



## CREATING A LEARNING CULTURE THAT VALUES EVALUATION

Implementation evaluations often rely on data collected from Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) program staff, partners, or others in the community. For example, an evaluation might ask facilitators to complete a fidelity log after each lesson they implement. Alternatively, the evaluation might ask partner staff to participate in an interview about program implementation. These activities require individuals to contribute their time and might also require staff or partners to contribute other resources—for example, by spending money on transportation to come to an in-person interview or focus group. However, individuals are more likely to complete evaluation activities if they understand *why* this data collection is important. Creating a culture with buy-in for evaluations among staff and other community partners can lead to successful evaluation activities.

This document answers questions SRAE grant recipients might have about how to build support among staff for a learning culture that values evaluation activities.

### What is a learning culture?

An organization with a learning culture looks to find, share, and use new knowledge or skills throughout their normal daily activities. This focus on learning and growth is evident in the attitudes and behaviors of the organization's staff, and it can influence the decisions that the organization or individual staff members make. Implementation evaluations can be a key component of a learning culture as they aim to gather and analyze information to better understand program delivery. The program or organization can use these findings to inform future decisions.

### How can SRAE grant recipients and their evaluators build a learning culture that values evaluation?

Like most efforts to influence or change attitudes within an organization, an individual staff member cannot build a learning culture on their own. But they can work to integrate this mindset into their work and encourage others around them to do the same. Efforts to foster a learning culture might focus on the program or evaluation team initially and then expand to others at the organization.

As part of their implementation evaluations, SRAE grant recipients can strengthen the learning culture at their organization and at their partners' organizations with strategies such as:

- **Collaborate with program and partner staff when developing the evaluation plan.** The evaluation team should make an effort to involve program and partner staff in the evaluation design process. For example, the evaluation team can talk to program or partner staff about data collection plans. The evaluation team can ask staff whether they have concerns with the plans, including whether they think planned data collection is feasible and useful. The evaluation team can then revise data collection plans based on feedback from program and partner staff.
- **Share the implementation evaluation’s goals and purpose with program and partner staff.** With a clear understanding of the evaluation’s purpose, program and partner staff can become invested and see value in the evaluation activities.
- **Communicate with program staff and partners about data collection plans and activities, and provide updates on evaluation progress.** The evaluation team should explain to program and partner staff the purpose of data collected from each source for the evaluation. Providing this motivation can help program staff understand why their role in data collection is important. As data collection and other evaluation activities begin, the evaluation team should share updates with program and partner staff. For example, after one semester of program delivery in the partner schools, the evaluation team could tell the program and partner staff the number of observations or focus groups conducted or the number of fidelity logs completed, reminding the staff what these data will ultimately be used for.
- **Train and support program staff on the evaluation’s data collection methods, if needed.** If program staff will help to collect data, the evaluation team should train staff thoroughly on data collection tools and processes. For example, if facilitators are asked to complete fidelity logs for each lesson they deliver, staff members should understand where to find the logs, how to fill them out, and where to track data collection. Training should provide the context for each data collection task and aim to build understanding and competencies among staff. Outside of the initial training, the evaluation team should also offer ongoing support, such as an email or phone number where staff can direct questions or regular “office hours” where staff can check in on how data collection is going.
- **Provide opportunities to learn about evaluation activities.** The evaluation team can make formal or informal learning experiences available to those interested in building capacity for future evaluation activities. For example, an evaluation team could informally present best practices for collecting survey data to interested program or partner staff. Learning from peers can be an effective way to foster a learning culture.
- **Share findings from the implementation evaluation, including with those who participated in evaluation activities.** To build a learning culture, it is important to give staff information from the evaluation that they can use in the future. Findings can help those that participated in the evaluation activities see how their input and involvement fit into the



bigger picture of the evaluation. Discussions of findings can be tailored to each audience. For instance, facilitators might be most interested in the detailed findings from program delivery, while partner staff might be most interested in more high-level takeaways.

- **Be a good listener and practice humility.** Throughout the evaluation process, it is important for the evaluation team to be available to answer questions and concerns and to listen carefully to input received along the way. Program staff and partners bring unique, valuable perspectives, skills, and expertise. Evaluation teams must value the voices of these contributors and ensure that they feel heard to promote trust and strong communication.