

Needs Assessment: Developing Evaluation Skills in MISA Leaders

What is a needs assessment? A needs assessment is the process of determining what issues are important by identifying and evaluating needs in a defined group of people. A needs assessment is one approach that can be helpful in spurring conversation around ideas of evaluation and learning.

Why are we participating in this needs assessment? Evaluation and learning are essential capacities—they should not be considered “nice-to-have” extras. It is critical for people in leadership roles to value evaluation. For evaluation and learning to permeate an organization and be a constructive force, it must be positively and proactively infused within program initiatives. In order to understand the evaluation skills, interests and needs of MISA leads, I have provided you with this assessment.

What will happen with the information we provide? I want you to know that I am the only person who will review individual responses to this needs assessment. This is critical, as I want to ensure that you feel completely free to be frank and candid in your responses. I am interested in knowing if there are evaluation needs and questions so that we can set aside time in the future to address them. I will collate the data and conduct an analysis of responses to present to the working group. This information, coupled with feedback from the evaluation plan, will be used to determine to what extent this evaluation can provide an educative experience.

What do we need to do? This needs assessment has two parts: Part A contains 5 questions that ask you to think about your evaluation experiences and jot down some ideas. If you need more space, please feel free to append an additional page. Part B (on the back) is a table where you are asked to rate your areas of interest/needs.

PART A

1. Do you conduct program or personnel evaluation as part of your role? If so, how often are you asked to undertake evaluative tasks (such as collecting data)? What do you like most about this work?
 - *No.*
 - *Teacher Performance Appraisals / School Effectiveness Framework (observations). Learn so much about practices.*
 - *All the time.*
 - *It is part of my work and development. It is how I determine if my work is effective.*
 - *We just created a “Learning Services Program Evaluation & Research Team”; we plan to try to find ways to embed data collection regarding our initiatives in order to evaluate their effectiveness.*
 - *Yes, regularly; interesting, changing, provides information.*
 - *Yes, we collect feedback from professional learning sessions as qualitative data to drive our next steps. I like the open & honest feedback.*
 - *Yes. Often I am asked to collect data & make reports. Understanding the questions.*
 - *Yes, but I have a team of program consultants who work with me in collecting and analyzing the data. I also am involved with ensuring our principals and VP’s know how to retrieve and analyze student data.*
 - *Yes; annually per person and per program. I like the way there is constant evolution in staff & program.*
 - *Yes, it is the core of my role. What I like the most is revealing the “story” about what is really happening according to the data.*
2. Describe the kinds of data you collect and identify how you use this data?
 - *Quantitative data – DRA scores, EQAO, report card achievement. All are used in board and school improvement planning.*
 - *Survey, observations, conversations with students & teachers, student work.*
 - *EQAO, RR, CASI, OCA, learning profiles, attendance, safe school climate surveys, pass rates, credit accumulation, mark distribution, report card, surveys, grad rate, enrolment.*
 - *Survey with multiple choice; feedback on session; results of EQAO, etc.*
 - *Student achievement data, perceptual data from teachers/admin and student surveys.*
 - *OCA, PRTA, OBS survey, PM Benchmark, climate surveys, EQAO, credits, report cards, financial etc...*
 - *Achievement & assessment data, student, school & board planning.*
 - *Student assessment data, perceptual and attitudinal.*

- *Quantitative data, qualitative data.*
 - *Report card, assessment, attendance, suspension/expulsion, credit accumulation, pass rates, climate surveys, teacher choice in PD.*
 - *Perceptual data surveys; stats on work programs completed*
 - *Assessment: DRA, EQAO, On demand writing, OSSLT, Ontario Comprehension Assessment. Perceptual: surveys from parents, staff, students. Demographic: From various sources – EQAO, etc... - statistical neighbours. All used for program planning needs and assessment.*
3. Identify 2 or 3 barriers you encounter in collecting data or conducting program evaluation?
- *Reliability of quantitative data; fact that this is often trailing data, finding ways to collect and use data gained through conversations or observations*
 - *Teacher resistance – union push back; insufficient time to stay in classrooms for observation*
 - *Amount of data; identifying what to do with the results*
 - *Sample sizes; getting all participants to respond*
 - *Focus – where to put our priorities; how to capture data on implementation; how to imbed process for program evaluation into all new initiatives*
 - *Time consuming (x5); I am not a programmer*
 - *Some people don't bring data to the table. How do you keep everyone accountable?*
 - *Knowing the question. People understanding the data we collect*
 - *Knowledge on report generation; timely access*
 - *Shortcuts in data collection often skew the results and don't provide adequate input for future programs*
 - *Ensuring the data is really measuring what we think it is measuring; are we gathering the right "evidence"?*
4. What, if any, aspects of your evaluative thinking or data/evidence-informed decision-making would you like to improve on?
- *Knowledge about how to collect and use; qualitative data*
 - *Being able to suggest next steps*
 - *How to help others see the need; based on evidence not personal beliefs*
 - *Analysis of results and applying to design*
 - *Prioritizing – how we decide what data to look at*
 - *Looking at the process.... All areas need improvement*
 - *How do I know if a new initiative is working / making a difference for students?*
 - *Program evaluation knowledge and how-to*
 - *Learning about different types of evaluation processes*
 - *More strategic report generation*
5. What supports do you need as you expand data-informed decision-making and research or evaluation work within your board?
- *A "go to" person to help with the implementation of the collection and use of qualitative data; a way to represent this data in communicating to stakeholders – parents, trustees, etc..*
 - *Knowing how to collect qualitative data without resulting in survey fatigue*
 - *Better understanding of research applications*
 - *Capacity building among system leaders/consultants re; thinking about program evaluation as part of an initiative*
 - *Tool kit (how to); testimonials; models*
 - *Access to ITS team; time to learn and to dig deeper*
 - *Maybe online resources pertaining to "how to collect relevant data" that will be used*
 - *Personnel who are data coaches*

PART B

Read each statement below and place a check in the response box that most accurately describes your thinking.

	This topic doesn't sound relevant to me	I know as much as I need to know about this topic	I need or want to learn more
1. Understanding how to evaluate programs.			10
2. Learning about different types of evaluation approaches and theories.		2	9
3. Identifying and expanding my knowledge of the processes or stages of an evaluation.		1	10
4. Experimenting with designing evaluation questions.			13
5. Discovering more about evaluation methodology more broadly.	1	1	6
5.1. Specifically understanding more about qualitative evaluation.		1	10
5.2. Specifically understanding more about quantitative evaluation.		6	5
5.3. Specifically understanding more about mixed-method evaluation.		2	8
6. Delving into credible, reliable and valid evidence to justify conclusions.	1	1	10
7. Thinking broadly and creatively about knowledge mobilization to maximize dissemination or sharing of the data collected.	1	1	9
8. Considering how to build evaluation capacity within our board.		3	8
9. Exploring how to increase use of the data and findings.		4	9
10. Sharing samples of my evaluation work with MISA colleagues.		4	4
11. Hearing how others have approached evaluations in their boards.		2	8

12. Are there any other areas of interests/needs or questions you would like to add?

- *I think the above statements hit all areas of need*