
To: RISE Partnership Community
From: Equal Measure
Date: February 25, 2020
RE: Salient Themes from RISE Partnership Sustainability Interviews

Introduction

This memo outlines salient themes from interviews with a subset of RISE Partnership Sustainability cohort members about their experience in the Building Evaluation Capacity Initiative (BECI) and, subsequently, in the RISE Partnership Sustainability program. Interviews were conducted in winter 2020 by Equal Measure, the Partnership's evaluation and learning partner. Overall, the participants described their experience in BECI as influential, enhancing their understanding of how stronger evaluation capacity can improve programming and prioritize learning. Participants also described the impact of evaluation capacity on their work, the value of the cohort model, and their vision for systems change. These themes are explored below.

Impact of Evaluation Capacity

- ❖ As a result of their experience in BECI, participants reported instilling a culture of learning and evaluation in their organizations, which strengthened program fidelity.
- ❖ Multiple participants said BECI training influenced leaders to enhance staff responsibilities, hire evaluation staff members, and empower evaluation champions, thereby strongly impacting organizational and staff capacity.
- ❖ Most participants used their new knowledge of data measurement to develop and apply new tools to manage, analyze, and communicate data—especially in storytelling, grant writing, and consideration of third-party evaluation contracting.

Value of Cohort Model

- ❖ The BECI pedagogy, facilitation, and experiential learning sessions were relevant and applicable to participants and their individual programs.
- ❖ The cohort model provided a valuable space to share reflections, despite a range of programmatic focus areas and experiences with evaluation across the group.
- ❖ Most participants reported tangible, direct benefits from receiving individualized support from the consultants.

Vision for Systems Change

- ❖ Participants are more confident to engage in conversations about evaluation with philanthropies, align outcomes with funder expectations, and seek new funding; however, some are concerned that philanthropies are still not ready to support evaluation capacity.
- ❖ The RISE Partnership is positioned to educate the nonprofit and philanthropic community on the challenges and opportunities of collaborative funding.
- ❖ Efforts to support evaluation capacity are emerging at different levels of the regional nonprofit ecosystem, including the Pew Fund for Health and Human Services' Evaluation Capacity Building Initiative; a learning community, initiated by major philanthropic leaders; and the Philadelphia Nonprofit Evaluators Coalition, initiated and led by internal evaluators working for regional nonprofit organizations.