



Translational Workforce Development Training Program Evaluation

Sample Focus Group Interview Guide

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Approach to Evaluation

Qualitative evaluation of translational workforce development programs is informed by the utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) approach (Patton, 2008). This approach is based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users. Therefore, evaluations should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. UFE can be used for different types of evaluation, and the focus of this evaluation study included formative, summative, and process components.

UFE prescribes that primary intended users of the evaluation must be clearly identified and personally engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process to ensure their primary intended uses can be identified. Prior to the evaluation activities, Director of Educational Development and Evaluation, Dr. Yulia A. Strekalova consults with training program directors to clarify intended uses of the evaluation and to tailor activities to the specific needs of the program.

Rather than focusing on general and abstract users and uses, UFE is focused on real and specific users and uses. The evaluator's task, therefore, is not to make decisions independently of the intended users, but rather to facilitate decision making amongst the people who will use the findings of the evaluation. Therefore, evaluation studies are informed by the logic model developed by the program directors and aim to produce a participatory version of the logic model representing the perspective of program trainees.

Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of trainee-level educational evaluation efforts is to gauge trainee perceptions of their experiences and the effectiveness of training. Focus group questions are intended to ascertain the participants' perceptions of program resources, activities, and outcomes. Specifically, the evaluation questions are informed by the professional advancement framework for academic scholars developed by the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER, Pfund et al., 2014; Sorkness et al., 2017) supported by the NIH-funded National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN, 1U24GM132217). The framework focuses on the following areas of trainee development and mentoring:

1. *Research Comprehension and Communication Skills*: Development of effective interpersonal communication skills, development of research communication skills, development of logical/critical thinking skills, and develop an understanding of the research environment
2. *Practical Research Skills*: Development of ability to design a research project, and development of ability to conduct a research project
3. *Research Ethics*: Development of responsible and ethical research practices
4. *Researcher Identity*: Development of identity as a researcher
5. *Researcher Confidence and Independence*: Development of confidence as a researcher, and development of independence as a researcher
6. *Equity and Inclusion Awareness and Skills*: Development of skills to deal with personal differences in the research environment, and advancement of equity and inclusion in the research environment
7. *Professional and Career Development Skills*: Exploration of and pursuit of a

- research career, and development of confidence in pursuing a research career
8. *Subject Area Expertise*: Development of disciplinary knowledge related to the focused area of training

Sample Interview Guide Questions

1. As you see it, what is the biggest benefit for your professional development that you gain through participation in the T32 training program?
2. Every T32 trainee has a unique background. What are specific training needs for someone with your background?
3. What new information have you obtained from participation in this program training?
4. Tell us how the didactic/classroom information informed your research.
5. Tell us how the laboratory experiences informed your research.
6. How has your primary mentor assisted you in the development of your research planning?
7. Name one to three instances or skills from your interaction with mentors that were pivotal in your development as an independent research scientist.
8. What is your experience working with the second/secondary mentor?
9. Has the T32 research training program helped you obtain grant funding? If so, give an example.
10. Has the T32 research training program helped improve your proposal writing? If so, give an example.
11. Has the T32 research training program helped you avert scientific misconduct? Explain why.
12. How has your application of scientific knowledge increased as a result of the T32 research training program?
13. How has your application of translating scientific knowledge in your research changed during the T32 research training program?
14. What other possible training components could support your professional development?

References

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