However, since there is not an identified group of CCLC grantees who report use in their evaluation findings, there was no comparable group to use for predictive validity. Similarly, concurrent validity was not appropriate because there were not two groups the survey instrument was designed to distinguish between. The instrument was designed to determine overall use within one type of respondent: CCLC directors. Convergent validity is the degree to which the operationalization is similar to another operationalization that it should be similar to and discriminant validity is the degree they are not similar (Hopkins & Antes, 1990; Krathwohl, 1998; Trochim, 2002). Typically, convergent and discriminant validity could be determined if the instrument was given to another state with similar CCLC evaluation regulations. Another way is to compare the results of the use of evaluation findings between internal and external evaluators with the theoretical literature, which is done in the results section of this paper.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was completed through the mailing of the survey instrument. An introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study, the timeline, and directions; a copy of the survey; and a self-addressed, stamped envelope

was sent to the 43 federally-funded CCLC grantee directors in Michigan (the Battle Creek director was excluded because she was part of the field-test). Eight days later, a follow-up postcard was sent to all respondents, encouraging the completion and mailing of the questionnaire. Ten days later, a follow-up email including the questionnaire as an attachment was sent to those directors who had not yet returned the survey. At the time of the return deadline (one month after the initial mailing), only 17 of the 43 questionnaires were received.

Three days after the survey deadline, the 27 non-respondents were called to encourage their response either over the phone, email, or fax. It was determined that 11 of the 27 programs had ended at least one month prior to the questionnaire being mailed, and no one still worked in those districts who was able to answer the questions. Since the programs were grant-funded, the administrative staff members were laid off. Additionally, one program that did not respond had merged with another program, so only one survey would be returned from those two sites combined. By the end of the phone calling, it was determined that there were still 15 questionnaires that had not been returned. Two weeks later, the 15 non-respondents were called again, which resulted in five more questionnaires being returned. Two weeks later the survey and cover letter were faxed to the remaining 10 non-respondents, which resulted in three more questionnaires being returned. An email, with the survey as an attachment, was sent both 10 and 20 days after that, which resulted in five more returned surveys. The final two potential respondents were

called, but no actual contact was made. Copies of the letters and postcard to potential respondents are in Appendix B.

Of the 43 surveys that were sent to Michigan CCLC directors, 30 surveys were returned including one for two programs that has combined, 11 programs no longer had active program directors, and two surveys were not returned despite numerous contact attempts. Four of the surveys returned were eliminated from the analysis because their programs used both external and internal evaluators and that data would confound the analysis interpretation. Four additional surveys were eliminated from the analysis because they did not use an evaluator at all. After nine separate contact attempts, the final response rate for returned surveys was 69.8% (30 out of 43). Of the surveys returned, only 73.3% (22 out of 30) could be used, so the useable response rate for the surveys was 51.2% (22 out of 43).

Analysis of Data

There were four primary variables that were used in the analysis of data: use, type of evaluator, qualifications of evaluator, and the utility domains. Reported use is determined in the dichotomous item that deals with the overall use of the evaluation reports submitted by the external or internal evaluator. Use is further explored through the composite variable of four survey items focusing on instrumental use (e.g., help with program improvement, determination of future of program), and one question dealing with stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation. The employment of an external or internal evaluator was determined in two dichotomous questions. If

the respondent answered yes to both questions (this occurred with four respondents), then the survey data were not used in the analysis because of interpretation problems. The qualifications of external and internal evaluators were based on the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) and were determined in four dichotomous items focusing on advanced degree in evaluation, evaluation experience, CCLC experience, and community knowledge. Finally, utility was broken down into the seven domains that can relate to utility (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). Multiple items related to each utility domain, and the mean response for the items in each domain became the data for that domain. For example, items 19-28 were focusing on stakeholder identification for external evaluators so those items were added together, divided by ten, and the mean became the answer for the overall domain of stakeholder identification.

Data from the returned surveys were coded and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The quantitative data were then exported to JMP (the Apple version of the Statistical Analysis Software by the SAS Institute) and SAS, and the qualitative data were coded by themes. For each of the four research questions, different methods of analysis were used.

Table 3. Research Questions and Analysis.

Question	Analysis
<p>Are evaluation findings for Michigan’s 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees being used? If so, how?</p>	<p>Data focusing on instrumental use were analyzed using frequency distributions and interpretations of the qualitative data written in the “other” categories. Items 37-43 and 73-79 on the survey instrument were used for this analysis.</p>
<p>What qualifications of the evaluator are related to the use of evaluation findings?</p>	<p>Data were analyzed by correlating responses on items 37 and 73 (reported use) to items 10-13 (external evaluator qualifications) and items 46-49 (internal evaluator qualifications). Secondary analyses used stakeholder satisfaction (items 44 and 80) and instrumental use (items 38-41 and 74-77).</p>
<p>Does the employment of an internal or an external evaluator relate to the use of evaluation findings? How?</p>	<p>Data were analyzed by correlating responses on items 37 and 73 (reported use) to item 4 (employment of external evaluator) and item 6 (employment of internal evaluator). Secondary analyses used stakeholder satisfaction (items 44 and 80) and instrumental use (items 38-41 and 74-77).</p>

Table 3. continued.

Question	Analysis
How are the Program Evaluation Standards utility standards related to use?	The items related to the utility standards (survey items 10-43 and 46-79) were condensed into seven utility domains by taking the mean of the items related to each utility standard. The data were then analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if the population means of the variable associated with reported use (items 37 and 73) demonstrated a statistically higher difference ($p < .05$) between utility domains. Secondary analyses used stakeholder satisfaction (items 44 and 80) and instrumental use (items 38-41 and 74-77).

Generalizability

Although the results from this study may not seem generalizable, Michigan grantees are similar to the grantees in the other states. However, the demographics for each state would need to be compared to the demographics for this study (which are very similar to Michigan overall) in order for comparisons to be made. This sample is not representative of the overall demographics for the country.

Table 4. Grantee Characteristics.

Characteristic	Respondents
Rural community learning centers	40%
Urban community learning centers	60%
Centers serving grades K-5	83%
Centers serving grades 6-8	93%
Centers serving grades 9-12	50%
Centers serving majority of Caucasian students	53%
Centers serving majority of African American students	43%
Centers with less than 25% free/reduced lunch students	3%
Centers with 25-40% free/reduced lunch students	10%
Centers with 41-55% free/reduced lunch students	23%
Centers with 56-70% free/reduced lunch students	23%
Centers with more than 70% free/reduced lunch students	37%

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Respondent Descriptive Statistics

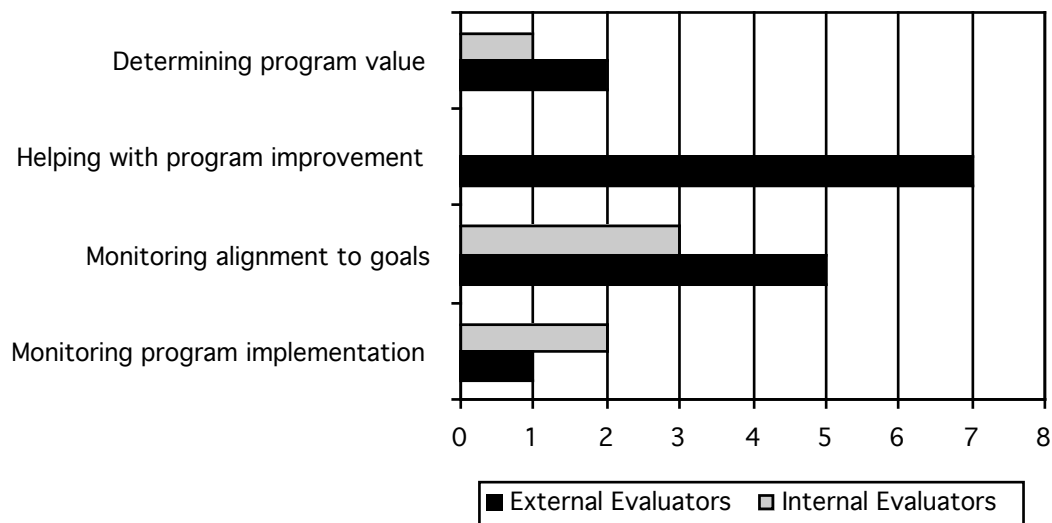
The respondents were asked some general questions about the type of evaluator they used for their CCLCs program, the background of the evaluators, and the purpose of the employment of an evaluator. The answers to these questions are presented here. This information helps provide the context for the research questions.

Sixteen of the respondents hired external evaluators (i.e., evaluators who were not employees of the school district and were contracted specifically for evaluation purposes) for their CCLCs grants. Of the six respondents who did not hire external evaluators, two respondents said there was not enough money in the grant, two respondents did not feel it was necessary to spend money on evaluation, and two respondents did not use external evaluation since it was not required by the grant. Six of the respondents used internal evaluators (i.e., staff members employed by the school district who had grant evaluation as part of their job duties). Of the sixteen respondents who did not use internal evaluators, five respondents did not have anyone internally to work as an evaluator and eleven respondents had their CCLCs directors doing monitoring work and felt that additional internal evaluation was not necessary.

Respondents were asked how they selected their external evaluator. Of the 16 respondents who used external evaluators, 11 respondents had worked with the evaluator on a prior project and five respondents found the evaluator through recommendations from partner organizations. Those respondents using internal evaluators were not asked the same question since internal evaluators are usually assigned to projects and not necessarily chosen by the project director.

Respondents were also asked which one area the evaluator primarily focused evaluation efforts. Figure 2 illustrates where both external and internal evaluators focused their efforts.

Figure 2. Evaluation Efforts. n=21 (1 non-response)



Research Question 1

The first research question is “Are evaluation findings for Michigan’s 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees being used? If so, how?” This

question provides some basic information related to the other two research questions. Overall, 20 out of 22 respondents indicated that evaluation is a critical component in every program, and two respondents using external evaluators indicated that evaluation is valuable but only needs to be done if you can afford it. The following tables provide frequency distributions to explore the instrumental use of evaluation findings in more detail.

Table 5. Were the evaluation findings in the reports used by your program?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	75% (12)	0	25% (4)
Internal	100% (6)	0	0

There was one respondent who used an external evaluator who provided additional information for this item, the other 21 respondents did not provide any additional qualitative comments. The respondent indicated that while the evaluation findings were used as best they could be, it was difficult to understand the data presented in the evaluation report because the instrument development and implementation was unclear, there were no summaries within the report, and no visual aids (e.g., graphs, tables) were used in the report.

Table 6. Did the evaluation findings help improve some programmatic aspect of your 21st Century Community Learning Centers?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	69% (11)	6% (1)	25% (4)
Internal	100% (6)	0	0

Only one respondent using an external evaluator provided additional information for this item. The respondent had hoped that the evaluation would lead to program improvements, but time with the evaluators was very limited. The primary evaluator assigned to their project changed during the grant, even though the contractor remained the same. Because of the changes, continuity in the evaluation was lacking and the evaluators were unable to make recommendations for program improvement.

Table 7. Did the evaluation findings cause you to revise some of your goals and objectives?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	63% (10)	12% (2)	25% (4)
Internal	83% (5)	17% (1)	0

No respondents provided additional qualitative comments for this item.

Table 8. Did the evaluation findings help inform policy and procedure decisions?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	69% (11)	6% (1)	25% (4)
Internal	83% (5)	17% (1)	0

No respondents provided additional qualitative comments for this item.

Table 9. Did the evaluation findings help determine if your program was effective and if it should continue/expand/end?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	75% (12)	0	25% (4)
Internal	100% (6)	0	0

Two respondents, both using external evaluators, provided additional information for this item, and 20 respondents did not write any qualitative comments. Even though all people who responded to this survey item said yes, one respondent was frustrated that no conclusive evidence was presented to help determine if the program should continue, expand, or end. The grant funds ran out sooner than anticipated and the final evaluation payment could not be made, which caused the final evaluation report to not be completed. Since the evaluation was not finished, future recommendations were not made based on the data collected. Another respondent indicated that local program staff spent too much time helping with the evaluation. This respondent felt that better information about program effectiveness could have been determined if the state took over the evaluation efforts and allowed the local personnel to focus on

program implementation.

Table 10. Did the evaluation findings fulfill grant requirements?

Type of evaluator	Yes (n)	No (n)	No Response (n)
External	75% (12)	0	25% (4)
Internal	100% (6)	0	0

Three respondents provided qualitative comments for this item, and the remaining 19 respondents did not comment. Two respondents, both using external evaluators, indicated that their evaluator also helped write the grant and continued to advocate for additional funding beyond the original CCLCs grant. These respondents felt the evaluator was able to better fulfill grant requirements because of the experience in helping to write the grant. Another respondent using an internal evaluator indicated that grant requirements could not be fulfilled because no evaluation was completed for this grant, which also precluded the school district from obtaining additional funding to sustain programs. However this respondent selected “yes” in the question prior to the comment.

Instrumental use includes the immediate application of evaluation information to specific decisions (Burry, 1984; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Shadish et al., 1991; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). Based on the respondents’ answers to the questions addressing instrumental use, the majority of respondents did use their evaluation findings (75% of respondents with external evaluators and 100% of respondents with internal evaluators). The two types of instrumental use most commonly used by respondents having either external or internal evaluators were use in making decisions to continue,

expand, or end programs and use in fulfilling grant requirements for evaluation. The type of instrumental use least employed by respondents was for the purpose of revising program goals or objectives. Finally, those respondents with internal evaluators employed the five types of instrumental use asked about in the survey instrument more often than those with external evaluators.

Research Question 2

The second research question is “What qualifications of the evaluator are related to the use of evaluation findings?” The data were analyzed by correlating responses on items 37 and 73 (reported use) to items 10-13 (external evaluator qualifications) and items 46-49 (internal evaluator qualifications). Evaluator qualifications is comprised of four questions focusing on an advanced degree in evaluation, extensive evaluation experience, prior experience evaluating CCLCs, and prior knowledge of the community.

No correlation could be determined between reported use and evaluator qualifications because 100% of the respondents did report use of the evaluation findings. Because no correlations could be determined between reported use and evaluator qualifications, a secondary analysis was done using instrumental use, combining the four survey items focusing on types of instrumental use. Table 11 illustrates the *p*-value and corresponding Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) for each of the relationships between instrumental use and evaluator qualifications.

Table 11. Correlation of Instrumental Use and Evaluator Qualifications.

Relationship to Instrumental Use			
Evaluator Qualifications	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Advanced degree in evaluation	-.13	18	.61
Extensive evaluation experience	.10	18	.69
Prior CCLC experience	-.19	18	.44
Prior knowledge of community	.10	18	.69

None of the relationships were statistically significant, all having p -values $>.05$.

A final analysis was completed using stakeholder satisfaction in place of reported use. Table 12 illustrates the p -value and corresponding Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) for each of the relationships between stakeholder satisfaction and evaluator qualifications.

Table 12. Correlation of Stakeholder Satisfaction and Evaluator Qualifications.

Relationship to Stakeholder Satisfaction			
Evaluator Qualifications	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Advanced degree in evaluation	.04	22	.85
Extensive evaluation experience	-.15	22	.51
Prior CCLC experience	.43	22	.04
Prior knowledge of community	.50	22	.02

The strongest positive relationship is between prior knowledge of the community and stakeholder satisfaction, and prior CCLC experience also has a moderate positive

correlation with stakeholder satisfaction. Extensive evaluation experience and stakeholder satisfaction demonstrated no statistical significance, $p > .05$.

To understand the relationship between evaluator qualifications and use further, the correlation between the number of evaluator qualifications an evaluator possesses and the reported use was calculated. Each “yes” answer to the four evaluator qualification items were added together to create a ratio variable ranging from 0 to 4. No statistically significant relationship was found between the number of evaluator qualifications and reported use because 100% of the respondents reported use of evaluation findings. Again, because no correlations could be determined between reported use and number of evaluator qualifications, secondary analyses were completed examining instrumental use and stakeholder satisfaction in place of reported use. However, no statistically significant relationships were found with either instrumental use ($p = .77$) or stakeholder satisfaction ($p = .27$).

An evaluator’s credibility may be the most important qualification (Scriven, 1991), and credibility can be established through knowledge and skills (Mertens, 1994; Worthen, 1975; Worthen et al., 1997). While no differences could be determined between reported use and evaluator qualifications because all respondents did report use or between instrumental use and evaluator qualifications because none of the relationships were statistically significant, some differences were demonstrated between stakeholder satisfaction and evaluator qualifications. Based on the respondents’ answers, the stakeholders who employed evaluators with prior community knowledge and prior CCLC experience more often were satisfied. The

number of evaluator qualifications possessed by the evaluator was not significantly related to reported use, instrumental use, or stakeholder satisfaction. Finally, in looking at the responses by type of evaluator, all stakeholders using internal evaluators responded affirmatively to both reported use and satisfaction with the evaluator while all of the stakeholders using external evaluators only responded affirmatively to reported use.

Research Question 3

The third research question is “Does the employment of an internal or external evaluator relate to the use of evaluation findings? How?” The data were analyzed by correlating responses on items 37 and 73 (reported use) to item 4 (employment of external evaluator) and item 6 (employment of internal evaluator). No statistical significance in the relationship between the type of evaluator and the reported use of the evaluation findings could be determined because 100% of the respondents reported use.

Because no correlations could be determined between reported use and type of evaluator, secondary analyses were completed examining instrumental use with the type of evaluator. There was no statistically significant relationship between type of evaluator and instrumental use ($r=0, p=1.00$). Additionally, there was no statistical significance in the relationship between the type of evaluator and the stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation because 100% of the respondents using internal evaluators were satisfied with the evaluation.

There is no empirical evidence that indicates if an external or internal evaluator is a better evaluator, and most organizations choose the type of evaluator who will best fit the circumstances (Shadish et al., 1991). In this study, no relationships were determined between the type of evaluator and the reported use of evaluation findings or between the type of evaluator and the stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question is “How are the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) utility standards related to use?” The items related to the utility standards were condensed into seven utility domains by taking the mean of the items related to each utility standard. The data were then analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if the population means of the variable associated with reported use demonstrated a statistically higher difference ($p < .05$) between utility domains. This analysis could not be completed between the utility domains and reported use because 100% of the respondents did report use, causing the dependent variable to become a constant instead.

Because no relationships could be determined between reported use and the seven utility domains, a secondary analysis was completed using instrumental use in place of reported use. This analysis produced one statistically significant

relationship, as indicated in Tables 13 – 14. U7 could not be used in the analysis because the items in U7 are the same as the items compiled for instrumental use.

Table 13. ANOVA Table for Instrumental Use and Utility Standards.

Utility Domain	Source	df	SS	MS	F	r²	p
U1: Stakeholder identification	Use	2	.41	.20	1.35	.07	.29
	Error	15	2.28	.15			
	Total	17	2.69				
U2: Evaluator credibility	Use	2	.11	.06	.65	.04	.53
	Error	15	1.29	.09			
	Total	17	1.41				
U3: Info scope & sequence	Use	2	.13	.06	2.53	.12	.11
	Error	15	.37	.02			
	Total	17	.50				
U4: Values identification	Use	2	.29	.14	.55	.23	.59
	Error	15	3.98	.26			
	Total	17	4.27				
U5: Report clarity*	Use	2	.19	.10	5.83	.23	.01
	Error	15	.25	.02			
	Total	17	.44				
U6: Report timeliness & dissemination	Use	2	.24	.12	1.40	.08	.28
	Error	15	1.26	.08			
	Total	17	1.50				

* Statistically significant difference.

Table 14. Means Table for Instrumental Use and Utility Standards.

Utility Domain	Medium Use (<i>n</i> =4)		High Use (<i>n</i> =13)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
U1: Stakeholder identification	.53	.19	.65	.11
U2: Evaluator credibility	.63	.15	.71	.08
U3: Information scope & sequence	.69	.08	.88	.04
U4: Values identification	.58	.26	.54	.14
U5: Report clarity	.75	.06	1.00	.04
U6: Report timeliness & dissemination	.62	.14	.88	.08

The F-tests revealed that mean use scores for report clarity were significantly higher, $p < .05$, for high use than for medium use, $p > .05$.

The final analysis using stakeholder satisfaction in place of reported use produced two statistically significant relationships, as indicated in Tables 15 – 16.

The F-tests revealed that the higher the satisfaction with the evaluation findings, the more important report clarity and report timeliness and dissemination were.

Table 15. ANOVA Table for Stakeholder Satisfaction and Utility Standards.

Utility Domain	Source	df	SS	MS	F	r²	p
U1: Stakeholder identification	Satisfaction	1	.001	.001	.006	.0003	.94
	Error	20	3.44	.17			
	Total	21	3.44				
U2: Evaluator credibility	Satisfaction	1	.18	.18	2.54	.11	.13
	Error	20	1.43	.07			
	Total	21	1.62				
U3: Info scope & sequence	Satisfaction	1	.07	.07	2.07	.09	.16
	Error	20	.67	.03			
	Total	21	.74				
U4: Values identification	Satisfaction	1	.20	.20	.85	.04	.37
	Error	20	4.80	.24			
	Total	21	5.01				
U5: Report clarity*	Satisfaction	1	.77	.77	5.97	.23	.02
	Error	20	2.59	.13			
	Total	21	3.36				
U6: Report timeliness & dissemination*	Satisfaction	1	.91	.91	6.37	.24	.02
	Error	20	2.86	.14			
	Total	21	3.77				
U7: Evaluation impact	Satisfaction	1	.48	.48	3.71	.16	.07
	Error	20	2.60	.13			
	Total	21	3.08				

* Statistically significant difference.

Table 16. Means Table for Stakeholder Satisfaction and Utility Standards.

Utility Domain	Satisfied (<i>n</i> =18)		Not Satisfied (<i>n</i> =4)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
U1: Stakeholder identification	.54	.41	.55	.42
U2: Evaluator credibility	.74	.28	.50	.20
U3: Information scope & sequence	.83	.19	.69	.12
U4: Values identification	.50	.49	.25	.50
U5: Report clarity	.86	.33	.38	.48
U6: Report timeliness & dissemination	.78	.39	.25	.29
U7: Evaluation impact	.84	.32	.46	.53

If an evaluation abides by the utility standards, then it has the potential to be useful (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). However, no relationships between reported use and the utility domains could be determined. Only two of the utility domains demonstrated significant relationships with stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation: report clarity and report timeliness and dissemination. Two of the utility domains also demonstrated significant relationships with instrumental use: report clarity and evaluation impact. This indicates that report clarity is the most critical of the utility domains since it was significant in two out of the three relationships.

Discussion

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the analysis of the data from the survey instrument. However, without verifying similar operating characteristic and CCLC grant evaluation requirements, these conclusions should not be generalized beyond the population of Michigan CCLCs programs (n=22) that were in operation after June 2003.

Research Question 1: Evaluation Use

Table 17 summarizes the survey results related to how CCLC evaluation findings are being instrumentally used. A higher percentage of stakeholders employing internal evaluators used the evaluation findings in each of the five categories, which supports previous statements that internal evaluators do a better job of encouraging the instrumental use of evaluation findings (Love, 1991; Scriven, 1991). However, excluding the stakeholders who employed external evaluators and did not respond to these questions, the results for external and internal evaluators are almost identical. Overall, it is clear that the revision of grant goals and objectives was the least utilized type of use, and summative uses of evaluation findings were more common for those respondents using internal or external evaluators.

Table 17. Summary of Type of Use of Evaluation Findings for Stakeholders

Employing External or Internal Evaluators.

Type of Use	External		Internal			
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Improve programmatic aspect of CCLCs	69% (11)	6% (1)	25% (4)	100% (6)	0	0
Revise CCLC goals or objectives	63% (10)	12% (2)	25% (4)	83% (5)	17% (1)	0
Inform policy & procedure decisions	69% (11)	6% (1)	25% (4)	83% (5)	17% (1)	0
Determine if program should continue, expand, or end	75% (12)	0	25% (4)	100% (6)	0	0
Fulfill grant requirements	75% (12)	0	25% (4)	100% (6)	0	0

Research Question 2: Evaluator Qualifications

Because all of the respondents answered in the same way for the reported use question, the correlation coefficient could not be used since reported use became a constant instead of a variable. Therefore, two secondary analyses were completed.

The first one examined the relationship between evaluator qualifications (i.e., advanced degree in evaluation, previous evaluation knowledge, previous 21st CCLC experience, and previous knowledge of the community) and instrumental use. The second one examined the relationship between evaluator qualifications and stakeholder satisfaction.

The secondary analysis found no significant relationships with instrumental use. However, prior knowledge of community and prior CCLC experience were the two qualifications that were moderately positively correlated with stakeholder satisfaction. The number of qualifications an evaluator possessed was not correlated with either instrumental use or stakeholder satisfaction. The finding that specific grant and community knowledge is most important to client satisfaction is supported in the literature, which states that staff attitudes, personal characteristics, and political climate (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997) should lead to higher utility. Therefore, in order to ensure the most client satisfaction, it is imperative to select an evaluator who has previous knowledge of the community and previous CCLC experience.

It is unclear, however, if this general knowledge (community and CCLCs) is transferable to other evaluation sectors or if it is specific to this grant program since it was not addressed in the survey. The research design of this study does not provide sufficient information to yield causal conclusions.

Research Question 3: Evaluator Type

There was no statistically significant relationship between the employment of an external or internal evaluator and the reported use of evaluation findings, again because all of the respondents reported use of the evaluation findings. The secondary analysis focusing on stakeholder satisfaction and type of evaluator also provided no statistically significant relationships because all of the respondents using internal evaluators were satisfied with the evaluation. Finally, there were no significant relationships between type of evaluator and instrumental use.

Research Question 4: Utility Standards

Overall, no relationships could again be determined between the variables (utility domains and reported use) because all of the respondents did report use. The secondary analysis focusing on instrumental use produced statistically significant relationships with U5 (report clarity) and U7 (evaluation impact). Additionally, the analysis with stakeholder satisfaction found that U5 (report clarity) and U6 (report timeliness & dissemination) demonstrated a statistically significant difference for those grantees who were satisfied with the evaluation (n=18) compared to those grantees who were not satisfied (n=4). The survey items related to U5, the utility domain that had significant relationships with both stakeholder satisfaction and instrumental use, were:

- Were evaluation findings compiled and presented (e.g., formal written report, informal written report, formal presentation, informal updates) by the external evaluator?
- Were the evaluation reports clearly understood by all key stakeholders?

From these findings, it is clear that the evaluation report is the most critical piece of stakeholder satisfaction to the federally funded CCLC grantees in Michigan. If the evaluation report was not clear, timely, and provided to all key stakeholders, then the stakeholder was not satisfied. The generalization of these findings to all CCLC grantees in multiple states cannot occur from this study because the sample was specific to federally-funded CCLC grantees in Michigan in operation after June 2003.

Summary

Results in this study were based on 22 respondents. While 30 respondents completed the survey, those respondents who were eliminated from the analysis included four that had both internal and external evaluators and four that did not use evaluators for their grant. Internal evaluators were able to affect the instrumental use of evaluation findings more often than external evaluators, and making summative program decisions and fulfilling grant requirements were the two most common instrumental uses of evaluation findings. The primary variable of reported use did not produce statistically significant findings in any of the analyses because all respondents did report use of their evaluation findings. The secondary analyses focusing on stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation and instrumental use, which

were used to further explore relationships with the other variables, did produce some significant results. Prior community knowledge and prior CCLC experience on the part of the evaluator were most closely associated with stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation. No clear differences could be determined between internal and external evaluators and stakeholder satisfaction because all of the respondents using internal evaluators were satisfied. Finally, report clarity was the one utility domain most closely related to stakeholder satisfaction and instrumental use.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of Study

The purpose of this study was to answer four research questions that were designed to help understand the relationship of the use of evaluation findings to the type of evaluator and the qualifications of the evaluator:

1. Are evaluation findings for Michigan's 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees being used? If so, how?
2. What qualifications of the evaluator are related to the use of evaluation findings?
3. Does the employment of an internal or an external evaluator relate to the use of evaluation findings? How?
4. How are the utility standards related to use?

In order to accomplish this, a questionnaire was mailed to all of the federally-funded CCLC directors in the state of Michigan. With a 51.2% useable response rate for all federally-funded grantees in Michigan, the survey results are only accurate for the state of Michigan. Demographics of grantees will need to be compared to determine if the findings can be generalizable to CCLC grantees in other states.

Summary of Findings

Based on the findings related to the seven domains of utility, the qualifications of evaluators, and the use of internal or external evaluators, no correlations or relationships could be determined with reported use because all of the survey respondents reported use of the evaluation findings. However, the secondary analysis focusing on stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation uncovered that two of the evaluator qualifications are important. Additionally, the clarity and timeliness of the evaluation report is most critical to the satisfaction with the evaluation. Another secondary analysis, focusing on instrumental use, supported previous findings that report clarity is important to the respondents and does have a significant relationship with instrumental use. Finally, in looking at different types of instrumental use, the respondents used the evaluation findings more often in summative than formative ways. While Patton (1997) strongly encourages the formative use of evaluation findings, Scriven (1991) acknowledges that the summative use of findings is typical for the benefit of external audiences and decision-makers. Since continued CCLC funding is depending on the decisions of government officials, it makes sense that summative uses of evaluation findings are more common than formative uses.

The results from the survey indicated that evaluation findings are being used by the grantees, and the findings are primarily being used for summative purposes to determine if the programs should continue, expand, or end. The findings are also used for formative purposes, to help with programmatic improvements, even though

that was not the primary focus of the evaluation efforts. Both types of use here focus on instrumental use, which is the most common and traditional type of use (Burry, 1984; Owen & Rogers, 1999; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). Because the various questions focusing on use of evaluation findings were answered primarily in the affirmative, it is possible that the respondents were not familiar enough with the evaluation efforts to answer appropriately.

Results also demonstrated that of the four evaluator qualifications, prior community knowledge and prior CCLC experience had the strongest positive correlation with stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation. Because credibility can easily be established through showing knowledge of familiar things such as the political environment, corporate jargon, etc. (Mertens, 1994; Scriven, 1991), it is clear why prior knowledge of community and CCLCs would positively correlate to stakeholder satisfaction.

Finally, report clarity (U5) and report timeliness and dissemination (U6) were the utility standards that had the strongest relationship with stakeholder satisfaction with the evaluation. Report clarity (U5) also had the strongest relationship with instrumental use. While involvement by the stakeholder at every level of the evaluation is critical (Feldman, 1990; Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994; King, 1988; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Patton, 1997; Scriven, 1991; Solomon & Shortell, 1981; Worthen et al., 1997), many stakeholders are not involved in the evaluation process. Reading the report is at least one point where the clients are somewhat involved in the process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, several suggestions can be made that warrant additional study to determine if the assertions are universal, specific to CCLC evaluations, or specific to CCLC evaluations in Michigan. Several recommendations will be made, some specific to the research questions and others in response to overall ideas of study. Included in the recommendations are highlights of some limitations of this study and how those limitations can be remedied in future research.

The first research question dealt with how evaluation findings were being used by the grantees. From the findings, it can be hypothesized that the grantees are not knowledgeable enough about evaluation findings and the use of those findings since most respondents indicated that their evaluation findings fulfilled all identifiable uses. Therefore, an additional study of CCLC grantees regarding the level of evaluation competency of the project directors would help determine if the evaluation findings are truly understood and used. Now that the state-directed CCLC programs have been in operation for over a year and the transition from the federally-run program is completed, the available population for further research is much larger. A larger number of respondents along with multiple sources of data collection would provide more significant results. Some ways the researcher could verify the instrumental or conceptual use of evaluation findings could include asking for specific examples of use or interviewing more than one stakeholder from each program site (e.g., evaluator, partner agency staff member). In addition, if a survey is

used, dichotomous scales do not produce rich enough data to allow for in-depth analysis. It would be more valuable to use Likert-type scales to differentiate the amount of use.

The second research question dealt with the qualifications of the evaluators and how those might relate to the use of the evaluation findings. Since the CCLC program is the largest competitive federal grant program ever and it strongly encouraged the use of an evaluator, this was the first time many of the grantees had ever experienced working with a professional evaluator. Therefore, the grantees may not be familiar with what makes a useful evaluation, so they all perceived it to be useful. Further exploration of the various elements of use through observations, document review, or interviews could provide a clearer perspective on the relationship between use and evaluator qualifications. With respect to stakeholder satisfaction, it makes sense that prior knowledge of things the stakeholder was familiar with (i.e., community and CCLCs) was a premium since the grantees were unsure of their needs for evaluation or what to expect. Following that same logic, the evaluator's knowledge of both the community and CCLCs provided the grantees with a stronger sense of comfort than formal evaluation degrees or previous evaluation experience. Since this was the first evaluation experience for many of the program directors, the more familiar an evaluator was – the more likely the stakeholder would be satisfied. Inclusion of questions focusing on the respondent's extensive knowledge of evaluation or experience working with an evaluator would have been helpful in drawing stronger conclusions.

The third research question focused on the relationship between the use of internal or external evaluators and the utility of evaluation findings. Again, because all of the respondents did report use of the evaluation findings, it was impossible to develop any conclusive evidence one way or the other. While changing the questionnaire from dichotomous to ordinal responses would provide more substantive data, this question may also be better answered by doing a similar study using two different type of grantees: one grantee who is required to do internal evaluation, such as the Safe & Drug-Free Schools, and one grantee who is required to do external evaluation, such as the state-run CCLCs programs in specific states (e.g., Michigan, Indiana). By creating a survey (with Likert-type scales), interview (including more than one stakeholder per site), or observation instrument that addresses evaluation-specific, not grantee-specific, issues, it should become clear if there is a relationship between use of evaluation findings and internal or external evaluators.

The final research question focused on the seven domains of utility based on the utility standards and their connection to use. If the stakeholders were new to the evaluation process, they would not necessarily know how different elements of the evaluation process (e.g., involvement of stakeholders, clarifying values between client and evaluator, understanding the scope of the evaluation) could improve use. If all the stakeholder expected the evaluator to do was to complete an evaluation and put together a report, then the report would be the most critical piece of use. Missing from this survey were further questions about the clients' past experiences and knowledge of the evaluation process. This is another area where multiple data

sources, such as several questionnaire respondents or interviews, would be more beneficial than the single respondent.

Finally, this survey focused on reported use with some additional questions targeting instrumental use. In order to better understand use, additional research would be necessary including program observations, review of program changes subsequent to the evaluation report, and interviews with evaluators and key stakeholders. While information about reported use is helpful and provides a basis for understanding, moving to more items focusing on instrumental, conceptual and process use would provide much richer data to add to the body of knowledge around use. It has become clear, too, that process use is of critical importance in the eventual instrumental or conceptual use of evaluation findings. If stakeholders are more involved in the evaluation throughout the entire process, then they will have better understandings of evaluation and of potential application of findings. Therefore, a study focusing primarily on process use and its relationship to instrumental and conceptual use would provide valuable information for both evaluators and stakeholders.

Summary

The implementation of this study has answered some of the questions while also paving the way for additional research to bring more clarification to some of the findings. The most important findings are that evaluator knowledge of the community, evaluator knowledge of the CCLC grant program, and clear and timely

reports are of paramount concern to CCLC grantee directors. This information can help evaluators as they prepare for work with local grantees.

APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

This questionnaire supports dissertation work by Wendy Tackett, a doctoral student in Evaluation, Measurement, and Research Design at Western Michigan University. The purpose of this questionnaire is to help determine if internal and/or external evaluators for U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center grants provide information that is useful for the school districts participating in the grant. Your time in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

*Please return the questionnaire in the stamped envelope provided to:
Wendy Tackett, 47 West Suttons Ridge, Battle Creek, MI 49014 by June 13, 2003.*

Basic Information

1. Which of the following best describes your school district?
 Urban Suburban Rural

2. Which ethnic/racial group represents the majority of the students in your district?
 African American Hispanic
 Asian Native American
 Caucasian/White Multi-Racial

3. What is the current free & reduced lunch percentage for your district?
 <25% 41-55% >70%
 25-40% 56-70%

4. Did you use an external evaluator (i.e., an evaluator that is a consultant and not an employee of the school district or any partner agencies) for your 21st CCLC grant?
If the answer is YES, please go to #6.
 Yes No

5. Why didn't you use an external evaluator (*please check the best answer*)?
 There wasn't enough money in the grant
 The district already had an internal person able to do the evaluation
 We couldn't find anyone qualified to hire for the evaluation
 We didn't feel it was necessary to spend money on evaluation
 Since external evaluator wasn't required in the grant, we didn't do it
 Other (*please specify*): _____

6. Did you use an internal evaluator (i.e., an evaluator that is an employee of the school district or a partner agency) for your 21st CCLC grant? ***If the answer is YES, please go to #8.***
- Yes No
7. Why didn't you use an internal evaluator (*please check the best answer*)?
- The district does not have an internal evaluator
- Our internal evaluator was too busy to take on this project
- The 21st CCLC director did the monitoring work, so an internal evaluator wasn't needed
- Other (*please specify*): _____

External Evaluation Information

Please answer the following questions with the EXTERNAL evaluator in mind. If you did not have an external evaluator, go to question 45 on page 5.

8. How did you select your external evaluator (*please check the best answer*)?
- We had worked with the evaluator on prior projects
- The evaluator was recommended by a partner agency
- The evaluator was hired through an open interview process
- Other (*please specify*): _____
9. Where did the external evaluator primarily focus evaluation efforts (*please check the best answer*)?
- Monitoring the implementation of program activities
- Monitoring the alignment of activities to program goals and outcomes
- Providing evaluative information that helped with program improvement
- Providing evaluative information that helped determine the program's value
- Other (*please specify*): _____
10. Does your external evaluator possess an advanced degree in evaluation? Yes No
11. Does your external evaluator possess extensive evaluation experience? Yes No
12. Does your external evaluator have previous experience with 21st Century Community Learning Centers? Yes No
13. Does your external evaluator have prior knowledge of the community, school district, and partner agencies? Yes No

14. Did your external evaluator become familiar with your project by reviewing the grant narrative? Yes No
15. Did your external evaluator become familiar with your project by holding informal conversations with key stakeholders (e.g., partners, teachers, parents, students, program staff)? Yes No
16. Did your external evaluator become familiar with your project by holding formal meetings with key stakeholders? Yes No
17. Did your external evaluator become familiar with your project by doing program observations? Yes No
18. If your external evaluator became familiar with your project through ways other than mentioned in questions #14-17, please describe here:
19. Were key stakeholders involved in the evaluation process? *If the answer is NO, please go to #29.* Yes No
20. Did your external evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information in the grant narrative? Yes No
21. Did your external evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided by the 21st CCLC director? Yes No
22. Did your external evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided by the 21st CCLC advisory committee? Yes No
23. Did your external evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided from program observations? Yes No
24. Did your external evaluator regularly meeting with key stakeholders? Yes No
25. Did key stakeholders help develop evaluation questions? Yes No
26. Did key stakeholders participate in the actual evaluation process (e.g., focus groups, interviews, surveys)? Yes No
27. Did key stakeholders review evaluation findings prior to finalizing reports? Yes No

28. If key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation in ways other than what is mentioned in questions #20-27, please describe here:
29. Were common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes developed with the help of the external evaluator? *If the answer is NO, please go to #33.* Yes No
30. Were key stakeholders involved in developing the common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes? Yes No
31. Were other experts (e.g., district staff, university staff, state or federal representatives) involved in developing the common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes? Yes No
32. If common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes were developed in ways other than mentioned in questions #29-31, please describe here:
33. Were evaluation findings compiled and presented (e.g., formal written report, informal written report, formal presentation, informal updates) by the external evaluator? *If the answer is NO, please go to #44.* Yes No
34. Were the evaluation reports clearly understood by all key stakeholders? Yes No
35. Were the evaluation reports delivered in a timely manner? Yes No
36. Were the evaluation reports disseminated to all key stakeholders? Yes No
37. Were the evaluation findings in the reports used by your program? Yes No
38. Did the evaluation findings help improve some programmatic aspect of your 21st CCLCs? Yes No
39. Did the evaluation findings cause you to revise some of your goals and objectives? Yes No

40. Did the evaluation findings help inform policy and procedure decisions? Yes No
41. Did the evaluation findings help determine if your program was effective and if it should continue/expand/end? Yes No
42. Did the evaluation findings fulfill grant requirements? Yes No
43. If evaluation findings were used in ways other than mentioned in questions #38-42, please describe here:
44. Do you feel satisfied with the efforts of your external evaluator? Yes No

Internal Evaluation Information

Please answer the following questions with the INTERNAL evaluator in mind. If you did not have an internal evaluator, go to question 81 on page 8.

45. Where did the internal evaluator primarily focus evaluation efforts (*please check the best answer*)?
- Monitoring the implementation of program activities
 - Monitoring the alignment of activities to program goals and outcomes
 - Providing evaluative information that helped with program improvement
 - Providing evaluative information that helped determine the program's value
 - Other (*please specify*): _____
46. Does your internal evaluator possess an advanced degree in evaluation? Yes No
47. Does your internal evaluator possess extensive evaluation experience? Yes No
48. Does your internal evaluator have previous experience with 21st Century Community Learning Centers? Yes No
49. Does your internal evaluator have prior knowledge of the community, school district, and partner agencies? Yes No
50. Did your internal evaluator become familiar with your project by reviewing the grant narrative? Yes No

51. Did your internal evaluator become familiar with your project by holding informal conversations with key stakeholders (e.g., partners, teachers, parents, students, program staff)? Yes No
52. Did your internal evaluator become familiar with your project by holding formal meetings with key stakeholders? Yes No
53. Did your internal evaluator become familiar with your project by doing program observations? Yes No
54. If your internal evaluator became familiar with your project through ways other than mentioned in questions #50-53, please describe here:
55. Were key stakeholders involved in the evaluation process? *If the answer is NO, please go to #65.* Yes No
56. Did your internal evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information in the grant narrative? Yes No
57. Did your internal evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided by the 21st CCLC director? Yes No
58. Did your internal evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided by the 21st CCLC advisory committee? Yes No
59. Did your internal evaluator identify key stakeholders based on information provided from program observations? Yes No
60. Did your internal evaluator regularly meeting with key stakeholders? Yes No
61. Did key stakeholders help develop evaluation questions? Yes No
62. Did key stakeholders participate in the actual evaluation process (e.g., focus groups, interviews, surveys)? Yes No
63. Did key stakeholders review evaluation findings prior to finalizing reports? Yes No
64. If key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation in ways other than what is mentioned in questions #56-63, please describe here:

65. Were common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes developed with the help of the internal evaluator? *If the answer is NO, please go to #69.* Yes No
66. Were key stakeholders involved in developing the common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes? Yes No
67. Were other experts (e.g., district staff, university staff, state or federal representatives) involved in developing the common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes? Yes No
68. If common interpretations of program objectives and outcomes were developed in ways other than mentioned in questions #65-67, please describe here:
69. Were evaluation findings compiled and presented (e.g., formal written report, informal written report, formal presentation, informal updates) by the internal evaluator? *If the answer is NO, please go to #80.* Yes No
70. Were the evaluation reports clearly understood by all key stakeholders? Yes No
71. Were the evaluation reports delivered in a timely manner? Yes No
72. Were the evaluation reports disseminated to all key stakeholders? Yes No
73. Were the evaluation findings in the reports used by your program? Yes No
74. Did the evaluation findings help improve some programmatic aspect of your 21st CCLCs? Yes No
75. Did the evaluation findings cause you to revise some of your goals and objectives? Yes No
76. Did the evaluation findings help inform policy and procedure decisions? Yes No
77. Did the evaluation findings help determine if your program was effective and if it should continue/expand/end? Yes No
78. Did the evaluation findings fulfill grant requirements? Yes No

79. If evaluation findings were used in ways other than mentioned in questions #74-78, please describe here:

80. Do you feel satisfied with the efforts of your internal evaluator? Yes No

Closure

81. In what ways do you plan to use evaluation in future programming (*please check all that apply*)?

- To make decisions about changes in programs
- To fulfill grant requirements
- To help in program planning
- To develop policies and procedures
- We are not planning to use evaluation in future programming
- Other (*please specify*): _____

82. Based on your experiences with evaluation, do you believe evaluation is an important component in programs (*please check the best answer*)?

- Evaluation is only needed to fulfill grant requirements
- Evaluation is a critical component in every program
- Evaluation is valuable, but it only needs to be done if you can afford it
- Evaluation is not a necessary program component
- Other (*please specify*): _____

83. **THANK YOU** for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any other comments you would like to provide about your 21st CCLC evaluation experience, please feel free to use this space below.

***Please return your completed questionnaire by June 13, 2003 to:
Wendy Tackett, 47 West Suttons Ridge, Battle Creek, MI 49014***

APPENDIX B

Letter and Postcard

May 23, 2003

Dear 21st Century Community Learning Center Director:

I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in evaluation, measurement, and research design. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study on the use of evaluation findings and internal/external evaluators among federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees in Michigan. I would really appreciate it if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it by June 13, 2003 in the enclosed stamped envelope.

Your participation in this survey will provide information that will help guide future evaluation practices for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program as well as other grant-funded initiatives. The survey results will be useful in the statewide implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers evaluation and individual district practices involving internal/external evaluators and using the evaluation findings. An abstract of the findings from the survey will be available upon your request.

The questionnaire you have received is coded only for the purpose of allowing me to follow up with districts that have not returned the survey to ensure the maximum response rate. All coding will be removed from the questionnaire upon its return and your responses will remain confidential. Questionnaire results will not be associated with any specific grantee.

Thank you for caring about our youth and developing quality programs that fill our youth's needs during those gap times.

Carpe diem,

Wendy L. Tackett

June 2, 2003

Dear 21st Century Community Learning Center Director ~

Last week you received a questionnaire focused on the evaluation elements of your program, including the use of evaluation findings and the employ of internal and external evaluators. If you have not yet filled it out, please take some time and do it soon. Your information will not only help me in completing my dissertation, but it will also provide valuable information for the future of 21st Century Community Learning Center evaluations.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 269-420-3417 or wendolyn@mac.com. Thank you!

**Carpe diem,
Wendy Tackett**

APPENDIX C

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: March 12, 2003

To: Wendy Tackett, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Lagerwey".

Re: Approval not needed

This letter will serve as confirmation that your project "21st Century Community Learning Center External Evaluation Utilization" has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Based on that review, the HSIRB has determined that approval is not required for you to conduct this project because you are gathering data about organizations and not individuals. Thank you for your concerns about protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

A copy of your protocol and a copy of this letter will be maintained in the HSIRB files.

Walwood Hall, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276

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