About the webinar: Logistical notes

- All participants are automatically muted during the webinar; you will only hear and see the presenters.
- If you have technical issues during the webinar, please type your issue in the Q&A box on the bottom right corner of your screen.
- Please direct all other questions to the point of contact listed in Section VII of the applicable funding opportunity announcement.
- To access closed captioning during the webinar, click on the Multimedia Viewer link on the bottom right corner of your screen.
- This webinar will be archived at: www.hmrfgrantresources.info

Evaluating Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Projects

Local and federal evaluations for the 2020 cohort

Presenter introductions

Seth F. Chamberlain
HMRF Branch Chief
Office of Family Assistance (OFA)

Sarah Avellar
Senior Researcher
Mathematica

Christine Ross
Senior Researcher
Mathematica

Welcome and agenda overview

- About the webinar: Focus and scope
- How performance measures and continuous quality improvement (CQI) differ from evaluation
- Overview of local and federal evaluations
- Evaluation fundamentals and types
- Working with:
    - Local evaluator
    - Institutional review board

About the webinar: Focus and scope

- This webinar *will* cover:
  - FOA requirements for evaluation
  - Questions that can be answered by an evaluation
  - Key components of high quality evaluations
- This webinar *will not* cover or address:
  - Anything beyond language contained in the FOA
  - How/what to write for proposals, or make any recommendations on whether your proposal will be competitive or will be funded
  - The programmatic elements of the FOA or details on performance measures and CQI. Separate webinars addressed these issues for all applicants.
- All webinars will be archived at: www.hmrfgrantresources.info.

Performance measures and CQI: Requirements and differences from evaluation

Performance measures

- Performance measures help the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and grantees monitor the services provided and who they are serving
- All grantees are required to collect, store, and report data on standardized performance measures in three areas
  - Services provided through the grant
  - Client characteristics and outcomes (client surveys)
  - Program operations (staff survey)
- Performance measures will be collected and stored in nFORM (Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management), a management information system designed for healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood (HMRF) grantees

Continuous quality improvement (CQI)

- CQI is the process of identifying, describing, and analyzing program strengths and problems, followed by testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019)
- CQI is a systematic, ongoing, and iterative process
  - Program monitoring documents what is happening
  - CQI is a way to use that information for improvement
- It is data-driven
  - There is no CQI without high quality data
  - Performance measures are a key data source for CQI

CQI requirements

- All grantees must develop, implement, and regularly update a CQI plan that uses the data to improve program performance and identify areas for further analysis and improvement

Evaluation

- Evaluation is a systematic way to determine and document whether a program is achieving its goals
  - Only an impact evaluation can determine whether the program caused changes, such as changes in client outcomes
- Helps program staff identify weaknesses to strengthen and successes to replicate
- Helps answer questions for the HMRF fields
  - Helps inform and improve the next generation of programs
  - Builds the evidence base to identify effective programs
  - Helps funders know where to invest
- A subset of grantees will conduct evaluations (discussed in next section)

Questions each process can answer

Can answer…	Performance measures	CQI	Evaluation
What is happening in the program?	✓	✓	✓
How can we improve the program?		✓	✓
Did the program cause changes?			✓ (Impact)
How can we improve future programming?			✓

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Overview of local and federal evaluations

What are local evaluations?

- Designed and executed by a grantee and its evaluator
- Answer grantee-specific questions
  - Example: Is the grantee's program effective at improving client outcomes?
  - Example: Which recruitment strategies identify the most eligible clients?

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Local evaluation requirements depend on funding level

Funding level (annual)	Evaluation requirement or guidance
\$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000	Must propose a rigorous impact local evaluation, such as a randomized controlled trial (RCT) or high quality quasi-experimental design (QED) study with a comparison group
\$750,000 to \$999,999	May choose to propose and conduct either a descriptive or impact local evaluation
\$500,000 to \$749,999	May choose to propose and conduct a descriptive local evaluation

Highlights of local evaluation requirements

Application stage

- Include an evaluation plan that describes research questions and design
- Include a letter of agreement from an independent evaluator, referred to as a local evaluator, who will conduct the evaluation

Planning period

- Submit analysis plans that adhere to standards that ACF will distribute
- Obtain a Federal-Wide Assurance
- Submit evaluation to institutional review board (IRB)

End of evaluation

- Submit final reports according to standards that ACF will distribute
- Submit de-identified data sets according to standards that ACF will distribute (if required to do so by ACF)

What are federal evaluations?

- Federal evaluations are sponsored by the federal government and typically include multiple grantees
- Conducted by independent contractors to the federal government
- As a condition of accepting an award, all grantees that are asked to participate in a federally led research and/or evaluation effort are required to engage fully and adhere to all research and evaluation protocols established by the ACF to be carried out by its designee contractors

Federal evaluations of healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs

- ACF has initiated two federal evaluations of healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood (HMRF) programs that will include selected grantees from the 2020 cohort

- Strengthening the Implementation of Marriage and Relationship Programs (SIMR)
- Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF)

Federally led evaluations: SIRF and SIMR

- As in the past, grantees may be asked to participate in ACF-supported federally led evaluations
- Previous/ongoing large-scale federally led evaluations
- Two new evaluations will address implementation challenges in HMRE and RF programs, with emphasis on improving recruitment, retention, and engagement
- Goals: To identify and test promising solutions to key implementation challenges that can (a) help programs now, and (b) help prepare for potential larger scale impact studies in the future

SIMR
Strengthening the Implementation of Marriage and Relationship Programs

HMRE programs
OPRE contract to Mathematica, with subcontract to Public Strategies

SIRF
Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs

RF programs
OPRE contract to MDRC, with subcontracts to MEF Associates and Insight Policy Research

Federally led evaluations: SIRF and SIMR

- Rapid learning methods allow for continuous refinement
  - Series of short learning cycles to pilot implementation solutions
  - Process: collect and analyze data, refine the solutions, and test again to adjust strategies most effectively
- Partnership and collaboration are key
  - Close collaboration with program partners at all stages to ensure that the solutions are relevant and adapted to context
- Stakeholder and expert engagement is underway
  - Phone calls, interactive webinars, and review of research literature and previous grantee performance data to identify challenges and possible solutions
  - Brainstorming creative and innovative solutions to those challenges that could be tested with rapid learning methods

Federally led evaluations: SIRF and SIMR

- Next steps
  - Continue to engage experts and stakeholders to develop and refine study design
  - Hold webinars in early August to provide more information for interested programs and the broader field
  - Engage with HMRF programs for planning and input in Fall 2020
  - Select and invite programs to participate by early 2021
  - Begin rapid learning evaluations in Spring 2021 (expected)

Federally led evaluations: SIRF and SIMR

- Learn more
  - Visit the project webpages

    https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/strengthening-the-implementation-of-marriage-and-relationship-services-simr

    https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/strengthening-the-implementation-of-responsible-fatherhood-programs-sirf

  - Attend webinars during the week of August 3rd - stay tuned for details and registration information!

Federally led Evaluations: SIRF and SIMR

SIMR points of contact

Federal:

Samantha Illangasekare (Samantha.Illangasekare@acf.hhs.gov)

Shirley Adelstein (Shirley.Adelstein@acf.hhs.gov)

Mathematica:

Robert Wood (RWood@mathematica-mpr.com)

Daniel Friend (DFriend@mathematica-mpr.com)

SIRF points of contact

Federal:

Katie Pahigiannis (Katie.Pahigiannis@acf.hhs.gov)

Kriti Jain (Kriti.Jain@acf.hhs.gov)

MDRC:

Charles Michalopoulos (SIRF@mdrc.org)

Dina Israel (SIRF@mdrc.org)

Key features of local and federal evaluations

Topic	Local evaluation	Federal evaluation
Description	Grantee-specific evaluations to answer grantee-specific research question(s)	Small- and large-scale demonstrations and/or descriptive and impact evaluations
Responsible party	Led by a local evaluator	Led by independent contractors to the federal government
Funding and support	Upper and lower evaluation funding levels (set in FOA), reserved from total grant funding	May provide additional funds to grantees for programming and study participation, and offer technical assistance
Process	After local evaluation research plans have been approved, grantees are expected to implement evaluations throughout the grant period	The federal government may incorporate the local evaluation into or replace the local evaluation with the federally led evaluation

Evaluation fundamentals

Research questions: The foundation of evaluation

- Your research questions must be important for the fields of HM or RF
- If you are proposing an innovative programming approach, consider evaluating it
- Consider information that would be useful to your staff and other stakeholders
  - If you don't care about the research questions, it can be hard to invest in the evaluation
- Involve your partners in thinking through what is critical to learn
- Ask your local evaluator to help develop the research questions

Examples of research areas

- Recruitment and program participation
- Program content
- Program implementation
- Program supports
- Overall program outcomes

Evaluation can take different forms

Evaluation design	Type of study	What can it answer? (Example questions)
RCT	Impact	Do the program or program components affect clients' outcomes?
QED	Impact	Do the program or program components affect clients' outcomes? (Evidence is less rigorous than those from RCTs.)
Pre/post	Descriptive	Do client outcomes change from the beginning to the end of the program?
Implementation	Impact or descriptive	What factors lead to high quality implementation?

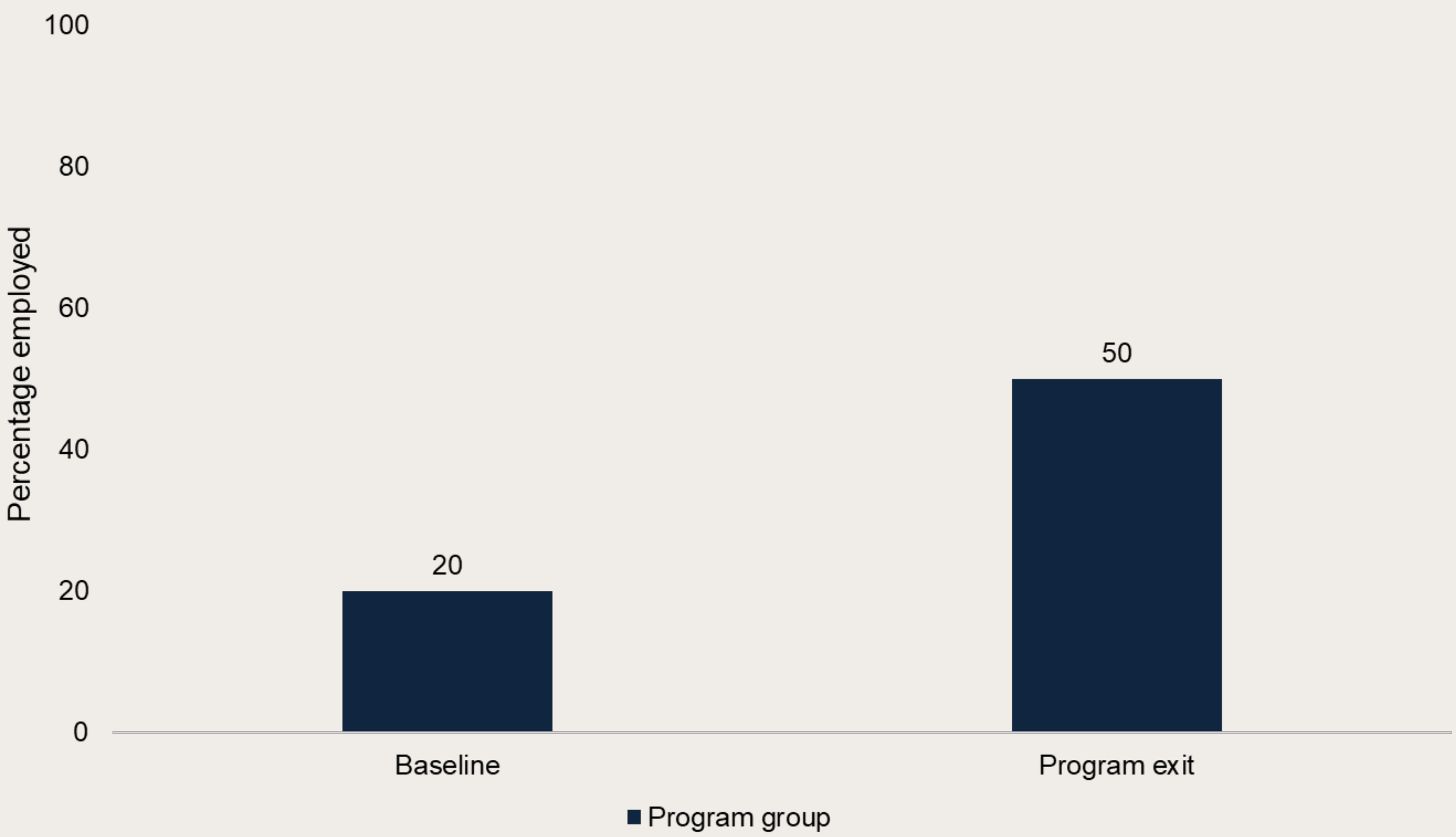
The research design and execution determine the questions an evaluation can answer

Impact designs

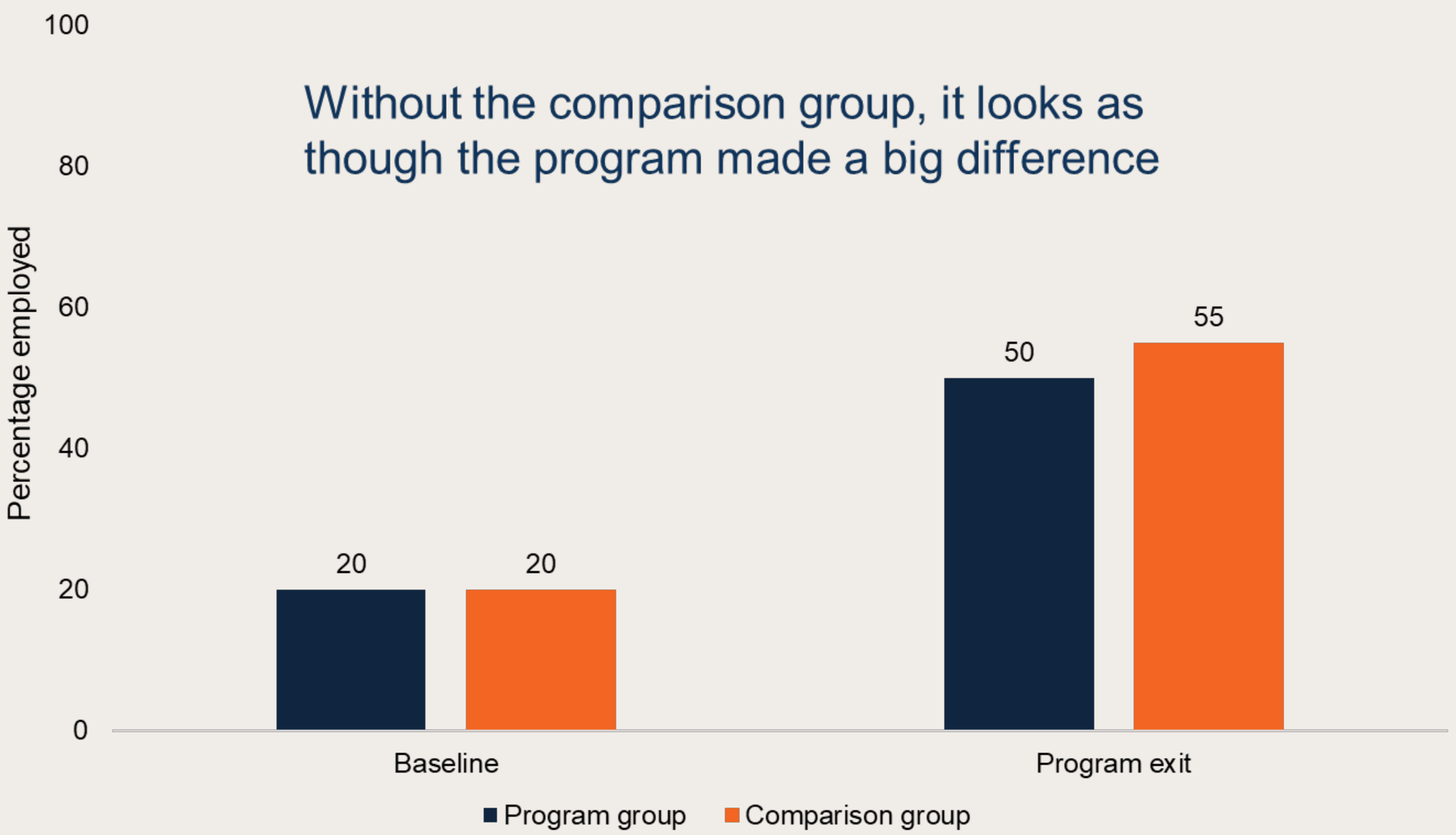
Distinguishing between change and impact

- Many factors can lead to change, including but not limited to personal motivation, natural change over time, or broader economic changes
- If we want to know whether a program caused changes in clients' outcomes (that is, a program impact), we have to rule out other possible causes
- To do this, we need to know what would have happened without the program
- The impossible ideal is to have the same people participate and not participate in the program at the same time, and compare their outcomes
- A comparison group, which does not receive the services being evaluated, is a feasible substitute

Without comparisons, results can be misleading (1)



Without comparisons, results can be misleading (2)



Not all comparisons are equal

- The comparison group represents what would have happened to the people receiving services (the program group) if they had not received services
- The groups must be similar at baseline—the beginning of the study
  - Known as baseline equivalence
- If the groups are similar at baseline, any later differences may be attributed to the program

Key features of two designs

Feature	RCTs	QEDs
How groups are formed	By chance (that is, random assignment)	Non-random—for example, the comparison group is formed of people who (1) cannot receive the program because they live outside of the service area or (2) apply for the program when it is at capacity
Baseline equivalence	On average, groups have the same characteristics; any differences are by chance (regardless of whether the characteristics are measured)	Baseline equivalence can be established on some characteristics, but never on all There is always the potential for bias

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When to use random assignment

- Do you want to know whether the program is effective?
    - Random assignment is one of the best ways to answer this question
    - Other designs can give the wrong answer
    - Random assignment is used to evaluate a wide range of programs
- Are there more people in need in the community than you can serve?
    - Random assignment is a fair way to allocate services that cannot be offered to everyone

Other ways to form comparison groups

- Draw a comparison group from a geographic area with a similar population, but where no similar services are available
  - Consider how you will reach these individuals for consent and data collection
- Partner with a program that works with a similar population (one that could serve as a comparison group)
  - Be sure the partner's services are different enough from those of your program, or it will be difficult to detect the impact of your services

Other ways to form comparison groups: more ideas

- Create a comparison group from those who cannot be served because the program is full
  - If program capacity is the only reason someone cannot be served, this is a good impact design
  - The program can serve those in the comparison group after data collection is complete (sometimes referred to as a waitlist design)
- Use administrative data
  - Consider whether other agencies collect data that you could use for your evaluation

Forming a comparison group: What not to do

- Do not create a comparison group from people who agreed to the program but never showed up, or dropped out after only a few sessions
  - There are likely to be important underlying differences between these individuals and those who complete the program
  - The differences are likely to create bias (to erroneously shift the results in one direction or another)
- Do not create a comparison group from those who are ineligible for the program or are not a good fit
  - Again, underlying differences between them and those who do receive services are likely to create bias

Possible data sources

- Grantee-specific surveys
  - Answer questions specific to local evaluation
  - Must be balanced with burden on clients, who also must complete the performance measure surveys
- Performance measures administered to the comparison group
  - As part of the required performance measures, clients are asked to take up to three surveys as they progress through the program
  - If the surveys are administered to the comparison group as well, they could be used as a data source for an impact study
  - Not tailored to local evaluation
- Administrative data, such as child support enforcement data
  - Might be difficult to obtain, and can usually only answer limited range of questions

Descriptive: Pre/post designs

Key features of pre/post designs

- Typically, clients’ characteristics are measured before (pre) and after (post) they receive program services
- This design does not include a comparison group, so it cannot tell you whether any changes were caused by the program
- But it can indicate whether clients’ outcomes changed over time
  - Did relationship quality improve?
  - Did earnings increase?
- This is a good first step, if more rigorous evaluations are not feasible

Possible data sources

- Performance measures
  - A pre/post design could examine client responses to see how they changed from the beginning to the end of the program
- Grantee-specific surveys

Descriptive or impact: Implementation designs

Key features of implementation evaluations

- Implementation evaluations examine factors leading to program outputs
  - Program participation
  - Staff turnover
  - Fidelity to the curriculum
- These studies can help identify better ways to operate a program
- Can help answer broader questions than CQI can for the program and the field

Design and data sources

- Implementation can be studied with an impact or descriptive design
  - For example, randomly assign clients to workshops offered in one format (12 one-hour sessions) or another (4 three-hour sessions), and compare hours of participation (impact study)
  - Conduct focus groups with participants and nonparticipants to learn why they did or did not attend (descriptive study)
- Possible data sources
  - Performance measure data combined with other types of data
  - Qualitative data such as interviews, focus groups, or observations
  - Quantitative data such as staff or client surveys

Local evaluation plan application requirements

Local evaluation application plan

- Research questions
- An appropriate research design
    - Descriptive evaluations must use data and analysis to describe and explain the importance of the program model's processes and/or the program's population
    - Impact evaluations must include a comparison group that does not receive the services of interest and that is comparable at baseline to those who participate in the service program
- Recruitment of participants

Local evaluation application plan continued

- Planned sample size
  - The size of each condition
  - When sample enrollment will begin and end
  - Monthly and annual sample enrollment targets
- Measures (including any measures in addition to the required performance measures)
- Data collection methods
- Analyses methods to be used
- Research implementation
  - A work plan for executing the proposed research design

Other players in an evaluation

Finding and selecting a local evaluator

- The FOA requires grantees to work with an external evaluator
  - An external evaluator does not have a conflict of interest with the program or agency
- Such an evaluator might come from an evaluation or research organization or from a local university
- Consider the evaluator’s qualifications and experience
  - Has the evaluator worked on similar evaluations?
  - Does the evaluator have a background evaluating similar programs?

Divvying up evaluation responsibilities

- Divide roles and responsibilities
  - For example, the team may decide that the evaluator will conduct the random assignment, but the program staff will tell clients whether they are in the program or comparison group
- Roles and responsibilities should fit each person's expertise and capacity
  - For example, to locate clients for follow-up data collection, local evaluators probably have more time and more relevant experience than program staff do
- Evaluators might also help with performance measure data collection and CQI, though this is not required

Institutional review board

- An IRB is an independent committee that reviews and approves research
  - The IRB is responsible for ensuring that the research poses minimal risk to the clients
- Universities typically have IRBs, and there are also independent IRBs that will review research studies for a fee
- The FOA indicates that most grantees will either need IRB approval to collect data for performance measures and local evaluation, or a waiver from an IRB

Approving consent

- An IRB will need to approve the consent process
- Fully informed consent is needed before someone can participate in an impact evaluation
    - Clients must understand the risks to participating in the study

Protection of human subjects assurance

- Applicants must complete the Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration of Exemption form (see instructions in the FOA)
  - Most applicants will check the third option in box 6
  - More steps will be needed once grants are awarded

www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html

Grants.gov	Project Narrative Attachment Form
Grants.gov	Project/Performance Site Location(s)
HHS	Protection of Human Subjects

Protection of human subjects form

Protection of Human Subjects
Assurance Identification/IRB Certification/Declaration of Exemption
(Common Rule)

OMB Number: 0990-0263
Expiration Date: 04/30/2021

Policy: Research activities involving human subjects may not be conducted or supported by the D
(56FR28003, June
in accordance with
Rule for exemptions
support must submi
(IRB) review and ap
Common Rule.

Institutions must have an assurance of compliance that applies to the

* 1. Request Typ

* 3. Name of Fede

if known, App

* 6. Assurance Status of this Project *(Respond to one of the following)*

☐ This Assurance, on file with Department of Health and Human Services, covers this activity:

Assurance Identification No. ________, the expiration date ________

IRB Registration No. ________

☐ This Assurance, on file with * *(agency/dept)*

____

covers this activity. Assurance No. ________, the expiration date ________

IRB Registration/Identification No. ________ *(if applicable)*

☒ No assurance has been filed for this institution. This institution declares that it will provide an Assurance and Ce
approval upon request.

☐ Exemption Status: Human subjects are involved, but this activity qualifies for exemption under Section 101(b), paragraph

____

Resources for applicants

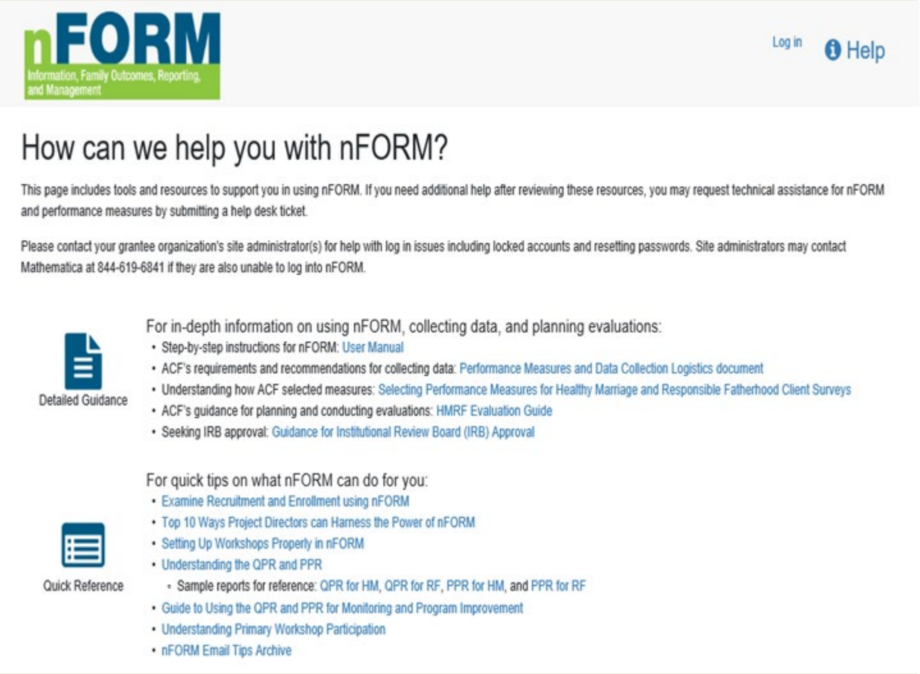
HMRF applicant website

- Designed for OFA’s RF and HM grant applicants
  - Program design
  - Evaluation design
  - Continuous quality improvement
- Questions to consider
- Tips
- Links to other resources
- Recordings of all applicant webinars

https://www.hmrfgrantresources.info/

nFORM and performance measures

- Resources for using nFORM
  - Training videos
  - User manual
  - Tip sheets
  - Data dictionary (for understanding all data elements in the 2015 cohort performance measures)
- Performance measures surveys
  - Versions for the 2015 cohort
  - Versions for the 2020 cohort (coming soon to: https://www.hmrfgrantresources.info/



https://www.famlecross-site.com/nForm/Contact

Contact information for FOAs

Contacts for Fatherhood Family-Focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential (FIRE) FOA:

- OFA: Tanya Howell at Tanya.Howell@acf.hhs.gov
- Grants Management (OGM): Bridget Shea Westfall at Bridget.Sheawestfall@acf.hhs.gov

Contacts for Family, Relationship, and Marriage Education Works - Adults (FRAMEWorks):

- OFA: Jacqueline Proctor - Jacqueline.Proctor@acf.hhs.gov
- Grants Management (OGM): Bridget Shea Westfall at Bridget.Sheawestfall@acf.hhs.gov

Contacts for Relationships, Education, Advancement, and Development for Youth for Life (READY4Life):

- OFA: Meghan Heffron -meghan.heffron@acf.hhs.gov
- Grants Management (OGM): Bridget Shea Westfall at Bridget.Sheawestfall@acf.hhs.gov

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Thank you!