A framework for using data to develop, implement, and sustain robust work-based learning programs

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Why use data?

• Systematic: Using a defined, replicable process can help us identify what job seekers and employers need and how to meet those needs

• Credible: It can help turn our gut instincts on what works into evidence for funders and policy makers

• Repeatable: Once we set up a data collection and analysis, it is straightforward to repeat, allowing us to track over time

• Efficient: In many cases, we have to collect it for outside stakeholders, so we might as well use it to benefit ourselves too!
But...

• Data are not a magic bullet

• We have to know what we are looking for
  – What question are we trying to answer?
  – What problem are we trying to solve?

• We have to know where to look
  – Data useful for evaluating effectiveness are not necessarily useful for addressing implementation challenges

• Some data we think are going to be helpful are not!
  – Example of integrating TANF-WIOA-Adult Education in one large county
Data use trajectory of a new program

- Scale (within an organization)
- Time

- Road test
- Rapid cycle evaluation(s)
- Possible participation in an impact evaluation
A framework: Learn, Innovate, Improve

LEARN
Understand the motivation for change and assess the environment

TESTING LEADS TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND FURTHER INNOVATION

IMPROVE
Test and refine until goals are met

INNOVATE
Design research-informed solutions
Learn: What is the purpose of the data collection?

• To develop a program that meets local labor market needs?
• To monitor implementation of the program and determine what is working well and what isn’t?
• To determine client and employer satisfaction with the program?
• To demonstrate impact or effectiveness?
• To inform continuous quality improvement once you have a program in place?
Innovate: Design data collection approaches to meet objectives from Learn phase

• Original data collection to get attitudes, behaviors, satisfaction
  – Surveys, observations, interviews

• Administrative data for service receipt and outcomes

• Combinations of both for continuous quality improvement

• These need not be expensive or cumbersome
  – Google forms or SurveyMonkey for surveys
  – Administrative data may be existing and have what you need
*Road tests: take it for a test drive*
  
  – Is it really answering our questions of interest? Why not?
  – Refine the approach until we are satisfied that it is working as intended
  – Then scale it up

*Can do this repeatedly, as a continuous quality improvement process*
Data use trajectory of a new program

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Time

Scale (within an organization)
Examples

- Our research has found that organizations training participants for middle and high-skilled jobs highlight employer engagement as a major challenge
  - Program staff do not have experience “selling” to employers
  - Paperwork for taking on trainees is a burden
- Participant engagement can also be a problem
  - Participants can get higher wages in entry-level jobs outside of on-the-job training programs
  - Difficult to place participants who lack relevant work experience in high-growth industries
- How might our data needs vary depending on which challenge we are trying to address?